**Jumpman**

Greg Rapier

I remember wearing shoes with heels that lit up when I walked. I remember Velcro-straps and cartoon characters and my Star Wars slip-ons.

I remember spray painting my Star Wars slip-ons gold so I could dress up as Mickey Mouse for Halloween.

I remember buying my first pair of big kid shoes. Patent leather, baby blue. My mom winced at the register but handed over her credit card anyway.

I remember my mom buying shoes a size too big that quickly became a size too small.

I remember Nelly’s music video for Air Force One’s.

I remember buying Air Force II’s with a funky orange and blue colorway. I was the only kid in middle school who had a pair. On my first day wearing them, my gym teacher, Mr. Wong, stopped taking attendance to tell me my shoes looked like something he would have worn when he was a kid. Thirty years ago. The other students laughed.

I remember throwing the shoes away.

I remember how in high school, everyone had iPods. This one kid named Devin didn’t have one, but he wore the white headphones that came with them. They weren’t connected to anything; they just dangled there by his waist like a severed umbilical cord.

I remember how the other students laughed at Devin. Okay, let's be real, I remember laughing too.

I remember Devin wore Sketchers.

I remember coming home from school one day and telling my mom I would not be shopping at Famous Footwear anymore, and that was that.

I remember the red Jordan XVIII’s with the laces hidden behind the tongue.

I remember waddling through school hallways so I wouldn’t get creases on my new shoes.

I remember wearing flip flops to AAU tournaments, sitting courtside, and unzipping my game shoes from my bag.

I remember buying a pair of Dub Zero’s to impress a kid who didn’t like me. He told me the shoes looked funny on people with big feet.

I remember beating the shit out of him in a game of 1v1.

I remember seeing at Costco a pair of paste-white Sketchers with two-inch soles. They looked prescription. I remember calling them *grandma shoes*. Later, I remember seeing those shoes on my grandma!

I remember the time grandma bought a Shake Weight.

I remember going to Costco with my mother and running into Kenny from basketball. We played games on the demo computers until our parents were done shopping.

I remember inviting Kenny and a couple guys from the team to hang out at Scandia for my birthday.

I remember we went to the buffet at Sizzler after a tournament in San Jose, and my dad showed Kenny how to sneak M&Ms into his pockets.

I remember reading in the paper that Kenny shot up a four-year-old’s birthday party and killed three people. He’s in jail now.

I remember going to a basketball tournament in Las Vegas and seeing a pair of plaid Nikes at Caesars Palace.

I remember returning to Vegas for a family member’s Elvis-wedding. Back then, I was old enough to know I wasn’t old enough to do anything fun. At least I bought those plaid Nikes.

I remember in between sophomore and junior years taking a class trip to Harvard and Yale and other schools none of us could get into. I remember my parents gave me $150 of spending money for the week, and I remember my grandmother pulling into the driveway just before we left and handing me an envelope with another hundred. I remember all my classmates buying snacks for the bus-rides and apparel from the different schools while I refused to spend anything. On the last day, we toured NYU, and I went into Times Square and dropped $200 on the latest Jordans.

I remember outgrowing them a week later.

I remember refusing to throw them away.

I remember then buying shoes online that squeaked no matter what. No returns.

I remember, in seminary, buying insoles because I couldn’t afford anything new.

I remember becoming a youth pastor. Some of the high schoolers wanted to play basketball with me, but I didn’t have basketball shoes anymore. So, I called my mother and asked if we still had my fancy New York Jordan’s in the green closet. The $200 ones. We did. She shipped them to the other side of the country, and they were still too small, but they would do. I remember telling the high schoolers these shoes were fifteen years old, and I remember them looking at me like *why the hell is this guy wearing fifteen-year-old shoes? They’re probably worth a ton.* And I remember thinking back at them (though they didn’t know it), *what good is a pair of shoes if you never wear them?*

I remember how the shoes broke during the second game with the kids I pastor, the same play I tore my calf in two.

I remember the body of Christ broken for you.

I remember having a Christ complex.

I remember the next day flying to California to say goodbye to my grandmother. My leg got all swollen on the plane and the doctor had to check me for DVT clots.

I remember googling DVT clots.

I remember the white compression socks covering grandma’s feet as she lay still in the hospital bed.

I remember, after we left grandma’s house, complimenting my dad’s shoes and meaning it. They were Sketchers, and he got them from Costco. My parents bought me a pair.

I remember slipping them on and feeling just perfect.