

A young girl and boy in school uniforms are holding hands in a hallway. The girl is on the left, wearing a white short-sleeved shirt with a dark sailor collar and a dark skirt. The boy is on the right, wearing a blue and white plaid short-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. Both are wearing black backpacks. They are looking at each other with slight smiles. The background shows green lockers and a hallway with a green wall.

A Girl I Really Like Turned Me Down

*I Am Super Sensitive—A Story about a Tween with
Untreated Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD)*

RICHARD CARLSON

**A Girl I Really Like Turned Me
Down: I Am Super Sensitive—A
Story about a Tween with
Untreated Rejection Sensitivity
Dysphoria (RSD)**

Richard Carlson

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Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria

(RSD):

Always consult with a medical professional for medical advice and help with RSD. The author is not a medical professional.

Rejection sensitivity dysphoria was first recognized by Dr. William Dodson in the 1990s as a mood disorder that causes emotional hypersensitivity. It is related to ADHD. According to Dr. Willian Dodson, “Rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD) is an intense vulnerability to the

perception – not necessarily the reality – of being rejected, teased, or criticized by important people in your life. RSD causes extreme emotional pain that may also be triggered by a sense of failure, or falling short – failing to meet either your own high standards or others’ expectations.”

Ways people affected by untreated

RSD cope:

1. Perfectionism
2. Overachievement

3. People-pleasing to avoid being criticized.
4. Avoidance: avoiding new things, rather than risk failure.
5. Dishonesty: People with RSD might lie to avoid criticism.
6. Being defensive: They push blame away from themselves to avoid accepting failure.

Reducing Rejection Sensitivity

Dysphoria: Unfortunately, there is no panacea for RSD. However, there are strategies to help a child cope:

1. Build self-esteem: Help your child achieve small successes. People with RSD have trouble accepting criticism and failure. Success helps their self-esteem and over time can help the child deal with their RSD.

2. Medication

3. Counseling

References:

Dodson, William. “3 Defining Features of ADHD That Everyone Overlooks.” ADDitude, August 11, 2025.

<https://www.additudemag.com/symptoms-of-add-hyperarousal-rejection-sensitivity/>.

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“Dodson ADHD Model: Revolutionary Insights into ADHD from Dr. William Dodson.” NeuroLaunch.com, August 15, 2025.

<https://neurolaunch.com/dodson-adhd/>.

About the story: Cory, a twelve-year-old seventh-grader, has a condition called rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD), which he doesn't know he suffers from—nor does anyone else in his life. It is 1983, and RSD isn't even a recognized condition yet. He is sensitive, and his feelings get hurt extremely easily and intensely from rejection or perceived rejection, which makes him suffer and miss out in life.

A fictitious story taking place in the southwestern desert of Tucson, Arizona, USA, in the fall of 1983.

Certain details in the story regarding RSD were experienced by the author as a tween and teenager and were incorporated into the storyline. This story is a representation of how the author experienced RSD and may not be the same as other people with the condition. For more information, visit www.rejectionssensitivitydysphoria.com and www.sensitiveboys.com.

About the author: Richard Carlson is a highly sensitive person (HSP). He has authored children's, young adult, and other books.

Although not diagnosed by a medical professional, Richard is convinced that he had rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD) as a child and teenager until he was almost twenty-one years old, at which time, he believes it no longer affected him. Richard hopes to educate people about RSD and help those who have

the condition. For more information
about Richard, visit
www.richardcarlson.com.

Part I

Tuesday, August 23, 1983

It was the second day of junior high school. Cory was a sensitive, imaginative, and shy twelve-year-old seventh-grader. It was third period; lunch was next.

Cory suffered from a disorder called rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD) which meant he took rejection and perceived rejection extremely

badly. His feelings could overwhelm him, like a tsunami striking Honolulu.

Rejection hurts most people, but not as much as a person with RSD. Cory also had low self-esteem, much like some other unfortunate tweens and young teenagers, and RSD made his worse. It might seem farcical and silly for Cory's feelings to be hurt so badly, but it was his reality.

