

Let me introduce you to my family. My name is Mollie Moyle and my parents are Kevin and Lucy. I am six years old and I have a little brother Mikey who has just had his fifth birthday.

I remember the day mummy came home from hospital with Mikey. Well, I really don't remember everything, but we have lots of family photos and movies of the event. Here was this really tiny person, no bigger than my favourite doll, wrapped tightly into a blanket with only a face peaking out and a very red, ugly one at that!

Everyone was looking at the new baby, grinning like their faces were about to split in two....well, not everyone, as I didn't understand what all the fuss was about. I was looking at my mummy and daddy with a rather worried frown. In one photo my chin was almost touching my chest and my arms were folded across my tummy. I looked sad as if I was about to cry.

My first real memories of Mikey were when he began to walk, or rather run. There was this time when our family was on holidays at the

beach. The day was warm and sunny and I was showing Mikey how to build a sand castle. He wasn't a fast learner as he flicked his spade of sand up in the air and missed the bucket completely! Mikey thought that was hilarious as he sat there chuckling away, but I was most distressed as I dusted the sand out of my hair and face. I looked around to protest to mummy but she had her head stuck in a magazine. What she was reading must have been funny though as she had a big grin on her face!

I looked over to daddy and he just shrugged his shoulders as he often does, and then said one of his strange sayings...."you were little once my girl". But you already know that there is no understanding my dad and his weird talk. I often wonder if it is because he is Irish and they speak a totally different language. I asked my mum this once and her reply was that my dad had a language all his own.....still can't figure it all out, but hopefully I will one day soon.

Now that Mikey is older he has worked out how to shovel sand into the bucket and can even make

a pretty good sand castle. He makes them as fast as he can and when he has completed three or four he stands, looking proudly at them before jumping on top and totally destroying them all with a big "Yahoo".

Our family loves going to the beach and lucky for us we have plenty to choose from near where we live. There is the calm water with almost no waves and then a little further down the highway there is a real surfing beach. This is much more exciting. When I was little I was very worried about the ocean beach for fear of being

attacked by a shark. Also, I didn't like the seaweed floating around and getting tangled in my legs.

My dad use to tease me about this, saying I didn't have enough meat on my bones for sharks to be interested in me for their dinner. I know he was trying to make me feel easier but it didn't work! Why do parents say these weird things when we know it is just really silly! Our dad is a champion when it comes to saying weird stuff. I don't know if I will ever understand half of what he says!

You know, I think Mikey is starting to become like our dad which is a real worry. He will be going to prep school next year so goodness knows how that will go for him. The other kids will probably give him a "hard time".....that's what our dad says anyway.

Take last Sunday at the beach for instance.... I was making a sand sculpture and Mikey was nearby jumping over the incoming waves. Then two boys about my age came over to look at what I was making. They started making stupid

remarks like...“what is that supposed to be?” and laughing when I told them it was a mermaid. The bigger boy said“Looks more like a whale to me” and started laughing louder than ever.

Mikey came running over all excited, waving his arms around and stood beside me saying...“are you guys bothering my sister?” He then stood there, hands on his hips and looking them straight in the eye. Well, they didn't know whether to laugh or not at this skinny, blond-haired little kid. They just stood there

speechless! Then, shrugging their shoulders they took off down the beach to annoy someone else.

Mum and dad were watching the whole scene from under the beach umbrella close by to see what would happen. Dad came over and tousled Mikey's hair and said "That's my boy, I'm proud of you defending your sister from bullies". I was secretly pleased with my brother too, but I could have easily "sent the bullies packing with a flea in their ear" (one of my dad's sayings). Besides my sculpture didn't look at all like a whale!

One of the great things about going to the beach is that we get to have a fish and chip lunch and before we head off home.....a special treat.....like ice-cream. Now Mikey is big on *treats*. He wants one for everything he does and even for not doing something annoying!! Mummy says she feels like "pulling her hair out" but I know she wouldn't do that! My dad's reaction is to give Mikey "*the dad stare*" and that seems to do the trick.

I used to get "the stare" when I was little ... this is how it looks. Dad's brown eyes just go into a

fixed look, his left eyebrow arches up into his forehead and his head tilts to the right...his mouth clamps shut with lips pressed together. Not a pretty sight that's for sure! Mummy doesn't like it either especially when she is on the receiving end. I wonder if this is something he learnt to do....maybe I could do "the stare" myself if I practice in front of the mirror. That would be worth trying on my school mates next time they are annoying me.

Mikey will be going to the same school where I am next year which will be rather weird. He

keeps asking me all these questions about what it's like and if he will have his friends from kindy there. Sometimes I know exactly how mum feels when she says she feels like "pulling her hair out" as Mikey can be very persistent with his questions. He just gives you this dopey look until he is satisfied with the answer you give him. Gosh it's hard work being an older sister!

My friend Clare thinks Mikey is very cute....probably because she doesn't have any brothers in her family. Sometimes when Clare comes over for a play-date she spends just as

much time doing stuff with Mikey as she does with me, which I don't think is fair. She loves going through his toys especially the train set and the racing car track. Mikey gets really excited as these are his favourite games and he can spend hours pretending to be Thomas the Tank Engine or racing in the Indy 5,000.

