

Full House Fan Fiction

The Joker's Wild

By: Doug Fowler

In "The Devil Made Me Do It," a 5th season episode by Nicolas Wall and Jane Paris, "devil-Michelle" suggests that Michelle try to run away. What if she decides not to? In the books; the relationship between Jesse and Michelle might not be close enough to make her want to do that. But, she'd still want to get him back. Plus, if he's in the attic from the beginning w/Danny's office on the 2nd floor, as it appears, it's her sisters getting Michelle up in the morning more, and playing with her in the summer more; and D.J. being more of an influence, leading to Michelle being more compliant earlier. This could make the "far end" timeout of being in her room all day not needed. (Perhaps Michelle messing w/D.J.'s expensive computer is more of a problem in the TV universe than is mentioned in my story; sending her to her room the whole day is unusually harsh for the very lenient Danny, so there was likely some disobedience before this episode we don't see.)

By the way, I have a dog just like Jeff describes at the end - and for the same silly reason.

Anyway, the less close relationship, along with Teddy not being there (though he could have moved & not come back), and the fact one book says April Fool's Day is one of her favorite holidays, mean the Book Universe's version of Full House's "The Devil Made Me Do It" might have been more like...

THE JOKER'S WILD

Michelle Tanner sighed heavily as she sat on her bed, her chin resting in her hands. She had been sent to her room as punishment. This wasn't unusual, with her being five-and-a-half, though she wasn't an extra bad girl. She simply fell for temptation easier when the men of the family were watching her.

Now, fifteen-year-old D.J. was tough. If she'd done what she did with D.J. in charge, she knew it would be right to her room, no TV but also perhaps no dessert. She knew ten-year-old Stephanie would tell on her, too. Her sisters were strict, and very good at teaching her right from wrong. She couldn't manipulate them at all when it came to that sort of thing. Like the rest of her family, they were very loving, but also firmer at times.

Her dad could be strict at times. He also could be really lenient about enforcing rules. But, if he'd caught her messing with her Uncle Jesse's recording equipment after she'd been specifically told not to, she would have understood him sending her to her room and not allowing her to watch TV the rest of the day. He had done that before, the first time she tried to mess with D.J.'s fancy new computer after being told not to. Then, she had accepted the punishment and not done that again. A more ornery Michelle might have kept doing it, and this disobedience might have resulted in being in her room the rest of the day. But, this Michelle listened better that.

But, it was her Uncle Jesse who had caught her this time. He and her dad's best friend, comedian Joey Gladstone, had moved in when her mom died five years ago. She never expected him to tell on her. And yet, he had. This made her mad!

Suddenly, a figure appeared in her mind - it sounded just like her, but "devil Michelle" looked like a Kindergarten biker chick. "Hey, Michelle. You oughta get back at your Uncle Jesse," D-Michelle said harshly.

On the other side of Michelle, in her mind, another figure appeared. It had a voice sounding like Michelle at her sweetest, was clad in a pretty red dress, and wore curly hair. "Oh, no, Michelle. You did something wrong, and you must take your punishment," Angel Michelle said.

"Don't listen to that goody-goody, Michelle. Let's get back at him real good. Run away from home - that'll make him sorry."

Michelle looked at D-Michelle and spouted, "Where to? And, how; it's against the rules."

"Duhhuh!" D-Michelle said. "If you run away it doesn't matter."

Michelle seemed pensive - she really didn't want to disobey that rule. She could get hit by a car and squished like a brick landing on a banana, just like D.J. had shown her once.

A-Michelle was saying the same thing to Michelle. "Once you get out of your room your punishment won't feel so bad."

"Don't listen to her, Michelle. You still won't be able to watch TV. That no good uncle of yours has to pay."

"Michelle, he loves you. He just wants what's best. Besides, he's always lived up in your attic, and Joey in your basement. Do you really feel as close to them as you do your sisters? Wouldn't you miss D.J. and Stephanie?" A-Michelle could tell Michelle was mulling it over heavily.

"You could go to Cassie's. Or better yet, run away right next door to Kimmy's." Kimmy Gibbler was D.J.'s dumb, annoying best friend.

Michelle passed D-Michelle a look and said sarcastically, "Yeah, right. I refuse to listen to any version of me that suggests going to Kimmy."

