



Walk In My Shoes

THE STORY OF ANDY J.

Preface

Every school has them.

The “outcast,”
the “nerd”
the “loner”

those who seem “different” in some way
from all others.

The things they say,
the way they act,
the strange way they look,

all don't measure up to the “standards” of those around them.

They are made fun of,
talked about,
and
for those insecure or unsure of themselves,
they are used as tools to boost ones' own self esteem.

So easy to pick on. So easy to make fun of.
So easy to compare yourself to.

Seems like so many people are quick to judge someone on the
outside, but did you ever take the time to know the person you
are disrespecting on the inside?

I mean did you ever wonder what it would be like, for example,
to be an outcast in your school?

What's it like to go to school day after day
where the only people who will talk to you are
the teachers?

Even if students do talk to you, they talk to you
not out of friendship, but out of temporary politeness.

Maybe the following story can help give you just
a small idea on how it would feel to be in
this position.

The story is fictional, but you can bet the events in
the story are VERY real.

Happens to thousands of teens every day.

When you read the story, try hard to put yourself
in Andy's position.

If you do, you'll get what I mean when I say
people like Andy are, without a doubt, the toughest
people in your school.

Walk In My Shoes:



The story of
Andy J.



“Mrs. Corbi. Mrs. Corbi, your son is awake. You can see him now.”

Mrs. Corbi slowly opened her eyes,
momentarily stared up at the doctor,
then quickly got up and rushed into
her son's room.

Not knowing what she'd find, she reluctantly
walked in and then gently sat in a chair next
to her son's hospital bed.

"Dominic," she whispered. "Dominic,
it's Mom. How are you feeling?"

Dominic slowly opened his eyes and turned
his head toward his mother.
"I'm all right, Ma," he said.

"Don't worry. I'm all right."

There was a noticeable silence before his
mother spoke up again.

"Dominic, you sure you're all right?"

Dominic turned his head away. Tears began
to slowly stream down his face as he blankly
stared out into space.

"Dominic, look at me. What's wrong?
You hurt somewhere?"

"Want me to get the doctor for you?"

“No, Ma, don’t. I’m all right,”

“If you’re not in pain, Dominic, then why are you crying?”
she asked. “Let me get the doctor for you.”

Dominic said nothing, but after a few moments
of silence, mom spoke up.

“Dominic, the doctor said you were shot.
Who shot you? Tell me what happened?”

“Look mom,” he continued.
“I have to tell you something, but I don’t know
where to start. I don’t understand it myself.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Mom, just listen and try to believe me.
I know it’s gonna be hard, but please, please try.”

Mom reluctantly eased back into her chair.
“Go on Dominic,” she said. Tell me what happened.
I want to know who shot you.”

Dominic wiped the tears from his face.
Moments later he began to tell his extraordinary story.

“I, I guess it all started at school.”

One day in school Willy, Robert and I were hanging out in the hallway waiting for our next class to start when we saw Andy coming down the hallway.

You know Andy. That little nerdy kid who walks by our house every once in a while? As long as I've known him he's had only one friend and that was when he was in like the 6th grade. But that kid moved away a long time ago. I've never seen him hang out with anyone since then.

We picked on Andy every once in a while, but we didn't really mean anything by it. Everybody kind of picks on him now and then. We were just having some fun. Nobody thought it was a big deal.

Anyway, when Andy saw us hanging out, he turned and tried to walk the other way, but we caught up to him.

Robert started going through his back pack looking for I-don't-know-what while I started to mess around with his glasses. He kept trying to pull away telling us to leave him alone but we kept messing with him.

Eventually, Robert had his book bag and I had his glasses.

We were just fooling around with him, that's all. We didn't mean no harm or nothing.

After we started messing around with him
Mr. Williams, the janitor, stepped in to break it up.

He made me give back the glasses and made
Robert give back the book bag. Andy was mad. He's always
mad when we mess with him. He grabbed the glasses and book
bag and I didn't think nothing of what we did to him.

To me, it was just another day of fooling around
with Andy.

After the janitor made me give back the glasses, he
called me into an empty classroom.

“Don't you think you guys have picked on that boy
long enough?” he asked me. “Day after day you pick
on that kid. Why?”

I remember telling him that we were just having
some fun with him and that nobody was getting hurt or
nothing. I also remember telling him to lay off.

“You're only the janitor,” I said, “so just back off.”

After I said that, Mr. Williams gave me this scary look.
“You'd be surprised who I am, kid,” he said. Before I
could ask him what he meant by that, he went on with
what he had to say.

“You say you're not hurting anyone—that you're
just having fun with him. But did you ever look at it
from his side? Do you really know what it's like to be
in his shoes?”

I told him to knock it off with all that “*how do you think he feels,*” stuff and just leave me alone.

Then something strange happened. He walked toward me. I backed off thinking he was going to hit me or something.

Instead, he looked me dead straight in the eye and said, “you don’t seem to take this very seriously. Maybe, just maybe, you should know what it’s like to walk in his shoes.

Maybe you’d think differently if you did.”
Then he said something that made me really think.