But Cory was worried. Very worried. Very, very worried. Cory changed into his P.E. clothes with the

other boys in his class. Sean, his best friend, had a locker next to his.

In Cory's opinion, Sean was the archetype of the perfect best friend. Sean was gregarious and had a winsome personality.

Like many of the other boys, Cory felt his stomach sink like the USS Arizona battleship at the bottom of Pearl Harbor because the students at his school were required to shower after P.E. He felt scared.

The day before, on the first day of school, the students had been issued

their P.E. padlocks, P.E. lockers, and P.E. clothes. They hadn't played any sports, so they hadn't been required to shower after class that day.

Cory had never been seen naked, except by his younger brothers and parents when he was younger.

There were no dividers or any kind of privacy in the shower area, Cory saw. It was one big room within the locker room: eight shower heads along two walls of the shower room.

“You’ll quickly grow accustomed to showering with the other boys.

You'll get over your nervousness before you know it, in about a week, probably," Cory's dad had explained before school began. "You'll have fun doing it, like I did when I was your age. Do not be afraid to try new things."

But his father's advice didn't quell his intense nervous feelings about being nude with a bunch of pubescent boys at school.

Don't be afraid to try new things was Dad's cardinal rule. But Cory was far from being brave about showering at school.

The P.E. teacher, Mr. Jones, led the boys to a large room where there were plush mats covering the floor.

Mr. Jones had explained on the first day that he was a former U.S. Marine Corps drill sergeant at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. He had somewhat of a military approach to being the boys' teacher and adult male role model.

“We've had some recruits who refused to shower nude with the other recruits. But that's not allowed at Marine bootcamp,” he'd said

yesterday, making an obvious point about the boys showering after P.E.

“Everyone is to shower after class,” he had ordered, just as if the boys were in Marine Corps bootcamp.

“We’re playing dodgeball,” he now said. “Take your shoes and socks off and line them up along the wall near the door.” The boys quickly followed his orders.

Now barefoot, Cory waited for the game to start. Then, the girls’ P.E. teacher, Mrs. Simpson, came to the entrance with the girls’ class; the girls

removed their shoes and socks, placing them along the wall at the entrance near the boys' shoes and socks. Cory caught glimpses of the girls' soles as they kneeled to place their shoes and socks along the wall. But one girl stood out: she was very beautiful and petite. Cory loved to see her feet. He stood there in awe of the girl's pure beauty and femininity. She was Aphrodite to Cory.

The girl had straight shoulder-length black hair, which Cory really liked; the color matched his hair. Cory

assumed they'd have black-haired children, like them. He imagined their son, a tween boy who looked like him. But then he thought that, hopefully, his son would take after her family and be physically attractive. He thought this way because of RSD. He was imagining that he wasn't attractive. What did the males look like in her family? Attractive, he hoped. She also had a cute smile that made Cory smile when he saw it. He couldn't tell her eye color, as he was

too far away, but he planned to find out.

What was her name? Did she have a boyfriend? He fantasized about dating her, holding her hand as they walked around barefoot, having a lot of fun being in love.

Cory knew she was the girl he'd like to marry someday: he planned for his girl and him to lose their virginity to each other after they were married. It was important to Cory to abstain from sexual behavior with a girl before marriage. In Cory's opinion, he had

scruples and was righteous: he planned to be a devout husband and father someday to a large family of caring siblings. He wanted to treat his girl like a princess whom he respected very much. Marriage was something special to Cory.

“What are you staring at?” Sean asked. He followed his friend’s gaze. “A *girl*?” He laughed, teasing Cory.

“No, no, it was nothing,” Cory blurted, still looking at the girl for a second.

The girl and her friend turned around and faced the boys with suspicious looks on their faces.

Thinking fast, Cory quickly changed the subject and asked the teacher, “Are we going to play dodgeball with the girls? Maybe boys against the girls?”

