

Sardines
May 17th

Today was a good one.

It was a sunny Saturday, and the house was full of other kids and energy. Ty and Ruby's friend Jasper biked over around breakfast time. Then Clare appeared at the front door and came in to hang out.

Sometime after 11 a.m., Tyler Grinspoon, Grant's friend, rode his skateboard over, looking like he'd just woken up. So there all seven of us were, chilling at our house.

Grant and "Grinspoon" (Tyler always went by his last name) took over the couch, lounging as they watched some TV show.

Ty, Ruby, and Jasper were hanging around the teenagers, making a ruckus. So Clare and I went into the living room too, well, because that's where everyone else was.

"Can we all play a game?" Ruby suggested. When no one replied, she asked again. Then again. Then she just started suggesting games: "Tag? Musical chairs? Capture the flag?..."

Grant grabbed the remote to turn up the volume on the TV. He and Grinspoon didn't seem interested.

Ruby kept coming up with ideas, and the rest of us crowded around the two teenagers on the couch, waiting for their reply. Ruby continued, "...Yahtzee? Sharks and minnows? Hide and go seek?"

Suddenly, Grant's face lit up: "Have you guys ever heard of sardines!?" No, we shook our heads hopefully, we hadn't. Grinspoon and Grant made eye contact, and Grinspoon said, "Oh yeah, sardines is THE BEST!"

"How do you play?" The twins asked together. Jasper, Clare, and I wondered that, too.

Grant explained: "Well, we all close our eyes and count to twenty while one person hides. Then everyone goes out to look for them. When you find them—don't say anything—just hide with them. Eventually, they'll be a group of people all packed together, hiding, like sardines. When there's one person left, still looking—and it could take a while—the whole group yells "SARDINES!!!" and the game's over. Got it?"

We all agreed this sounded like fun. Ty was picked to be the hider after he claimed he was very small and knew all the good places. Then there was a lot of 'no peeking' discussion, followed by a debate of who usually peeked. Whatever!

The rest of us put our faces against the couch and chanted, “1, 2, 3, 4....” And we heard Ty’s footsteps disappear.

At “twenty,” we did the classic “Ready or not, here we come!” Then I set off to the kitchen—having a sneaking suspicion Ty would be in our broom closet.

The sound of hurried footsteps crisscrossed the house. Clare ran past me, heading for the back door, and Ruby trotted straight up the stairs. Grant sat up from the couch to look behind the curtains while Grinspoon lazily checked under the couch.

I zipped from room to room, searching...

Broom closet: Empty!

Kitchen pantry: Empty!

Backyard: Empty!

Front coat closet: Also empty!

I even checked the trash bin out front (this is Ty we’re talking about!): Empty!

Our dog Fudge just lay on the floor, watching everyone zip by. I heard another pair of feet run upstairs, so I decided to follow them. I didn’t see Jasper or Ruby anywhere, meaning they were probably already hiding with Ty!

“What spot could possibly be big enough to fit seven of us all squished together?” I thought.

Clare ran past me, giggling, heading straight for my parent’s room. Genius! I thought. My parents’ closet! A bolt of energy ran through me—what if Grant and Grinspoon were already there—I didn’t want to be last!

I skirted past my parents’ bed and pulled open the closet door. Ty, Ruby, Jasper, and Clare looked back at me in the dark with big sneaky smiles. I giggled quietly, shoved myself in, and crouched on my dad’s shoes.

It was dark, and we could feel my parents’ clothes hanging all around us and hear each other breathing. I felt a little old to play hide and seek, but I’ll admit, this was fun!

“I wonder when they’ll find us!” Whispered Clare.

“I hope Grinspoon doesn’t find us,” said Jasper, “He scares me!” We all laughed, crammed together in the dark, feeling like a mischievous pack of sardines.

After a few minutes, I whispered: “I don’t hear any footsteps.”

“That’s because I picked a great hiding spot!” Ty countered.

We sat in the dark a while longer. A long while longer.

"I'm hungry."

"Me too!"

"I have to go to the bathroom."

"Keep that to yourself!"

"When's lunch?"

"I don't know?"

"What're we having for lunch?"

"I dunno! Make your own lunch."

It started to feel stuffy in there. And Jasper's feet smelled terrible. I decided it had gone on long enough. Ty seemed proud that the older boys never found us. We called it quits, opened the door, and rolled out of the closet.

We ran downstairs like a troop of monkeys. We couldn't wait to see Grant and Grinspoon still searching high and low...

But as we walked into the living room, we were very disappointed to find Grant and Grinspoon all sprawled out on the couch, eating lunch, and finishing their TV episode in perfect peace.

Your Friend,
Joanie