He said,

“After all, we as human beings are given only ‘one pair of shoes’ in our lifetime and are never allowed to walk in another. You, my friend, need to walk in another.”

Even though I thought this guy was crazy, I will still never forget those words. I don’t know why.

And the way he looked at me.
The man scared the heck out of me.

As I began to walk away, I stopped and turned around to see if he was still looking at me. But when I did, he was gone. It was like a bolt of lightning went straight through my body when I didn’t see him there.

“Where....where did he go?!” I asked myself.

I tried to brush it off thinking maybe he went out
the back door or something,
but there was no back door.

That night, while I was in bed, I thought a lot about
what Mr. Williams said and especially that look he
gave me. I couldn't get those piercing eyes out of my mind.

And the words he said:

*“We as human beings are given only ‘one pair
of shoes’ in our lifetime and are never allowed
to walk in another. You, my friend, need to walk
in another.”*

What did he mean by that?
To me the guy's nuts, but it drove me crazy.
I was up half the night thinking about it.

Then it happened.

~

Dominic paused a moment.

His face suddenly began to turn pale as he continued
to stare hypnotically out into space .

“Dominic,” his mom asked in concern.

“What's the matter? You all right?”

Dominic then turned slowly towards his mom.

I know you're not going to believe me, Mom.
But just try, all right? Please, just try.

“Dominic, I'll believe you,”
his mom said.

“Just tell me what happened.”

Dominic lowered his eyes debating with
himself as to whether he should continue with the story.

After a few moments, he went on.

~

The next morning, I was awakened by the voice of some girl.

“Andy,” she said, knocking on the bedroom door,
“Andy, get up. Time for school.”

I opened my eyes right away. After staring at the
ceiling for a few seconds,
I remember slowly turning my head to look around the room.

What I saw made my heart beat really fast.
It wasn't my room.

I was sleeping in someone else's bed
in some strange room.

I began to panic.

I quickly sat up in bed.

Just then, there was another knock at the door.

“Andy,” this girl said, “are you up?
Come on, you have to tend to dad.”

I was frozen with fear. I thought maybe this was all
a bad dream or something. Maybe if I went back
to sleep I would wake up in my own room.

But it wasn't a bad dream.
It was more like a nightmare.

I slowly pulled the covers off of me and got out of bed.

As I began to walk around the room, I kept asking
myself, “Where am I? What is this place?”

I then turned and looked into the large mirror that
was on the dresser. What I saw scared the heck out of
me. My legs became so weak I had to hold on to the
dresser to stop myself from falling to the floor.

~

“What did you see?” his mom asked.

Dominic paused briefly before he answered.

“Dominic, what did you see?” she asked again.

“I—I saw Andy,” he said.

“Andy?” mom asked with a strange look on her face.

“You don’t gotta believe me, Mom, but I’m telling the truth. I saw Andy. I...I couldn’t believe it myself. I thought I was in the twilight zone or something, but there I was. I was in Andy’s body.”

~

Then there was that knock on the door again.

“Andy, you up? Come on! You’re gonna be late!”
the voice said.

I didn’t know what to say or do.

“Andy? You hear me?”

“Yeah,” I finally answered. “Yeah....yeah, I’m up!”

“Andy,” she said, “I’m coming in.” Just then the door swung open. A girl who looked like she was in her 20’s came walking in brushing her hair.

“Come on Andy! Look at you! You’re not even dressed for school,” she said pulling the knots out of her hair.

“Hurry up. You have to give dad his pills.”

She then left the room. I stood there for a moment trying to understand what was going on. I kept telling myself that it was all just a bad dream.

After a few minutes of talking to myself, I started to get dressed. My legs were so weak I could hardly stand. I put on a pair of Andy's jeans, a shirt, his socks and a pair of black and white sneakers.

After I got dressed, I went to the door and slowly peeked around the corner. I was scared to death. As I was peeking around the corner, the girl called up to me from downstairs.

“Andy, I'm leaving for school now! Dad's pills are on the end-table. Hurry up or you'll be late.”

Just then the front door slammed shut and there I was all alone in this strange house and in the body of another person. I didn't know what to do.

I went back into the room and looked into the mirror one more time. Maybe everything would be back to normal. Maybe I was Dominic again. Maybe this dream would be over. But no such luck.

As I looked at myself in the mirror, I slowly ran my fingers across my face to see if what I was looking at was real. It was. For some strange reason, I was in Andy's body.

It was then the words of Mr. Williams came to me...

“We as human beings are given only one pair of shoes in our lifetime and are never allowed to walk in another. You, my friend, need to walk in another.”

‘Could it be?’ I thought to myself. ‘Could it...’

‘Naaaa, this is just a dream,’ I said,
‘Don’t worry, you’ll wake up soon. It’s just a dream’

Then I decided to go downstairs. As I walked through a hall that led to the stairs, I noticed some pictures hanging on the walls. They were mostly of Andy and his family. I think it was his mom, dad and the girl who woke me up.

When I got downstairs I looked around a bit.

