

ning up through the roots, smiling, pulling him down, like claws — and he's screaming and he has no idea what's happening ... and I couldn't even reach him. I couldn't get to the pool and he —

JOSHUA. (*Putting an arm around her.*) Breathe, Gen. We're breathing.

GENEVRA. But this was like the eighth time —

JOSHUA. And do we let him near ducky wading pools? (*Breathing.*) In. Out.

GENEVRA. (*Holding Joshua.*) What does it take, Josh? What do you have to do to make the universe kick in and help you out a little? (*Thunder. Three parents glide out in stylish comfortable clothes, looking happy and damn near perfect, focusing a digital camera and video cameras on the distance. From one direction comes Cate in hip jogging attire and from the other come Ross and Lynzie, who is very pregnant.*)

LYNZIE. Cate!

CATE. Lynzie! Ross! (*They hug.*) Look at you! How was your summer? Did you go anywhere?

LYNZIE. (*Indicating her pregnant belly.*) We just kind of nested for the summer. That and the yoga classes.

ROSS. I took a lot of vacation days though. Amber and Donny and I set up a telescope. Every night we'd be outside the city mapping out the night sky, and every day we'd come in and paint a scale model on Donny's ceiling.

CATE. I love that!

LYNZIE. And the games. Don't forget the board games.

ROSS. You'd think after your forty-third consecutive round of Chutes and Ladders you'd be wanting to blow your brains out —

LYNZIE. But you just don't.

ROSS. (*To Cate.*) What about you? How was your summer? Busy?

CATE. Well, right after school let out we ran the Breast Cancer Marathon — Gray was so cute — it was his first 6K. They had a special division for five-year-olds — the day after that we packed up and headed back to Atlanta and our whole family worked on a Habitat for Humanity house.

LYNZIE. How wonderful.

CATE. They had Gray pounding nails and laying PVC and mudding drywall. In-credible.

LYNZIE. Oh, that is so wonderful.

CATE. And since we've been back, he's been, "Mommy, that man needs a home — he can have my tree house" and "Mommy, let's

find some hungry people and give them my leftover tater-tots."

ROSS. That is really lovely.

CATE. Where are your little guys?

LYNZIE. (*Going back to her camera.*) Over there. Playing in the sandbox with that little boy.

CATE. Gray is too!

JOSHUA. That's our little boy. The one they're playing with. Mac. I'm Joshua Bradley and this is Genevra.

GENEVRA. It's great to meet you.

ROSS. Ross Bain. That's our two: Donny and Amber.

JOSHUA. The mocha-colored ones. (*Genevra elbows him.*)

LYNZIE. And I'm their mom. Lynzie.

CATE. And I'm Cate. Gray's mine.

GENEVRA. They're so sweet! You don't usually see older kids playing with little ones —

CATE. How old is your son?

JOSHUA. Three.

GENEVRA. Four in two months.

ROSS. Then you're almost done.

LYNZIE. Congratulations.

GENEVRA. What.

CATE. His fourth birthday. You get 'em to four, and your parenting job's practically over.

LYNZIE. "Give me the child 'til he's four, and I'll give you the man."

ROSS. Some Jesuit said that.

LYNZIE. Good enough for him, good enough for us! (*She crouches and shoots with her digital camera.*)

JOSHUA. We've always said the early years were vital, didn't we, honey —

GENEVRA. I thought we had 'til he was five —

ROSS. Four.

LYNZIE. All the studies show that whoever they are on their fourth birthday — that's who they'll be for the rest of their lives.

ROSS. You can see their whole life in that little body. Like those girls who are chubby when they're four start getting breasts at age nine.

LYNZIE. That's kind of creepy, honey.

ROSS. But it's true.

LYNZIE. (*To Gen and Josh, gesturing to the sandbox.*) You should be recording this.

ROSS. It goes so fast.

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