

57 - Coffee Keeps her Going

One might argue that Emily was now two-for-two on flashing her underwear to Joyce's family when it came to first impressions, but this was thankfully not the case. No. Far from such an embarrassing statistic.

After all, her onesie wrapped around her diapered bum perfectly; copying the curvature just to make sure not a single bit went uncovered.

So from that perspective, totally better than showing off adult underwear, right?

For half a second it felt like all eyes were on her, given she was the lowest thing in the room now. From the bratty boys to the dog even wagging its tail over her, Emily was a spectacle to be seen.

For half a second.

"Luke did it!" Oliver shouted over his feet picking up the pace, all with the stolen trinket in his hands, followed by his younger sibling's cries after him.

The only thing stopping Joyce from going on an actual brat hunt was tending to the one she actually liked, and she wasn't alone.

It'd gone from a few surprised gasps to a sudden pit crew materializing over the girl. Joyce was shoulder to shoulder with Hannah as one removed the big cuddly dog and the other hurriedly tidied up the girl.

She didn't know who was doing what, and that's what terrified her the most. Not that she fell, and not that she didn't get an apology. More so what had been revealed and who had seen what.

She didn't see, right? She didn't? Right?

Four hands moved all over, and Emily was too emotionally stunned to know who was doing what. Someone pulled back down her skirt. Someone helped her stand. Someone patted her down. Someone helped fix her jacket.

Someone— no, Joyce, actually, asked if she was okay.

"You're not hurt, are you?" Joyce worriedly looked her over, carefully scanning the back of her head.

“You didn’t hit your head at all, did you?” Hannah asked just as closely, though holding down the pooch beside her by the collar.

“N...no...” Emily answered meekly, assuming the worst. While crying felt tempting right now, she could at least keep herself from doing that, even if twenty minutes in her outfit was already enough to start regretting it.

“Promise you’re okay?” Joyce asked again, and Emily nodded. The caregiver could obviously see the screaming concern in her eyes, and while it was mildly understood, Hannah *had* been on the other side of the table... A place where nothing could’ve been seen.

Thank goodness.

Joyce kept her sigh to herself though, because Emily’s wellbeing meant free time to crack skulls elsewhere. Cue a timely whine from one of the brothers as a fight in the living room continued to ensue.

Hannah eventually let go of the collar, but immediately grabbed again as the dog hurried back for Emily who flinched in return.

“Ah-ah! Slow! Slow!” Hannah scolded the dog, then looked up at Emily. “You’re okay with dogs, right? At least obedient ones?”

“Y-yeah,” Emily nodded, finding her thighs uncomfortably squeezed close together, which went contested by the slight pulp between her legs; awfully warm and bothersome now that she’d just shown it off.

“You sure you’re okay?” Hannah asked again.

“Y-yes, I am,” Emily tried to tighten the reins around her words, and footsteps echoed from the open basement door at the other end of the room.

“Sounds like Trisha!” Frank announced with a corner of a folding table in his hands, ending with John holding the rear stepping out last.

“Everything all good?” John leaned his head out.

“Just Oliver and Luke,” Joyce sighed. “Warden came in and jumped on Emily, and while they were fighting over an iPad they knocked Emily down.”

“They did *what?*” Frank sounded close to incredulous, with an eerie weight that even made Emily, a victim through and through— save for possibly making others witness her seeming lack of potty training, quiver. The older man had a new mission, and that left John with a table only half-supported as the father’s heavy steps made way for the living room. “*Boys?*” His voice boomed and carried discipline with its one, but heavy-handed word.

The bickering between kids seemed to stop almost instantly, drying up like a puddle in the Sahara, but Emily nor anyone else in the kitchen was privy to what ensued. Mary and the rest of the guests masked it all on top of the three young adults having their own conversation. Plus one curious and excited dog.

“Well that didn’t take long,” John patted the pet on the head after setting the table against the wall. “Sorry about that,” he said to Emily, who could only politely wave it off.

While also stealing nervous glances at Hannah, wondering just what or wasn’t seen by her. “It’s...uhm, it’s fine.”

