

27 - Pancakes for Breakfast

The nursery was mostly untouched like it'd been during its debut, but that somewhat had to change out of necessity because of trying to hide all the things that could normally be laid out in the apartment. Most things fit in the closet, but not everything. Regardless, none of it obstructed the spot they needed to work in.

“Hop up on the changing table for me?” Normally she could lift the girl herself, but frankly she wasn't setting out to make a point at the moment, nor was she trying to get covered in pee either. Perks to being an off-duty Mommy.

Emily looked at it and back to Joyce. “But isn't it gonna get covered in...you know?”

“One, the cushion is plastic,” she paused to yawn. “And two, don't you think it'd be a little silly to make a changing table that wasn't designed to get pee on it?”

It didn't take anything else to get her on the table.

Emily's face grimaced a little when it touched the cool plastic. The room wasn't cold, but the plastic sure was.

“Just lay back and I'll take care of the rest. I know,” she stroked Emily's arm while she stood between her legs, “it was rough, right?”

She was about to play defense and make it seem not as bad as it was, considering how old she was, but after taking stock in what Joyce had always told her and where she lay right now, she had little reason to put up a front.

“Yes...” tearily, Emily nodded.

“Do you wanna talk about it at all?” There was the rumble of thunder again, making Emily visibly tense, though Joyce rubbed her thigh. “Maybe tell me what you were going through? It might help you feel better.” And give Joyce some insight on what had happened. Ultimately, the best she could do was piece together what she'd seen. One, her girlfriend in tears while she stood in wet pajamas. Two, a puddle of pee and her stuffed mochi partly sitting in it, and three, a piled up blanket on the top of the couch. Joyce took pride in getting a read on Emily, but she had her limits...

“...I woke up in the middle of the night because I had to pee...” No surprises there, considering what had happened.

“Mhm?” Joyce nodded, leaning out of view for just a second, coming back with a bundle of wet wipes.

“A-ahnd--!” Emily’s voice went a little haywire when the cold wipe touched her skin.

Joyce looked apologetic, but she didn’t stop wiping. “Sorry...worst part’s over?”

“A-and I knew I had to go, but that also meant having to leave the room...”

“Why’s that?”

“Why?” What did she mean ‘why?’ “Because...because I wasn’t wearing a...you know.”

Joyce happened to glance at the stack of diapers bundled in a basket underneath the table.

“Well, I suppose,” Joyce laughed a tiny bit. “But I mean why didn’t you use the bathroom in our room?”

“Wh-what?”

“In our bedroom?” Joyce said it again. “We have one in there, you know?”

It was taking a lot not to crawl under a rock and die right then.

“I’m an idiot...” Emily defeatedly whimpered, looking straight up at the ceiling. Never once did she stop to consider what that other door aside from the closet and hallway entrance might be for. She was dealing with so much tunnel vision that the possibility of a second bathroom escaped her entirely.

“No, you’re not,” Joyce said quite firmly. “Now what happened next?”

“I was afraid to go into the hall because it was so dark, so I...” the next part was a little embarrassing to admit.

Joyce was happy to finish for her. “Did you take Pip with you in case?”

Emily was quiet, and even under the shroud of partial darkness Joyce could see the crimson shade on her cheeks. She nodded her head.

“So I started walking with him and then when I got near the living room I thought I saw someone sitting on the couch. I think it was that blanket you said... But when I saw it I really was scared. I really thought I was in danger; that everyone was in danger. I was gonna hurry back to the room and wake you up, but then, then the thunder happened. It was so loud and it caught me off guard. I didn’t know what it was at first, so I guess everything just caught up to me and...”

“It’s okay, Emily,” Joyce soothed. “Accidents happen.”

“Not to adults, they don’t...” she pouted. “I just wet myself over a movie!”

“Well, I definitely think your imagination got to you, but I don’t think that’s worth beating yourself up over... You know it yourself that you don’t do well with scary stuff. I wish you didn’t have to go through something like this, but I think it’s worth calling this a hard-taught lesson.” She lifted the girl’s legs, wiping underneath. Already she was starting to smell halfway decent again.

“I just wanted to do something nice for you and your dad...”

“And you did. But next time please put yourself first? At least for stuff like this?”

“...Okay...” It was no secret how heavily the girl was lamenting over her long list of blunders right then.

“Hey, youuu-houuu~” Joyce called for her attention, brushing a finger under her chin. “We’re a team, remember? I’m not going to judge you over something like this, Emily. I’m here for you at your best, your worst, and your most vulnerable. By the same token, I know you’re going to be there for me too.” All such wonderful words, but they really did seem to have the worst spots for these kinds of conversations. Now they were trying to stand like equals while one wiped the other’s bottom on a changing table.

“I know...” Thankfully Emily did smile some, even if it was only a little.

“Now, more importantly, why didn’t you wake me up when you needed to go to the bathroom from the start? I would’ve gone with you, you know?”

“I know you would have,” Emily said it a bit more gloomily. “I didn’t wake you up because I didn’t want to keep asking you for so much stuff. I know I can do that when you’re my...Mommy, but not when you’re my girlfriend.”

“Emily, you can *always* ask me for anything. I can’t imagine I ever would, but even if I thought you were asking too much of me, I’d say something. So please, I don’t ever want you to think that you can’t lean on me. After all, that’s how something like this can happen, right?” She referenced a used wet wipe as her point, then tossed it in the bin. “I think you should be clean enough for the night, though. How about we go get you some new pajamas then wipe the floor up real quick? After that I think it’ll be back to bed for us.”

