

36 - Misbehaving

When Emily did come to, the first thing that hit her first was the mental assault on her concentration. Wonderful, a hangover. Well-deserved though, unfortunately. Seeing Joyce right beside her though did bring a smile to her face. Emily shuffled just a tad closer, but paused as she felt a slight tug on her shorts.

Without looking, she even thought something was...touching her butt? Leaning her head over her shoulder, it was a first to see the tendril that was Joyce's arm having slipped itself not only underneath her pajamas, but her underwear too like it was a cookie jar.

Propped up on an elbow she swept aside a few strands of her hair, still trying to decide how she felt about it: weird, or pleasant. Then her eyes drifted back to the culprit, leaving her bountiful chest as defenseless as apparently Emily had left her bottom.

“Eye for an eye...” Emily grinned with a murmur as she reached forward.

Yet she yelped as her muscles stiffened like a board, locking up her joints and giving her a brief startle. The trap she'd neglected to disarm had activated its claws, giving Emily's bum a playful squeeze.

“Mmm!” Joyce hummed pleasantly as she shuffled herself. “Just what I needed to wake up!”

“Do I really need to start sleeping on my back now because of you?” Emily giggled as she slipped Joyce's arm out of her shorts with ease.

Joyce puffed out her cheek before she said, “Well, it'd be a lot harder for me if you were in a diaper...!”

“Is that how this works?” Emily raised her eyebrow. “Making the idea of being an adult so unappealing I'll never want another pair of panties?”

Joyce's eyes shot wide open, sparkling with stars. “Really? Is it working?” She held a bated breath, but her own act didn't last long enough for Emily to either spring yet another trap or call her bluff. “Sorry; did it make you uncomfortable? I just wanted a little more cuddle action last night...”

“As long as it doesn't keep me from sleeping...” Emily issued her final ruling, rubbing her backside. “Does that mean it goes both ways though?” And before Joyce could answer, Emily mischievously squeezed her breast.

“Wh-oAH!” Joyce yelled herself, jumping out of reflex. “St-stop! At least give me a little warning!” She laughed. “These are *pillows* for you, *not* stress balls!”

“Yeah? Did I leave a ‘welcome’ sign on my ass?”

“What’s gotten into you, snarky-pants?”

She had been joking, and so was Joyce, but she caved into it like it was something genuine.

“I have a headache...” Emily moped.

Joyce stroked the side of her head offering a sympathetic look. “That’s what happens when you go past your limit...” She said soothingly, but her stroke slowed down as she remembered last night. The playing field was level again, save for a hangover, but fair enough. “Where were you last night?” Her shift in tone was subtle, yet there wasn’t any play in her voice.

Emily looked back at her from her sideways posture. “At the party with you?”

It pegged Joyce as a joke or something less than honest. Even from Emily, dodging or twisting a serious question upset her a little. “Emily, I’m not joking. I was worried, you know?”

“I’m not joking either...” Emily’s lackadaisical attitude was being dragged down by the atmosphere into her own kind of upset-ness. “Even after we got separated, I was at the party almost the entire time. I waited for you?”

How could she have been there? There wasn’t a chance in hell Emily would be found in the crowd, or so Joyce thought, which is why she scoured the empty spaces all around while entertaining conversation with others. “It felt like I searched the entire dance hall! You’re being honest? Then where were you?”

“I was sitting at a table with some people,” Emily paused to think for a second, “Two people named Rebecca and Hank.”

Joyce pursed her lips, nearly ready to poke holes or call a bluff, but then she did remember at least one of those names being mentioned last night. Drunken Emily had said something about a Rebecca...being a...bitch? But what’s more, Emily had done something on her own Joyce hadn’t expected; socializing.

“You were sitting at a table with a group of people?” Joyce clarified. It still seemed a little out of character, but it’d make sense for why she seemed to have vanished. Dinner tables there were a dime a dozen as well as an unlikely place to find Emily, supposedly. In the pursuit of trying to make her search efficient and quick, she’d ironically eliminated her chances of finding the girl altogether.

“Are you okay?” Emily asked, witness to the crease forming between Joyce’s brows. Her pupils rose back to the girl in front of her.

“I’m fine...” She softly exhaled, “I just...I feel like I let something very obvious slip and it led to only more stress that’s my fault. I’m sorry. I owe you an apology; I came at you last night and just now like it was something you did and not me...”

“No, no it’s fine, really...” Emily put a hand on her shoulder. “It’s sort of fair to think I’d be on the edge near the wall...which was true for a tiny bit. I’m...sorry for not being where I probably should’ve been.”

“Stop that.” Joyce pecked her on the cheek, “Don’t look for silly reasons to apologize when it wasn’t your fault. I take the full blame on this one. But again, I’m surprised you were sitting with other people...how did that go?” A cheery glimmer started to come back to her eyes, now a little excited to hear about her girl’s little (and safe, now that she knew) adventure.

“It...was interesting,” Emily briefly summarized, finding that kind of rating by weighing Hank’s pleasant presence against the exact opposite which was Rebecca. With...maybe a dash of points back in the positive favor, seeing that Rebecca mellowed out towards the end...

“Hank was the guy who offered me to sit with them. He was nice, and I think he does financial management stuff. Rebecca turned out to be his high school friend, I guess; she owns theaters. The *play* kind, not movies...” Emily emphasized the last bit, feeling residually annoyed by how Rebecca had just “assumed” Emily would know which of the two.

