

## Dan

By Gail Grenier Sweet © 2002

There's a message on my answering machine. It's my brother Dan in California, calling from his car.

"Hi Gail and Mike. I just wanted you to know that I'm about to turn over 100,000 miles in my car. Thought you'd want to be in on the thrill since I was using your car when it turned over 100,000. Here we go.... 99,998... 99,999... This is a funny call huh."

Funny, yes. And prime Dan.

About three times a year, Dan has business in Wisconsin and he stays at our place. He always leaves notes on the bulletin board...

"I didn't make the bed cause I thought you might like to wash me out of it. Then again I didn't strip it cause you might want my 'aura' to linger."

Another time, after he encountered the dog's toothpaste in the bathroom:  
"Thanks for your chicken flavored toothpaste! I appreciate it. Go in peace...Dan Grenier loves you."

And another: "Nothing quite like being held in the bosom of your family. But I'm a leg man — though being in the leg of your family just doesn't have the right ring to it."

Dan is a couple of years younger than me, so he'll always be my little brudder. He calls me "Big Sister." We have a strange and tender relationship borne of much violence in our childhood. We used to try to beat the crap out of each other. I maintain to this day that the sibling you fought most with in your childhood will be the one you're closest to as adults.

Dan was the most annoying person to live with. For this reason alone, I love and honor my sister-in-law Nan. They've been married almost a quarter-century and she hasn't strangled him yet.

I always fantasized about having a brother who would protect me from the caterpillar boys. You know, the ones on the school playground who chased you with caterpillars they threatened to drop down your shirt.

Dan wasn't the protecting kind of brother. He was too busy getting in various kinds of trouble. When he was older, he annoyed me with excessive music from his bedroom which was right below mine and excessive smoke from the bathroom (where he "snuck" fags).

We alternated between loving and hating each other. Now he's approaching the landmark of FIFTY, which I have already forded. When we get together, we laugh and shake our heads about the fact that younger siblings don't remember stuff just the way we do.

We remember it *right*.

The End

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