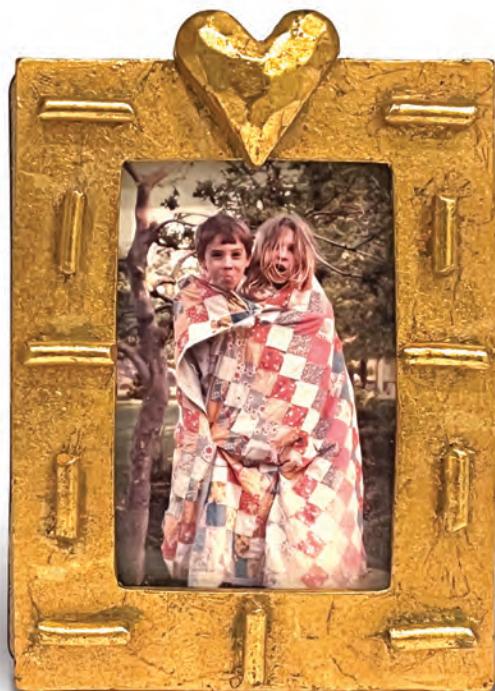


in loving memory of

VICTOR ROONEY

Vic



April 6, 1978 - December 9, 2021

some stories and images from your "old babysitter"
you will forever be in our hearts



Male Au Pair

I first walked in meeting Joyce at their home on 94 MacDougal Street in New York City. I was going to be their Swedish male Au Pair, I do believe I was the first male to take this title. But I guess in her mind, who can take better care of her children, on the streets of New York City and in the subway, a male or female? So, I got the job, and moved in the following day. Meeting Vic and Sarah was easy, they both were so sweet they made me feel at home right away.

All three of us had our rooms on the third floor, as you came up the stairs there was a small TV room, to the left was Sarah's room. Across from the stairs were two bathrooms one for the cats Treacher and Wendy and one for us. Down the hall was Vic's bedroom with very cool wallpaper, that is on the inside covers of this book, just on the left inside Vic's room was my bedroom. I was not allowed to close my bedroom door; Vic was not too fond of the dark. I totally understood for I too as a child was not too fond of the dark.





History

One day I was alone in the house on MacDougal Street, the kids were in school, Joyce running errands and Pat at work. I could hear a loud banging on the third-floor door that led to the public stairway. 94 MacDougal Street, at that time was two townhomes put into one. We occupied 3 floors on one side and there were two connected floors on the other side with a public stairway in the middle. I open the door to find an older man not so well put together yelling at me to find his friend Bobby, I replied there is no Bobby here. He insisted that Bobby lived here and that he was his best friend. But then it dawned on me, he meant Bob and not Bobby. I informed him that Bob Dylan had moved a few years back and no longer lives here. MacDougal and Sullivan Street is truly a magical place in the middle of Manhattan. It shares a private garden in the middle that you cannot see from the Street. I can still remember the smell from the first hyacinths blooming in the garden early spring.

You can learn more about the history of MacDougal and Sullivan Street from this New York Times article.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/29/fashion/new-york-secret-garden-anna-wintour-bob-dylan.html>

