

The Polaroid Paradox

There once was a man named Albert, who was one of two prominent photographers in the local metro. He had quite the outstanding rivalry with his fellow photographer, whose name was Regenald - quite a snooty name indeed. Regenald was always putting down Albert, saying things like his photos were unrefined and not up to par for him to even be considered a rival. This didn't deter Albert, though, as he was more than happy to recognize that Regenald was just an uptight gatekeeper to the profession. One day, while Albert was doing some upkeep to his camera, which he did on a fairly regular basis, he noticed that there was a rattling noise in his

camera. Instead of taking it to a repair shop, he decided to open it up and see if he could DIY the issue. Upon opening up the camera and finding the culprit of the rattling noise, he came to the conclusion that it was a vital piece that had come loose, making the camera inoperable. This made him fairly sad since he had been using this camera for some time now. He decided not to dwell on it, though, as he had gotten more than enough use from it. The following day, he decided to make his way to the bus station to take the bus to the nearest Best Buy and get a new camera. On his way to the station, though, he was surprised to see a building he'd never seen before. It appeared to be an

antique photography store. As a camera and photography buff, he decided to check it out, fully intending not to buy anything from the store. As he entered, he was immediately greeted by a man working the front counter. "Welcome to my store," said the man as Albert entered. Albert nodded his head and said, "Thanks, I'm just gonna look around." The man simply acknowledged the sentiment and continued to man the counter. Albert was in awe as he went around the store, looking at all the old photography equipment they had - lights, film, and cameras - all of which looked like they came from the dawn of photography. After getting his fill of viewing the store, he went to the old

man to talk some shop with him, and that's when things would change for Albert. "Hey there, great collection you got here," said Albert. "Thanks, I took over collecting when my father passed. We shared the passion adamantly," said the man. "If you love collecting so much, why open a store and sell them then?" Albert wondered out loud. "Well, you see, after my father passed, I had come to realize it wasn't really about the photography itself but about the time I spent doing it with him. So, I thought I could give that to others who are in a similar situation and maybe bring them the same joy it brought me," explained the man. "Wow, that's pretty honorable," Albert said. "Nah, nothing like that,

just doing what I wanna do," said the man. "Well, I wasn't planning on buying anything, but I think I've changed my mind," said Albert. "Got anything that's particularly special?" Albert asked. The man smiled and said, "Wait right there." The man returned with a camera that was unlike anything Albert had ever seen before. "What in the world was that?" he thought. "Is that a camera?" Albert asked. "Yes, it's a very special camera. My father got it when I was only two years old, and it is very special. And I'd love for you to have it, Mr. Albert," the man said. This threw Albert off for a minute, then he asked how he knew his name. "I'm pretty caught up on all of your work, sir. You do great work,

and that Regenald Fetterbottom has got nothing on you and your style." With that comment, he was more than willing to buy this man's camera. So, he did exactly that and made his way back to his home where his orange and white streaked cat greeted him at the door. He gave Mr. Whiskers a pet and went about looking over the strange camera. As he did, he noticed a dial on it that had numbers 1-10. He wasn't sure what the numbers could mean, but he assumed it was to mess with the exposure - at least that was his best guess. So, he set it to one as it wasn't as if he needed to mess with the exposure all that much in his well-lit home. He made his way to Mr. Whiskers, his favorite model when it

came to his pictures. He snapped a few, but by the third picture, he noticed that Mr. Whiskers seemed to be different than a few moments ago - almost as if he was more vibrant. So, he snapped a couple more to see if he could notice a difference, and sure enough, with each picture he took, Mr. Whiskers appeared to get more shiny, and at one point, he got smaller.

That's when it clicked - this camera was making his cat younger. He was shocked and confused by this revelation as it's not something that happens all the time or ever really. He then remembered the dial with the numbers on it. "Maybe if I use that, something else will happen." So, he turned the dial and cranked it up to

ten. Now, Albert wasn't an old man, but at the age of 48, he wasn't no spring chicken, that's for sure. So, when he grabbed the camera and flipped it around to take a selfie, only for him to go from 48 to 38, he immediately felt the effects of the camera at work. He shouted, "A mirror! I need a mirror!" He ran to the nearest one and peered at a man of 38 years of age peering back with the biggest grin on his face. "My god, this is insane! Who would have thought this to be possible?" Mr. Whiskers the cat just meowed at him, oblivious to the situation, as cats usually are. He thought about how he should use this camera and thought about how great it would be to be twenty again. He

