



*Start the New Year Right with a Special Story Just for the Youngest Member of the Family. – John McCormick*

*Happy New Year to Young and Old!*

*By John, William, and Connor McCormick*

Being the youngest member of the family has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that the youngest child often gets special attention and favors. The disadvantage is that sometimes the youngest gets picked on by her older brothers and sisters.

Tina didn't see any advantages at all in being the youngest. Tina was 7 years old and the last of four kids. Her oldest brother and sister, James and Michele, were twins, age 12. The next oldest was Peter, age 10. Peter drove Tina especially crazy.

"You're so annoying," said Tina one day to Peter, who had been shooting over her Star Wars action figures with a Nerf gun. "Leave me alone."

"Don't be such a baby," replied Peter. Any time Tina protested or stood up for herself, her older brothers and sister called her a baby.

They also liked to pick on her for her size. Being the youngest, Tina was naturally the smallest. Peter often referred to her as "Tiny Tina," or sometimes, just "Tiny."

"Hey, Tiny," said Peter, "you need some help turning on the light switch?"

"I can do it just fine," said Tina defiantly. "Mom says that when I grow up, I'm probably going to be taller than you. Then I'll be looking down on you for a change."

Peter replied as he always did. "Don't be such a baby."

Tina did her best to act grown-up and fit in with the older kids. Take New Year's Eve. It was the family's tradition to stay at home on New Year's Eve, drinking sparkling cider, eating yummy treats, and watching the ball drop at midnight on TV. Then they all blew party horns and sprayed confetti and foam on each other. Tina tried to make it to midnight but always fell asleep. She even slept through the party horns and everyone screaming "Happy New Year!"

The next morning, Tina was always in a grumpy mood because she had yet again missed the midnight celebration. The teasing from her brothers and sister didn't help. "Tiny Tina can't even stay awake after her bed time!" they chanted in unison. "Tina's such a baby."

Oh, did that make Tina angry! Tina decided this New Year's Eve was going to be different. During the entire week before New Year's, she stayed awake a little later each night and woke up a little later in the morning. Whereas her brothers and sister ran around all day long, Tina took a nap each afternoon. Though she didn't eat a lot of sweets, on New Year's Eve she loaded up on candy and chocolate after dinner so that she'd have plenty of energy.

Tina's parents, brothers, and sister started their annual New Year's family party around nine o'clock in the evening. They played board games and charades, and danced to lively music. Tina participated in the games, but didn't wear herself out as her brothers and sister seemed to be doing. Around ten o'clock, Tina began to get a little sleepy. But just seeing her brothers and sister whooping it up gave her renewed energy and determination.

A little holiday cake, cookies, and punch at 11 o'clock helped a lot. Before Tina knew it, it was almost midnight and to her relief, she had stayed awake. She felt so grown-up. Tina was filled with joy as she participated in the count-down to the New Year. "Five, four, three, two, one!" she counted out.

The ball dropped on the building in Times Square in New York City. For the first time in her life, Tina shouted "Happy New Year" right at midnight on New Year's Eve.

But she was the only one who did.

Tina looked around the room. Everything was quiet. There, sprawled on the comfy sofa and den chairs, were her father, mother, brothers, and sister. All were sound asleep!