

## **Laine Scott**

### **My Title Means Nothing**

A few years ago, when I was in middle school, my dad offered me a job. When he told me what my job would be, my middle-school brain got a little overexcited:

“YEAAAAAAAAAH! Where am I going? What do I have to do? Where is it? IT’S IN YOUR CAR?! Can I see it? Can I wear it for Halloween?”

And the answers to my questions were, respectively: You are going to the Grand Opening for a Sonic Drive-In in Manchester. You have to dress up in a hot dog suit and pass out balloons. Yes you can see it. And no, you can’t wear it for Halloween.

. . . . .

A few days later I found myself standing in the impressively ungreasy back hallway of a brand new Sonic in Manchester. Despite its newness, the restaurant still managed to smell like a French fried sock (which is what all restaurants smell like, even if they claim they don’t fry food). My mom, who was going to be with me all night, tried to make me stop jumping up and down as she helped me suit up.

First, I had to pull over my head the oddest long-sleeved woolen shirt I’d ever seen. The actual shirt part of my shirt was mesh, and it only went down to about 1/3 the length of a normal shirt. The rest was composed of very ugly, very blue fabric sleeves with elastic stirrups at each end that went between two of my fingers. After I had struggled into that, I immediately pulled it off because, in the middle of summer, it is much much much too hot to wear.

The next step I might as well skip also because it deals with disgusting woolen pants of that same primary color and those same elastic stirrups at the ends.

But now I’ve reached the exciting part! The dog itself was rolling around on the floor behind me like it was possessed, its cartoon eyes laughing at me while I struggled with my shirt! This hot dog suit was very professional.

It had a cylindrical metal frame to give it its distinct shape, and a dashing bright blue baseball cap that seals off the hole at the top. My mom and her work friends then plopped the metal-framed hot dog prison over my head, then I stuck my arms out the armholes and listened to the “awws” and stifled laughter from every free man outside. The first thing I noticed then was that my face automatically got smashed up against the inside of one of the eyeballs (which is a metal mesh I could see through). Then, as if I had an unwelcome epiphany, I noticed exactly how heavy the hot dog suit actually was, and when my mom pushed down on the removable bright blue baseball cap to make sure it was going to stay on, I most certainly whined about it for a few hours. . . .

The next two steps were more awkward than you’d think. There was a pair of white gloves that seemed innocent, but were actually surprise four-finger gloves! Finally, I struggled through “slipping” on a pair of bulbous shoes, 20 sizes too big. Those special shoes were fitted to house my real shoes, and slipping shoes into a pair of shoes is certainly a feeling I’d never experienced before, or even after that day. And even though that might sound like a comfortable alternative to sharing sweaty shoes with past and future hot doggers, it’s actually rather cumbersome to layer shoes. However, forcing my shoes into giant shoes was much easier than learning to walk in them, and I found that waddling like a duck was the only way.

My mom, who was acting as my personal chauffeur, walked around on the parking lot holding my arm as I got used to walking in those ginormous shoes. Whenever we’d find a group of people, I tried my best to hand out the balloons with those awkward puffy gloves, while my mom dished out coupons.

And then I saw her: a tiny blond girl standing next to her large blond mother. I waddled towards them and stuck out my hand full of balloons to the tiny girl, who stared at me wide-eyed. She looked about six or seven, and she didn’t care one bit about those balloons.

“Are you a Hot Dog?!” she asked me.

I gave her a thumbs up.

She beamed and asked, “Will you be my friend Hot Dog?”

I kind of danced around for a “yes,” and the tiny girl smiled even wider, grabbed my free four-fingered hand with an iron grip, and did not let go.

For the rest of the night, I was her favorite person...well, her favorite food in the whole world. "Hot Dog!" the tiny girl would yell, "Come over here! Hot Dog! Go this way! Hot Dog! Do the Macarena dance! Hot Dog! Let's do the wave! Hot Dog! Jump in the air! Higher! Higher! Hot Dog? Why'd you fall over? Get up Hot Dog! Hahaha!"

As demanding as she was, I was actually having a lot of fun. And nobody knew it, but I was smiling and laughing the entire time the tiny girl "Hot Dogged" my head off. But, the ends of fun things come far sooner than they're wanted, and eventually it was time for me to take off the suit.

My mom took me back into that now slightly greasy back hallway, and pulled off the hot dog suit. The whoosh of cold air that hit me as soon as the hot suit was off made me realize that my clothes, arms, and even hair were completely drenched in sweat.

Anxious to go back outside where there was a breeze, I yanked off the shoes and gloves, thanked my dad for the shake he handed me in payment for wearing the suit for hours, and headed for the door.

I trundled outside with the surprising ease that came with wearing normal sized shoes, and saw the tiny girl sitting beside her large mother slurping down a slushy.

"Hi! Remember me? I was the hot dog. My name's Laine!" I waved and smiled at her, expecting a wave and smile back. But what I received was a blank, terrified stare. My name meant nothing to her. I was not the person she'd been running around with for hours. I was just some weird, slightly chubby older kid who looked like she'd just gone swimming in a pool full of sweat. Her mother tried to explain to her that I was "the girl in the hot dog suit," but her efforts were wasted.