Anna had heard stories and rumors about what the internet was like but the freedom still surprised her. Women could access the internet usually but the filters meant they were locked out of a lot of it. Anna had never been on a news website, she had never been on some of the bigger social media websites either. Now she was making up for lost time.

One of the first things Anna tried to do on her new laptop was visit some websites based in different countries. Sallas had, by and large, locked out the rest of the internet. It wasn’t technically allowed to visit foreign sites but it was one of those rules most people ignored. Getting around the firewall wasn’t the hardest thing in the world and it was rare that someone was punished for it.

Anna saw forums and chat rooms of filled with women from abroad. Some were even part of groups that wanted to fix Sallas and help the women trapped in the country, it gave Anna hope that perhaps one day change would be possible. The temptation to join these groups and speak to these free women was high but Anna knew she couldn’t do it. She knew the government would trawl through some of these places looking for dissidents, she had to settle with watching from afar as if she was looking through a window at a happy party whilst she was locked out in the cold.

After only a couple of days Anna couldn’t even bring herself to look at these forums anymore. It was just too painful seeing people enjoying everything she wanted whilst she was trapped behind an invisible border. It was all well and good that these people wanted to help her but it was mostly just discussion and petitions, there was nothing that would actually make a difference.

The gifts had certainly done what Ryan had intended. Anna was no longer hiding away in her room every hour of the day, now she was back to her old self. She was just glad to no longer dwell on the punishment that had occurred at Thanksgiving. The bruises and welts on her backside healed slowly and she still winced when she sat down but the emotional scars were clearing up under the care of her husband.

It was a Friday evening and both Anna and Ryan were in the living room. Ryan was relaxing in front of the television after finishing his week of classes. There wasn’t even any parties or anything that either of them had to fear. This weekend it seemed would be just for them.

“Ryan?” Anna said as she sat on the armchair.

“Yeah?” Ryan replied from the couch.

“I think we should go out.” Anna said, “Like, you know, on a date.”

Anna saw Ryan suddenly stiffen as he looked across to her. She couldn’t help but smile. It really shouldn’t have been much of a surprise since they were married and married couples went on dates all the time but obviously this wasn’t a normal marriage. This was something Anna had been thinking about for a long time.

“A… date?” Ryan repeated.

“I get that we’ve kind of done things backwards but…” Anna shrugged and looked down at her keyboard in embarrassment, “I like you. I think you like me too.”

“O-Of course I do.” Ryan quickly said. He was sat up straight now as if he would have to leap into action.

“I’ve been cooped up in here so much. Why don’t we go out tonight to get dinner?” Anna said, “I know the rules and everything but I’m sure we can get through it.”

“Are you sure?” Ryan asked, “I don’t want you to feel pressured or anything.”

“What’s the worst that can happen?” Anna asked with a smile.

“Alright then.” Ryan looked nervous. Whether that was because of the idea that this was a “date” or because of the general situation Anna didn’t know.

“Cool, well, I’ll get ready then.” Anna said happily.

Anna put her laptop to one side and stood up. As she made her way to the bedroom she couldn’t help but smile. There were rules she would have to follow but she was excited. A chance to get out of the apartment with Ryan. She found herself feeling giddy, first dates are usually something you first experience as a teenager, she may have been running late but at least she was going to get to experience it.

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Anna was ready for her date. She had showered and tidied herself up before getting dressed for her big evening out. She had debated whether she could get away with a pull-up or should put on a full diaper, after some deliberation she decided on the pull-up, it made her feel so much more grown up.

“Are you sure?” Ryan had asked.

“Of course I am!” Anna replied, “I’ve been doing really well with that stuff…”

“You have.” Ryan was quick to agree, “I was just thinking that this could be a stressful situation and-”

“I’ll be fine.” Anna smiled. She saw that Ryan was debating with himself if he should push the point before letting it drop. It was both nice and entirely unexpected to have a man trust her judgement.

Over the pull-up Anna had decided on a dress which looked thoroughly grown-up. It was long and dark red, it was something she had actually stolen from her adoptive mother when she was a teenager but apparently no one missed it. She had no idea why her mom had such a dress since she didn’t seem to wear anything like it much.

Anna had never had much practice with make-up. She never had occasion to want to make herself look good but she still had some and she spent time in front of the mirror putting it all on, it took a while but eventually she felt like it looked acceptable. It was clear Ryan thought so too as when Anna walked into the living room she saw her husband sitting on the couch in a smart shirt and pants.

“Very nice.” Ryan said as he stood up and looked at Anna.

