



This is the partner to the Mother's Day Story and it seemed the obvious route to take. Father's deserve equal time too and I think that Steve's stepfather played a big part in his upbringing. As always, this is a work of complete fiction, Steve and his family members are used as characters. Any resemblance to anyone in this story, whether living or dead is purely a coincidence.



Steve sets the boxes of pictures and the photo album down on the dining room table and as he does so, a picture escapes the album and floats down to the floor, as Steve bends over to pick it up, Robin comes out of the kitchen with two coffee mugs and she sets one down at Steve's place. Steve picks the picture up and he looks at it and he laughs.

"I have forgotten all about this picture."

Steve says as Robin comes over and she hugs him from behind and she looks over his shoulder at the picture.

"Who is it a picture of?"

Robins asks as Steve looks over his shoulder at her and he holds the picture where she can see it.

“Me. This was taken the day Mary almost killed me.” Steve says.

“What! Almost killed you?”

Steve laughs as he nods his head.

“Yep just almost, it was the summer when I was nine....”



The summer when Steve was nine was only a few weeks old and Steve was riding his bike, jumping curbs, fallen trees and trash cans pedaling as fast as he could heading home for the dinner that he knew was waiting for him. His mom was a stickler for promptness at the dinner hour and Steve was already ten minutes late. So maybe that was why it happened, who knows, the alignments of the planets were right, the wrong place wrong time theory but young Steve was about to learn the first lesson of physics, that two objects can't occupy the same space, no matter how much they try.

Steve is so close to his house by now that he can see it so he shoots off the sidewalk and into the street and that was when Steve saw his young, still yet short life, pass in front of his eyes. Time stood still for that half a second as Steve looked up and he saw the wide eyes of the driver over the steering wheel of the pickup, their eyes locked and then things happened in slow motion, every agonizing detail at a snail's pace and Steve didn't think that he would live to see ten.

The driver of that green pickup with the construction materials in the back, was just minding his own business, heading for the house at the end of a long work day thinking about the weekend approaching when his life suddenly changed in the form of a little boy turning out into the street in front of him. At that moment, on that day there were only two people in the whole world, him and that little boy. The man saw fear in the eyes of the little boy as he stomped on the brake and clutch and he lay a foot or more of rubber turning the steering wheel at the same time, the truck made a sickening spin and a dull thud followed.

Steve's thought processes were racing and jumbled but he recognized a few of the words that were spinning through his head, truck + bike = severe injury or even death. He knew it was too late to stop and his scream mingled with the squealing of the tires and when the truck did that lazy spin to the south the load of lumber that was sticking out of the back, hit Steve and knocked him down. The force knocked him to the ground and to his left, the bike caught and drug under the back tire of the truck. The truck coming to rest on the back tire of the bike, which took the form of the ugliest “u” shape.

The driver sits in the truck, eyes closed, breathing hard a white knuckled grip on the steering wheel. Too afraid to look but knowing he has to, if he opens his eyes maybe it will be a dream. Maybe he is asleep in his bed and all this is a nightmare but he knows it is not when he slowly opens one eye and he sees one shoe lying in the street and then he hears the screaming.

“Stephen! Stephen! Oh my god, Stephen!”

From the truck, he hears her first then he sees her, running from a house across and down the street. Apron flying and hair coming down from its pins as she runs across the street, slip sliding then falling to the pavement as she rounds the truck and she crawls on her knees over to the little boy, reaching one hand out to touch his bare foot.

Steve, after he was hit landed hard on the pavement and he skidded to a stop lying on his right side, head on his outstretched arm. His pants leg ripped from knee down to his ankle, shirt pulled out of his pants and scraped from one end to the other, a bruise already forming on his face from the contact with the lumber.

“Stephen!”

The driver finally finds his legs and he gets slowly out of the truck, his work clothes soaked thru with sweat, he runs his hand thru his hair as he moves closer to the woman, the summer day suddenly turning cold as she looks up at him, tears streaming down her face.

“I’m sorry I didn’t.”

“Didn’t what?”

She snaps back at him as she slowly puts her arms around him and she lifts him, pulling him close, holding his head to her chest rocking him back and forth.

“You shouldn’t, something might be..broken. We...you should call an ambulance. God, I am sorry. I didn’t see him.”

“Didn’t see him! Didn’t see him! How could you not see him! A little boy on a bicycle! My little boy! Stephen! Please be all right!”

“He rode out in front of me and I couldn’t...stop in time.”

Standing there looking down at both them, her tears falling into his hair, the little boy suddenly takes a deep breath and just like the day he was born he lets loose with a scream. A scream that was certainly heard on the other side of the small town of Hanford. The scream causing both adults to jump and the driver to fall to his knees and his mother holding him even tighter.

“Momma! Momma! My arm! It hurts!”

Steve cries out as he looks up at his mother and she looks down at him, moving the hair from his face.

“Stephen my baby! Thank god you’re alright!”

She kisses him on the forehead and she looks at his arm as Steve whimpers.

“Momma I’m late for dinner. Don’t be mad.”

Then Mary laughs. She laughs so hard she cries but this time its tears of joy. The driver on his knees sends up a silent prayer then when he mentions dinner he raises his head and he smiles and he puts his hand on the top of the boy’s head. Tears streaming down the driver’s dirt streaked face that he wipes away with the cuff of his shirt.

“Oh my baby boy don’t worry about dinner.” Mary says.

“Son, I am sorry. I just didn’t see you. Thank god that you will be all right. I couldn’t have lived with myself if.....”

Then Steve notices the stranger, he looks over his shoulder at him as he clings tighter to his mother. He climbs up into her lap his little arms encircling her neck.

“You hit me!”

“Yes I know and I am so sorry.”

Mary stands up cradling him in her arms and the driver picks up his shoe and he hands it to her.

“You almost killed me!” Steve yells at him.

“I know. I’m sorry. This is my business card. If he goes to a doctor I will pay for it.”

He hands the card to Mary and she looks at it then she puts it in her pocket.

“Thank you. We’re see how he is later.”

He watches as she carries him across the street the boy’s little face peeking out over her shoulder and he makes a note of which house they go into. He goes back to the truck and he moves it off the bike then he puts it in the back and once again, he heads toward home, looking at their house as he drives by.

The next day, Saturday, the driver of the pickup returned to that house and he parked out front. He sits for a minute in the cab of the truck, looking at the house, wondering if he should. Well, he has to because he has the little boy's bicycle in the back now repaired. How do you say you're sorry for causing a near tragedy he wonders? A journey of a thousand miles starts with one-step he reasons so he takes that first step.

He walks to the front door, he rings the bell, after a few minutes the door opens behind the screen door, and it's the little boy that answers. Steve opens the door wearing an Indian outfit, fringe vest and pants and a single feather that encircles his head. Its lunchtime and Steve holds the other half of a sandwich with a few bites taken out of it, seeing the man Steve's eyes widen and his mouth drops open.

"Mom! Mom! It's the man that almost killed me!"

Then he turns and runs off and Mary peeks around the corner drying her hands on a towel as she walks to the door. She looks thru the screen door at him as he stands with his hands in his pockets looking at the porch then he looks up at her.

"Is he okay?" He asks.

Mary looks back over her shoulder at Steve as he hangs around the doorway to the kitchen then Mary comes out onto the porch.

"He's fine. The doctor said there was nothing broken."

"The doctor? How much was the bill? I want to...."

Mary holds up a hand to stop him and she smiles at him.

"He's an old family friend. It was a free house call. Stephen bounced back pretty quickly, he had bruises and scrapes but otherwise he's fine. He was more worried about his bike. He was really upset about that."

"His name is Stephen? Okay, that's another reason I came by I got his bike and I fixed it, it's the least I could do you know."

He points over his shoulder to his truck as Steve comes out of the house and he scoots around his mother to come and stand by her and Steve looks up at him his head cocked to the side, one eye closed and then he noticed the bandage under his chin. Marv extends his hand to him.

"Hi Stephen I'm Marv"

Steve just looks up at him and he crosses his arms over his chest.

“I know who you are, you’re the man that almost killed me and only my mom calls me Stephen. You can call me big chief Perry! How!”

Steve raises his right hand and then he turns and jumps off the porch and he runs around the house making whooping noises. Mary and Marv stand there looking at one another until they can’t hear Steve anymore and Mary laughs and smiles and Marv is taken aback by it then he realizes that he is staring.

