

1. Summer 1957

Ethan wiped the sweat from his brow. Dad had said to cut the grass but it had been left too long and now it was that - too long. Pushing the lawnmower was hard work on this hot August day and the grass box was filling up too quickly and needed emptying every other row.

"You should get a petrol mower."

Ethan turned and there was Neil, standing smiling at him, tanned legs contrasting with his white socks, white shorts and top. He had come to the back garden through the open side gate. Ethan felt that buzz in his ten year old body. "My Dad says the lawn isn't big enough to make it worthwhile," countered Ethan, brushing his fair curls off his forehead.

"That's because he makes **you** do it," said Neil.

"Are you going to the tennis courts?" asked Ethan. Neil Eldon was a good tennis player and was good at every sport, according to Neil, that is. It was one of the things Ethan admired about Neil.

"I've been," said Neil. "Took me racket home and then came over on me bike for you."

"I've got to finish this first," said Ethan.

"Leave it," said Neil. "What's he going to do, lock you up?"

"Of course not," said Ethan, annoyed. "It's only your family he locks up."

"That was years ago," said Neil, looking embarrassed. "Me cousin's out now anyway, and we don't have anything to do with that side of the family."

"Glad to hear it," said Ethan. "But I'm still going to finish this cut. You can wait if you want."

"PC Robson. I'd hate it if **my** dad was a copper," said Neil, sitting on the garden bench. "Best way to lose friends. Hurry up, then."

"Sergeant now, remember. And well, you're here all the way from West Farm," retorted Ethan, referring to the very upmarket estate where Neil lived in a big detached house in its own grounds.

"Only takes me about twenty minutes," said Neil.

Ethan continued pushing the mower up and down, liking that Neil would cycle from West Farm to see him, but saying nothing about it. "Finished now, I'll just put the mower away," he said at last.

The two boys, classmates, rode their bikes slowly through Park Dene estate where Ethan lived.

"Do you like Mr Eastwood?" asked Ethan. Mr Eastwood ran the school football team and Neil played centre half. Mr Eastwood was due to be their class teacher as they went into top juniors after the six week holiday.

"Yeah, he's good," replied Neil. "People think he's dead strict but he's OK really."

"Well, he would be with you because you're very good at football."

"You're not bad yourself," said Neil.

"Not good enough for the team though."

"I'll put in a good word for you," smiled Neil.

"That won't make me better at football."

"I meant so he's not strict with you in class."

"Oh yes," laughed Ethan. "He does what you tell him. I don't think."

"You do though," said Neil, glancing at Ethan who wobbled slightly. Neil saw Ethan flush.

"Is that where we're going?" asked Ethan eventually. As always, that low buzz of excitement came when thinking about it.

"We'll find somewhere," said Neil. Somewhere turned out to be the dene, a small wooded valley through which a stream ran down, later joining the River Bilt. Riding through the dene Neil stopped by a small path that led up the side of the dene through closely packed trees. "Come on," he said.

The boys pushed their bikes up the bank, away from the main path. Now hidden by the trees they stopped. Ethan waited for the command.

"Right then," said Neil. "drop 'em."

This had started at the beginning of the summer holidays. Ethan had always felt drawn to Neil and had made himself Neil's friend. He had told Ethan to cycle to his house to help him with a huge construction kit of a sailing ship. As they carefully glued and assembled the intricate parts, somehow the conversation came round to what they called their willies. Both were now getting a 'hard on' sometimes. Neil had got up and shut his bedroom door, then turning to Ethan had simply said, "Drop 'em then." Ethan had done so, under Neil's spell. Neil had looked and smiling told Ethan he could now pull his pants up. Ethan had enjoyed the sensation of being ordered in such an intimate way by this boy he looked up to. This had been repeated a few more times. Now here they were, in the dene hidden by trees and the command came again.

"Right then," said Neil. "drop 'em."

"What, here?" said Ethan, nervously. "What if someone comes?"

"We'll hear them and you can pull 'em up."

Ethan stood for a moment, but Neil was looking at him, expectantly. Excited by the additional risk of being in the open, he unhooked the snake buckle on his elastic belt allowing his shorts to fall. Neil nodded so Ethan lowered his underpants which also fell to his ankles. His T-shirt was not long and he was now exposed. He started to go hard which Neil noticed.