Anna couldn’t help but bashfully smile. She had been complimented by Ryan before, of course, but it felt different when she had legitimately put an effort into her appearance. Ryan was looking as handsome as ever, he was very clearly nervous but that seemed to only make him even more appealing.

“Shall we go?” Anna asked when Ryan hadn’t moved for a few seconds.

“Oh, right, of course!” Ryan replied.

Anna watched as Ryan grabbed his jacket. As he turned around he paused for a second and made a face like he was realising he had to do something. With a sigh he draped the jacket over the arm of the chair.

“I don’t want to but…” Ryan held his hands up.

“I know.” Anna nodded as she pressed her lips into a thin line, “Do what you have to do.”

“Sorry.” Ryan commiserated as he reached for the coat stand again.

Far from a nice jacket to complete her look Anna saw Ryan unhooking something that she had been doing her best to avoid. The adult-sized toddler harness had been hanging on the stand since they had got it. Before that evening Anna practically only left the house when heading off-campus and thus was able to avoid having to wear it. There would be no such luck this time.

Anna held her hands out as Ryan walked over. She remained smiling as he put it the harness on her though she felt anything but happy about it. She knew it was necessary but that didn’t make it any less demeaning. She felt the straps across her chests, waist and over her shoulders tighten as they were adjusted on her back. It emphasized her curves and distorted her dress.

“Is that OK?” Ryan asked.

“Uh huh.” Anna replied.

“I just need to attach the-…” Ryan started.

“Don’t say it.” Anna said seriously. She belatedly let out a small laugh to try and make the situation less tense. It didn’t really work.

There was a metallic clipping noise and Anna knew the leash had been attached to the back of the harness. Now, just like a small child, Anna could be led around without needing to worry that she might wonder off. She couldn’t help feeling resentment towards Ryan even though she knew he had no choice. If she didn’t have her pride she would’ve cancelled the whole date idea right then and there.

“One more thing.” Ryan practically whispered.

Anna looked around to see Ryan holding up a pacifier. She sagged visibly as she looked at the little latex bulb attached to a pink mouth guard. It felt like the embarrassments would never end. All of this just to go out on a date like a normal person, the urge to cancel the whole thing became even stronger.

“This is all getting to be a bit much.” Anna said dispiritedly.

“It’s the last thing.” Ryan said, “But we can cancel if you want. I wouldn’t hold it against you.”

Anna was tempted. The idea of cancelling and then just sitting on the couch watching television was something that Anna seriously considered for a few seconds. She looked down at the floor but the longer she thought about it the more she found her mind turning in a different direction. Anna’s rebellious streak was coming to the surface, her refusal to just do as she was told by society created a burning desire in her. She wanted to go on a date with her husband and no one was going to stop her. Why should she hide away from the world?

Anna looked up from the floor at her husband. She must’ve had a fiery determination in her eyes because Ryan seemed a little taken aback. She opened her mouth and nodded a couple of times. Ryan lifted the pacifier and pushed it between her lips.

“I don’t want to do this.” Ryan said as he indicated the pacifier and looked at the harness, “But it’s what everyone else uses on their women when outside. We have to blend in…”

“It’th OK.” Anna replied. She grimaced a little at how the pacifier made her lisp pathetically.

“Ready to go?” Ryan asked.

Anna nodded. As they made their way to the door Anna puffed out her cheeks. Ryan paused as he pulled on the door handle. He turned around and picked up the toddler leash and then belatedly opened the door. Anna followed Ryan outside and immediately felt like there was a spotlight on her. The hallway was empty but that didn’t help her feelings of embarrassment.

It was awkward. To start with Anna lagged behind Ryan but they quickly realised it would be easier the other way round since the leash was connected to the back of Anna’s harness. Anna walked in front of her husband and tried to project a confidence that she didn’t really feel. There was a tense and anxious silence as the couple went down to the ground level and out into the outside world.

The sun was starting to set and there was a chill in the air. Anna looked around thinking everyone would be staring at her and laughing but there weren’t really that many people about. There were some small groups of men going here or there but they didn’t pay any attention to her. As weird as she felt she had to keep reminding herself that this was just normal for a lot of these males. The few females that were out were all dressed in a more infantile manner than Anna was which drew some envious looks from them.

Ryan walked alongside Anna and she almost felt like taking his hand in hers but she knew she couldn’t. Ryan had slipped into his role of alpha male, as he had to, and that meant Anna had to be as out of the way as possible. Every now and then she felt a little tug on the reigns when she was lagging a little too far behind or pulling a little too far in front.