“I’ll get the bike out of the back of the truck.”

He goes out to the truck and Mary follows him and watches as he lifts the bike from the back and he sits it on the sidewalk and they look at it.

“See good as new. If your husband is at home I would like to explain...”

“I...I don’t have a husband.”

Mary takes the bike by the handlebars as she looks at him and he knows that he has the stupidest look on his face, one of surprise, the eyes wide and mouth open look, like a fish with a hook in its mouth.

“Oh.”

Is all Marv manages to say as Mary pushes the bike up to the porch.

“I’m divorced.”

“Oh I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. It happened a long time ago and for me it’s in the past but I worry about Stephen. All his friends have fathers and he wonders why he doesn’t. My father tries, you know, but it isn’t the same. I noticed on your card that your do construction. How much would it be to finish a tree house?”

Mary cocks her head to one side just like Steve her hair blowing lightly in the breeze causing her to reach up to move it out of her line of vision and Marv for the life of him knows she spoke to him but at the moment he couldn’t tell you what she just said. He was too caught up in her eyes, the way they sparkled and the way the sun played off her hair and the way she smiled. Okay Marv old man, c.o.n.c.e.n.t.r.a.t.e.! Pull yourself together and pay attention! By now Marv realizes that he had follow Mary over to the fence and into the back yard and she was pointing to an unfinished tree house, not even halfway done. Just a floor and boards nailed to the tree for steps.

“Well? I can pay some every month. What do you think? I mean if you aren’t too busy.”

Marv walks over to the tree and he looks up then he looks back at her.

“You have to take into consideration the time and the materials. Tell you what, I will go back to the office and work up some figures and I will call you.”

Mary agrees and she gives him her phone number and they walk out to his truck together and they say their goodbyes. She stands on the porch watching him leave. The next day Marv calls and gives her an estimate and tells her that she can pay him in monthly payments and he can start next weekend if she wants. Mary readily agrees and when the next weekend rolls around Marv is out in the backyard taking measurements and writing down figures and he knows Steve is watching him from a distance.

Marv tries to be there every weekend but sometimes weather and his schedule won't allow him to be but the weekends he is there he sees the Perry household from his tree top perch and he sees that Steve is a very mischievous kid. Trying his hands at everything, getting into everything and his fearless curiosity is what finally drew Steve to Marv. Oh granted it took awhile it seemed, Steve watching him from a distance and his window looked out over the backyard so sometimes Marv could see Steve looking out at him. Steve would eat his breakfast then he would get on his bike and he would circle his house, Marv seeing him to do this, then Steve would ride off to do whatever 9 years old would do with their Saturdays and Marv would carry on with his task.

Marv wasn't sure when it changed but Steve would now sit on the back porch and read or pretend to do something instead of going off on his bike and then finally one Saturday Steve came out to his truck, standing there on the curb, hands in his pockets. His pants legs rolled up, scuffed tennis shoes, suspenders holding up jeans that seem just a little too big a striped shirt and a baseball cap looking all of his 9 years. Steve cocked his head to one side, one eye closed against the sun as he looked up at him, Marv stopped what he was doing and they looked at one another.

“Can I help?”

“Sure Steve or is it Big Chief Perry today?”

Marv asks as he smiles down at him and he hands Steve a big box of nails.

“Can you carry that?”

“Yeah and it's just Steve today.”

Steve takes the nails and he and Marv go out back and so for weekends after that Steve helps. Marv showed him how to saw boards, he let Steve saw the steps and to nail them to the tree. They shared peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, Fritos and root beer and Mary would listen to Steve go on and on about Marv. Marv said this and

Marv said that or Marv did this or Marv did that. Marv would soon find out that young Steve noticed more than he thought. Sitting on the back steps eating their lunch they see Mary go out to the curb and put the trash in the can and when Mary turns around she smiles at them and Marv smiles back and Steve turns his head and he looks at Marv.

“You like my mom don’t you?”

Steve looks up at him as he eats a Frito and Marv looks at that little cherubic face, young but not so young.

“Yes Steve I do. Is that okay with you?”

Steve takes an Oreo cookie and he takes it apart then he eats the center and he shrugs his shoulders.

“I guess.”

“I like you too Steve. Do you like to fish?”

Steve’s eyes lit up as he looks up at Marv and he grabs his arm and Steve puts his plate on the step and he stands up, jumping up and down in place.

“Oh boy do I! Grandpapa used to take me, mom she tried but she is too much of a girl! The worms make her puke! Can we go! Can we!”

Marv laughs as he watches Steve jump up and down.

“Yes we can go if your mom says its okay.”

Steve then runs off into the house the screen door slamming shut behind him.

“Mom! Mom!”

Later that day finds Steve and Marv in the kitchen, Marv down on one knee looking at Steve’s finger as Mary comes in from the living room and she puts on her apron.

“What are you two doing?”

“Oh Steve got a splinter.”

Marv says as Steve goes over to Mary and he holds up his finger.

“Look.”

Steve says as Mary bends over to look her hands on her knees.

“I see. Does it hurt?”

“Na. It’s neat, can I go and show Tommy?”

Marv stands behind Steve, leaning on the counter, arms crossed over his chest smiling looking over his head at her.

“Okay but you know...”

“I know, I know dinner at 5.”

Steve takes his hat out of his back pocket and he puts it on his head, he runs out the door and he lets it slam behind him.

“Don’t slam....the door!”

Mary takes a deep breath and she laughs then she goes over to the drawer and takes out a checkbook and a pen and she fills out a check and signs it then she hands it to Marv. She gets him a glass of iced tea as he looks at it and she sits it on the counter next to him. Marv looks hard at the check then he looks over it at her then he makes his expression as serious as he can.

“Oh this just wont do. This just wont do at all. This isn’t anywhere near enough Mary.”

Mary eyebrows knit together as she leans on the counter with one hand the other on her hip her foot crossed at the ankle. A flash of anger darkening her eyes even more.

“What! What do you mean it isn’t enough! We had an agreement!”

Mary moves closer to him now both hands on her hips.

“This will cost you a lot more!”

Marv then holds the check up, he rips it in half, he wads it up and he throws it into the sink as Mary watches him.

“What are you doing?” She asks.

“The price is now dinner and a movie. Have dinner with me next Friday Mary. We can drive into Bakersfield. What do you say? “

“Oh well I, I haven’t been on a date in ages Marv.”

“Well then all more the reason to go. I really like you Mary and I want to take you out.”

“I haven’t left Stephen alone at night very often. He can stay at Tommy’s next Friday night. Yes! I will go out with you Marv. I would love to.”

“Great! Next time Steve can go with us.”

“Next time Marv? My goodness you’re sure of yourself, aren’t you?”

Mary smiles and Marv smiles back at her.

“I’m sure of one thing Mary.”

“What’s that?”

“How I feel.”



Steve looks at the picture of the tree house for a minute then he puts it in the photo album then he smooths the page over it.

“That was a great tree house. I had a lot of fun there.”

Robin holds up another picture for Steve to look at.

“Nice birdhouse Steve.”

Robin says as she laughs and Steve takes the picture from her.

“Oh yeah, you know, I was about ten here. I made that for my mom’s birthday. I was so proud of it and she kept it for years. Even when she moved she took it and this was a turning point for Marv and me.”

“Oh how so?”

Steve looks at her.

“I trusted him and he didn’t let me down.”



Steve was ten and eight months is a long time to a ten year old. Eight months was now how long that Marv had been in Steve's life and of course in his mom's life. It took awhile actually it took many a whiles for Steve to get used to the idea of Marv and both of them getting used to the fact that they both had a man in their lives. At first, Steve was not sure, he was not used to sharing his mom with anyone but he saw how happy she was and he now realized how happy he was.

Mary tried to do guy things with Steve but it was not the same and there was his grandfather, he tried to spend time with Steve but he had to go back to the Azores and that left Steve without a male role model. Marv seem to like spending time with Steve and he was always there, he kept every promise and Marv made the effort but as much as Steve wanted it, wanted Marv to be in his life and be there to do things with he was scared. Scared to let his feelings, emotions show, afraid that something would happen if he did.

It was February, Steve's mind was on his mom's birthday that was in April, and he wanted to make her something special. Something that he made with his own two hands so he decided on a birdhouse, a big birdhouse with six openings for the birds that would fit on a pole in the back yard. He found a picture in a magazine and Marv agreed to help him but Steve wanted it to be his own work so Marv was there for guidance and support.

