

Chapter

6

Chazz and Kenny have to clean up and change clothes before they go see Grammy Rose, and so I use this time to bring my story up to date. I'm working on a picture of Kenny's fountain when Kenny comes up and looks over my shoulder. He smells clean.

"Wow, that's my fountain," he says. "Can I have that picture?"

"This is for my story for Mrs. Whitehall," I tell him. "But I'll draw you another one."

"Great."

Now Chazz is ready, too, and we get into Chazz's car which is pretty beat up but way cool. Chazz always laughs and says that he's got it done up according to his exact specifications.

On the trip to Grammy Rose's we pass by my school and the kids are all getting out of baseball practice. I slide down in the backseat so no one can see me, but Chazz suddenly says, "Hey, Dill, is that Adam." And before I can say anything Chazz pulls over and says, "Hey, Ad-Dumb, want a ride?" Chazz is always calling Adam Ad-Dumb, and Adam is so dumb that he likes it. I think it's because Chazz is almost a man, but he's still a big kid, and Adam feels good to be playing with one of the big kids.



Before I can say anything, Adam is getting into the backseat with me and Chazz is telling him Kenny's name, and all, and the car is back moving up the street.

“Sup?” Adam says to Kenny. “Sup?” he says to Chazz. But Adam doesn't even look at me.



Kenny's all sitting sideways in the front seat and looking back at me and Adam. I try looking out the window, but Kenny is even smarter than I was thinking before. He says, “So, what happened between the two of you? You're not talking?”

I say, “Nothing.”

But Adam doesn't say anything. Kenny's eyebrows make those question marks, but he doesn't say anything. He just turns around in his seat.

Adam says to me, but he doesn't think anyone else can hear, "You fag!"

Man, the way Chazz stops that car, my dad would be yelling at him! There's this squeal of brakes and this jerk of the car as it pulls over to the curb and stops. Chazz turns around fast and looks at Adam like he's dog meat in his backseat. "What did you say?"

"Well, he is!" Adam says, and I can tell that he's scared and ready to cry, like playing with the big kids isn't so great any more. "He picked a fight with me today!"

"But why did you call him that?" Chazz says, and he's got his arm up on the back of the seat and I'm thinking he might even smack Adam backhand or something, even though I've never seen Chazz do anything mean like that to a little kid.

"Because he picked a fight with me! He pushed me down and I almost hit my head, and he *is* a fag!" Now Adam's just sitting there kind of shaking.

I can see Chazz can't figure it out, and I say to Chazz, "He doesn't know. Adam doesn't know

what he's saying. He's just a kid."

"Wait a second, Chazz," Kenny says, and he turns all the way around and puts his own hand across the back of the seat, up on top of Chazz's arm, like in case Chazz does start backhanding Adam, Kenny can stop him. That makes me feel a little better, even though I don't think Chazz ever would. Then Kenny says to Adam, "Do you know what that word means, Adam?"

Adam thinks about it and says, "Yeah?" but there's this kind of question mark in his voice like maybe he doesn't really know, after all.

"Do you know it's a dirty word?" Kenny asks him.

"No, it's not. It's just what you call kids when they act stupid, like Dillon."

"Well, trust me, Adam. It's a dirty word. Don't use it unless you mean it. And if you mean it, you better be ready to fight. You got that?" Kenny's so cool the way he's just looking at Adam, making no big thing about it, but just telling it the way it is.

"Okay," Adam says, and now I'm feeling a

little better again.

But only a little and only for a second because now Chazz turns all the way around in his seat to look at me, sitting behind him. He says, “You pushed Adam down?”

“Well, he called Joey Blinder a fag!” Chazz looks like he doesn’t understand. I say, “Well, you know what you told me last night! You said if a kid calls you a fag, I’m supposed to fight.”

Kenny looks surprised at Chazz. “You told him that?”

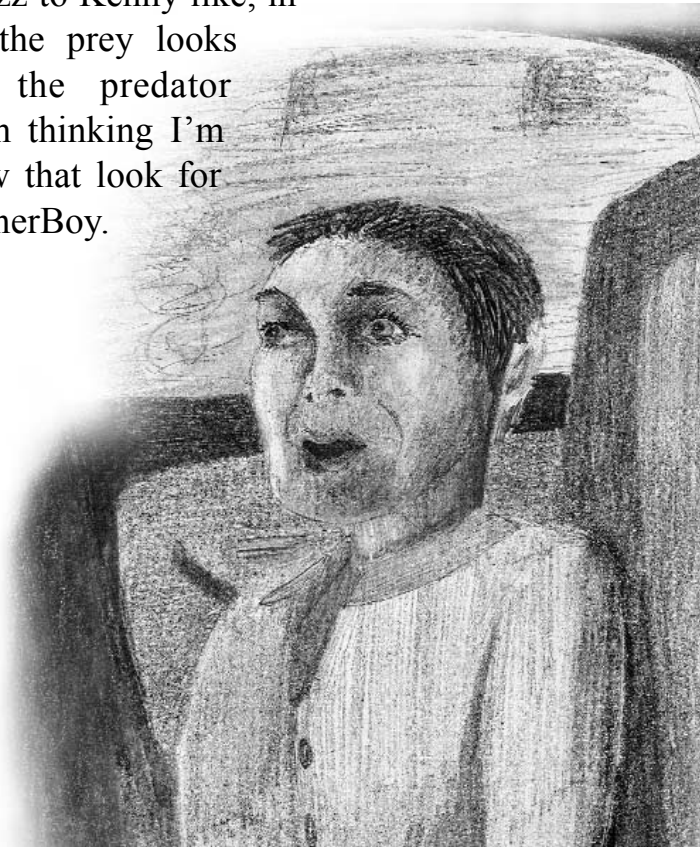
Chazz looks surprised at me. “I told you that?”