Emily nodded again, truthfully glad to be clean again. Joyce leaned forward to help Emily slide forward, but unexpectedly, she stopped her.

“A-actually, there’s one more thing...” Emily said in a low voice.

“Uh-huh?”

“I...I know we said we wouldn’t, and that I didn’t want to either, not while your parents were here...but, with everything that’s happened, and because it’s at night...” she looked almost hesitant to ask. “Can...can I wear one tonight?”

“You mean a diaper?” Had she not been trying to suppress it, the surprise and shock welling inside of Joyce would’ve been clear as day.

Emily, looking quite bashful kept her words limited to another nod.

“...Are you looking for me to baby you tonight?” On any other night it’d have been an absolute yes without hesitation, but in light of recent events, Joyce was admittedly reluctant. Today had been about discovering she could push the envelope too far if she wasn’t careful. She wasn’t so crazy to throw herself back in a role Emily might be suffocated by...

“I...I just want to feel safe tonight.” It was the honest truth. There was something inexplicable about being in the security of both Joyce and the clothes she wore. In truth, a culmination of her experiences thus far as Joyce’s baby made for a better explanation than trying to think of any short-term explanation which could justify it. And call her a scaredy cat, but one of the advantages she could now see in a diaper was not having to leave the safe confines of a bed when there could be danger lying afoot.

“Emily, you’re always going to be safe with me. And...aren’t you worried I might go too far again?” Joyce looked pensive and uncertain. The simple fact of the matter was she being unable to trust herself. A repeat of the zoo was too terrifying to imagine.

“I really only had a problem with how things went in public... When we’re at home I don’t mind it so much.” Now Emily yawned, as the adrenaline had started to leave her. “We can talk about this stuff later, but can we please not tonight?”

“So you want to wear a diaper?” It was nice to hear it from Emily, and it did make her happy to know she was asking for it, but there was still that hint of unease Joyce couldn’t shake.

She couldn’t look Joyce in the eye. “Is...is that okay?”

A sigh came from her mouth, trying to psych herself out.

“Of course it is. I’ll spoil you tonight, but after that we really do need to talk about this, okay? I love doing these kinds of things, but I still want to know where we stand.”

“Okay...” Emily answered back. “I love you, Mommy...”

“I love you too,” and with a warm smile, Joyce leaned over near the table’s side again, pulling a puffy and thick pad from underneath.

“...I like the way they feel.” Emily started to speak for no reason, not that Joyce minded having to listen.

“Because of the padding?”

“Sort of... I guess it’s kind of like you said a while back. It reminds me I’m cared for.” And that was a security she was starving for right then. Joyce had proved to her that this monster didn’t exist, but that didn’t mean she felt totally safe. Anything could happen that would be equally if not more frightening. Knowing that she belonged to someone, it afforded her a security that wasn’t traditional to have as an adult. It meant there was something bigger than herself that guarded her from all that might do her harm. Joyce was her sun and Emily wanted nothing more than to bathe in its light.

“It’s because you are,” Joyce spoke as she slipped the diaper under Emily. “Don’t ever be afraid to be clingy with me, especially if you’re scared.” The powder came next, raining down that same wonderful scent they’d been slowly acquainting themselves with for every recurring diaper

change. “There’s that, and if things really do get scary again, you don’t have to worry about any more accidents,” She gave a toothy smile as she gently pat Emily’s padded crotch. “No more wet jammies, now.”

There was a relieving finality once Joyce stretched and pressed the tapes into place. The deal had been sealed and Emily could feel those knots in her muscles loosen themselves just a little more.

“Feel good?” Joyce traced a finger over Emily’s scalp, who was looking more relaxed by the second. The secondhand relief was beyond wonderful for Joyce, seeing as Emily had finally found her happy place again.

“Thank you...” Emily stirred a little on the table, leading to the plastic crinkling from both the table and her diaper. Maybe it had to do with sleep-intoxication, but the noise for once wasn’t totally unpleasant.

It was the second time she went to leave the changing table, but Joyce had stopped her and even buckled the strap over her. Of course she was confused, but Joyce spoke and acted first.

“I just want you to lay right there for a second, okay? I’ll only be a second.” Naturally that made Emily a little scared; being left alone.

“But why can’t I go? Can’t I come with you?”

Joyce brought herself around the table so she could easily get near Emily’s face. “You can really soon, but I just want to throw a towel on the floor before you come out, okay? I just finished cleaning you up, so Mommy wouldn’t be too happy if you got dirty again...” While Emily could have argued she was capable and would much rather be near Joyce, she tried her best to be brave, convincing herself she could last on her own for a single second if she could manage eighty-seven banana’s worth of time.

As Joyce walked past Emily’s vision she dragged her finger along the girl’s cheek.

With Emily behind her, Joyce could now fully turn her attention to the absolute strangeness she was looking at.

The hallway light was on.

It’d been off when they walked to the nursery, so it had no business being on right now. And if Joyce listened closely, there was something moving out there...

Quietly, she looked down on Emily again, somewhat swinging her legs. Cute to watch, but with all the fear-mongering she had caused herself, it made Joyce feel good to know that she stood between Emily and whatever was out in the hall.

Slowly, she leaned her head out, first seeing a shuffling shadow, then right after a figure slouched over and working close to the floor... It was a woman, but not a stranger. One Joyce knew awfully well.

It was another gradual move as Joyce took painstaking efforts to close the nursery door behind her without a sound. She'd do absolutely anything to keep this unnoticed and that was her exact intent.

