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#105 Arizona, April 2014, Gold Country

(Oh beloved Editor, pleaseeease help me cut out these extra words! Xoxo)

Dear Arizona,

*My parents are constantly embarrassing me. How do I get them to stop?
Embarrassed in Elderado*

Dear Embarrassed,

You and I have the exact same problem and I sadly have no actual solution!

"Hey!" My mom said, looking over my Friday newsletter. "Your teacher needs some parents to come along on your overnight fieldtrip up to Gold Country. Gosh, Daddy loves Gold Country so much. Wouldn't that be so neat if he could take a day off work?"

"Yeah!" I said.

But then I remembered how my dad happens to be the world's most embarrassing human being, which I can barely handle in front of my very best friends, much less in front of my entire class!

"Um, on second thought," I said. "Maybe that's not such a good idea. I mean, Daddy probably shouldn't take that much time away from the store. How about you come along instead!"

"I'd love to Zony," she said. "But I'm helping out with a fundraiser for the homeless shelter that weekend."

As you can probably guess, my dad said yes. And as you can also probably guess, the embarrassing stuff started the minute we sat down on the bus!

"Hey guys!" He said, all excitedly. "How about we sing some fun songs?"

I glanced towards the back of the bus where the fashion police were sitting. That's what my friends and I call this particularly mean group of girls who are too cool for anything, and who are always cutting people down who don't dress and act exactly like they do.

"Um, my throat's feeling a little scratchy," I told my dad.

But I don't think he heard me cause he was already singing away.

“Oh, the wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round, oh the wheels on the bus go round and round all over town!”

I sank lower and lower into my seat. I was positive the fashion police were saying, “Nice. Arizona’s father still sings her baby songs!”

“Ugh! Dad please stop!” I begged. “People my age don’t sing baby songs!”

“No problem, I know a bunch of good ones,” he said. “Who knows this one? Take me out to the ball game, take me out with the crowd. Buy me some peanuts and crackerjacks, I don’t care if I never get back. Let me root root root for the home team-”.

“Dad,” I whined. “We’re not going to a ballgame!”

“Then how about this?” He said. “Take me out to that Gold Country, take me out there right now. Get me a gold pan and mining stuff, like back in the old days when times were real tough! Let me root, root, root for the Gold Rush, I’ll strike it rich there for sure. And it’s one, two three strikes you’re out up in Gold Country!”

“Hey, that’s pretty good,” Laughed J.D. “How does that go again?”

J.D.’s a really nice kid and kind of a class clown. He started singing my dad’s goofy, made up song. And then Max and Noah and Luke and my teacher joined in. They kept making up new verses and having a great time.

When we finally got off the bus, I remember thinking, ‘Phew! At least the embarrassing part of this trip is over!’ But I wasn’t exactly right about that.

This guy named Sourdough Joe who was dressed up exactly like an old time Gold Country guy welcomed us. My dad whispered something to him and they went away and came back and my dad was dressed exactly like Sourdough Joe with a hat and suspenders and boots.

“Howdy,” my dad waved. “Prospector Pete here at your service!”

“Argh! Daddy, this isn’t Halloween!” I said, frantically looking around for a bush or *anything* to hide behind. There was no way I could be seen next to him looking like that with the fashion police around. But when I mustered up the courage to peak out from behind my fingers, I saw that the fashion police were so busy fixing their perfect hair and dusting the dirt off their perfect shoes, they hadn’t even noticed my father’s new look.

“Awesome outfit Prospector Pete!” Said J.D. “I wish I had a hat like that!”

“Well you’re in luck kiddo,” said Sourdough Joe. “Everybody follow me to the supply room. We’ve got hats and everything you’ll need to go panning for gold.

We got to use the very same kind of pans that they used in the old days. You dip your pan into this clear, green mountain stream and swish the muddy water around and it slowly drips through these little holes in your pan until the only things left are the pebbles which are too big to fall through. And as your swirling, you’re hoping and hoping just like they did way back in the 1849 Gold Rush, that one of those pebbles might turn out to be a tiny chunk of gold!

“Eureka!” My dad hollered so loud my ear drums nearly broke. “I done struck gold!”

“Well halleluia!” Sourdough Joe cheered, taking a closer look. “Prospector Pete, I do declare you are a wealthy man!”

It turned out that my dad’s teeny gold pebble wasn’t really worth enough to make him rich. But it was still pretty cool. Everybody gathered around and took turns holding the treasure. My dad was definitely the most popular guy around.

So Dear Embarrassed, here’s what I learned. I will most likely have to deal with being horrifyingly embarrassed many, many more times. But, even though some particularly unlovely people like the fashion police will roll their eyes and make rude comments, there’ll always be great, fun loving good sports like J.D. who don’t give a darn about acting cool and just want to get the very most fun out of life. I guess my advise might be to beg your father like crazy to act a little more normal. Then try as hard as you can to laugh and not worry about what all those annoyingly judgmental people think!

Ciao for Now,
Arizona