“Well...” I say, but I just can’t remember it right. “Rumble was scratching all over me, and you were outside my door and yelling about the kids on the playground calling each other fag, and how I’m supposed to stop it.”

“Well, Dill...” Chazz says, and I can see from his eyes that nothing is clicking in his head. “I don’t know what I said, but I didn’t mean that. You can’t change the other kids. I guess I just

meant that I know you kids are always calling each other fag, and saying, ‘Oh, that’s so gay!’ and making all these put-downs of gay people. I don’t want *you* to do that, Dill.”

“Are you gay?” This is Adam’s voice, coming from next to me on the backseat. And I look over, and if he looked scared before, now he looks like he’s going to wet his pants. He’s looking from Chazz to Kenny like, in the movies, the prey looks just before the predator pounces. I’m thinking I’m going to draw that look for my next PantherBoy.



Chazz is looking like he doesn't have an answer in his head. That's a good look, too, but I don't think I can draw well enough yet to capture the physiognomy of it.

It's Kenny who gives the answer, and it's just like he was talking before, nice and quiet and straight at you. "You know, Adam, I don't think that's a question you should be asking people. If they want you to know, they'll tell you. Okay?"

"Okay," Adam says, but he doesn't look okay.

"Okay," Chazz says, and he turns around and starts the car moving again. "You two just go back to being friends now, okay?"

I'm not so sure, but I say, "Okay." I look over at Adam, and he's looking at me like he doesn't like what he sees. I say, "Sorry I pushed you."

He says, "That's okay." He waits a second and then says, "It didn't hurt, you know." But I know that it did.

“You just took me by surprise, you know. Otherwise...” and he shows me with his fist how he would beat me up. That just makes me laugh.





Chazz pulls up to Adam's house, and Adam gets out and walks up the walk like he's real cool, like some big man in high school or something.

"So-o-o ba-a-a-a-d!" Kenny says in a whisper to Chazz and gives a little laugh. Adam can't hear that, but something makes him stop just before his door and turn around and yell at us, in this really mean voice, "Why don't you run away to San Francisco and get married, faggots!" And then he runs into his house.

Chazz doesn't say anything. He just puts the car into gear and goes.

Chapter

7

Grammy Rose is waiting for us on her swing on the front porch. Whenever you tell Grammy Rose you're coming over, she always waits for you on her swing on the front porch. She gets up and waves. Chazz introduces her to Kenny.

“So you're the face behind the voice on the phone at Chazz's place. Well, Kenny, don't you think it's about time we met?”

Grammy Rose always makes you feel like you're responsible for everything, only she doesn't hold it against you. It's like everything is a joke with Grammy Rose. Only now when she turns to me, maybe it's not so much like a joke because she says, “And you had to sit in the Principal's Office

today, Dilly? And you cut baseball practice? Is this a new habit, being bad? Is this an activity that you are cultivating, that you should get in trouble twice in one day?"

I say, "Who told you that?"

"And just who do you think? Do you want to get in there and call your mother? She's worried sick about you." But before I can say anything, Grammy Rose takes off again, like she does. "Well, no you don't, as a matter of fact, because I just talked to her on the phone, and I told her that Chazz called and you were coming over here for dinner, and so you are, all three of you, and I'm not going to take no for an answer because I intend to get to the bottom of everything, and as for you, Dilly, answer my question, did you lie to the coach?"

"No!" And that's the truth, as I said before. "I told the coach that Chazz has an emergency, and he does, don't you, Chazz?"

Grammy Rose does this thing where she turns from one person to the next like she is a spotlight. That's how she turns to Chazz.



Grammy Rose, turning on her spotlight.



*Chazz, in Grammy Rose's spotlight.
Notice the same scared prey physiognomy that Adam had.*

“Yeah, I guess that’s not a lie,” Chazz says.