"*Mom*," Joyce spoke in a hushed yet bothered voice.

Mary looked up from her spot, busy on her knees while she rubbed a towel around the floor. Right where Emily's accident had happened... Pip was even sitting on his own towel.

Before she could get a single word in Joyce made a simple and commanding gesture to follow her. The woman stood up to follow, but Joyce then reached down for Pip as well. Might as well kill two birds with one stone...

The walk down the hall and past the living room was one of great mental exercise. This night had been troublesome enough and now her mom had been added to the mix? What was she even doing up this late? Joyce was ready to split hairs. She was expecting there to be something in the hallway, and it may have been scary, but she wasn't expecting this kind of scary. Hell, she was wishing to have found a killer instead of her mother.

Mary did follow Joyce and the two were now in an illuminated kitchen.

"Do you have any idea what you're doing?" Joyce was doing her best not to sound aggravated, otherwise she'd speak loud enough for Emily to hear. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Well," she started mechanically, as if her logic were going to save her, "the thunder woke me up..." Even then she was trying to sound justified. Maybe she was to some degree, but it being Mary that got involved, Joyce couldn't help but classify it as her mother meddling in things that she had no business with!

"Yeah? And?"

“I heard someone in the hallway moving... I looked and saw something that needed to be cleaned...” Maybe now she was inadvertently realizing her own awkwardness, yet at the same time doubling down on her matronly duties. “I figured you two may have wanted a little extra help.”

It took great mental and emotional strength to not flip out. There was so many things wrong with this. The greatest offender being that her own mother had volunteered to clean up her girlfriend’s pee, maybe only second to anything even more embarrassing or incriminating she might know about.

But Joyce did not have the time nor energy for this. Taking care of Emily already had her working off of fumes. If she took too long Emily might start to get worried, God forbid if she stepped outside the nursery.

Joyce rubbed her eyes. “Listen, you *cannot*, and I mean *cannot*,” she could not stress it enough, “let Emily know in *any* way that you know about what happened tonight.”

“I would *never* tell her I knew!” Mary retorted. “Give me some credit, Joyce. And besides, it was just a small accident; I’d never make her feel bad about that...”

“You shouldn’t even know that she did that!” Joyce kept her screams to simply loud whispers. “She already had a tough enough time telling *me* what happened! That’s our business, so please keep out of it!”

“Well...” Really? Even now her mother could be this stubborn? “I just want to say that if you need help, let me know, okay?” She wanted to help, it was in her nature, but this was a private life she shouldn’t be let in on. But of course, the mother in her would always insist on it.

Joyce sighed, hopefully one last time for the night. “Please, go back to bed. Pretend this night never happened.”

“Alright, alright,” Mary finally relented. “Just make sure to scrub a few more times, okay? I wasn’t completely finished out there.”

“Go to bed.” Joyce said in a simple and tired voice. She’d had enough chaos for one night.

And while she was in the right area, Joyce opened a side door rarely ventured to, in the kitchen, depositing the stuffed mochi into a washing machine.

Joyce made sure to watch her mom go back to her room, then waited just a little longer to make sure the door stayed shut, too. The worst part about their encounter is that it probably wasn't over. Of course she'd be trying to ask Joyce more about it. The most she could hope for was that she only knew about the pee in the hall.

"Joyce?" Emily tried to do the impossible of leaning her head back further, but having to arch her back to do so was impossible when a strap had her buckled to the table. "Is that you?"

"No, it's Mommy to you," she responded with a kiss to the forehead. "Sorry about that," she unbuckled the strap and helped Emily off the table.

"Are you okay?" Emily asked. "You look bothered..."

She wouldn't have been surprised if the look showed on her face, but seeing Emily all cozy and content was plenty sobering enough. Thankfully her momentary annoyance was starting to fade.

"It's nothing, I'm just tired. We're gonna go back to bed in a few minutes. I just need to throw your pajamas in the washer."

Emily's hands were starting to look grabby.

"...Is it okay if I come with you?"

"Yes," she pecked Emily on the cheek then grabbed her hand. "Let's be quick, though. I'm ready to go back to sleep, and I definitely know you are too."

The rain had really started to pour, and that was evident by the torrent of water cascading from the living room windows. Thankfully the thunder wasn't so close now, as it turned into more of a distant grumble.

Joyce took the towel and pajamas that were laying on them to the wash with Emily in tow. She knew Emily was there the whole time because of not only the hand-holding, but the tell-tale crinkle as well. It was cute to hear, but a silent worry was praying her mom really did go back to bed.

Emily, meanwhile, although dealing with a spacer between her thighs and a slight waddle in her step, felt herself drifting closer to cloud nine. She was practically impenetrable at this point. With

Joyce by her side and being strapped into an absorbent diaper, all the threats that had once attacked her were powerless now. She couldn't help but lean into Joyce with a tired giggle.

“Okay, let's wash our hands real quick.” After all, Emily had been holding the hand Joyce used to take off wet pajamas and wipe a wet bottom. That, and while Joyce didn't know it, she'd been holding the hand Emily used to cup her crotch... Regardless, it'd all come out in the wash.

They made sure to turn off the lights as they left each room, finally shutting themselves off in the bedroom. Emily was given a new shirt, then the last and final step was to sleep.

“Feel good?” Joyce stroked her hair, they slipped under the covers.

“Yep.”

“Feel safe?” Then came another pat on the diaper's crotch.

“Uh-huh,” Emily giggled at that.

“Feel loved?” And then, Joyce had pulled Emily close with her arms wrapped around her.

