

## The Facts About Jordan

“Did you know,” the voice pealed high and clear above the supermarket hum, “that a bottle of Coke has twelve teaspoons of sugar. That’s why you’re so fat.”

Linda screwed up her face and spun around. Just as she feared, Jordan was gone. A minute ago, he’d been standing right behind her and now, by the sound of his voice, he was at least two or three aisles away. The loudness of his voice never failed to amaze her. She knew of no other six-year-old who could yell loud enough to annoy an entire shopping mall. If she didn’t catch up with him quickly, they might be adding yet another shop to his long list of barrings.

Scooting down the aisle, she bobbed side-to-side, desperate to see past the huddles of shoppers. “Excuse me,” she murmured as she dodged around the barricades of high-piled trolleys. Bemused shoppers turned their heads as she passed. They’d heard Jordan’s pronouncement and the desperation of her flight made it blatantly obvious that she was the responsible mother. Or, in their eyes, the irresponsible mother.

“Did you know,” the voice piped up again, “that Coke has artificial preservatives and colourings. That’s why you’ve got so many wrinkles.”

Linda groaned and dashed around into the soft-drinks aisle. A quick glance. No Jordan. Whoever he was annoying had moved on and not just from the soft-drinks. If the past was anything to go by, the chosen target would be accelerating away from Jordan, desperate for distance away from this irritating child with his mortifying ability to embarrass. Jordan might be small but he was fast. And persistent. Linda had lost count of the number of shoppers she’d seen abandon their goods and flee rather than choose to suffer further humiliation. She could hardly blame shop-owners for taking action. Apart from his obvious nuisance value, Jordan was bad for business.

“And if you eat all those biscuits, you’ll get fatter. And hyperactive. You’ll be awake all night.”

Linda stopped for a second and listened. Getting closer, for sure. She rushed into the next aisle and there he was, dogging the footsteps of some old woman pushing a full trolley. In his hand, he was waving a packet of biscuits perilously close to the poor woman’s eyes.

“And did you know, that’s not real cherries in those biscuits. It’s just jelly. That’s going to make you really fat.”

Linda sprinted the length of the aisle and caught her son’s arm. “Jordan! I’ve been looking for you everywhere.” Then she muttered to the woman, “I’m so sorry. He doesn’t understand...”

A slow grin filled the woman’s face. “I know,” she nodded to Linda and then smiled down at the boy. “We’ve been having a great chat, haven’t we? Jordan, is it?”

Jordan waved the biscuits at his mother. “I was just telling the lady that she shouldn’t buy these biscuits because they’re not real cherries...”

The woman nodded. “You’re quite right, young man. And lots of sugar.” Then she turned back to Linda. “Really, I don’t mind. My grandson’s an Aspie, just like your Jordan. With a big voice to match!”

Linda breathed a sigh of relief. It was rare to find people who’d even heard of Asperger’s Syndrome and even rarer to find people who were prepared to tolerate Jordan’s loud off-loading of any trivial fact that he found especially compelling. Never

mind his inability to keep inappropriate judgments about another person's appearance to himself.

"I'd better get back to my trolley," Linda said, gripping Jordan's hand. "Hopefully, the staff haven't packed it all back on the shelves."

She towed Jordan away and was several aisles distant when she realised he was still carrying something that did not belong to him. "Jordan! You have that lady's biscuits!" She turned to drag him back the way they'd come but was stopped in her tracks by another loud voice.

"Don't worry about the biscuits!" the woman screeched. Heads turned from all over the supermarket as she waved enthusiastically at Linda. "He's a special boy. I only wish there were more like him!"

Linda grinned with gratitude and Jordan, remembering his manners for once, yelled back, "Thank you, fat lady!"