“Mhm?” Joyce nodded thoughtfully, showing great interest. But of course, curiosity was getting to her. “Last night though, in the lobby you did mention Rebecca I think... Something about...not being so great of a person?”

“Oh...” Emily tried to remember, “A bitch, right?”

A small puff of air left Joyce’s mouth as she laughed heartily. “I see you don’t feel any different about it when you’re sober?”

“Well, I sorta figured it out before I got drunk...Hank would probably agree too. He was sort of like her royal handler or whatever. Those people that have to put up with the kings and queens and help them out?”

“A...retainer?” Joyce guessed, trying to find the right word.

“Yeah, that! He was like a retainer for her. Long story short, she was sort of mean to me at first, but I guess she didn’t completely mean it. After Hank called her out it seemed like she got really embarrassed,” she giggled, remembering the next part. “Then she apologized by going to get me a parfait!”

“Awhh...” Joyce couldn’t help herself. Without the visuals and willfully tweaking the context in her mind, it was the same as Emily playing nice with a new friend who was still learning how to deal with “big” emotions. Cute for a kid, but as an adult...well, maybe it could be bitchy.

“Did you get along after that?” Joyce asked.

Emily nodded. “That’s how we started drinking, actually. She told Hank to get me wine as well. And..that’s how it started...” as well as ended.

“So you left the party after getting drunk?” Disapproval was starting to come back to her face. She was going to outright call it irresponsible, but having shot herself in the foot quite recently, she waited to hear her out.

“Yeah, but I think I wanted to stay...”

“So they forced you?” And so easily her opinions of these people had flipped; absolutely enraged by these strangers forcing peer pressure on Emily to--!

“No...not really,” Emily answered back, oblivious to the turmoil in her girlfriend’s head. “I guess more like sound reasoning. Rebecca was really drunk, like, threw up in the elevator drunk... Hank wasn’t bad though, so he offered to take me back to our room first before he’d take Rebecca to hers.”

“But you didn’t have the room key...” Joyce found it difficult to be the silent spectator. Since it was an Emily-grade re-telling, of course she struggled to sit still and save her questions until the end. There were simply too many that a pen could transcribe before the fiery queries would start to burn out.

“Right...” Emily agreed, now sounding not so proud. “I uh...went anyway. I think I even took us to the wrong floor...I think that’s how I ended up in the lobby.”

Joyce took a small breath, feeling as if she saw the essentials of the picture now. “So, after we got separated, you met these people, drank as much as you could, left the party knowing full-well that you couldn’t get back into our room, then meandered in the lobby, all while I was still looking for you at the party?”

Emily’s mouth twitched a smidgen as she averted her gaze. “I...Hank wasn’t gonna let me stay...I was too drunk...”

“Did you explain to him how you didn’t have a room key?” Joyce’s attack came as unyielding. For once, she was starting to hold Emily’s feet over the fire.

“No...I forgot.”

“You forgot?”

“I forgot.” Emily repeated, sounding a bit bothered now. “Can I not forget things?”

Just as Joyce was about to accelerate, Emily’s defensive tone struck made her realize the pressure she was starting to apply. “I didn’t mean it like that...”

“I’m sorry for making you worry,” Emily sighed, with a hand to her throbbing head. “I just...I thought I was doing all the right stuff I should have, up until leaving the party, I guess...”

“No, I’m just being selfish.” Joyce softly spoke as she rose from the bed. “Thank you as always for putting up with me... It may sound narcissistic, but I feel like it’s easy to see by now that I’m usually the one in control of everything around me... I always plan and have backups in my work, so a lot of what I do is pre-planned and it makes sense to me. I can’t control you Emily, and I would never want to, but you’re the first thing in a long while that’s sometimes unpredictable to me. You’re the most important person in the world to me. If I don’t know where you are and I can’t reach you, everything’s just so...” She made grabbing motions at her hair. “So crazy...”

“I feel that way about you too, you know?” Emily said back.

Joyce smiled, “Thank you, that makes me happy to hear.” Though, not that she’d ever doubt Emily’s feelings, Joyce would wager that her own severity was much more. “You...you don’t

think I'm a control freak, or anything?" After such a bad taste in her mouth, she was starting to have regrets about what she'd done to Emily with the computer.

"No. Not a control freak," Emily deterred her thoughts, but not completely refuted. "I'd definitely agree you like having a handle on things though." Call her a mommy, why didn't she?

"See?" Joyce's expression turned to one of somber. "Even you can tell; I'm hopeless. I feel like I'm always apologizing for some stupid overbearing thing that I do..."

"I never said it was unlikable, though?" Emily interjected. Standing on all fours, she crawled over into Joyce's lap. "Maybe if we were a bit more...traditional, I think I'd have a problem..." Using Jack as her reference, she would be annoyed. But Joyce struck her differently. "But we're not that. Control is definitely part of our relationship, isn't it? It's part of our...you know, lifestyle?"

After all, a mother who couldn't control her child would lead to pure anarchy... Or in other words, it wasn't realistic without it.

"I already said," Emily began to remind her, "You don't have to act like you're flipping a switch..." She paused to think of the right words. Joyce always seemed to be better at that. "I know I've gotten upset about it before, but I kind of like it when you get concerned like that about me... How you keep me in sight at all times; pull me aside just to check up on me...coddle me... Obviously there's a limit when I'm an adult, but..." She started to blush, partially feeling like a liar for having a change of tune since they last "talked". "Now that I've had some time to deal with it...I guess I kind of like it when there's always a small part of Mommy around..."

Emily was laying on her stomach across Joyce's thighs. The older woman pensively worked with her hands. "You do...?"

