

## 48 - Being Brave

“So...” Amy slowly set down her needle and thread, and Emily on her toes as she reached for a bin tried to look extra busy right then. “You...dripping wet, butt naked, started running all over the apartment?”

“Y-you...you had to be there...” Emily grunted especially hard just to hide the stutters.

“Be careful, by the way; I wasn’t kidding when Joyce said I had to stick to some rules,” Amy said again with her watchful eyes still on Emily.

“I won’t climb on anything, I promise,” Emily assured right back and dropped back to the flats of her feet. “And yeah, Joyce went running after me, but I was faster,” it felt really good to say that. Finally getting a one-up on Joyce! Well, sort of. Joyce had longer legs and bigger strides, but Emily used the house like a playground. Just because mama bear could sprint didn’t mean she could swing from vines... “But then I slipped and hurt my nose...” Emily reminisced a lot less fondly.

“...There’s a saying, you know,” Amy raised her eyebrow, maybe thinking twice about the things she was letting her assistant handle, “about playing silly games and getting silly prizes?”

“And now I’m not allowed out of the bathroom until I’m completely dry...” she dodged the criticism and finished her grand tale. “But get this: *Joyce* doesn’t have to be dry! She can walk out whenever she wants!”

“Sounds like you’d run?”

“Not anymore! I don’t wanna break my nose!”

“You won’t if you just dry off in the bathroom. And maybe run in the house a little less...”

Still choosing either to ignore or just not see the problem, Emily sighed. “Joyce is such a hypocrite at times...”

“You know, I said I’d listen and all, and I will, but I’m almost starting to think that Joyce is as overbearing as she is for good reason...” And as Ashes strolled by, the seamstress brushed her hand across his back.

“No, she’s not!” Emily claimed, and Amy hung a hand on her face just to hide her oncoming smirk. “Like, *some* rules make sense, but other ones are just ridiculous! Like...! Oh! Yeah! So whenever she wants, she just *decides* what time we’re going to bed!”

“Both of you?” Amy would have guessed Emily being sent ahead first...

“Yes! And whenever I try to argue or debate it, she always somehow throws it back at me and uses *that* as a reason just to build up her point.” Joyce was rubber and Emily was glue...

“Well, she’s...” Amy sighed as she smiled, never quite realizing just what kind of reasoning she’d be getting herself into, “...crafty?”

“*Yes!*” Emily nearly jumped as she worked. “Don’t you see what I mean? It’s so unfair! She makes up all the rules whenever she wants, and I just have to listen! I think it’s only fair if I get to make some rules too...” In all fairness, Emily did make rules, only when they were having adult discussions, though. Given that this was somewhere...in-between, her credibility and authority were beneath the threshold.

“I think if you’re wanting rules just for the sake of having them, that kinda defeats the purpose, Em,” Amy chuckled. “Oh, can you hand me that swatch right there?”

Like a gopher, Emily spotted the destination with her eyes, grabbing a small stack of squares off a nearby table and handing it over to her boss.

“Is this what you needed me to try on?” Emily couldn’t help but look on from the side. It did look like a pretty dress...

“Mhm,” Amy answered quietly, leaning out and in from her chair, holding the sample under a light and away from it across the outfit. “Just playing with some options right now, though. But—oh, where were we? Right. How does the saying go? Made your bed, so sleep in it?”

“Joyce doesn’t let me make the bed,” and Emily certainly rolled her eyes at that. “W-well, sometimes she does. When it’s my chore for the day...”

“Oh that’s good; keeping busy around the house?” Amy played sort of dumb. She knew about the chores since that one time she spoke with Joyce. Though, she wasn’t looking to divulge any details about that. She only made clothes, but surely that still fell under client confidentiality?

“Yeah, but—” she paused for the sound of the sewing machine.

“It’s okay, I can still hear you!” Amy encouraged.

“But it’s just little stuff. Nothing major. And it’s weekdays only. Otherwise Joyce wants to do it.”

“Gosh, the battery that woman must have…” Amy shook her head hopelessly. “Guess we’re all built pretty differently.”

“Mm…” Emily nodded, going quiet and contemplative.

Her work for the day has mainly just been waking up, eating breakfast, doing a chore, browsing the computer a little, and waiting for Joyce. It wasn’t as boring as before, now with just a tiny bit more structure, but it was far from filling up her entire day. Searching for work was harder now, too. She was as earnest as she started, truly, but now due to certain parental locks it was just another hurdle trying to get in… If she wanted to use the computer when Joyce wasn’t home, somehow she could “request” for permission, whatever that meant. It probably sent something to Joyce’s phone, but she didn’t like bothering Joyce during work, as much as she loved to bother her now in general.

“Enough about Joyce, though; let’s go back to us,” and she killed the machine and held up her handicraft. “Think you can try something on for me?”

“Yeah, of course,” and Emily was about to take it, but Amy playfully tugged it back.

“Sorry, this one has a zipper on the back. Might be easier if we do it as a team,” Amy smiled, and Emily nodded. It was one of those once in a blue moon situations where she could actually go down to just her underwear without totally blushing.

“Want some help stripping?”

“No thanks, I’m uh, fine. So should I go…?” Emily looked around, like there was a dedicated changing room.

“Oh, no, it’s fine to do it right here,” Amy nonchalantly waved. “Let me go lock the front door though, actually…”

Maybe it was weird to admit, and maybe it was definitely weird to be feeling, but Emily couldn’t help but have a sense of unease as she lifted her shirt. Almost like…she was doing something wrong? Only because Amy was here. Another body, another person that was watching her or at least being near her while she got naked. Guilt? Was that what she was feeling? The intent was honest and pure, but that wasn’t enough to affect the strangeness.

*If Joyce saw me like this...would she get jealous? Infidelity? Was it cheating if her seamstress saw her undressing?*

“Emily? Everything okay?”

