

KMART NIKE'S

From Bully! <https://apt.org.au/product/bully-2/>

ANDY

My family was pretty broke when I was growing up; single mum with three kids and my dad was an arse, never paid his share and we'd hardly ever see him. He used to write these really nasty messages on his Facebook page about my mum; resentful about having to pay his childcare money, telling anyone who would listen that my mum would spend it all on herself. I deleted him. It was all lies of course, my mum went without all the time; she would try so hard to make sure that we had everything we wanted, but most of the time we'd just have to miss out too. She hated it and would try to make it up to us...but sometimes when you try too hard to fit in you just end up sticking out instead.

When I was in Year 9 all of the guys had Nikes and I really wanted some, but of course we couldn't afford two hundred bucks for shoes. But then mum found a cheap knock off pair in Kmart. She was so thrilled when she brought them home, saying they looked almost exactly like the ones my friends were wearing. But they were so lame! I was embarrassed, but I wore them to school anyway... For mum. Of course everyone noticed. They called me a try-hard and laughed at me. I became a joke. Every day they'd make comments, ridicule me. Every day! I knew we couldn't get new shoes until the old ones wore out and of course those cheap Kmart shoes just lived on and on, long after the other guys Nike's wore out.

I hated those shoes so much that one day I walked through tar that workmen had just laid on the roadworks near our house. Those Kmart Nikes were ruined, black tar, seeping into the pleather. I apologised when I got home, said I slipped. Mum was really disappointed but tried to hide it. She said she'd buy me new ones the next day, but I could see the worry in her eyes. Her smiles weren't fooling me, I knew we couldn't afford them. I said don't worry, I'd still wear them. I woke up in the night and mum was [painting them in the kitchen. She's been at it for hours, tried scrubbing but couldn't get all the marks off, so was painting them black instead. Her hands were red raw from scrubbing, and she was so apologetic that she couldn't save them so they still looked like my friends ones. I hugged her, told her they were great and put them by the heater to dry overnight. I went back to school in those painted black Kmart Nike's and got teased even harder... but I didn't care anymore because from that day those cheap Kmart shoes were worth more to me than the most expensive Nike's ever would be.