"Maybe not originally, but I dunno...I guess I've had some time to come around. You care for me in a way I don't think anyone ever has..."

"Even if I'm a control freak?"

"I promised I'd say something if you get too pushy?" Emily said back to her.

A dumb smile was infecting Joyce. "You're...you're gonna regret giving me so much leniency, you know?"

“And I’ll talk to you about it if we ever get there,” Emily smiled. “Please don’t let this affect anything? I’m sorry for making you worry; I can’t say I was completely aware of everything, but I’ll try to be more considerate down the line...” As she reflected on last night herself, a lump started to well up in her stomach and reach her throat. All the anxiety and worry she’d felt from last night, stomached by the adrenaline of new encounters and social pressure weren’t here to let her appear as strong. She suddenly hiccupped as she wiped her eyes. “I was scared too, you know?”

“Thank you...” Joyce massaged her back with her open palm.

Renewed and strengthened, both women sat in their positions for just a few more minutes. As Emily enjoyed her position laying across Joyce’s legs, she felt a hook suddenly snag the waistband of her shorts and panties.

“Hey, no more for you,” Emily grinned as she didn’t bother to look behind. She was the bartender who decided Joyce had gone past her limit. Though, her expression shriveled a little once she felt the cold chill on her bottom, as a full-on tug brought down her clothes and exposed her bare bottom. She wiggled her hips as her head started to turn. “Joyce? What are you--!”

SMACK

A brief, skin-to-skin smack filled the room. A light slap, but just the right point of contact for maximum sound. Emily’s muscles reflexively contracted as soon as she felt the prickly sting on her bum. It didn’t necessarily hurt, but Emily had certainly felt it. Was she just...spanked?

“J-Joyce?” Emily turned her head.

Joyce, meanwhile, had a look of pure bliss; an addict who had found their fix. She held her palm just above Emily’s backside, still relishing the wonderful feeling.

“S-sorry...” Joyce apologized, still chasing off her high. “I felt like that was needed. Just a little punishment for bad behavior.”

Emily rolled her eyes, but smiled. “I thought when all this started, you said there’d be no spanking?”

“If you can change your opinion, I can too, can’t I?” Joyce grinned. She lightly tapped Emily’s butt as she briefly massaged it before tugging her underwear and shorts back up. “Just a little reminder to be on your best behavior~”

“Uh-huh...” Emily kept her face forward and away from Joyce. In spite of the lighthearted fun, she was a little concerned about her own reaction. It wasn’t outright revolting... She was already blushing just from thinking about it. Absolutely not. Spankings were not going to be their new thing...

“But in other news,” Joyce looked delighted to report, “Sheila said you had no troubles last night getting to bed?”

“No, not really...--” Her answer was casual at first, but the atmosphere seemed to freeze, or whatever jovial tune she moved her drum to the beat of had just been crudely stopped.

“Sh...Sheila?” Emily sounded confused, somehow hit by a sense of amnesia and reminiscence.

“Yes, Sheila?” Joyce said. “My secretary? She’s the one who found you in the lobby and brought you back up to the room so I could wrap up at the business dinner...” Joyce lost that final polish in her tone, now aware too of the mental gap Emily seemed to have had. “You...don’t remember?”

“I...I do...” Emily bit her lip from trying to recollect. How much had she drunk? Most of the details were there... Figures, places, blurs, and Joyce’s face. It was like staring at a low quality image from afar, only to realize just how many imperfections it was riddled with the closer you got.

Before she could run in circles with herself for too long, Joyce filled in some of the spaces for her. “Sheila found you in the lobby by chance, then got in touch with me. I came downstairs and Sheila said she’d bring you back up to the room... Does that sound familiar?”

“It does...but...” It felt embarrassing to admit just how jumbled the night was for her.

“Wait...*Sheila* put me to bed?” As soon as the words left her mouth, she felt like she already knew the answer, re-remembering fragments in all sorts of places, slowly converging into the full picture.

“Yes...?” Joyce rubbed the top of her head. “How about we get you something for that hangover?”

“Sure...” Emily sighed, only registering the throb again once Joyce reminded her of it. She continued to silently reflect, doing her own kind of digging inside her mind. She was with Sheila... Sheila was in the room... Emily undressed herself...wait, did she? She was given clothes...no, helped into them...she snuggled with Pip, but he sort of just “appeared”, which obviously wasn’t right...

When Joyce came back in, Emily's face hung in her hands as her eyes peered down at the bedding through the slits between her fingers.

"Sheila..." Emily said aloud, "Sheila, she...she saw so much last night...!" Despite being a whole other person last night, it didn't affect Emily's ability to physically cringe just from thinking about it. She laid herself bare to this effective stranger; leaned on her like an actual child...!

"What did she see?" Joyce handed her the glass of water. While Emily was in a mild panic, Joyce seemed much more level-headed.

After a long gulp to help her swallow, Emily exasperated, "Pip! She...Ugh...! She must have thought I looked like a complete kid!" It was only them, but that didn't stop her from wanting to hide from the invisible embarrassment. No, she was mortified. "I couldn't even get myself *dressed!*"

Joyce felt bad for her, but not so much precisely *because* it'd been Sheila, the only alternative at this point she would ever feasibly consider in place of herself. "Emily, I know it's embarrassing, but please trust me when I say that Sheila won't ever speak a word of this to anyone."

And naturally, in a moment of tension and panic, then came Emily, "H-how do you know that? I'm probably now her weirdest, creepiest work story!"

