



Once Upon a Time in Elmore: The Story Behind the Watterson House (The Amazing World of Gumball)

By Charlie Hart


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When Gumball and Darwin hear the guide on the "Tour of Elmore" bus call their home the smallest house in town, they are determined to find out why that is. When their hare-brained schemes don't get them any closer to the answer, they finally decide to ask their parents. And the answer they get, although shocking, makes them realize that living in the smallest house means they will always be very close to the people they love the most.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Charlie Hart watches way too many cartoons and writes books (and other stuff) by the beach in Los Angeles.

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CHAPTER ONE

Gumball's sweater was full of holes. There were stains on the front, and threads stuck out all over it like stray hairs. It was always getting snagged on furniture and bushes.

One morning, as Gumball was pouring milk onto his breakfast cereal, Gumball's mother, Nicole, saw Gumball's belly button peeking through a hole in the sweater.

"You can't go to school like that," she said.

"Why not?" asked Gumball.

"I can see your belly button."

"I like my belly button," said Gumball.

"Everyone does," said Darwin. "It's very handsome."

"Yes," said Nicole, "you have a very nice belly button, Gumball, but the entire world should not be able to see it through a hole in your sweater. You need a new one."

"A new belly button?" Gumball asked, alarmed.

"Where would we buy one of those?" wondered Darwin.

Nicole sighed. "No, Gumball. Not a new belly button. You need a new sweater."

"But this is my favorite sweater," said Gumball.

"It's your only sweater," said Nicole.

"It's my lucky sweater!" said Gumball, crossing his arms. As he did, there was a loud riiiiip-POP! as his elbow tore through a hole in his sleeve and bumped Darwin's arm. The spoonful of cereal Darwin was trying to put in his mouth ended up in his eye.

Across the table, Anais, Gumball's little sister, shook her head. "Doesn't look very lucky to me," she said.

"We're going to the mall today," said Nicole. "I'm getting you a new sweater, Gumball, and that is that."

Gumball didn't want a new sweater, but he went to the mall with Nicole anyway. Darwin and Anais came

along, too. When they got to the department store, Darwin and Anais ran straight to the boys' department and began pointing out all the sweaters that they liked.

"These sweaters have sparkles on them!" said Darwin.

"These sweaters have airplanes on them!" said Anais.

"These sweaters are the ones we can afford," said Nicole. She flipped through a rack of plain sweaters, checking sizes. She picked one out and handed it to Gumball.

"There's nothing special about this sweater," he said.

"Try it on, please," said Nicole as she led the way to the changing rooms.

The changing-room attendant asked, "How many items?"

"Just one," said Gumball glumly. "One plain, boring sweater with no sparkles or airplanes."

"When you try it on, come out and show us," said Nicole.

"You're not coming into the changing room with me?" squeaked Gumball.

"You're old enough to try on clothes by yourself now," his mother said.

"But . . ." Gumball's eyes got big, and his voice trailed off.

"But what?" asked Nicole.

"What if I get scared?" Gumball asked in a tiny voice.

"Very well," said Nicole. "Take Darwin with you."

"Hooray!" shouted Darwin, who grabbed Gumball's hand, raced into the changing room, and slammed the door.

Anais and Nicole looked at each other, then down at the sweater that Nicole was still holding. Both of them sighed.

Anais knocked on the changing-room door. "Darwin? Gumball?"

"Aaaaaaargh!" screamed Gumball.

"Go away!" shouted Darwin. "He's. Not. DECENT!"

"Well, he's going to stay that way unless you have this sweater for him to try on," Anais said.

Darwin's arm snaked out of the changing room and grabbed the sweater, then the door slammed closed again.

“Whew!” said Gumball. “That was close.”

Darwin held out the hanger. “Your sweater, sir.”

Gumball took the sweater off the hanger. He had to admit that it was nicer than his old one. There were no snags or holes. It smelled better, too. He buried his face in it and took a deep breath.

“What does it smell like?” asked Darwin.

“It smells . . . ,” started Gumball.

“Yes?” asked Darwin.

“. . . NEW.”

Gumball and Darwin rubbed the sweater on their faces and took a deep breath of the new-sweater smell. Both of them got a little dizzy and fell backward onto the floor. From where they lay, they could see underneath the door of the changing room. Their eyes were very close to their mother’s shoes. One of her feet was tapping. Impatiently.

“Boys?” she called. “Is everything okay?”

Gumball quickly jumped up, and Darwin began helping him into the sweater. “Yes, Mom!” they called through the door.

“Hurry up and come out here so I can see how the sweater fits.”

It took a few tries. First Gumball got his head stuck in a sleeve. Then his head and his arm were both through the neck hole. Then Darwin realized the whole thing was on backward.

“There’s something weird about this sweater,” said Darwin. “There’s just so much of it.”

“Yeah,” agreed Gumball. “It seems like there’s enough sweater here for both of us.”

Finally, Darwin opened the door of the changing room, and Gumball stepped out. Nicole had clearly chosen a sweater that was several sizes larger than the one he’d been wearing.

“Why is it so big?” Gumball asked.

“You’re growing as fast as bacteria in a trash can. I can’t buy you a new sweater every month,” said Nicole. “You’ll just have to grow into it. When you have your own money, you can buy as many sweaters as you like.”

Gumball knew there was no use arguing with his mother, so he put on the too-large sweater and felt silly. Nicole was going to give his old one away, but Gumball knew that was no way to treat an old friend. “He deserves a proper good-bye,” said Gumball.

“Fine,” said Nicole.

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