



OTTO'S GLASSES

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2003

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It was a very shiny Sunday morning in Ocean Shores. The kids, as usual, were very active, practicing their extreme moves all over Madtown.

“WAHOO!!” – cried Otto, while performing a McVarial.

“Totally awesome, Ottoman!” – said Twister, who was filming his friend’s stunts as usual.

“That’s nothing, man! Wait to see this new move!!” – replied Otto, sliding down the half pipe and gaining speed for a double inverted jump he had been practicing for the last week.

Otto gained momentum and climbed the ramp. He was ready to make his stunt, but then he experienced again that annoying effect: when he climbed the ramp, the bright, intense sunlight hit him directly in the eyes, dazzling him. Momentarily blind, Otto couldn’t see the ramp and lost his balance in the middle of his jump, falling heavily to the ground.

“Whoa!! OUCH!! OW!!!” – cried Otto with each bounce he made until stopping at the bottom of the half pipe.

Twister, Reggie and Sam ran to check on him. They found Otto still sitting on the ramp, with his skateboard and helmet on the ground. A painful expression was on his face while he rubbed his right ankle; it was evident that he really beefed hard this time.



“Aw!! That was really tough!!” – said Otto while Sam and Twist helped him stand.

“Are you OK, Otto? Nothing broken??” – asked Sam with authentic concern.

“Just my pride, brother,” – answered Otto, trying to smile, but rubbing his butt, still a bit tender due to the fall – “Ouch!!”

“What happened, bro?” – asked Reggie.

“I dunno, sis! I was ready to make my awesome stunt when something caught my eye on the beach. When I turned to see I was suddenly dazzled. I just couldn’t see anything for a moment, and before I knew I was bouncing like a beach ball down the half pipe! In fact, my eyes are still a bit sore!”

Otto took his sunglasses off and rubbed his eyes with his fingers. It was obvious that he was still a bit dazzled; his eyes were somewhat reddened, and he blinked continuously.

“You have been having these problems for a while now, brother. In fact, this is your third fall this weekend, and that’s quite unusual on you. Maybe it’s time Raymundo takes you to the optometrist again” – said Reggie, offering her shoulder to Otto so he could use her as a crouch. It was a maneuver she had practiced a lot with her brother.

“Yeah... maybe you’re right, sis” – said Otto, putting his glasses back on. Then he put his right arm around Reggie’s neck and limped back to the Shore Shack to get his ankle bandaged.

While Otto and Reggie walked slowly away, Sammy looked at Twister, confused. - “Going to the optometrist again?” – Sam asked him – “So, Otto had visited an optometrist before? Why??”

“It’s a long story, Sam.” – answered Twister while picking Otto’s helmet and skateboard. “It happened some time before you arrived here, when I still used to be the Squid. But maybe you should ask Otto to tell you.”

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Some minutes later, the kids were at the Shore Shack. Otto was seating by one of the tables. He had taken off his shoe and had his right leg on a stool. Tito covered the boy’s foot and ankle with ice to reduce the swelling. Meanwhile, the other kids were sitting with him around the table, waiting for their burgers.

Otto had taken his glasses off again and was rubbing his eyes with his fingers. It was something he had done quite frequently lately.

“Man, that really hurts! I can’t stand my eyes!!” – Said, a bit desperate.

“Reggie told me you are having problems with your eyes again, son. I made an appointment with Dr. Johnson, the optometrist, and we’ll visit him tomorrow after school. You’ll be OK again in a snap, don’t worry.” – said Ray, while serving the cheeseburgers to the kids.

“Thanks, dad” – replied Otto – “I thought I wouldn’t have to go visiting him for a while, but I guess you’re right; it’s time to see him again.”

“I am a bit confused, Otto” – said Sammy. – “You all talk about visiting the optometrist again; why, have you had this before??”

“Well...”

Otto looked at Sammy for a moment, a bit undecided. But he didn’t hesitate long; Sammy had shown over and over again that he was a true friend and Otto knew he could trust him.

“... It all began about six months before you moved in, Sammy. I had always had trouble standing bright lights, but the dazzles had become even more intense and I began beefing quite often and even crashing with objects I couldn’t see because I had my eyes closed or almost closed all the time. Raymundo finally noticed it and took me to the doctor. They made some studies and finally diagnosed me to have a condition called anterior uveitis. One of its symptoms is that I can’t tolerate bright lights because my eyes hurt. The doctor gave me some medication and suggested that I might try wearing sunglasses. That’s why I use these things all the time; they help me reduce the glare.”

