

ROAD RASH AND REPENTANCE

BY NATHAN RICHARDSON

I knew I should have listened to my dad's warning, so now I didn't want him to find out I'd hurt myself.

Sliding to a stop on the gravelly pavement, I winced at the pain in my arm. It was then I realized my brother's idea might not have been such a great one.

One summer afternoon when I was 12 years old, my brother Jason and I began snooping around the garage looking for something to do. Jason got the brilliant idea of tying our old red wagon behind his bike so he could pull me up the street. I, being foolish, thought it was a good idea.

As we tied the two ends of a rope to the bike seat and the wagon handle, Dad saw us from the kitchen window and came out to stop us. "I don't want you kids doing that. Somebody will fall and get hurt." We made a show of slowly untying the knots, but as soon as he was back inside, we cinched them tight again.

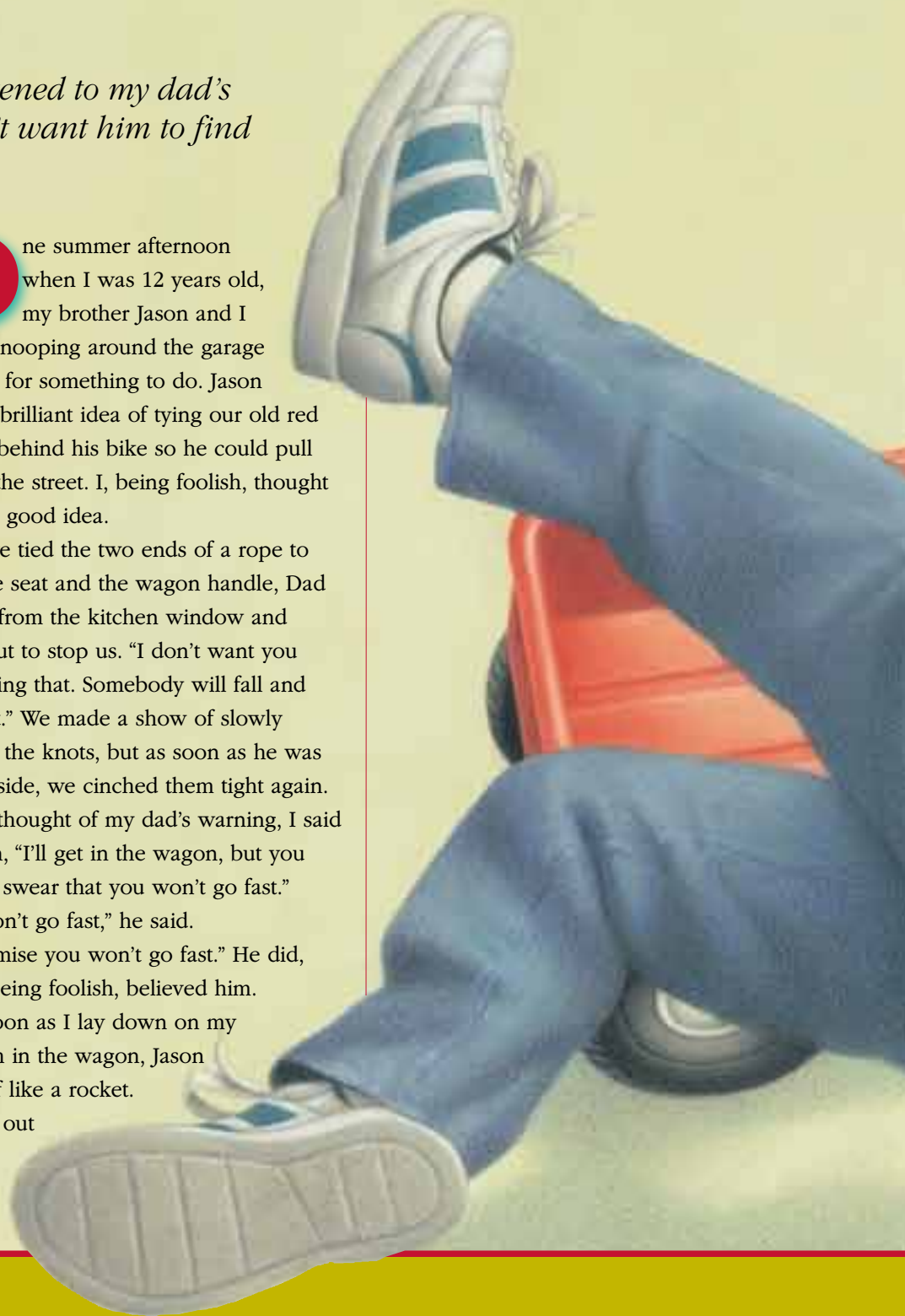
As I thought of my dad's warning, I said to Jason, "I'll get in the wagon, but you have to swear that you won't go fast."