This bright February afternoon finds Steve in Marv's garage, after school, working on the lathe with Marv standing behind Steve and Steve and Marv wearing safety goggles. When it finishes Marv turns it off, Steve takes it off, and he eyeballs it to make sure it's straight.

"What do you think?"

Steve looks behind at Marv and Marv takes the pole from him.

"Straight as a line. Good job Steve."

Marv pats him on the shoulder as Steve takes off the goggles and Marv gets them both a coke out of the fridge.

"Thanks. Marv can you keep a secret?"

Marv looks at him over that space of the garage and Marv sees something that he has never seen in Steve before, at less if he did; he didn't recognize it until now. Steve was serious. Marv had always seen Steve as happy-go-lucky, not bothered by much, problems seem to roll off his back like water off a duck but now Marv saw something different in his eyes and he could read it in his tone.

“Sure.”

“Even from my mom?”

Steve opened the gate and now all he had to do was to walk across the bridge and he watched Marv’s eyes, they didn’t move from his, didn’t falter or waver.

“Yes, even from your mom.”

Steve looks at him and Marv waits, the silence falling around them like so many leaves; they both hear the ticking of the clock in the kitchen, the neighbor across the street coming home, the slamming of a door in the distance, their breathing.

“My dad left because of me.”

There, he finally said it. Gave life to the words and feelings that he has been carrying for years. He raises his eyes and he looks at Marv.

“Steve who told you that?”

“Nobody. It’s the truth!”

Marv sets his coke down and he crosses the room to go over to him but Steve runs and he stands in the doorway to the kitchen.

“It was me! That last night they fought and mom was crying! She was always crying! That night I prayed to god to stop it! I prayed that he would leave! All I wanted was for it to stop! For mom to be happy but I didn’t mean for him not to ever come back! All I wanted was for the fighting to stop! I...I prayed to god to make it better, the next morning he was gone, and he never came back! Me! See! It was my fault! If I hadn’t.....!!”

The confession flowed from Steve like a dam that had overflowed its banks and he couldn’t stop it. He heard himself but from a distance and once he stopped talking he felt the overpowering need to run, to flee. Why he doesn’t know, he didn’t feel threaten but he was afraid, afraid that Marv would hate him now and leave just as his dad did. So he ran, trying to get away from what had transpired in that garage but Marv saw him leap from those steps and he headed him off at the pass and he grabbed him from behind. Steve’s feet leaving the ground and Marv held him tight as Steve kicked and he tried in vain to get away.

“Oh put me down!! Put me down! I’m bad!”

Steve says as he struggles and Steve plants his little foot in Marv’s stomach, which causes him to drop him, and when Steve hits the ground, he is gone like a shot.

Steve tears around the corner of the garage and he heads for the gate that goes out to the backyard. Marv finally gains his footing and he runs after him.

“Steve! Steve! Stop!”

Steve looks behind him and he hits the gate knocking it open, it swings so hard it bangs against the side of the garage and once more Steve chances a look behind him to see how far Marv is behind him. Steve trips and he falls to the ground and Marv gets to him and he falls to his knees beside him. He turns him over, Steve’s face is streaked with tears and Steve holds onto Marv’s shirt with his little fists. He is crying so hard Marv can barely understand him taking in great gulps of air, which causes him to hiccup.

“I...m bad! I’.....m bad! It’s my fault! He left because of me! He never came back! Not once! I didn’t mean..I just wanted it to stop! The yelling! The fighting! IT’S MY FAULT HE NEVER CAME BACK!”

Marv picks him up and he cradles him in his lap, Steve’s little arms around him as far as they will go, his face buried in his shirt. Marv’s hand on the back of his head. Marv trying to stop himself from crying as he rocks him back and forth.

“Oh god Steve, honey, it wasn’t your fault.”

“Yes yes yes it was! It was! My mom! My mom can’t know! She’ll be mad and she’ll hate me! Now you know how bad I am and you will leave too!”

“Steve you aren’t bad and your mother could never hate you. Your father made a choice to leave. We all have choices in life to make and he made his.”

“Oh why. Why do people make choices that hurt...other people?”

Steve looks up at Marv with those hazel eyes, bright with tears, and Marv takes the tail end of his shirt and he dries his eyes as he looks down at him.

“Because Steve we are human.”



“Because we’re human and you know he never told my mom about that. I told her, years later. Steve smiles as he looks at the picture and then he puts it in the book. Robin drinks her coffee as she shuffles through some of the pictures, finding one; she holds it up for Steve to look at.

“Who is this?”

She holds up a school picture of a young girl and Steve reaches for it then he turns it over onto the back and he laughs.

“Oh god, I can’t believe it, this is the first girl I had a crush on, Carrie. This was also around the time that Marv explained women to me.”

“Wasn’t a long discussion, was it? “ Robin says as she laughs and Steve makes a face at her.

“Ha-ha yeah right very funny! Not!”



Steve was 11 or 12, he was not even sure himself but he remembered the day when he first noticed girls. The first day of school. The summer beforehand was uneventful and he saw all his usual friends and such and the same girls except for one, Carrie Wagner. Carrie Wagner was new to Hanford and therefore she was new to Steve. This school year Steve was deemed too old to ride the bus or have Mary or Marv drop him off so, he rode his bike to school with his friends or he walked, the first day of school was a walking occasion.

The boys in one group and the girls in another and they never seem to mix or even talk to one another and then Steve noticed a girl, walking all by herself at the back of the crowd. He did not recognize her but she sure was pretty. Long reddish-blond hair and she wore the more stylish clothes of the time and to Steve they looked expensive. He hung back a little, dragging his feet, until the ones in front fell away and she finally caught up to him and before he knew it they were walking abreast. She glances over and smiles. Green eyes and a cute little nose, freckles and a killer smile. Steve feels his young heart skip a beat and he is instantly captivated, oh yes, she is different from the other girls that he knows or that he goes to school with.

“Hi, I’m Steve, Steve Perry.”

“Carrie Wagner. What grade are you in?”

Steve tells her and they find out that they are in the same grade and most of the same classes which does not disappoint Steve at all. The weeks roll by, Steve makes new friends, he gets reacquainted with old ones, and he notices that Carrie has established her friendships as well and as Steve walks home one afternoon, he is astounded to find out that she lives just up the street from him. Why he never noticed before he did not know but he could kick himself, all this time, he could have been walking home with her! As they walk along, they talk about homework assignments, teachers they don’t like, the horrible mystery meat Wednesdays in the cafeteria and

where she lived before. Somewhere between school and their houses Steve finds himself carrying her books for her and before either one of them know it, they are on their street, stopped in front of Steve's house. Carrie takes her books from Steve and then she does something that Steve in no way expected, she gives him a kiss on the cheek. Steve inhales sharply and his eyes widen as the sun suddenly seems brighter and the roses from his mother's garden smell sweeter. His heart does a serious flip-flop maneuver, as he is more aware of her presence than ever.

"Thank you Steve. See you tomorrow okay?"

"What? Oh yeah, sure, tomorrow, see you tomorrow."

Steve suddenly feels flustered and tongue tied but he is saved when she slowly backs up and turns her back and she walks up the street, looking over her shoulder at him and then she waves and smiles and Steve waves back. Now, they weren't the only two that were alone in their universe, Marv was in the garage and he saw the whole thing. He looks around the corner, wiping his hands on a towel as he comes out onto the driveway, looking at Steve who is still looking up the street at her, frozen in place, holding his books. Marv comes over and he stands next to him looking where he is.

"Steve, who is that?"

"Carrie Wagner."

"Is that the new girl in school?"

"Yeah."

Marv looks down at Steve.

"Steve, are you okay?"

"Huh? Oh yeah, yeah I am fine. She kissed me." Steve puts his hand on his cheek.

"I saw that. I think you and I need to have a talk." Marv puts his arm around Steve's shoulders, he leads him into the garage, and Steve sits his books on the workbench.

"Now there are six things that you need to know about women."

Steve stands there looking at Marv, his legs apart, his arms crossed over his chest, head tilted to one side, ready to partake of any knowledge that Marv may offer.

“1. Respect them. 2. Open doors for them, they like that. 3. Devote all your attention to them. 4. Listen to them because what they say is not always, what they mean. “

At this, Steve makes a face and Marv laughs.