“Yes...” It was just like earlier while they slept, only Joyce had Emily's head fully nuzzled between her head and chest, keeping her body nice and close.

Joyce lulled in a quiet whisper. “Goodnight, Emmy...”

“Goodnight...” Emily blinked more and more as her eyelids became heavy. She didn't have any energy left to consider what scary things might be lurking outside the room. Not that they mattered, because right then she was encased in a fortress of love and affection.

It was a moan, groan and stretch that got the morning started for Joyce. That, and confusing herself as her breasts seemed to be pushing against something. Looking down, she held back a groggy laugh seeing a black head of hair. Apparently she'd pushed too hard, because now Emily was starting to stir.

Joyce whispered with a tinge of amusement, “Did I wake you up?”

“No...” Emily managed over a yawn, then squeezed something awfully sensitive with her hand.

“H-hey-AH!” Joyce half-shouted with a gasp as it blended into laughter. “I let you use them as a cushion, so don’t squeeze them!”

“Was just resting my eyes,” Emily slurrily spoke, still laying there mostly motionless.

“Should I let you sleep a little longer? I know you were awake a little longer than I was last night.”

Joyce could feel Emily’s arms lock around her torso.

“Sleep with me some more.”

“Just a few more minutes,” Joyce sufficed, soaking in the moment. “I gotta make everyone breakfast at some point.” Usually Frank and Mary were earlybirds, but Joyce wanted to wager jetlag might throw them off schedule. Especially her mother, considering what she was up to last night...

While she snuggled there with Emily, she turned her head back the other way to the windows, seeing the sky was still a dreary gray with a drizzle of water falling from above.

Emily was as happy as a clam, relishing in those few moments of uninterrupted peace. She shuffled her legs a little, hearing the slight crinkle from what she wore beneath. Funnily enough, she didn’t seem to mind it so much right now.

“Hm?” The sound came off as curious to Joyce, who did interrupt that uninteruptible moment through the squeeze of Emily’s padded crotch. While it was Emily’s sensitive spot that was being squeezed, she didn’t react as outwardly as Joyce did. She was still smiling, though her face was a redder shade of skin.

“When did you wet last night?” The front had felt fuller and the dampened noise itself sparked her intuition.

“I woke up again last night and I had to go...” And why waste a perfectly un-used diaper? Had she not fulfilled its exact purpose? “It wasn’t easy to pee laying on my side like this, you know...I was afraid I’d leak...” With the way it’d flowed around her body, she really was afraid of that, hence why she had to pace her wetting last night, letting it out bit by bit, giving the diaper a chance to keep up with her stream.

“Well, I’m glad you didn’t,” Joyce said while smelling Emily’s conditioned hair. “A baby that leaks two times in a single night is too much work for me...”

Emily’s voice stuttered over caution and gullibility. “R-really?”

“Of course not,” Joyce answered with a kiss. “Though, by that point if you hadn’t been afraid like last night, you *definitely* would have been sleeping in your crib. At least there the mattress is protected.”

“You put a cover on the mattress?”

“Of course I did. I like to think I can diaper you pretty well, but there’s no telling what that sneaky bladder of yours might be up to...” There were a lot of positive things to be said about Emily’s diaper habits; endless words of praise that Joyce, her dotting Mommy could have used, but this didn’t feel entirely like the time for it... After all, last night and this morning were meant to be more of a pick-me-up than another session for the two.

Session. The corners of Joyce’s mouth sunk a little. In spite of trying to limit herself, she still didn’t like to consider this only momentary...

Emily snickered, then felt herself drifting onto a more somber note. “So once we get out of bed, is it back to normal?”

“I hope you meant to say ‘abnormal’,” Joyce corrected. “Isn’t it fair to say us switching on and off has been more of the norm lately?”

“True...” Emily mused.

“Just a little longer. But you’ve been enjoying yourself with them here, right? Has it been fun meeting them?”

“Yeah, it has. I like your parents. I’m glad they like me.”

“That makes me happy too.”

“What are we gonna do with the diaper though? What if they’re awake?” Opening the nursery at night was already an unexpected occurrence. Opening it during the day really was playing with fire.

“That’ll be fine. We can just use the trash bin in this bathroom,” in reference to the one connected to their room.

The sound of it made Emily furrow her brows, complaining, “I still can’t believe I forgot about the bathroom in here... None of this would have happened if I knew...”

“If you had the chance to do it over would you have preferred that?”

It was almost an outright ‘yes’, though as Emily laid there, laying all cozy next to Joyce and in a diaper, she was sort of on the fence.

“I’m not sure,” she concluded. After all, both outcomes had their own unique set of benefits, only the route Emily sent herself down held many more daunting obstacles...

Joyce, however, seeing more angles than just Emily’s, may have been silently in favor of Emily finding the toilet in the room... Not that she minded getting up for Emily and sorting her out, but what she did mind was a third member being part of last night’s ‘festivities’. Hopefully her mom really did forget about last night.

“Well, all we can do now is play where it lies,” Joyce said out loud, meaning both to herself and Emily, only on different levels of truthfulness. “But anyways, your few minutes are up, missy. Time to go play grown-up.”

“Bleah,” came Emily’s very not grown-up response.

Joyce merely smirked as she wrenched herself from Emily’s arms and got out of bed. It was always a little game in itself to see how much Emily could relinquish her adult-self each and every time they got into their roles like this. She couldn’t help but think back to that sock analogy she imagined nearly forever ago, seeing it stretch further and further with each go...

