

Daddy's Shoes
a parable of our day
by Debra Woods

"I'm going to be a doctor just like you!" announced Timmy to his father at the breakfast table one morning.

"I see," replied Dr. Taylor, "then you better finish those waffles, or we will be late."

"Late for what?" questioned Timmy, mystified.

"Late for work. There's nothing like the present, if you are going to be a doctor, we might as well get you started right away, so drink that milk and wipe your face off, and meet me in the garage." With that, Dr. Taylor folded the morning news, stood up, kissed his wife on the cheek and walked briskly from the room.

Timmy's eyes widened and his jaw dropped as he looked up at his mother. Her eyes were wide as well, but she shrugged and said, "You know he hates to be late. Better hurry!"

His eyes widened even more, momentarily, and then he crammed the last bite of waffle in his mouth and downed the final gulp of milk, wiped his face off and scrambled down from his chair. He was on his way out the door when he stopped in his tracks. "This isn't how doctors dress!"

"Oh no!" said Mrs. Taylor with alarm. "But there are clean clothes stacked on the washer. Here, take this shirt and these pants and you can change in the car." She handed Timmy the button down shirt and a pair of long pants he only wore to church on Sunday, smoothed the hair that was sticking straight up on the crown of his head and ushered him quickly out the door to the garage where his father was already waiting in the car. She waved goodbye as they pulled out of the driveway, Timmy in a flurry of arms and sleeves in the seat next to his father.

By the time they reached the clinic, Timmy was all changed. His tennis shoes didn't quite match the rest of his attire, but he hoped no one would notice. The receptionist greeted them with a smile, "Well hello Timmy! Don't you look nice today. Are you getting a check up?"

Timmy just shook his head "no" and followed quickly after his father through the door leading to the exam rooms and walked into his father's office.

"Hmmm, let's see," said Dr. Taylor scratching his chin and looking around the room. "You will need a lab coat, and of course a stethoscope . . . where is that old one I used in college?" He looked through a drawer in his desk and soon held up a stethoscope, "Aha!" he said with satisfaction, "This will do just fine." He hung it around Timmy's neck. "Now for that jacket." He went to the coat tree in the corner where several lab coats hung, He put one on himself and picked the shortest one and brought it to Timmy. "For today, this will have to do." He helped Timmy on with the coat, "We'll just roll up these sleeves like this . . ." he started to roll up the left sleeve, then the right. "There, it hardly drags on the ground at all. Just be careful."

Timmy could tell when his dad was joking and when he meant business. So he didn't bother asking.

"Do you want to look in the mirror?" They stood in front of the full length mirror Dr. Taylor had behind his office door. Timmy only came halfway up his father's chest, but there was a striking resemblance, even with the oversized lab coat. Dr. Taylor patted Timmy on the shoulders and said, "So let's see what's on the schedule for today."

He picked up a clipboard on his desk and looked it over. "It says we will be seeing Mrs. Carver first this morning. She's been having trouble with her ears. Here is her char." He handed Timmy a folder from a rack on his desk, "let's see what room they put her in."

They walked into the hallway and looked down toward the exam rooms. Timmy already knew that the multi-colored signs by each door flipped out and each color meant something different. Only one sign was flipped out by any door, and it was red. "She's in room three, I bet."

“You are absolutely right!” said Dr. Taylor

Timmy felt all warm with gratification at his father’s praise. He walked confidently after him to room three. “Maybe this won’t be so bad after all,” thought Timmy.

Mrs. Carver was sitting on the end of the exam table. She looked surprised when she saw Timmy follow his father into the room.

“Good morning Mrs. Carver. I’d like you to meet my son Timmy. He will be assisting me today.”

“Oh! How do you do?” she said nodding at Timmy.

“Fine,” said Timmy.

“Now then, let’s take a look at your ears today.” Dr. Taylor went to the counter and reached for an instrument and attached something to it and walked along side of the exam table on the left. “Timmy, pull that chair over here and step up on it so you can see in the patient’s ear.”

Timmy pulled the chair over to where his father stood and climbed up on it. Dr. Taylor put the instrument in Mrs. Carver’s ear and pressed a little button on the handle and a bright light shown into her ear. He looked through a lens into the ear. “Hmmm. You better have a look at this Timmy.”