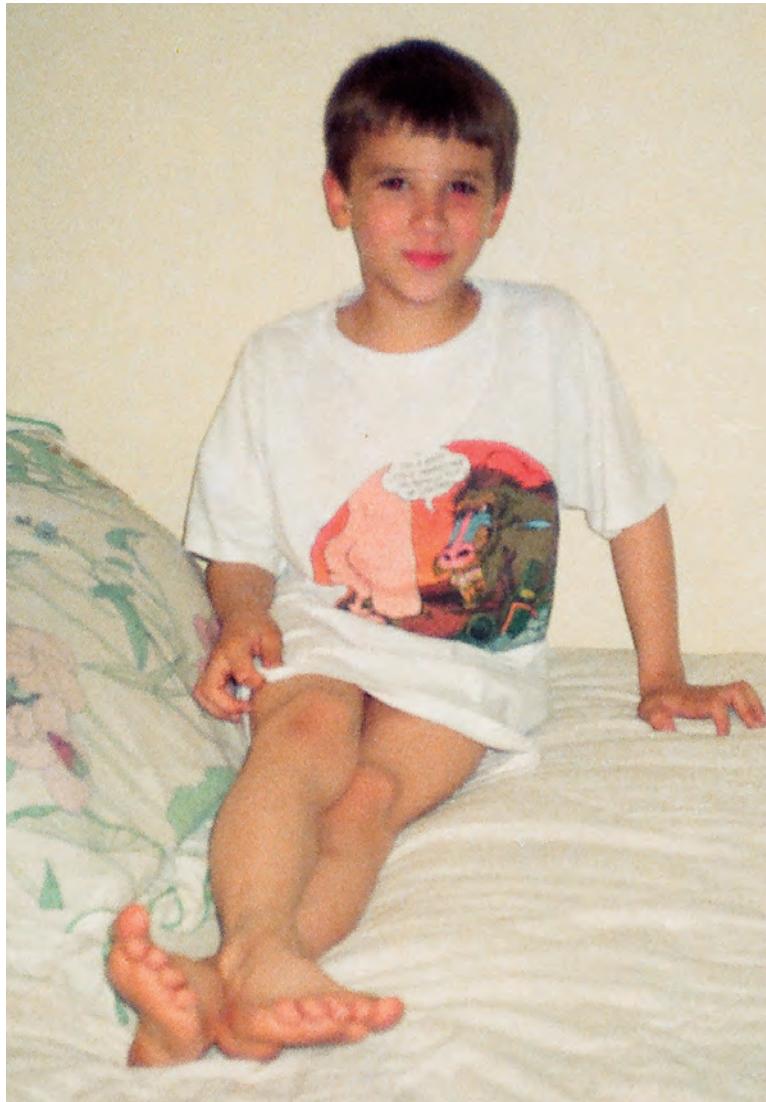


Tush

On our first trip to Florida I quickly learned that Vic, Sarah, and I had something in common: water, ocean, and swimming. We all loved it. One morning I got up and told Vic that he better go to the bathroom before we headed to the pool. I can hear Sarah pleading with Vic to poop, sitting on the floor in front of him on the

toilet; I was also pleading with him to poop. But Vic answered, "I can't poop. There is no way". I know you can, I replied, you proved it yesterday. The previous day Vic put on his pull-ups and floaties on his arms, eager to get to the pool; he's running, me after him, Sarah after me. Vic jumps in the pool; his pull-ups slip off, his tush is in the air, and yes, Vic knew how to poop.





Newt, Pulling A Fast One

Vic, Joyce, and I have to come clean. Your pet Newt had many cousins at the pet store. They all knew that one day either Joyce or I would go and pick one of them to take the place of your pet Newt. Newt always had an escape plan but never thought the water was essential.