Ethan started to bend to pick them up again.

"Not yet," said Neil, quietly. He stepped closer to Ethan and took hold of Ethan's now stiff cock. Ethan shuddered under his touch. Neil felt Ethan's scrotum and pushing his hand between Ethan's legs, feeling his bum and a finger finding his hole. Ethan was panting now and his heart was racing.

"You liked that, didn't you?" said Neil as he withdrew his hand.

Ethan had liked it, a lot, but didn't know what to say. He knew that at some level he shouldn't have liked it, but he did. He just nodded. Neil smiled, a sort of satisfied smile, more to himself than Ethan.

"You can get dressed now," he said.

Ethan pulled up his clothes and hooked his belt. Somehow Neil had this effect on him which Ethan didn't really understand but he knew he liked it but at the same time was a bit scared by it. Maybe he was a bit scared by Neil who was a bit bigger and more heavily built than the slimmer, lighter framed Ethan. He admired Neil's sporting prowess, his good looks, brown hair, olive toned skin and very blue eyes. His own were a paler blue, along with his fair skin and fair hair. With all this going through his mind, Ethan said nothing but waited for Neil's next move.

"Fancy going down town tomorrow?" asked Neil.

"Yes," answered Ethan. "Just us?"

"Probably Eddie and Alan. Not sure about Steve."

These were all boys in their class at Park Dene junior school, in the top stream. Ethan liked them all.

"That's good," answered Ethan, happily. "What time?"

"Meeting at the shops at half nine, I think. That's what time I'll be going anyway. I'll leave my bike at yours. "

The two cycled slowly home, chatting as they went. Nothing was said about Neil's control over Ethan. It never was, away from the actual event.

...

Ethan was by the small estate shopping parade before nine-thirty along with Neil.

"Hi, Ethan," came Steve's voice. "Got you out of bed early, have we?"

Before Ethan could think of a suitable riposte, Alan and Eddie arrived.

Laughing, joking and teasing each other, they waited at the bus stop. This continued as they rode the top deck of the trolley bus into the city centre. Neil was being quizzed by them about Mr Eastwood.

"If he picks on me, I'll pick on him back," announced Steve.

That produced laughter as the extreme unlikelihood of that was obvious.

"Oh, that'll terrify him, I don't think," said Eddie.

"You'll be OK," said Steve. "It'll be Ethan he'll go for, I reckon."

"Why me?" said Ethan, indignantly.

"Coz you're the prettiest," added Alan.

"No, come to think of it, that would mean Eastwood won't go for Ethan," said Steve.

"Doesn't he go for pretty boys, then?" asked Eddie.

"I don't know," said Steve. "Ask Neil, he should know. Eastwood likes Neil."

"I wouldn't say Neil is as pretty as Ethan," said Alan.

"He doesn't specially like me," said Neil. "No more than anybody else. Just coz I'm on the team, that's all."

"If you say so," said Steve in a teasing tone.

Neil's irritation now was clear. As if to divert the conversation, he said, "He'd like Ethan though."

Ethan felt a moment of panic. Was Neil about to tell the others about their little secret? Scared of the betrayal he felt himself flush.

"Now look," said Eddie. "You've made Ethan blush."

Ethan was used to this teasing about his good looks and floppy curly hair. He knew there was no malice in it but inside it made him feel vulnerable. He enjoyed what Neil did with him although he knew he should not. But he kept these inner anxieties hidden, and instead, with an answer ready, went on the attack. But he had to delay because then the conductor came to collect their fares.

"Are you boys going to behave yourselves?" he demanded as he issued the tickets.

"We always do," said Steve with a cheeky grin.

The conductor issued the tickets from his machine. "Very glad to hear it," he said as he left the group.

Ethan got in quickly with his response before the conversation moved on.

"I can't help being the best looking boy in the class," he announced. "Julie thinks so, anyway."

"Julie Grey?" said Eddie. "Did she tell you that?"

"Yes, she did," announced Ethan. "And I was top for Arithmetic and English."

