

Snowsuit (from FATHER MUST)

by Rick Rofihe

He had on his snowsuit. He wasn't even cold.

"Are you all right?"

The first time the lady said it, he didn't know what she was saying.

"What?" He sat up.

"Are you all right?"

"I'm all right."

"I've been standing across the street for fifteen minutes. I was walking by and saw you weren't moving. So I watched—you didn't move at all."

Well, what's so wrong with—but he just looked at her and said, "I was all right."

"You'll catch cold, just lying in the snow like that."

He wouldn't. "This snowsuit's really warm."

"How old are you? Nine?"

"Eight. Almost nine."

"Aren't you getting a little big for snowsuits?"

What else did she ask him? Was he sleeping? "I wasn't sleeping." Just looking at the clouds? "There's no clouds." At the sky, then?

Is that what he was doing?

"Nothing to do? You should be busy doing something," she said. "Playing with your friends. Just looking at the sky like that, you must get bored."

He was all right. He wasn't cold. He wasn't sleeping. He wasn't looking. He wasn't doing anything, so maybe he didn't look busy. He doesn't know if he was busy or not, but he wasn't bored.

He's sorry he worried the lady. He didn't know it was fifteen minutes. He didn't know anyone would watch him. Maybe he should have been in the back yard. But where he was when he started lying there was in the front yard. Maybe he just started thinking. But he's not sure what he was thinking. Fifteen minutes? He wasn't cold. He wasn't bored.

People get ideas about you. When he told his big sister about the lady, she said the older you get, the more people get ideas about you.

“Because you get taller?”

Older, his sister meant. The *older* you get, the more people get ideas about you.

“I don't want people to get ideas about me.”

His sister said it didn't matter, they're going to.

He's sorry he made the lady worry. He's sorry she had to stop and watch him for fifteen minutes. He didn't move for fifteen minutes, she said—but sometimes you forget just what you're doing and where you are. In the front yard, or in the back yard, or in your room. In his room, if anyone saw him now, they'd think he was just looking at the ceiling. But that's not really what he's doing. He doesn't look busy. His eyes are open. He might be thinking, but he doesn't always remember what he was thinking. He doesn't look busy, but maybe he is. He's not bored.

He's going to ask his sister how to make sure people get the right ideas about you. Because people do get ideas about you. Maybe it's fine if somebody gets the right ideas about you.

He had on his snowsuit. His snowsuit's really warm.

He wants to be busy, but he doesn't want to be just busy. He doesn't want to be just busy, and he doesn't want to be bored.