“I know I know it doesn’t make sense. 5. Never raise a hand to them.”

Marv pauses, he puts his hands on his hips, and Steve looks at him.

“Well that is only five what is the sixth one?”

Marv bends over so that he can look Steve in the eyes and he points at him.

“This is the most important one of all, because somewhere, sometime in your life you will have a girlfriend or wife and they always ask this question. You want to be prepared; in fact, you might want to write this down. “

Steve knows this conversation is serious and he knows the importance of good note taking so he grabs his notebook and his pencil and he finds a blank page.

“Okay, I’m ready.” Steve says as he poses his pencil over the paper.

“6. If a woman ever asks you ‘does this make me look fat’ you always say no. “

Marv seems pleased with himself as he rocks back and forth on his feet, his arms crossed over his chest and Steve writes it down then he reads it over then he looks up at Marv with one eye closed, a look of puzzlement on his face.

“Huh?”

“I know it’s confusing but trust me.”

“There are just 6 things?”

Steve asks as he starts to write them down too.

“Well, actually, they are a lot more but no man in his lifetime will ever find them out. Women are a mystery. “

“Why?”

Steve asks with all of his young wisdom.

“If anybody could figure that out then they would make a fortune. They would be the most sought out person in the world. Here have a seat.”

Marv pulls over a barstool, Steve gets up on it, and Marv sits across from him.

“Now, has anybody ever told you about men and women? You know the birds and the bees?”

“Oh yeah sure, you know, in health class. They showed us those movies.”

Steve says matter-of-factly.

“They still show those?”

Marv asks with a surprised tone and Steve nods his head.

“Well, there is more to it than that.”

Then and there Marv explains it all, in terms that Steve would understand for a boy his age. The physical and emotional aspects of it all and Steve drinks it all in like a dry patch of grass in the summer that finally gets rain. Neither is embarrassed and Marv listens to any and all questions that he might have. Steve can finally find answers to questions that he knew that he could never talk to his mother about, no matter how close they are, guy talk. Once again, Marv establishes trust with him and Marv draws on his experiences with his father as they talk. When they finally wind down Marv sits up and he looks at him.

“Okay do you have any more questions?”

“Yeah just one.”

“Shoot”

Steve looks at him with all seriousness as he asks him,

“Do you have pictures I can look at?”

Marv looks at him and his mouth drops open and then he laughs as Steve starts to laugh.

“No, I don’t think your mother would like that.”

That night after Steve has had his dinner, he sits in the living room working on his homework when Marv comes over and Steve lets him in. Marv joins him on the sofa and Steve points out a problem to him in his math, and five minutes later, Mary comes into the living room, twirling her skirt on her new dress as the two of them look up and Marv whistles.

“Wow Mom you look great!”

“Stephen, you aren’t just saying that are you? Are you sure that this dress doesn’t make me look fat?”

Then Marv and Steve look at one another then they both turn and look at Mary and they say in chorus, and it couldn’t have been timed better if they planned it.

“No!”



Robin hits Steve on the arm as he laughs and he grabs his shoulder.

“Ow!” Steve says as he rubs his arm.

“You! That is where you got that from! Oh, no Robin you don’t look fat you look beautiful! “

“Well you do, you always look beautiful.”

“Oh you! “

Robin slams her hand down on the table causing some pictures to be blown off of the table and down onto the floor and Steve reaches over and grabs some others before they hit the floor and Robin picks them up.

“What are those?”

“Pictures of my first bands. This one is of the Sullies see. “

Steve holds the picture out to her and she looks at it.

“Who is that cute fellow on the drums, hmmm?”

“Beats the heck out of me.”



The summer when Steve is 13 and he is out in the garage practicing on his drums, just whaling away and making enough noise to raise the dead or at least the neighbors across the street. Steve is in a new band, The Sullies, a summer project and a

way to make some extra money, playing dances and parties during the summer. Steve plays the drums and with the help of his friends from school they round out the band. The first weekend of the summer and Steve and his band mates are practicing in the garage, there is a birthday party tonight, and they want to sound just right. Steve's mom got them this gig and it even pays. \$20 bucks apiece and of course all the cake and punch they can hold. This afternoon Marv is with them, he opens the door to the kitchen, and he sticks his head out.

"Lunch guys."

They file into the house and they sit at the kitchen table. Marv made sandwiches, chips and of course coke. Steve and his buddies start to eat, Marv plans to join them that is until the phone rings, and he leaves the room to answer it.

"Man Steve you dad makes great sandwiches. My dad can't cook at all."

"Yeah and Steve's dad made that tree house."

The other boy points and they turn to look.

"Your dad knows a lot of cool stuff. Is he driving us to the party?"

"Sure. He is even going to help us set up."

They all echo their enjoyment in that, then Marv comes back into the room, and he joins them at the table. After lunch, they practice another hour or so then, the other boys go home. They plan to meet at Steve's house and then they shall go from there. Steve helps Marv with the dishes, Marv washes and Steve's dries. Marv notices that Steve spends an awfully long time drying a plate.

"Something on your mind Steve. Nervous about the party?"

"Huh? What, no not nervous I was just thinking about what the guys said, that's all."

"It must have been something to get you thinking so hard. Want to talk about it?"

Then Steve looks up at him.

"They thought you were my dad."

Steve says it just as smooth and easy as a hot knife thru butter. He puts the dish in the cupboard.

"Oh well, how did that make you feel?"

“I didn’t tell them any different. I guess I liked it. It didn’t bother me, I mean....oh I don’t know what I mean. I feel like you are my dad, I mean you do some much for me, we do so much together. “

Marv smiles as Steve is at a loss for words.

“I think I understand what you are saying.”

“Really?”

“Yeah Steve really.”

After that, he helps Steve pick out the suit he will wear at the party and Steve gets ready. Marv gets the drum set in the car and they all pile in. Mary is already there and Marv sets up the drums. Well into the evening and well into the party Mary is taking pictures of Steve and the band and Marv is standing on the patio, drinking punch when the mother of the birthday girl comes over to him.

“Mr. Perry, you must be so proud of Stephen. He is quite talented. Is that from your side of the family?”

Marv laughs then he looks at Steve.

“No that is from his mother’s side and yes, his mother and I, are quite proud.”

The girl’s mother and Marv talk awhile longer and when the band finishes Steve comes over to Marv who hands him some punch.

“Something on your mind Marv. Nervous about the party?”

Steve asks as he drinks some punch and Marv smiles at him.

“Huh? What, no not nervous I was just thinking about what the girl’s mother said.”

“It must have been something to get you thinking so hard. Want to talk about it?”

Marv laughs then he smiles at Steve remembering the conversation from the kitchen earlier.

“She thought you were my son.”

“Oh well, how did that make you feel?”

Steve asks as Marv puts his arm around Steve's shoulders and Marv looks down at him.

"Wishing that it was true."



"That was sweet Steve."

Robin says as she puts the pictures of Steve and his first band in the album. Steve rummages through the box, he finally finds the picture that he is looking for, and he holds it up triumphantly.

"Eureka!"

Steve says and as Robin tries to look at it, she pulls on his wrist.

"Let me see it!"

Steve finally gives in and he shows her the picture.

"Mom and Dad's wedding picture."

"Oh Steve your mom was really beautiful. They made a great couple."

"Yeah I think so too. I remember just like it was yesterday when Marv told me they were getting married."



The springtime of Steve's life and he was 14. Marv and Steve were on their way to Shaver Lake and since it was early morning and not a lot of people were out Marv let Steve drive his truck.

"Steve I do believe that you got the hang of it."

"It's easy!"

They come around the corner and they see the parking to rent the boat and to get the bait.

“Okay park right over there.”

Marv points and Steve parks the truck when Marv tells him. They get out and retrieve their gear. Marv goes over and he rents the boat and then they buy the bait and they put it all in the boat. Fifteen minutes later Marv rows them out to their favorite spot, he takes out a thermos, he pours himself and Steve some coffee, and they drop their lines into the water. By now the sun is rising, the sky turning shades of red and pink the sunlight kissing the water.

“Steve.”

“Hmmm?”

“I want to talk to you man to man. You’re 14 now and you are no longer a kid.”

“Yeah sure Marv what is it?”

“You know that you have known me since you were 9 and Steve I love your mom and I want to marry her and I want to know what you think about this.”

Steve looks at Marv then he looks at the water and the fishing line.

“What I want to know is, what took you so long?”