One thing Mikey and I both love to do is go to the playground and we have so much fun on all the equipment. Mikey's favourite is the flying-fox and that is the first thing he heads for and stays until there are too many other kids wanting

to have a go. Then he's off to the slippery slides. I've often wondered why it is called a *slippery* slide.....yes, you do slide down it but I don't think you can say it is *slippery* do you?

There are always lots of kids in the playground and I like to make friends with them and get to find out all about them. It's amazing what stories you hear. My dad says that I'm always picking up *stray cats*. But that isn't true as we have never ever had a cat for a pet.! Even the boys at the park are better behaved than the ones at school....I guess it's because they have an

adult to supervise them. My all time best playground has a giant slide and huge climbing monkey bars shaped like a giant balloon. It also has swings and other stuff but that is more for smaller kids like Mikey.

Mikey doesn't talk to anyone at the playground. It is not because he is shy as he is always *showing off* at his kindy and with friends. Mummy says it is just that Mikey is *focused*. It took a while for her to explain to me what that meant, and even then I'm not sure I really understand if being "focused" is a good or bad

thing. This is another thing about parents...you are never sure what you should be doing and when you think you are just joking around, they can become irritated and upset with you.

Not long ago, Mikey and I had a talk to try and work out how we could have fun and do some adventurous stuff without us both getting into trouble with mum and dad. Well, Mikey wasn't too keen with the idea as he thought it was a useless exercise either way. He would say that being a boy.....but I wanted to give it a good try, so he said he would go along with whatever I

decided. He's good like that....well, most of the time anyhow!

After putting lots of ideas together we finally came up with a plan. We had to make sure that mummy and daddy were feeling happy and in a good mood. So we decided the following Saturday afternoon would be a good time to put our plan into action. Everyone is pretty relaxed after lunch and all the chores and shopping has been done, so we had high hopes we could pull it off.

At the end of our street there is this huge tree. Lots of bigger kids are climbing it all the time but we have never been allowed. Mikey and I just have to stand there watching everyone else having fun swinging from the branches and chasing each other from limb to limb. I don't think it is any more difficult than the monkey bars and flying-fox at the playground. Besides there are always some adults around keeping an eye out for anyone in trouble. So this was to be our big adventure.

Every day during the following week Mikey and I were on our best behaviour and did lots of chores at home to please mum and dad. I did my homework without having to be reminded, which for me was a big effort. I don't know why we have to do school work at home....it just doesn't seem fair to me. You spend enough of the day at school doing all the learning, so why do you have to do more at home?

Mikey stayed out of trouble too and didn't even mention having a *treat* all week. We both played together without any fighting as we planned how

we would go about having our adventurous climb on the Saturday.

We had thought of some great ideas as to how this would work...well, most of them were mine, but Mikey didn't care he was so excited. I just hoped he didn't spoil it all by blurting something out to mummy and daddy. He's not that good at keeping secrets but then he's only five years old! We even planned what we would wear and made sure we had our sneakers, hats and back-packs ready.

After dinner on the Friday night, our mum announced that the family was going on a trip the next day. It was a special treat as a reward for our good behaviour during the week. Well, I was just speechless as I looked at Mikey willing him not to say anything about *our* secret plans! What could we do? Where were we going and what was the special treat?

Mikey and I didn't know how to feel. Yes we were disappointed but then again we were excited to know all about the family plans for the

next day. So off to bed we went, our minds racing until we fell asleep exhausted.

Mummy and daddy were up very early the next morning and soon had the household chores done and the groceries back from the supermarket.

No matter how many times Mikey and I tried to coax mummy into telling us about where we were going, it didn't work. All she would say is "you will both have a great time, so be patient and wait and see".

About mid morning the car was loaded up and off we went. All the time our dad had what we call

his *silly face* on. Not at all like *the stare*but you know he is busting to say stuff but keeps his lips firmly together, a little smile turns his lips upward and his eyes take on this amazing sparkling effect. Mikey and I know it's a good look and when our mum sees it, she just giggles and shakes her head. I guess it's like a secret language they have without the words!

After about an hour's drive Mikey and I were getting a little restless and asking the obvious question...."are we there yet?..." and then we pulled into this huge car park with hundreds of

cars and people everywhere. What was this all about? Daddy jumped out and did one of his famous "TA DA" poses....well, I guess you don't know much about them but we do get to see them a lot.

We all had to walk up to an entrance and go through a turnstile and once through, Mikey and I were truly stunned....we had come to an **Adventure Playground and Water Slide Park!!** Wow....we could hardly believe it....this was like our best dreams coming true. We both hugged

mummy and daddy and each other, jumping up and down and giggling until we almost fell over.

The next few hours just flew by. This was like Disneyland without leaving the country! Everything was huge.... Mikey and I ran from one activity to the next. But to our greatest surprise and delight was a magnificent tree-house set high within the upper branches of a Moreton Bay fig tree. There were rope ladders to climb to the lower limbs and even walking platforms connecting the branches. Mikey and I just looked wide-eyed at each other;

speechless....and then erupted into a crazy fit of giggling, hugging and jumping around.

Our mum and dad stood there wondering what was happening to us to behave with such excitement, but of course we couldn't tell them could we.....that was "our secret". Later as we drove home happy and exhausted Mikey and I whispered about how parents had the power not just to know **everything** their children did, but even what they were **thinking!!**