A-Michelle smiled happily. "I'm proud of you, Michelle."

"Okay, let's go down before your time's up and watch MTV. Let's rap," D-Michelle suggested. She knew she never should have suggested Kimmy. Michelle was too sensible for that.

“I shouldn’t...” Michelle’s eyes brightened. “Wait a minute. Now you’re talking. Even Uncle Jesse hates rap music.”

A-Michelle tried to halt Michelle. “Please, Michelle, think about this.”

Michelle smiled. “That’ll really bug everyone. They all hate rap. I’ll wait till Dad lets me out of here, though,” Michelle asserted. D-Michelle smiled. At least she’d gotten Michelle to do something bad.

“Michelle, remember what your family says. Some of that has bad words. It can put scary thoughts in your mind,” A-Michelle said.

“Maybe then you can replace all your uncle’s music with rap,” D-Michelle suggested, going one step further.

Michelle grinned and tapped her chin. “I don’t know where I’d find rap music. But, I know something else he’d really hate...”

Michelle wandered aimlessly around the room she and Stephanie shared, till her dad came to check on her. Since he sensed she was truly sorry and she didn’t want to disobey a direct instruction like that again, he let her out of her room.

And, Michelle went to work.

Jesse and his wife, Becky, relaxed in their attic apartment. They’d been married for over a year, and now they had two wonderful twin babies. Life was great. And, as Becky watched Jesse plop a tape into his machine while they snuggled, she decided that the sound of his beloved Elvis was even beginning to grow on her.

The young couple cozied up next to each other and kissed as Jesse pressed play. However, instead of an Elvis tune, a familiar, annoying voice belted out loudly: “Baby Beluga in the deep blue sea...”

Jesse flew out of his seat. “That is not Elvis!” he shouted as he quickly took the Raffi tape out of the machine and glared at it.

“Are you sure?” she teased him.

Jesse sighed heavily. “I’m sorry, Beck, it’s just that this tape spoiled a nice romantic moment. That’s not supposed to happen till the boys can walk out here and say, ‘Mommy, Daddy, what are you doing?’” he ranted, doing the child’s quote in a squeaky voice. Back in his normal voice, he asked, “I’m all ready for the King, and what do I hear? Some singer who makes little girls swoon and throw their diapers at him.”

“Oh, lighten up, Jess. One of the girls probably put it up here for the boys.”

“In my stuff?” He sighed as he mindlessly placed another tape into the machine. “They should have put it in the boys’ things.”

“So they could listen to it?”

“No, so I could burn it. Michelle nearly drove us crazy when she got a tape like that. Danny had to go out and buy another twice ‘cause she played that same song about a hundred straight times.”

He sat, and he realized he’d been sounding quite grouchy. Now, he was the one ruining the romantic moment. “Aw, I’m sorry, Beck. I guess maybe being a stay-at-home dad is getting me down a little again.”

“Well, you’re doing a great job, ‘Dad.’ Our boys feel so much love from you.”

“Thanks, hon. And now...” He pressed “play,” and they nearly kissed as the song warmed up. “Something that will remind us of love, joy, and happiness.” The slow whirring of the tape joined the lovers’ soft embrace and kiss. Then...

“Rubber duckie, you’re the one,” screamed Ernie’s voice from the recorder. “You make bathtime lots of fun.”

Jesse shot out of seat and scowled, quickly shutting the machine off as Becky sat laughing at him. He twirled and said, “It’s not funny! Someone’s messing with my Elvis stuff.”

“I’m sorry, honey,” Becky said through giggles as she rose. “The timing on that was just so funny.”

Jesse gestured with the “Sesame Street” tape. “I...okay, I guess we will look back on this later and laugh. In about ten years!”

When he heard a knock on the door, he walked down the steps to the 2nd floor landing and opened it. Joey stood outside, wanting to ask Jesse if he could do a demo tape for his show. So this is the prankster, Jesse told himself as he spoke accusingly. “Joey, what do you know about rubber ducks?”

“Well, they’re lots of fun in the bathtub,” Joey answered truthfully. He was a kid at heart, and often did things adults - especially Jesse - considered silly.