“H-huh?” Emily perked up with her rolled shirt halfway down and off her arms, bringing out the red spots on her cheeks. “Y-yeah, I...nevermind.” Amy made it clear she was fine with the personal stuff, but Emily still wasn’t cool sharing her stupid.

*Stupid Joyce and her stupid jealousy...* Apparently other things were starting to rub off on the girl.

“By the way, uhm...Amy, do you have any family, or anything?”

“Hmm?” Amy’s interest had been piqued. “What makes you ask that?”

“Just...cause you’re a person that makes clothes, and all...” and with still a small bit of trained and learned hesitation, Emily undid the button on her jeans. “I was wondering if you make stuff for your family, or anything.”

“Ugh, believe me, Emily,” Amy sounded with playful disgust, “the less *my* family knows about what I do, the better.”

“They don’t know?”

“They do...but I don’t go around reminding anyone, you know? Here– let me take those, I’ll fold them...” She moved Emily’s clothes in a neat pile to the couch. “Great family, and I love them, but with so many of them, just doing one favor for every person would ab-*so*-lutely destroy my schedule!”

“Do they ask for big stuff?”

She scoffed and Emily nearly flinched. Apparently they’d hit a passionate tangent.

“Big, small, medium; all of it! And difficult stuff, mind you! I’ve had cousins before that want me to essentially build a whole new outfit over an existing one! I couldn’t even save the fabric!”

Emily listened as she stepped into the dress on the floor.

“Put it like this:” Amy started, but stopped so she could pan them over to a mirror, “when a mechanic finishes up work for the day, the last thing they wanna do when they go home is work on another car. Make sense?”

“Yeah it does... What...what you do for me and Joyce...that’s not off-work stuff, is it?”

“Nope, that is very much my work,” Amy haughtily chuckled as she lifted the outfit up Emily’s legs. “You, my munchkin, have given me a *whole* new branch of things to play with, and I cannot be excited enough for it! Do me a favor: if Joyce *ever* thinks about dropping me, try and warn her discreetly that I’m gonna throw a tantrum, ‘kay?”

“Uhm...yeah...I will...” Emily hesitantly agreed, and while she felt conflicted about a line being crossed, she didn’t notice Amy’s smile.

“Joking! Just jokes,” she laughed, and Emily swallowed another bitter gullibility pill. “But no, Joyce and I kinda have a special deal going because I’m kinda into it, too. She’s got me on retainer, so I get paid to play around with ideas and Joyce can request something specific if she wants.”

“Has she done that before?” More backdoor dealings without Emily knowing? Or if Amy told her, was it not that secret after all?

“What, requested something?”

Emily nodded.

Some of Amy’s gears were turning, as the question was processed the dress fitting had stopped. But she spoke and said, “Uh...can’t say,” then zipping her lip and tossing the key.

“Confidentiality, and all.”

“Can you really not say *anything* about Joyce at all?” Emily finally started to give the woman a sideways look in the mirror. “I’m telling you a lot...” Seriously, shouldn’t they be trading secrets here?

“I won’t tattle about your detective work, but I’m not gonna get in the crossfire,” Amy held up her hands, ready for arrest. “Intentionally, at least,” then she went back to tugging the dress in places. “Does it feel comfy?”

“Uhm...kind of, I guess?” Emily tried not to turn, but she did try to get a fettle of the fabric. “It’s a little loose though...”

“That’s fine. Like I said, you’re similar to another client, but not exact. They’re a bit bigger than you.”

And Emily stood there and watched herself a bit longer while Amy muttered and took notes.

“You’re kinda different when you’re serious...” Emily thought out loud.

“Yeah?” Amy giggled, “am I?”

“I– All I mean is that when you’re taking notes and stuff...”

“I gotta be if I’m gonna make nice things...” she murmured as from a lower pedestal step she lifted a piece of the dress’ hem. “You don’t even wanna know how much research I’ve done for you, kiddo.”

“You do research too?”

“The ideas don’t come completely from trees!” Amy laughed, and Emily felt embarrassed for not realizing the obvious. “That’s usually how I start new projects. Hear from the client what they want, gather and study some references, sketch it out, then make it! *Sometimes* though, I might just strike lightning and go straight to the sketching part.”

“W-well...” Emily went meek as her hands fumbled with themselves. “What...stuff did you research for me?” Was Amy getting into the kink side of things, too? Did she have to dive in the deep end like that because of her and Joyce? For what Emily knew her to do, pushing this woman off the deep end like that didn’t seem fair for what normal stuff she is likely used to...

“Oh, kid’s fashion!” Amy said it simply and cheerily, and Emily almost fell over. “What?” she held her model up by the shoulder, “not what you expected?”

“Not really...” Emily mumbled, not keen to mention her thoughts. “You look at kid’s fashion?”

“Ya-huh. Lots of cute ideas to take from there. Though, that kinda brings a new challenge to it, which is I’ve never had to quite ‘age’ up my references before...”

“What’s aging up...?” Could Emily be blamed? After all, Joyce only ever taught her how to age down.

“Just taking something and considering how it might change for someone older,” Amy explained. “For example, you’re not gonna find a toddler or kid with adult breasts or curves. Depending on what we’re going for, those are just a couple things to consider. And also, that day that I came over to your house to see the clothes; were you wearing a different diaper?”

“H-huh?”

“Do you guys use different ones, or just the same kind?”

“I-I think we use the same kind,” Emily answered, though nervously just a few steps behind the casual introduction of her diapers. “I don’t know where Joyce gets them, though...” Somehow through Sheila, apparently.

“Mm, well, I wish Joyce would have told me so I could account for it...” Amy said with the slightest bit of annoyance.

“Does it really affect that much?” Who was Emily, the not-seamstress, to ask?

“No, it doesn’t,” Amy admitted with a defeated sigh, “but if you like perfection you gotta scrutinize the details.”