“Alrighty, let’s inspect the damages...” Joyce cooed as she dragged Emily by the feet to the edge of the bed.

“...I only wet it a little...” Emily didn’t like the sound of ‘damages’, because then she really did sound like she could do a number to her diaper...

There was that refreshing sound, the tearing of adhesives and even Joyce felt herself getting sentimental. The change wasn’t even over and she was already missing this. Then came the mixed smell of powder and pee; sort of like water and oil in the way that one was constantly

trying to trump the other. There was no harmony in the scents, though they all led back to the same feelings. Feelings for a mother like Joyce.

“Little, huh?” Joyce spoke with personal amusement as she looked inside the diaper with a smile. Then there came a small detail she forgot to consider. Looking over at the bathroom then back to mid-diaper change Emily, she looked guilty, saying “I think I was so tired last night I didn’t think to bring any baby wipes back from your nursery...”

“Then, what does that mean?” Emily hadn’t considered the thought either, though, Joyce - Mommy, rather, would have suggested she needn’t bother thinking about cleanup to begin with. After all, her smile glowed a little, thinking back to how it fell right outside her responsibilities. Moments like this were starting to give her such a warm and fuzzy feeling.

Still, thinking on a much more adult note, she didn’t want to smell like pee... That mean old thought was plenty sobering enough to snap her out of her trance.

“Nothing to you,” Joyce ‘booped’ her on the nose with a finger. “Mommy, just likes to ramble, that’s all. That, and you might prefer how wipes feel over a washcloth...” She left Emily some time to stew over the aimless chatter while she left for the bathroom.

Emily watched the bathroom from her position, watching part of Joyce’s figure reflected in the mirror she could see through the door frame. Then, briefly taking stock in her own situation, Emily suddenly considered her position right then. Waiting for Mommy to finish getting what she needed to finish a change, specifically laying still with an un-taped and used diaper sitting between her legs.

“Welcome back,” Emily greeted with a giggle, laughing for no real reason other than being silly. She bounced her hands off the bed like foam drumsticks against a floor of rubber. Being a world of luxury, the mattress wasn’t as ordinary as spring-made.

“You have gone through so many towels in the past 24 hours, it’s unbelievable!” And to boot, in one hand was her washcloth and the other - wait for it, another towel.

Joyce maneuvered the towel underneath Emily, between her diaper and the bed, making sure she had some insurance in case if the washcloth got too drippy.

Used to the idea of wipes, Emily was bracing herself for the worst; an ice-cold encounter with the wipe-meister, but not this time. Instead, she was visited by his much more mellow cousin

known as the warm washcloth, being equally as effective but so much more wonderful to the touch!

“I like it more when you use this instead of wipes,” Emily declared her opinion as if it were a God-given fact. “I think we should vote to use these instead of wipes from now on,” without letting a second go by, up went Emily’s hand, stretching for the ceiling. “All in favor for washcloths say ‘I’. ‘I!’” she answered herself. “Okay! Motion ca--”

“--Not carried,” Joyce butt her voice in and deftly pressed Emily’s voting hand down, all the while still wiping her down. The crude abruptness of it had her charge giggling all over. Never underestimate comedic and tactful timing. “Mommy’s vote is worth at least three times yours, and my vote is that wipes are much better for your bottom.” And cleanup. Have a heart, Emmy?

“But wipes are so cold!” Emily whined, practically shivering from the phantom pain right then.

“They might be a little chilly, but it’s better than diaper rash,” Joyce explained, pulling the diaper out from beneath her. “Besides, I know my brave little girl can handle a few measly wet wipes, right?” As if to sweeten the pot, Joyce paused to kiss her on the forehead.

Brave. The exact thing Emily hadn’t been feeling all night last night, yet when she heard it from Joyce, even under lighthearted circumstances, she still wanted to believe that even something as small as handling the finer parts of a diaper change spoke positively about her character... After all, if Joyce said it, why would Emily have to disagree?

“Maybe I can...” Emily spoke with a loose resolve as she turned her head to the side. A pat to her thigh brought back her attention though, signaling the change was over.

“See? I knew you were brave!” Her voice rang with such praise and enthusiasm, how couldn’t Emily feel such pride? “And now you’re gonna prove that you’re just as brave when you’re a big girl. Ready to get the day started?” She held out her hands, ready to whisk Emily back off to adulthood. She loved the chauffeur, but quite honestly felt herself dreading the destination...

“I don’t want to. I wanna keep cuddling.” She crossed her arms with that one.

“Come on, sweetie, just a little longer? Do it for me?” Ugh, Joyce knew her too well. Whether it was for Mommy or Joyce, there was always such a wonderfully emotional incentive involved if she moved along with things. Sometimes it could be quite stressful, thinking on it, but by the end, Emily could always say she was happy.

With a huff and a puff she dropped her hands into Joyce's, being pulled upright and onto her feet. Looking down at herself, it almost struck as an afterthought that the only thing she was wearing was a shirt.

Joyce was balling the used diaper up. "I'll take care of this then head out to the kitchen. Wanna dress up pretty for me before you come out?"

Emily swung her arms as she turned on her waist. It really was becoming easier to let herself go... "I want you to pick for me," and to solidify her point, off came her shirt.

Had it been any other day under any other circumstances, Joyce would have been jumping for joy, hearing Emily wanted to be led along and have her decisions be made for her, like an absolute princess. But it wasn't that other day and it wasn't those other circumstances. Was she being punished? For yesterday? Now Emily was the one *asking* to be babied, and Joyce wanted more than anything to enable her, but...