Umbrellas

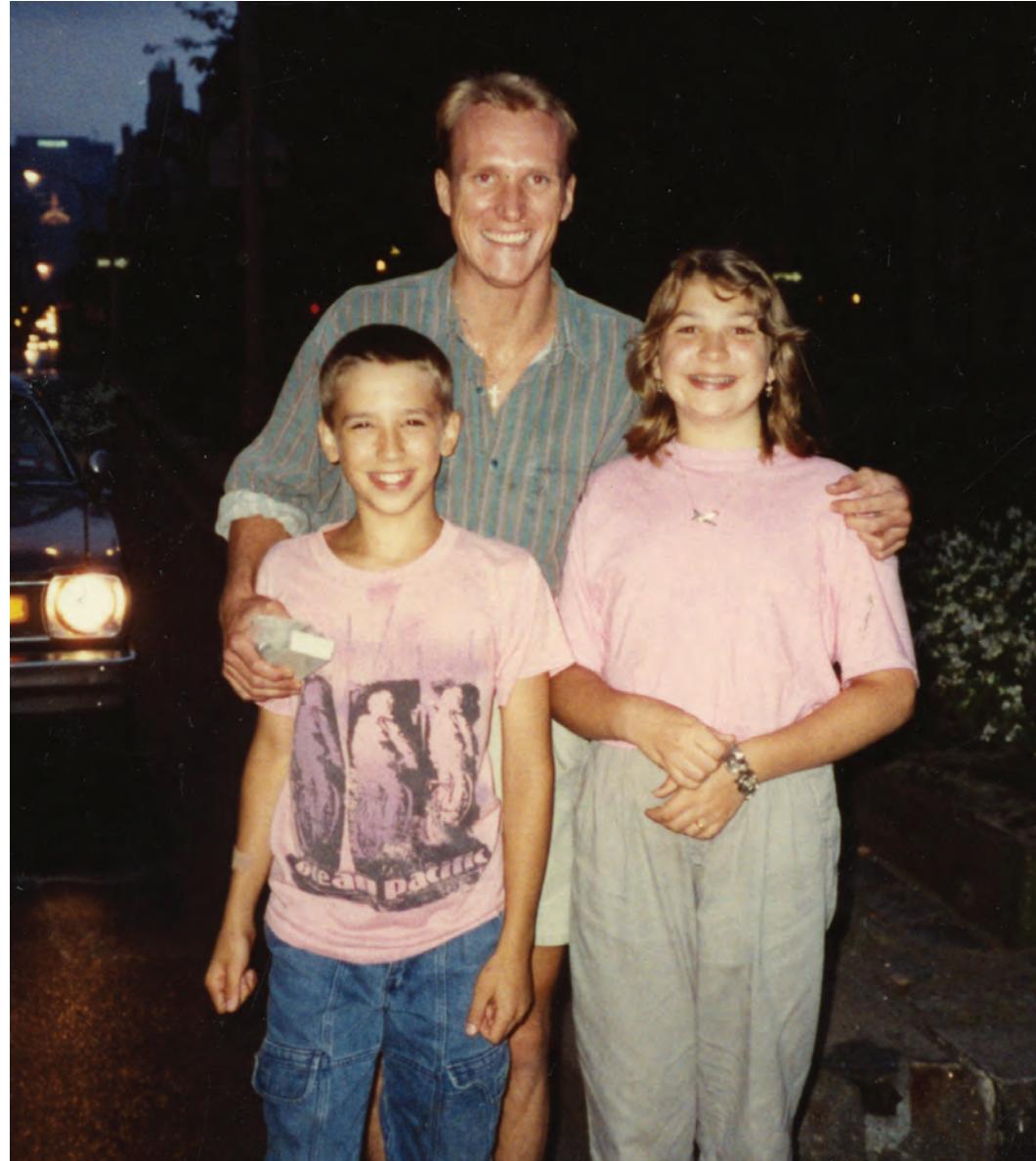
A few years later. It was an old house and I think the boiler was older. Joyce and Pat were on vacation, so I was alone with Sarah and Vic. One evening we were sitting in the TV room on the second floor and we started to hear this hissing noise coming from somewhere in the house. The noise was now coming from several places in the house and getting louder. We are now inspecting the strange noise; it's coming from all the radiators in the house. All of a sudden we hear loud popping noises from every corner of the house and with that water like rain everywhere. Vic and I just looked at each other clueless, but Sarah was there. Grab all the umbrellas we have in the house and put them on the radiators, Sarah screamed. Damn she is smart I'm thinking. But that was not the end. Later we hear a loud noise from the first floor—a large piece of the water-soaked ceiling landed right on the grand piano in the living room.

