Bullying Isn’t Funny
by Eileen Cook

I’ve always been funny. It’s my thing. Some people get beauty, others sports ability, a lucky few even get musical talent. Me? I can’t dance, sing, catch a ball, and no one has called to make me a top model, but I can make people laugh. It’s a handy skill and unlike sports ability, it rarely results in injury. You don’t see too many torn tendons from cracking a good joke.

Being funny is a bit like your own personal super power. It can be used for good or evil. Granted not always as handy as being able to fly, or having your fingertips shoot lightening, but you have to work with what you got. The question is what do you do with all that power? It isn’t that you plan to use your power to be cruel, no one sets out to be the villain, but sometimes it’s easy to make fun of someone who doesn’t fit in, who’s different, or just plain weird. No one means anything by it. It’s just a joke. Besides, if they are laughing at what you say, it means they aren’t laughing at you.

In high school I had a classmate named Dennis. Dennis was pretty dorky. He wore his pants too short and he seemed to always have hot lunch spilled on his shirt. He had terrible acne and wasn’t the best student. He was always trying to fit in, but he never did. I don’t know if anyone ever physically bullied him, but he certainly had more than his fair share of “funny” comments made at his expense.

Dennis died in an accident. They announced it the morning on the PA before classes. He was the first person in our class to die and everyone was shocked and a few of us started to cry. I wasn’t crying because I was sad he was gone. You can’t cry for someone you didn’t know. I cried because I was ashamed. I knew I could have been nicer. I could have used my humor to turn the situation around on the person making fun of him, but I never did. I laughed at Dennis, not with him.

I realized then that it was up to me. Being funny comes with responsibility; I had to use it wisely. Bullies aren’t just the people who shove someone around or the one who makes the snotty comment. Bullies are also the people who stand on the side and laugh. I promised myself I would never feel that shame again. I would use my humor for good, to make people
laugh with me, not at someone else. I wanted to be a hero, not a villain. I wanted to know I stood up when it mattered. Feel free to join me, the world can always use another superhero, and you don’t even have to look good in a Lycra suit.

Eileen Cook spent most of her teen years wishing she were someone else or somewhere else, which is great training for a writer. She is the author of The Education of Hailey Kendrick, Getting Revenge on Lauren Wood, What Would Emma Do?, as well as the Fourth Grade Fairy series. She lives in Vancouver with her husband and dogs. You can visit her online at www.EileenCook.com.