Things had been moving so fast that Emily didn’t register what Amy said until she had time to digest. “W-wait,” she turned her head to Amy, “you noticed a difference?”

“Had a hunch,” Amy answered like it was asking for the weather, “your bum looked a *little* bit more puffer! Which is cute, by the way!” and Amy, the master of damage control, made a loop with her fingers and signaled the universal “OK” sign.

Though her attentiveness opened the door for more questions, but ones that Emily was far too embarrassed to ask. What, “how did you know that my diaper just wasn’t wet?” What a great argument that would make; built all on the stage of self-sacrifice.

“If I know what the bare minimum is like, I can consider the stretchiness for stuff that wraps around it,” Amy explained. “Too much and it either gets too loose, or suddenly your diaper isn’t getting the support that it needs.” Amy stayed calm and casual, even when indicating the obvious and terribly embarrassing. Diapers only needed support if they were hanging on to extra baggage. Either way, she sounded just like Joyce, but without all the tension, but the same exact lack of reservation.

So instead of calling a bluff or doubting her claims, it was far more worth Emily's pride and dignity if she just let Amy be right.

"That's another thing I kinda had to study, by the way," Amy included, looking like the brunt of the burden was Emily's fault. "Figuring out diapers isn't easy, you know?"

It was like layer after layer of discovery for the poor girl that just had to stand there and model a piece of clothing. While it was interesting to listen to Amy talk, she was completely unprepared to introduce or contribute anything to it. Diaper studies? What, was she supposed to talk about how comfy hers felt, or snug and secure they could be? Maybe they were on the same subject, but the lenses were totally different.

"L-like what?"

"Again, it's all tiny stuff, but it's worthwhile information. Just knowing the difference between plastics and cloth. Disposable and cloth. Oh— those are two huge differences, by the way! Maybe I was kinda going down the rabbit hole, but it also helps with my sketches if I know one is kind of non-negotiable for the model. Otherwise she gets punished," Amy grinned, and Emily blushed. "If it's like a onesie or sleeper you're in, I need to consider the types of fabrics that I'm using if I know what kind of underwear you've usually got. Helps avoid extra wear on friction between materials. Lets me know if I can keep certain spots fluffy and soft"

"Oh...well...uhm...you thought of a lot..." Emily was rightfully at a total loss for words, and Amy was at least self-aware to a point.

"Sorry! Did I overwhelm you? I have a little file built on you, is all I mean. You and Joyce are pointing me in new places, but as a seamstress I'm better for it!"

"Glad we can help..."

"Glad I've been blessed with this work! Mmm...okay! Ready to get that dress off?"

Emily blinked, and apparently that's how long it had taken. "That's it?"

"That's it!" Amy nodded. "Easy though, right?"

"It was easy, yeah..." the girl agreed, but it didn't change that an entire day was reserved for what, just ten minutes of her time? On some level it felt very much like a "Joyce's assigned one chore of the day," but where they differed was at least Amy supplemented with other things...



“So...now what?” Emily asked while she let Amy undress her. Unlike where she was just obedient for Joyce, this was Emily fearing that she might ruin or tear an unfinished product. Maybe that’s why Amy also offered her help at the beginning...

“Now, we take this off, you can put your normal clothes back on, and...mm, well, I guess that is kinda it then, huh?”

“Are you gonna have me come back again?” Emily asked, wondering if her need had been exhausted entirely.

“Oh yeah!” Amy nodded assuringly. “I’m gonna be making some tweaks to this over the next little bit and have you try it on again. Sorry in advance if that sounds boring!”

“No, it’s not,” after all, chatting with Amy for the most part was pretty fun, “but I’m just a little surprised, is all.” Not that anything they discussed over the phone could’ve been false advertising, but maybe Emily’s expectations got ahead of themselves.

“I know, I know,” Amy apologized, “it’s not a whole lot... I’ll see what I can do about giving you some more stuff to do for next time!” Amy said it confidently, and Emily nodded as she started to re-dress herself.

Emily had the chance to look at the time, finding the new predicament that came with a light workload.

“So...that’s it then?” Emily stood, taking that as her cue to leave. After all, the work was done and the day was over.

“Oh, Emily, that doesn’t mean you have to leave!” Amy exclaimed, finally catching on. “Stay and be comfy! We can still hang out while I work? I have some stuff I can do down here anyway. Or, if you get bored of me you’re more than welcome to the TV upstairs.”

“Yeah, but...I don’t wanna interrupt anything... Should we write down the time, or something? I think I got here at around nine, so...” and while she was nearly ready to resort to her fingers, Amy had a hand on her shoulder and forced her to sit.

“Don’t worry about the hours; I have that all taken care of,” Amy dismissed. “And *no*, you are not imposing! Don’t be afraid to use your phone or anything, by the way. Sorry though; this doesn’t quite fill up your day like work normally should...”

“Really, it’s fine,” Emily insisted, and in fact, “Besides, if I wasn’t here, I’d kinda be at home by myself...” she watched her leg for a minute, wondering if what she would say was all that workplace appropriate, “I like getting to talk with you, so...I don’t mind.”

Her words must have fired like bullets out of a gun. Amy held a hand to her chest, delightfully taken aback by such a small but meaningful gesture.

“Well I like getting to talk with you, you know!” Amy laughed. “Besides, you were nice enough to invite me over to your house, so obviously I should make the same gesture, shouldn’t I?”

“Well...that only sort of happened because I was too scared to come over here...dressed like that.”

“Everyone’s got their comfy space, right?” Amy shrugged, dusting off worry and wonder everytime Emily could muster some kind of doubt. “So you’re gonna stay, right? Otherwise it’s between you and the cops once Joyce can’t find you here to pick you up,” she taunted with a grin, and Emily couldn’t help but reciprocate.

“Okay, fine, I’ll stay.”

“Perfect.” Amy smiled, and all was well again. For only a little bit, however. A matter of seconds, really.