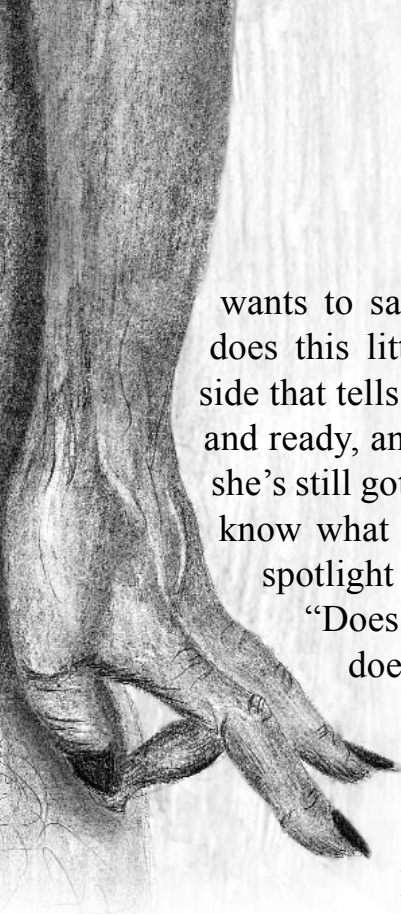
“An emergency?” Grammy Rose turns her spotlight from Chazz to Kenny. Kenny looks at her a second, then he shrugs his shoulders and puts his eyebrows into the question marks, and Grammy Rose says, “Uh huh.” When Grammy Rose says “uh huh” like that, it doesn’t mean that she agrees, but it doesn’t mean that she disagrees, either. It just sort of means, “Tell me more.” But this can be a trap, too, and so you don’t want to say too much, if you can get away with it. Kenny seems to know this already about Grammy Rose because he doesn’t say anything at all. So Grammy turns her spotlight back on Chazz. “You were at your mama’s and daddy’s last night, Chazzy?”

“Yeah.”

“And...words were spoken?” She turns her spotlight on me. “Dillon, what do you know?”

“Nothing.”

“That is not very encouraging.” She keeps looking at me for a long time. I can see out of the corner of my eye that Chazz is moving in like he



wants to say something, but Grammy Rose does this little thing with her fingers at her side that tells you not to speak until she's good and ready, and she's not good and ready while she's still got me on the spot. But since I don't know what to say next, she finally turns the spotlight back on Chazz again and says, "Does Dilly know? I think he does, doesn't he? About you and Kenny?"

"So *you* know, Grammy?"

"Well, of course, honey," Grammy Rose says. "But does Dilly know?"

"I think he does. We've talked about it."

"Kenny?" and Grammy Rose spotlights Kenny, who's still got his eyebrows in the question marks.

"Seems like he's got the essentials of it, all right."

"You mean about Chazz being gay, and Kenny's his partner? Sure, I know all about that. But how do *you* know, Grammy Rose? Mom didn't tell you, did she?"

Because she doesn't even believe it."

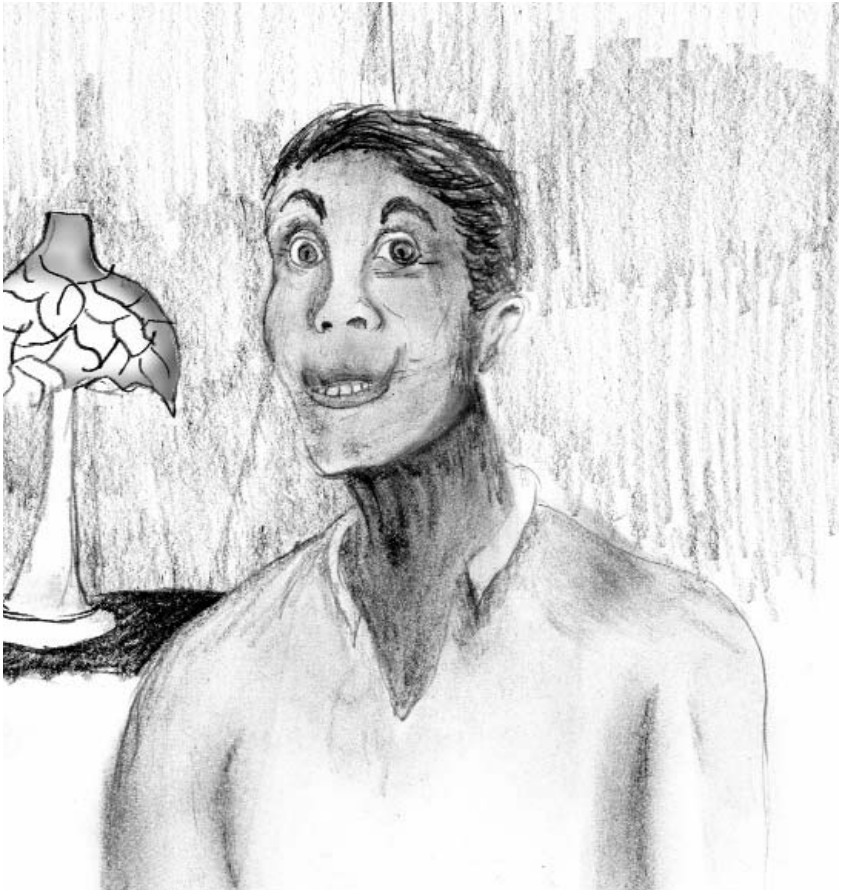
"Oh, she believes it, honey. She just doesn't *want* to believe it. But no, to answer your question, your mother did not tell me that. That's just something I've known for a long time. I've just been waiting for Chazzy to find it out for himself." And she pulls Chazz over to her by his neck and gives him a kiss on his forehead.

