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I hope you enjoy my story.

The Christmas Shoes

By
TJ Fritz

Tommy really loved Saturdays because there was no school, Mom would make waffles for breakfast, and he just felt free to relax. His older brother, Danny, had already gotten out of bed and was in the living room watching cartoons with the little twins, Sammy #1 and Sammy #2. Tommy could hear Mom in the kitchen making their special breakfast.



“Come and eat, guys!” Mom yelled from the kitchen. The four kids headed for the kitchen table for breakfast.

“Okay. Coming,” said the twins in unison. Tommy could never understand how they would sometimes say exactly the same thing at exactly the same time as if they were programmed or something.

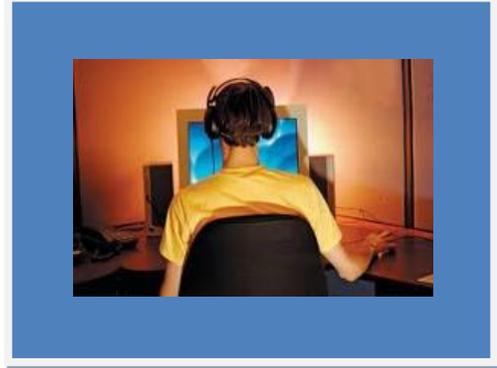
His older brother, Danny, had just become a teenager. Though he was only 13, he acted like he was 18, as if he already knew all there was to know. Though Tommy was three years younger, Danny treated him like he was a dumb little kid.

The Sammies were identical twins and could – at times - be identical pains. They were only three. Mom had named them Samuel and Samantha. But everyone called them Sammy One and Sammy Two. Samuel was called Sammy One because he was five minutes older than Sammy Two. Tommy thought that Sammy One should have been polite and let his twin sister be born first, but Mom said that things like that aren’t up to babies, but are left up to God. When Mom wasn’t around, Tommy called the twins “Thing One and Thing Two.”

As the four gathered around the table Mom said, “I’ll be at work for a few hours, then I’ll be back. We can go for a walk in the park later, if you like.” Mom said the blessing and they ate their waffles.

Tommy hated that his Mom had three jobs. She worked every day so the family had a place to live and food to eat. He decided that when he got older he would get a job and help out.

It was chilly now in South Carolina, with overnight lows in the 40s and daytime highs in the mid 60s. Thanksgiving was last week and Christmas was only a few weeks away. As usual, Grandma and Grandpa had everyone at their place for a great Thanksgiving dinner. Grandma was an even better cook than Mom. Soon Tommy's grandparents would show up at the apartment to put up a Christmas Tree.



"Now, you kids be good while I'm gone," Mom ordered. "Danny, you're in charge. You kids can watch TV, play on the computer, or do your homework."

"Mom," Danny moaned. "It's Saturday. Isn't doing homework on Saturday against the law or something?" Everyone giggled. The Sammies were lucky they didn't have to worry about homework yet.

"Mom?" Tommy complained. "How come Danny's always in charge? When am I gonna be in charge?"

"When you're older, Tommy. You two can take turns. But for now, when I'm gone, Danny is the 'man of the house.'"

After breakfast Danny and Tommy helped clear the table. This week it was Danny's job to wash the dishes, and Tommy's was to dry them.

"Do you kids need anything?" Mom asked. "Tommy, you've been awful quiet this morning."



Though he didn't want to say anything, Tommy felt that he had no choice.

"On the way home from school yesterday, my shoes fell

apart,” Tommy confessed. “I guess I wore them out.”

“Well,” Mom said. “With my next paycheck we’ll get a pair of shoes for you. Take a look at the shoes in the store window down below and see if you like anything. Meanwhile, maybe Danny would let you borrow a pair of his.”

“Okay,” Tommy said. He didn’t want to say anything more. He hated wearing Danny’s shoes. His brother had gigantic feet and his shoes were huge. Besides that, Danny’s shoes were stinky.

Mom and the kids lived in a modest third-story, three-bedroom apartment in an area where stores were located on the street-level, and apartments were located above the stores. There were clothing stores, restaurants, a toy store, a drug store, arts and crafts, of course, a shoe store, and many more.