Steve says as he looks at him again and Marv laughs.

“What?”

“I said what took you so long. Jeez, you know, I think I have known since I was nine that you liked her. It isn’t hard to tell you know.”

“It isn’t?” Marv sounds surprised and Steve laughs as he looks at the water and he shakes his head.

“No, it isn’t! Marv you are transparent as a piece of scotch tape!”

“I am? I didn’t realize that.”

Steve nods his head.

“Have you asked her yet?”

“No, that will be tomorrow night, our big date night. I want to make it official. I have felt like your dad for quite awhile now and if you would let me, I would like to adopt you. Make that official too.”

Steve is visibly stunned and his mouth drops open and Marv thinks he said something wrong.

“Steve, I’m sorry if that upsets you. I want us to be a family, I know that I can be a good father to you and I know that your real father...”

Steve puts a hand up to stop him.

“Whoa, whoa stop. I have not seen or heard anything from my real father and I do not know if I ever want to again. You have been more of a father to me than he has ever been. Marv you have to know that I love you. I want and I need a father. If you are asking for, what do they call it, my blessing? Then you have it a hundred times over.”

Marv is speechless as Steve reaches across the boat and he hugs him and Marv feels his eyes tear up as he puts his arms around Steve.

“So, do I have to wait to call you dad, dad?”

The next night, true to his word Marv asked Mary to marry him and she accepted and in June, they were married. It was a small affair with Mary’s dad to give her away. The people in attendance could not tell who was happier, Steve or Mary; they were both smiling from ear to ear. Marv had money saved to take Mary on a great honeymoon and that night they drove off to San Francisco and Marv was shocked when he found out that Mary had never really seen San Francisco. Although Steve was far from needing a babysitter Steve’s grandfather stayed with him for the two weeks that they were gone.

Then when they returned the real work begins, Marv has to pack up his house and sell it. They decided that Mary’s house is the larger of the two between them so Marv moves in with them and so this begins Steve’s summer of adjustment and nothing was going to be the same again. First, Mary or Steve was not used to having a third person in the house and after a month, the house did not seem so big after all. After doing, some creative figuring Marv decided that he could add on and make Steve a bigger room and his old room into a bathroom and later he could expand their bedroom as well. Another bathroom would be a big help and Steve learned about the finer aspects of construction but his mom called it a serious male bonding session.



“Serious male bonding my mom called it and things changed after Marv. “

“Good changes, Steve, more coffee?”

Robin asks as she gets up to go into the kitchen and Steve looks hard at their wedding picture.

“Oh yeah sure, there were a lot of changes but all were good. Marv was a natural father and I was a natural kid.”

Robin comes back in and she sets the coffee cups down.

“Meaning that you got into trouble, rebelling, that sort of thing?”

Steve carefully puts their picture in the album and he smooth down the page.

“Now that I look back on it I didn’t get into as much trouble as the other kids but I had my moments. I certainly had my moments, see, and this caused most of them when I was sixteen.”

Steve finds a picture of him, a few of his friends gathered around a car, and he shows it to Robin.

“A car Steve?”

“I will have you know that this wasn’t just a car, it was my baby, other than my girlfriend that summer. Yeah I was in some trouble.”

Steve grins wide from ear to ear and Robin looks at him.

“Steve?”

“What?”

“I want to know about this girlfriend that can invoke such a response.”

“Oh no you don’t!”

Steve says as he gets up from the table and she follows.

“Oh yes I do! Steve comes back here!”

Steve takes off around the corner and Robin chases after him.

“Stephen Ray Perry!”

She yells after him.

“Oh god this is serious she is using my whole name!”

Steve laughs as he continues to run from her.



Steve's sixteen summer and with the money that he saved from various jobs he has been doing since he was 13, cutting grass, paper route and the work, he has been doing with his band and with this latest job at the radio station he was able to buy his first car. Marv pitched in a little but Steve used most of his money and he was proud of it. He even went so far as to clean out the garage so that he could park it inside out of the weather and most weekends were spent washing and waxing it.

"Steve you are going to wax all the paint off of that car if you aren't careful."

Marv was always telling him and Steve would just roll his eyes and continue. This is the second year that Steve has been working at the local radio station, after school when his band schedule permitted and during the summers full time and everything at the radio station was his job and between his job and his car, Marv and Mary were pulling their hair out.

"Stephen what is this?" Mary asks.

"What's what?"

Steve asks as he eats his breakfast.

"This!"

Mary throws the paper on the table in front of him and Steve just raises his eyes and he looks at it but he doesn't say anything.

"It's a speeding ticket isn't it? This is the third one this month."

"If you knew what it was why did you ask me? That was in my room! You've been in my room!"

"I haven't been in your room, this was in your pants pocket and the pants were in the laundry basket. Three tickets Stephen!"

"I have paid them all!"

"That isn't the point! Your insurance will go up and we talked about this didn't we?"

Steve stands up and he grabs his jacket.

“No, you and Marv talked and I listened!”

Marv comes into the kitchen and he pours himself a cup of coffee.

“Steve, don’t talk to your mother with that tone. No car this weekend.”

Steve’s chin drops to the floor and he comes around the table.

“How am I suppose to get to work and I had plans. Shit! This isn’t fair!”

“Stephen! Watch your language. I’ll take you to work and then you can come back here and catch-up on your homework, I am sure that is behind too. “

Steve just stands there, turning five shades of red, gearing up to say something, Marv knows this, and he stops him.

“What ever you are thinking of saying, I wouldn’t. Unless you want to be grounded for the rest of your natural life. Now go to school before you are late.”

Steve backs down, he grabs his books, and he heads for the door.

“Steve you come straight home after school, got it?”

Steve has his hand on the doorknob his back to him.

“Yes sir.”

Then Steve leaves slamming the door behind him.

“Don’t slam the door!”

Marv yells after him as Mary starts to clear the breakfast dishes and she takes them to the sink and she shakes her head.

“I just don’t know what has gotten into that boy.” Mary says as Marv comes up behind her and he hugs her.

“Being 16 has gotten into him. It was bound to happen sooner or later. He is a good kid he just wants to spread his wings you know. See how much the traffic will allow. Don’t you remember being 16?”

“Yes of course I do but I was a 16 year old girl, there is a difference you know. I’m glad you’re here, when he was younger it was easy to solve his problems, an Oreo cookie and a glass of milk took care of it but now, I wouldn’t know want to do.”

“Sure you would, you are a very smart woman. He loves you and I love you. This too shall pass.”

Marv kisses her on the cheek.

Two weeks later and school is out for the summer and Steve wakes up to his first full day on the job at the radio station, he wanders into the kitchen, Marv is sitting at the kitchen table reading the paper and drinking coffee.

“Morning Steve how are things at the radio station?”

“Work is work.”

Steve says as he shrugs his shoulders and he gets down a bowl for cereal.

“Well that is certainly poetic.”

Marv says as Steve sits at the table and Marv gets another shrug for his efforts.

“Steve, what’s the problem, you haven’t spoken more than two words to us. Your mom is worried.”

Steve looks up at Marv then.

“I am not two years old.”

“Steve we know that.”

“Do you? I mean, I have no privacy. Mom goes into my room whenever she wants. You grounded me like I was a kid! I am 16 years old for cripes sakes! Do you have any idea how embarrassing it was that you had to drive me to work? Sorry guys I cant go out this weekend because my dad took away my car!”

“Steve, your mother only goes into your room when she needs to and the first step to being an adult is to be responsible. Getting three speeding tickets in a space of a month is not responsible. Has long as you live under this roof.....”

Steve stands up so abruptly that he knocks his cereal bowl to the floor.

“Yeah yeah I know all about that ‘living under your roof’ crap! I’m working full time now and I am going to save my money and then I will move out!”

Marv cannot believe this, cannot believe what he is hearing. How did Steve go from a sweet smiling little boy to this, a rude, sully, rebellious teenager.

“Steve you are too young. Nobody would rent to you.”

Marv tries not to raise his voice and talk in an even tone; he tries to maintain his temper.

“Not true! One of the guys at the radio station has a place, a garage apartment. He says I can have it anytime I want. Me and another guy from the band have talked about being roommates.”

Marv stands up and he leans on the kitchen counter arms crossed over his chest.

“Really?”

“Yeah really!”

Steve says as he puts his hands in his pockets, he rocks back and forth, and they look at one another.