I went into the living room and was amazed at the number of family pictures there were: the family at the beach, the family at Disney World, the family at Christmas, family this, family that. You didn’t have to be a genius to realize that this was a close-knit family. Just by looking at the pictures, you knew that these were people who really cared about each other.

There was one picture I picked up of Andy and probably his dad. Andy must have been about 5 years old. I couldn’t help but notice how Andy was looking at his father; like he was his hero or something.

I remember that picture because it was the way I looked up to dad. I must have looked at that picture for like 3 or 4 minutes.

When I put the picture down on the table, I noticed that there was a drawer underneath with a round lock built into it.

I was curious about what was in the drawer so I tried to open it. I was surprised that it wasn't locked. When I pulled it open, I saw a small hand gun.

I wish I never saw that drawer.
I wish I never saw that gun.

I was about to pick the gun up when the front door suddenly opened. It was Andy's sister.

'I forgot my history book,' she said while walking through the front door. She then noticed me standing next to the open drawer.

'What are you doing Andy, she asked. 'What are you doing? You know better than to go near Dad's old gun!'

I couldn't say anything.

'Close the drawer and don't ever let me see you in there again. Understand? You're lucky I'm in a hurry. We'll talk about this later,' she said in an angry voice.

As she hurried up the stairs to get her book I can hear her speak in a loud whisper.

'Stupid gun!,' she said. "Thing's got to go."

When she came down from getting her book, she went to a room not too far from where I was standing.

After she walked in she called out to me.
‘Andy, Andy, did you give dad his pills yet?’

I didn’t know what she was talking about. Pills? What pills?

Although I didn’t really want to go in that room, I was curious about what was in there. When I walked in, I saw a man laying on what looked like a hospital bed. His eyes were shut, and there was like a plastic tube sticking out of his arm that was hooked up to some bottle on a stand near the bed.

As I got closer to the man, I realized it was the same man I saw in those pictures. It was Andy’s father. I later learned from Andy’s sister that he was dying from cancer. When I was told this, I imagined the picture I was holding in the living room, the one of Andy and his father, falling to the floor and breaking into pieces.

I remember how I felt just then.
I think it was the first time I started to feel really bad for the family

“Did you give dad his pills?”
his sister asked again.

I didn't know what to say.

‘Andy, did you give dad his pills,?’
she asked me for the third time.

Not knowing what she was talking about,
I just told her that I didn't.

She handed me some pills to give to her father but
then changed her mind. ‘Never mind,’ she said, ‘why
don't you go on to school. I'll give them to dad and
wait for the day-nurse to come.’

I stood there for a moment not knowing what to
say, how to act or where to go. I was all confused.
A thousand emotions race through my body.
‘Go to school,’ she said again.

I turned to leave but before I did,
I stopped to look back. I felt really bad.

I rushed off to school that day hoping someone
would recognize me. Maybe this whole nightmare
would finally be over.

As I walked in the front door of the school and
headed down the hallway, I started to say “hi” to
people I knew, expecting them to say “hi” back to me.

But that didn't happen.

Some of the people I said “hi” to looked at me strangely. Some turned their heads away from me. Others ignored me, hoping their friends didn’t hear me. Still others just looked straight ahead like I didn’t even say anything.

There were a few people who said “hi” back to me but you could tell that they were just trying to be nice and that was about as far as it went.

It didn’t take long for me to realize that I was in Andy’s body and Andy wasn’t exactly the most popular kid in school. As I walked down the hallway, all I could see were people looking through me as though I didn’t exist. It was like I was invisible or something.

It was a strange feeling for me. I felt like I was at a party and all the people there were strangers. As Dominic, I never had this happen to me before.

Then I saw Linda, my girlfriend, getting something from her locker. I was like, ‘Finally! Someone who will know me—somehow, some way, she will know who I am.’

I went up to her locker and just stood there hoping by some miracle she would recognize who I was.

When I cleared my throat to get her attention, she turned to look at me

‘Andy,’ she said in that nice soft voice she has, ‘do you want something?’ I figured I’d say something that would kind of jog her memory as to who I was.

‘Yeah,’ I said to her, ‘I just wanted to know if you had a good time at the dance last week.’ Man, she must of thought I was crazy.

She stared at me for a moment and then said something like, ‘Yeah, Dominic and I had a real good time. Is there anything else you want, Andy?’

‘Hey,’ I thought to myself. ‘This is cool.’ So I asked her another question:

‘Dominic’s a real nice guy, ain’t he?’ Once again she look at me like I was nuts.

‘Yeah, yeah he is. Look Andy, I really have to get to class.’

On the one hand, that made me feel good. I mean now I not only know she had a good time at the dance, but also that she’s crazy about.

On other hand, I was disappointed. No way she was going to recognize me. No way she knew who I was.

She closed her locker, looked back at me with a strange look and then walked away.

I wanted to tell her it was me so bad, but I figured it wouldn’t do no good.

I waited for a few more moments at her locker hoping she would come back and tell me she was just kidding, that she knew it was me all along.

But that didn’t happen.

Instead she just kept walking away.

As I turned to leave,
I bumped into some old friends.

It was Willy and Robert.

At first I was happy. They were my best friends.

