

REMEMBERING FOREVER

By Bruce Derksen

Fingers trembling slightly, I keyed the proper sequence into the small numbered pad beside the door and waited quietly while the computer softly hummed, processing my commands. In moments the door slid quietly open revealing a softly lit room that I recognized immediately as my study where I reclined in my large leather chair during breaks in writing my latest manuscript. Fingers of auburn sunlight leaked between the edge of the window frame and the rust colored drapes that framed the large pane causing a prism of light to gently caress the inviting carpet. I inhaled deeply, breathing in the familiar aromas triggering memories of a time long ago. Slowly I moved across the room, my body breaking the multiple shafts of sunlight for a moment as I crossed the floor. Reaching the back of my chair my fingers slid over the luxurious leather. It was cool to my touch reminding me of the many hot summer evenings when the coolness of the chair brought comfort to my aching semi-clothed body.

Knowing the routine, I slipped easily into the softness of the stuffing, taking a moment to recline partly, letting the edges of my body find their appropriate places deep in the textured material. Lately I had been coming here more often, contrary to what my therapist had suggested.

“Time heals all wounds,” he had reminded me in that way of his. The saying was so old and worn I had been somewhat startled the first time he had said it, thinking that he was about to add some new wisdom to the old cliché. But that was not the case. He apparently was of the old school and believed in such ridiculous sentiments. But then I had also believed it at the beginning. God I had needed it to be true. Now I didn’t care.

“Begin,” I said quietly.

Grabbing the arms of the big chair, knuckles growing white, I stared into the semi-darkness of the office past the large bookshelves lined up alongside the far wall.

In a moment I heard it. The quiet gurgling and grunting that was emblazoned in my brain, meaning only one thing.

“Sammy,” I called out to the darkness.

My small son emerged from the shadows crawling quickly across the soft carpet on his bare knees.

“Sammy boy, come on, son,” I urged bringing my weight quickly forward causing the chair to fold to its original position. I knelt in front of the chair and stretched my arms toward him. He hurried as much as his little legs and arms would allow and soon covered the distance between us. As I scooped his warm body into my arms I squeezed him to my chest and shook him softly. He began to giggle. I did the same. For the space of a minute time stood still as I rocked him tightly to me, the carpet warming my knees. He laughed and squirmed pushing my chin with his tiny fists, pulling my ears and nose; grinning at the faces I made at him. I hugged him even tighter. Like there was no tomorrow.

In time I set him down in front of me and held him at an arms length to study him. He was so handsome. Only eleven months old, but already abandoning the baby stage and becoming a young boy. He was just learning to walk and soon he pulled away from me to try his newfound skills. He was never one to be still. Even as an infant it was rare to hold him without him becoming restless and pulling away. Now as he struggled free he used the edge of the chair to climb up on unsteady feet. I watched with a smile. He let go and began to stagger awkwardly away on bowed legs. Concentrating hard he moved three or four feet across the floor.

“Sammy,” I called quietly.

He stopped at the interruption and turned his head to look over his shoulder at me. This was enough to topple him and he sat down with a thud. The

stunned look on his tiny face quickly gave way to a broad ear to ear grin as he began to laugh. Putting his hands above his head he began to flap them like a bird making a cooing sound. I laughed at his motions and rolled toward him. He eagerly climbed onto my prone body struggling to pull himself up and over me. Grabbing handfuls of my hair, clothing, or whatever part of my body was available he launched himself from one side of me to the other landing in differing positions of entanglement as he accomplished the feat over and over. I lay still pretending to be asleep while he played. In time he tired of his fun and crawled away toward the semi-darkness near the bookcases.

I sat up quickly in alarm. I had lost track of the time.

“Sammy, come back, come here,” I called.

He stopped and turned towards me, his fist jammed as deeply into his teething mouth as he could possibly push it.

His face beamed and he quickly covered the floor back into my waiting arms.

I sighed in relief. I still had time.

Swinging his soft body into my arms we sank together into the coolness of the chair. I held him so that I could look into the sculpted features of his tiny face. Large blue eyes the color of the ocean on a bright sunny day stared back at me in curiosity. His perfect nose wrinkled above his soft red lips. His chin and throat matched the bareness of his pudgy legs in their perfect smoothness against my face and arms. The denim shorts and deep blue t-shirt he wore were my favorites, matching his liquid blue eyes and sandy crop of hair atop his rounded head.

I held him at the waist as he sat on my lap scrutinizing me with a small thumb pushed into the corner of his mouth. He was still. I took full advantage not daring to look away from his gorgeous face. Warm moisture began to build in the corners of my eyes as I watched my son. My only son. Clamping my teeth tightly together I fought the growing lump in my throat. But it was no use. The bottom of my chin began to tighten and soon a tear rolled over the edge of my

cheek. In moments they were running freely down my face as I fought for control.

Sammy began to smile and clap his hands together thinking I was performing for his amusement. In the midst of my tears I couldn't stop a roll of laughter from deep within me. Soon it became a release as I surrendered my battle to stop my walled in emotions. The laughter and the tears joined together in a wash of feelings as they were spewed forth unchecked. I clamped his tiny body to me as tightly as I dared, my tears wetting the front of his sky blue outfit.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry," I whispered into the side of his face. Anguish began to fill me and the laughter ended suddenly as I held my precious child. My lips found the perfect smoothness of his cheek and salty residue from my tears tickled my tongue as I kissed him. He laid in my arms quietly as I began to rock him easily, the big chair swaying slowly, rhythmically. Sobs shook my body now, starting gradually and building uniformly until I trembled violently; tears I did not realize I had flowing freely from my eyes as I held on to my world.

"One minute," a soft mechanical voice said into the emotion charged room.

"No, God no...please no," I whispered.

I held even tighter. Sammy began to squirm against me, fighting my tight hold. Soon he began to whimper as I refused to let go. Hearing his soft crying I released him letting him slide to the floor over my legs. As he steadied himself on his knees he turned to me with his huge smile and gave a final giggle as he turned to crawl away. My heart shattering into a million pieces I fell to the floor on my chest as he scurried away, his little bare arms and legs pumping. In seconds the darkness behind the bookshelves had swallowed him as I lay prone on the yielding carpet. Violent and grotesque wracking sobs slammed at me as I lay, knocking the air out of my pumping lungs. Burying my fingers deep into the fabric I cried unabated as the seconds fell away.

"I love you my little son."

Darkness fell over me as the beams of sunlight began to fade in a horizontal motion across the floor, disappearing completely when they reached my forlorn body.

I lay quietly now, face wet in the coolness of the evening not hearing the words.

“Simulation ended. Memory chip S744391. Samuel O’Brien, late son of James Vincent O’Brien. Year 2039, November 11.