"I've known since the second grade, Grammy," Chazz says. "I just didn't know what it was."

"I wondered if that was true. Well," Grammy Rose says, and she looks at me and then says, "this is a conversation we'd best finish up away from the little pitcher with the big ears." When she says this, I know she means me. "Dilly, I guess you have some homework to do? You go into the dining room to the table there and start working on it. Chazzy, you and Kenny come into the kitchen and help me finish up dinner."

"Can't I come?" I say, but Grammy Rose turns her spotlight on me, and then pushes Kenny ahead of her through the door.

Chazz gives me a look with his eyes wide open and his lips pulled down at the corners like he does sometimes when he knows something big is going to happen, but he doesn't know if it's good or bad.



Chapter

8

So I've pulled my story out of my portfolio and I'm bringing it up to date, and I get kind of lost in it. I don't know how long it is before Grammy Rose comes into the dining room and starts setting the table, and Chazz and Kenny come with the food. And now I'm eating Grammy Rose's food, which my dad always says is the best cooking in town and how my mom learned everything she knows in the kitchen at my Grammy Rose's side. And I can tell that Grammy Rose and Chazz and Kenny have been talking all about *it* in the kitchen. *It* is the thing, the thing with Chazz that's causing all the problems with my mom and my dad.

Grammy Rose is doing all the talking.

She always does that. First she gets you to say everything she wants you to say, and then she ends up saying everything she wants to say, and that's always a lot. My dad says that once Grammy Rose starts talking, you can't get a word in edgeways. I always think that's funny, because I picture in my mind saying a word edgeways out of my mouth, and then that edgeways word getting gobbled up by all of Grammy Rose's words jumping out of her mouth, like a computer attack game.

“Well, all right, Chazz,” Grammy Rose is saying, “I understand what you've done, trying to speak to your family about this, and why you've done it. But this plan of yours to tell your Grandma and Grandpa Moore, now why in the world would you want to go and do a thing like that?”

Chazz starts to answer her, but Grammy Rose won't even let any edgeways words out at the moment. “What would be the *good* in it, Chazzy? And what would be the bad? I want you to think hard about that. Now it's one thing for you to come to your Grammy Rose. That's appropriate. And your Gramp Al, if he were only still with us—

rest that dear soul of that good man—would just eat you and Kenny up with sugar. He would be so thrilled at this young man you’ve brought into this family! But your Grandma and Grandpa Moore, honey? That would not be appropriate. They just don’t have the same...” and here Grammy Rose took a second and looked in her head for the word, “...outlook ... honey, on life. And that may be part of why your daddy exploded like a cherry bomb. And your mama, well, as you have seen and as you might have *foreseen*, sometimes she’s got more grits in her than good sense. And over *this* now, she’s going to have to take a little time to drain the mush. But listen, this is what I want you to know about that, and here’s the truth of it.”

Grammy Rose takes a big breath here, but she doesn’t really need it because, as my dad says, Grammy Rose can talk like she’s playing a harmonica, on breath going in just the same as on breath going out. No, this breath she takes now is to point up her next word, which is “love”.

“*Love*,” Grammy Rose says, “comes where and how and with whomsoever you find it, and there’s nothing much anyone can do to stop it.

As your mother should well know, since she fell in love with your father which, believe me, your Gramp Al didn't agree with at all, at all, at *all* ... at first. Yet, look what a fine man, husband and father Chaswick Moore is this day. And Gramp Al was wrong. Al Dillon was wrong, I'll say it again! As *he* should well have known since he himself had to fight like the dickens to get *me* away from *my* mother, your Great Grammy Grace, who should have known better *herself* since *her* own mother, your Great Great Grammy Viola Franklin Hayes, had to fight *Mama* like the dickens to try to separate *Mama* from the true love of *Mama's* life, who in fact did become my father, thank you very much. And that was your Great Gramp Grover, and *there* was a man for you! Never so much as..."

And here Grammy Rose interrupts herself because she was about to "undertake a digression", as she calls it, and she takes another one of those breaths that she doesn't need but only uses to impress you, and says again, "*Love!*" like that was where she was always headed. "And that's just how love is. Love always wins out when the people are good in their hearts. And all it takes is one

look at Kenny here to know that he's as good as gold in his heart, even though I just met him hardly more than an hour ago. And I do know *this* much anyway, what would my Chazzy be doing with someone who wasn't pure gold? And as for your mama and daddy, well that's just a matter of time because although gold melts and changes its shape, it never goes away, and that's why people treasure it so."

Grammy Rose looks like when she's just finished sewing on a button, like a job that had to be done is done, and well done. I look to Chazz to see if he's going to talk now, but he's just nodding his head. And so Grammy Rose takes out another button. "But Chazzy, you didn't come here tonight to ask me to fight your fights for you with your folks, did you?"

I say fast to Grammy, "He told *me* he didn't want *me* to fight his fights."

