

## JUST KIDDING

**I**t was dark and stuffy in my hiding place. Uncomfortable too because I was lying on a lumpy pile. I had been there for what I am sure was hours. Maybe I had even fallen asleep for a little while. It was a kid's closet so there was a lot of stuff on the floor. The closet was narrow and long – about 6 feet I'd say – so it was easy to simply toss toys and clothes into the back. Stashing was our nifty shortcut to cleaning the clean for Mom's inspection. All three of us kids shared the bedroom so the pile in the closet a mix of our belongings. Mom never checked the back of the closet and we got away with the disorganized mound.

**I** was playing a joke on my parents. They would think I was still outside somewhere and by now should be plenty worried about why I had not come home. I felt a little thrill of anticipation about how happy they would be when I popped out of my hiding place.

**I** heard voices in the living room and strained to hear what Mom and Dad were saying. It wasn't just Mom and Dad. It sounded like one or more other voices too and I wondered why we had company. Shortly, the extra voices were gone.

**I** was about ready but waited just a few more minutes. The longer I was gone, the happier they would be to see me.

**A**t long last, I crawled out, burst into the living room and exclaimed, "Just kidding!"

**F**ar from the joyous reaction I expected, they looked angry. In fact, I don't think I was ever in more trouble before or after that. The extra voices I had heard were members of a search party. Dad was just getting ready to head out too but now he had to find the searchers and apologize for wasting their time.

**I** learned something important about that phrase. Kidding is only fun when it is mutual and words of explanation are not necessary.