"Clever boy," said Eddie, who was also good at schoolwork.

"So Ethan fancies Julie," smiled Steve.

"She's OK," said Ethan, glad that his masculinity was re-established.

"Oooh," said the others in friendly mockery.

The bus arrived in the city centre. The banter stopped as they got off and had to decide their next move.

"I want to buy the Elvis record," said Eddie.

"Snap," said Alan.

They trooped along to the record shop where Eddie asked for *All Shook up* by Elvis Presley.

"Booth four," said the young female assistant, looking doubtfully at the five ten year old boys.

The booth wasn't big enough for five of them, but Eddie and Alan squeezed in and then Ethan felt a push from behind and he was squashed in as well. It had been Neil who had pushed him. The door only just closed and they listened to the record while the other two pulled faces through the glass window in the door.

"My dad says he's disgusting and vulgar," said Alan.

"My mum likes him I think," added Eddie. "When my dad was going to turn it off, mum said leave it on."

"It's the way he wiggles his hips and that," said Alan. "Dad says it's rude."

The booth door opened. "What are you talking about?" asked Steve.

"Elvis Presley," said Eddie, shutting the door again.

When the record finished the boys went back to counter.

"Is that the one you want?" the assistant asked.

"Yes please," said Eddie.

"One for me too, as well, please," said Alan.

The assistant retrieved another copy. "Do you want to hear this one," she asked Alan.

"No thanks," said Alan. "It'll be OK."

"That's six and eight each, please."

Eddie produced a ten shilling note while Alan scrambled with coins to make up the six shillings and eightpence.

They wandered out of the shop into Victoria Square.

"Who wants to go to The Dungeon?" asked Eddie. This was a new coffee bar just off the far side of the square, taking its name from the fact it was in an underground basement.

There was a general agreement, except for Alan.

"I've only got enough left for the bus fare home," he said.

There was a moment until Eddie said, "I'll buy yours and you can pay me back next week."

"Thanks," said Alan and the group crossed the square, quite busy now, and descended into The Dungeon.

It was fairly busy, mostly with teenagers who seemed to be dominating the jukebox. They ordered their drinks, a mix of coffees and cokes, and sat at a table away from the older group.

Neil sat next to Ethan, and as Alan squeezed on the end of the bench on their side, Ethan was pressed between Neil and the wall. They were chatting about Fangio's win at the German Grand Prix making him the world champion driving his Maserati. The main argument, chiefly between Alan and Steve, was whether Fangio really was a better driver than Stirling Moss. This was not something

Ethan could really argue about, or even care about that much but it was funny watching the two argue about it.

Then, concealed by the table, he felt Neil's hand on his thigh. He looked at Neil who gave every appearance of following the argument, but while not looking at Ethan, his hand moved slowly up Ethan's thigh until he was gripping Ethan's stiffening cock through his trousers. Ethan was gripping his coke glass tightly with both hands. He thought if he moved his hand under the table to move Neil off it would attract attention. Also he wasn't sure if he wanted to move Neil's hand off. He liked the sensation and he shuddered slightly under the increasing stimulus. Neil noticed this and turned to Ethan, with a slightly triumphant smile on his face.

"You OK, Ethan?" he asked, while squeezing Ethan's cock more tightly.

"Yes," managed Ethan. "Why?"

"You're not saying much," answered Neil.

"Thinking of other things," said Ethan, trying not to spasm with the continuing manipulation.

"Probably Julie Grey," supplied Eddie from across the table.

"Maybe," said Ethan, at which Neil abruptly withdrew his hand. Ethan looked at Neil but he had started talking to Alan.

"We start school next week," said Eddie. "Who's up for a trip to the swimming baths before then?"

"I am," said Ethan. He knew that he was a good swimmer and he enjoyed it.

"OK by me," said Alan. It was agreed, the swimming trip was planned.

2. The Pool

They met up as planned at ten o'clock on the day before school was due to start. There were six now, Ethan Robson, Eddie Blackett, Steve Mosley, Neil Eldon, Alan Stowell and Andrew Collingwood, this last also being in the same class. On the bus there was the same joking banter, each boy trying to establish their place in the group.

