

Stories

Academically gifted

At the beginning of year 11, students discuss their prospective academic scores with teachers. "With continued effort Bobby, you could be on track for an OP 1."

Wow, I thought, imagine how proud my parents would be! So I kept this information secret, wrote a goal on a small piece of yellow paper and hid it in my bedside table.

After two years of hard work I achieved my goal.

Mum flashed a brilliant smile, "Wow, I'm so proud of you! I had stumbled across that goal you'd written, but I never thought you'd actually be able to achieve it. Well done!"

Thank you for invading my privacy and not believing in me.

Wicked

When you asked me what I wanted for my birthday this year, I said my usual line, "Mum, I really don't mind what you get me, I would appreciate a surprise."

You ignored me as usual and asked the question again. My mind, expertly trained in dealing with these uncomfortable conversations, flashed an image of a Wicked poster on a bus shelter I'd seen earlier that day. "How about Wicked the musical? I've seen it before, but it was pretty good."

"Leave it with me, son!"

I saw you a few times over the coming months. You mentioned how busy you were with the dogs and caravan and overseas trips, but assured me you'd find some time to purchase the tickets 'real soon'.

One afternoon in October I received an SMS with a link to some e-tickets:
hApPy BiRtHdAy To YoU 🎵🎵🎵

Great thank you!

Mum, you are the only person who tells me how difficult I am to buy gifts for. If you had simply tried or listened, you may have discovered I'm not so difficult at all.

Going back a couple of decades, I can't think of a gift I've received that had obviously come from dad's initiative.

Fake Nike shoes

I noticed other boys wearing cool skate shoes when I was around 10 years old. The classic Vans style with black canvas on top of a white sole. I asked mum to buy me a pair.

As a self-proclaimed fashion expert and budding shoemaker, mum invited me on a trip to the local BigW. I watched in horror as she slowly withdrew a pair of shoes from a shelf above my head. They were black canvas shoes indeed, but adorned with the chunkiest white soles I'd ever seen. They looked like upside-down castle turrets. I was puzzled because I thought this was the kind of shoe worn by middle-aged sarong-draped women at Balinese resorts!

Once home, I was asked to watch closely as she crafted a shoe just for me! She outlined a lop-sided poor imitation of Nike's famous swoosh logo on each shoe, and filled in the shapes with a gooey white craft pen. As the luxury brand shoes dried, she urged me to get excited for the big fashion premier! We'd be showing off these custom creations at church tonight!

I felt my mother's proud gaze on me as I stood up and shuffled forward to receive Holy Communion. These chunky fucking upside-down castle turrets were blazing brighter than the wafer in the priest's fingertips.

After mass there were a few older boys from school standing around sniggering at me. It was at that point I wrestled with a powerful urge to disappear completely with no means to achieve it.

A few days later I was waiting to be picked up from school. From behind me a boy from church yelled and pointed, "Hey, fake Nike shoes!" I whirled around, slapped my hands together and croaked out a disarming laugh. On the inside I wondered if I would be more successful at disappearing completely this time around.

Mum's silent treatment lately seems to be related to me not wearing the shoes anymore, but she won't talk to me about it. I just can't seem to make her happy.