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CHAPTER 1

First High Heels

BROTHERS! Sometimes I wonder why babies ever have to turn out to be boys. Well, maybe it isn't so bad that they turn out to be boys, but there are times when I just can't understand why they have to turn out to be brothers.

To tell you the real truth, I'm sort of glad that boys turn out to be boys, especially if they are like David Tanner, but then he's not my brother. And he's awful cute. David, that is, not my brother, Roy. Of course, Susan Tanner thinks Roy is cute too, but I sure don't. Maybe it's because Roy does so many things that make me angry. Or maybe it's just that I don't always appreciate my twin brother.

But really, Roy is the funniest brother. Not the funny, laughing kind; just the funny, different kind. One time he laughs and makes fun of everything I do, and the next time he asks me if I want to get in on a secret.

Last Sunday morning was one of those times he was laughing at me. It was a big laughing time for Roy, but it almost turned out to be a crying time for me.

It really started on Saturday. Most of the girls in

my Sunday school class had started wearing high heels and nylons, so I asked Daddy and Mother if I could have some high heels too. When I first brought it up, they did what they always do.

"We'll think about it," they said.

The day they said that, I knew it would be a long time before I would get heels. I had learned that when Mother and Daddy said, "We'll think about it," that it really meant, "We'll put it off as long as we can." At least, that's what I figured it meant.

But last Saturday the day finally came that I was to get my heels. I'm not sure, but I think Daddy and Mother felt I had talked about it so long that they just couldn't stand it any longer. So Daddy and I finally went uptown. When we came to the shoe store, I showed Daddy a pair of shoes in the window that I liked very much.

"Those?" he said, a great big question in his voice.
"Those have spike heels."

I rolled my eyes around and smiled real big.
"Yeah," I drooled. And Daddy frowned just like he was afraid I had gone out of my mind.

"I don't know why anybody wears stilts like that," he said sharply. "They must be anything but comfortable."

Well, maybe Daddy didn't know why people wore them, but I sure wanted to try a pair. I could almost see the envy in the eyes of the girls in my Sunday school class. Just think, if I could have shoes with higher heels than most of them. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

As we walked into the store, a clerk practically shoved us into a seat. Then he asked what I wanted.

"Dress shoes," I said, just as though I had bought them all my life. But when he started bringing them out, Daddy kept picking up shoes that had those little old tiny heels. For a while I thought I wouldn't be able to get my message across to the clerk. I didn't want those small heels! I wanted some real high ones.

Finally, the clerk came out with a pair of shoes that looked almost perfect to me. When the man put them on my feet the first thing I wanted to say was, "Ouch." They were sort of pointed up front, and pinched me in the toes. But at the same time, they sort of flopped around on my heels. But, oh, were they ever beautiful! And right away I wanted them.

"Why don't you try to walk in them?" the clerk suggested.

I looked at him and frowned. Why did he have to say, "Try to walk in them"? Couldn't he have just said, "Why don't you walk across the room?" I didn't know if he knew that these were my first pair of heels or not, but he sure acted like he knew it. I got up and sort of wobbled back and forth on the carpet.

"How do they feel?" he asked.

"Oh, real fine," I said, but I hesitated just a little. Maybe they didn't fit exactly "real" fine, but they fit sort of fine. While I stood there looking in a mirror, I could almost imagine what some of the

boys in our church would think when they saw me in them. I could hardly wait for Sunday to come.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" Daddy asked over and over again after I had come back to sit down. For some reason he just could not imagine anybody wanting shoes like these.

"This is exactly what I want, Daddy." I knew I had to say it in a convincing way, because I was pretty sure Daddy wasn't as sold on these shoes as I was. After all, he had to pay for them.

"Do they fit?" he questioned. First he looked at me and then up at the clerk. I was all ready to convince Daddy that they did fit, when the shoe clerk did it for me.

"Oh, they are her size all right, sir," he said. "It may take her a little time to learn to walk in them, but all teen-age girls go through that stage."

I could have poked the clerk right in the nose for saying that. In the first place he didn't have to say "going through that stage" in exactly the way Mother always said it, and in the second place he made it sound like I didn't even know how to walk in shoes.

Then the shoe clerk did something real nice and I forgave him for everything else. He brought out a pair of shoes that cost \$5.00 more than the pair I had on. The heels were exactly the same size, and they were sort of pretty. But when Daddy looked at the price, he decided real fast that it would be better for me to take the ones I had on my feet. I could have thrown my arms around the man and hugged

him, but since I didn't know him, I was pretty sure Daddy would frown on that outburst of emotion. And anyway I was sort of bashful.

After Daddy had paid the bill and we got home, I untied the box and showed the shoes to Mother. Boy, I thought Daddy was hard to convince, but I found out I could have had real trouble if Mother had been there. But instead of saying anything to me right away, she looked at Daddy, and almost started to scold him.

"Why on earth would you let the child buy shoes like that?" she asked. "Why, look at those heels."

"Child," I snapped. "That's what you always say. Why, Mother, I'm practically thirteen."

Mother picked up one of the shoes and stared at it. Then, without another word, she put it back in the box.

