

Old New Shoes  
January 15th

My alarm clock rings every morning at 7:09 AM. It is covered in stickers, courtesy of my little sister Ruby, but everything else in my room is decently neat.

I used to share a room with my big brother, Grant, but when he became a teenager, he got his own, and so did I!

Anyhow, once I'm awake, I put on my school uniform. All the girls at our middle school wear green skirts, white long-sleeve button-downs, black sweaters, and black dress shoes (I try to keep mine nice and shiny).

The boys wear the same but with pants instead of skirts. Once I've brushed my teeth, combed my hair, and eaten breakfast, I'm ready to roll.

When I hear a car honking outside our house, my heart drops slightly. It's not that I don't like school—I really do! But getting to school presents a challenge.

I carpool with Amy Kirkpatrick: Every day, she and her mom pick me up on the way to school.

I appreciate getting rides, but Amy can be a little...difficult. This morning, she began talking as soon as I got into the car:

"Hey! My birthday was on Saturday! You won't believe all the presents I got! For starters, my parents let me paint my room hot pink and told me I could start taking singing lessons! I don't think I need them! But they also got me..."

Amy launched into a very long list, but I won't bore you with the details.

As we pulled in front of the school building, Mrs. Kirkpatrick asked me how my weekend was. I opened my mouth to answer, but Amy cut me off—"Joanie doesn't want to talk to you, Mom!" Then she grabbed her backpack and jumped out of the car.

I collected my things, but before leaving, I turned and told Amy's mom I had a good Saturday and Sunday, despite the cold weather. She smiled and agreed.

Once inside, my friends Simone and Shelby and I hugged each other to say hey! I began organizing my books in my locker. I saw Amy walking down the hallway with her best friend, Patricia. She was quite short and always agreed with everything Amy said.

I heard their conversation as they walked by. It seemed that Amy, per usual, had a lot to say:

"Don't you think it's weird how Zoie wears such a big backpack?" Amy whispered loudly.

“Totally,” Patricia added quickly and quietly.

“And don’t you think it’s strange how curly Ernesto’s hair is?”

Patricia did, apparently.

“And isn’t it funny how Bernadette wears her socks so high?”

They continued, back and forth, all the way down the hall. The bell rang, and I went to social studies class.

Afterward, I walked down the hallway and into the girls’ bathroom. It was empty, except for one other girl who sounded like she was crying.

“Hi there,” I said softly, “Are you okay?”

My friend Sophia was in the corner sniffing. Sophia and I had been in school together since we were five and had always been buddies.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

She uncovered her face and quietly looked down at her feet. Then she wiped a tear, looked up, and told me that Amy had made fun of her because her school shoes were old and scuffed up, and everyone laughed at her.

Sophia had felt so embarrassed because her shoes were handed down from her older sister, who had worn them a couple of years ago.

It was horrible to see how sad she was! I hugged Sophia and then told her I had a plan...

At lunch, Amy saw Sophia and immediately began taunting her, “Wah, wah, wah, here comes—” But Amy stopped mid-sentence, catching a look at Sophia’s feet.

Her shoes were perfectly black, bold, and shining; she stood up straight and smiling, the picture of confidence.

Amy was left with nothing to say for possibly the first time ever. And Sophia proudly sat down to eat her lunch. Sophia looked over at me and I smiled back and gave her a thumbs-up.

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Later that night, I was working on my homework when my dad came home, took off his shoes in the hallway, and placed them next to mine.

As he walked over to me, he said, “Woah, Joanie, looks like you’ve been playing around a lot in your school shoes. They’re all banged up! We’ll have to get you some new ones soon...” and smiled.

Your Friend,  
Joanie