

Elizabeth Dye

Superman

“I run faster with no underwear on!” said Jack. My brother, who could not have been more than four, looked at the boy with a bit of wonder.

“My mom says that I have to wear a clean pair of underwear every day,” Joey said. Jack began to run back and forth from his house to his garage door.

“You are weird,” said my brother as he began to walk back into our yard.

“Janey, Jack says that he doesn’t have to wear underwear ’cause it makes him run faster. Does it?”

“What are you talking about? He said that?” I looked across the street to Jack who was still running around his yard.

“Stay away from that boy, Joey, he is a little different.” Joey gave me a disappointed look but ran back to our

swing set for a round of seesaw with some of the babysitting kids. The ‘babysitting kids’ came Monday through Friday. Sometimes there were even extra children at our house during the week. Mom not only fed them and cared for them from 7:30 A.M. until their parents got off work in the evening, but I feel as though she raised them. She was the first to see them walk and the one to potty train each of them. She gathered up their lost teeth to keep in a baggy until their mothers arrived, to put under their pillow for the Tooth Fairy that night. Mom had to deal with all of their questions about life, sex and growing up. When I was little I thought she was crazy for wanting so many children around her all of the time.

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I made my way into the house to find my mom in the kitchen still slabbing peanut butter on the twenty some sandwiches she was making for lunch.

“Uh Mom, Joey just told me that Jack, next door, is running around with no underwear on,” I laughed.

“Oh yeah, I know that. He says it all of the time. I think that he wants the boys to think that he is cool. Just as long as no one here is running around naked, we will be fine,” she said smiling.

“Okay, just thought you should know,” I said walking out of the kitchen.

“Hey, Jane, could you round everyone up for lunch please? I think that we’ll eat outside today.”

“Sure, Mom. Okay guys, lunch time!” I yelled out the back door. All of the kids instantly stopped their seesawing and swinging to run for their favorite spots at the picnic tables placed throughout the back yard. I made my way over to sit beside Joey. He looked up and smiled at me with his goofy grin as he wiped his mud-covered hands on his overalls. He had lost his first tooth on Monday in an unfortunate Big Wheeling accident. Although we have eight years between us, I have always had so much fun with Joey. We were always game partners, and he insisted that I take the role of his mother during our marathons of house playing. When our mom is not around, I am the first person Joey insists on being with. I am his “big sister.” We understand one another. I prefer to talk with him over any other family member. I don’t tell anyone this, but he is my favorite.

Mom brings out lunch and we all chow down on our peanut butter and jelly

sandwiches and macaroni and cheese. Summer is almost over; I can feel the temperature change in the air. School will be starting soon.

School shopping: this was always a trip that my dad preferred to pass on. Mom would load up all four of us in our mini van and drive the thirty minutes to the Southland Mall in Marion, Ohio. We would make our way to Sears first; this is where we would find our “school shoes.” School shoes were worn only to school. If we were caught playing in the backyard or wearing them on the weekends we would be punished. These could be various types of shoes; pretty much anything new would fall into the sacred category. All four of us were bought new sneakers. Joey and I were thrilled with our new Nikes. Joey’s lit up on the bottoms when he walked. I preferred plain white and blue stripes alongside mine. Jenny, our sister who is closest to my age picked out a pair of Smurf blue and white cartoon sneakers. Marti, our youngest sister, also chose cartoon sneakers, but preferred Barbie. After the shoes, we made our way to the boys department where Joey would need new pants. Mom chose several pairs for him to try on.

“Jane, take your brother to the dressing rooms, while I find Marti some socks,” she instructed as she walked toward the girls department.

“Okay Joey, lets find the dressing rooms.” We made our way across the store toward the “fitting room” sign. Joey was still too young to accurately try on new clothing. He needed a big sister’s opinion. I chose the handicap room with bars on each wall. I knew that we would

need the extra space for two people. Joey began making faces into the mirrors while I organized all of the pants on a wall hanger. After he sat on the floor, I removed his cowboy boots that he had insisted on wearing shopping that day. I grabbed the first pair of corduroys to try on and went to unbutton jeans. Giggles filled the entire room.

“Why are you laughing?”

“Um, Janey I didn’t wear any underpants today,” Joey said with his little hand covering his mouth full of giggles. I knew this would not go over well with our mom. I had to find a pair of ‘undies’ somewhere in order to complete our task.

“Okay, we had better find you some so that we can try on these new pants.”

“No, I don’t want to wear underpants. They slow me down,” he said.

“Where were you planning on running today?”

“I ’dunno, I run a lot, Janey. I am a little kid, remember?”

“Here is the deal, you have to try the pants on with underwear, but then you can take them back off, okay?” Joey looked satisfied with my plan. I made my way out of the dressing room to find the boys underwear. I found a rack of size small Super Man undies and figured they would do the job. I knew that I had better pick a pack of underwear that was on sale, because our mom would have to buy them once we were done with my plan.

Once inside the dressing room, I ripped open the package and attempted to make Joey put on a pair. He insisted on only putting on the red pair with Super Man on the front (at least I had chosen a

suitable package). He cooperated and we found three pairs of pants that fit. Joey insisted on ripping the undies back off before putting back on his own pants. He threw them in my lap as I gathered up our items and went running out of the dressing room and back into the aisles.

Once outside the dressing room we saw Mom. Joey and I had taken longer than I thought trying on his pants.

“Where have the two of you been?” Joey looked at me with eyes that pleaded for me not to tell. I couldn’t bear to share our secret. Joey trusted me to keep it.

“We just had a hard time finding pants to fit,” I lied. Joey looked thrilled with my response, grinned at me, and then took off running full force toward my sisters in the girls department. Mom looked at me and smiled as she took the open pack of underwear and Joey’s new pants from my hands.

“Is it just me, or is Joey running a little faster today?” she asked.