He stepped back, still holding the instrument in place, and Timmy took a turn looking through the lens. He was very surprised to see what the inside of an ear looked like. “Wow!” he said.

“My thoughts exactly! You can get down now Timmy.” He helped Timmy hop down from the chair and walked to the other side of the exam room. “Timmy and I concur that the ear has healed very nicely indeed. Have you finished your medication?”

“Yes, two days ago.” she answered.

“Good, good. Well then, if you agree Timmy, I think we can give Mrs. Carver a clean bill of health, what do you think?”

“Ummm, “

“Do you have further concerns Timmy?”

“Oh! No, no concerns.”

“Good, good. So Mrs. Carver, you just give us a call if that ear gives you any further trouble, will you.”

“Yes Dr. Taylor, thank you.”

“Fine, have a nice day, Timmy and I have other patients to see now.”

“Bye! Thank you Timmy!” she said, waving and smiling very wide.

Timmy and his father walked out into the hallway. “That went very well Timmy. You seem to take very naturally to medicine.”

“Thank you,” said Timmy. He glowed a little more. He noticed another red sign flipped out on exam room 4. There was a folder in the rack on the door. Dr. Taylor pulled it out and opened it.

“Here we have Joey Schultz. He has a sore throat and fever.” Dr. Taylor opened the exam room door and ushered Timmy in before him. “Hello Joey. I understand you aren’t feeling so well today.”

Joey shook his head.

“Well, my assistant Timmy gives good exams. I’m sure he will find what is wrong and be able to get you feeling better in no time. I am going to take Mrs. Carver’s chart back to the nurse station.” With that he stepped into the hallway and closed the door behind him.

Joey glared at Timmy in his lab coat and stethoscope. Timmy swallowed hard. His heart started pounding. What was his father thinking, leaving him alone in this room with a patient! He cleared his throat. “So you have a sore throat?” his voice broke as he croaked out his question.

“Uh-huh” Joey nodded with a wince. It obviously hurt even to nod.

Timmy hesitated, palms sweating, and looked around the room. He saw another of those instruments they had used to look in Mrs. Carver’s ears. He went to it and fit one of those cones on the end. He pulled the chair up to the exam table and climbed up on it. Joey just glared at Timmy. “I need to look in your ear” he said, since that was one thing he thought he knew how to do.

Joey leaned back away from Timmy and shook his head. Just then, there was a light knock on the door, and Dr. Taylor peeked his head through the door. “Excuse me, do you need any help?”

Tim heaved a big sigh of relief and nodded at his father. Dr. Taylor came in and walked over to Timmy. “I see you were checking his ears, that’s good.” But Timmy was now shaking and nervously climbed down from the chair. He handed the instrument to his father, and walked to the door, opened it and walked out. He made a beeline for his father’s office. He took off the lab coat and put the stethoscope back in the desk drawer. He went to the chair by the window and curled up in it.

Several minutes went by before Dr. Taylor returned to the office.

“I don’t want to be a doctor.” Tim announced when his father came into the room.

“I think you will be a very fine doctor Timmy.”

Tears came to Timmy’s eyes. He wiped them away. He shook his head rapidly. “I don’t want to be a doctor.”

His father paused, then asked, “What do you want to be Timmy?”

“A BOY!” he said with force. “Just a boy. I just want to go to school with the other kids and learn multiplication and division and the presidents of the United States and the planets.”

“I see.”

“Why did you leave me in there with that boy!? I didn’t know what to do!” Timmy cried out and began to sob.

Doctor Taylor came to the chair and lifted Timmy up and sat with him on his lap. He gave him a hug and soon Timmy stopped crying.

“It takes a long time Timmy. It took me a long time to become a doctor. I didn’t even know I wanted to be a doctor till I was in college. I think it is wonderful that you want to be a doctor when you are just 9 years old. I am happy that you think I am someone you want to be like someday.” They sat that way for some time. “But for now, I think you are right. I think you need to go back to school and practice math and science and writing and history. And if you still want to be a doctor when it is time to go to college, we will pick out a very good school for you to attend where you can study to become a doctor someday.”