



# THE SIMPLE TRUTH NEXT GENERATION



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UNDER THE SWELTERING HEAT OF A HOT JULY DAY IN PORTLAND, A DAY IN WHICH NO SOLACE COULD BE FOUND FROM A SOFT, PUFFY CLOUD OR SPONTANEOUS RAIN STORM, TWO MEN WAITED PATIENTLY AT A CROSSWALK. THEY WORE CUT OFF JEAN SHORTS, AND LONG THREADS OF DENIM TIGHTLY CLUTCHED THEIR LEGS, DAMP WITH SWEAT. THEY BOTH WORE MUSCLE SHIRTS; ONE A BRIGHT PASTEL BLUE, THE OTHER WHITE AND BLACK STRIPES. THEIR STRONG ARMS GLINTED IN THE SUMMER'S BLINDING LIGHT. As they stood at the corner, the one in blue grew impatient. He walked quickly in little circles until the other reached out and grabbed his belt. He gently pulled him closer and wrapped his arms around him. He stared into his eyes and their lips met. His partner grew still, his impatience seemingly drained with a single kiss. Nearby, the crosswalk light flashed green, and the two departed, hand in hand, to destinations unknown.

And across the street, I solemnly stood mouth agape. My face twitched with pain from a raised eyebrow that had been at attention for far too long. My face flushed, my heart raced and my mind fervently sought resolution for what I had witnessed, not because of what I had seen, but because I had seen it at all.

I'm from Idaho, a place where you're more likely to get stuck behind a tractor, a truck with a horse trailer and a van full of Mormons than you are to see such an interaction. Outside of clubs or the safety of a friend's party in college, what I witnessed was the first public display of affection I had seen between two gay people in a place full of passersby.

When you spend your life in a place that voices disdain at your very presence, these moments are indeed milestones.

When I regained myself, admiration had replaced my shock, which quickly turned to envy. What did these men possess that I didn't which allowed them to act so openly with each other, even while existing in a world of ignorance and hatred? Either they were stronger, more courageous than I — unabashed, unashamed of their love — or that dense, oppressive atmosphere simply didn't linger in the air waiting to crush them to dust.

I had a few gay friends, and while I wasn't ashamed of myself — I phrased it as situational awareness; a half-truth — I didn't have pride. My interactions with