Joyce took her and her bottled up emotions over to Emily, rubbing noses. "I want you to choose today, okay?" What she did do though is slip a hand behind Emily's back, unhooking her bra. "I'll get you started, but I need you to do this yourself today, alright?"

Emily looked nothing short of puzzled when Joyce stopped there, which was quite a surprise. She knew they had to slow their roll for today, but...did Joyce really just say 'no' to babying her? It wasn't so much offense that Emily took, rather the shock. Of course, a somewhat bitter aftertaste was actually having to be a grown-up. Weird, thinking that somehow bothered her...

"Oh, uhm, alright..." Emily gave a weak laugh as she rubbed her head. It felt like she'd just come at Joyce on a totally different wavelength, hence why she was feeling strangely awkward right now.

The shift in her tone was obvious to Joyce, and it made her feel terrible. Just like that, she'd crushed the blooming feelings of infancy within Emily. All there was were now two adults standing strangely in a room.

Only a little longer. Just one more day... Joyce tried to tell herself that, but doing what she'd just done...it felt like betrayal. Encouraging Emily to let out those feelings and suddenly force them back in? She was going to be sick if she thought about it anymore.

"It's *only* for today," Joyce spoke with heavy resolve, holding Emily's hands. "There's nothing I want more right now than to spoil you like this, but I don't want to baby you by accident in front

of my parents.” Emily seemed to have an idea of switching her mental gears, but that was something Joyce wasn’t so great at. “I’m not so flexible like you are, so I can’t be getting any ideas. Do you understand what I mean?”

“I...” Emily started, but nodded her head. “Should I not have worn a diaper last night? For your sake?”

For their sake, Joyce would argue, considering her mother, but Joyce wasn’t going to answer in a way that made little sense to Emily. “No, I’m glad that you did,” she said with an honest smile. “I want you to find comfort in things like that. You’ve done absolutely nothing wrong. I won’t ever ask you to hide those feelings, but until my parents are gone and we’ve clarified some things between us, can we just be girlfriends?”

“Of course, that’s fine,” Emily answered with a hug, albeit naked while doing so. “But, in other words,” Emily cocked a cheeky grin, lowering herself to look up into Joyce, “are you saying I’m just too good at being your babygirl? Huh?”

Joyce took a small breath, watching the devious little thing play to all her strong-suits.

“Yes, that’s exactly what I’m saying,” and it was the absolute truth. Even now she was doing ‘it’, making herself seem so small and vulnerable; a ball of energy that needed someone to handle it. “Now, please get dressed before I put you in another diaper!” She spun the girl around then with both hands pushed her by the bottom towards the bed.

Joyce tossed the old one away and left Emily to her devices. Now she had to go to the kitchen and get started on breakfast. It wasn’t the crack of dawn, though it was still somewhat early. She was trying to think of what to make, suddenly thinking bacon thanks to the sizzling noise from the kitchen as well as the wafting scent of...bacon?

“Joyce! So glad you could join us for breakfast!” Frank welcomed her into the kitchen as she slowly walked herself in. Mary was there as well, enjoying a cup of coffee as she fiddled with the remote to the kitchen monitor.

“D-dad? Mom? What are you two doing up?” Apparently the jetlag didn’t bother them?

“Well, if I didn’t make breakfast, then who would?” Frank chatted while he worked with the pan - two, actually, one being the bacon she smelled thirty feet ago, and the other a freshly cooked pancake. “Now come on, don’t be a stranger, sit!” Frank beckoned to her like she was a guest in her own home.

Calmly, Joyce took the remote from her mom and pressed the power button she'd been looking for, bringing the screen to life.

"I was going to make us all breakfast, you know," Joyce stood back up, figuring the least she could do was at least assist her dad. "I figured you guys might sleep in at least a little..."

"And miss the early bird lifestyle? Wouldn't dream of it!" Frank laughed in his deep voice, swapping a pancake from the pan and onto the growing stack he had set on a plate. "Think you could pour some of that batter to get the next one started?" He motioned to the bowl he already had filled with batter.

"Mhm. Did you plan on using fruit as well? We have bananas." Thanks to a little certain monkey...

"If you get the chance that'd work for a topper, yeah," Frank then added to the stack of bacon. "You're going to need more chocolate chips after this, by the way."

"Thanks for the heads up," otherwise she'd have to deal with a disappointed little girl when pancakes came around again... Snapping out of it, Joyce went back to work.

The pair fell into a rhythm and Joyce worked diligently as the sous-chef, feeling the years of practice under her father come back to her.

"Oh, Joyce?" her mom called from the table.

"Yeah?"

"I noticed you had a couple things in the wash so I moved them over to the dryer for you."

She nearly dropped the plate of pancakes. "...Thanks." Her tone came as quite reserved. Mary didn't give so much of a reaction either, seeming defensive, almost. Frank had his back turned the whole time, working away. Though, that didn't stop him from asking when a distressed-looking Joyce came back.

"What happened this time?"

“It’s nothing.” Her dad was a great guy; easygoing and understanding, but privacy mandated she didn’t rope anyone else into this. She was hoping this would all blow over by morning, yet her mom seemed to never stop being so invasive...

“Mornin’” Emily stretched her way into the kitchen, a lovely contrast to the woman Joyce was bothered by.

“Mornin’, Emms,” Frank said back in just as casual of a voice. “Sleep well?”

“Uhm, yeah...not so bad.” If only he knew. “But I’m surprised you guys are up. Are you not tired at all?”