Ethan had his swimming trunks rolled up inside his towel in a small shoulder bag. Mum had also popped in a chocolate bar - "In case you feel hungry" she had said unnecessarily.

Ethan was looking forward to this because he was a good swimmer, probably the fastest of this group at least, so he anticipated impressing his friends and re-establishing his credentials as a member of the group of boys. He felt needed this as a counter balance to the jokes about his looks.

Once through the turnstile and their locker keys collected, they headed for the male changing room. It was busy and of the ten changing cubicles, five were occupied. Ethan went into a vacant one but as he pushed the door closed, it was pushed open again.

"I'll share with you," announced Neil.

"There's not much space," said Ethan.

"There's enough," said Neil, bolting the door and starting to remove his clothes. "Come on, don't be shy."

Ethan removed his clothes, folding them neatly onto the small bench seat. He felt Neil's hand stroke his bum and turned to see Neil, naked and his cock erect. This was the first time Ethan had seen Neil naked and the sight had an instant effect on his own cock. Neil smiled and put his finger across his lips to indicate that Ethan should be quiet. Again he stroked Ethan's body in an intimate way. Ethan wasn't sure what he was expected to do. He wondered whether Neil was expecting him to reciprocate but then Neil took charge.

"Turn round, Ethan," he whispered, placing his hands on Ethan's shoulders to turn him.

Ethan just nodded and turned, feeling Neil push him forward slightly. He was startled by the sudden feel of Neil's warm cock against his bum.

"What...?"

"Sssh," whispered Neil.

Neil's cock found Ethan's hole and pressed against it. The feeling excited Ethan but his feeling were in turmoil. He wanted Neil to stop but he wanted Neil to carry on. He wanted Neil to go further. Neil pressed but the resistance was too great.

Suddenly there was a banging on the door. "Hurry up, you two," came Andrew's voice. "Everybody's ready."

"Are Neil and Ethan both in there?" Eddie's voice.

"It's just a bit cramped," said Neil loudly.

"Depends what you're doing with Ethan, Neil," said Steve, but in a joking tone. This caused laughter. Swiftly pulling on their trunks, then Neil unbolted the door and stepped out, carrying his clothes in an untidy bundle. "Ethan couldn't find his trunks," lied Neil.

"I'm sure you helped him," said Steve, grinning.

"Yes, he did," said Ethan, joining the lie. "They'd got folded up inside my towel."

"Come on then," said Alan. They trooped over to the lockers. Ethan noticed Neil just rammed all his clothes and towel into the locker in contrast to his own neatly folded stack in the adjacent locker.

"Very tidy, Ethan," said Steve, smiling, pushing his own bundle in and locking up. They wrapped the thick rubber band with the key around a wrist and headed for the pool.

"Last one in's a sissy," shouted Steve, launching himself into the water with a huge splash. Determined now not to be last, Ethan dived in about half way along the pool and coasted for some distance underwater, surfacing and brushing his hair off his face. Alan was tentatively climbing down the steps into the shallow end.

Steve, nearby, said, "Alan's the sissy today." He splashed Alan.

"Stop it," said Alan, now standing in the water. "It's just I can't swim."

Steve smiled. "That's OK, Alan," he said. "I'll teach you."

Ethan smiled at that. He knew that Steve was always ready with a comment but it was always said jokingly and he would never deliberately hurt anyone, but rather be much more ready to help.

Then Neil was beside him. "Race you to deep end and back to the shallow end," he challenged Ethan.

"You're on," said Ethan, immediately setting off in a fast front crawl. Neil followed, trying to keep up but was nowhere near as fast. Ethan touched the tiles and started back up the pool. He passed Neil. "Come on slowcoach," he said.

At the shallow end he stood getting his breath back waiting for Neil. Steve was getting frustrated with Alan's inability to copy his movements.

"Just keep trying what I said," suggested Steve as he swam off. Ethan thought Alan looked equally pleased and disappointed; pleased because Steve was no longer pressuring him and disappointed because of his failure to swim. Ethan looked down the pool to see Neil about half way back, now doing breaststroke.

Ethan turned to Alan. "Do you want me to try and help you?"