“We’ll play with half the girls and half the boys on one team, and the others on the other team,” Mr. Jones explained.

Cory thought fast again. He was timid and usually reticent, but

something was pushing him to be bold.

“Let’s play on the same team,” he nervously blurted to the girl and her friend.

“Okay,” she replied with a smile. She was a fun person to be around, Cory could tell.

He worried and wondered if he was attractive enough and good enough to date her.

Sean took control of the situation.

“Hi, I’m Sean. This is Cory, my bud. What are your names?”

“Susan,” the beautiful girl said with a big smile.

“Christie,” her friend exclaimed with a huge, nice smile.

Mr. Jones explained and reviewed the dodgeball rules. The game began. The kids had a lot of fun playing dodgeball. Cory stood behind Susan so he could be close to her. Sean stood next to him. Susan’s friend, Christie, stood next to her. Everyone had fun, but even so, in the

back of their mind, many of the kids, boys and girls, worried about showering.

The inevitable drained Cory, but he tried to have fun, especially seeing and being so close to such a beautiful girl. As they played, he caught glimpses of her beautiful soles.

Cory had a tingling feeling of love in his chest for Susan; he even had heart palpitations. He already had a massive crush on her! Then, because he was looking at Susan and not paying attention to the game, he was

struck right smack in the face, like he'd been targeted by a Scud missile. The ball ricocheted off his face and went flying into a wall. He was okay, just really stunned. A welt instantly appeared on his cheek. Out of the game, he lurched to the side, along the wall, not too far from Susan, Christie, and Sean. Then, Susan was out; she stood next to Cory.

Cory smiled as he looked at her face; she had beautiful brown eyes, like he did, he thought, feeling a nice

tingle in his chest and heart. She smiled back.

Cory worried that he probably was not good enough, and especially not attractive enough for her. He was much more concerned and overwhelmed by such things than other tween and teenage boys might be because of his RSD.

Soon, Sean was out, and then Christie. Their team lost the game.

The class played three more games, and each time, the gang were on the same team; Cory stood behind

Susan each time. He didn't get anyone out, but Susan got two girls out. Sean got five boys out, and Christie, one girl and two boys. In the end, their team won half of the games.

Once P.E. was over, the students put their socks and shoes back on and drudgingly headed back to the locker rooms.

“We'll see you around,” Sean said to the girls, and they smiled at the boys.

“See you later,” Cory called out, with an intense tingling in his chest; he felt so much love for Susan.

“See you guys,” the girls each chirped.

Cody smiled and raised his eyebrows at Susan as the girls headed to their locker room.

Part II

In the P.E. locker room, Cory's stomach turned and turned like lawn mower blades turning at the speed of light, whizzing around, completely out of control. He followed Sean to their P.E. lockers to undress and go to the showers.

Cory's stomach quivered and quivered and quivered and quivered. He felt completely horrified!

He quickly thought and thought and thought and came up with an ingenious plan.

Just leave your underwear on, he thought, feeling a big relief. Some of the boys stripped; others procrastinated. As Sean stripped to his birthday suit, Cory slowly undressed to his underwear. Cory hustled to the showers, as Sean followed. Not adhering to the showering norm, Cory didn't want to face Mr. Jones' reproach for wearing underwear in the shower.

And yet, Cory worried and worried about what others thought about his body. Last school year, he had been teased about being scrawny, which still bugged him very much. He didn't have big arm muscles, or a muscular chest, like some of the boys, he noticed.

Some of his classmates hadn't started puberty quite yet, he saw noticing the lack of pubic hair on those boys. Some boys had just a little pubic hair. They must have just

started puberty, he assumed. Sean was well into puberty.