Chazz says, "I don't want anyone fighting my fights, Grammy. But I just don't see why it has to *be* a fight."

"Oh, it's going to be a fight all right, Chazz.

But Dilly, Chazz is right, honey. A person's got to fight his own fights in a person's own way. No, Chazz, I don't intend to fight your fight, or pick sides here, but I *will* promise you all something. If your mama and daddy come to me asking for advice—and I'm not saying they will, but if they do come—it'll be your mama first, and you know the way she respects my opinion..." And Grammy Rose stops a second and looks at me. "She does respect my opinion, doesn't she?" I'm wondering what I should answer to this because of some of the things I've heard my mom say about her mom, but Grammy Rose looks like she thinks better of the question and goes right on. "Well, never mind. You can be sure what I'll tell them. And here's something else, I guess it's about time to bring your Great Uncle Marty out of the closet."

Chazz turns more than his head to look at Grammy Rose. He turns his whole body in his chair. "Is that the one...?" Chazz starts to say, but he stops.

"Yes, that's the one. That *is* the one. That's the one no one ever talks about. And I loved Marty so. For me it's the loss. That's why I never

want to talk about him. But for everyone else, it was the other thing, it was the shame. Yes, what a shame. Shame on *them*.” Grammy Rose looks like she looked one time when she took a drink of milk that had gone sour in her refrigerator. Then she says, “Now, Dilly, I’ll bet you can recite the names of all my brothers and sisters, can’t you, even though you never even met a one of them?”

I can. That’s because my mom has told so many stories about them, and she has pointed out where they lived around town, and sometimes we’ve gone to visit her cousins, even though they’re a lot older than she is. I say, “First there was Frank, then Ella, then Daisy, then Gobe.”

“Yes, and you’ve heard stories about all of them, I know, and I could tell you a lot more, and maybe they wouldn’t appear to be angels, all of them. Those first four were all about two years apart, like Mama and Dad had measured them out with a ruler of time. But then I guess Mama and Dad learned their lesson because that was the end of their kids

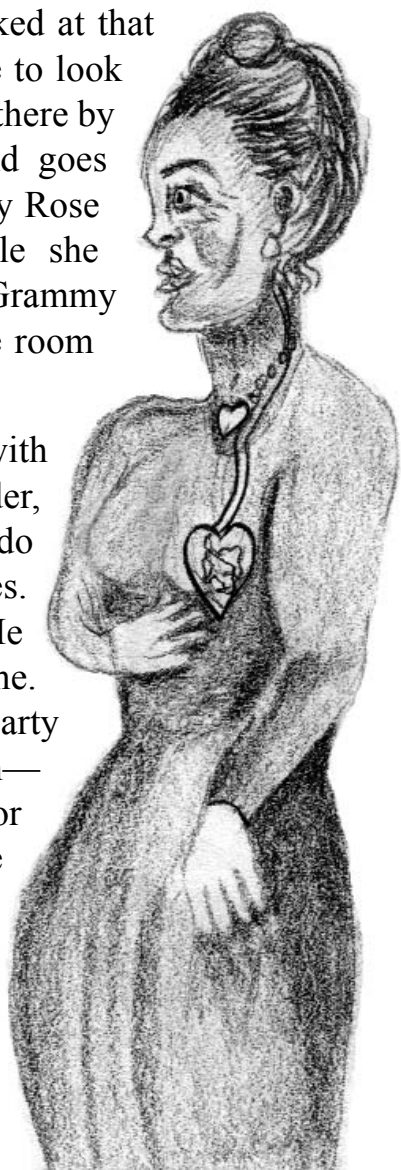
for about ten years. But then they had Martin. And then they measured out another two years and they brought me into this world. People used to have lots bigger families than they do now. And that made a lot of sense because so many died so young in those days, and if you wanted to keep the population up, it was your duty to have at least three or four kids because one or two were sure to die. But I'm undertaking a digression here, and you boys should do a better job of keeping me on track. Kenny, where was I?"

“And then along came Rose.”

“Yes, and then along came Rose,” Grammy Rose says, and she kind of laughs at that, and she gets up and goes over to the hutch and opens a drawer and she takes out a handkerchief. But she keeps talking all the time and she tells us all about Great Uncle Marty, all the time wiping at her eyes with the hanky. Grammy Rose has all the pictures of the family on the same wall in the dining room where the hutch is, and she points to the one that's got her whole family, Great Grammy Grace and Great Gramp Grover and all Grammy Rose's brothers and sisters. Grammy Rose is the smallest,

