EVAN JACOBS

MYSTERY BOX



A More Mature Look

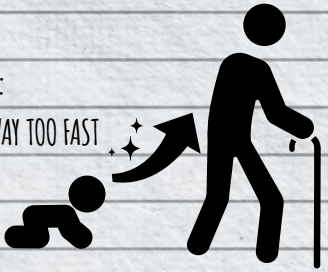
WHY JAYVEE THINKS HIS SMART GLASSES ARE COOL:

- SLEEK, MODERN DESIGN
- HIDDEN CAMERAS AND MICS
- LOOK EXPENSIVE
- GET HIM WANTED ATTENTION
- MAKE HIM FEEL MORE CONFIDENT



HUGE SIDE EFFECT:

- GROWING UP WAY TOO FAST

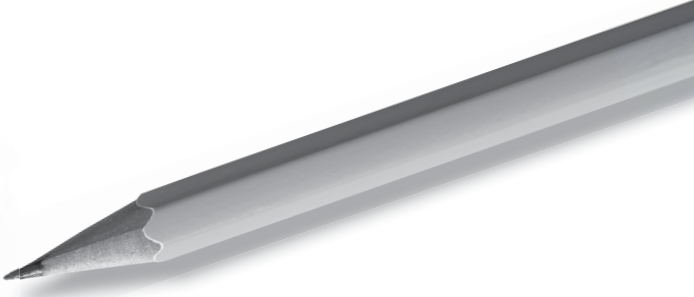


JAYVEE'S GRANDMA WOULD SAY:

- GETTING OLD ISN'T ALWAYS FUN
- LOOKS AREN'T EVERYTHING
- TIME WITH FAMILY MATTERS
- FOCUS ON ENJOYING THE PRESENT









Wanting to grow up is normal, but this isn't . . .





CHAPTER 1

SMART STUFF

Jayvee Soriano unfolded his scooter. His two friends, Vince and Eduardo, got theirs ready too. The boys were headed to Vince's house after school.

Eduardo smiled. "I can't wait to see what it is. We should've ordered a mystery box a long time ago."

Jayvee eyed him. "Don't get your hopes up. I bet there's nothing good in it."

Vince shook his head. "Why do you say

that? We paid $100 for the box. I'm sure it'll be worth it."

Eduardo glanced at Jayvee. "Yeah. The company we picked is the best too. Everybody says it is."

Jayvee shrugged. "Whatever."

He thought about his money. Jayvee never had as much as his friends. They were all in eighth grade. Their money was from their allowances.

Vince and Eduardo each gave $40 for the box. Jayvee only had $20 to give. His friends did not know he couldn't pay more. They just thought he didn't really want the box. There was truth in that. Jayvee wasn't sure about ordering it. The idea of wasting his money frustrated him.

Earlier that day, Vince had received a text. It noted that the mystery box had arrived. The boys wanted the box to be sent to Vince's. His house was the biggest of all their homes. He also was an only child. This is why the three always hung out at his house. Eduardo shared a one-story home

with his parents and two sisters. Jayvee lived in a small apartment with his dad. They had been there since Jayvee's mom passed away.

Jayvee would always remember his mom's wake and funeral. He had never seen so much of his family before. America was his birthplace. But he was Filipino. Most of his family still lived in the Philippines. Many of them had visited the U.S. when his mom died. They were very supportive and kind. All of them made Jayvee feel loved. When they left, Jayvee and his dad felt alone.

Mrs. Soriano's passing changed everything. Jayvee and his dad rarely talked. Mr. Soriano usually worked two jobs. Sometimes, it was three. He was hardly ever home. This made Jayvee even more grateful for Vince and Eduardo. The boys were his best friends. They were always there for him.

Jayvee liked riding through his simple suburban town. It was called Bishop Creek. The homes were what he loved most. His dream was to have his own house there one day.

As he rode, Jayvee wiped sweat from his forehead. He slightly adjusted his backpack. *I hope my hair still looks good*, he thought.

He always tried to dress well. His hair had to be as perfect as possible. Jayvee couldn't afford expensive clothing. Yet his style made him appear more mature. Looking older was his goal. It was something that made him feel cool.

Jayvee admired high schoolers. Most seemed to have their lives together. He longed to be like them. Many had groups of friends. Some high schoolers dressed well. They drove to school too. Maybe he would be driving in a few years. That could get the attention of popular students. There was only one problem. A nice car would be hard for him to afford. It was one big reason to save his money.

Vince and Eduardo differed from Jayvee. They didn't seem to care much about their looks. Jayvee tried to get them to dress better. It never worked. Sometimes, their hair looked like they just

got out of bed. The two boys never seemed to think of growing up. Their attention was on gaming. Pulling pranks was fun for them too.

Soon the three turned onto Vince's street. They could see his house.

"There's the box!" Vince called.

Eduardo's eyes were wide. "I see it!"

"Why do you both sound surprised?" Jayvee asked. "The text Vince got said the box was there."



The boys stood in the middle of Vince's garage. His parents kept everything neat. They were still at work, so their cars were gone. That gave the boys plenty of space to open the box. It was huge. But it didn't weigh much. No one knew how big or small the box's items were. Jayvee thought they had to be small. The box was too lightweight.

Vince was the first to dig into the box. That was only fair. They were using his house.

He pulled out a black phone charger. It was

double the size of a normal one. "It's a Maxx charger! I bet I can charge anything with this. Look at all its ports!"

There was a cord that could plug into a wall. Another cord could use a USB-C port. The charger had other cords and ports too. Every kind of smart device could use it. This charger also claimed to be faster than any other.

Eduardo was next. He held up his surprise. "A Dome flash drive! This thing has 15 terabytes! That's 15,000 gigs! I know flash drives seem old-fashioned. But this one is an exception. It has so much storage. Plus, I never know when I'm not going to have the cloud. Or even internet. I'm ready for anything now! All my files will be in one place. The drive lets me take them anywhere too."

"Really?" Jayvee asked. "A charger and a flash drive. Big deal."

"Come on," Vince said. "You know this stuff is great. It isn't *just* a charger and flash drive."

"Yeah, man." Eduardo pointed to the box. "There's one item left, Jayvee. It's all yours." He grinned.

Jayvee rolled his eyes. He pulled out the box's last item. It was a pair of black smart glasses. "Whoa!"

Vince eyed him. "Does that mean you like them? I'm sure there's no prescription. But you don't need one. Right? Your eyes are fine."

Eduardo looked sad for Jayvee. "I'm sorry that's what you got. You'd just be wearing them for no reason. Do you want to? I know they can do smart stuff. Still, they're *glasses*."

Jayvee had been staring at his surprise. Finally, he looked up at his friends. "I love them! Of course I want to wear them!" He put them on and ran to Vince's mirror. "Wow! I look older. This is perfect!"

Vince and Eduardo gave each other puzzled glances. Eduardo shrugged.

MYSTERY BOX

EIGHTH GRADE, GREAT FRIENDS, LATRICE

NO REFUNDS, SMART GLASSES, GRAY HAIR

JAYVEE DIDN'T EVEN WANT THE MYSTERY BOX. BUT INSIDE, HE FINDS SLEEK NEW SMART GLASSES. THEY MAKE HIM LOOK COOLER, OLDER, AND EVEN GET HIM SOME ATTENTION. THEN COME THE SHARP PAINS AND STRANGE CHANGES. WHO'S THAT STARING BACK AT HIM IN THE MIRROR? IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG FOR JAYVEE TO REALIZE THAT SOME BOXES ARE BETTER LEFT CLOSED.



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