quickly realized that would be a mistake - what would happen to his career? No one would recognize him. He wouldn't be able to do his job without odd stares and idle gossip about what he did to accomplish such a drastic appearance. He felt he could get away with looking the way he did now, and it wouldn't be that suspicious. They might just think he got a facelift at worst. He noticed that some things in his house were different - nothing too major, but it definitely wasn't the same as it was prior to taking his picture. He decided to check his ID, so he opened up his wallet and noticed his birthdate was different on the license. It's as if reality itself had changed when he had

taken that picture. This bothered him at first, making him question what would and wouldn't be the same. It looked like he still had the same lineup of clients he did before the photo, but he also noticed he had even more lined up as well. So, he Googled himself, as one does, and was shocked to see that he was way more popular than he was before he'd taken the photo. It was as if people believed him to be a man with ten more years of experience than he should, and he figured that was technically true but wasn't sure how that worked since he hadn't been there to do those things. Albert decided not to argue with a good thing and went about his life. He was

like a legit celebrity now - he went to parties and out on the town with friends he hadn't remembered making but were now closer to him than anyone prior to the picture. One of those nights, he had spent on the town, ended with him and a few of his friends coming back to his place. By the time they made it there, though, they were already far past drunk and were on their way to being completely blackout wasted. Against Albert's better judgment, he showed them all the suspicious camera that he claimed could make one younger and change the world to suit their new age. They obviously didn't believe him, so he had to prove it to them. As he was drunk and not in the right mind to

be handling a camera like that, he started taking pictures, but without thinking, he hadn't changed the dial from 10 to a less over-the-top setting. There were three of them there, including Albert. There was his best friend Gene and his love interest Janet, although he hadn't gotten to tell her how he felt yet. Gene was about 35, and Janet was 32. So, when Albert took a group picture with them, holding the camera in a selfie position, they all had gotten younger. But because Albert was drunk and the camera was already in an awkward position, he accidentally tapped the button three times. Before any of them knew it, they were little kids - Janet getting the worst of it, being

aged down to a mere toddler. The camera hit the ground after the last picture was taken, and they all blinked - now stone-cold sober, as kids can't drink. They looked at each other, somewhat confused and unsure what just happened. They could remember most of what happened, although it was somewhat difficult as they had just gone from blackout drunk to sober in an instant. Albert and Gene stared at each other, not 100% sure who the little kid staring back at them was, except for Gene. He was staring up at an 8-year-old, which didn't make sense to him. Albert looked closely at Gene and broke the silence, "Gene? Is that you?" "Yeah, I'm Gene. Who are you, kid?" Gene asked. "It's me, Albert.

I think the camera made us little," said Albert in a panic. Their conversation was interrupted by what sounded like a toddler, and sure enough, Janet - standing no more than 2 feet tall, wearing a Huggies Minnie Mouse diaper with a pacifier in her mouth - looked up at the two of them and said, "Ya cama may me uh baby." "Oh no," the two boys said in unison. "You have to undo this," said Gene. "I don't know how to. I haven't messed around with it since I made myself 38," Albert said, dropping the fact that he wasn't always the age he was before they got drunk and turned into children. "Yuh wasn't always dirty eight," Janet said, nursing the pacifier that appeared in her mouth after the picture was taken.

Albert broke down and explained to them the origins of the camera and what had happened. They were surprised, but then it dawned on them: if reality changed when he took the picture the first time, does that mean it did this time as well? asked Gene. To which Albert just shrugged and said he wasn't sure. It doesn't make sense that a 2, 5, and 8-year-old would be up at this time, let alone by themselves. Almost on cue, a man came down the stairs and asked what all the fuss was about. They were all startled when they saw the man, but Albert recognized him and said, "Dad? What are you three doing up and out of bed?" This took them off guard as they had just been adults mere

moments ago and now were being asked like children who are up past their bedtime why they were up past their bedtime. Albert said, "Dad, you don't understand. We were using this camera and..." Albert was cut off and told that his camera wasn't a toy and that he shouldn't be playing with it. His dad picked the camera off the floor and put it on a high shelf none of them had a chance of reaching for at least a few years if not more. He then told Albert and Gene to get to bed while he picked up Janet and started baby-talking her. "Aw, did the big boys wake you up, sweetie? Let's get you back to bed," said Frank (Albert's dad). After he said that, he noticed something stinky in the air and