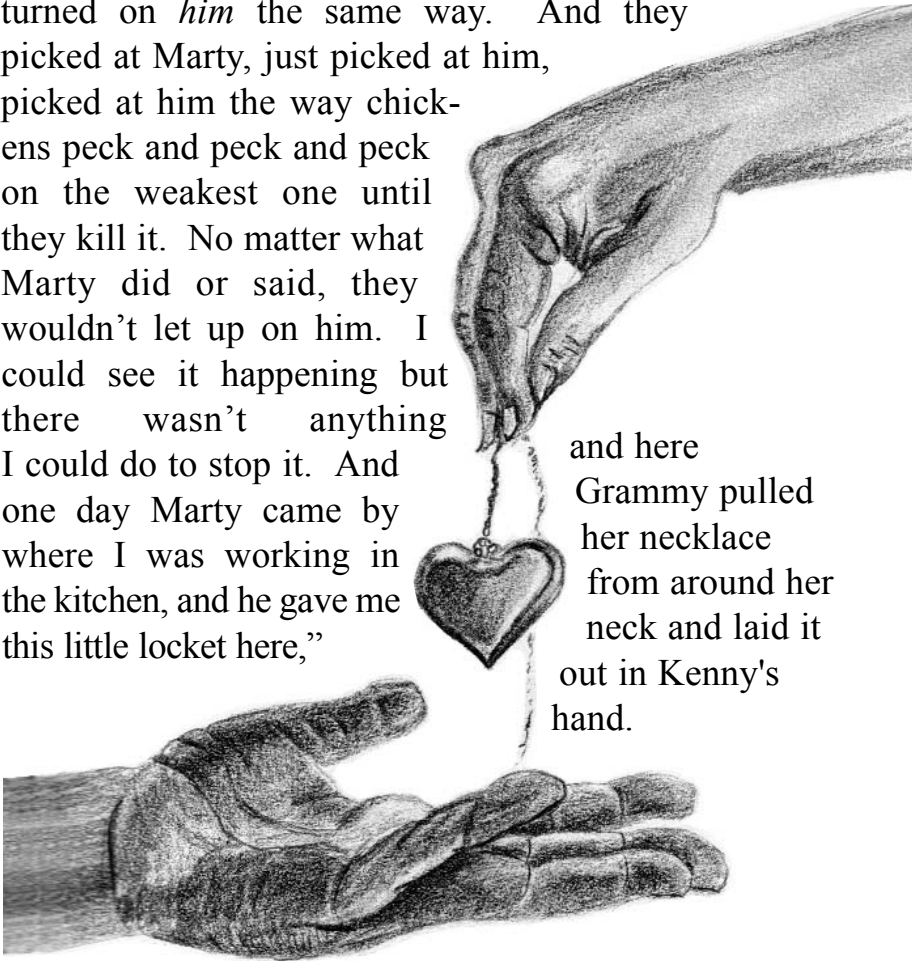
and it's the kid standing next to her, who's just a little bigger than she is that she keeps pointing at. That's Marty. I've looked at that picture before, and I don't have to look at it now to know every face on there by heart. But Kenny gets up and goes over and stands next to Grammy Rose and looks at the picture while she talks, and pretty soon it's like Grammy Rose is talking to no one in the room but Kenny.

“Being so close in age with all the rest of them so much older, Marty and I were, oh, what do they call it now ... soul mates. Marty and I were soul mates. He was always taking care of me. Well, it must have been when Marty was around fifteen or sixteen—I know because I was thirteen or fourteen—that Frank and Gobe caught Marty with this other young fellow. Abe Crown was his name.



Abe lived just down the road from us. And my family turned on Marty like hounds on a rabbit, Mama at the head of the pack because Dad was dead by this time. And I guess Abe's family turned on *him* the same way. And they picked at Marty, just picked at him, picked at him the way chickens peck and peck and peck on the weakest one until they kill it. No matter what Marty did or said, they wouldn't let up on him. I could see it happening but there wasn't anything I could do to stop it. And one day Marty came by where I was working in the kitchen, and he gave me this little locket here,"


and here
Grammy pulled
her necklace
from around her
neck and laid it
out in Kenny's
hand.



“Because it was Valentine’s Day, you see, and it’s in the shape of a heart.” And here she starts to wipe her eyes again with the hanky, but then she holds it over both eyes with her whole hand.







“And it was that day, Valentine’s Day, that Marty left us forever. With Abe Crown. And I never saw Marty again. And there was a hole in my heart so big and so full of hurt that you’d think some wild little animal had crawled in there and was eating it up from the inside.”

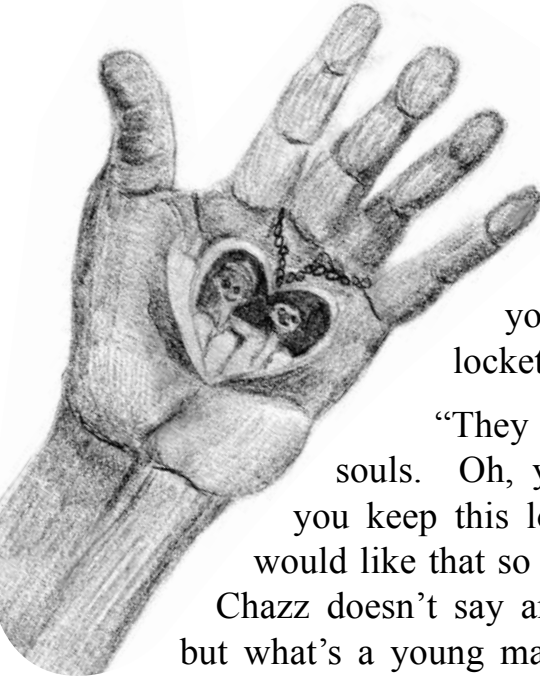
None of us can say anything because Grammy Rose is really crying now, covering her face with one hand and grabbing at her heart with the other one. I've never seen my Grammy Rose cry. And I've never seen any grown-up cry this hard. And it pinches my own heart so that it hurts like a pain, and almost like Grammy Rose said, like something eating it up from inside. I look at Chazz and he's the same way.