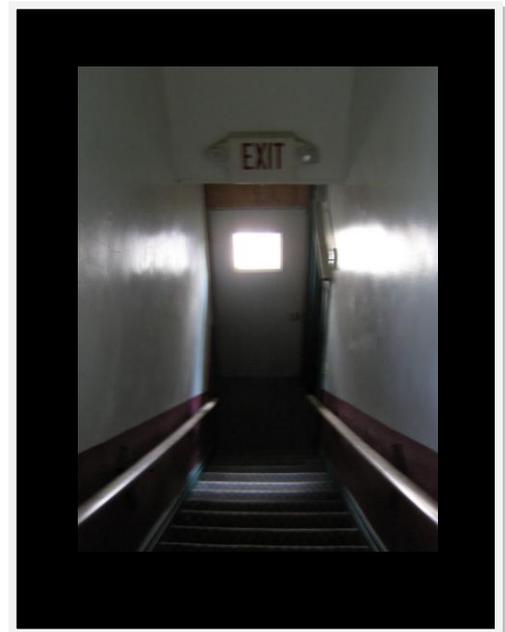
While the Sammies watched cartoons on the TV and Danny got on the computer, Tommy put on a pair of socks and a pair of his brothers old tennis shoes. The TV had been a Christmas gift from their grandparents. And Grandpa had bought a new computer and gave his old one to them. Mom had set up the computer so the kids couldn’t go online to anything they shouldn’t see.

“Where do you think you’re goin’?” boss-man Danny demanded as Tommy opened the door to leave the apartment.

“I’m gonna look at shoes downstairs.”

Danny looked at Tommy’s feet. “You better take care of **MY** shoes!” Tommy pretended to ignore him and stepped into the hallway and closed the door.

Tommy hated the hallway because something had happened there that changed his life. On the day the Sammies were born, Tommy saw his Dad for the last time. He had followed his



Father into the hallway and he asked, “Are you going to the hospital to see Mom?”

His Dad seemed confused. “Uh. Maybe later.”

“Mom had twins! That’s cool, huh?” Tommy said just to make conversation.

“Ummm. I need cigarettes,” his father said. He turned to descend the stairs, stopped and turned around. He put his hands on Tommy’s shoulders.

“You’re a good kid, Tommy. Stay that way, Okay? And remember that I love you. And I always will.” Then we walked down the two flights of stairs and walked out the door.

That was over three years ago, and it was the last time he ever saw his Dad. Tommy never told anyone about that encounter. It would remain his secret. He had thought it was odd that his Dad would be leaving to buy cigarettes and tell him he loved him. But now he understood. His Dad had decided to leave. Now, every time Tommy heard the front door to their apartment building closing, he thought of his Dad. And every time he heard the door opening he hoped he would see his Dad returning. Now the hallway and stairway were vacant as Tommy walked down and left the building.

The street and sidewalks were busy with traffic and people. Christmas decorations were everywhere – on poles, the front of buildings and inside the shop windows. Christmas music was blaring from speakers attached to the countless storefronts. Tommy walked a half block to the shoe store and looked in the front window. On display were dozens of beautiful shoes from canvas tennis and running shoes to fancy leather dress shoes. He just wanted one pair. One new pair! Warm, soft, comfortable, and that he could



call his own. He looked down at his feet and saw his brother's boats. Tommy had tied them as tight as he could but they were still too big and loose.

"Nice shoes," said a strange voice. Tommy turned to see an elderly woman standing beside him and looking at the shoes in the window. She seemed to be about the same age as his grandmother. She was average height, thin, had gray hair and glasses, wore a dark brown coat and carried a big black purse.



"Let's get a better look," she said. Then she walked a few steps to the front door, held it open and waved him to go inside.

Tommy quietly stepped inside the shoe store and the strange lady followed him. She led him to a row of empty chairs and told him to take a seat while she spoke to the clerk, a teenage girl.

A moment later, the elderly lady sat in a chair two down from Tommy's as the clerk brought a half dozen pairs of socks and a dozen pairs of shoes.

"Try these on," said the clerk as she handed Tommy pair of fluffy white socks. Tommy glanced at the elderly lady and gave her a questioning look.

"It's Okay," said the lady. "See how they fit." Tommy removed his brother's stinky old tennis shoes and then his socks. The new socks were thick and soft. He slid them on and they felt wonderful.



Next, the teenager said, "Now, let's try this on." And she slid a new shoe on his foot. "How does it feel?"

"It's perfect," said Tommy. Then he looked at the elderly lady as if to say, "What's going on here. I can't buy these!"

“It’s Okay,” said the lady. “Now, pick out two more pairs.”

“What?” asked Tommy. The kind lady just smiled and nodded. Tommy pointed to two pairs and said, “I like those... and those.”

Tommy remained in the chair as the clerk put everything away and met the elderly lady at the register. When the two were done, the elderly lady brought a shopping bag to Tommy and handed it to him.

“Merry Christmas,” she said. As she turned and headed out the front door, Tommy followed. For a moment Tommy and the lady stood on the sidewalk in front of the shoe store.

Tommy was confused, grateful and didn’t know how to act or what to say. Then he looked up into the elderly lady’s smiling face and asked, “Are you God’s wife?”

The kind lady laughed, bent over him and gave him a hug. When Tommy put his arms around her waist, he felt a kiss on the top of his head. He took a step back to admire his new shoes. Then he looked inside the shopping bag that was filled with his new socks and shoes. He looked up to say “thank you” to the mysterious lady, but she was gone.

The End