"I'm useless," said Alan. "I think I'll just watch." He made to wade back to the steps.

"No," said Ethan. "Honest, you can swim. Don't give up." He smiled encouragement at Alan, who turned back.

"It's all right for you," Alan said. "You're good at everything."

"Not everything," replied Ethan, "but I can swim. Come on."

Ethan thought it better to start with breaststroke because then Alan could keep his face out of the water. As Alan tried Ethan could see that the co-ordination between arms and legs was a problem for Alan. When doing one he would forget the other. He was put off as well by a big man who jumped in next to him creating a large splash and wave.

"Let's try front crawl," suggested Ethan.

"I told you I was no good," said Alan.

"I think you might find it easier if you don't mind getting your face wet."

"I'll try it then."

By this time, the others had gathered round. Teaching Alan became a group project, the boys encouraging Alan.

"We're right here," said Eddie. "We won't let you drown."

"Not today, anyway," quipped Steve.

Buoyed up by his friends' support, both metaphorically and literally, Alan started to try the front crawl. Ethan was supporting Alan under his tummy and gently let go but still with his hands in position. Alan was swimming. He kept going, encouraged by the others. The others dropped back but Ethan was now swimming alongside Alan.

"Well done, Alan" said Ethan. "You've done it. You're swimming."

Alan stopped and then suddenly realized he was out of his depth. With a look of panic he grabbed Ethan, pulling them both underwater. Ethan pushed up and they broke the surface to see the other laughing.

"OK, now just do what you were doing and swim back," urged Ethan.

With initial support from Ethan, Alan swam back to the shallow end where he stood up with a happy grin on his face. The other clapped and then splashed him unmercifully.

"Let's have a race," said Steve.

"Ethan will win," said Neil. "'he'll have to give us a head start."

Ethan nodded.

"I don't think I'm good enough for this yet," said Alan uncertainly.

"Chicken," said Neil.

"No, he's done well today," said Ethan.

"Alan, you can be rice pudding then," said Steve.

"What?" answered Alan, frowning his brow.

"Sago," explained Steve, laughing. "Then count to ten before you let Ethan start."

"OK," said Alan, happy to have found a role.

They lined up along the end of the bath.

"What happens if someone gets in the way," asked Andrew, looking down the pool at some other swimmers.

"Go round them," said Eddie.

"Or over them," joked Steve.

"Or under them," said Ethan.

"Ready?" called Alan. "Except Ethan, Go!"

The line surged forward.

"Are you counting?" called Ethan, poised for his launch.

"Oh, I forgot," said Alan.

"OneTwoThreeFourFiveSixSevenEightNineTen,Go" Alan said rapidly.

Ethan pushed off. The rest were spread out about half way along the pool, those who had chosen breaststroke now realizing their mistake as front crawlers were all ahead. Ethan had noted where other swimmers were and had planned a route. Powering down the pool he overtook some and met the leaders soon after their turn. Ethan was catching them up and in the last quarter of the return it was a race between Andrew, Neil and Ethan. Ethan reached out and touched the tiled lip, noticing that Neil and Eddie had also done so.

"Well, Alan," called Neil. "I won. Just. Didn't I?"

"Actually, Neil, Ethan just beat you to it. By about half a second."

Neil pulled a face but Eddie said, "Well done, Ethan. Champion."

"Henricks watch out," said Neil.

"Who's that? asked Eddie.

"Won a gold medal last year in Melbourne."

"I thought it was only football you were interested in, Neil," said Andrew.

"Anything sporty," supplied Ethan.

"I'm tired now," said Steve. "Who's for The Dungeon?"

In the changing room, Ethan emptied his locker with his neat stack. Neil's bundle fell apart then he had to stop to pick items up. There were plenty of free cubicles so Ethan quickly took one for himself. He was unsure about what Neil had done before in the shared cubicle. There was part of him that had responded to it and while it was happening he had liked it. But he wanted to mentally process this and was not ready to repeat it, if ever.

The group decamped to Victoria Square and The Dungeon. Neil sat on the bench. Ethan quickly took the bench on the other side. All agreed it had been a good session and congratulated both Ethan and Alan.