“So, you wear those sunglasses everywhere because you actually need them?” – asked Sam, who now understood quite well why his friend had that apparently odd habit.

“That’s correct, Sammy. See, I need them even at night, because artificial lightning like bulbs or neon lights are too bright to me. If I enter a brightly illuminated room at night I can have the same kind of dazzles as if I stare directly at the Sun. That’s why we have all the lamps shaded, both in the shack and at home.”

Sammy now understood it. It had always seemed odd to him that Otto used his dark glasses even at night or when they were indoors. And now he knew why the first thing Otto did every morning was putting his glasses on, even before getting dressed. He had seen him do this on the several occasions the whole gang had gone camping together.

After they finished their hamburgers, Ray cured his son's leg with an ointment and a bandage, and after a while they were heading to the pier.

While they walked, Sammy couldn't help but watch Otto. He was wearing his sunglasses again, as always; but now he was constantly keeping his hand extended over his eyes like a shade. He kept doing this all the day.

That evening, when they returned to the Shack, Sammy went to Otto and asked if they could go outside to the pier. He was concerned about his friend, and had a lot of questions and doubts in his mind.

"I don't mean to be an annoyance, Otto" – said Sam – "But there are still a couple of questions I want to ask about... your condition..."

Otto looked at Sam and realized that he was truly concerned about him. Otto smiled; the Squid had become somewhat like a brother to them all.

"No problemo, Squid! Shoot'em!!" – Answered Otto with a thumbs-up.

"Well... I was just wondering... what causes that? Will you be OK??" Does it hurt??? Will you ever..."

"Whoa! Hold your horses, dude! One at a time!!" – said Otto.

"Sorry!" – replied Sam, blushing.

"It's OK. Well, let's see. According to the doctor, my condition is quite common, and is often associated to other diseases, although many healthy people, and this is my case, can also present the condition without a clearly defined cause. But don't worry, Sam. I'll be fine as long as I get the proper medication soon; else my eyes could develop some sort of scars and that would affect my vision. That's why Raymundo always takes me to the doctor as soon as I begin to show the symptoms."

"Does it hurt?"

"A little. But that is treated with medication. Most likely the doctor will prescribe some drops for my eyes, to ease the pain."

"Will you ever be cured of that?"

“Probably. This disease is most common in young people than in adults. And with proper medication it usually disappears for a long while. It has the nasty habit of coming back, though; this is what I am suffering now. But with the proper medication it will be gone again soon, you’ll see.”

Sammy looked down to his shoes. He never thought Otto could have some sort of illness; but he was quite impressed on how well he dealt with it. Knowing that he actually needed his sunglasses, he now understood a lot of things about his friend.

Otto noticed Sam's thoughts and comforted him. Placing an arm around his neck he joked with him.

“Now you know why I have never made fun of your glasses, Squid!” – said Otto, jokingly.

“Yeah... I was thinking that too, Ottoman. Back in Kansas most kids used to make fun at me for wearing glasses, and now I realize it was something weird that you guys never even mentioned it.”

“That’s because I know what it feels like having to wear glasses, brother. I don’t like being called a ‘four-eyed dork’, y’know, so I don’t make that kind of fun. I might be a pain in the neck sometimes, but I’ll never make jokes that could come back to bite me.”

Otto and Sammy walked inside the Shack again. Sammy felt relieved, and Otto was also glad that his friend really understood him.

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The following day, Raymundo took Otto to the optometrist and, as the kid supposed, the doctor found that he had a relapse of his condition. He prescribed him the proper medication, including some drops for his eyes, and diagnosed that the kid's vision had not suffered any permanent damage. The condition was well under control, and with the medication its symptoms should disappear soon.

In a matter of days, Otto was again skating and shredding as always. He had ceased suffering the effects of his disease; only the sensitivity to light remained present, as usual. But he had already learned to live with that. He just needed to wear his sunglasses everywhere.

References:

I found these sites that explain the conditions mentioned in this fic. They might explain why the Rocket Boy always wears his glasses, even at night.

For information about anterior uveitis:

<http://www.pennhealth.com/ency/article/001005.htm>

For information about photophobia, or excessive sensitiveness to light:

<http://www.pennhealth.com/ency/article/003041.htm>