

## School Supplies

As the days of summer started winding down, a strange weather pattern emerged over the state. Normally in August, the weather turns extremely warm and then cools off as the seasons start their movement from summer to fall. Not this year.

The weatherman on Dolly's favorite local channel kept telling her each day that the temperature would increase by two degrees; so by the end of the first week of August, the normal 80 or so degrees were replaced by temps in the triple digits.

Of course, this gave Chip and Dale -- with and without their friends -- plenty of opportunities to test out theories. They already figured out how to make popcorn on the hood of the family van; how to fry eggs and bacon on the slab of concrete which previously was part of the Dixon's home until a demolition crew came and imploded the home in order to build a new one from the ground up; and with their mother's help, how to distill water from the air and then without her help using the water as a heat source to kill off several unaware insects.

The temperature the day that Dolly -- Elizabeth -- decided to take the two boys to get a haircut and then to do some shopping at the local Target store was 107. It was the eighth day of the "heat stretch", the local weatherman called it. It would continue for three more days before rain clouds would cool everything -- including bodies of little boys accustomed to running around and "having fun".

The day started like most every day, with the boys finishing up their chores and putting the recycled out to the curb before the pickup time of 8am. During the school year, one or the other -- mostly Charles -- would take the bin down and Dale would bring it up since the two attended different schools and Dale would arrive home one half hour earlier than his brother. They both performed this task of taking the recycles to the main street.

"So, what do you two have planned for today?" Dolly asked, looking at the two young men sitting at the table.

"You know, Mom, the same thing we've been doing all summer long," Dale responded half-hearted.

"Yeah, we'll do something fun...maybe..." Chip added, also in the same funk.

"Sounds like your hearts are not really into it like normal, guys. What's the problem?" Dolly finished placing dishes into the dishwasher and then shutting the door to the machine. She did not turn it on, listening to both the answers from her adopted sons and from the guy on the TV set.

"Well, it's too hot to go and do something outside right now. We'll have to wait until later in the day when the sun sets," spoke Dale first.

He was added by Charles, "yeah. Too hot."

Dolly wiped her hands on the hand towel hanging from the front of the sink and then pushed the buttons on the dishwasher to start its washing cycle.

"How about this. You two get ready and I'll join you in the car. We'll go over to the Mall and you can shop for school supplies and we can get those mops of yours trimmed. Then, we'll go over and I'll use my DQ coupons that your older sister sent me and we'll eat ice cream in the car this afternoon -- as long as you two don't get too messy with it."

Dale looked at his mother.

"Those coupons were for YOU...Marie gave them to you!"

"I don't think that your older sister wouldn't mind if I used them on her younger brothers," Dolly said, "besides she works at DQ and she can get more she said. Let me see if I can find them. Get -- scoot -- to the car and don't let the cats out!"

The two boys got off the stools and moved to their room first to get the school list. Dolly looked at the ceiling for Divine inspiration or something, and repeated to herself, "3, 2, 1"...and then she smiled when she heard "Mom, do you know where my school list is?"

"On the side of the refrig, Charles!" she yelled back, smiling.

Dale had his list in his hands as he returned to the kitchen. Charles came in shortly after. "Oh yeah..." he said, getting his list of school supplies off the side of the refrigerator. Both boys called to make sure that the cats were not anywhere near the backdoor, then they busted out and ran down the steps and to the van.

"Boys." Dolly said.

At the mall, they first went to the Unique Cuts and everyone got their hair trimmed.

"Won't Dad be mad at you for getting your hair cut so short?" Chip asked his mother.

"He'll get over it. He always does. I don't tell him to cut his mustache off and he doesn't tell me about my hair -- other than he likes it", Chip's mother answered.

"Do you think I'll have a mustache like Dad's?" Dale asked. He then caught himself. "Never mind. Sometimes I forget that we're not bios..."

"Bios?" Chip asked his brother.

"Biologicals. We're adopted." Dale reminded his brother. Dale then looked at his mother.

"You're both OUR boys -- "bios" or not. And to answer your question, Dale, yes, you will more than likely get a mustache like your step-father. It'll be a different hair color, of course, but we can fix that too just like Sapphire here can change my hair color. You too, Chip. You'll probably have a beard and a mustache, like one of Mike's sons."

The trip to the Target store to get supplies went exceedingly well, especially since they had bundled the supplies for each school year at various schools. Dale's bundle was almost twice as much as his brother's school supply bundle initially until he told his Mom that he can do without some of the things suggested on the list.

"I still have some of that stuff from last year...and since we're doing much of our work on the laptop this year, I won't need too much extra things."

It was when the three of them went to the ice cream place that there were issues. First, the coupons had expired back at the end of the last month. Second, even if the coupons were still valid, the ice cream place was "closed until further notice".

"Who closes an ice cream place in the middle of summer -- with all of this heat?" Chip asked aloud. "I was looking forward to some real ice cream!"

"Me too," exclaimed Dale.

"Me three," said Elizabeth. Her van and the occupants were sitting in front of the closed shop while she looked through her phone for a closer place. All of the other DQ places were closed too. She called her husband.

"Ice cream emergency, Sweetie", she said when I answered my phone.

"Too much or not enough?" I smiled back although she could not see my smile.

"Did you know that ALL of the DQs are closed around here? I mean ALL of them," Dolly spoke into the air, her phone on speakerphone mode.

"Begin at the beginning and tell me everything," I said. She then summarized everything and finally said, "I have two boys who are deserving of some ice cream...have any ideas?"

"Well, there's Pizza Crunch. They have ice cream there. Not the best. What about that new ice cream and food place over by the electronics store..." "Cones, Scones and More?" I bet they would have some good ice cream..."

"That sounds like a good idea! Meet us over there after you leave from work?"

"Actually, I was on my way to the house but I'll turn around and meet you three over there..." I said.

"Hey!" Dolly yelled before I could hang up. "Got a quick question for you!"

"Okay... got a quick answer," I answered.

"Do you think that Chip or Dale would get a mustache first?"

"Oh, I don't know...I think that Charles would eventually look like my son Jonathan...you know with the beard and mush and everything? Dale would probably wear a mustache like me...a little more mousy brown than my dark one...but you could probably darken it for him by then. Be the only high schooler in town with brown hair and a black mustache!!" I laughed.

They all laughed at me. Dolly said "Be careful, Sweetie...we'll talk more when you get to Cones..."

"You too. See you in a bit." I hung up.

Looking back at the two boys buckled in their backseats, Dolly simply said "Adopted huh? You two are more and more like Bios to me! Let's get some ice cream!"