

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FOUR YEAR OLD BOY

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I knew a four-year-old boy some years ago, and every once in a while I think about how he affected my life. He was not different from many other four-year-old boys. Often, he would do things that he was not supposed to do (but how many four-year-olds are angels anyway?) Going outside and playing while it was raining, then walking in the house covered with gray mud (which seemed to originate at the roots of his hair) did not make him a bad little kid. Yes, the mud did trickle down his body, and then ooze onto the kitchen floor, making him look like a mud monster from a horror movie, but that was all in good "clean" fun. Still, this boy did have a certain twinkle in his eye. It was the kind of twinkle which said, "Look out! I can get myself in a lot of trouble." This boy never went looking for trouble, but it seemed trouble would find him anyway. Maybe it was because he had an insatiable curiosity, or maybe because, more often than not, he did things he was told not to do.

One day this boy was playing in one of his favorite places: the bathroom! Every inch of the room glistened from the light shining through the window on the white floor, toilet, bathtub, and sink. This was also the place that had the best terrain for his little toy soldiers to have full scale war. The room had two lakes (well, the bathtub and sink), and a myriad of cliffs and hiding spots where the soldiers could ambush their enemies. Another bonus of playing in the bathroom was that if he left the door open he could see both the kitchen and dining room--it was important to make sure that his parents were not around if he was doing something he was told not to do. But the best feature of this miniature war zone he created within the confines of his household bathroom was "The Whirlpool of Death," the place where naughty little soldiers went. And this, of course, was the toilet. (The same toilet the little four-year old boy, just days earlier, had tried to flush a billiard ball down. The key word is "tried.")

On this day the boy's mother was making a meatloaf for supper and had sent the boy away to play. He began setting up his toys, when he noticed a silvery object sitting on the toilet. It was shiny, metallic and the boy could see his face in it. It also had a tiny white button on top which, when he pressed down on it, sprayed out a sticky, translucent liquid. He planned to use it on his soldiers as a new "death" spray. Then, for some unknown reason, an idea popped into the boy's head.

The boy slowly opened the bathroom door and walked into the kitchen.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hello. What do you have behind your back?"

"Nothing."

"Let me see it. What are you doing with my hairspray?"

"Nothing . . . . Hey Mom, what would happen if I threw this in the oven?"

"It would explode. Now put that away and don't talk so silly."

"Okay."

Explode! He wasn't sure what it meant but it sure sounded neat. The boy did as he was told though, and put the hairspray back. He left the bathroom door open and began playing with his toy soldiers. His mother finished the meatloaf, opened the pre-heated oven, and was about to put the evening supper in when the phone rang. She quickly put the meatloaf down and ran in the next room to answer the phone, forgetting to close the oven door.

The boy heard the phone ring and turned towards the kitchen. And there was the stove, wide open! It appeared to be waiting for someone to put something inside of it. It seemed to call to the boy: "Please, feed me. I'm hungry." Then the boy looked at the lustrous spray can sitting where he first saw it earlier that day.

Quickly the boy snatched the can and rushed into the kitchen. He grabbed the can with both hands and threw it directly in the center of the oven.

Kawhoosh!!! A brilliant flash of light erupted from the stove. Suddenly it turned into an angry, fire breathing dragon spewing forth searing flames from its gaping mouth. The boy fell to the floor screaming as the kitchen curtains caught fire. Suddenly the boy was jerked through the air by his arms. It was his mother. She held him tightly as she filled water in a glass to put out the small fire at the bottom of the curtains.

The day's excitement was over for the boy and his mother. To her relief, the only thing hurt by the incident was the curtains (and the boy's bottom later that night, after he was properly punished).

Looking back, I really miss that four-year-old boy I knew so many years ago. He still has his curiosity, his sense of adventure, and (once in a while) his devilish attitude. However, the boy has lost the innocence he had when he was young. The little boy was me, of course. Even though I know I can never go back to being a child, I will always be a child at heart. As the saying goes, "You don't stop playing because you grow old; you grow old because you stop playing."