Pretty soon, though, Grammy Rose wipes her eyes again, one last time, and stuffs the hanky in her pocket and reaches over to take the locket back from Kenny. But before she can put it around her neck again, Chazz asks to see it. She brings it to him. It looks like it's hard for her to walk, and when she gets to the table where Chazz is, she sits down and hands him the locket. I've seen this locket on her neck all my life, but I never knew there was a story about it. It's like Grammy Rose was keeping it a secret. It's like Grammy Rose has always been a ghost in silence, too.

As Chazz opens up the locket Grammy Rose says, "That's a picture of Marty and Abe. Aren't they lovely?"

“Real good looking,” Chazz says.

“Both of them,” Kenny says, looking over Chazz’s shoulder.



I look, too, and I say, “This one on the left is Marty.” I can recognize his face from the picture on the wall, even though he was much younger then. But in the locket, he still looks like a kid.

“They were both just lovely souls. Oh, you know what, honey, you keep this locket. I believe Marty would like that so much.” But seeing that Chazz doesn’t say anything, she says, “Oh, but what’s a young man like you going to do with a locket on a chain. I guess I’ll just keep it,” and she reaches for it again.

Chazz says, “I’ve got a box where I keep things like this. I could keep the locket in that box.”

“Well, then, that’s ... lovely,” Grammy Rose says and she hands the locket back to Chazz. But she doesn’t let go of the chain right away. So I know this is hard for her. But she does, in the end, give the locket to Chazz.

You know how sometimes things get embarrassing? That’s what happens now. Nobody knows what to say next. And then Kenny says, “Dillon, why don’t you read us your story? Chazz and I will take care of the dishes, and Grammy you just sit back and take it easy. Okay, Dillon?”

Chapter

9

I'm used to reading Chazz my stories about PantherBoy because he kind of helped me invent PantherBoy. But I've never read for Grammy Rose before, and sure thing I never read for Kenny. And now he's the one who's asking me to read. I don't know that I want to, but before I can think much about it, we're all in the kitchen and Kenny is washing the dishes and Chazz is drying them and Grammy Rose is on the other side of the table waiting for me to start. She starts looking at the pictures before I'm ready for her to, and I have to tell her that they're not finished yet. Some of the pictures I want to fill in better, and some are just ideas, just sketches out of my head and maybe I

won't even finish them, but I don't even know yet. She says that's okay. And I tell all three of them that I want to go back later and get the words better, too. I think I can get the words just right if I work at it. They all say okay, and I start reading.

It doesn't take long to read all that I've got so far because I don't have the stuff about Marty in yet, even though I know for sure that I want to put that in. I'll do that later.

When I get to the last words, I look up from the page. That's where I write, "Chazz gives me a look with his eyes wide open and his lips pulled down at the corners like he does sometimes when he knows something big is going to happen, but he doesn't know if it's good or bad." That's as far as I got in my last update. Chazz and Kenny are leaning against the counter now, just watching me. Chazz has got exactly that same look on his face right now. Kenny's got his eyebrows in the question marks again. Grammy Rose is watching me, too. Her mouth is kind of open like she's waiting for the next word. But nobody says the next word. Not for a long time.

Then finally Grammy Rose says, "Dilly?"

You're intending to hand that story in to Mrs. Whitehall tomorrow?"

I look at Chazz, who's still not saying a word, but I can tell he wants to. "I don't know," I say. "I'm thinking now that maybe I shouldn't. I'm thinking now that I could write another story about family, and hand that story in instead. I could write about Rumble. Rumble is part of the family, too. I could just use the part where I tell how you gave Rumble to Chazz on the day that I was born. And I could use that Rumble picture for that story?"

I leave that as a question.

Grammy Rose says, "Well, that might be a good idea, Dilly." Chazz nods his head and looks at Kenny. Kenny nods his head, too.

"That would be appropriate, wouldn't it?" I say.

"Yes," Grammy Rose says. "That's exactly the word I would use for that. But I want you to know that I really like this story here, too, Dilly."

"Yeah, it's a good story, Dill," Chazz says, and Kenny keeps nodding his head. "You should

keep working on it, just like you're doing. And we'll keep it in the family. And share it with people who can understand it. I think Grammy Rose is right about that." Kenny keeps nodding. Chazz looks at him. "Right, Kenny?"

"Yep, I think that's what I would do."

