

Childish Behaviour

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A family holiday is not without its tensions ...

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It was the knock that did it – a hard one to my head that sends me fuming as I reach for a pack of frozen peas from the freezer. My family is sharing a campervan for the Christmas holidays. A family of five, living together in a space that is six metres long and two-and-a-half metres wide. This is going to be a holiday to remember.

My twelve-year-old brother Brian and I have been fighting, physically. It started with me looking through Brian's department store catalogue, hoping I would find some good (and affordable) Christmas present ideas. Brian ripped the catalogue out of my hand and said "Don't touch it. It's mine." When I tried to snatch it back from him, he hit me – playfully though – on my hand. He then dropped the catalogue and ducked as I tried to hit him back, and I missed.

I tried again and got him this time, right on the head. It had turned into a play fight between the two of us. Hit after hit took place, along with some pinching, as well as some screaming from me. This was when Brian finally picked up the catalogue, rolled it up tightly and slammed it down on my head, sending me into a repetitive rampage of swearing as I ran for the freezer.

Holding the cold peas to my head, I sit down on the couch by the window, sucking on a candy cane.

It's only two weeks before Christmas and three weeks into the annual Sanchee family vacation. Brian's playing video games now, while I'm trying to comfort my sore head. I'm refusing to speak to him now. Being shorter than my brother makes it easy for him to hit me these days, and I find this fact very annoying. Because, while I've stopped growing, my brother is still shooting up, like a giant beanstalk getting taller by the minute, or so it seems.

My little sister Janine (and by little I mean in both age and in height) is out shopping with my mum, while my dad is sitting outside on a very comfortable chair reading the newspaper. At the moment, we're camped in a caravan park near the beach. The hot summer air is thick and buzzing with annoying flies. My dad isn't fazed by them though, because he wears insect repellent. I love the warm weather, but I hate the flies. I'm forced to put up with them as I step outside now though, because I refuse to wear the repellent (for fear that the chemicals would have a terrible effect on my skin).

When my mum, and sister Janine arrived back from shopping, my dad gets the barbecue ready and starts frying big, juicy steaks, succulent sausages and fresh barramundi fillets. Mmmmm. The smells drift through the air and are carried further by the warm breeze that gently blows in our direction, delivering the heavenly scents out to sea.

All five of us are pretty hungry right now, and my mum and dad are a little tense. My mum and dad had argued earlier on in the day, while travelling from Cairns here to Townsville, which is where we are now. It was so annoying. My mum argued that the instructional voice on the electronic navigational device should be changed to a male one, rather than the annoying female one which my dad seemed, strangely, slightly sexually attracted to. Weird, I know.

Anyway, my dad refused to change the sex of the voice, and I watched him tighten his grip on the steering wheel as he angrily said "Sherry is not getting a sex change. Sherry's a bloody woman, and she's going to stay a bloody woman." My mum crossed her arms then, and looked out the window as we drove, muttering to my dad through clenched teeth that he only liked the superficial voice because it reminded him of his ex-girlfriend. This in turn infuriated him even further, and the two of them began to argue

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over their past lovers like they were jealous immature teenagers.

Anyway, Janine and my mum are back now, and theyâre making a salad. I decide to complain about my annoying weasel of a brother. I tell my mum that he hit me â really hard on my head. I think I need to go to the doctor, to get it checked out.â Of course, my mum thinks she knows all too well that Iâm overreacting.

â Amy,â she says to me. â Youâre nineteen.â

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