How could they not recognize me?

‘Hey, guys! What’s goin on?’ I said.

I quickly learned that recognizing me wasn’t going to happen. They both looked at me as if to say, ‘this kid’s got some nerve saying hi to us.’

‘Get away from us, you little knot-head,’ Robert said.

I stood there for a moment, then turned to walk away.

It was here that the most amazing thing I ever saw came around the corner.

When I saw him, I froze;
I stood paralyzed with fear.

~

Dominic paused for a moment from telling the story.

“Well, who was it,” his mom asked.

Dominic said nothing.

“Who was it,” mom asked again.

Laying on his back staring at the ceiling
he laid his hand on his chest.

“*Me,*” he said. “It...it was *me.*”

I was...I was looking right into the eyes of myself.

Here I was in Andy’s body looking at myself!

Dominic slowly turned to look at his mom to get her reaction.
“You think I’m crazy, right? Say it. You think I’m nuts.

But I know it’s true.”

“I’ll tell you something, you can’t imagine what it’s like looking at yourself from somebody else’s body. I was numb with fear. I remember asking myself, ‘what’s going on here? How could this be happening?’”

~

Just then Dominic grabbed me by the ear and pulled me toward him. Having myself by the ear was the strangest feeling I ever had in my life.

Think about it, I had *ME* by the ear!

‘You got me in trouble yesterday, you little punk,’ Dominic said to me. ‘I ought to kick your butt right here and now—but I won’t. I’ll get you some other time...

Bet on it.’

My glasses were all crooked on my face from the force of Dominic pulling me toward him. I looked at him with my eyes wide open. I was really scared. Not only couldn’t I believe that was me, but the anger in his eyes scared the heck out of me.

I never knew I could be like that.

Soon my ear began to really hurt. I was starting to get mad so I told Dominic to get off me and quit messing with me. He pushed me away, stared at me for a moment and then all three boys turned to leave.

Before they left, Robert knocked my books to the floor. I stood there for a moment looking at them as they walked away.

I was angry. I was real angry.
I didn't know whether to jump on them,
curse them out or just leave it be.
Truth was there was nothing I could do.

As I bent down to pick up my books, the people passing by me were bumping into me like I wasn't even there. A few stepped on my books, some pushed me aside and one kid even cursed at me telling me to move out of the way.

No one, not one person tried to help me. Not one.
God forbid their friends saw them helping me.

It was like someone threw some trash on the floor and it was just in the way of people passing by. I was the trash. I was so ticked off, I wanted to curse everyone out.

I wanted to knock down everyone's books and have them feel what I felt. I wanted them to know what it was like to be treated like this.

But I knew I couldn't do anything. This made me even more angry. "Punks!" I said to myself,

"Dirty punks!"

Just then, the bell rang for the first period class.

I stood there in anger for like 5 minutes looking down the hallway before I headed to my gym class.

In gym it was a common thing to have students pick teams to play a game. And you know I'm a good basketball player, so I was always expecting to be the first one picked and usually was.

That day, we were playing basketball so I figured there would be no problems.

But then I realized I wasn't in Dominic's body. I was in Andy's skinny little frail-looking bony body. This presented a whole new set of problems for me.

One by one, I watched as my classmates were being picked ahead of me by the two captains. There went Tom, Rene, Richard, Elizabeth...

Eventually, I was standing out there alone. I felt weird. I was never put in a position like this before. I never knew how it felt to be picked last until now.

But it wasn't just being the last one picked that bothered me. It was the attitude of the captain doing the picking that made me feel stupid.

When the person before me was picked and the captain realized I was going to be on his team, he was like...

‘Ahh man, do we have to have him on our team?’

After he said that, some of the kids started laughing.

With all the kids lining up behind the captain, I was standing in the middle of the floor all alone. I felt like there was a giant spotlight on me showcasing the “school dummy, the school loser.” Everybody was looking at me and I couldn't do anything but stand there.

I remember hanging my head a little in shame.

For much of the game all I did was run up and down the court. No one would throw me the ball.

While I was running, I felt awkward, clumsy. Once or twice I even tripped over my own feet. Then I remembered that it wasn't me who was running down the court, but Andy.

Funny, I always thought that everybody liked sports and that everybody could play them. It didn't take long for me to realize that this wasn't the case.

Toward the end of the game, someone finally threw me the ball. Actually, the person who threw it was being double teamed and had no where else to throw it but towards me.

When the ball was thrown to me, it slipped out of my hands and into the hands of a player on the other team. The kid who grabbed the ball went down the court and scored a basket.

My teammates jumped all over me like I was the only player who ever made a mistake in the whole game. I looked over toward the gym teacher thinking he would intervene, but he said nothing.

When I—as Dominic—played basketball, I made a lot of mistakes during a game. Nobody ever said anything to me then. Not one thing.

Needless to say, the ball never came my way again during the rest of the game.

When the class was over and everyone was leaving the gym, I felt like everyone was looking at me; like everybody was blaming me because we lost the game.

I played a lot of basketball as Dominic, but I was never so glad to see a game end than I was with that one.