Cory quickly checked out the other boys' penises: his was about average length or maybe a little shorter; he couldn't tell for certain because not all the boys had erections. Cory noticed one boy, who appeared to only have one testicle, which surprised him. Cory had been circumcised; a few of the boys were uncut. Cory knew the difference; he had looked it up in his encyclopedia a while back, after hearing about

circumcision on a popular dating advice radio show that he sometimes listened to in his bedroom, wearing headphones.

Cory began to shower under the deluge of spraying water that he shared with Sean and a few other boys, each taking a turn. He felt a lot better. He rushed to hopefully finish before Mr. Jones noticed him wearing his underwear in the shower.

Soon, the other boys could see that Cory was well into puberty because his dark pubic hair showed

through his soaking wet whitey whites.

Then, Mr. Jones approached from behind and exclaimed, “You need to take off everything to shower,” making Cory worry and worry and worry.

Cory’s heart beat right up into and out of his throat.

Cory muttered and quibbled, “But, but I can wear underwear.”

Surly Mr. Jones snapped, “You can’t. You must be naked.”

A massive nervousness attacked Cory's chest; but Cory was far from refusing to following the completely-naked-at-school showering rule. But, his infraction was just a peccadillo.

Soaking wet, he reluctantly and submissively lurched back to his locker to correctly discharge his martial seventh grade after P.E. shower duty.

Cory pulled his sopping wet underwear down and off his feet—which took longer because his underwear was wet and stuck to his

skin—leaving it with the pile of his other clothes on the bench, and joined Sean in the showers. Ten giant anvils were lifted off his shoulders; he still felt nervous and a bit afraid, but he had done it; he was naked in front of the other boys. Mr. Jones went back to his office.

Cory focused on his body and showering. He was thrilled that he didn't have an erection, which might embarrass him; he wondered if he didn't because he was so nervous. Rushing, he washed his body,

including his crotch, legs, feet, and behind his ears, and then he followed Sean, wearing a white towel from the rack near the showers, walking back to their lockers. By that time, much of Cory's embarrassment had gone away.

Cory stood there, as Sean dried himself off.

“See? That wasn't too bad,” Sean exclaimed with a smile as he quickly pulled on his boxers.

Cory, removing the towel off his waist, dried off and got dressed

quickly like a Russian Kinzhal missile flying to its target. Once his underwear was back on, he took a deep breath and felt relieved: a two-million-pound dumbbell was lifted off his shoulders. The boys dressed, locked their P.E. lockers, put their towels in the large laundry bin, and headed to their regular lockers before lunch.

Cory felt very lucky and relieved to have survived the first day of showering at junior high school. He wished and wished he was brave

about being naked with the other boys, like Sean and some of his classmates were.

Part III

During lunch, Cory sat with Sean and another very good friend, Stefan, a Hispanic boy. The boys had been friends since kindergarten.

They each bought a school lunch in the cafeteria: pizza and a brownie, with cold, refreshing milk. The size of each slice was far from scant, easily filling the boys' hungry bellies. They were the perfect group of friends, enjoying fun tween banter in the lunchroom.

Cory explained to Sean, “That girl: the one during dodgeball— Susan—the black-haired girl,” he said. Then he blurted, “I like her.” He felt brave for admitting how he felt.

What if she didn’t like him? He worried and worried and worried.

“Who’s Susan?” Stefan asked.

“She’s really pretty,” Cory exclaimed ecstatically. “She’s also got a pretty blonde friend.”

Cory had never had a girlfriend. Once, he had kissed a pretty girl when

they were eight years old. They had been in a fort that his friends and he had made, using an old pallet, old boards, brush, and an old king size mattress alongside a huge wash in the neighborhood.

Washes of different widths and depths flooded with rainwater during monsoon season, but were dry most of the rest of the year in southern Arizona.

He wasn't eight years old any longer, though, and Cory felt embarrassed about his body and

personality. Was he muscular enough? Handsome enough? Was his personality winsome enough for Susan?

He probably wasn't good enough for a girl; their future was merely a figment of his imagination. Cory's negative self-talk was exacerbated by his RSD, giving him mental anguish.