"I still think those heels are outrageous." Mother just shook her head and went out into the kitchen to start dinner.

It wasn't until Sunday morning that I found out just what everybody meant when they said that a girl had to "learn" to walk in high heels. In the first place it seemed that my feet were a lot fatter than they had been when I bought the shoes, because they felt terribly tight. I took them off and looked in the inside to see what size they were. I wondered if maybe the clerk had put the wrong size in the box. But they were the same ones I had tried on yesterday.

"Oh," I said out loud, and then I remembered

that there was nobody there to talk to. Maybe they seemed tighter now because I wasn't wearing stockings. At the store, the clerk had given me some little things to put on my feet. I jumped up and opened the drawer to my dresser and pulled out a pair of bobby sox. And that's when I really found out how tight the shoes were. I squirmed and pushed and grunted and did everything, and finally managed to get the shoes on. When I looked down, I thought they looked sort of stupid. Here I was wearing my pajamas, bobby sox and high-heeled shoes.

This time when I stood up, I could hardly walk. Boy, were they tight! I wondered if Mother had gone through all of this when she first started wearing high heels. And I couldn't help but wonder if she still felt that way or if a lady finally gets used to them.

I decided they had felt a little bit better without the bobby sox, so I sat down on the bed and took off the heavy sox and put the shoes on my bare feet again. This time I decided to walk down the hall and brush my teeth. Maybe it was like the shoe clerk said, I had to get used to them. I opened the door to my bedroom and started down the hall. Well, I guess I didn't really walk—I wobbled all the way down. And by the time I got to the bathroom I almost felt seasick. For a quick moment I was ready to admit that the heels were just a teensy bit too high. And all the time I was brushing my teeth, I felt the heels of my shoes swaying back and forth.

"Wow," I said to myself, blowing toothpaste almost all over the sink. "These heels sure are wobbly. Maybe they need tightening."

I took off one of the shoes and tested the heel. It seemed just as tight as it could be. I almost dreaded to go back to my bedroom because I was afraid Roy would be in the hall to see me, and I just knew he would laugh. I opened the door very quietly. I hoped everyone was still asleep, but I was almost sure they weren't. Carefully I began to stagger back to the bedroom. But not before Roy had seen me. There he stood in the hall, laughing just as if he had heard the funniest joke of his whole life.

"Boy," he said, still laughing so hard that he could hardly talk. "This must be 'go to church on stilts' Sunday. I'll have to dig up those things I made last summer. I bet I walk better on those than you do in your dumb shoes."

I tried to inject a word, but Roy just kept on talking.

"I wonder if Dad will be wearing his stilts. Man, that will look real sharp up there in the pulpit, won't it?"

The longer Roy talked, the angrier I became. See, it was just like I said. Either Roy made fun of everything I did, or we were real good buddies. But most of the time it seemed that he made fun of me. I staggered to my room as fast as I could. That is, as fast as I could in my new shoes. I closed the door. In fact, I rather slammed it. Then, all of a sudden, I remembered how I had been severely punished one

day for slamming the door that way, so I opened it about a quarter of an inch and said, "'scuse me" and then closed it again. This time more quietly.

For a long time I just sat on my bed waiting. If only Roy would go downstairs, I could go back out in the hall and practice walking. I was sure I could learn if I only walked back and forth a few times. But I knew the minute I would go out there, Roy would be there to watch me. Then, I would probably get so nervous and excited that I would flop flat on my face. I looked around in my bedroom. If only the bed weren't in the way I could walk back and forth in the room and get used to the feel of these, yes, stilts. I would never tell Roy, but at this very minute, I did feel as though I were on stilts. I remembered walking on Roy's stilts last summer and they were a lot easier to balance on because there was something to hang on to.

But these shoes! Oh, there you are all by yourself hanging up in midair. It wouldn't have been so bad if I could have worn a parachute or something so I could have been sure about coming down for a safe landing, but I didn't have anything. Not even pillows to fall on like I had the day I learned to rollerskate.

I walked over to the dresser and adjusted the mirror so I could see my beautiful aching feet. They did look sort of funny. But then I guess most people didn't wear them with pajamas.

When I took the shoes off, I used a clean hankie to polish them. Then I wrapped each one separately

and put them back in the box that was still on my unmade bed. It was funny, but these shoes had looked so pretty in the window. And they didn't look too bad in the box either, but, oh, how terrible they could make a person feel!

For a moment I almost decided I would wear bobby-sox and flats to church again this Sunday. I knew if I did Daddy would never forgive me for making him spend so much money. And right now, I just couldn't have either Mother or Daddy be in a bad mood with me because there was something else I wanted to ask them. I had been putting it off ever since school was out Friday, but pretty soon I would have to give the girls an answer. And, oh, how I wanted to go with them.

Janice and Susan had asked me to spend the next weekend up at their cabin. The cabin really belonged to Janice's mother and father, but they said we girls could have it Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We were going to take our bikes up there and just have the cabin and the weekend to ourselves. Janice said there was a small town not too far from the cabin where we could buy food and get anything else we wanted.