Confusing ‘iNG(g)liSH

One morning I’m trying my best to get knots out of Sarah’s hair before school—not an easy task if you ever saw Sarah in the morning. I can hear Joyce screaming from downstairs. “Vic has to wear a turtleneck.” I know what a turtle is and I know what a neck is—Sarah, what in the world is a turtleneck?

Deciphering Joyce’s handwriting was one thing, but going to the grocery store was a nightmare, finding all the particular items like Land O’Lakes unsweetened butter, applesauce, lots of applesauce. Yep, Vic could eat applesauce like no other.

The phone phobia, please don’t ring. Since my English was limited, answering the phone and taking a message was useless. Most messages were for Pat. He would come home, look at the notes and then look at me. I knew he could not make sense of my phonetic English.



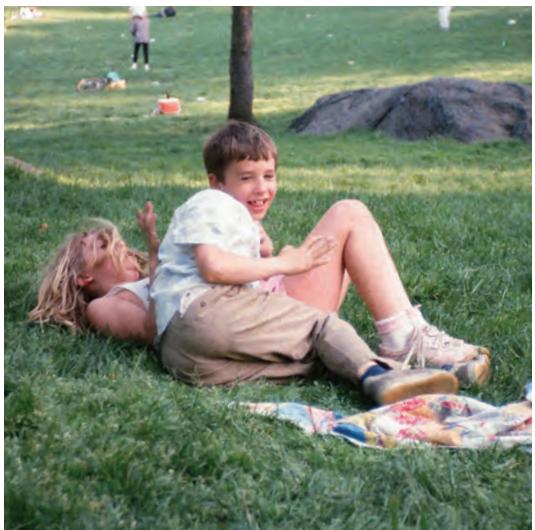
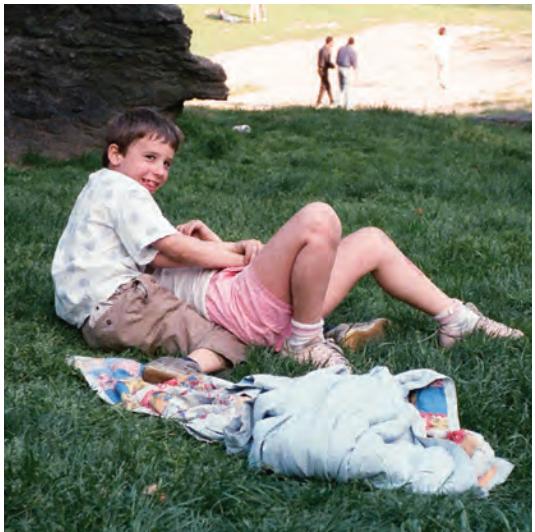
Good Taste

I was making some Swedish Wasa bread open sandwiches with some Roquefort blue cheese on them. Vic comes and wants to try some too. I said, wouldn’t you rather have some toasted Thomas English Muffin with raspberry jam? He loved toasted Thomas English Muffin, slightly cooled down so the butter would not melt completely. No, I want what you’re having, he said. I don’t think you’re going to like it very much, but Vic insisted. Here Vic, take a bite out of my sandwich and see if you like it. I thought he would spit it out so fast, but no. “This is good; I like it,” he replied.

Letting Off Steam

What better place to bring Sarah and Vic than Central Park in New York City? It is the perfect place to run, play or just lay in the grass relaxing. One of my best memories is taking them on a picnic to Central Park.







Googly Eyes

Nichole (picture below) was the girl next door on MacDougal Street, plus they had a house down the street on Meadow Lane in Southampton. She was a few years older than Vic. Vic would be so happy just staring at her every time she came over. I do believe it was Vic's first infatuation.





Stick Shift Under Pressure

Never a dull moment, Joyce and Sarah were at the bodega across from The Little Red School House where Sarah and Vic went to school on Bleeker Street. Not sure exactly what happened, but Joyce fell walking in or out of the store and broke her knee.