“Your mother would certainly be surprised to hear this. Tell you what, you save your money and when the time is right we will all sit down and discuss it, like adults.”

Obviously that was not the response that Steve was expecting and his face-registered surprise.

“Oh.”

Is all that Steve can manage to say.

“Problem?”

Marv asks.

“No, no problem. That’s cool, I better get ready for work.”

Steve turns to walk off and he looks back at Marv over his shoulder as Marv calmly drinks some of his coffee. Marv looks at the floor as he rubs his eyes.

“Everyday is an adventure in the Perry household.”

Steve gets to the radio station at his usual time and he goes in thru the employee entrance. He goes into the locker room and he puts his jacket away then he goes down the hall and he waves at Pete, who is on the air, as he walks by. He goes into the general manager’s office to get his daily assignments from the secretary there. She is on the phone, Steve picks up the clipboard from her desk, and he means to leave when she raises a finger to stop him. Steve waits as his eyes drift over to Jack’s office and he sees a girl in the office with him.

“Goodbye and thank you. Hi Steve.”

“Hi Marsha. What’s going on today?”

“Jack wants to see you”

“Uh oh, Marsha that dent in the van was already there.”

Marsha laughs just as the door to Jack’s office opens and he motions for Steve to come in and as he does the girl, he saw thru the window stands up. Her and Steve are the same height so he notices immediately that her eyes are green with flecks of gold, her blonde hair pulled back from her face. Wearing a mini dress of brown and white with a black stripe around the bottom and those white go-go boots. At that moment, Steve was glad that he worked at this radio station because up until this point in his life, she was the most beautiful women that he had ever seen.

“Steve this is Julie Jones.”

Steve shakes her hand.

“Julie this is Steve Perry. He has worked here for two years and he will be showing you around.”

“Hi Julie.” He smiles at her.

“Hi Steve.” Julie smiles back at him.

“Steve can tell you about the promotion we are doing next weekend for the concert next month.”

He says as he pushes them towards the door.

“Now you two run along I have work to do.”

They both look behind them as Jack shuts his door and Steve laughs.

“He’s a little abrupt, he likes to get to the point.” Steve says.

“I see.”

“Well, let’s start with the break room. The most important stop on any tour, do you drink coffee?”

She nods her head and they go off and Steve spends the morning showing her the radio station, introducing her to the D.J.’s there. He explains what he does, which

is everything and about the promotion next week. They end up outside at the van, which Steve drives.

“Well that’s it, what do you think?”

She turns and looks back at the radio station as she brushes hair from her eyes.

“It is impressive. Quite a lot to learn.”

“Oh well it isn’t so much and I’ll help you. We better go in and start work on the promotion, from what I have heard, this is a big one.”

“Really?”

She says as they walk side-by-side back into the station.

“Really.” Steve says.

Later on in the week Steve and Julie and one of the disc jockeys drive on into Bakersfield to pick up the posters and flyers and such for the promotion, Steve and Julie sit in the back talking and getting acquainted, forgetting that Mark was even there. Getting into Bakersfield, they find the store and warehouse and Steve helps load the van while Julie talks to the people in the office.

“You know Steve I don’t mind being ignored. Really I don’t.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You and Julie. You two have been talking since we left Hanford and nary a word to me.”

Steve laughs as he looks at the ground.

“Sorry Mark, I had no idea that you would take it so personally.”

They laugh.

“She is pretty, isn’t she?” Mark asks.

“Yeah she sure is. “

Steve says as he shuts the van’s doors.

“Well, are you going to ask her out?”

“Yeah, after the promotion this weekend. Go out after and have dinner. Show her what there is to see of Hanford. “

“That would be a very short date.”

They both laugh as Julie comes out of the office.

“Okay what are you two clowns laughing about?” She asks.

“Oh nothing.” They say.

Julie looks at them as a woman who knows when guys are up to something as she gets into the passenger side of the van and Mark hands Steve the keys.

“You drive.”

“Thanks.”

Friday was finally here and the weekend of the big promotion, there is quite a turnout and they all are busy all day Saturday. Giving away tickets, t-shirts, posters and by the evening, Steve is ready for dinner and after he closes up his booth, he goes looking for Julie. Julie is putting boxes in the van and Steve helps her.

“Are you hungry? I know a place that has great burgers.” Steve asks her.

“I would love a hamburger and I haven’t seen much of Hanford.”

She smiles at him as she brushes a strand of hair from her face and Steve feels his heart skip a beat as he laughs.

“Well there isn’t much of Hanford to see but I would like to show you around. Let’s go.”

Steve takes her by the hand and they take his car. Steve takes her to the best place in Hanford to get a hamburger and fries and two milk shakes and then he drives her around town, showing her the town square, stores, Movie Theater and the park. Then he takes her to the best place to really see all of Hanford, the scenic overlook. They get out of the car and they sit on the hood, the lights of Hanford strung out like a diamond necklace across the neck of a black velvet dress, the sky, cloudless.

“Steve this is beautiful.”

She pushes herself off the car, she walks over to the edge, and Steve follows her then he puts his hand on her arm.

“Watch out, it’s a long way down.”

Julie looks down and then she looks over at Steve and he puts his other arm around her and he pulls her to him and they kiss. Steve feels the world spin away and he realizes that she is pulling him towards the car.

“I...”

Steve says.

“You what, you don’t want to, you can’t, what?”

“No, I want to, I really want to.”

Steve says as she continues to pull him towards the back of the car then she stops, her hands on her hips.

“Then what is the problem?”

Then she gets this look on her face, it can only be described as recognition, as if someone turned on a switch. Her eyes widen and her hands go to her mouth and Steve looks at the ground.

“Oh no, your not a....!”

Steve looks up at her.

“You are! You’re a virgin!”

“No! I have done things, a lot of things.”

She walks closer to him.

“Have you gone all the way?”

She looks at him and he looks at every place but her.

“Well no...”

“Then you are a virgin!”

“Is that such a bad thing? I mean, you know, what is wrong with that?”

“How old are you?”

She asks him and then he realizes that he never really asked about her age. They never discussed it. To him she looked young, a school kid like himself and age is only a number.

“16.”

Another shocked expression.

“What did I say now? How old are you?”

Steve asks her.

“Oh Steve I am 22.”

Steve laughs. He laughs so hard that tears come to his eyes.

“Okay, okay enough of the jokes. How old are you?”

“No I am not kidding I am 22. I swear.”

She raises her hand like she is swearing on the bible, the other hand over her heart.

“Shit! You are serious! Your 22 and that would make you an older woman and me...?”

Steve points to himself.

“Jailbait!”

Steve winces at the sound of the word as he runs his fingers through his hair.

“Oh don’t say that Julie.”

“It’s true. I don’t know about this.”

“I won’t tell if you don’t.”

Steve says as he smiles at her and he takes her hand and he leads her to the car and he opens the door to the back seat, Julie gets in and she pulls Steve in behind her.

Right there and then Steve and Julie begin a summer romance, granted it is a secret summer romance. Steve knows that Julie is considered an adult, of age, legal and all of that and he is merely a kid, child, teenager, oh how he hates that word. She is a college student and he is still in high school. Steve finds out that she is a freshman at a college in San Francisco, majoring in communications, broadcasting whatever

you want to call it, interning at the radio station for the summer. Picking up invaluable experience and college credits, Steve is collecting a paycheck, learning the ins and outs of a radio station, he is thinking about being a disc jockey himself. They work closely at the radio station, some days they are so busy they have do not time to think about anything but work and the task at hand, and they manage to keep their romance a secret.

They do not see each other everyday after work, Julie has her college friends that come to visit her and Steve has his band and when they do get together they do the usual things, movies, food, and of course, there is the physical aspect of it. They usually meet at the boarding house that Julie is staying at or the back seat of Steve's car while they are parked at the scenic overlook, not the most romantic of places Steve realizes.

Steve thinks that he is playing his part well, keeping his romance a secret, telling no one about it. No one at work suspects them, that he knows of anyway and he knows that Julie has told no one and Steve does not think he has changed, at least not in his eyes, but Steve doesn't see himself through his parent's eyes. One Saturday morning Steve was rushing out of the house to go to work almost running his mother over in the kitchen in his haste to get out of the house.

"Steve! Where are you going?"

"Work mom."

"Stephen it is still early."

"I know, we have a booth at the fair and I am going to help set up. See you later mom."

