

— although David didn't see that part of the day at all! (Well, what's the good of a Birthday if you can't get up at a civilised time? — like lunch time!)

It didn't even hit David that this seemingly ordinary Thursday was anything special . . . Till he bumped into the basketball hoop, skidding on the basketball that had been lying there next to it!

Hoop, Hoop, Hooray

Now, that *did* strike David as odd. Because he was sufficiently wide awake to know that there had been no basketball hoop in sight in the passage the night before.

Basketball hoop!!! What on earth was that doing there?

He snapped fully awake with the shock and to the sweet strains of Sam wishing him a 'Happy Birthday'!

The basketball and hoop were, of course, Sam's Birthday surprise for David. At least they were *one* of his Birthday surprises — and the only one that David was allowed to know about right then!

Ringin'

So the two of them sat down to breakfast in the same way that they would any other day . . . Except that the 'phone didn't stop ringin' with friends of David calling him to say Happy Birthday to him.

David wasted the whole afternoon, and Sam didn't say a word. David was there bustling about, getting everything fixed for the evening, not realising that

Sam was a good couple of jumps ahead at that game!

So that they could make the final preparations for the surprise party without David guessing anything about it, Sam complained that he was too tired to walk the dogs that day and pointed out that the housekeeper was too busy with all the extra work she'd gotten on hand for that evening.

David was a bit surprised that Sam was chickening out of it like that, but — as he always enjoys walking the dogs anyway — he whistled to Sheesh and Bull's Eye and off they went for what Sam hoped would be a nice, *long* walk!

"I almost wish David could've seen what happened the minute he was out of sight," Sam laughed. "I'd been there, stretched out on the couch, trying my best to look all in and as lazy as hell . . . Then as soon as his back was turned, it was action stations! We must've looked like one of the early silent movies the way we were rushing around.

"And all the time we had to be on the look out for David, so I could steer him straight under a shower the minute he came back . . . After all, I told him, your guests'll be here any minute now . . . He must have thought I'd gone crazed or something!"

On Schedule

But it all worked out according to plan. David emerged from his shower, dressed hurriedly, and came back into the living room to find the place full of friends,

beautifully decorated and with the table spread with food he had had nothing to do with!

One Flaw

The only really important person missing from the gathering was Evelyn, David's Mom. She was still in Europe, continuing her vacation that had started as a trip over to see David in concert at Wembley.

Naturally, David was sad that she couldn't make it back for his birthday. But he reckoned that she must be having herself a great time, and he'd rather think of her enjoying herself in Italy than figure that she'd cut short her vacation to get back just for his Birthday.

The Stretch

Anyway, that'll be yet another way of making that twenty-third birthday stretch on and on . . . 'Cos David will naturally want to have another little celebration when Evelyn gets back and presents him with *her* exciting surprise gift . . .

Well, even if David does nothing about seeing to that extra celebration, you can bet your life that Sam will!!!

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Another pic of ►  
David, also taken  
on his visit to  
"Stewpot".

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Just like David
isn't it . . . the more
comfort, the better!
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