It was spring, and summer was around the corner, time to head out to Southampton every weekend. I did not know how to drive a stick shift and all the cars we had were stick shifts. Every weekend Joyce and I would rent a car with a cast on her leg. And exactly who is renting the car? The sales clerk asked. Joyce didn't bat an eyelash and said, I am, taking her crutches and giving me the keys.

A few weekends came and went until one hot Friday afternoon. Joyce told me that we are not renting any more cars; you are just going to have to learn how to drive a stick shift. I was in shock. We loaded up the Mazda with the two cats Treacher and Wendy, Newt in his bowl, Sarah, Vic, and Joyce with the cast on her leg.

Now put the shift in first gear, ease up on the clutch and press the gas pedal down slightly. Joyce said we would make some pit stops on the way, picking up the cushions for the TV room on the upper east side. I just looked at her in terror.

I guess bumper to bumper on the Long Island Expressway and all the traffic lights in NYC thought me well. But when we finally got to the house, I was so happy I made it there. I needed a break from all that pressure. Roger, you need to head over to the grocery store; Joyce said, really?!?!



Water Wins

Joyce decides that we should learn how to play tennis since we have a tennis court on the property. Sarah and Vic are both excellent. Me on the other hand, I could not hit that ball to save my life. Even the tennis instructor told me I was useless. I didn't care, so back to the pool or the ocean. And it didn't take long until Vic and Sarah followed suit. Sarah would be in the water so much that her lips would turn purple. I would ask Sarah, aren't you cold, she be like no. Maybe Sarah is the actual mermaid from the movie *Splash*.



Favorite Song

As we would spend extended time in the car, there was nothing better than the radio; one song, in particular, would come to mind, Pour Some Sugar on Me by Def Leppard. I can still hear Vic and Sarah belting the words; Cause I'm hot (hot), say what, sticky sweet, From my head (head), my head, to my feet. Do you take sugar? One lump or two? Maybe not the most appropriate lyrics for kids, but it was a whole lot better than hearing Vic sing; Grandma got run over by a reindeer.

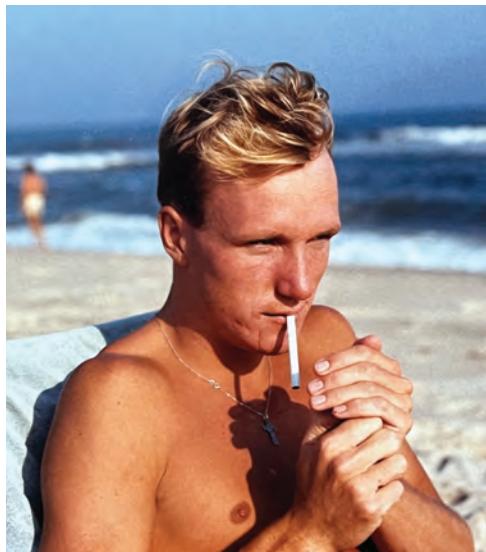
I can still hear Simply Red singing, Holding Back the Years, like a reminder of those wonderful days in the Hamptons, and one day will only be in our memories.





Fun Blondes

Vic and I were left alone for a week in the Hamptons, spending most of our day by the pool or the ocean. One day, Vic asked me what is the stuff you spray in your hair every time you're in the sun. It's called Sun-In it makes my hair lighter. I want my hair to be lighter, too, Vic said. Not sure your mom would like that very much, I said. Oh, she won't care. It's summer. We can say it was the sun, Vic replied. And who could ever say no to Vic? Joyce and Sarah come back, and all I can hear from Joyce, what happened to your hair, Vic! Joyce did care.



Flossing

Vic had an incredible imagination. We're in Southampton, and Vic asked me for some dental floss. I'm like, okay, not sure what he needs dental floss for. About 30-45 minutes later, Vic asks everyone to come and see his new pet. He has managed to get dental floss tied around a big fly like a leash. You could see dental floss levitating in midair until you looked closer and saw the fly. Only Vic and only Vic could think of this.