realized what it was. "Uh-oh, smells like all the excitement made somebody have an accident. Don't worry, I'll have you changed out of that stinky diapie in no time." Janet's face could only be described as mortified. She hadn't even realized that her diaper was dirty or when it happened. She hoped it was like that before the transformation, but she couldn't be sure. The fact that Gene and Albert hadn't noticed the smell made them think it must have been when Frank walked down the stairs, though. That being said, they both had been shocked and felt pretty bad for Janet. After all, she really got the short end of the stick. They may be little kids, but at least they could still use the

toilet. But they didn't see any other course of action but to play along. It's not like Frank would listen, and he was also being very stern in the idea they needed to go to bed. They did all of a sudden feel extremely tired, as if their new bodies had finally adjusted to the minds that inhabited them. Janet was passed out before her butt hit the changing table. As for Gene and Albert, they ended up in one room together, which they thought was odd as they weren't sure of their current relationship since they weren't related normally, so why would they be now? Also, if they were related and shared a room, why would they only have one bed between them? It didn't make any sense to them, but they ended up

falling asleep pretty quickly as well. They were woken up by Frank as he entered the room. He told them it was time to get up and that Gene's parents would be there to pick him up soon. They had woken up, but it dawned on them that the bed felt cold for some reason. But it soon became pretty obvious that one of them had wet the bed. As Gene was the youngest, he was the most obvious culprit, but to both of their surprise, it turns out that the source of the wet sheets came from Albert, which was painfully obvious from the state of his pajama bottoms. They left the room and made their way downstairs. As for Janet's morning, she was woken up to an irritation between her legs; apparently,

her diaper was full and making her very uncomfortable. She stood up in what appeared to be a crib, but it was weird. It was plastic and not that big, but from her perspective, it was still large enough and tall enough to keep her in and give her space to toddle around it. She ended up standing up and looking around. The room was fairly dark aside from a night light in the corner, making it at least somewhat visible. She noticed that it didn't look like a nursery; it was more of a spare bedroom kind of vibe. She noticed that there was another bed in the room and a dresser, but besides that, it was fairly empty of personal items. That's when she noticed what looked like a walkie-talkie on the

dresser, which she soon realized was a baby monitor. She cringed at the thought she'd need such a thing, but here she was trudging around in a crib with a dirty diaper between her waist, so maybe it was a good thing.

Although she wasn't sure what to say to get the attention of Albert's dad, so she just stood there for a moment until she felt something warm running down her leg. She looked down and could barely make out a dark spot appearing on the sheets of the crib.

Then she shouted out, "I'm peeing!?!?" This made her toddler instinct kick in, and she began crying, which was unnecessary for alerting Frank since her shouting definitely got his attention. He burst into the room and

said, "What's the matter?" as he flicked on the light to reveal a crying Janet and a very wet crib. He settled her down and changed her diaper. He then brought her downstairs and placed her into a mesh playpen that was filled with baby toys. Frank then went about getting ready for the day, making coffee, getting dressed into more appropriate clothes, and watching some TV. It's right about into his second cup of coffee that brings us back to the current bedwetting incident. Albert and Gene walk downstairs to find Frank watching TV. They also notice Janet in a playpen as they enter the living room. They all just avoid eye contact with each other out of sheer embarrassment of the

current situation. They go up to Frank, and Albert says, "Uhh, Dad, I think I wet the bed." His dad seems disappointed and says, "Well, it happens to the best of us, buddy. Let's get you and Gene cleaned up." They aren't sure why they didn't just clean themselves up. It might have just been childish instinct or perhaps they just didn't think about it, but that's what they did. It was extremely embarrassing having to be told to raise their arms up so he could remove their shirts and to step out of the pants after they were pulled down, but there they were now completely undressed, standing next to each other in their birthday suits, just waiting to be redressed by a man who

is actually younger than they had been yesterday, clocking in at a measly 27 years old. They ended up being dressed without incident unless you count embarrassment and were led back downstairs to watch cartoons while he cleaned up the bedding.

When they went downstairs, they went to the playpen where Janet was sitting and asked her how she was holding up, to which she replied that she didn't really want to talk about it. They understood and dropped it.

Janet then asked if they could get the camera and fix this. They looked at each other and nodded their heads no. Gene then pointed out that it's way too far out of our reach to get it.