Cory knew that Susan and he had to get to know each other better. When the time was right, he would send his personal envoys, Sean and Stephan, to find out if she liked him,

too. If she did, they could have a romantic relationship; he was looking forward to that!

But would Susan accept him for who he was and hang around him and his faction of Sean and Stefan?

The boys talked about how well they hoped and planned to do with their schoolwork so that they could get into a good college. Cory's dad encouraged his children to do well at school so they might have more options in life regarding a career; he

didn't want his sons to have to work menial jobs.

The sky quickly became dark and morose: it was monsoon season in southern Arizona. There was going to be a violent rainstorm, leaving some trees, bushes, wooden picket fences, and other things ruinous.

Cory removed his shoes and lay on his bed after school, thinking about Susan; he was in love, he knew. All he thought about was her.

Cory slept that night and dreamed about Susan; he wanted to

marry her, someday, when they were old enough. He held his teddy bear tight, as if Susan were lying there right next to him.

Part IV

The next morning at the bus stop, Cory was dreading showering again. He had such a difficult experience yesterday that he planned to wear his underwear again and hope that the Marine sergeant, whom Cory knew meant well, wouldn't notice. He knew there was nothing wrong with showering nude with the other boys. After all, they all had the same stuff—they were all boys!

But Cory worried about not having a muscular body. How could he ever get a girlfriend when the other, more muscular boys were his competitors in the girl-dating market? Cory had much self-doubt because of RSD.

Susan was probably dreaming about muscular boys, he thought, feeling disappointed by his physique; he planned to check out the other boys today in the shower to see how many of them had muscular arms, chests, and stomachs.

It was third period, P.E. for Cory and Sean. The boys bantered as they undressed and changed into their P.E. uniforms.

“One of the babes in my English class this morning asked, ‘Where are your muscles?’ when we were talking about the boys at school,” Sean said with a grin; he obviously was not letting her comment bother him.

Cory’s stomach sank to the deepest depths of the ocean. If girls weren’t even impressed with Sean, they would never be impressed with

him! No girl would like him as a boyfriend—ever.

Maybe I should quit finding a girlfriend. Maybe the girls will laugh at me!

Cory shrugged, feeling extremely anxious. His emotions were taking control over him, and he couldn't stop it.

Cory and Sean stood next to each other in their underwear and boxers; Cory noticed that Sean's arms were more muscular than his.

Sean's chest, in Cory's opinion, looked much more manly and better than his. Sean even, unlike him, had some muscles showing in his abdomen, making Cory feel disappointed about being scrawny and undesirable, in his opinion.

“I guess girls are just like that. They like muscular guys,” Sean explained, not knowing he was making his best friend feel even more disappointed about his body.

Cory and Sean dressed and headed to the same room as

yesterday, where the boys and girls played dodgeball. They were going to play dodgeball with the girls again.

Cory followed Sean, and they put their shoes and socks along the wall next to the girls' shoes and socks. With Cory trailing behind, the boys walked up to Susan and Christie.

“Do you want to play on the same team again?” Sean asked the girls; they smiled and agreed.

Cory smiled as he glanced at Susan.

Sean smirked and then asked Susan, “Why don’t you play next to Cory, *your boyfriend?*”

Susan frowned and blurted, “He is *not* my boyfriend,” giving Cory a big frown.

Cory’s feelings were now extremely hurt. Possibly, the reason why Susan frowned and said what she’d said was because she’d be embarrassed to admit she liked him or thought he was cute and/or handsome. But Cory didn’t figure this fact out, and his stomach felt like a

three-hundred-mile-high tsunami striking New York City. He didn't know that RSD was greatly affecting his reasoning.

Cory hid how he felt inside. Sean giggled, and Christie laughed and laughed. Then, they played dodgeball.

Cory was hit in the forehead after only a few minutes because he was still in shock about his perceived rejection from the girl he loved.