A tiny cold sweat broke on Joyce as her back straightened a little.

If only this was the weirdest thing I've forced on my secretary...

"E...even if it might be," Joyce decided to leave some landmines buried, "which I don't think it is, Sheila knows that anything I share with her or have her do is strictly confidential. She's contracted and it's been this way for years. "

"Yeah, years of babysitting?" Emily pouted with pessimism.

"Stop it," Joyce was quick to admonish her, "the day Sheila betrays me is the day kittens fly."

Naturally, hearing the botched figure of speech had Emily's head turning. And for Joyce she knew that she could smile because Emily was still taking in silly stimuli.

"I just..." Emily exhaled, but started to find anomalies beneath the mental debris. "Wait, how did she even know about Pip?"

“I told her,” Joyce said with no signs of remorse, “otherwise it could have been one of many things that could lead to a bad night...” She ran her hand through Emily’s hair. “It’s nothing to be embarrassed about? Sheila really isn’t the type to pass judgment, and especially tell people about any of that...”

“Yeah...but...”

Joyce had the thought of biting her lip, debating whether to reveal a small tid-bit of information, if only to help ease Emily’s worries.

“You know your diapers? The ones we keep in your nursery?”

“Y-yes...” Emily started to blush. Her diapers. Her nursery.

Joyce’s expression communicated that she hadn’t quite settled on how she wanted to leak the information. “Well...Sheila had a big hand in getting them for us...”

Emily’s eyes widened. She couldn’t be serious. “She *KNOWS?*” Obviously her voice couldn’t be kept down then. “Wh-why?! Why did you tell her? You said it was--” A hand came over her mouth.

“Shh, shh,” Joyce gently shushed. “Deep breath? Unnecessary stress is a great way for naughty girls to bring back their headaches...”

Emily did just that before mumbling, “I’m not naughty...”

“No, you’re not.” Joyce smiled and nodded. “Sheila knows as much as she needs to. She knows that I wanted them made, and that’s it. Not who they’re for, or why they’re needed. This was a while back, Emily, even before I started planning out your nursery. If she hasn’t said anything by now to anyone, I highly doubt she’d do it in the future.”

Emily still couldn’t wipe the blush off her face. All she could do was assume the worst. Sheila was smart, probably, to be working under Joyce. For that reason, Emily hardly thought Sheila would just “forget” about something as objectively curious as that. It was only a matter of time until she figured out how Emily was somehow related to them.

“Are you upset with me?” Joyce asked cautiously. She was optimistic, yet she wasn’t a mindreader...

“No...” Emily sulked. “It...I can’t say I really trust her because I don’t know her, but I do trust you...” She gave Joyce a hopeful look. “If you say you think she’s safe, then I guess all I can do is go with that.”

Joyce leaned forward with her arms wrapping around the girl.

“I promise. I absolutely promise that whatever Sheila thinks she knows or does know, it will absolutely not go beyond her.” She hated to consider the thought, but if somehow Sheila was possessed and of another sinister mind to leak what she knew, even Joyce wouldn’t hesitate to strike back. Sheila was important, but even more so herself and Emily alike.

All Emily could do was resign herself to fate, leaning her head into the crook of Joyce’s shoulder, feeling the goosebumps appear in droves as a finger traced itself on the back of her ear.

“Can I tell you something?” Joyce asked.

“What?”

“I’m only suggesting this because I think you might need it...”

Now she was looking up at her. “What...?”

Joyce defused herself for only a second as she fumbled with her suitcase.

Emily wondered what travel tissues had to do with any of this, but her heart skipped a beat once she saw what she most certainly did not expect to see in any place other than home.

“J-Joyce...! Why’d you--”

“Hush.” Calmly, yet adamantly, the stressful girl was commanded into submission. The motherly authority came back on the bed, yet Emily, now silent, still couldn’t take her intense gaze off the pacifier. Naturally she wanted to ask questions, express her worries, but she couldn’t. Not when she didn’t have permission to raise a complaint from the start.

As Joyce spoke, even as she bobbed her finger, dangling the pacifier, Emily was distracted for a list of reasons.

“I think you’re getting in over your head, sweetheart. You’re having too many big thoughts again. I will always respect your opinion, take your concerns into consideration, but I’m going to put my foot down in this situation. You need a reminder to not be such a worrywart.”

Maybe Joyce wanted a verbal response, but Emily was simply becoming too good of a submissive, as she could only quietly murmur, feeling the invisible glue applied to her lips.

Joyce looked fondly down at the pacifier, like an old friend who had helped time and time again, only it wasn't an old friend. A new one, someone that was going to be a fresh presence in their everyday lives.

Turning with her hand raised, Emily didn't do so much other than allow her lips to part as Joyce slipped it in. It was perfect; designed for Emily's mouth like a key was made for a lock.

"See?" Joyce smiled. "I like it much better when my little girl gets to hold onto it," Joyce grinned, daring enough to even tickle the underside of her chin.

Emily was at a crossroads. Part of her still wanted to hinge on the matter that was once at hand, now totally taken from her, courtesy of Momm-- Joyce. The other part? Well, it was instead chipperly awaiting what the real authority figure had in store for her next.

There wasn't any motion from her mouth, and of course Joyce would notice that.

Joyce flashed her teeth as their faces were inches apart. "Oopsies, did I forget to turn on the engine?" Raising her finger through the ring of Emily's pacifier, she gently tugged on it, and just before the silicon teat could break the suction from the infantilized girl's lips, Joyce pushed it right back in. Tug, push. Tug, push. She needed only to manually make the girl suck with just a few more motions before the machine started to run on its own.

