



My daughter left a swimsuit hanging on the steps for four days last week before anybody noticed it. Nobody meant to leave it there. It just stopped mattering, the way things do right before school starts, when a swimsuit turns into something for the storage bin instead of something anybody needs by Tuesday.

I found it Sunday evening when I went out to sit for a while, and it stopped me for a second longer than a wet swimsuit really deserves.

There's a particular kind of quiet that shows up in a house the first week of school. Not sad, exactly. Just different. The mornings get a schedule again. The backpacks come out of the closet still creased from the store. My son, Mac, is starting T-Ball for the first time. He wanted his baseball cleats packed for practice before he'd even eaten breakfast, like the summer hadn't happened at all, like he'd been waiting on this the whole time and just hadn't said so.

I used to think of back to school as a hassle to get through, mostly because that's how it gets talked about everywhere else. New supplies to buy, schedules to rebuild, the whole machine cranking back up. And some of that is true. But somewhere in my thirties I started noticing it as something else too. It's one of the only times all year somebody hands you a clean start whether you asked for one or not. A new teacher who doesn't know yet whether your kid talks too much in class. A new grade that doesn't remember last year's report card.

I spend most of my working hours around people who are dealing with the opposite of a clean start. People still living inside something that happened to them months or years ago, still waiting on a case to close so they can actually start over. It's made me a little more attentive to the moments where a fresh start gets handed to somebody for free, no waiting period, no fault-finding, just a new folder and a name tag and a teacher who's willing to find out who your kid is without any of yesterday's baggage attached.

G.K. Chesterton wrote that the world will never starve for want of wonders, only for want of wonder. I think the same might be true of beginnings. We're not short on them. September hands us one every single year, right on schedule, whether we've earned it or not. Most years I forget to notice.

This year I noticed, mostly because of a swimsuit that sat on the steps a few days too long, and a boy who wanted his cleats packed before the sun was even up.

Somewhere out there is a bin that swimsuit's about to live in until next Summer. I think I'll leave it out one more day.

Take care,

Mason

PS: If you ever have questions or need anything, don't hesitate to reach out. I'll be glad to help.