“...Hey, actually...Emily?”

It felt like the first meaningful pause she’d heard from Amy ever. Emily’s hand stopped petting Ashes and she looked up almost nervously.

“Y...yeah?”

“First: you can refuse, okay?” she held out a halting hand. “If this sounds like too much, just let me know. It’s just...well...I may have one other thing that I might need you to try on...”

“For a client?” Emily was already getting up from her seat. Another chance to model was another chance to work. Contribution felt good, after all.

“Yes, for a client,” Amy chuckled, “but specifically for you.”

“For me?” The groundwork was already laid that made it clear Amy was producing for her, but that wasn’t to say she ever expected an opportunity to see it. Especially without...

“But...I thought I couldn’t see anything Joyce was having you make?” Eternal Christmas presents that wouldn’t be under the tree until Joyce said so. It’d be enough to make all the good boys and girls unionize.

Amy was already flipping through pages on her table and tidying up her fabrics, then finally folding the dress. “How about I go get it, then I can explain.”

“O...kay...” and Emily watched Amy hurry upstairs. The woman was still forward and cheery, but there was an air of reservation, only now coming from the other end.

And as Emily heard her feet coming down the stairs, Amy was already jumping straight into explanation.

“So normally– no, I can’t show you stuff; both because that’s what Joyce wants, and I don’t like sharing unless it’s fully finished, but this is something very close...” The white box Amy was holding was nondescript and hardly an indication of anything, but Emily could tell it wasn’t normal attire that was inside. After all, Joyce didn’t pay to make Emily look mature. “And, well, I wanna be *extra* sure this is just right.”

“Is it another...onesie?” Emily, feeling daring and brave, asked the question that just might dispel the suspense.

“No.” Amy said.

Apparently the suspense was not dead yet.

“It’s a diaper,” she continued.

Apparently it was dead now.

“A diaper?” Emily paused, but Amy didn’t, who took the top half of the box and lifted.

Like a royal treasure atop a fur-lined pillow, Emily waited to see a diaper with a nervous beat in her chest, but was quite surprised and confused by what she saw. It definitely did look like underwear, but not the disposable kind. The colors were loud and proud. Purple, yellow, red; clashing foes that somehow perfectly encapsulated the chaos that a kid could be. Panties didn’t feel accurate, but nothing else sounded better in her head. High-cut, all-encompassing ones.

Buttons were studded along the sides, and at the waist and legs there were elasticized trims of thin and light material. Most importantly, though— the most confusing part: it looked...thin. While Emily would never elect herself as the authority on diapers, surely wearing them was enough to allow her an opinion on the matter.

And while she looked down at the garment confusedly, Amy with bated breath was patiently holding her hands together.

“This is a...” Emily looked up at the woman, “...diaper?”

“Yes!” Amy enthusiastically nodded, and Emily slowly looked down at it again.

Emily went quiet, slowly reaching out her hand, waiting for Amy’s command to stop that never came. Soon she was touching the “diaper,” rubbing the material between her fingers. Though, she could hear the friction, like tiny thin fibers were rolling and sliding against each other. Sort of like...

“It kinda sounds like a bathing suit,” Emily commented, and the proprietress merely laughed.

“That’s the inner layer; I added some waterproofing to it! Because...well...” They each shared an uncomfortable look, “just in case! But the inside is soft! Feel it!”

The idea of it being a diaper was still hardly sold on the girl. Was it an invention? Where was the padding that got the job done? That made the diaper a...a diaper! She hooked her finger around the leg band, feeling the inside.

“It does feel pretty soft...” Emily agreed, but sounded like she didn’t know much else to say or how to expand on it. No way other than the kind of skepticism she felt bad giving. “Amy, I really like how it looks, but I...I don’t think this’d really do what...what a diaper is supposed to...” Where was Joyce to back her up on this?

“Well, it *is* a prototype,” Amy slowly admitted, like a magician that begrudgingly revealed their own trick, “But I do stand by it! It’s my first time with some real functionality in clothing. Does something seem wrong with it? It works like a normal diaper, see?”

Emily watched Amy reach out, making it a show of the button areas. Each side erupted in loud metal pops from where the buttons unsnapped, going off and off until none remained connected. Only then did Amy slowly but deliberately show that the buttoned fabrics unfolded and came apart, like wings on a disposable diaper.

“See? There’s snaps that let you take it on and off!” Amy emphasized, flipping and flopping the wing with her hand multiple times. “Cool, right?”

“Yeah, but...mm...” Emily went quiet again.

“What? What is it?” Amy verbally pushed and shoved. “You’re beating around the bush, silly. You won’t hurt my feelings!”

“You promise...?”

“Yes, I promise,” Amy held up her hand “So? Break the news! What’s so bad?”

“It’s...it’s kind of thin... Like...a lot of thin,” Emily broke the news, and as welcomed as it was it didn’t change her guilt.

“Thin?” Amy asked to confirm, and Emily nodded again. Half the reason she didn’t want to say it was in fear of having to get specific, and they were already toeing a dangerous line.

*It’s thin!*

*So what if it’s thin?*

*If it’s thin it won’t...absorb!*

*Absorb? What do you mean?*

*When I pee myself!*

Or something like that. The at-home video in her head was traumatic enough.

But Amy was still quiet, like she was waiting for something else, and that only made the girl more nervous. Did she want more explanation? Was she insulted?

“Well...” Amy sounded like she was trying to be careful. *Oh no, did I hurt her feelings? Should I apologize?* “That’s because we didn’t add the padding, yet?”

“O—” Emily stammered. “O-oh! Oh! That’s why?” she went for an embarrassed laugh. “S-sorry! I just thought since you said it was done and all...” *Stupid! Stupid!* “So...wait, how does that work then?”

Amy tilted her head. “How does what work? The padding?”

