

Action Figure

By James Dale

With images of action figures dancing in my head—I put my hands akimbo and tiptoed like a crab from side to side and sang my favorite song by M.C Hammer, “Can't touch this!” After I caught my breath—I dropped down to my knees, intertwined my fingers, and prayed: “God, thank you for another day.

“My dad promised that for every week that I don't wet the bed, he'd take me to Toys-R-Us and buy me a G.I. Joe action figure. So far, I have twelve of them.

“Thank you for helping him with his sobriety. He's been sober for as long as my mattress has been dry.

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—Amen!”

I reached underneath my neatly spread twin-sized bunk bed and pulled out a glass jar wrapped in used Band-Aids. It had the words “Booger collection” written on the cover.

I peered over my shoulder, twisted off the cover, hastily removed a handful of money and a picture of my dad with his platoon. I turned it around, and it read, “Vietnam 1972.”

I grinned, unraveled a cut-out G.I. Joe ad from my pocket that read: “Limited edition Snake Eyes in winter camouflage (special 7.99+ tax).

A resounding bang on the front door echoed throughout the empty apartment. The metal latch over the keyhole clinked and clanked as the door vibrated. I jerked backward and dropped my piggy bank. “Who is it?” I yelled out.

“Open up; it's the paramedics!” a stern voice replied.

I yanked the metal bar away from the door, unlatched the chain, and unlocked the three

deadbolt locks one after the other.

The medics pushed past me and asked, “Where’s Mr. Calvin, McClymont?”

“What do you want with my dad?” I replied.

“Son, we have no time to waste—Please, take us to your father.”

I froze and exhaled. My chest deflated, and my shoulders dropped down to my sides. The paramedic snapped his finger, and I ran with my hands flailed in the air toward my parent’s bedroom and pushed open the door. There my father laid, wallowing in a pool of vomit and blood in the fetal position. Empty liquor bottles littered his nightstand.

The Emt put his wrist over his nose and turned his face away. He put on his mask and took a deep breath. The paramedic, undeterred, rushed to his side. He checked my father’s vital signs and asked, “Sir, where does it hurt?”

“Argh! My stomach is burning,” my dad replied.

"Sir, are you on any medication?"

"No, I have been taking Pepcid and Milk of Magnesia."

“Dad...?” I said through my quivering lips. “You promised...!” My shoulders slumped down to my side, and I raised the cutout ad out in front of my face.

“What’s your name, Son?” asked the paramedic.

“J...Jamie,” I replied. "Is my dad going to be alright?"

“Your dad is going to be fine, Son. We must get him to a hospital so the doctors can help him get better. Have you ever been in an ambulance before?”

“No, Sir!” I whimpered.

I stood there in silence as the medics put a neck brace and an oxygen mask on my dad, then they hoisted him onto the gurney. They zipped by me and scrambled out of the bedroom.

The paramedic led the way as the Emt pushed my dad through the apartment. I lugged my feet after them; I skipped out of the door before it slammed shut behind us as we entered the hallway. They rushed to a ready and waiting elevator. The Emt pushed the L button, and in a matter of seconds, the doors opened downstairs. They whisked the gurney through the lobby towards the double glass doors. I lagged until we entered the back of the ambulance.

The sirens blared as the red FDNY truck darted through traffic.

The paramedic planted the lead electrodes from the EKG machine onto my dad's chest.

He grumbled, removed the oxygen mask off his mouth, and said, “Son?” with a raspy, barely audible voice.

“Yes, Dad?” I replied.

“I'm sorry, Son. This pain in my stomach is unbearable.”

“Dad, who's going to take me to Toys-R-Us...?”

“Don't worry, Buddy...I... I'm sorry—”

My dad coughed incessantly. Then blood spewed out of his mouth and nose.

The ambulance wheeled around towards the front of the emergency room entrance. The medics ushered my dad into the hospital.

The nurses and E.R doctors grabbed the gurney and promptly worked on my dad as the medic relayed their patient's condition in medical jargon to them.

My mom scurried into E.R moments later and cried out, “Baby? Mommy's here—thank God you're okay!” She placed my head into her bosom and hugged me. “Let's pray that your father is okay.”

“Mom...?”

My mom sniffled and squeezed me tighter into her bosom. I gritted my teeth, clenched

my fist, and yelped. I closed my eyes and prayed: "God, I know you can hear me: Please don't take my dad away from this family. He's the only dad I know—I know he's not perfect, but I love him anyway. Amen!" Thoughts about all the Sunday afternoons that my dad I bonded over the past three months flashed before my eyes.

I sat there in the waiting room and held up the ad of Snake Eyes up to the flickering florescent tube light bulb for what seemed like an eternity. I mumbled, "G.I. Joe... Real American Hero! G.I. Joe is there. G.I. Joe...A Real American Hero! G.I. Joe is there."

The E.R doctor walked into the waiting room and took off his head covering. He removed his mask, cleared his throat, and called out, "Mrs. McClymont?"

"Yes!" she replied and walked towards him.

I put the cutout paper ad over my face when my mom wailed and collapsed in the arms of the E.R doctor.

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One week later, after the funeral, I was playing with my G.I Joe's halfway underneath my bunk bed; when suddenly my two older brother's Devon and Valin, dragged me out by my legs and said, "Get up, Punk!"

"No, I'm playing with my toys," I replied.

"Toys! Toys! How could you play with those dolls at a time like this?" asked Valin. "We just buried our father." He snatched my G.I. Joe, and both he and Devon played keep-away with it.

"Give me back my toy!" I shouted.

"No!" Devon replied. "Do you know that Mom is talking to Mr. Robinson about how you haven't cried since Dad died?"

“He's a shrink, you little twerp,” Valin said. “If you tell that quack anything—I’ll kick your little narrow ass!”

“Yeah, Every–Single–Day from now on!” Devon said, and he mushed me.

“I don’t care, give me my G.I. Joe–now!” I shouted, then I kicked Devon in the shin.

“Ouch! You little shit—”

“That's enough!” my mom exclaimed. “You two apologize—”

“But Mom!” they shouted in unison.

“No Buts. Apologize!”

“Sorry, you little twerp,” they mumbled through their gritted teeth.

“Jamie, are you alright?” my mom asked.

“Yes, Mom,” I replied.

“Mr. Robinson wants to talk to you about what happened to your father.”

“Mom...I don’t think I should. Dad was my best friend—”

“I know, Son; it’s okay to be upset—”

“You don’t understand; he promised me he’d stop drinking!” I shouted. “Who's going to be my best friend now?”

“Son, Mr. Robinson is here to help—”

“I won’t talk to him; Devon and Valin said that they would kick my ass if I did.” I put my G.I. Joes in my lunchbox and stormed out of the apartment.

I ran up the stairs to the roof, took out the ad from my pocket, and put it inside the lunch box. I dropped to my knees, buried the lunch box underneath some gravel, and said, “Goodbye guys, keep my dad safe.”

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