



BY MELODY WARNICK

(Based on a true story)

We are as diff'rent as the sun and the sea. . . . And that's the way that it's supposed to be (*Children's Songbook*, 263).

Mint chip," Erin thought. "No, strawberry." She peered down at the rows of different flavors inside the ice-cream freezer.

"What are you going to have?" Erin's best friend, Stephanie, asked. She was already licking her scoop of vanilla, the same kind she ordered every Thursday afternoon when the two girls stopped at the Ice Cream Castle after their tap-dance class.

"I'm still deciding," Erin said. "They all look good." Erin had just settled on a scoop of peanut-butter fudge when the bell above the store's front door tinkled.

In walked Brad and Chris, two boys from school. Erin

cringed. Brad and Chris were mean to everyone, and Erin was afraid of them. As the boys sat down at a table at the back of the shop, Erin breathed a sigh of relief. Maybe they hadn't noticed her.

But when the girl behind the counter asked Erin what she wanted, Brad called out, "Hey, Stephanie, be careful Erin doesn't eat all your ice cream." He made an oinking sound, and Chris laughed.

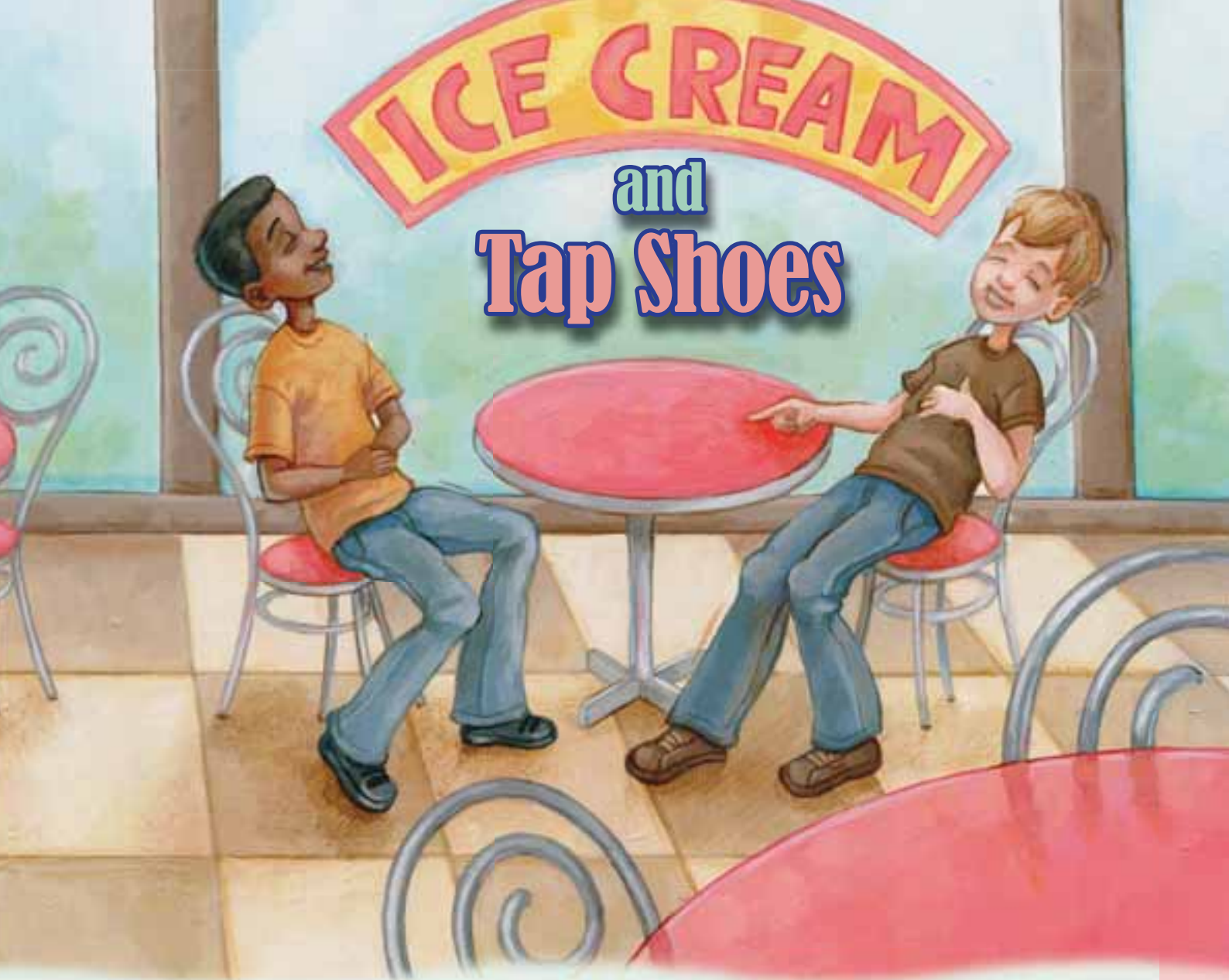
Erin's face got hot, and her legs started to shake. She wanted to run out the door as fast as she could, but she felt like she was superglued to the floor.