"Much better, my little treasure," Joyce scrunched her shoulders and face into a pleased smile as the tone had just shifted so wonderfully. "Keep sucking. Just think about your pacifier and how much your girlfriend, your Mommy, loves you so, so much. How I would do absolutely anything to protect you, cherish you, and make you feel oh-so fuzzy inside!" She couldn't help herself with the dreaded tickle attack, causing the adult woman to squeal with involuntary pleasure as she wrestled away. Correction, *allowed* to get away.

They stared back at each other for a few moments, both mesmerized by the other's gaze.

"This is definitely what you needed." Joyce said with affirmation. She wasn't teasing. She was stating the facts.

Emily's response? More sucking, paired by the occasional remark, which was the light slap of plastic from her pacifier ring, if that could be considered a legitimate retort.

“Now let’s get you up, buttercup,” Joyce cooed as she grabbed her hands. “Good girls don’t go to breakfast smelling like wine now, do they?” She chuckled happily once she saw her girl’s cheeks redden. Bashful and embarrassed, like she should be.

Joyce traced her hand along Emily’s back as they came into the bathroom. It was impressive, equipped to handle them both, but it was surely a feature both Joyce and Emily knew wasn’t quite as impressive as what they had at home.

“Cahn ah tahk iht ouh beh-foah thuh sh-ow-er?” Emily earnestly tried to mouth around the obstacle in her mouth, but she oh so adorably failed with flying colors.

“I promise I’ll get better,” Joyce giggled as she pulled out the pacifier, excitedly pleased to see a thin layer of drool on it, “but until I learn pacifier-speak, what was that?”

Emily reflexively licked the roof of her mouth, always feeling some kind of difference in her mouth after one of those. She was much more meek now, however, surely after being put in her cushy place. “I asked...can I take it out before the shower...?” Though, by the sound of her voice she knew it was a silly question simply because it had already been answered.

“Yes, but only if you don’t bring up what you’re not supposed to?” Joyce raised her eyebrow, as if to challenge a potential opponent.

But rather prey than predator, Emily nodded with a blush. “Mhmm...”

“Then we’ll save it here until we get out of the shower.” Joyce sufficed, already stripping Emily.

“I love you...” The words came out of Emily. She wasn’t looking at her lover; too busy up at the ceiling as she assumed the ballerina’s posture, a difficult move only meant for the experienced veterans at helping their Mommy-figures remove their clothes.

After Joyce’s head came back up after dropping a pair of pajama shorts, she with the force of her own two lips leaned Emily back a little as she deeply connected with her special girl’s.

Taking a deep breath of air she said with a glowing smile, “I love you too. So-so-so much. Could you start the shower?” she asked as she started to undress herself.

And as she watched Emily, particularly her bum, move which-way as the proprietor who frankly had it on lease, as far as Joyce’s ownership was concerned, something ran by her mind. Dealing with Emily’s reaction to Sheila taught her something she hadn’t fully considered.

Up until now, they eventually did address everything in full, equally and completely. But maybe sometimes...it wasn't quite worth getting Emily as involved as she thought she needed to be. Rather than give her more rope to feed to a fire she always needed help putting out... Her eyes fell on the pacifier.

Like now, and would likely be in the future, Emily maybe needed "help" realizing that some things just needed to stay beyond her. Emmy didn't have to worry about adult topics or heavy conversations. If Joyce thought it was okay, and she knew it was okay, Emily should only need to deal with it on a smaller level. A safer level.

And effectively, it was robbing Emily of control. She was losing out on responsibility. But to Joyce, that was the entire idea. That was the goal. The pattern they were going to follow. Yet why did she feel so confident in doing this? That was the easiest part in her mind; the very trigger itself. Emily gave her permission for it, and she encouraged it. They'd fine-tune as they went along.

But frankly? Seeing Emily so subdued with her pacifier, being put in a headspace that proved just how unnecessary some of her worries could be? Hell, if this made the history books, if there ever was one for the unusual adventures of Emily and Joyce, this'd surely be one of her greatest plays.

"Okay, time to go," Joyce announced in two ways. One was the sound of her own voice. Two, was the wet popping noise from a pacifier leaving a mouth that didn't want it to leave.

"I could have done that..." Emily smirked with a blush as she put on a pair of sandals.

"I know," Joyce tickled her chin, "but then I couldn't have?"

"Th...thank you for that, by the way..." Emily said in a shy voice.

"For giving you what you needed?" Joyce asked.

"Y...Yes..." Yes, for giving her what she needed.

"To be honest, I should have been doing that sooner..." Joyce sighed to herself. She was always going to have her mommy-mode feelings and tendencies, but recent events felt like that her conscious efforts had been shell-shocked completely. Making the right kind of play earlier was

starting to give her some confidence again in that department. “I love you more than anything, Emily, so I’m going to be better about judgment calls like that. And remember, if I ever do something like that, it’s not because I don’t value your opinion, okay? It’s because I think you’re starting to bite off more than you need to chew.”

Emily nodded, feeling her inner feelings starting to stir. It was the parental lock on the computer all over again. She wasn’t being asked or suggested for anything. She was being *told*.

Needless to say, the shorter of the two couldn’t keep her shoulder away from Joyce’s arm as they walked down the hall.

“Are there gonna be a lot of people again at this breakfast...?” Emily asked with a tinge of trepidation.

“Probably enough for one table,” Joyce considered with previous engagements as her reference. “A big table.”

