

## My Brother is Gay

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I will never forget that day. It was October 1998, just after my 29th birthday. My brother Tom had invited me down the pub the night before, in a brief and puzzling phone call. All he would say is he needed to talk to me about something important, no matter how I probed nothing more was forthcoming...

So there I sat, staring into my lager, waiting for my little brother.

To be honest, I suspected Tom wanted me to lend him money; he was always clubbing and buying new clothes. I often wondered how he could afford it on his part-time salary as a waiter.

He arrived late, as usual, with a lame excuse, as usual, and we made with the small chat, as usual. How is such and such, did you see the movie on the TV... Then without warning, Tom said 'Mark, I'm gay.'

I didn't know what to say, I mean what can you say to that?

I think all I could manage to say was an 'Ok' for the next 5 or so minutes. The first thing I can remember thinking is 'That explains a lot.' Tom was never a 'normal' person, always walking his own roads in life.

As a kid he had refused to play football with the other boys in the neighbourhood, instead preferring to play dress-ups with our sister and her friends. I always just accepted Tom for being Tom, without thinking about it.

I knew I had to say something, anything. 'How long have you known?' I asked, still very stunned. He replied he had always known. I guess I had too. 'Who else knows?' I asked. I was the only one from our family who knew, which didn't surprise me.

That day we didn't really say much else, I think we were both emotionally drained. Small talk somehow crept back into the conversation. We talked about TV shows, the weather, my car.

Shortly after, excuses were exchanged and we went our separate ways home.

I didn't hear from Tom after that, which was unusual. So I decided to take it upon myself and call him.

A short time into a rather awkward phone conversation I took the bull by the horns 'You know I don't care that your gay don't you.' I said, hoping I wasn't making a huge mistake. 'Your sexuality means nothing to me. I just want you to be happy.'

Later that day we met at the pub. It was like the awkwardness never existed, we played pool, we laughed at stupid stories, we got so drunk we literally had to be carried to a taxi.

Basically like old times, like 'nothing had changed' I thought. Of course things had not changed, my brother just confided in me.

I felt special and I loved him more for trusting me.

When Tom came out to our parents, he asked me to be there for moral support, so I was of course.

We drove in my car, from Sydney to Newcastle. All the way I could tell Tom was 'scared shitless';

He didn't talk much, which is out of character for Tom, who is usually the life of the party.

We all went inside sat down and Tom told them what he had to say.

They were stunned initially, but also, like me, deep down inside they knew this was Tom. Dad went pale for a few minutes, but after a few minutes was back to his normal self. Dad never really cared for what other people thought and always taught us to be true to ourselves.

I think he is proud of Tom, as we all are.

It takes so much courage to do this.

Mum went quiet but also in a few minutes was back to herself in no time, taking it in her stride. I think she knew better than anyone who Tom was.

We all knew to be happy Tom had to be himself, and if he is gay then he is gay. Simple. As usual, our parents love was unrelenting and they did nothing but make Tom feel loved and needed. We all ate dinner together and everything was great.

On the way home Tom was back to his old self. I could see in his eyes he had a huge weight lifted off his shoulders.

Tom and I saw a lot more of each other after that. We would meet once or twice a week for a laugh and a beer at the pub. I managed to convince Tom to come to the cricket with me, which was a great time. Tom must be the only Australian not to know how to play cricket. He always makes me laugh like a fool.

After a few months, he told me he was involved with someone, and he wanted me to meet his new partner, Stuart.

I didn't even know he was seeing anyone, but I can understand Tom wanting to take things a small step at a time, and waiting to tell me.

We all met at the infamous Pub, and as usual, everything was fine. No awkwardness, and to my relief, Stuart was great, a genuinely nice person.

When I saw them together, I knew in my heart of hearts Tom was happy, and that is all that matters to me.

That seems like it happened so long ago, but it was only 4 years ago. So much changed but nothing did.

Tom is still happily with Stuart, they just returned back in Australia from a 6 month holiday in England, and moved into a house around the corner from me.

My 3 year old daughter Desrae has two loving uncles who she adores to pieces, and my darling wife Jade is best of friends with both Tom and Stuart.

We are all planning to take a holiday together when Desrae is a little older. I want to visit Asia, but Tom wants to see South America.

Some things will never change, when everything else does.

Mark. Australia

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