“No,” Joyce much more firmly said, “it’s not. If Dad— better yet their own parents don’t make them apologize to you, I will.”

“Joyce, it’s fine, really...” Emily tried to insist, but her Mommy’s mind was made up.

“Don’t worry about it, really,” John said with a laugh. “I think it’s just about tradition at this point they get in trouble for something within the first ten minutes of being here...”

And it had to be with my Emily... Joyce exhaled with another affectionate touch, although maybe starting to reach a point of smothering that only amped up Emily’s self-conscious feeling.

But naked feet came back into the kitchen, dragging along as a giant behind them forced both boys on death row to walk the line, all the while holding the very tablet that started the whole mess. But this time more adults came with him.

Mary, three couples— two around the age of Frank and Mary, and another closer to Joyce, though slightly older. And also somewhere in that two other men again in John and Joyce’s age bracket.

“Wow, everyone really showed up at the same time, huh?” John laughed, and immediately the greetings started as the influx of family entered and dispersed, save for a husband, wife, Frank, and overly concerned Mary that lingered over the situation yet to be resolved.

“What happened?” Mary asked Joyce, who quietly explained as the mystery woman, likely the mother of them, openly scolded the two.

“What did we say about running around in Uncle Frank and Auntie Mary’s house?!” she tutted tirelessly. “Is this how we want to start today? Should we take away the iPad completely?”

“*NoOoo!*” they immediately turned and whined, but as unimpressed and disapproving as the mother and father seemed, Frank somehow had them beat.

“Well if you don’t want that, you’d better start by apologizing for knocking Auntie Joyce’s friend over!”

Friend? Joyce wanted to scoff. Do *friends* share the same bed at night? Do *friends* enforce naps on each other? Do *friends* change their *friend’s* diaper? The list could go on, and Joyce’s smug look could certainly grow wider, but it was the half-assed mumbling stumble of an apology being muttered by her family that was tempering her mood into something hotter.

“It wasn’t us though! Warden did it!” they blamed the four-legged fiend, yet their may have been some bias in the court.

All it took was one incredulous look from their parents to aptly communicate in the most direct and G-rated way possible, “cut the shit.”

“*S-sorry...*”

“*Sorry we did that...*”

And if for a moment one might have believed that their words weren’t motivated by their own greed, Oliver turned back to his parents with the gaul to ask, “Can I use the iPad now?”

And before his parents could answer, Frank did instead.

“Nope,” he firmly shook his head. “You can have this either when Mom and Dad say you can, or maybe I’ll just keep this for myself.”

“What?! *No!*” The younger brothers cried in disbelief as Frank marched off with it, likely to make it disappear for the afternoon. Neither parent seemed to disagree though, doing no more than commanding their kids to stay downstairs as Frank left to go hide it.

“*Enough!*” their father shut down the bickering fast with a single word. “Your mom told you two what would happen, and now you’re dealing with the consequences.”

“Can we use your phone, though?” Luke, the tinier one complained, and their mother at a seeming loss for words pointed out to the living room.

“You can both watch TV, *without* fighting. That’s as good as it’s going to get right now.”

There were groans and mumbles, and maybe even a few chuckles from other adults in the room busy in their own conversations, but it was clear where their loyalties lied when they made way for the next available screen in the house.

“*After* you say hi to everyone?” their mom sternly called after them.

And while Joyce, John and their partners were checked off, they still had new faces so go, and so they did.

After a few seconds of being a watchful parent, the woman sighed and drifted closer to Joyce and Emily.

“I am *so* sorry about that. . .” she shook her head. “Nice to meet you, though! I’m Trisha,” she said as she opened up for a hug and Emily had little ability to refuse. “Oh~!” she openly remarked right over Emily, looking giggly at Joyce. “She’s tiny!”

“A. . .” Joyce tilted her head, unsure of how to answer, but still hugged her family nonetheless.

“Hey there,” Trisha’s husband greeted Emily with a deep voice, sticking out his hand. “I’m Daniel, Trisha’s wife, and also Joyce’s cousin. Nice to meet you!”