Playing the occasional joke was one of the things the professional comedian did quite well. “Joseph, did you or did you not put ‘rubber duckie’ in my tape collection?” Jesse asked.

“No, Jess. My rubber duck’s downstairs in my apartment.”

“Not your dumb duck! I mean the tape with the song.”

“No, why, is it up here?” Joey walked up to Jesse and Becky’s living room and looked at the tapes. “Whoa, it looks like all the girls’ tapes are here, and none of your Elvis stuff is.”

“What? You mean all my stuff is...” He fumed silently as he finally looked at what had been his entire collection. It was now several drawers of all the girls’ tapes. And, a sudden realization struck him. “Rusty,” he said, like a person whose arch-nemesis had returned.

Joey rubbed his chin. “Gee, Jess, I don’t know how your tapes could get rusty. But maybe some Rustoleum will work on them just as well as it did your motorcycle.”

Jesse rolled his eyes. “I’m talking about that kid. You know, reddish hair, Danny dated his mom a few times, kid drove us nuts.”

Becky remembered quickly. “Oh, yeah. He was upset about his parents divorcing, and he’d play all sorts of practical jokes on us while he was here. He wanted to stop his mom’s relationships at first because he was convinced his parents would get back together. After some time with us - admittedly very maddening time - he started to mellow out.”

“That’s right. How could I forget him? He taped over a really important comedy tape I was doing.”

“Well, he must be at it again, Joey. No, wait, that’s impossible. Last I heard, his mom’s goin’ with some guy, and he really likes him. I think he’s the guy who coaches him in baseball this year,” Jesse remarked.

Becky agreed. “He was even better last spring, when Danny coached him. Still, maybe Danny had to watch him, and he pulled something for old times’ sake.”

“Yeah, that must be it. Still, I have to find my Elvis tapes. I just hope that kid’s not holding them for ransom,” Jesse said quite seriously.

D-Michelle appeared to Michelle as Michelle tried to fix a doll’s hair into a braid like hers. “Hey, that uncle of yours doesn’t even know you pulled that on him.”

A-Michelle appeared over the other shoulder. “You can just go to him and say you’re sorry.”

“Don’t listen to her. She’s a goody-two-shoes. Now it’s time to get really tough!”

Michelle nodded. “Yeah, what else could I do?”

“Call Cassie. Have her mom pick you up and then say you’re running away when you get over there,” D-Michelle suggested.

A-Michelle rejected that. “Michelle, think of how you’ll miss your family.”

“Okay, if you won’t do that, let’s do something that really drives your uncle up the wall.”

A-Michelle softly reminded Michelle, “Think of what your dad will say if you start acting mean. He won’t like it at all. Neither will your sisters.”

“Yeah,” Michelle admitted, “my sisters would be mad. They can yell really loud.” She hated to be yelled at, much less punished.

“Come on, even one of Stephanie’s volcanic lectures won’t hurt you,” D-Michelle said.

A-Michelle pleaded with Michelle. “Remember what they say, Michelle. You want to be a good princess. What you did was bad already, you don’t want to start being a really bad princess. You want to be a good one.”

“A good princess can pull a few pranks. Come on, Michelle, let’s have some fun.”

Michelle rose from her bed as she said, “Okay, but not too bad. Just enough to show him I mean it.”

That evening, Jesse and Becky had made impromptu plans to go out to eat, and let the others babysit the twins. Jesse had just gotten out of the shower when he screamed, “Becky!”

Becky ran into the bathroom, thinking something was terribly wrong. When she got there, though, she suddenly began snickering. Jesse’s normally perfectly styled black hair was now lime green; he looked like he had half an Easter egg on top of his head. “Jess, look at you.”

Jesse fumed. He took incredible pride in his hair. “Look at this. That kid put green food coloring in my shampoo. Now I’m gonna have to get a new bottle out and wash it all over again before I spend my normal hour in front of the mirror. In fact, we’re running so close on time, I might have to limit it to about 45 minutes.”

“Oh, Jess, don’t worry. Your hair’s going to be fine,” Becky spoke soothingly. She grinned and said, “And, you know, when I see you I can’t help but sing!”

“Oh, really?” Jesse was surprised that he could look attractive at all with his hair green.

