

THE OTHER BROTHER

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Jett

My little brother, Mikey, doesn't know what's happening to me. Should I tell him? I'm not sure. He's only seven...

I remember the day my brother was born. It's my warmest memory. The touch of his little marshmallow hand against my cheek, and the love that flowed through my heart – and still does. I peered carefully into his cot and whispered in his ear, "I will always protect you."

Right now it's like I'm watching a video on fast motion. I see myself zooming down the street, doing wheelies with Mikey in the pram. "faster," he yells. I hear crying and screaming in the night, but I'm not bothered. I even put up with the stink of dirty nappies. We play hide and seek and I fake surprise when he chooses the same spot Every. Single. Time.

The years whizz around like a tire swing. They're filled with bubble bath beards, flips on the trampoline, and my favourite, water gun warfare!

Youch! I'm snapped out of my daydream by the whacking of a stick. "lets fight," says Mikey. Ching Ching goes the clash of stick swords while I pretend to be Darth Vader with my rasping voice. Even though I'm in high school, I still love a good sword fight. "Pant, pant, pant – I'm just too tired, bro, I just need a rest," I say as I collapse onto the couch.

Mikey

My big brother, Jett, doesn't think I'm old enough to understand. But I know what's going on. It's hard to believe, but he's really a superhero.

Flash! It all started adding up one blustery night while I was brushing my teeth. All of a sudden my eyes were pierced by a bright burst of light. I ran to Jett's room but he wasn't there! I ran up to my mum and she said something had happened at the pharmacy and Jett had just run off! And in that moment, I just knew he was out there, catching robbers when they strike at night. Running, jumping, climbing like a speedy ninja.

Born a daredevil, Jett's probably the bravest person you'll ever know. I've seen him climb 10 metres high in a tree, plunge into 3 metre deep sea waters, and let's not forget that time he jumped off our roof!

Ding, Dong! I race to the other door wondering who it might... "OH HELLO THERE!!!" booms our neighbour, MR Williams. "Shhhhh, be quiet," I warned him, "my brother's taking his regular nap after being out on duty all night." "Oh

I am so sorry to disturb, I just wanted to give this to him so he knows we're thinking of him," says MR Williams in a hushed voice, as he hands me an envelope. I add it to the pile of gifts from other people Jett must have rescued.

Jett wakes and scrambles off the couch, his heart racing. "Bye, Bro," he says as he closes the front door. "What's he doing?," I ask myself. Quickly I race to the window, just in time to see three people wearing secretive masks beckoning Jett into a van. "they must be other heroes too," I think, "It must be some sort of weekly training workout because Jett always disappears at this exact time each week." I watch as the van schreeches out of the driveway, leaving only skid marks behind.

Just as the van turns the corner, I see a flash of a word written in bright red on the side door – Can-ker, can-cer. I'm not sure what it means, but I'll add it to my journal.

Jett

"Check mate!", yells Mikey as he knocks over my King. "how did you get so good at chess?" I wonder out loud.

Mikey gets off his chair to go make lunch, but a scrunched up dictionary page slips out of his pocket. Highlighted in yellow is the definition of 'cancer': any type of malignant growth or tumor, caused by abnormal and uncontrolled cell division.

Mikey walks back to the table and hands me a vegiemite and cheese toasty. Suddenly he notices the page and says, "Don't worry, I'll keep your identity secret."

It is sooooo time to tell Mikey, I think. Here it goes. I feel shaky, as though I'm about to race in an 100 metre sprint. I just want to get it over and done with.

"Mikey, there's something I've been wanting to tell you. I've been sick, like really sick," I say.

"Have you been poisoned by the bad guys?" asks Mikey.

"No mate, it's called cancer. I've spent the last few weeks in hospital," I explain.

Mikey's eyes widen and his face looks pale, as he pauses and stares for a moment. Then he asks, "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

I think for a while then say, "I wanted to wait until you could understand, like properly understand. And I didn't want you to worry until I knew I would get better."

Mikey asks in a small voice, "how will we know that you're better?"

"I'll get to ring a bell at hospital when I finish my treatment. "It's a tradition," I say.

Two weeks later

"Did you know you could fry an egg on your head if you stood outside for 3 hours?" jokes Mikey as we walk down the hospital corridor.

I feel like I'm dragging a bag of rocks with each step as we move closer to the bell room. I catch a strong whiff of that familiar antiseptic smell. I nervously open the door to a room with a golden bell standing on a platform. Mum, Dad, and a few of my oncologist doctors and nurses are all crowded around the bell waiting for my arrival. My hands are trembling, and the clapping sounds distant and muffled.

My legs feel cardboard stiff as I slowly approach the golden bell. Above is a plaque with the words engraved:

Ring this bell

Three times well

It's toll to clearly say

My treatments done

This course is run

And I am on my way.

As my hands wrap around the bell rope. I feel a sense of love for Mikey and a reflection of everything we've been through. I ring the bell and hear the calming sound ding, ding, ding ring through my eardrums, echoing inside, as I think of the words...

My treatment done

this course is run

And I am on my way

As I step down the stage, I overhear my kind specialist say to Mikey, "remember, not all heroes wear capes."

– THE END –