“Whelp, Mary and I sort of wake up at around the same time,” he brought the plate of bacon over to the table, sitting down. “Jetlag doesn’t get to us so much anymore.”

“Well, that’s good,” Emily already had a plate of food; pancakes topped with sliced banana and bacon. It looked divine. She couldn’t speak too much on the whole “jetlag” thing, as she didn’t fly very often. Though, thinking on the trip from California to here, maybe it did leave her feeling a bit winded...

Back to the divine pancakes, the taste did quite live up to their name. “Mmm! These are really good!” Emily’s face lit up twice over, totally and utterly enthralled by the chef’s handiwork.

“Of course they are!” Frank laughed with a hearty boom, “I made them!” Then he leaned over to Joyce in a loud whisper, “Now’s your chance, hon! Propose while she’s chewing!”

Joyce, who was in the middle of chewing coughed, almost choking on her food. Her cheeks started to turn a little red.

Emily at the same time looked a bit flustered, only she was choking down a laugh rather than embarrassment.

“D-dad!” Joyce finally managed after swallowing her food.

“What? Too soon?”

“It’s a mystery how Hannah survived around you...” Mary passively chided as she ate a strip of bacon.

Emily stumbled past a few giggles before saying, “Definitely too soon,” she paused to wipe her mouth. “We’re gonna need pancakes at least twice a week before I can consider anything like marriage.” The magic M-word had Joyce looking uncomfortable again, though Frank found it just as funny as his own remark.

“Well, it ain’t gonna be easy, but I suppose making my daughter happy is worth it. Joyce, I’m gonna need a lot more eggs,” he looked at his blushing daughter with a cheshire grin.

As the saying goes, Joyce couldn’t take the heat. “Alright, I think I ate enough,” she declared, standing up with her plate.

“I’m sorry, honey,” Frank apologized, still with a few lingers of laughter, “I was just having a little fun.”

“It’s fine,” Joyce smiled back. “I just remembered a few extra things I needed to do for laundry anyways. You guys enjoy the rest of yours though.”

“Oh, I can help with that,” Mary volunteered, standing up herself.

“It’s fine, you don’t have to,” she insisted, hoping her mom would sit back down.

“Nonsense. Laundry goes faster in pairs, anyways.”

“Well...” could she really say ? “Alright, if you insist...”

On her way out of the kitchen, Joyce did give Emily’s shoulder a fleeting squeeze.

“Don’t worry, she’s safe with me!” Frank called as they left.

“~If you teach her one more idiom, it’s your head!” Seriously, one dad was enough. Thank goodness her mom didn’t rub off on people like that.

As if to call her bluff, Frank pulled at his head, trying to detach it from his neck. He looked at Emily with a smug look. “Still attached for me!”

They got to enjoy the sound of Emily’s laughs as they walked away.

Walking down the hall, Mary casually asked, “Have you scrubbed something on the floor yet? It’ll make sure the floor doesn’t smell.”

Wide-eyed, Joyce momentarily stopped to look at her mom. Did she just...?

“What?” Mary looked a little surprised as well, “You didn’t know it would?”

Joyce kept walking. *This* was why she didn’t want her mom helping. She knew. She knew this would happen the second they were alone together. Even when she said she’d do something, five seconds later when your back was turned she’d be back to doing the same exact thing you told her not to!

They walked into the bedroom, though Joyce waited near the door so she could close it once her mom walked in.

“Joyce? Is everything alright?”

“No, it isn’t.” This needed to stop. Now. “Mom, I love you, but you really need to mind your own business.” She was hoping her point had been made last night, but apparently not.

“About what? I was just suggesting that you clean the floor...”

“You know about what!” Did she really have to act so ignorant? She knew exactly what she was poking at! “Are you going to tell me you suggested that I clean my floor for no reason whatsoever? Just because it came to mind?” She was just about ready to tap her foot, already setting her hands on her hips.

“Well...we both have an idea why...”

“This is what I mean, Mom!” Joyce frustratingly cried. “It’s one thing if you’re going to be a mom to me when I was a kid, but I can’t have you trying to mother Emily too, not when she’s her own person!”

“Joyce, I’m a mother. I can’t help it if I act like one, even to your girlfriend.”

“Yes, you can,” Joyce retorted plainly, hoping the disbelief in her mother’s defense might come of her face.

“Joyce, I’m not going to judge Emily for wetting the be--”

“She doesn’t wet the bed!” It was all secondhand annoyance and embarrassment. She was slowly watching her mom fall into her own delusions about Emily and she was powerless to stop it.

“Well, nighttime accidents, then,” Mary corrected herself.

“She...she doesn’t do that either,” Joyce fired back. It was still the morning and she was already feeling so drained. “She doesn’t do any of that.”

“But what about at the zoo? When she had to run to the bathroom? You two were gone an awful while... Did something happen?”

The look on Joyce’s face was incredulous. She could remember the conversation with her mom, implying something else might have happened.

It was a trap.

Did she lie about Emily needing the bathroom and possibly having an accident, only making her mom think worse of Emily’s bladder habits, or admit what actually happened and talk about their relationship strain?

“You don’t have any right to ask about that,” Joyce chose for neither, dodging it completely.

“I’m just a concerned mother, that’s all Joyce. I like to be aware of what happens around me.”

A control freak sounded like a better description, but she wasn’t having this conversation to sour their relationship. “I *really* don’t want to be talking about this with you. I would *really* prefer you didn’t talk about it either. I don’t want you to mention it, think about it, or do anything even related to it!”