“Well...yeah?” Was there some kind of misunderstanding? “Don’t...doesn’t that stuff go in the diaper before you finish making it...?” Maybe she needed to ask Joyce about that when she saw her. Again, she was a diaper wearer and nothing more. “How are you supposed to get it in now?” For all she could tell, it looked pretty sealed up.

“Emily?” ever so sweetly, Amy asked.

“Mhm?”

“Honey...do you know how cloth diapers work?”

Emily blinked.

“Sorry?” *A cloth what?*

Amy’s eyes widened and Emily’s oncoming embarrassment grew just a little bit bigger.

“Awh! O-oh my gosh, you don’t know? Ah!” and in a hasty rush Amy lifted the box’s interior filling, revealing varied sizes and thickness of thick cloth squares and strips. “See these?”

“Y-yeah...”

“*These* are the padding!” Amy explained with a whole new wave of enthusiasm, all because she had a sadly ignorant girl who was a product of the modern age. “Look– pick up the diaper, see?”

In Emily’s hands she looked at the interior of the front face of the diaper, and Amy’s hand stuck out at a place where Emily could now see a seam and where the cream-colored fabric was bundled up. She watched the woman’s fingers go near the anomalous spot, close and closer, until... Her fingers! They disappeared! Gone! Into the void! Gone and forever– then her fingers came back out.

“See this? This is where you slip in the diaper inserts! Let’s put one in now, actually,” and Amy with Emily as her vise grip parted the inner mouth of the diaper, slipping the long thick strip of material in.

“Everything is safe to get wet,” Amy explained, “and all you have to do is just wash and dry it! Cool, right? It’s an infinite diaper that can look *exactly* the way you want it to!”

And in admitted amazement, Amy's efforts helped Emily cross the mental bridge that brought her from skepticism to the finished product the seamstress was trying to communicate. Instantly she felt the still soft and malleable, but sturdy pad fill out the diaper, going from thin and baggy to thick and taut. Suddenly she was holding a diaper, except...washable?

"See what I mean now?" Amy couldn't hide her teeth, sounding more eager by the second. "Isn't it so cool?!"

"Y-yeah..." Emily nodded, ultimately in an embarrassed place all over again. After all, Amy said it was made for *her*. There were no secrets about whose diaper she was holding, and yet it did nothing, or maybe even caused Amy to be so cheery. Was she expecting the girl to cheer right alongside and be just as happy? She was, and she was grateful, but... Being excited about what she got to pee in...

"Ah...!" Amy stepped away, making a dramatic sigh. "Maybe Joyce would've been better to show!"

"W-wait, no!" Emily in a hurry spoke up. "I-It's not that I don't like it, it's just that...that I'm..."

A hand was on her wrist, setting the diaper down. "Relax, it's fine," Amy chuckled, back to her sincere self. "I know you can be a little nervous about this stuff at first. Sorry for teasing too much~!" she sang. "But I still wanted to show you.

"So does Joyce know about this?" Emily asked in her direction, but her eyes couldn't stop going elsewhere. Somewhere specific though. Directly down at the diaper...sitting unfolded and open... It was made for her. Would it fit? Of course it would...Amy made it. It was *her* diaper. Tailor made and thought of. A silly, stupid design; something reminiscent of the way Joyce got her into making a messy minefield of crayons in her coloring books.

...*Stylish*...

"But it's a prototype..." Amy sorrowfully explained. "Close to being done, but it needs a couple more things..." Her statement was leading, like there was more to it, and just maybe, Emily was expected to pick up on it.

"Like what? It...looks done to me?"

"Well, it's yours," Amy seemed to chuckle to herself over that, "so I still need to put your signature on it."

“Signature?”

“Yeah; a little something that shows I made it and it was made for you. I do it with everything I make. Anything from me that Joyce got has her own signature too. I don’t write an actual name, or anything. Remember that denim dress of yours? The front pocket with the paw print? That’s your signature!”

Then the explanation clicked. The one reference was all she needed as a reminder to what Joyce explained way back when in the beginning. The day she got her big and bountiful birthday present.

“Oh...I guess I never remembered seeing it on Joyce’s clothes, though...” Not her dresses, which is what she imagined Amy did most for her.

“Well...” Amy averted her eyes, taking a playful finger to her chin. “Yours may not be as...discreet as what I do for everyone else.”

“Discreet?”

“Most of what I do is for formal or high-end events, so little personal touches like that are sort of a no-no. I keep that somewhere on the *inside* of the outfit. But with you, I don’t have to worry about that!” she laughed. “I can’t imagine you’d wanna wear your footie pajamas to a party, right?”

“N-no...” Emily agreed with a blush.

“Right, well, it started off as a small idea, but I really like how it turned out. The little pet paw I give all your stuff works great as part of the overall design. Think of it like...like your own fashion brand, yeah!” Amy sparked with glee, and Emily with far less context and passion to ride the highs smiled nonetheless. “Your own chique set. Mwah, *fantastique~!*” And finally her charades were infectious enough to make Emily laugh herself.

“Long story short,” Amy chuckled a little bit more after finally settling down, “it’s what turns all your clothes into a branded set. Sorta for style and identity.”

“Okay, I think I get it,” Emily nodded. “That’s...I...I mean...I know you’re being paid for this, Amy, but...thank you.”

“Hm? Of course! I’m happy to do it, but yes, being paid certainly makes me happier,” she laughed again.



“Right, but...I’m...I’m sorry for taking so long to show any of that to you.”

“Huh?” Amy’s smile sank, “hon, what are you apologizing for?”

“Ever since my birthday, Joyce told me how you made all those outfits for me... The onesies, dress, and pajamas... She said from the very beginning how much you wanted to see them...see me in them... And...only until it actually happened, I really didn’t wanna show anybody... I was nervous, scared, and embarrassed, and I still am...but none of that was being fair to you. So...I’m sorry.”