Thrill Seeker

Oh man, did Vic and I have fun every time we went to Six Flags Great Adventure in New Jersey. We would tell Joyce and Sarah they could find us at the scariest rides. They were walking way too slow for us. We wanted to get to as many rides as possible. Free Fall was our favorite, and we would get off the ride, run back to the line and do the ride over and over again.

Also, driving back from Southampton, Vic would insist on taking the Williamsburg Bridge, but the outside lane. Years ago there was just steel grating on the bridge so you could see straight down to the East River and you felt that there was no support railings. Sarah would be covering her eyes; Vic would be telling Sarah to look and not be so scared. It was a bit scary, but Joyce had taught me well how to drive safely.

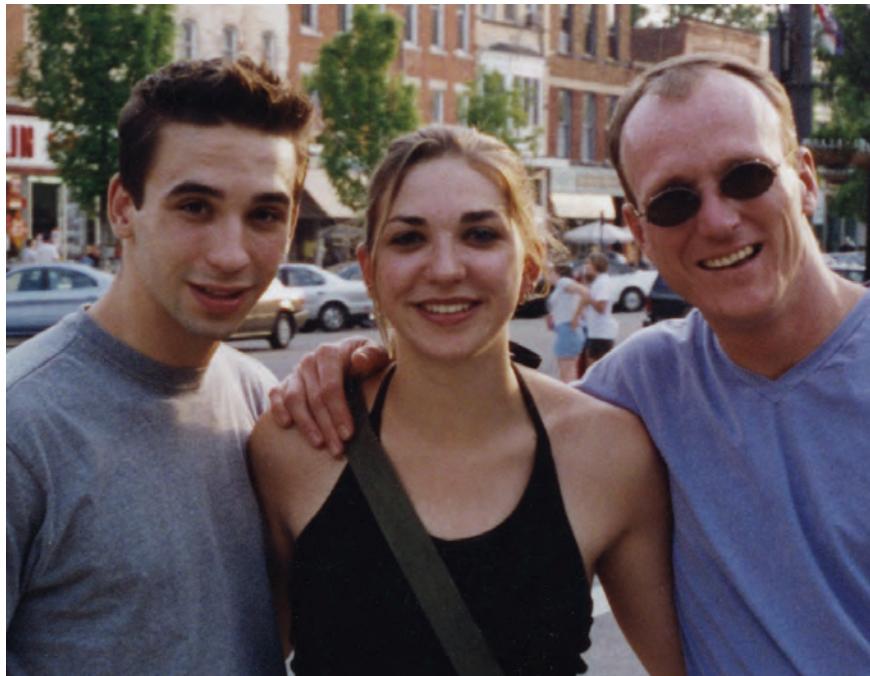
Garden Ornament

One day in the Hamptons, Joyce is distraught over my underwear. How did your underwear end up in my garden? She asked me. I have no idea, I answered. Did you do something with someone in the garden? She asked. I have no idea how my underwear ended up in the garden, and I'm just as baffled as you are, I answered, and no, I did not do anything in your garden except lots of weeding.

A few days earlier, I asked Joyce if I could take Pat's speed bike for a spin. Sure, she replied. Great, not before long I was in Easthampton, hot and sweaty. I want to go swimming, I thought, to cool off. I knew a store where I could buy a bathing suit.

I could not stop thinking about my underwear and how they ended up in the garden? But then it dawned on me. After I had gone for a swim in Easthampton, I didn't know what to do with my underwear, so I stuck them in the water bottle on the bicycle. Pat would come out on the weekends and take the bike for a ride. He most likely had found my underwear in the water bottle and had flung them into the garden. After I told Joyce the story she was beside herself and so was I. Joyce informed me not to say anything about this—pretend it never happened.

I think it's time to say, I'm so sorry about the underwear in your water bottle Pat.