"Yeah, I'd need to be at least 3 feet

taller if I wanted even a chance at reaching it," said Albert. "Well, ask your dad. I am not trying to be a baby any longer than I have to be," said Janet. They figured it's worth a shot but said they'd wait until he came downstairs since he's busy right now. "Doing what?" asked Janet. They both said in unison that they didn't want to talk about it. She didn't like it but had to accept it. After what felt like an eternity of sitting there with only the sound of cartoons playing, Frank finally made it back downstairs and asked if they were hungry. Albert asked if he could talk to him about something, and Frank said, "Of course, buddy. What's up?" Albert did his best to convince his dad of what happened

with the camera, explaining the whole situation. His dad seemed skeptical, but after Albert wowed him with some photography knowledge, he was more convinced that his little boy might not be the same one he was spending time with yesterday. Then Frank realized and said, "So that means that little Jane over there is actually 32? Whoa, she's older than me." "Come on, Dad. This isn't something to joke about. We don't know if we can fix this with the camera or not," said Albert. "Oh, that's right. Let me go get it," said Frank. He grabbed it off the shelf and examined it. "Looks to me like there's only two dials on this thing. One's got the numbers 1-10, and the other one is just a switch without any markings

on it. Oh, wait. It does have markings on it, but they appear to be illegible," he said. "Maybe it's an age-up and age-down switch? We should test it out," said Albert. Gene and Janet agreed. "All right, could be worth a shot," said Frank, and he messed with some of the dials and flicked the switch. He then took Gene and Albert's picture while they stood there. As he did though, they got upset and said, "No, don't test it on us." But it was too late; the picture had been taken.

Unfortunately for them, they did not get older. In fact, there was no discernable change at all. Now Gene was even younger than Janet; he was now a 1-year-old infant, and Albert was a 4-year-old toddler. But more

specifically, he was just under 4, about 3 and 8 months old. He didn't get left out when it came to being padded, either. Gene was sporting a Winnie the Pooh diaper and a "Little Stinker" shirt, and Albert was lucky enough to have a matching outfit, rocking Spider-Man from top to bottom. As stated, it appeared that nothing had changed with the flick of the switch. But oddly enough, something just might have, since after the picture was taken, Frank didn't seem to know that they had just been big kids, nor did he remember the story they had told him about being adults. So he, without thinking of it being weird or anything, declared that the camera was going to be a keeper and put it on the coffee

table. As he walked over to Albert and asked him if he needed to go potty, Albert got confused and asked, "Dad, what do you mean? Did it not work?" "Hmm, the camera? Yeah, it worked, but it's not digital, so I can't show you the picture, silly," said Frank. "No, I mean it didn't make us bigger," Albert stated with a lisp. "Such an imagination, buddy. But seriously, do you gotta go potty?" said Frank. "Potty? Wha, no, I don't have to..." At that moment, Albert felt an unbelievably powerful urge to pee and said, "Yeah, yeah, I gotta go," doing an expertly performed potty dance. His dad then said, "OK," as he picked up Gene and led them toward the bathroom, not wanting to leave the

infant on the floor by Himself. As they entered the bathroom, Janet couldn't help but be upset by this new change. It all just somehow got even worse, she said to herself, but she was also secretly happy she wasn't the youngest anymore, which was more or less a hollow victory. That being said, it still was kinda nice from her point of view. Albert made it into the bathroom and attempted to get on the toilet before he was reminded by Frank that he uses the potty now, well according to his underwear or lack thereof, he sometimes uses the potty now. He then pulled down his pull-up and sat on the potty chair, but nothing happened. It was like he didn't have to pee anymore. That's when he stood

up and said, "I guess I don't have to go." His dad just chuckled a little while also being a little disappointed and said, "Bud, you definitely did have to go." Albert, while about to pull up his pull-up, said, "What do you mean?" But his question was answered when he pulled it up. It was soaked. A shiver ran down his little spine, and he said, "Oh, I didn't make it, huh?" "No, you didn't. Sorry, bud," said Frank. "Don't worry, there's always next time." "Yeah, next time," said Albert. The three went back to the living room where Frank got out a fresh pull-up and changed Albert. As for Gene, he was put into a baby walker, and Janet just sat there in disbelief that it appeared that this was now gonna be her life for at least

a couple of years if Albert's any
measure of potty training. So there
they sat watching baby shows and
playing with toys.