“Oh, sure. ‘I’m gonna wash that green right outta my hair!’” she sang jokingly. “Come on, honey, you have to laugh at this stuff a little.”

“Well, okay. But, I sure hope we catch whoever’s responsible. Danny said he hasn’t seen Rusty in weeks. He could have been over here anyway, but still, I don’t know how that kid does it.”

D.J. was digging in her closet for something after dinner that evening. She’d just told Jesse and Becky that the twins were doing well - the couple had arrived home several minutes ago. And now, after coming back down, she discovered a couple of Jesse’s Elvis tapes in her closet. How had they gotten there?

“Hey, D.J.,” Michelle said as she stepped into D.J.’s room. “I picked a really funny color, didn’t I?”

“You mean Uncle Jesse’s hair? Yeah, that...” D.J. began absently. She then noticed that Michelle was nodding.

“Oops,” Michelle said suddenly.

“Michelle, did you put that food coloring in Uncle Jesse’s shampoo?” D.J. asked, hands on her hips. Michelle grinned sheepishly. “And what about his tapes?”

“I hid them, too. There’s more way in back,” she said sadly. She thought of saying that she had to go get her pajamas on, as it was near her bedtime. But, she sensed that nothing would stop D.J. from raising her voice right now. But, at least if she acted remorseful, she could lessen the harshness of the lecture.

Instead of giving a loud lecture, D.J. stepped toward Michelle and said, “Come on. We are going right upstairs and you are going to apologize to Uncle Jesse for pulling those tricks. Either that, or I will tell him and dad myself about what you did.”

Michelle sighed. She should have known not to hide his things in D.J.’s room, but she didn’t know where else to put them. And, since that had been her room when she was younger, she thought she knew some good hiding places. Apparently, a couple of tapes had fallen out as she moved them.

“Okay, D.J..” She slowly walked up to the attic apartment, with D.J. following.

Jesse couldn’t believe it when Michelle told him what she’d done. Once she told him why she did it, though, he began to grasp the situation.

He and Michelle sat down on the couch in the apartment’s living room. “Look,” he explained, “I know you don’t like what I did. But, I had to tell your dad what you did. If I hadn’t, you’d think you could get away with everything. And, you know that’s not right.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” she muttered solemnly.

“Now, listen, what you did with those jokes was kind of funny, I guess. It hurt, but knowing it was you and not some other kid, it’s easy for me to forgive you,” Jesse said as he put an arm around her. “I love you very much. And, you’re always gonna be special to me.”

“Thanks. I love you, too.” Michelle thought for a minute. “Are you gonna have to tell on me again?” she asked.

Jesse grinned. “Tell you what. I’ll help you a little, and if you move all my stuff back where it belongs, and put all that other stuff back where it belongs, I’ll make sure he doesn’t punish you for those jokes. Capiche?”

“Capiche.”

As Jesse went down to D.J.’s room and start to help Michelle carry his tapes upstairs, D.J. met Stephanie in her and Michelle’s room. She related what Michelle had done. “Nobody could have gotten hurt from these little jokes. But, we need to show her how and when to do it, before she thinks it's okay to pull one where someone gets hurt,” D.J. finished.

Stephanie thought for a second before responding. She supposed that hanging around Joey would make her a little more likely to pull pranks, anyway. The class clown of Michelle’s class - maybe of the school - Jeff Farrington, probably gave her ideas, too.

But, she really wasn’t sure if she wanted a little jokester around all the time. “I don’t want to wake up every morning wondering if there are going to be rubber snakes in my dresser.”

“That’s just it. April Fool’s Day is over a month away. That gives us plenty of time to talk with her and plan a great day for her to pull supervised jokes. And I emphasize the supervised part. You’re right, we don’t want her pulling anything that could hurt, and for the first couple years, we don’t want her doing April Fools’ stuff without us or Joey arranging everything, if she wants to pull them.”

“Gotcha, Deej. This sounds like a good idea. I guess you’re right. If she’s thinking like this now, she might keep doing it. And pull worse ones later.”

“Right. Tomorrow afternoon, we’re going to sit down and have a long talk.”

The three sisters sat in Joey’s basement apartment the next day, scanning a catalogue from a local novelty store. Joey had given it to them to look at, as it told of a gigantic April Fools’ Day promotion coming in a couple weeks.

