

Ouch!

by Jack Swenson

My mother is holding my hand, towing me along, as we go into the dime store. She spots something she's interested in and stops by a counter near the front of the store. A fat lady is examining the goods on a counter on the other side of the aisle. I give her bottom a smack with the flat of my hand. "Ouch!" she says and turns around. I look up at her, and she looks down at me. She walks off without a word.

I spot another fat lady in another part of the store, and I slap her butt, too. She tells me I'm a bad boy. My mother turns around, and my mother and the lady have words. The lady leaves in a huff. My mother eyes me suspiciously.

The next time she catches me at it. A matron with an extremely large backside is standing by the candy counter. As we walk by, I give her a friendly greeting. She yelps and whirls around. "Well, I never...!" she says. My mother puts her nose in the air and leaves the store in rather a hurry with me in tow. We are halfway down the block when my mother stops, leans over, and pinches me on the arm. Hard. "Ow," I say.

"Don't do that again," she says. She says each word separately and with great emphasis. I start to cry.

That night I hear her on the phone talking to my aunt. She is telling her what I did. I'm in the other room, and she doesn't know I can hear what she is saying. She is chuckling. She seems to think the story is very funny.