And all three of them keep nodding their heads up and down, and so do I. And I start to put my story back in the portfolio, always the pictures first, so that I can make good and sure there aren't any folds or wrinkles. And then I say, "Well, you know, Mom and Dad are waiting for me. So I've got to go home pretty soon."

They keep nodding their heads.

"I could walk home from here."

Nobody says anything.

"Or maybe, Chazz, maybe you could drive me home? Maybe you and Kenny? If you wanted to? You don't have to come inside. I could get out in front of the house. Mom and Dad might be watching out the window? They might see you? That would be okay with me. Would that be okay with you?"

Chazz looks at Kenny. “That’s okay with me. Is that okay with you, Kenny?”

“Sure.”

“Grammy Rose? You could call them and tell them that I’m coming home? So they would know?”

“Yes, honey, that’s a thing I could do.”

Everyone’s nodding again, and I nod, too, right along with them.

“So, whenever you’re ready, Dill,” Chazz says.

“Okay,” I say. “I guess I’m ready.”

That’s when the phone rings, and Grammy Rose picks it up. She says hello and listens a second then says, “Well, how fast do you think we can move, Linda? We’ve got to make the dinner, we’ve got to eat the dinner, and then there’s always talk. People do talk you know.”

She looks at me a second, then says, “Yes, of course we talked about that. Sounds like you made a real mess in your kitchen last night.”

When Chazz and Kenny laugh at that, Grammy Rose just gives them a wink. She says into the phone, “Umhmm,” then again, “Umhmm.” Then she says, “Yes, he’s just packed up and he *says* he’s ready.”

The she listens again and says, “Umhmm.” And what about Chazzy? You want to talk to him?” She looks at Chazz and Chazz nods his head yes at her. Kenny doesn’t look so sure though. “Is that what you want me to tell him? Those exact words?” She listens a second, then says, “Okay, I’ll tell them both. See you tomorrow.”

And Grammy Rose hangs up. “Chazzy, your mom says she does want to talk to you. But not yet.”

Chazz doesn’t say anything, and so I say, “That’s good, isn’t it, Grammy?”

“You bet,” Grammy Rose says. “And Dilly, she says to tell *you* she’ll be waiting for you on the front porch.”

“Then she’s sure to see Chazz and Kenny if they drive me home.”

“I’d say so.”

“And maybe Dad would be with her, waiting on the front porch.”

“Maybe.”

I think about this. I really think about this.
“Okay, then. Okay. Then yes. I *am* ready.”

THE END



ERRATA

One of the really cool things you can do when you make a book is to add pages at the end of it, if you want to. My Grammy Rose taught me this, and even Chazz didn't know about it until she told us. See, the way it happened was that Grammy Rose was doing what they call "proofreading" the book. That's what they do after the author writes it, and after the editor edits it, and the author rewrites it (again and again and again). Then the proofreader comes in and proofs it to make sure there aren't any typos or other kinds of mistakes. Grammy Rose found some of these other kinds of mistakes, and she was hopping mad at Chazz because she knew that Chazz had already seen these mistakes but wasn't doing anything about them. But Chazz said that as editor—which is what he calls himself because he helped me a little, or maybe a little bit more than a little—that he was responsible for making sure that his author's voice was true. That's me, the author, and my "voice" is the way I use my words when I write. Chazz told Grammy Rose that those mistakes were part of my voice, and we had to leave them just as they were. But Grammy Rose said

that we couldn't leave mistakes in the book. But then she thought a second and said, "A rattum page, Dilly! That's what you need!"



Well, by this time, with both of them talking about all these so-called "mistakes" I had made in the book, I went straight to the dictionary to look up "rattum" because I didn't trust either Grammy Rose or Chazz as far as I could pick them up and throw them. When Grammy Rose saw me looking through the R section of the dictionary for "rattum" she laughed her pumpkin head off, and told Chazz about it, who laughed his own pumpkin head off. That's when Grammy Rose told me what "irony" is. (Look it up.)

Chazz was already on the computer and making the Erratum page, only because there was more than one erratum, he typed it "Errata" which is Latin for errors. And here they are:

- P. 4 - Then Grandma Moore tells my dad that his "wife's mother" shouldn't be lording it over the angels because the angels have "ways mysterious" of reeking revenge.

(Should be "wreaking" revenge. How was I supposed to know that?)

- P. 4 - And Grandpa Moore says that Chazz is "no better nor no worse" than any of God's beans...

(Should be "beings" which I would have known if I had thought about it.)

- P. 44 - Chazz says they call these dot dot dots "lipsies"...

(Should be "elipses" and this one makes me really mad because Chazz should have corrected me when he first told me about it instead of laughing at my mistake behind my back, even though it is kind of funny.)

ADDENDUM

You can also put in an Addendum page if you want, which means something that is added on. Or if you have more than one Addendum, then you say "Addenda" because that's how the Latins do it, and they invented it. My addendum is this picture (see over!) of my family at next Sunday dinner, even though it hasn't happened yet, and may never even happen, especially if I want to include Grandma and Grandpa Moore. But as Grammy Rose told me, "A guy can dream, can't he?"

