

By Jane McBride Choate

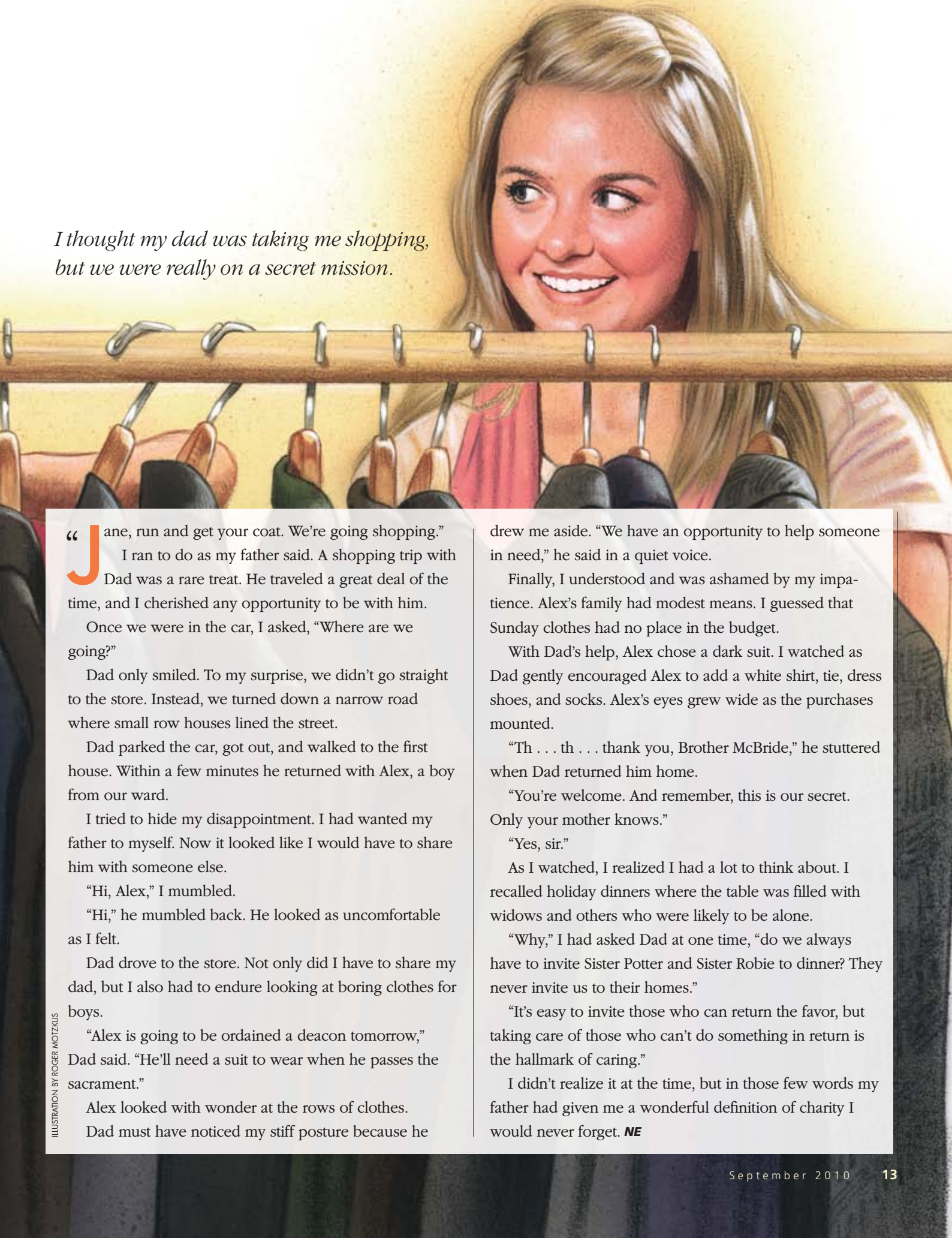


ALEX'S

NEW

SUNDAY  
SUIT





*I thought my dad was taking me shopping,  
but we were really on a secret mission.*

“Jane, run and get your coat. We’re going shopping.”

I ran to do as my father said. A shopping trip with Dad was a rare treat. He traveled a great deal of the time, and I cherished any opportunity to be with him.

Once we were in the car, I asked, “Where are we going?”

Dad only smiled. To my surprise, we didn’t go straight to the store. Instead, we turned down a narrow road where small row houses lined the street.

Dad parked the car, got out, and walked to the first house. Within a few minutes he returned with Alex, a boy from our ward.

I tried to hide my disappointment. I had wanted my father to myself. Now it looked like I would have to share him with someone else.

“Hi, Alex,” I mumbled.

“Hi,” he mumbled back. He looked as uncomfortable as I felt.

Dad drove to the store. Not only did I have to share my dad, but I also had to endure looking at boring clothes for boys.

“Alex is going to be ordained a deacon tomorrow,” Dad said. “He’ll need a suit to wear when he passes the sacrament.”

Alex looked with wonder at the rows of clothes.

Dad must have noticed my stiff posture because he

drew me aside. “We have an opportunity to help someone in need,” he said in a quiet voice.

Finally, I understood and was ashamed by my impatience. Alex’s family had modest means. I guessed that Sunday clothes had no place in the budget.

With Dad’s help, Alex chose a dark suit. I watched as Dad gently encouraged Alex to add a white shirt, tie, dress shoes, and socks. Alex’s eyes grew wide as the purchases mounted.

“Th . . . th . . . thank you, Brother McBride,” he stuttered when Dad returned him home.

“You’re welcome. And remember, this is our secret. Only your mother knows.”

“Yes, sir.”

As I watched, I realized I had a lot to think about. I recalled holiday dinners where the table was filled with widows and others who were likely to be alone.

“Why,” I had asked Dad at one time, “do we always have to invite Sister Potter and Sister Robie to dinner? They never invite us to their homes.”

“It’s easy to invite those who can return the favor, but taking care of those who can’t do something in return is the hallmark of caring.”

I didn’t realize it at the time, but in those few words my father had given me a wonderful definition of charity I would never forget. **NE**