“Nice to meet you,” Emily promptly shook back, though finding her hand a bit consumed by his larger callus-toned one in comparison.

“So Emily, right?” Trisha asked, then nodded for herself before Emily could even confirm. “It’s so nice to meet one of Joyce’s friends from work! Gosh,” she waved her hand, “We hear how much of a big wig she is all the time; can’t say we’ve ever seen much to believe it, though!” She laughed. So did Daniel. So did Emily, kind of. A little from Joyce.

“Actually, Trish,” Joyce interrupted the bad joke with her own taste of personal humor. And even if Emily wanted to run just so she didn’t become a spectacle, Joyce’s soft hand lightly pressed

against her back kept her at the forefront of the stage. “She *is* a friend, but well, she’s really my partner...”

“Partner?” Trisha blinked, and Daniel started to turn his head with a smirk, only realizing himself just now. And despite the normality of it, Emily was still starting to feel blushy when in that whole moment of Trisha trying to turn her gears, Emily was the one she was staring at the entire time. “Ah—! Oh, wait! Not a business partner. A dating partner?”

With a thin-lipped smile, Joyce promptly nodded.

“Ahh...” Trisha nodded understandingly, but blinked again. “A—*ahhh!* Ah-ah! Okay! Wait— so, you two...?” she wagged her finger between them both, exacerbating what was implied to an unhealthy and annoying degree.

Emily started to shift her gaze off to the side, already imagining what this woman might have been thinking. Something hot and steamy with sexual activity. Like a grade schooler learning that their parents didn’t just like to wrestle at night.

And yet the steamiest it got was when Joyce used too much hot water during bathtime... Then again, Joyce did an awful lot with Emily’s privates... As long as it had to do with wiping and powdering them for a diaper change. So they were...intimate?

Not quite like what Trisha was seeing, however.

“Okay, hon, let’s go say hi to everyone else,” Daniel interrupted the awkward reaction with a hand on her shoulder. “Emily, nice meeting you,” he nodded, then took his wife away.

Since they were in a spot where their words couldn’t be used as freely, Joyce and Emily shared a wordless look that said enough to one another.

“And if it isn’t my niece from across the country!” an older woman sang with her arms wrapping around Joyce. “How are you doing, hon?”

“Hi, Auntie Carol!” Joyce smiled and hugged back. “Hey, Uncle Ted!” Joyce greeted him over her aunt’s shoulder. “How’ve you guys been?”

“Oh, same old same old,” Ted chuckled. “Retirement has been treating us well; gives us more time with Daniel, Trish, and the grandkids.”

“If only we could use some of that time to see you, though?” Carol raised her eyebrow. “You know your mom hasn’t stopped talking about you since she and your dad came and visited you, right?”

Awkwardly, Joyce laughed. “I...can imagine.”

“And it also sounds like your mom has a second daughter,” Carol smirked and then Emily came into the picture. “Nice to finally meet you, Emily! I’m Joyce’s aunt, or Mary’s sister, Carol.”

“Just call me Ted,” her husband cheerily flagged with an open hand. “And also I think we owe you an apology; it sounds like you already met our dog, Warden!”

Carol made a silent gasp, then quickly closed her mouth.

“O-oh, he’s yours?” Emily laughed out of habit. “He’s uhm...I like dogs, so...it’s okay!”

And frankly it was easier to find fault with a person than just a pet. She *did* like dogs, too...

“So did you two just fly in yesterday?” Carol asked them both.

“Yeah, we got in sometime in the afternoon,” Joyce said.

“Business, I’m guessing? Or maybe first class?” Carol taunted, and Joyce laughed like she was supposed to.

“It’s convenient,” Joyce shrugged and left it at that. “Actually– I wanna go introduce Emily to Auntie Martha and Uncle Rob, but we’ll catch up after.”

“Of course we will!” Ted nodded with certainty.

They politely excused themselves, then drifted, going through one final pair of aunt and uncle, then onto the last two cousins.

“Joyce, it’s been too long!”

“You look so good!”