He hurried to the side of the room and stood there, still in shock. A

girl's frown and mean look was synonymous with her not liking you, he believed. If only he had known about RSD and had been able to receive treatment!

The classes played four games; Cory's team won each time. Except for Cory, they all had a lot of fun.

After the games, the boys followed Mr. Jones to their lockers to shower; Cory was still in shock, preoccupied by perceived rejection, which might seem farcical to some people, but was harsh reality to him.

Cory saw Mr. Jones go into his office and shut the door. He quickly stripped to his underwear and went to the showers, hoping not to catch the attention of the strict ex-Marine sergeant. Sean followed soon after.

Wetting his body, Cory hustled to finish, but he wasn't lighting fast; Mr. Jones practically stormed up to him and caught Cory red-handed.

“You have to shower naked,” Mr. Jones boomed.

Cory reluctantly shuffled back to his locker, all wet. He removed his

underwear and went back to the shower. Glancing at the other boys, Cory saw that some of them had muscles like him, others more, and others even more so. Cory didn't feel as nervous about being naked with the boys nearly as much as he thought he would, and definitely not as much as yesterday.

Even so, Cory's body practically shriveled with feelings of shame as he stood lathering up his body and looking at the arm muscles, muscular chests, and muscular abdomens of

some of the other boys. He thought
no girl would ever like him!

Part V

School went on. Once, in English class, Cory smiled and raised his eyebrows at a pretty blonde-haired girl, as she turned and looked behind her; she gave him a mean scowl. Cory felt horrible as he stared down at his desk; no girl would ever like him, he thought.

Another day, in science class, his lab partner gave him a scowl as he tried to cooperate with her and do the science experiment. She continued

to scowl, just sitting there watching him. Then, when they put their names on the assignment paper, she said, “I’ll put my name *under* yours because if I put mine to the side of yours, people would think we were dating.” Cory’s feelings dove deeper than two GBU-57 massive ordnance penetrator bunker buster bombs being dropped on a half-mile deep underground nuclear research facility.

But she was treating Cory that way because she was trying to flirt;

she was hinting about dating him. She might have been confused as to why he was acting the way he did. Cory missed out in his young life! Arrrgh!

A week later, Sean asked Cory if he wanted him and Stephan to tell Susan that he liked her.

“Yes,” Cory exclaimed as they finished eating lunch.

Sean and Stephan spotted Susan and Christie sitting across the cafeteria from them, within Cory’s view.

Cory watched as his friends told Susan he liked her. Susan, looking at Cory, made a frown and gave him a mean scowl look for a second or two. Cory's heart sank and sank and sank. His feelings were hurt so, so much!

No girl will love me! He was ashamed to be in love with her.

But Susan might have reacted the way she had because, otherwise, she'd have to admit to Sean and Stephan and Christie that she liked Cory, which might be embarrassing. Just because she reacted the way she

had, didn't necessarily mean she disliked Cory or thought he wasn't attractive enough for her. Because of Cory's RSD, though, he didn't know this fact. Now, he sat there, feeling terribly hurt.

Then, as Cory looked at them, Susan, Christie and his friends talked for a short while.

Cory drank his milk, looking down at the cafeteria table, still embarrassed by his (supposed) rejection.

Then, Susan, Christie and his friends came over and sat the table and bantered about their classes and about school. But Cory was reticent.

“My science teacher is such a doofus. He makes us take notes while he is lecturing, without putting them on the board—what? Am I in college?” Susan said, making the boys, except for Cory, giggle and laugh.

“My science teacher hands out typed notes for us, and everything we need to know is on them,” Sean said, making Susan frown.

“So does my teacher,” Christie said.

“What about you, Stefan?” Susan asked.

“She uses an overhead projector, which includes everything,” Stefan answered.

“How about you, Cory?” Susan quizzed, making Cory nervous. He could feel his face turn a little red.

“Oh, she lets us copy the notes she writes on the chalkboard,” Cory

said. He was still in love with Susan; he wished he could date her.