"Don't pay any attention to them," Stephanie whispered. "Just go ahead and order whatever you want."

But a peanut-butter fudge ice-cream cone didn't sound so good anymore. In a small voice Erin said,

ICE CREAM

and Tap Shoes



“Could I have a lemonade, please?”

“Are you sure that’s all you want?” Stephanie asked. “Don’t let those guys bother you.”

But Erin just nodded. It was pretty much impossible not to be bothered by Brad and Chris.

While she waited for her lemonade, Erin glanced down at her blue jeans and purple T-shirt. Leaving the house that morning, she had felt good about how she looked. Now she thought she looked horrible.

The next Thursday when they got to the dance studio, Erin and Stephanie changed into their stretch pants and shiny black tap shoes and started warming up on the scuffed hardwood floor. One whole wall of the dance room was covered in mirrors. When she caught a glimpse of herself—legs moving, arms waving—Erin

thought, “I’m bigger than the other girls. I look terrible in these dance clothes.”

Erin remembered what had happened at the Ice Cream Castle the week before, and the knot in her stomach tightened. She was about to go call her mom to come get her when Miss Yvette, their teacher, came into the room. “OK, girls,” she said. “Let’s start with some flaps and shuffles.” She turned on the stereo, and jazzy music spilled into the room.

It was too late to escape. Erin fell into line with the other girls and started moving her feet. The silver taps on the bottom of her shoes clicked and clacked, and Erin let her arms swing in time with the music. She had been taking tap-dance lessons for only a few months, but she loved hearing the sounds her feet made when



she moved them just right. Pretty soon, Erin was working so hard to keep up with Miss Yvette that she forgot about how sad she felt.

Toward the end of class, Miss Yvette said, “I want everyone to line up in the corner. We’re going to practice our turns across the floor.” As the girls in front of Erin twirled and leaped, Erin hopped a little, trying to get her feet to do what she wanted them to do. Because she was just a beginner compared to the other girls, she had to try extra hard to get things right.

When it was her turn, Erin started dancing toward the opposite corner. “Stomp-shuffle-step and turn,” Miss Yvette instructed, and that’s exactly what Erin’s feet did. She was doing it! As she turned, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror: blonde hair flying, body spinning, and biting her lip in concentration. As Erin reached the far wall, Miss Yvette shouted, “Bravo, Erin! Good work!”

By the end of class, Erin’s bangs were damp with sweat and her heart was pounding. Miss Yvette said, “You girls did great today. I want to congratulate Erin.

She’s only been in this class for a little while, but she’s worked really hard to catch up with everyone. She wins the prize for most improved!”

The girls started clapping. From across the room, Stephanie shouted, “Way to go, Erin!” Just like at the Ice Cream Castle, Erin felt her cheeks start to burn. But this time it wasn’t because she was embarrassed, but because she was happy.

On her way out of the room, Erin watched herself in the mirror. “So what if I’m bigger than some people?” she thought. “Everyone is different.”

Erin knew Heavenly Father had given her her body. From now on, she would be grateful for all the good things her body could do. ●

“I plead with you young women to please be more accepting of yourselves, including your body shape and style, with a little less longing to look like someone else. We are all different.”⁴

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

