

Scenario: Edward and Daniel

Edward and Daniel have lived together in a small New Hampshire town for 6 years. They are raising Edward's 11-year-old daughter, Ana. The couple has not entered into a civil union, nor have they married. Daniel has no legal rights to Ana, but he has been her primary caregiver for the past five years. Edward is 33 years old, prematurely balding and very slight. He works as a manager and accountant for a construction company in a town about an hour away from their town. Edward is HIV positive and, for privacy reasons, visits a physician in Massachusetts. Daniel knows Edward's HIV status.

Daniel works part time in a bakery in town, so that he can take care of Ana when she comes home from school. His employers, who are very conservative and have made homophobic remarks in Daniel's presence, do not know that Daniel is gay; they think that he has a girlfriend, and Daniel has been under a great deal of stress trying to conceal his sexual orientation and his relationship from them. He is 24 years old, six feet tall and muscular. His relationship with Edward is his first serious relationship. In fact, Edward frequently reminds Daniel of this fact and refers to "showing him the ropes" regarding how a gay relationship works. Daniel is estranged from his family, who reacted angrily when he came out to them at 17 years old; they live in upstate New York. Daniel attempted suicide at age 18, a couple of months before he met Edward. Though he has not attempted suicide since, he has shared with Edward his occasional thoughts of suicide and he has begun taking an antidepressant. As a teenager he was a heavy user of methamphetamine and alcohol; he has not used drugs since meeting Edward, but he does drink sometimes.

Daniel says that he is afraid of Edward's temper and fears that one day Edward will "lose it" and attack him physically or with one of the hunting rifles he has in the house. Edward has never actually hit Daniel, but they have had what Daniel calls "shoving matches" that Edward instigates when he is particularly angry with Daniel. Edward has told Daniel many times that he would kill both himself and Daniel if Daniel ever tried to leave him. Edward also has told Daniel that no one would believe that Daniel is afraid of him and that the police and courts would never help because Daniel is so much bigger than Edward and "they all think that pushing and shoving is just something that happens in all gay relationships" when the couple argues.

Edward and Daniel have a joint bank account, but Edward, because he is an accountant, has taken over management of the couple's finances. Edward has told Daniel that he lacks responsibility regarding money and took away his credit card. Edward gives Daniel some spending money when Daniel identifies things that Ana needs. Edward earns far more money than Daniel does, and he has investments that earn regular dividends left over from his previous career in finance in Boston.

Edward and Daniel attend the same church in town, which is the only one nearby that is accepts openly gay members. However, attending church is far more important to Daniel than it is to Edward, and Edward frequently tells Daniel that he does not want him going to church without him, so Daniel attends much less frequently than he would like.

The two men share a small group of gay and lesbian friends in town, although Edward has far more friends than Daniel outside of the gay community.