“Is there gonna be room for me...?”

“Well that’s why you’re going to be on my lap...” Joyce spoke with feigned assumption and ease as she called the elevator. Then she turned her head. “W-wait, Emily, I’m joking...” She laughed apologetically. “Yes, there will be room. I’m sure they made a headcount based on the guest list; the worst case is that they have extra chairs.”

As they rode the elevator, Emily felt the need for more silly, yet in her mind, important questions.

“...Is it okay for me to order whatever?”

“Within reason,” Joyce decided. “You can order what you want, but I’d like you to keep it light, please? Just go easy on your tummy this morning.” Joyce was the guiding hand that steered the ship, yet by the same stroke Emily held the override switch, and by now Joyce felt comfortable enough to assume Emily knew that. And since there was no opposition, it only led to further affirmation.

“I don’t think I want anything big either...” Emily agreed, now with much more grounded expectations. Funny how fickle the stomach could be. One moment she merely thought of the pancakes, waffles and whipped cream, and the next after a single thought about her tipsy night, she suddenly couldn’t stomach the thought of excessive confectionaries, much less be in the same room as one.

“And no morning drinks,” Joyce felt the need to include. Emily did not however.

“Really? The last thing I can even think about is alcohol...” The poor girl groaned.

“Just in case,” Joyce rubbed the back of her head affectionately. “A rule unspoken is a rule easily broken.”

“Did you just come up with that now?”

“Impressive, ain’t it?” She giggled proudly.

Emily rolled her eyes as they stepped off the elevator.

The lobby, understandably, looked a tinge less vibrant during the day. The daylight and lack of city lights stripped all the glass windows of their mystifying, glime-dazzling nature, in Emily’s opinion. One of the prized ornaments hanging from above was only half as impressive when there wasn’t an array of warm lights passing through it.

Would you be surprised, the restaurant built into the hotel that was serving breakfast, the entrance: glass. Emily was starting to see a theme here...

“Joyce Summers?” The two magic words. All she needed was her name and the red carpet seemed to always appear ever so magically.

“Right this way,” a waitress escorted the pair down an aisle of a mostly busy place and around the corner.

Emily was a little surprised. Big table made her think of five or six people. Not double that. But sure enough, a large wooden circle was where they went, already occupied mostly with others.

Though if there was any sort of pleasant surprise, it would be the unexpected diversity at the table. Financial titans to Emily made her think of older men in suits likely born from old money. Joyce was of course her antithesis to that notion, but so was the view before her. Obviously some of the females were just significant others, like Emily, but others just seemed to...radiate that they were on their own account, that their place was earned by merit and not mutual affections.

And from that same radiation, Emily for some odd reason was...picking up on a wave of...bitchiness?

Amidst the wave of welcomes they received from the table, only then did the head right in front of them turn around to see who had come.

“Emily?” Lo and behold, that head was Rebecca’s.

“R-Rebecca?” Frankly, Emily as an afterthought was a little touched that she even remembered her name. What part about herself left an impression? Being a doormat and reconciled with through the way of sweets?

An outstretched hand with a friendly smile already corralled the girl back on the side of her handler.

“Hi there,” Joyce smiled, “I don’t think we’ve met before?” Smiled so much of a smile that you’d think she was smiling. Objectively smiling. Whether positive feelings were behind it, that was another story.

While it was another business get-together, these smaller breakfasts thankfully were a tad bit less formal, even if talking shop never quite stopped. Moods didn’t need to be as tailored, the fanciest of dress wasn’t required, and certainly for a mature, dignified woman like Joyce, maybe just a tinge of...unbecoming traits could waft a little.

The reality was quite something about Emily getting to other women first before Joyce that quite irrationally upset her. In her mind, it was somewhere between checking Emily’s Halloween candy for tampering and filtering out even the air another predator might breathe so much as even in the same room as her sweet treasure. All this was her natural response, even if all it took was a small sense of reason to snap her out of her unchecked jealousy. But could she be blamed? (Most definitely). There was a damn good chance Emily could have the hots for men or women now. It’d suddenly become the same playing field but with twice the players!

“Hello...” Rebecca from her seat reached out to Joyce’s hand, giving it a light shake. Yep. Joyce for sure was radiating with...something. Something that somehow made the atmosphere all...uncomfortable.

Joyce’s entranced expression as she gave her a firm shake was popped like a bubble with a blunt touch from behind.

“Hm?” With a cute hum of curiosity, all that flame and fire extinguished once her head turned around.

Emily's hand was half-hooked on Joyce's elbow. She wasn't as good as Joyce when it came to oozing with emotion like a nuclear meltdown, but maybe her eyes could work a little magic.

Be nice! Don't be weird!

She had defused the bomb once Joyce turned her head back, smiling. A more real smile. Still on the side of faux, though. "I'm Joyce, Emily's *girlfriend*."

So much for business. It was starting to feel like an exchange at the high school lunchroom. And if only Emily had seen the faintest corners of Joyce's mouth, like she was doing just the bare minimum to hide a haughty grin, somehow proud for already having the prize to a game Rebecca knew nothing about and likely would have cared even less to play.

"Joyce, why don't you two have a seat?" One of the others at the table, outside the range of Joyce's...influence, called out in a friendly manner.

"If you're fine with it, there's two seats next to me..." Rebecca said, though from Emily's perspective she was slightly averting her gaze from Joyce, looking past her and to Emily, of all people. Unbelievable. But, then again, sort of believable...Joyce was starting to intimidate the woman for no reason other than her own pride and overprotectiveness.