For some kids, school is a place to not only learn,
but to also hang out with friends.

As I went from class to class that day, I began to
realize there wouldn't be any friends for me;
there wouldn't be anyone for me to talk to.
I was all I had.

Soon it was lunchtime.

When I got in line, a few kids tried to cut in front
of me. I started to get angry. I tried to defend myself
by pushing my way back into the line but the more I
pushed, the more they pushed back. I just wasn't
strong enough to defend myself from the people who
were trying to cut in.

Suddenly, I felt a tug on my arm. It was
Mr. Burnstein, the Assistant Principal.

'What's going on here?' he asked me. I told him
that people were cutting in front of me in line. The
kids who were cutting all denied it and said I was the
one trying to cut in line.

No one in line would dare stick up for me. No one wanted to be
seen sticking up for Andy. There were like ten other kids there
and not one person said anything.

I thought to myself, 'what a bunch of cowards they were.'

I remember dad telling me one time that
*'to know right and not do it is the worst form
of cowardliness.'*

They were, without a doubt, the worst form of cowards.

Believing the three or four kids who tried to cut in,
Mr. Burnstein pulled me by the arm and put me in
the detention room for the lunch period.
Someone eventually brought in my lunch tray.

Sitting there by myself in the room, I stared at my
food as I picked at it with a fork trying to sort things out
in my head. I was so frustrated! I started crying. I remember
the tears dripping onto my glasses and then onto my food.
'Creeps,' I kept saying to myself. 'They're all Creeps.'

As time went on, I found out that when I did get
my lunch, I would end up sitting at a table by myself.
Seemed like no one wanted to be seen with me.

It was like I was some kind of freak who had to be
kept separate from everyone else because there was
something wrong with me. I never felt so all alone in my life.

Sometimes there would be no empty tables available
so I had to sit at a table where there were like two
or three other kids already sitting. When I sat down I
felt very uncomfortable. I would slowly put down my
tray not knowing how the people at the table would
react. I would look at the people, sort of like asking
them for permission with my eyes to sit down.

The kids would look at each other with smiles on their faces and would say very little. The smiles weren't one of those 'just trying to be nice' smiles. They were smiling as if to say, "can you believe this kid? He's got some nerve sitting here. Who does he think he is, sitting with us?"

Soon after the kids would go about their business talking with each other as though I was never there.

Listening to some of their conversations made me want to throw up. But what else could I do.

After school, I started to walk home; MY home.

But then I thought you wouldn't recognize me, Mom. I figured you'd call the cops on me or something because this strange person was in our house.

It was then I decided to go back to Andy's.

As I walked in the door, I saw Andy's sister coming out of her father's room. I asked her how 'dad' was. She hung her head a bit and asked me to join her in the living room.

She told me that it didn't look good for Andy's dad. I guess she was preparing me for his death or something.

Even though he wasn't my father, I was really sad.

I hung my head. I don't know why, but it really bothered me. I never felt this bad for anyone in my life.

After she told me about her father, we both got to talking. I didn't exactly like being in Andy's body, but I was still curious to learn more about his family.

I found out that Andy's sister was a college student studying to be a lawyer. I was so anxious to learn stuff about the family, I began to ask what I now realize were dumb questions. Questions like
'where's your mother?'

When I asked that question, Andy's sister gave me the strangest look. She asked me if I was feeling okay.

'Where's your mother,' she asked.

'You know what happened to Mom. Why would you ask me a stupid question like that?' she answered.

I remember there was an eerie silence after she said that.

'You miss Mom,' she asked me. I didn't know what to say. I couldn't answer.

Then she gently took my hand and said, 'It's okay, you can tell me. It's okay to miss her. I think of her all the time. I will never get over the accident. I will never get over her death. I miss her so much.

But we move on with life. We do things that honor her life, not disrespect it.'

The sad tone in her voice is something I will never forget.

First news about her dad, and now this. I felt really bad for this girl and especially for Andy. I remember asking myself, 'how much more can this kid take?' I began to respect this kid more and more for the courage he had.

I hung my head again. I remember whispering to myself, 'I'm sorry Andy, I didn't know. I'm sorry.'

At that moment I felt like the mean school bully you see on TV that everyone hates.

Let me tell you something: it's one thing to hear about how tough someone else has it, but another thing to actually go through that person's experience for yourself. It's then you realize that the person you see doesn't reflect the courage you don't see.

It was tough being Andy. It was tough.

Morning after morning I would wake up, quickly sit up in bed and look around the room hoping I'd be home again. But I wasn't.

It was the same old thing every day: the disrespect at school, the depression at home, the loneliness all the time.

After a few days, going through the halls in school and seeing other kids messing around with each other, walking together, talking about what they were going to do after school and the parties they were going to attend, made me want to be a part of it all in some way. To want something real bad and knowing you could never have it is so hard to deal with.

As Dominic, I knew what it was like to have friends.
As Andy, I knew what it was like to want them.

After school, I began to develop a routine. I'd put my books on the end table and go up to Andy's room. I'd close the door and go to a corner of the room and just sit on the floor with my knees pulled up against my chest. I would sit there feeling angry, frustrated, depressed, lonely, confused. Man, I never knew I had so many emotions. Most of the time I sat there just staring into space.

