

## Ahead of Her Time

I guess all fathers have to go through it sometime, but the day my daughter came home and told me about her boyfriend, I almost fainted. "Shane gave me a present today! Shane is nice! I love Shane, and I'm going to marry him!" I know it's normal for girls to fall madly in love with that first *special* boy, and Shane truly is a good guy. He attends college while working as a custodian in the afternoon, and I think he treats Elizabeth like a queen. The problem is that my daughter is only three years old! Elizabeth is ahead of her time.

Elizabeth is tall for her age. Before she could talk very well, people would try to engage her in conversation, and then would act surprised that she couldn't talk intelligently about the situation in Bosnia or the advantages of investing in mutual funds. About a year ago, I was buying a pair of shoes and a well-meaning sales clerk in Mervyn's rattled off this series of questions to Elizabeth, "Hello, Sweetie! What's your name? How old are you? Where did you get those big blue eyes? Do you go to school? How many brothers and sisters do you have?" Elizabeth, who had just turned two, scrunched up her nose and loudly replied, "Scoopie Loo!" The woman looked at me with pity in her eyes as if to say, '*It's too bad your daughter is so slow.*' When she handed me my change, I simply said, "Scoopie loop-doopie doo!"

Elizabeth has always had people misinterpreting her looks. She didn't get any hair until she was more than a year old, so if we dressed her in anything less than a pink gown (with a ribbon taped to her bald head), people would mistake her for a boy. "How old is your son?" a woman in the hardware store once asked. My wife Eileen snarled, "**SHE** is 14 months!" Baldness never bothered Elizabeth, but it drove Eileen crazy. Especially when I'd joke that Elizabeth was going to grow up to look just like her daddy! Now, Elizabeth has a full head of blond hair that sticks straight out in all directions whenever she wears a "staticky" sweater. Her eyes are as blue and sparkly as ever, and when people meet her for the first time, they often comment on her long eyelashes. Maybe I'm biased, but I think she's one of the cutest kids around.

"Read me another one!" is a bedtime phrase I've grown to dread. Being an English teacher, I should love having a child so interested in books--but it's getting out of hand! One night I read to her until I fell asleep on *her* bed. I woke up an hour later, and she was still turning pages in one of her Disney picture books. When she saw I was awake, she happily announced, "Now it's Mama's turn!" I know that all the exposure to words has given her a large vocabulary for a child of three, but since many people think she's five (because of her height), no one else seems to notice.

My grandmother (Elizabeth's great-grandma) thinks Elizabeth is the most adorable child on earth. Of course, Grandma Rose has never been there for one of Elizabeth's "meltdowns". Being an only child, Elizabeth is used to getting all the attention. In fact, she seems to think she controls the household, but I sometimes have to draw the line. For example, once Elizabeth snagged a video called *The Texas Chainsaw*.