Steve kisses her as he grabs a piece of toast off the table then he flies out the door it slamming shut behind him.

"That sounded like Superman Steve leaving and going to his second home."

Marv says as he comes into the kitchen and pours himself some coffee and Mary finishes cooking breakfast.

"Yes I am afraid so, that boy is running himself ragged. He is either at work or with his band; I don't know when he sleeps."

"Well Mary, if you haven't noticed lately Steve is not a boy anymore. He has really grown up this summer, what a difference a year makes."

"A full time job will do that to you. Okay, your breakfast is ready."

Mary sits Marv's plate down in front of him and then he grabs Mary and he pulls her into his lap and she laughs.

"Marv!"

She says as she hits him with the dishtowel and they laugh.

"How can you think of food when we have a whole house to ourselves?"

Marv asks her.

"You are a very smart man."

"Yes I know, I married you and that is the smartest thing that I have ever done."

Oh yes Marv was very smart and Steve was just about to find out how smart he really was, Steve forgotten that Marv at one time was 16 himself.

One weekend during the summer Steve and Marv take time out and they go fishing, leaving on Friday and coming back home on Monday. They go to their favorite place on Shaver Lake, Marv rents a cabin for them, and they rough it. No women, no work, no clean clothes usually and sometimes not even a shower. They have been doing this since Steve was about ten and each time it is a fact-finding mission, each finding out a little more about the other.

Marv found out on one of these trips that Steve could sing, he sung along with the radio in the truck and in the cabin and Marv was impressed. He encouraged Steve to sing as much as he wanted. Marv also found out that as Steve grew older he was not crazy about heights and they find that out the hard way. An incident one summer with a leaky roof and some loose shingles that almost cost Steve his life was a rough way to figure out that Steve needed to keep his feet on the ground.

This day, early in the morning, they are out on the boat, a cabin cruiser that Marv rents and it is equipped with all sort of foodstuff and drink. Marv brings Steve a cup of coffee who is intently fishing, trying to get a jump on Marv who always seem to out fish him. Steve gratefully takes it as Marv leans up against the railing.

"Who is she?"

Marv asks with that parental tone and Steve looks at him.

"Whose who?"

"This girl, who has your nose so wide open that you can't see, passed it."

Steve looks at him and he laughs.

“Nose so wide open, now that is a funny saying.”

“Funny but true, who is she?”

“How do you know there is anybody Marv?”

“Steve I was 16 and you spend more time at work then you do at home. Does she work at the radio station?”

Steve smiles then and he looks out at the water then he looks back at him.

“Yeah she does and her name is Julie.”

“Julie? Pretty name for a pretty girl, right?”

“Yes she is pretty.”

“Then you should have her over for dinner some night, your mom and I would like to meet her.”

Steve smiles and he shakes his head back and forth.

“No I don’t think so.”

“Why, what’s wrong with her, does she have three heads or something?”

Steve laughs and he shakes his head.

“No. She doesn’t have three heads.”

“Then what? Your old folks don’t embarrass you, do they?”

“Oh no, nothing like that. It’s just that.”

Steve stops then, he looks at Marv, and Marv looks back at him.

“That what? Steve, come on.”

“She’s older.”

“Older okay? So she is eighteen, is that such a big deal.”

Steve makes a face as he looks down at the boat.

“Steve?”

“She’s 22.”

Steve mumbled this last part and Marv did not hear him.

“She’s what?”

“I said that she is 22! She is in college and she is interning at the radio station.”

Steve blurts out at Marv and Marv’s eyes widen.

“22!”

Steve nods his head as Marv whistles.

“Wow Steve I can see why you wouldn’t want to say anything. Her age and yours that could cause somebody some trouble, mainly her.”

“I know that is why I didn’t say anything. I thought I was doing a good job of hiding it but if you figured it out. Does mom know?”

“No I don’t think so. I only noticed because you have changed, grown up it seems. You seem different. Having a woman in your life will do that to you.”

Marv drinks some of his coffee.

“You aren’t you know, mad, at me about this are you?”

“Why would I be mad? You mean about the age thing, Steve you are not a little boy anymore and I seriously doubt that I could stop you and you wouldn’t let me stop you anyway, right?”

Steve smiles at him and he nods his head.

“Yeah you couldn’t stop me.”

“So tell me more about Julie.”

So Steve proceeds to tell him everything about Julie, the fishing forgotten for a while, he tells Marv everything that he can think of. He really holds nothing back except the fact that he knows that anything that has a beginning also has an end and come September it ended. It was a mutual thing, he was going back to high school and she to college, and she even gave him her phone number and told him that he could visit anytime that he wanted to. Steve had seen her friends, how much older and

sophisticated they looked and acted and how he knew that he would never fit in with that college crowd. They had spent the entire summer together, it was their secret summer romance, and as far as Steve knew only Marv had caught on. It saddens Steve to see her go but he knew that it was inevitable but he felt older and wiser for the experience and suddenly the world was bigger than Hanford. He felt that he outgrew the boundaries of Hanford in every way possible.



“You know I always wondered whatever happened to her. Did she get married, does she have kids, and is she working in radio somewhere.”

Steve says to Robin as he puts the picture in the album and she shuffles thru the others in the box, she finds one and she smiles at it as she looks at Steve.

“You look very happy here.”

She holds the picture out to him and he looks at it.

“High School Graduation that might have something to do with it.”



The graduating class of 1967 and Steve is one in that number, he walks up to the stage and he receives his diploma as his proud parents sit in the audience and snap many pictures. As a graduation gift Steve's parents send him on a trip to Los Angeles with his friends and while there Steve's friend has a friend who knows someone, well you know, how it goes that has a band and they are looking for a singer. Steve is told this, they go to hear the band, and as a lark and from being egged on by his friends he decides to audition. Well it is not really an audition, at least not in Steve's mind, he gets up onstage and just fools around. He leaves them his phone number back in Hanford and he forgets about it, he is concentrating being out of school and having fun in Los Angeles with his friends. Once he is back in Hanford, employment is utmost on his mind, and for once music was the last thing on his mind, that is until the phone rang.

Steve's mom was out in her rose garden when Steve comes barreling out of the door and the door slams shut behind him sounding like a gunshot, Mary jumps and she puts her hand over her heart and Marv comes out of the garage.

“Stephen! What are you doing?”

Steve is so excited that he is jumping up and down, dancing, and yelling.

“I got a job! I got a job! I got a job!”

“Steve that is great, is it that job at radio station again?”

Marv asks.

“Oh no, it is much better than that! Much, much better!”

Marv and Mary looked at one another and Marv shrugs his shoulders.

“Well?”

“Remember when I went to L.A. and I told you that I auditioned with that band that needed a singer? They hired me! They want me to join the band!”

Marv and Mary are shocked, now why they do not know, Steve is 18 and he can do what he wants now. He is free from school and they know about his love of music and how long he has dreamed of this.

“Mom and Dad I, I can’t believe it. It’s like everything I have ever wanted is finally coming true.”

“Steve, your mom and I are really happy for you son. What about a job and a place to stay?”

“Oh that is the best part! The Manager has a guesthouse and I can stay there and, and also he is the office manager at a warehouse and he can get me a job there! I can stay with him until I save enough money to get an apartment. Maybe even share an apartment with the other guys in the band!”

“Sounds like you have it all worked out.”

Mary says a little sadly and Steve notices the change and he goes to her and he hugs her and Mary wraps his arms tightly around him.

“Oh mom, it’s okay. This is what I always wanted and it is just L.A. it is not as if it is across the ocean or something. “

Mary puts her hands up to his face and she looks at him and Marv stands by smiling.

“Stephen I know but I have gotten used to looking at this face for 18 years it will take me some getting used to. Working and in a band, when will you rest?”

Steve laughs.

“This is all that I have ever wanted, for as long as I can remember, I have an opportunity to learn so much and I am young I don’t need a lot of rest.”

“Steve when do they expect you in L.A.?”

Marv asks.

“The end of the month. He gave me time to get stuff in order, to pack, forward my mail. I have his address. Those songs I have been working on I can finish them and take them with me. I want you and mom to be proud of me.”

“Steve, son, we are proud of you.”