One day while I was sitting on the floor, I thought about my own family and how much I miss them. It's only been a few days, but I wanted to go home so bad. I thought about not being with my family and then realized how much Andy must of missed his.

I wonder if Andy sat in that room thinking
about all the things that went on in his life.

I wonder if he sat in the same spot I did.

I wonder if he cried as often as I cried.

Then it happened.

I was in the bathroom in school one day and was
just about ready to leave when Dominic, Willy and
Robert came in. I never could get used to seeing
myself face to face.

I especially could not get used to the way I acted.

I tried to leave the bathroom but they
wouldn't let me go by.

Then, without any warning, they all grabbed me, turned me
upside down and brought me into one of the stalls.

I fought as they tried to put my head in the toilet,
but I couldn't get them off me.

'Knock it off!' I kept yelling,

'Knock it off!'

Just then, someone came in. Even though it wasn't a teacher, the boys still let me down. I was so close to being totally put into the toilet that the top of my head was wet.

'That's what you get for getting me in trouble the other day, you little nerd,' Dominic said as they all left the bathroom laughing at what they did.

There I was sitting on the floor by the bathroom toilet. I felt dirty. I felt humiliated. Tears were running down my face. It was the lowest point in my life as either Dominic or Andy. I wanted to get those punks, one of which was me. I didn't care who it was.

I wanted to get them all so bad!

I quickly got up off the floor, left the stall and flung the bathroom door open. I rushed down the hallway and out of the school on my way to Andy's house. I can't tell you how angry I was. The anger took over my whole body.

As I came closer to the house, I noticed that there was an ambulance parked out front. I walked up the porch steps where Andy's sister greeted me at the door. She gave me the news that Andy's father had died.

I can't explain why, but I lost it.

I just broke down and cried.

Maybe it was because of all the frustration and anger that had been building up inside of me.

Maybe it was because of the guilt I felt for all the trouble I caused Andy as Dominic.

Maybe it was because I was getting to know and love this family and my heart went out to them.

Maybe it was because when his dad died, it reminded me of when dad left home for good. When that happened, in a sense, my dad died too.

I don't know why. All I know is for some reason I broke down and cried. I didn't think I had anymore tears left in me, but I guess I did.

I remember ending up on the floor of the porch on my knees bent over crying uncontrollably.

I totally lost it. I never cried like that in all my life.

Andy's sister gently lifted me off the floor, wrapped her arms around me and cried along with me. I couldn't stop crying for about like 10 minutes straight.

Was it Andy crying or was it me?
It could have been both of us. Probably was.

~

Dominic paused a few moments from
telling the story to wipe away tears from his eyes.

Then, suddenly, his countenance changed from sadness to anger

~

Then my sadness turned to anger. Without saying anything, I quickly went into the house and headed for the living room.

I opened the dresser drawer and pulled out the gun.

My hand shook as I grabbed it. I never held a gun before.

I looked at it for a moment, put it in my coat, then rushed out the front door past Andy's sister.

“What are you doing?” she screamed
“Where are you going,”

I kept right on running.

As I ran, all I could think about was revenge. I was mad at everything and everyone.

The disrespect I was getting in school was the dynamite.

The problems at home were the fuse.

Dominic and the boys lit the fuse by what they did in the bathroom.

About three blocks from Andy's house I spotted
Dominic, Robert and Willy.

They saw me coming and began to walk towards me.

I pulled out the gun and as I raised it,
my hands began to shake even more.

'Dominic,' I yelled. **'Dominic!'**

All three froze in their tracks when they saw the gun.

My eyes were wide open with fear. I was scared to death.

It seemed like I was holding that gun for like an
hour even though it was more like a minute.

It's bad enough pointing a gun at someone,
but you can't imagine what it is like to point one at yourself.

It was here that I began to realize what I was doing.

'What's going on here,' I asked myself as my hands
continued to shake, 'you nuts? You can't shoot nobody.

What the heck you doing.'

Getting control of my anger, I started to think more clearly.

I slowly lowered the gun.

It wasn't just because I couldn't shoot myself.

I couldn't shoot nobody.

As I lowered the gun,
I heard a voice behind me yelling;

‘NOOOOO, DON’T DO THAT!!!
DON’T DO THAT!!

I turned to see who it was. My jaw dropped
when I saw who was running towards me.

It was Andy.

‘NOOOO,’ he kept yelling. ‘DON’T DO THAT!!’

I didn’t know whether it was Andy who was
screaming at me or my own conscience.

I didn’t think things could get any stranger, but
there I was in Andy’s body looking at Andy
running towards me.

Or was I really still in Andy’s body? Heck man,
I don’t know. All I remember is telling myself
‘this is really messed up.’

Not seeing me lower the gun, Andy jumped on me.

When he did, the gun was knocked from my hand.
It fell to the ground and went off shooting me in the leg.

I shot myself by accident ! Can you believe it? I shot myself !

Even though it was an accident, I couldn’t believe I’d
go so far as to do something like this.