Sarah is All Grown Up

A few years later, Joyce and I hit the road from NYC to celebrate Sarah's graduation from Oberlin College in Ohio. Vic arrives with a cast on his arm and a few bruises on his body. Let's say it was a good thing I was there; who else would clean Vic up. Like the old days, it is time to say hi to the little rubber duckies Vic, and get cleaned up.

The graduation was terrific. Sarah looked beautiful in her dress that I insisted on buying for her. But like so many graduations, it rained a little that day. The show stopper was Joyce in a white dress, who managed to get white garbage to cover herself with, but the corner of the garbage bag was pointing right up on her head; let's just say that Joyce now looked like someone we had never met before, you can draw your conclusion. But the sun came out, and it ended up being a wonderful weekend with Joyce, Vic, Sarah, me and aunt Marie. Lots of love.



Opposite Page: My graduation from School of Visual Arts 1992, Top right image; Andre LeDoux, me, Scott Rubman and Vic.



New Experiences

Joyce was the perfect mom, always looking for new adventures. The goat petting zoo in the Hamptons or kayak excursion through old native Indian rivers on Long Island where we could eat watercress right out of the water. Making an impression on visiting guests, driving fast on a dirt road, leaving a massive cloud of dust as we entered a Vineyard, we were a little late. Finding the perfect Christmas tree, no, we didn't just go to Hudson River to find one. We took a long trip to a Christmas tree farm upstate New York; we did find the most beautiful tree, and the experience was priceless.





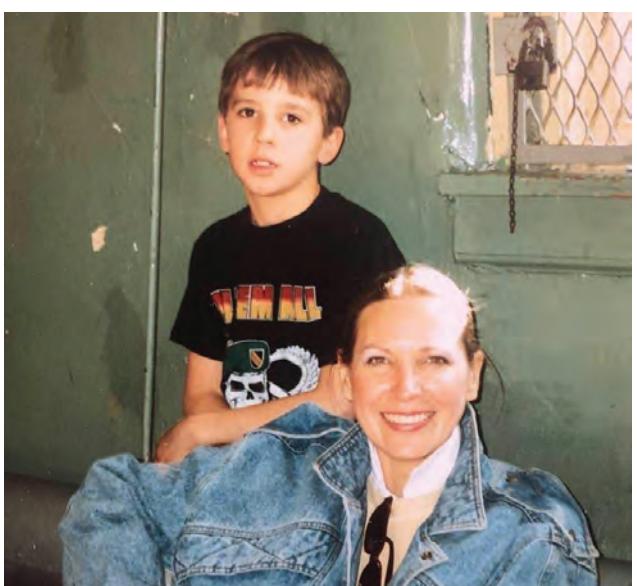
True Love

This story is a bit hard to write, and it takes place a few days before I move out of 94 MacDougal Street. But, as we all know, Vic was in my life long after this day.

Vic and I are walking from The Little Red School House to see someone talk about me moving out. Vic was taking it hard even if I told him that I was just moving a few blocks north and I would see him all the time.

Vic is tired and whining about how he cannot walk any longer. He begged me to pick him up and put him on my shoulders. I told him, no, but after a few blocks, I gave in, and we were standing at the corner of 7th and Greenwich Avenue. I pick him up and accidentally hit his head on the Don't Walk sign. Vic started to cry; I said, I'm so sorry. I held him so hard in my arms; he grabbed me around my neck, his head was right next to mine, and at this point he was sobbing. It wasn't from the bump on his head—he was grieving my goodbye, he was so tired of the emotions. I carried him in my arms the rest of the way, wishing I could take the pain away.

I will forever love you, Vic, and you will forever be in my heart.





The Swede

The creation of this book is to keep Vic in our hearts forever, and remember him as the little boy I used to have so much fun with. I got to know Vic when I was just a young man at the age of 16 in 1981. I didn't stay long the first time but I knew that I was always welcomed into the Rooney family. A few years later in 1985 I came back. Many things have happened throughout the years but one thing remains forever: love.