The gang continued to talk about their classes and school. Cory listened most of the time, but he felt sad. His face showed it after lunch, when the other students went to their lockers and then to their next class. Cory didn't like being unattractive.

After the girls left, Sean and Stefan leaned in close to Cory.

“Susan didn't say *yes* or *no*,” Sean exclaimed.

“She didn’t say either way,”
Stefan said, making Cory frown
feeling his stomach sink.

Cory slept well that night, likely
from all the stress over Susan, and
from playing so much dodgeball.

The next day, he was actually
looking forward to showering after
P.E.; he was now used to it.
Showering after P.E. with the other
boys was fun, just like his dad had
explained; his body image didn’t
affect him nearly as much when he
was with the boys in the shower

because none of them teased him about it. He liked to be a good kid and do what he should do, especially with an ex-Marine sergeant for a teacher.

Part VI

Sean and Cory arrived at the P.E. locker room.

“Phew!” Cory exclaimed.

Sean could smell it, too.

“It smells like sewage in here,” Cory said, making Sean and several other boys pinch their noses. They walked past the P.E. teacher’s office to their lockers.

“The school had a sewer backup. You boys can’t shower anymore until

the showers are cleaned and disinfected,” Mr. Jones said.

The boys changed into their P.E. uniforms and followed Mr. Jones to a room with volleyball courts. The girls’ class soon showed up.

Following Sean, Cory walked up to Susan and Christie. Sean smiled and appeared to be happy to be with the girls, too.

The students went over how to play volleyball and the rules, and then they broke up into groups. Cory and Sean were on the girls’ team for each

game. They won two out of three games.

During lunch, the boys and girls ate together.

“We can’t shower after P.E. right now, because of a sewage backup. Is that the same for the girls’ showers?” Sean asked Susan and Christie.

“Yes,” Christie responded.

“Now the guys won’t see Cory’s three inches until they get it fixed,” Susan joked. Everyone, except for Cory, laughed and giggled.

“Until they get what fixed?”

Stefan quizzed. “His penis?”

Again, everyone giggled and smiled, except for Cory.

Cory knew he was longer than three inches! He was four! Why did she say that? He stayed quiet and acted like her comment didn't bother him. But he pondered and worried. Maybe she wouldn't like his manhood if she decided to date him and then got married. He was sensitive to criticism, especially because of his RSD, which made his feelings seem

like a tsunami viciously striking San Diego. But she was only joking with Cory and the gang.

“For the first two days, Cory tried to shower with his underwear still on,” Sean told them, “but Mr. Jones said he had to shower naked, and then he did. His willy was huge! I’d bet it’s too big for you, Susan,” Sean said. “It’s huge, like the cucumber that has the world’s record for being the longest cucumber.”

Susan and the gang laughed. But Cory felt hurt; was his friend trying to

help him? He didn't know what to think!

Then, Stephan interjected, "Cory is shy. He's too shy to say who he likes," teasing him because they already knew who he liked.

"Ooooooooooooooh," the others said, except for Cory and Stephan.

"Whom do you like?" Susan asked, making him nervous and sweaty. He had never felt his underarms sweat so much.

“I like a lot of girls,” Cory said, looking at the tabletop, not being one hundred percent honest. “Maybe I’ll find a girlfriend, and soon.” He hoped and hoped and hoped, but had negligible confidence in himself.

The gang bantered about their teachers until lunch was over. Cory felt very uncomfortable with himself and particularly his body, especially around the girls. He was particularly bothered about his unmanly and unattractive chest, in his opinion.

Part VII

The next morning, Cory had an idea: to forget about Susan. His feelings were very hurt, and he had an idea to get over it, but because of his RSD, he couldn't rid himself of this awful feeling.

Cory and Stefan sat at a bench outside, adjacent to the cafeteria, waiting for Sean to arrive.

“Are you still interested in Susan?” Stefan asked Cory.