Man, did that hurt!

~

“Sometimes when you get pushed too far;
when you’re disrespected so badly like I was,

rather like Andy was,

you do things you wouldn’t ordinary do;

like pick up a hand gun.

Your anger,
your emotions,

take over and override any common sense you have left.

No one should be treated like that...

Nobody.

Luckily I got control of my senses.
Lucky no one was hurt except me.”

Anyway, the next thing I remember is
waking up here at the hospital.”

“That’s it, Mom. That’s the whole story. I know you don’t believe me, but it’s true. I don’t know what else to say to convince you.”

Dominic paused a moment. Silence filled the air as his eyes slowly lowered.

He then glanced over at his mother to get her reaction. She said nothing. She stared at him with a blank look on her face trying to make sense of the whole thing.

After a few moments she slowly leaned back in her chair, took a deep breath, thought for a moment, then gently leaned forward once again.

“Dominic,” she said in a soft voice,
“Dominic, you were having a bad dream, son. That’s all it was. It was just a bad dream. Maybe it was the medication the doctor gave you or something you ate. Whatever it was, you were just having a bad dream.”

“No!” Dominic insisted,
“No, it wasn’t a dream.”

An eery silence filled the room once again.

Mom momentarily stared at Dominic, turned to the doctor and then back to Dominic once again.

“Look, Dominic,” she said slowly standing up,
“the doctor says you need to get some rest.
Why don’t you lay back and get some sleep,
all right? Everything is going to be fine.
Just lay back and go to sleep.”

When his mom said that and sounded
the way she did, it made Dominic feel like
a little child being patronized by his mother.

To Dominic, the experience he had was real.
For mom however, it was just a silly dream.

Mom walked over to the doctor to get his opinion.

“Maybe you should get some counseling for him
or something,” he said. “The boy might need
some professional help.”

Dominic looked over at his mother and
then turned his body to face the wall.

“Don’t need no help,” he whispered to himself.
I’m not crazy. They’re crazy for not believing me.
Don’t need no help from nobody.”

Dominic then thought about all
that had happened.

“Can’t believe the way I acted towards Andy. Can’t believe that was me. I hate myself for what I did. Can’t believe the creeps in my school either. Wish they could go through what I went through. Wish they could do it for like 5 minuets. Wimps wouldn’t last 2. And none of those wimps had the guts enough to stop what was going on either. Andy’s a good kid. I’m gonna tell him that one day. You watch, I’m gonna tell him. Never let those creeps change who you are Andy. Things don’t stay the same forever, kid. Things don’t stay the same forever.”

~

The day finally arrived when Dominic was to leave the hospital. Anxious to go home, he was up early.

He got out of bed and quickly began to get dressed.

As he was getting dressed, he glanced up to see a man mopping the floor outside of his hospital room. Thinking nothing of it, he continued to dress. When all his clothes were on, he looked around for his sneakers.

“My sneakers...” he said to himself, “where are my sneakers?”

Looking everywhere, he couldn’t find them.

Then a strange thing happened. The man who was mopping the floor came into the room holding a pair of sneakers.

Dominic looked up and gasped,

“Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams?
What...what are you doing here?”

“Mr. Williams?” the man answered, “who are you talking about kid? I just came in to see if these were your sneakers. They were sitting outside the door here. Are they yours?”

Dominic was numb with fear.

‘Not again,’ he thought to himself.

His eyes slowly lowered from the man’s face to the pair of sneakers he was holding.

“Yeah,” he said in a guarded voice.
“Yeah, they’re mine”

“Are you sure?” the man asked.

“Of course I’m sure.
They’re the only pair I own.”

“Well, then,” the man told Dominic as he handed the shoes over to him, “they must be yours if they’re the only pair you own.”

Then the man said something to Dominic that made him feel even more anxious.

“You know what they say about having only one pair of shoes, don’t you,?” the man asked.

“Ahhh, let me see, how does that go again...?”

“Oh, yeah. ‘We as human beings are given only one pair of shoes in our lifetime and are never allowed to walk in another.’ Yeah, that’s it. That’s what they say. Did you ever hear that saying before?”

Dominic was too much in shock to say anything. Instead he slowly reached over and gently took the sneakers from the janitor.

He then cautiously walked towards his bed and sat on the edge to put his shoes on. He only took his eyes off the man to tie them.

When he finished, he looked up to discover that the janitor was gone.

“Ahhhhhhh, maaan,” he said stomping his foot on the floor, “Not again!”

Dominic quickly looked around the room and saw a hand mirror lying on the end table. He reluctantly lifted it to his face to see who would be staring back at him.

Touching his face, he saw his own reflection.

He breathed a sigh of relief, put the mirror back on the table and then went over to the door.

He slowly peeked around the corner to see if the janitor was still there.

He wasn't.

Shaken by what just happened, Dominic slowly returned to his bed and sat down.

Shortly after, his mother came through the door.

“Hi, Dominic. Ready to go?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he said, staring straight ahead in disbelief.

“Yeah, I’m ready. Let’s get out of here.”

“Something wrong Dominic?” Mom asked as both walked out the door.