Mother and Daddy had more or less treated Roy and me as though we were still little children. At least, that's what we thought. It seemed that whenever they went out at night, they always got one of the ladies from the church to stay with us. We thought we were old enough to stay by ourselves, especially since most of the other kids our age did.

And that's what made it so hard to ask Mother and Daddy about going to the cabin. I just knew Mother would think of about a hundred things that could go wrong, and she would worry and stew and think I couldn't take care of myself.

So you see, that was another reason I couldn't have Daddy and Mother in a bad mood about the shoes.

Suddenly I realized something. I had my new shoes, but what would I wear for stockings? When a person gets high-heeled shoes, she surely can't wear bobby-sox. I opened the door and called to Mother.

"What'll I wear?" I said, expecting Mother to know what I had been thinking about.

"Why, your Sunday dress, of course," she called right back, just as though there were no problems at all.

"No, I mean with my shoes."

"Stockings," Daddy called back. "What else do people wear?"

If Roy had said that, I would have wrinkled up my nose, and said something sort of unkind, but since it was Daddy, I knew better. I had tried that a couple of times, and it didn't exactly work. Somehow or other Daddy would have felt it his duty to discipline me. And his kind of disciplining always meant that I got bopped in the ear, or paddled sort of low down on my back.

Mother came in with a pair of her nylons. I gasped when I saw them. Why, they looked so long and funny that I was sure they would never fit.

"Here," she said, "you'll have to wear a pair of mine."

"Yours!" I screamed. "They'll be miles too big."

"Certainly not miles," Mother sort of snapped, like I had made her sound as big as a house, "but maybe a little big."

"But, Mother," I defended, "I can't wear your stockings."

"Do you have another suggestion?" she asked.

I looked up at her. She sounded like maybe she was getting a little disgusted. She was right. I didn't have any stockings of my own, and I really felt I ought to wear my new shoes, so I began to struggle into her hose.

Mother watched me. "And if you get a run in them," she said, "I'll . . ."

She didn't finish. I knew how she hated to get runs in her stockings. Once while we were sitting in church, I had seen a tiny little thread sticking out from the side of her newest stockings. So right there, I bent over and pulled on it. It came and came and came. In fact, it never seemed to stop. All of a sudden Mother looked down and noticed that half of her stocking was hanging at the bottom of her foot. I had pulled the thread that broke her stocking right in half.

When I thought back on that day, I thought I could never wear long stockings in my whole life, and worst of all Mother's. But here I was, doing both of them and trying to pretend I enjoyed it.

As soon as Mother left, I finished putting on the

horribly long stockings. They were soft and had a smooth feeling to them, but on me they didn't fit so well. One of them had so many wrinkles at the bottom, that they almost looked like I was wearing brown nylon bobby sox; pleated sideways. And with the points it made me look like I had elves' feet.

If I hadn't begged so much for high-heeled shoes, I think I would have given up the whole idea. But right now I was stuck.

I was still working on straightening out the wrinkles when Daddy called and said breakfast was ready and I was to come down immediately. I took one last look at my baggy stockings and then slipped back into my brand-new step-ladder shoes. I would just have to pretend that they felt good and that I was enjoying every minute wearing the horrible monsters. But deep, deep down in me, I really wasn't enjoying it. I took one last longing look at my flats on the closet floor, and then opened the door to walk down the stairs. When I looked down, I thought I would never make it. All those steps! But I knew better than not to watch my step. I would probably fall headfirst if I didn't watch, so I hung desperately to the rail.

"Admiring your size 10's," Roy said, with a giggle in his voice.

"Oh, you be quiet," I snapped and then realized that it wasn't Roy's fault I was a girl. Maybe he should be glad that he was a boy, though.

"These shoes are just slippery," I said, trying to

defend myself. "And anyway, they're only size 6."

"Sure," Roy said, still laughing. Then he turned and walked into the kitchen. I was glad. At least I would be able to walk down the rest of the stairs without having him look at me.

When I finally managed to make it into the kitchen, Daddy looked at me strangely. He got up and pulled out the chair for me as though I were a visitor in the house, or something.

"Well, now," he said, "Who is this good-looking young lady?"

"That's my gorgeous sister," Roy blurted out before I could even smile at Daddy for being so nice. "She's really getting up in the world, Dad. She looks about four inches higher than she was last Sunday."

I wanted in the worst way to tell Roy a thing or two, but I knew that Daddy and Mother would never stand for it. Instead, I turned and smiled at Roy. But, boy, was it ever a hypocritical smile. He was such a pest, and I wanted more than anything else to do something unkind to him. But just as I was thinking of what mean old thing I could do, Daddy opened the Bible and started reading.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, . . .'" I guess there was a lot more there, but that was all I heard. I really didn't have a right to be angry with Roy. It wasn't his fault I was uncomfortable. And anyway I was a Christian, and that meant that I belonged to God's family, and my actions needed to be like someone who belonged to

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God. Right away I was sorry for the way I felt. I was still thinking about it when Daddy called on Roy to pray.

All the time Roy was praying, I was sort of scared, because at our house, we prayed about everything. Yes, I mean everything. And if Roy asked the Lord to make me feel good in my new shoes, I thought I would just—just absolutely die.