“Emily...” Amy said in a warm voice, reaching out for the somber and withdrawn. Her hand landed on the girl’s shoulder. “You don’t think I was upset at all, do you?”

And all the girl did was shrug. “Maybe? I mean, you have every right to be...”

“Emily...yes, I really did want to see you all dressed up, because, well, that’s something new for me, and it’s obviously something new to you too. But even if I made it, the fact that Joyce paid for it is as far as any obligation or responsibility you or she has for me goes. Period. Don’t feel like you had to do anything for me, okay? Because while I might say things to Joyce, I don’t want you to think I was pressuring for anything to happen, okay? ”

“Mhm...” Emily nodded. “Thank you... I’m sorry for saying all that; I guess I can overthink things a little...”

“Believe me, I think you’re the only one who’s kind enough to be honest about it. I bet half the things that go on inside your girlfriend’s head would make me go cooky...!” In a dramatic fashion she stuck out her tongue, corkscrewing the side of her head with a finger, leading to Emily’s laugh.

“You better watch what you say,” Emily giggled, “what happens if I tell Joyce?”

“Then I tell her you climbed on something high without my permission,” Amy narrowed her eyes. “Do it and I promise you mutually assured destruction.”

And the staring match lasted all of three seconds before both burst into laughter.

“I’m glad I’ve got you in a good mood again! Because...” Amy’s hand went near the corner of the box again. “This needs something else other than a signature...”

Emily waited without saying anything, but she made eye contact with Amy.

“Emily, do you wanna try this on for me?”

“Try it...on?” Emily said the words back at her, like she didn’t hear her right.

“In private, of course!” Amy suddenly stammered. “I’m not gonna make you do that here. I don’t wanna embarrass you, but since we’ve already done a fashion show once before, I figured this might be fine? You’re more than welcome to use the bathroom upstairs, or I could go up and wait for—”

“I-I can’t...”

“Sorry? You can’t?” It wasn’t doubt in Amy’s voice, but self-surprise from something she somehow overlooked.

Emily shook her head. “I...I guess I’d be willing, but...I’m...not allowed to...”

Amy blinked once, then twice, then she remembered lunch.

“O-oh! That’s right...! You’re not allowed... Joyce takes care of that, doesn’t she?”

It wasn’t in such explicit terms, but Emily bashfully nodded nonetheless.

Amy glanced down at the garment, having all the pieces but a single, tiny bit of technicality that sat in the way of her testing.

“Sorry, Amy...” Emily looked genuinely apologetic. “I’d do it, but...I like to joke a lot about rules with Joyce, but I think this one really does matter to her.” It was the one thing that truly felt inalienable and unbreakable. She could imagine herself doing it intentionally haphazardly, or taking one off in just a moment of bratty fun, but while they would undoubtedly bring harsh consequences, she could see it all as part of the lifestyle. But deliberately putting one on without mistake or some ulterior, immature motive? That was...well, it was supposed to not be Emily’s job. Babies didn’t put on their own diapers. It was their last bastion to what made this all so real, and it was one of the most important pillars that defined Emily’s willful dependence.

But that wasn’t to say this wasn’t a moment without good reason? It wasn’t *actually* wearing a diaper, right? It was just a fitting session? One she could do in private, but one that if Joyce ever found out about would certainly lead to questions. It wasn’t about the problems of trying to hide the lie, though, but the act of lying itself. No more secrets. Honesty.

“Let...let me call her,” Emily decided, and Amy looked surprised.

“Oh, Emily, you don’t have to do that. I appreciate it, really, but we can just do this later?”

“No, it’s okay,” Emily answered, then nodded as if affirming herself. “Besides, the worst that can happen is she’ll say no?”

“Yeah, but maybe we shouldn’t bother her while she’s at work...”

That did make the girl pause, being the very thing she did not like doing either. But this was important. And the same reasoning applied; if Joyce couldn’t pick up, then that’s all there was to it.

“I’m gonna try calling her,” Emily decided again, and with a sense of determination, she pulled out her phone.

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“Uhm...can I ask you something?” Emily’s voice sounded hesitant over the phone.

Joyce creased her brows while she walked, “Of course you can?” Was something wrong?

“Can...” as much as she hyped herself up before calling, simulated training could never seem to match practical experience. “Can I wear a diaper?”

There was a long pause over the phone. Silence, and Emily’s toes couldn’t stop rubbing against one another while she watched the battle from above.

“Emily?” Joyce spoke, but she sounded conflicted... Confused?

“Y-yeah?”

“I’m headed to my office now... Just give me a second please, okay?”

“Okay... Are you mad?”

“No, I’m not.” But she sure was confused as all hell. What would Emily need to wear a diaper for, and why was she asking something like that when Joyce wasn’t there?

“Sh-Sheila,” Joyce called for her assistant with the phone held against her shoulder, “I’m sorry, but I think I left one of my binders in the conference room? Would you mind going down to get it?”

“Of course,” Sheila nodded, and she was off, and Joyce was alone as she stepped inside the room.

“Emily, are you still there?”

“Yeah.”

“Sweetie, what did you ask again?” Maybe it was just the jam-packed schedule of the day getting to her. Joyce in her many moments of failure was finally learning to try and hear things out fully and completely.

“Can...I wear a diaper?”

Okay, maybe she hadn’t misheard...

“Sweetie, I’m a little confused...are you at home right now?” Amy didn’t mention anything about her leaving. Did she miss a message?

“No...I’m at Amy’s.”

“And you want to wear a diaper...?” Was this Emily?

“...Yeah.”

“Emily, honey, is Amy with you?” She had to be. There couldn’t be any other reason for this, even if Joyce had no idea what it was.

“Yeah, she is.”

“Could you please put her on?”

“Is this taking up your time?” Emily asked with a guilty voice now. “It’s okay– I don’t have to.”

“No, no, I’m glad you called. Sorry...today’s been a tiny bit busy. *Not* because I brought you over to Amy’s,” good lie, Joyce, “I’ve just had some unexpected things drop on me at the last minute. But could you give Amy the phone, please?”