“Those are some funny things,” Michelle said with a smile.

Stephanie corrected her. “They can be. But, would you want to wake up and be scared by a fake spider in your slippers?”

“Why would I pull one on myself?” She had only been thinking of her pulling jokes, not of other people doing them.

“It’s not that, Michelle. It’s just that you have to think of others.”

D.J. told Stephanie that Michelle needed something specific to help her understand. “She needs to see how jokes can hurt. For instance, Michelle, say someone just baked a big chocolate cake.” Michelle’s mouth began to water. “And, let’s say you thought about giving Comet that cake.” Comet was their Golden Retriever. “Do you think that would be funny?”

Michelle nodded. “Yeah. Letting a dog eat a big cake would be funny. Cakes are for people.”

“So in your mind, that’s a fun joke?” Michelle nodded toward D.J.. “Well, guess what. Chocolate is poison to dogs. Just a little bit can give them diarrhea really bad. And, even a piece of chocolate cake would kill a dog.”

Stephanie, as usual, got overly excited. “Michelle, you just killed Comet!” she declared.

Big tears welled up in Michelle’s eyes. “I didn’t mean to.”

“It’s okay, Michelle,” D.J. assured her. “Comet’s okay. But, that’s only because we made sure you didn’t pull that joke. If we hadn’t stopped you, you would have thought it was funny, and Comet would have died when you did it.” Sometimes Stephanie gets too excited, but her exclamation there probably helped our cause a little, D.J. mused.

“See, Michelle. You have to listen to us,” Stephanie asserted.

“That’s right. If you want to pull jokes, you can only do it when one of us or Dad or Joey or Uncle Jesse or Aunt Becky do it with you. And then, only on a certain day each year. Do you want to pull fun jokes?”

“Not if they hurt,” Michelle said timidly, still thinking about how what she thought was funny would have killed their dog. She loved animals.

“We’ll help you get ready for a big April Fools’ Day,” Stephanie declared. “You can be the life of the party if you do your jokes with us.”

D.J. held up a hand. “Please, Steph, we don’t want to overdo it. Maybe she doesn’t want to pull pranks anymore. Would you like to, Michelle?”

“Well...I wish I could have seen Uncle Jesse’s green hair. I like jokes like that,” Michelle admitted. She wasn’t sure if this was the right answer or not. What would her sisters say now that she’d admitted it?

“Then you have to pull jokes with us for now. Because you know what could happen when you think something’s funny on your own,” D.J. stated firmly, yet lovingly.

Michelle smiled excitedly. “Okay, let’s do them.”

Weeks later, on the morning of April Fools’ Day, Michelle walked excitedly into D.J.’s room once they had all dressed for school. “D.J., I know a boy who likes you.”

“Oh, really?” She didn’t have a steady boyfriend at that moment.

Michelle nodded. “He wants to dance with you.”

“Oh, how sweet.” She wondered if Michelle was pulling a fast one on her. But, she wasn’t sure.

“His name is Tim. I told him he could ask you out today.”

Suddenly, D.J. had forgotten about the calendar date. Instead, she was thinking of a boy-girl date. And, there was a big formal the school held for undergraduates while the seniors held their prom in a few weeks. She grinned broadly. “Well...what’s he like? Where did you meet him?”

“The girl who babysat Cassie.”

Stephanie walked into D.J.’s room and quickly asked, “Did Michelle tell you about Tim?”

“She did...and this sounds neat. So, tell me about him.” At that moment, the phone rang.

“He loves dogs.”

“And he’s really nice, too. Right, Michelle?”

Michelle agreed with Stephanie as D.J.’s grin widened. “Yes, he’s very nice. He plays tee ball.”

Great, an athlete, too. Maybe he was on the school’s baseball team. “Wow, he...” D.J. stopped for a second, her grin morphing into a confused look. “Did you say t-ball?”

Since the door was open, Danny walked into D.J.’s room. “Telephone for you, DeeJ.”

“Thanks, Dad. Hello?”

“Hi. Will you go out with me?” came a six-year-old voice.

As D.J. shook her head, Michelle shouted, “April Fool!” Stephanie took the phone and thanked the first grader before hanging up.

“Okay, you got me. That was clever.”