“Mary can’t stop talking about you, Emily!”

“How many bathrooms does the new house have?”

“I love your outfit, by the way!”

“That diaper is just so *you!*”

Okay, maybe no one said the last thing, but the atmosphere was still there. Everyone was warm and inviting, as far as Emily’s account went, even if some comments only felt better-taken because it was coming from family. But Joyce was smiling and laughing.

But everyone was smiles and laughs. Some louder than others; particularly the ones with height and depth to their voices. And every footstep was a slap or clap against the hardwood floor. Nothing soft or muffled by socks or naked feet hitting the ground. Every foot and pair of feet were still dressed for the occasion— shoes and all. Come to find out, even Joyce was wearing hers. Joyce *was* seeming taller than usual today...

The only people she *hadn’t* seen wearing anything... Two troublemaking kids.

Either way, the memo was missed and if her concealed diaper wasn’t enough stress to think about, being the only (alleged) adult in the room without shoes made her feel strange. Heck, even Frank and Mary were wearing shoes!

“Uhm, I’ll be right back,” Emily spoke right between a gap in talks with Joyce’s family.

“Hm?” Joyce turned her head, already starting to discern the look. And with faces and publicity around them at every moment, she made a tiny gasp. “Oh! Do you need to charge your phone?”

Do you think you need a diaper change, honey?

“Uh— n...no, uh, just a call I need to make,” Emily pointed to the hallway over her shoulder, because who explains that they wanna go put on shoes inside a house to look like everyone else?

And naturally Joyce’s mouth warped a little, given that the tiny playbook they made before the guests arrived didn’t include that code phrase.

So Emily quietly excused herself, though it didn’t stop Joyce from following right after her. And once they were far enough away from the commotion:

“Doing okay?” Joyce asked softly.

“Yeah, I’m good,” Emily nodded simply. As good as she could be. She couldn’t never *not* be slightly on edge, though. God forbid Warden the dog decided to come back around and flip up her skirt. The unfortunate reality was she didn’t know if she’d been outed to Hannah or not, and at best a near-miss was making her woozy.

“Good,” Joyce nodded, then finally made a smile that could make Emily do the same. “Did you want a second to cool off?”

“No...not exactly, I mean, I just...” she turned around and walked over to the door where a pile of shoes were. Mainly only Emily’s and two other tiny demons responsible for Emily’s flattened diapered bum.

“Oh!” Joyce gasped, and thankfully the message was clear.

Joyce realized and understood how desperately Emily wanted to fit in and feel adult like everyone else, thank goodness.

Which is why Emily watched Joyce snatch her shoes away before she could have a chance to put them on.

“I didn’t even think of that,” Joyce smiled appreciatively as she dangled Emily’s shoes from her fingers. “Warden is decently trained, but he can have an issue with chewing on stuff... We can keep these upstairs in our room, kay?”

“W-well, I kind of wanted to put them on...” Emily muttered with an outstretched hand.

“What?” Joyce asked, then chuckled. “Got someplace else to be?”

“No, but...” Did she really have to say it? “I just...wanna put my shoes on, is all.”

“Since when?” Joyce giggled, but she didn’t hold them hostage. She dropped them to the floor, although she did pick them back up once she was on her knees. “Let’s get these on over by the stairs.”

“Joyce...” Emily said a bit cautiously. She couldn’t help but look down the other end where they could still see bodies moving, talking, and celebrating. “I can do it...”

“...Okay,” Joyce shrugged again, setting the shoes down but sitting on her knees. But then she smiled. “Would you feel more comfortable if I wasn’t wearing shoes either?”

“Wh-?...” Emily tried to feign ignorance, but her immediate knee-jerk was enough to make Joyce smirk, then bring a round of blushes back to her face all over again.

“Emily, you’re comfy; why do you wanna change that?”

“*Because* just because of what I’m...wearing...that doesn’t mean I can’t just try and fit in a little more...!”

And quite selfishly, Joyce said adamantly, “but I don’t want you fitting in,” then even frowned at her lover and friend for saying such a disappointing thing. “I want you as comfy as you are and look like when you’re at home.”