“Mhm...” Emily agreed, then silently held it out for Amy.

“Joyce? It’s Amy.”

“Amy? Is everything okay?”

“It’s *fantastique*, one might say! We’re doing fine! I’m sorry about calling like this; I suggested we shouldn’t, but Emily wanted to.”

Joyce without much back and forth cut straight to it and asked, “Why does she want to wear a diaper?”

“Look, Joyce, I know... It’s not the most exciting thing for a parent trying to potty train to hear—”

“--*Amy?*” Joyce cut in, sounding awfully serious. “Did you say something?” As much of a friend as she was, absolutely no one or anything would stand between her and Emily. Emily didn’t ask to do things like that on her own. Not unless provoked, pressured, or...or something else? It felt far too uncharacteristic, and the fact that Joyce couldn’t be there to understand why was making her more upset by the second.

“Joyce, everything is *fine!*” Amy tried to calm her. “No, so I showed Emily something from my workshop; something you haven’t seen either, nor asked for, so it’s fair game! But it’s different from what I usually do, so I wasn’t sure how it’d fit. I was willing to wait, but Emily wanted to try it on now, but she wanted to ask for your permission. I promise, I didn’t try to force her into this, and if you say ‘no,’ then I pack it up and we’ll wait.”

“...So she asked? All by herself?” Emily did? Joyce’s Emily, the girl that throws tantrums over going to the dentist?

“Yep, she did.”

“...Could you please put Emily back on?”

The phone was exchanged again.

“Joyce?” It was Emily’s voice again.

“Emily...you know we have a rule about this.”

“I know...but, I figured it might be okay, since it’s just to try something on? It comes off! It’s like clothing!”

Like clothing? Joyce shared a confused look with herself. *A cloth diaper?*

“Emily...no, I don’t want you putting one on yourself. Even if it’s just for a fitting.”

“I...okay.” As much as Emily could try and debate, not only did she expect not to win, but also how much it would bother Joyce in trying to poke, prod, stretch and twist what she’d rather remain unspoken, untouched and understood.

And yet, as much as Joyce didn’t like the initial feeling, with great reluctance...

“...But yes,” she sighed, “you can wear one.”

“I-I can...?” Emily stammered. “B-but, you said...”

“Yes, *you* cannot put one on, Emily. That hasn’t changed,” Joyce frowned, dreading the next part. “But...if it’s an adult that I trust...then it’s different.”

“J...Joyce?”

“I’m going to need you to put Amy back on in a second, but I need to explain something else to you, Emily. Are you listening?”

The girl suddenly felt fidgety from all her nerves about to go haywire. “Yes...”

“Emily, when you wear a diaper, it’s not pretend, okay? I know you understand how much this means to me, and I know how much it means to you. That’s why I just don’t want to make any lighthearted habits out of this. It’d be different if I was there, but...this is something new for me, so I feel like I have to be strict about it.”

“No...I understand,” after all, Joyce somehow not being part of the equation that involved diapers did sound unthinkable.

“That’s why when you put Amy on, I’m going to tell her that the only way you can wear a diaper is if she puts you in one.”

Her words came down like a bombshell.

“W-what?”

“A trusted adult, Emily,” Joyce reminded her. “If you want to wear one, then Amy has to put it on you.”

“But...but she doesn’t...I...”

“I’m not trying to be difficult, Emily, but you’re the last person I want putting you in diapers. Leave that stuff to the grownups, okay?”

And with the might of her wisdom, Emily felt the electric tingle as a part of her brain somehow melted.

And if the blow hadn’t struck hard enough already, Joyce delivered a one-two-three right after.

“And Emily, when you wear a diaper, it means the same rules apply, understood? Your diaper stays *on*. That means all day until I come to pick you up.”

Obediently, she murmured into the phone, “Mhm... I...nevermind...I-I’ll just wait for you.”

“Emily, could you please put Amy on?”

“H-huh? B-but I can wait, Joyce. It’s fine, really.”

But unfortunately, a door had been opened that would not be allowed to shut.

Calmly, but firmly, Joyce insisted. “Emily? Baby? Put Amy on.”

There was another long pause, and finally Emily’s head creaked up and looked at Amy, slowly, but eventually handing the phone over to her. Though, the girl was just about ready to jump ship and run. She didn’t know what kind of result she was expecting, but Amy as part of it was very much not that.

“Joyce?” Round two for Amy.

“Amy? Does Emily look upset right now?”

“...Mm, yeah, I’d say so.”

And suddenly the discomfort for both girlfriends was mutual. But at least in Joyce's eyes it was deemed a necessary evil.

"Well, it's because of what I'm about to tell you. I said she can wear one," and the fact she was in second place with being so open to Amy about diapers frankly threw Joyce for an even bigger loop. "But, Amy, and this is absolutely nothing I'm asking you to do. What I did tell Emily though is that she can wear one, but she's still not allowed to do it herself." If they were calling Joyce, she figured Amy knew as much about that rule. "The only way I'll let her though is if you put her in one." Boom, a personal bombshell for Joyce.

"Sorry?" Amy spoke, but her mind was given a momentary lapse.

"Amy, Emily's not allowed to put on her diapers. I told her you're the only one there allowed to do it for her right now. I think she's upset because she's getting exactly what she'd get if she were with me," and the fact that Joyce wasn't there made her heart ache, but teaching moments like this were also moments to teach herself. Begrudgingly.

"But...me?" Amy repeated, at a loss, and a small glance over at Emily looking to be on the verge of tears made her even more taken aback.

"Amy, if you've gotten her already talking about this kind of stuff around you, you've clearly broken down some of her barriers," and that fact was certainly heartwarming for the busy mommy. "But this is something largely between me and Emily. It's our relationship, and I don't want to force you into that. That's why this is completely at your discretion. Whatever it is that you made, I appreciate it and I can't wait to see it, but I don't want to ask you to become any more personally involved than that..." Yet she sighed again. "But...what I'm saying now...if...you wanted to...you may fill that role for Emily right now..."