Stephanie explained, “One girl who babysits for Cassie babysat him about a week ago. We set this whole thing up. I worked with Michelle on what to say, then I called him right before she walked into your room, and told him to call back right away.”

“Michelle was just itching to pull a joke on you,” Danny added.

“Well, you did. And you did a good job, Michelle,” D.J. said. Michelle beamed.

“It sure helps when you know the parents, too. By the way, thanks for the picture you colored and put in my briefcase. I’ll have to hang it up at work,” Danny said.

Michelle sighed. Her dad was too good at keeping a straight face. That joke hadn’t worked as well. She said, “April Fool” with little excitement.

The group went down to the kitchen to eat breakfast. Jesse's head was buried in the newspaper. He reached around the paper to touch his plate - and felt a bigger dish than normal. "Huh?" he said to himself as he peeked around the paper. "Ewww, who put Comet's dog dish in front of me?" He looked at Joey.

"Hey, it wasn't me. I pulled that one two years ago," Joey explained.

"It was me. April Fool," Michelle said.

"Yeah, well, I'm just glad I didn't eat any of that. Yuck!" Jesse exclaimed at the end as he sat Comet's dish where it would normally be.

"Well, nobody's going to pull one on me. I'm the champion - I know 'em all," Joey bragged.

Michelle gingerly picked one of the twins up and said, "Your turn to change Nicky."

"Heh, yeah, right. Like I'm falling for that. That's probably Alex, and he doesn't even need changed," Joey told her.

Michelle shook her head. "Go ahead. He needs changed."

"Oh, I'll do it," Becky said absently as she thought about the show she'd be doing in a little over an hour. When she got to the changing table, though, it was Alex and he didn't need changed. She shook her head and snickered. "I can't believe I fell for that."

"I know. I'm good at April Fooling people," Michelle said with a big grin.

"Hmmm, now what will..." Stephanie noticed a big grin on D.J.'s face. "Am I going to feel something gross when I go upstairs to get my bookbag?" Since everyone was having jokes pulled this morning, maybe they would all be over with at once.

"Go ahead, get your bookbag," Michelle urged her.

D.J. walked over to her and whispered. "Be a good sport - so Michelle can have her fun."

Stephanie sighed, then walked upstairs with the same look she might if sent to her room. "All, right, let me get this over with." She brought down her bookbag, and pulled out a couple rubber snakes. "Ewww, grossss," she said in a melodramatic way.

"And now, it's Joey's turn," Danny said as he dished Joey some pancakes.

Michelle reached over and said, "Here let me pour your syrup."

It was ketchup, however. Before Joey noticed, a big glob of ketchup had appeared on his pancakes.

“April Fool,” Michelle said as Joey stared at the pancakes.

“Okay, you got me.”

“Yep, that makes it a clean sweep. Now, you’ll have to wait till next April Fools’ Day,” Danny said.

“That went faster than opening Christmas presents,” Michelle exclaimed. “But, it was funny. April Fool’s Day is the best day ever!” she shouted. “Next year I want to pull them on all my friends at school, too.”

Stephanie rolled her eyes and looked at D.J.. “I think we overdid it.”

“Way overdid it. We’ve created a monster.” She hoped Michelle wouldn’t get too out of control. But, she was afraid they had created a girl who would possibly pull pranks on everyone, all the time. Even if it was only limited to April Fools’ Day, that could drive them crazy.

Once they got home from school, the girls decided to go to the park. As they walked with Michelle to the park, D.J. and Stephanie tried to think of a way to explain that she needed to remain in control - they couldn’t keep monitoring all her jokes forever.

However, they were interrupted by Michelle’s friend and classmate, Jeff.

“Hey, Michelle,” Jeff shouted. The boy, who was six, ran up to her. “I forgot this at home today.”

Michelle took the pen that Jeff had wanted to show her. “It looks pretty.”

Before she knew it, pressing the little button to open it had squirted green ink all over her clothes. She shrieked noisily. “Eeek!”

“Ha, ha! April Foll! You’re green with envy over it,” Jeff teased her. He snorted at his humor. He’d recently heard that phrase, and asked what it meant. He was proud of himself for using it along with the April Fools’ Day gag.

“Jeffery Farrington, what did you do?!” his mother scolded as she pushed the stroller with his little brother up to them.