“No,” Cory exclaimed, “not anymore.”

“Can I date her?” Stefan asked, hoping he’d say yes.

“Okay.”

That’s when Sean showed up.

“I’m going to ask Susan to date me today,” Stefan exclaimed happily.

“That’s cool,” Sean replied, casting a quick glance at Cory.

“I’m going to give her a note during lunch,” Stefan explained.

The bell rang, and the boys went to their classes, hoping to have an interesting day.

During P.E., the boys and girls did not play together. Today, the girls played basketball, while the boys wrestled. Cory dreaded wrestling, mainly because he was no good at it. Cory wrestled against Aaron, who was about his height and weight.

“I’m gonna kick some ass,” Aaron pointed to his chest and jeered at Cory several times before each match, making Cory feel like an

extreme weakling and a very big wussy.

Cory just did what he had to do to get the class over with. He lost every wrestling match; Aaron was just better than him.

Sean wrestled a boy who won zero matches out of four. Sean patted his chest, proudly trotting in place.

During lunch, the boys devoured their meal. Stefan left when they were done, and Cory and Sean watched as he crossed the lunchroom and handed his note to Susan. She took it

and faced away from Stefan and Christie to read the note.

“Yes!” she shouted, turning her body to face Stefan. She was happy to be dating a handsome and cute boy. Stefan, Christie, and Susan headed over to Cory and Sean.

Cory just shrugged, completely let down.

Part IIX

Cory enjoyed showering with his classmates. He didn't mind doing it any longer because none of them teased or criticized him or his body. In fact, he looked forward to it every day; his dad had been right.

One day in the showers, three boys slapped each other's shoulders as they washed, and everybody laughed and giggled. Cory liked being naked with his naked classmates. Being nude with each other was a

fruitful male-bonding experience for the young adolescent boys.

But Cory still had a negative opinion about his body; he wasn't proud of his looks.

Cory was over Susan, but still felt discouraged by her dating his friend; then, they eventually broke up, and Sean dated Susan! Sean had asked Cory beforehand if it be okay with him for Sean to date her. Susan dated his friends, but not him. He felt let down and hapless.

RSD was affecting his self-esteem negatively, because he took rejection or perceived rejection much worse than most other people; Cory believed no girl would like him, and he felt sad and hopeless.

One day, the gang was eating lunch together. Then, Stefan asked Christie in a note if she'd date him.

“I'm sorry. But my dad wouldn't approve of me dating a Mexican,” Christie said, rejecting Stefan's love.

Right then, Stefan absolutely hated his dark skin; his skin was

darker than many Hispanic boys'. It was not right or fair for Stefan to have to feel that way. Cory felt his stomach sink as Stefan looked at his shoes, embarrassed and humiliated because of racism. Cory felt really sorry for him.

Sean and Cory talked to Stefan after the girls left.

“Don’t let that bug you,” Sean insisted. “There’s nothing wrong with you. Got it, buddy?”

Cory just made a sad face, not knowing how to reply. He was just as

shocked as Stefan, who deserved to be treated like everyone else. But because of Chistie's father's racism, he felt down and sad.

Stefan cheered up, like he should. Cory felt for him. The buddies talked about how unfair racism was.

“Racism is very wrong,” Cory finally chimed in. “It’s terrible,” he said, supporting his friend.

“She’s doing what she’s doing because she’s afraid of her father’s reaction. Try not to take it personally,”

Sean explained, making Stefan cheer up a bit.

Cory wished Sean had some helpful advice for him.

Part IX

Cory eventually got over his RSD when he was almost twenty-one years old. Later, Cory fell in love with a beautiful girl, and after graduating college, they got married and had six children. Cory was never diagnosed with RSD by a medical professional, but figured out that he'd had it by learning about it online in 2024, when he was fifty-three years old. Cory felt sad that he had missed out. Maybe, there will be hope for people with

RSD, with treatment and counseling.

Cory was happy now that he understood himself better.