Preventative measures, preventative measures...!

Emily was still too shy for many words, but she knew something needed to be done for Joyce's sake. Trying to be casual, but not so casually, she grabbed Joyce's arm, pretending to play with her hand just for a second so she could be the closer one to the chairs, sitting right down in the one adjacent to Rebecca.

Both of them knew that's the one Joyce had wanted, which is why a look of surprise, and maybe even silly betrayal crossed the reflection in her eyes.

"F...Funny seeing you here, Rebecca?" Emily did her best to make small-talk, but lord if she wasn't as rigid and stiff as a board. Joyce, given the degree of separation and a moment to pause, she at least sat down without a fuss. If only Emily had known this'd become a sudden job to babysit her babysitter...

"Funny..." Rebecca sounded like she half-agreed, whereas her other half was too busy trying to discern the sort of stare she was getting from another chair down. "Have we met somewhere before?" She suddenly asked down the chain.

“Oh? Us?” Joyce feigned ignorance as well as paper repelled water. “No, no; Emily told me about you and your other friend last night. Thank you for keeping her company!”

“...Oh, that’s right,” Rebecca took a thoughtful second before looking at Emily, “didn’t you say that she was looking for you? Does she misplace you often?” Rebecca grinned, and maybe Emily would have too, but she felt the fire of hell radiating just over her shoulder.

Maybe in another life, had Emily been blessed with height she could have fully screened the borderline hostile patron beside her. “I *would* have found her right away, but it’s a little hard when someone meddles and *steals--*”

“Hi there!” A waitress coincidentally (and oh-so thankfully) interrupted all the different amounts of chatter right then. “Is everyone here to start taking orders now?”

“Uhh...sure, that sounds fine,” One of the men at the other end of the table said. “We’ll work our way down if anyone still wants to take a look at the menu.” He said, likely referring to Emily and Joyce, the last arrivees.

“Joyce, could we share a menu?” Emily asked, pretending like hers right in front of her didn’t exist. Joyce’s lips pursed as she knew she was being called back inside and for good reason.

Emily scooped her chair closer to Joyce, trying to be as quiet as can be while she whispered into her ear.

“*What are you doing?!*”

“*Nothing! I’m just saying hello to the bitchy bully you met last night.*” It was maybe funny and cute last night, but the elevator ride down left Joyce thinking of how all that “bitchiness” had to have been felt by Emily firsthand.

“*Well stop it!*” Emily admonished with a quiet whine. “*We’re on good terms now!*” At least Emily thought they were. Whatever neutral blood there may have been at the least though, it felt as if Joyce was personally trying to spoil what was relatively untainted. “*Think about how this looks for you, too!*”

Emily then felt the need to roll her eyes, and she certainly did so once Joyce’s face gave the impression she’d just been told ‘no’ to getting a new toy.

Honestly, how bad could she be? Was it jealousy or overprotectiveness? Could she at least be discreet about it? Maybe Emily had only herself to blame; they were just coming downstairs from a little intimate moment leaving her partner high on the pleasures of being a mommy...

Emily's inner conscience shook its head with guilt. Of course all this excitement was too much for her poor mommy...

"And you?" The waitress was standing by Joyce next.

"Oh, uhm..." Joyce hadn't a second to really ponder the menu, and neither did Emily. "I'll take a...coffee, please. Black? Two eggs with toast. Sunny side up, please?"

"...Okay, sure thing. And you?" Now it was Emily's turn.

Emily blinked, immediately thinking of what her normal preference would be, something involving a pancake or waffle base followed by chocolate chips and a fruit (possibly of the banana variety), but remembering her important talks from the elevator, that was unfortunately off the table...

"Uhm..."

"Could she have the same thing, actually?" Joyce intervened, finally making her first tactful play of the entire breakfast. "Only can we swap her drink for chocolate milk? Add bacon to hers, too?"

Well, not quite how she'd have liked it, not when she was in the audience of Joyce's business peers... She could have sworn a few even ordered daytime drinks. Coffee was going to be her goto, not chocolate milk...!

But it'd already been done and dusted, carved in stone as the waitress flicked with her pen and moved along.

"Th...thanks, but I would have liked coffee, too..." Emily felt the need to say in a quiet voice.

"But you like chocolate milk, don't you? I make it for you all the time?" Joyce asked unashamedly.

"*Not when it's at a business breakfast...!*" Emily found the privacy to complain just a little longer while Rebecca was busy with her order.

“Well I don’t want you having coffee either today; I think it’s already a miracle that you weren’t in the bathroom last night...” Thankfully she didn’t go into unnecessary detail.

As chaotic as Joyce was being, her conscious mind had never left, sensing it was about time she showed Emily she was still capable of rational decisions.

“Rebecca?” Joyce re-extended her hand, “I’m sorry about a few minutes ago. I was a bit bothered by some news I got this morning... Investments falling through.”

The lack of a predatory look on Joyce’s face this time seemed to be of good faith, which is why Rebecca took it once more only a bit more amicably this time.

“Oh, that’s fine. It happens... Sorry about my comment a second ago... I didn’t mean to insult you if that’s what it seemed like.”

And as the two monsters made peace through words, Emily could only wonder why she instead had received offerings of parfaits rather than direct apologies...

“I like her!” Joyce smiled from ear to ear on the drive home.

Emily drilled a finger in her own ear, just to double check. “Y-you looked like you were gonna punch her at first...”