“That big green blob on her blouse is funny,” Jeff said, ignoring Michelle’s tears.

“No it isn’t! Come on, D.J.! Come on, Stephanie!”

D.J. and Stephanie quickly followed Michelle. They were unable to stop to hear Jeff’s mom apologizing, as they were too busy making sure Michelle got across the street safely.

“I hate April Fools’ Day,” Michelle screamed as they walked home.

A short time later, the doorbell rang. Jeff and his mother appeared at the door, with Jeff staring at the ground. “Hi, Mr. Tanner,” Mrs. Farrington said. “Is Michelle home? Jeff has something he’d like to say to her.”

“Sure. I’ll show you up to her room.” Jeff trudged slowly upstairs, his mom following.

Stephanie and D.J. were sitting on Michelle’s bed, consoling her. With an arm around her, D.J. said, “Don’t worry, Michelle. I’m sure Dad can get that stain out. You know how good he is at cleaning.”

“He said it would be really hard.”

“That doesn’t mean he can’t.”

Jeff appeared inside the doorway, and stood there for a moment. “Go on, Jeff,” his mom urged.

Sighing, Jeff walked over to Michelle and weakly said, “I’m sorry I did that, Michelle.”

“It wasn’t funny!”

“I know. Neither is no TV for a week.”

“I’m terribly sorry,” Mrs. Farrington told the older girls. “He was all anxious to pull jokes on everyone. But, he got a little carried away with a few of them.”

“You mean a lot,” Michelle complained.

“We had to supervise things ourselves. Or else Michelle might have pulled worse ones. Huh?” D.J. said sweetly.

Michelle wasn’t thinking of the ones she’d wanted to pull before her sisters suggested the easier ones, to show her how to pull safe jokes. She only thought of Jeff’s right then. “You should have stopped him.”

“Michelle, he just did something bad. Just like you do sometimes. But, what do we always say?”

Michelle looked up at Danny. “You love me no matter what?”

“That’s right. All of us will always love you. And, you should be just as loving and forgiving to your friend, especially since he’s here saying he’s sorry,” Danny explained.

“Okay.” Michelle said sincerely, “I forgive you.”

“Thanks. This is a neat room. You really like stuffed animals, huh?”

“Yeah. Wanna play with them?” Once Mrs. Farrington okayed it, Michelle and Jeff started playing, the bad joke forgotten as little kids so often did with such things. She, Danny, Stephanie, and D.J. walked out into the hall.

“He really is a sweet boy - when he wants to be,” his mother said. “Michelle seems really nice, too.”

“Thanks. It’s hard without a mom, but, we manage. I think we started her off on the right track, pulling good, clean jokes.” Danny related what Michelle had done.

“Jeff’s a little wilder, but I think lots of boys are. Thankfully a lot of his wildness is in his humor, not roughhousing like some kids do. I like to think that means he’ll be sweeter and more sensitive someday. He’ll make someone a great husband.” She chuckled. “Listen to me. I’m thinking about my little Jeffrey as an adult already.”

D.J. chuckled. “Well, I’m the one thinking that’s good he’s not rough at all, because he and Michelle would make a cute couple someday,” D.J. confessed, thinking of herself with boys. She really disliked boys who acted really tough.

“Sounds like you’ve got some of my mothering instinct already if you’re thinking like that.” D.J. nodded. She, like her mom, always wanted to be the best.

“She might. But, please, Dee, let’s just wait to think about Michelle and boys for ten, twenty, forty years,” Danny said nervously.

Jeff and Michelle, meanwhile, were looking at a stuffed dog. “I have a dog with three ears.”

“That’s silly,” Michelle said, giggling.

“Yep. Her ears kept falling off last year. So, my mom said she’d sew new ones on. She had three colors - green, white and red. I said I wanted one of each.”

Michelle laughed. “That’s a funny story. I like silly things, too,” she told him.

“Me, too. Maybe next year we can pull a joke together.”

“Maybe. But let’s not hurt anyone.” She giggled. “Maybe we can put a whole bunch of ears on a dog.” Jeff laughed, and the children continued to play and joke about adding ears, noses, and other parts to their stuffed animals. Having fun being silly together - yet in a nice way.