“I just want to make sure it’s being handled properly, okay? Even if you’re an adult, I still worry about you kids, and by extension your partners, too.”

And that was her card; the ‘I’m concerned for you’ one. She probably meant it, but it was such a bitter pill to swallow when that familial awkwardness encroached on newcomers into the family. They shouldn’t have to deal with such an oppressive woman.

“You can worry about me, but not Emily. That’s between her and me. Can’t you understand that she doesn’t want anyone to know about it? I don’t want anyone to know about it!”

“Joyce, I’m not going to tell anyone about it. Remember when you used to wet the bed? I never told anyone about that--”

“And stop including yourself!” Now Joyce was looking aggravated. Her mom could be annoying, but she’d never argued with her mother over something like this. The difference now was that it wasn’t Joyce being attacked, but her partner. She’d be damned if anyone tried to bring harm to her.

“Does she wear protection?”

“D-does she wear...?” Joyce in pure disbelief stared at her mother. Was she not listening, or did she just decide to reach her conclusions on her own? “N-no! She doesn’t because she doesn’t need any! There’s nothing to protect herself from!”

“So this doesn’t happen often?”

“Yes!” Finally, progress! Wait, ‘often’? “Wait - no! Not often because not at all!”

“Do you know why it happened last night then? Does she get stressed often?”

“No, it’s becau-” Joyce stopped herself, so excited to end the conversation that she nearly played right into her mom’s hands. “No. No, we’re not having this conversation. We’re done talking. You’re done talking.”

Mary was quiet and Joyce was a little too relieved to embrace the silence. “...All I want to do is help, sweetie.”

And this was the furthest thing from help. She always struggled to fathom *why* her mom wanted to know things, to be in control. In the times people did need her, she went above and beyond; she thrived. But in the times that you didn’t, she could become the most overbearing thing in the world. At the end of the day, she was Joyce’s mom, so there was always going to be a soft spot for her, but Joyce needed her butt out... Even when she didn’t want to tell her mom things, inadvertently she always did, and when it wasn’t her secret to tell that made it so much worse.

It was a joint secret. A secret Emily committed and a secret Emily confided in Joyce with respect to. She never got to walk away from her mom unscathed, all because she wanted to know things. Why did she have to be so difficult?

“Mom, please, you’ve done enough. You can help me with this stuff, but after that can we please forget about it? You’re my mom, I get that, but I’m allowed to have personal matters, and so is Emily.”

“Joyce, honey... I don’t mean to invade your privacy. I just want to help...”

“Please, can we just go back to cleaning up? I’ll let you do that, but I don’t want to talk about this anymore. I...” should she even be saying this? Maybe that was the trick though, give a little and get a little. “Last night, Emily woke me up, in tears and...” please, please let this gamble be worth it, “wet pajamas. She was scared to even tell me about what happened, but she did because she knows she can trust me. I know you can be trusted, mom, but it’s not my choice to tell you Emily’s secret.”

Mary stood from the bed and walked over to Joyce, hugging her. “Thank you for telling me. I promise I won’t talk to Emily about it. As long as I know that you and Emily are okay, that’s more than enough for me. So in exchange, can you let me show you a few tricks?”

There was a strange feeling welling up inside of Joyce. One she’d never felt with her mother. It was a good feeling, as if she’d just climbed a mountain with her bare hands and endured every struggle and strife that’d come tumbling her way. Was this...victory? Had she finally won over her mom? She was practically jumping for joy, and saw it not only as a win for herself, but Emily too. Now they could put this past themselves.

“What tricks?”

“A few ways to clean up after...erm, accidents.” Again, back to touchy subject-matter, but Joyce reminded herself of best intentions. “Now I’m not asking this to be nosey, but did any get on the carpet? In here?”

“...A little, I think...”

“That’s okay. I can show you the best way to clean the carpet so nothing stains or smells. I remember when your brother John was younger - oh, poor thing... It was a little rough getting him past the potty training stage...”

“Mom? Back on topic, please?”

“Sorry about that. I tend to reminisce a little... Anyways, you have a bathroom in here, right? Do you have any soap in there? We can start with that.”

“Uh, are you positive it’s going to be okay?” Joyce sounded a bit weird. “I don’t want to sound, well, silly, but is it going to leave a mark on the carpet?” She hated to speak like that. It made her sound stupidly rich, mainly because the carpets were too. This material wasn’t exactly cheap... It wasn’t Emily’s fault she dripped on it, but now all Joyce could hope for was proper cleanup. And of course, keeping it all discreet was top priority.

“Our carpets at home were spotless, so yours should be fine too. What, think you’re too rich for home remedies?” She laughed off Joyce’s silence before she could answer back. “Let me go check your bathroom.”

Mary disappeared in the bathroom, and while Joyce walked over to the side of the bed, tracing her eyes across the floor, the door to the hall opened.

“Oh, Emily, did you finish eating already?”

“Yeah, I just finished. I kinda got some syrup on my shirt though...” she said in a mulling voice, looking down at the tiny splotch. “I figured I should change my shirt. Where’s your mom?”

“Oh, she’s right...” her voice faded to silence as she looked at the bathroom and Emily stared silently in the same direction too.

Mary was standing right there, only she was carrying something with her.

In her hand, firmly gripped around the stretchy waistline of it, leading into the soggy, padded and childishly patterned crotch and waist hung a wet and used diaper, sized perfectly for one of the three women in the room.

A wave of heat washed over Emily, and Joyce’s heart just about nearly stopped.

Game over.