Marv puts his hand on Steve’s shoulder then he draws him into a hug and there all three of them stood, out in the backyard, in the noonday sun with god, the neighbors and the dog across the street watching. Before the end of the month, Steve got all his business done, said goodbye to his friends and then he said goodbye to Hanford. The night before he left he went up to the scenic outlook and he stood there, with his hands in his pocket and the breeze ruffling his hair, as he watches dusk fall. As the sun slowly dies in the distance, sinking into some distance ocean, he watches as the lights of the city come on.

“Well Hanford, old friend, this isn’t really goodbye you know. I will be back. Hanford will always be my home, no matter where I go. I don’t know where this music thing will take me or how far but I know there is at least one thing I can count on always being here, you.”

Steve picks up a rock and he tosses it over the edge as more of the darkness washes over the city like a wave on the ocean and by tomorrow he was on his way to L.A. Steve stayed with Pieces for at least two years, learning all he could about music, growing as a vocalist and gaining more confidence as they played to larger crowds, it was rough, working and playing in a band. Most of the time he felt like he was sleep walking thru his 19th and 20th year and like all good things, they come to an end.

Fighting among the band’s members can make for some really stressful times on stage, at first they were able to leave their differences with each other back stage, but soon it all begin to bleed over like a piece of paper in the rain where the ink starts to run. Too many harsh words, too many altercations in parking lots and Steve felt it was time to roll up the tent and go home. He worked at the warehouse, full time, for a year until Alien Project came along and he joined up with them. This band was serious and Steve was able to quit the warehouse gig, this was a serious working band that actually traveled through out the State of California and into Nevada. The more they traveled the more fans they collected.

Steve was stretching himself, everyday and in every way musically. It was his idea for them to record their rehearsals and their performances so they could see where they needed improvement, if any. They did a lot of fooling around in rehearsals and a lot of good material is lost, recording helps in case somebody's memory is faulty. Steve rocks and rolls his way thru the state of California, living on a continual natural high.

This is what he was born to do and he can feel it every time he gets on stage. They garner so much attention that they are approached to do a demo record and for two days, they party then they get down to business. They rehearse, they plan, they rehearse some more then they are ready to go into the studio. This is Steve's first experience in the studio and he watches everything and he learns all that he can and this is his first time to hear himself recorded professionally and he is amazed by the whole process.

With the demo finished, the manager takes it and he takes it around to anybody and everybody he can think of, of course, the guys get their own copy and Steve sends his home to his folks. Six months later to the day, they get word that a record company is interested and they want the guys to come in on Tuesday to sign the paperwork, Tuesday because this weekend is the Fourth of July and Steve is happy, no he is flying and he thinks that he will never come down, this weekend he parties and on Monday he wakes to another world.

One of the band members was killed over the holiday in a car accident and while the other guys want to carry on Steve cannot. It won't be the same for him and he can already feel the void that his friend's death has caused so soon after Steve packs up his belongings, gives up his apartment and he goes back home to Hanford. Steve does not realize how tired he is until he gets to his folks house, in the middle of the night, and he looks at the porch light. Funny how things come full circle, he left Hanford because of music and now he is returning also because of music.

Steve is exhausted mentally and physically and he feels defeated. He feels like a man in the desert that sees a beautiful woman holding a big glass of ice water out to him but the closer he gets the more she retreats until she disappears all together and he is left alone, wondering what in the hell just happened. Steve feels that way about music, he gets close to his goal and it is snatched away, cruelly and without reason.

His parents welcome him of course until he can get back on his feet and until he sorts things out and wonder what his next move will be. He mopes around the house, nothing bringing him pleasure it seems, his mother tries, she fixes him his favorite foods and she leaves him to himself until one day his mom is out in her rose garden and Steve comes out and he sits on the porch and Steve feels a sense of déjà vu. He watches her, wearing that silly sun hat and those gloves, cutting roses from the bushes and putting them in a basket she looks up at him and she smiles.

"Mom I've made a decision."

“Yes Stephen what is it?”

Steve hesitates as he picks a blade of grass and he looks at it.

“I decided to stop doing this music thing, you know, I haven’t gotten anywhere. I take two steps forward and I get pushed back three. I think I should try something else. “

Mary sits down next to him and she takes off her gloves.

“Stephen I know things have been difficult for you but I think you should reconsider. Music has been your whole life and I don’t think that you would be happy doing anything else.”

“I was going to try for my broadcast license, you know, be a disc jockey or even work in a recording studio. “

“Stephen you know I love you no matter what you do but I know you, music is your sun and without it you will die, just like one of those roses. “

Mary kisses him on the cheek then she gets up and she goes back to her rose bushes and Steve is left sitting there, thinking. A few more days pass and it is early morning and Steve is sleeping, something that he has been doing a lot of lately. He hears the alarm clock in his folks room go off and then somebody silence it and the water in the shower comes on, the pipes forever rattling.

He turns over and he covers his head with the pillow going back to sleep. He isn’t sure when it happened but the next thing he knows that pillow is snatched from his head and somebody, it has to be Marv, because they are strong has Steve by his hair that is at the top of his head and they pull him up and out of bed until he slips down to the floor taking the blanket with him. Steve has his hands on top of the hands that are pulling him and he is kicking and screaming, his eyes closed but watering from the pain.

“Ow! Ow! Stop it! Stop it! It hurts! Ow! Marv! Hey what in the hell are you doing! “

Marv finally lets him go as Steve’s butt reaches the floor and he scrambles for a blanket, sheet or pillow to cover him.

“Hey! I am not even dressed!”

Marv leans back against the dresser, his arms crossed over his chest, watching him.

“Good morning to you too and it isn’t like I haven’t seen you naked before. “

Marv goes over to his closet and he pulls out a pair of jeans and he grabs his tennis shoes and he tosses them to Steve as he goes over to the dresser and he grabs underwear, socks and a t-shirt and he tosses them to Steve too, as Steve does his best to grab for them.

“Get dressed you are coming with me today.”

Marv says as he stands there and Steve looks up at him with that dumbfounded look on his face.

“Huh?”

Is all that Steve can manage to say and Marv, feeling his patience slowly start to wash away, reaches down and he grabs Steve by his arm and he pulls him to his feet as Steve clutches his clothes to himself and Marv looks him in the eye.

“It stops today, this pity party that you have been throwing for yourself for the past three weeks. Steve your mother and I both know that you have had some setbacks, bad setbacks, but you have to stop it.”

Steve looks at the floor and Marv shakes him a little and Steve looks back up.

“Now you can stay in this room and die or you can go on! Your mother and I won’t let you die son, we know that there is something big waiting for you right around the corner and we can see it even if you cant, but you cant see it from this room. Now get dressed, you need to do something, you will come with me and work.”

Then as Marv looks at Steve, he sees Steve’s eyes start to water then he closes them and Steve drops the clothes in his arms and he slips his arms around Marv and he starts to cry. All the pent up emotions and frustrations from the past month or so finally over flowing their banks and Steve cries for the band member that was lost in that horrendous traffic accident and he cries for himself. Marv holds him, letting him cry it out, the first real emotion that he has shown since he has been home.

“Steve we love you and we do anything that we could to make your dreams come true but you have to help yourself. Don’t give up on your music son.”

Steve nods his head and Marv gives him the end of the sheet to wipe his eyes on.

“Don’t let your mother see you crying she is going to think that I have been beating you in here or something.”

Marv smiles and Steve laughs as he dries his eyes.

“Get dressed, we go to Bakersfield for breakfast, then onto the turkey ranch.”

“Oh no not the turkey ranch!”



Steve puts the rest of the pictures back in the box and he secures the lid with a rubber band as Robin comes into the kitchen and she hands Steve his coat and she picks up the photo album, Steve puts on his coat.

“Marv is going to love his Father’s Day present. I bet that he has not seen these pictures in years. How did you ever think of it?”

Steve with the box under one arm he takes Robin by the hand and he leads her to the door.

“I don’t really know but it makes for a great Perry-tale don’t you think?”

Steve winks at her then he and Robin wave and they say in unison;

HAPPY FATHER’S DAY EVERYONE!”

-30-

©LAB and SRP & JRNY FANFICTION 2007 to 2018. All rights reserved. Steve Perry and Neal Schon’s likenesses appear only as characters. Any resemblance to any one living or dead is purely a coincidence. This fictional story is for entertainment purposes only and for the complete enjoyment of the author and the readers. I have no permission from Steve Perry or/and the members of Journey to use their likenesses or names and this story is purely fiction and written solely for the love of things and people back in the day. No real rock stars were injured in the writing of these stories and I put them back when I am finish with them.