"I won't go fast," he said.

"Promise you won't go fast." He did, and I, being foolish, believed him.

As soon as I lay down on my stomach in the wagon, Jason took off like a rocket.

I called out for him to slow down,



but apparently he didn't hear me. He rounded a corner to go down the alley, and my wagon went up on two wheels, dumping me onto the pavement amidst a mixture of gravel, dirt, crushed glass, and who-knows-what-else. I slid to a stop and lay for a moment to get my breath back. I winced as I picked myself up. The pavement had left a big scrape the size of a bacon strip on my left forearm.

My brother hadn't noticed what happened, so I was left alone. I sniffled to myself as I walked carefully home, trying not to jostle my burning arm while I picked bits of gravel out of my wound.

I knew I was going to have to clean it because it was so big and dirty. But my greatest fear was what my dad would say when he saw me because he had specifically told us not to do what we had just done.

When I got home, I quietly slipped past

the kitchen where Dad was reading the paper. He called out to me and asked if everything was okay. He must have sensed my hesitancy. I said I was fine as I headed down the hall to the bathroom. There I ran some warm water over my arm, which felt good. I hoped a bandage would keep infection out so it could heal. However, there was no gauze or tape in the bathroom. I would have to go upstairs.

To do so, I quickly walked past the kitchen again, keeping my arm hidden from view. Upstairs in the fully equipped mom-and-dad bathroom, I tried to cut some gauze and tape it on my arm, but I couldn't do it one-handed. I began to get frustrated because I was so helpless. I was on the verge of crying as I placed two very inadequate Band-Aids over my scrape.

About that time my dad came in. I'm sure he decided to investigate because he had that instinct and

usually knew when something was up. I braced myself for a scolding, but instead he saw my arm and said, "Oh my gosh, that's not going to do it. We need to put something on that." I told him what happened. I remember feeling ashamed that I was in the very predicament he'd warned me of, and vaguely wondering why he didn't bring up that fact.

Dad opened the cabinet to get out his arsenal.

Out came the hydrogen peroxide. He squirted it all over my cut and I could see it foam up, fizzling like soda. Next he lathered on the ointment, which now felt nice and cool. Then he cut a strip of gauze the right size and taped it over my cut, leaving no loose edge to catch on things. I was silent the whole time because I



When my dad found me hurt, he wasn't so concerned that I had ignored his warning; he was focused on taking care of me.

was trying not to cry—but not because of my pain. When he was done, I gave him a hug that lingered longer than usual.

I've often thought of how little we understand our Father in Heaven. I think if we really knew Him, we wouldn't hesitate to go to Him for repentance. We hear His repeated warnings and often ignore them. Then, when we find ourselves in the very situation He foretold, we are terrified at the thought of asking Him for help. We imagine in our minds a tyrant, some kind of prosecuting attorney who will demand we pay for our acts. Yet we find ourselves bearing an infected wound that can lead to even worse sickness if we don't do something about it. We've learned about the repentance process, so we run warm water over the sin. It dulls the pain and feels good for a while. We know that repentance somehow involves waiting, so we look to safely cover our sore while time works its magic. All the while, our Father calls out to us, "Is everything okay?" and we draw distant from Him in prayer, because we don't want Him to see what we've done to ourselves.

What we find is that when we try to fix ourselves, we don't

have the needed equipment. So we might try to approximate the repentance process. But the medicine hurts too much, so we don't apply it; and the bandage is impossible to put on by ourselves, so we try to cover it with a few little Band-Aids.

Then the Father comes in and sees our raw sore, which we had tried to hide from Him. He helps us clean it out. He applies the Atonement to our wounds, which begins the healing process. If it doesn't burn at first, we're not repenting. Then He helps us tape on a bandage that we could never have gotten on by ourselves. With our red wound now dressed in white, we are left to wonder why we were ever afraid to ask our Heavenly Father for help. I think that if we really came to know Heavenly Father, we wouldn't be so scared to repent.

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