“Huh?” Oh Joyce, so willing to feign ignorance. “Well...maybe I was a little bit out of sorts at first... An investment fell through for me, you know?” She grinned.

“Uh-huh...”

A hand found its way on Emily’s thigh. “I know...I was already riling myself up on the elevator ride down. I started thinking about what you told me about Rebecca and how she wasn’t nice to you at first...”

“You’re a real helicopter mommy, you know?”

“And don’t forget it.” Her voice seemed to carry a small sense of pride, like Emily’s mocking comment was a badge of honor.

“...You were okay with it, right?”

“Okay with how you acted toward Rebecca?” Emily snarked. “Meh. As long as it doesn’t affect you,” she smiled.

“No, uhm...I meant about what happened in our room. As...as long as you were okay with it; how I handled that, I promise I’ll stop asking...I’m just...a little nervous since I was so forward...”

“For someone who calls this such a lifestyle, you’re throwing in a lot of stops, ya know?”

“It is...” Joyce whined with her own smile. If Emily was joking, she wasn’t upset. Good.

“We already talked about our stops, so since you told me not to worry...” Emily inhaled, “then I won’t worry.” But always at the end of the day, saying something was far easier than actually doing it.

“Okay,” Joyce briskly cut the cord, “time for something else. Enough about that. So, do you think you’d ever want to do something like that again?”

“...”

“Emily?”

“Mmm...” Apparently it wasn’t an easy decision. “I guess if I had to I could handle it...”

“If you *had* to? Well, that’s okay, my little trooper. I think once was enough for you.”

“Hah?” Emily reared her head over to the driver. “Didn’t you *want* me to come with you last night? You were begging me!”

“I was *not* begging,” Joyce put on the best ‘totally wasn’t like that even if it was’ look she could give. “I just thought it’d be nice to enjoy each other’s company while I had to deal with business?”

“Yeah, well, that didn’t go as planned.”

“No, it didn’t,” Joyce grinned, “but frankly, even if we were together the whole night, I still think I’d have been dealing with a sleepy little girl regardless.”

“You would not.” Emily frowned with a sharp correction.

“I wouldn’t?” Joyce inflated her tone with feigned ignorance.

“No. I was...I just drank a lot, is all. It made me tired.”

“No, drinks make you emotional, but they don’t make you sleepy. It was way past your bedtime anyway.”

“My bedtime? I don’t have one, need I remind you?”

“Maybe not officially when you’re out of your diapers,” Joyce agreed without resistance like it was a simple fact, and so was the possession of her diapers, to which Emily quietly blushed over. “But since we’ve gotten your sleep schedule back in line, you do start to show signs, ya know? When I say bedtime, I don’t mean an enforceable one,” but oh she so certainly would love to, “I mean the time when your body starts showing signs.”

“I don’t show any signs...” Emily side-eyed her. In her mind, signs didn’t consist of the generic yawns and eye rubs.

“Yes, you do,” Joyce giggled. “You droop your shoulders,” Joyce imitated the posture, “You start rubbing your eyes all the time, and you always do that cute little head-bob...!”

“Y-you do the same thing...” Emily tried to strike back, but since the record showed Emily had never once gone to bed after Joyce, she couldn’t say for sure...

But instead she was ignored. “Oh! Or when sometimes you start sticking your hand under your shirt? That’s too adorable!”

Her last mention sounded completely foreign to her. “What? I don’t do that.”

“Huh?” Joyce apparently knew Emily’s body better than herself. But in all fairness, with the way she handled her, her claim actually might hold some weight... “Yes you do? You do it pretty regularly. You always have it on that cute tummy of yours.”

Apparently Joyce saw the subconscious things in Emily even though she herself didn’t notice. Did that go both ways? Did Emily notice those kinds of things about Joyce as well?

“And by the way...since we were away from the house the entire night...I was thinking maybe you’d like to do some ‘catching up’ on our little promise to each other?”

Thankfully, all it took was some mommy-talk and a pacifier in the morning to keep Emily on her allusion game for once.

“Really?” Emily stifled a giggle and settled for a chuckle. “You think you’ve earned the right after losing me last night?”

“Well, when you put it like that, I do remember last night on the elevator ride down I couldn’t stop thinking of all the different ways I could keep track of you. Bells, a tracking chip, handcuffs...” She hummed for a brief moment, letting the silly act imagine herself as the astute, genius mommy in the making. “But I guess no one at a grown-up party except for you would sound like a crinkle-tush, huh?”

“Let’s stick with handcuffs...”

“Oh, and if we kept you in diapers we wouldn’t even need to take you to use the potty? More time to chat with others!”

“Joyce...!”

“I guess I’m just thinking out loud...but I better write that one down. After all, you said it yourself; I seem to misplace you so easily! Heh, I guess I hear you just as much as see you.”

“Okay! We can use the nursery tonight! Just please stop joking about that stuff!”

With Emily rightly backed into her corner, Joyce felt at ease again to laugh now with herself back on top. “Okay, I’ll let it go, for now.” Thankfully it was a red light, otherwise Joyce would have missed out on the sweet strawberry that’d replaced Emily’s face.

Emily took to looking out the window for the rest of the ride home, her dumbstruck face with quivering lips, trying to wipe a naughty smirk off her face. Her strings she never even knew about herself were starting to be plucked more and more as her owner slowly discovered just the right rhythm to make the bashful girl sing on immediate command.

And never in a million years would she. Never would she dare to be anything but cohesive and compatible, but the thought couldn’t help but cross the lovestruck girl’s mind.

Maybe I should misbehave more often...