“You’re not going to believe this, Mom,”
Dominic answered, looking back towards his room,
“but...” Just then Dominic stopped talking and
turned to look at his mother.

“Never mind,” he said.
“Never mind, let’s just keep walking.”

Mrs. Corbi looked at her son strangely.

“You know, Dominic,” she said as they walked
down the hall, “your first appointment with
the counselor is on Monday. You won’t forget, will you?”

Dominic quickly turned to look back at his
room once again. “Don’t need no counselor, Ma,” he said
turning again to his mom. “Don’t need no counselor.”

As they continued to walk down the hallway and past
the janitor’s room, a man slowly stepped out
and leaned up against the door jam. He folded
his arms and watched as Dominic and his mother
turned down the short corridor that led to
the front doors of the hospital.

The man smiled as Dominic’s words
echoed off the walls in the lobby.

“Don’t need no counselor ma.....
don’t need no counselor.”

EPILOGUE

After Dominic got out of the hospital, he made numerous attempts to talk to Andy. He was fascinated by his character; his strength to overcome adversity. But Andy wanted no part of Dominic. He simply didn't trust Dominic and who can blame him?

But Dominic was determined to prove himself. He finally got his chance one Tuesday afternoon when he found Robert and Willy picking on Andy in the gym locker room.

To make a long story short, it would be the last time those two even came even close to Andy again.

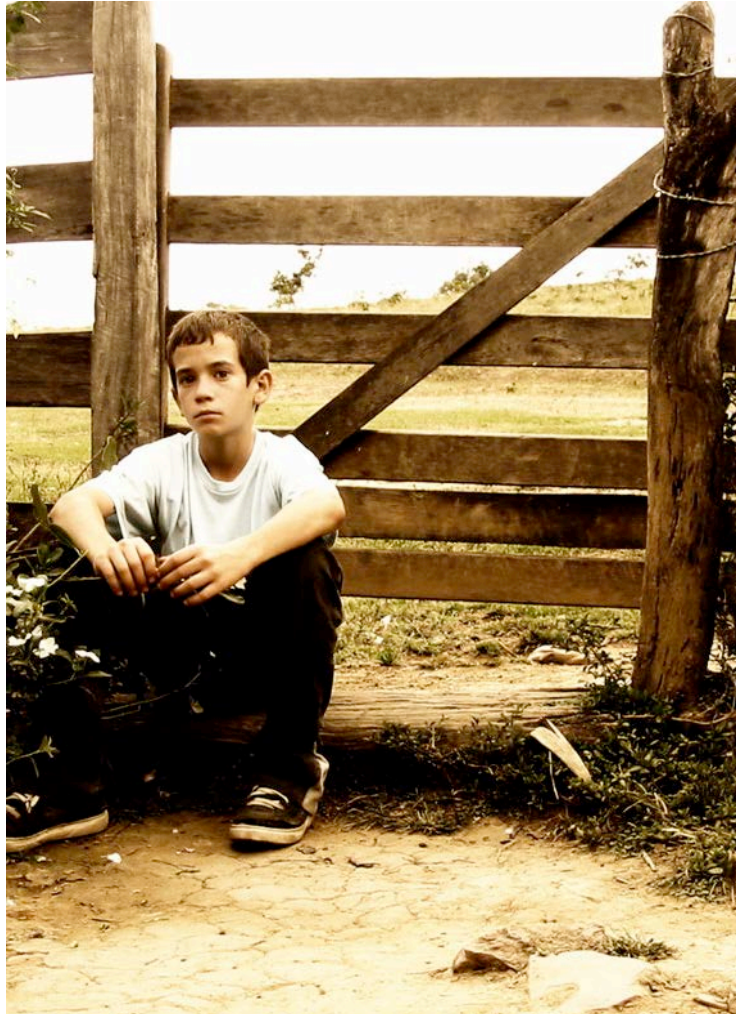
Because of what Dominic did, he and Andy slowly became friends and hung out together often.

From this point on Willy and Robert wanted nothing more to do with Dominic because of his friendship with Andy.

This wasn't a problem for Dominic.

Maybe, just maybe, all those two guys need is a little "janitorial care....."

.....If you get my drift.



As you saw with Andy, no one knows what a person goes through in life. You only see a small portion of a person's day at school.

What goes on the rest of the time?

Something to think about before you pick on someone who is either physically or mentally **weaker** than you are.

Better yet,
maybe you should think about why you would see a
need to pick on someone who is weaker than you in
the first place.

A lot of people say it's because the
bully is so insecure about him or her self, that he or
she needs to bring other people down just to build
themselves up.

Maybe that's why the bully only picks on those
people he or she perceives to be weak instead of
strong. After all, it's hard to build yourself up if
you're always "getting knocked down" by someone
who is stronger either physically or mentally.

I think this is what is meant by the saying...

***"Those who bully the weak
are weak before the strong."***

When the day comes in which you, the bully, are
standing in front of "**the strong**,"

I hope "**the strong**" you're standing in front of

will have **compassion**,

not **contempt**,

for you, the "**weak**."