"I...wow..." Amy murmured. "Sorry, I...mm...I guess I wasn't expecting things to go this way," she chuckled.

"I didn't either, but since it did, I think it's good, honestly... Since it's you, Amy, I really would rather she's comfortable around you like that. I don't mean acting in any sort of way, but just...in the things that she wears. "

"No, no, I understand what you mean," Amy nodded. "But so we're clear...it's up to *me*?"

"Yes, and I'm about to explain that to Emily. But if she wears it, Amy, it has to stay on until I'm there. I...there's a lot to this, but right now, with something like this, I want to be firm about it, for whatever might come of it."



“No...uhm...I understand...” Amy said again, though much more passively, like her mind was elsewhere.

“And again, you *can* say no, but I want it to be your decision, not Emily’s. Since she brought it up, she decided that this was a possibility now.” And she knew how afraid it would make Emily, and how nervous she would feel, but it felt...necessary. Or possibly like a breakthrough? The next step? If it even came to that. Amy could always refuse, and that would be that. No harm no foul. Was this a misplay from Joyce? Knowing Emily at this point...it didn’t seem that way.

“...Okay. Sure, yeah. Should I put Emily back on?”

“Please.”

Amy quietly walked back over to the couch where Emily was now huddled, petting Ashes in her lap, looking to be digesting some very difficult feelings at the moment.

“Em?” Amy quietly spoke up, holding out the phone. “Last time, I think.”

And slowly, Emily took the phone but still stayed curled up against the couch.

“Joyce...?”

“Emily? Baby?”

There was a snuffle. “Mhm...”

“Now above everything, you know how much I love you, right?”

“Uh-huh...” Oh lord, her stomach was already turning. Emily hated sweet talks like this because she always knew it was just to make something bitter go down easier.

“And you know that I’d only do something if I knew it was safe and in your best interest?”

She felt like she was going to be sick. “Y-yeah...”

“I just let Amy know what we talked about, but there’s one other thing, okay?”

“...What?”

“Emily, please, don’t be upset with me,” Joyce was kind, but she knew the sound of a tone that wasn’t. Not that she held it against Emily. It was expected at this point, but sometimes bitter pills have to be swallowed. “Now, I trust Amy, and it sounds like you’ve started to trust her a whole lot more today, right?”

“...Mhm...”

“Well, that’s why I’m leaving the decision of diapering up to Amy. Whether you ask her to or not.”

“Wh-what?” Emily stammered. Up to Amy alone?! “B-but—!”

“But nothing,” Joyce said with finality. “Emily, if you’re not going to be honest with yourself, then I will. Amy’s in charge of that decision right now. If she decides to diaper you, then you listen, or that’s something we’ll deal with when I get out of work. Understood?”

“...”

Silence ensued, but what Joyce knew and Emily certainly knew was that as strict and solid as Joyce was being, there was a way to stop this. A single word that need only be spoken and the impossible would become possible again. Emily need only say it.

“Do I need to hear anything else?”

It was quiet on the other end for just a little longer.

“...I...I understand.”

“Good. And no matter what happens, I’ll be off of work in just a few more hours, okay?”

“Mhm...”

“And Emily?”

“Yes...?”

“Mommy loves you!”

It made her feel fuzzy and warm, but she knew the moment they hung up that those warm feelings wouldn't be there to protect her from her own reckless decisions that just landed her on a one-way street.

"I love you too..."

And while things had yet to stabilize, all was well again. Enough for Joyce to softly smile. "Okay, Mommy loves you too. Remember to listen to what Amy says. Bye."

And she hung up.

And Emily stared at the empty phone in her hands.

"She...hung up..." Emily said, suddenly feeling a vast chasm between the two now. Every sense of comfortability now was out the window and in the fire. With what knowledge that now plagued their minds, it scared Emily from even sharing the same room as Amy. But here they were, standing within a room's width of each other.

Amy was quiet for a long while, far more pensive than she'd ever been. She walked over to the desk, staring down at the box of gifts she had brought, suddenly seeing them in a whole new light. A peculiar one. She looked over at the couch, still with Emily and half her face hiding in the cushions while she self-soothed by petting Ashes.

Then she looked down at the box again.

"...Emily?" Amy softly called for her, right as she sat down upright beside her.

Emily responded in a low, shaky and nervous mumble, "Mm...mhm...?"

"Can you sit up for a sec? Look at me for a minute?"

The one silver lining was that Ashes didn't leave her lap while she adjusted; the last safe thing she had for comfort that didn't judge her for her deepest and darkest secrets. Just a point of unconditional love to get her through all her other worries.

And Emily looked, but her lower lip quivered as her mouth imploded, seeing what she did not want to see.

Resting in Amy's lap. If only she had her cat. Too bad it was in Emily's. Though her companion looked just as soft and just as comfy. A companion that offered a sense of security, and one that could support its owner in vastly different ways.

"I...wasn't expecting things to go like this..." Amy did her best to look at Emily, but even she was nervous. And yet, she couldn't help but answer the distant call to be the lead and the authority.

And Emily shuddered when she watched Amy's hands tumble the object in her lap, spreading it and smoothing out the creases, just like Emily stroked Ashes' back.

The same comforting hand from before was suddenly back on Emily's shoulder, making her jump at first, but immediately falling limp to the touch.

"I know what Joyce said, but...well..."

*Is...is she not going to?*

"...If it really is alright with you, I...I think I do want to try putting this on you."

And it was a quiet moment of total vulnerability, the more Amy bundled the fabric, but finally, she held up the cloth diaper like a love letter, and tilted her head with an innocent smile.

"Emily...do you think you could lay down for me?"