

Superhero Bread

I am forever struggling to get my three-year-old twins to eat, especially fruits and vegetables. The other day I took some whole-grain/omega-3/whatever-other-health-cliché bread you can come up with and tried to convince them to eat it. They just would not dare to even try it. In my desperation I suggested to them that it would turn them into superheroes. I took a bite, swallowed it, froze for a moment, and then did my best acting job to metamorphasize into superhero. I changed my voice, puffed my chest out, raised my shoulders, and stood as tall as I could. Then I lifted my son over my head and said, "See, I'm a superhero!"

Unconvinced, my daughter pointed at my stomach and said, "Then why is your tummy still big like Daddy's?"

I put my son down and pretended that the effects of the bread had worn off, that I was Daddy again and couldn't remember what just happened. Giggling, my son still refused to eat it, and instead insisted that I take another bite of the bread.

So I did. I began the metamorphosis again, only this time I sucked my stomach in as much as an overweight, our-of-shape, forty-two-year-old slob can.

My daughter still wasn't quite convinced, so I lifted her over my head and pretended to fly with her. This went on for a awhile, alternating

between her and my son, until I ran out of breath and conveniently pretended that the superhero effects had expired again, and that I was back to out-of-shape, old Daddy again. Furthermore, with the loss of power I also acted as if I no longer had any memory of being a superhero.

During this whole charade, for some reason they were making a wall of toys and other children's items in the playroom doorway, using their wagon, stroller, large trucks, toy houses, etc. I was on the outside of the room and their "wall" had gotten to the height at which I could no longer step over it. My son asked for a tissue for his runny nose. Seeing that I could not get past the wall, he said, "Just step over it Daddy!" By that point it was too high and wide; instead I had to stretch my arm over it and hand the tissue to him.

Then they asked me to eat the bread again. I took a bite, did the transformation, and once again made my best impression of an overweight, nearing-elderly-status superhero.

Amused, my daughter said, "Are you really a superhero?"

With my arms bent, my hands rested on my hips, and my chest forced up and out, in—at least what I was imagining was—a classic comic book cover pose, I replied in a low, loud, stern voice, "Yes, I am."

"Really?" she said with precocious suspicion.

"Yes, I certainly am," I replied.

"Then let's see you jump over this, because our Daddy can't," she said.

"What?"

"Our Daddy can't jump over this like a superhero. Jump over it."

It was an insult and a challenge at the same time. *Clever girl*. But the smile on her face—and my son's as well—was really of devious mischief; they wanted to see me attempt the jump, but expected me to crash and return to the reality of clumsy Daddy. They wanted to see this pathetic image of me pretending I was a superhero come to a spectacularly disastrous end.

They were quiet, trying to hide their grins, staring at me, waiting for my answer.

"Okay...I will now...leap...over...the...wall...because Superdad...can leap...tall buildings!" I hesitantly announced with the confidence of someone who accepted a task he knows that he cannot fulfill.

My son tried to stifle his laughter as he enthusiastically anticipated the impending catastrophe.

As I readied myself, they wisely moved out of the way, backing to the far wall of their playroom. In their haste to get to safety, they knocked some toys out of their way.

I flexed the entire four ounces of muscle on my body, took a deep breath, and sized up the insurmountable tower of fire engines, Barbie dolls, and Rescue Hero toys. *At least there were a few stuffed animals in there: maybe it won't hurt too badly*. I got a running start of a few steps,

then leaped, pulling myself into a ball so that I would not crack my brains all over the top of the doorframe. Besides, curling up in a ball would probably be the least painful approach to this mess anyway.

Much to my surprise, I cleared the wall, somehow landed on my feet, and stumbled as I regained my balance—my momentum nearly smashing my head into the opposite wall. The funniest part of this stunt wasn't that I probably sprained both ankles and fractured some stuff in my feet and legs, but the stunned look on their faces: *there was no way either Daddy or Superdad could have leaped over that pile*. They looked back from me to the wall to each other and then rotated through that series a couple more times before examining me with their eyes again.

I resumed my classic superhero stance, resting my hands on my hips, coughing and wheezing in triumph while trying to hide the new pain in my feet.

"You *are* really a superhero!" my daughter declared with her eyebrows drawn in earnest as she pointed at me.

"Yes, I am," I said, out of breath.

They studied me for a moment, standing there quietly, trying to make sense of it. So was I. I mean, *that pile had to be at least five inches high, and I cleared the whole thing. How?!*

Finally, she took a few steps toward me and ordered, "I want my Daddy back now."

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