“Joyce,” Emily said, sitting on the stairs in front of her. She crossed her arms and shook her head. “No.”

And Joyce with a giggle rolled her eyes.

“Emily, yes.”

And if there was room for belief that Emily was going to get her way, that went sailing along with Emily’s shoes skidding away where Joyce had flung them. Then before anything else could be said, Joyce juttled out her hip to unfold one leg, unlace her shoe, toss it, then repeat with the other. Now Emily could compare her white socks to Joyce’s black ones.

“Better now?” Joyce smiled.

“...No,” Emily turned the other cheek, albeit smiling a tiny bit.

“Good, so it is,” Joyce laughed again, then brushed her little girl’s shoulder. “Having fun?”

Emily nodded right back. “Yeah, I am. You are too, right?”

“Spending the holidays with you *and* family?” Joyce stood on her knees just to fall forward into a hug. “Easily a top ten.” As the laughter from the kitchen picked up, she leaned back for a second just to look down the hall. “Here, hold this for a second?”

“Sure,” Emily did so without a thought. After all, it was Joyce asking. So like a good girl she accepted the bundled up hem of her own skirt so Joyce could see her puffy crotch. “W-wait...!”

“It’s just a second...” Joyce sang soothingly, as Emily flinched with each pop on her onesie-covered crotch. “Up-up!” she encouraged each time the nervous girl’s hands started to droop.

“Joyce...please...!” Emily begged, but feeling her mommy squeeze her front said enough that it didn’t matter what she thought right then.

And seeing that Joyce wanted to do things her way, as stupid as it was, Emily was certainly feeling a bit taunted into trying to do things just the same. A couple more cups of water was all it had taken to make her feel full again, and now she was ready to be empty once more.

She was sitting on a short step, holding her skirt and flashing her diaper at her lover and caregiver, exhaling through her nose as she focused and felt a strangely pleasant feeling of release. All at once she managed to break down the wall yet again and freely wet herself, specifically her diaper.

“Ahp~!” Joyce reacted with glee, too giddy to not look at Emily’s embarrassed face. “Better? Got it all out?” as lovy-dovy and cushy as she was being, it was Joyce’s textbook brand of patronizing that made her subject equal parts tormented and tickled, feeling a certain kind of silly that wasn’t appropriate for family gatherings.

“There...” Emily mumbled with puffed out cheeks. “Can we go back now?”

“In a minute,” Joyce made another chuckle, though much less this time for teasing’s sake.

“What? Why?” Emily tried to drop the skirt, but Joyce put her hands right back up. “Joyce...!” They could only play games for so long!

“Emily, baby, I need to check you again,” Joyce explained a bit more seriously, without the jokes. Like it was a matter of fact now.

And that wasn’t missed by the girl suddenly blushing even harder. Imagine that. Wetting your diaper in front of your mommy is going to make her check and see if you need a change. Go fucking figure. Yet only a thought like that existed in the land of retrospect inside Emily’s head, which is why she was downright embarrassed for giving Joyce a reason to be an actual mommy to her.

Needless to say, her diaper was warmer, thicker, and heavier. Known by Emily out of feeling, and also mutually by Joyce pressing her front yet again.

“Keep this up and I’m gonna have to use one of those boosters...” Joyce commented.

“*Joyce!*”

“I’m not trying to tease you~” Joyce kissed her on the lips to calm her down. “Don’t hold it in like that. Bad for you and your diapers.”

And while it was a mortifying hill to die on, Emily mumbled, “I-I don’t hold it in...”

“You do when you’re not at home,” Joyce countered, suddenly knowing better about Emily’s bladder than the girl herself. “Point is, you don’t need a change yet. Yay!” Like going for as long as possible without needing a new diaper somehow made her more mature or continent-seeming than any other person that wore them.

“Where did those two go off to...?” a fast-coming voice mumbled nearby, and with footsteps too quick, Emily could only manage to stuff her skirt down over her exposed diaper before they turned the corner.

“There you two are!”

And somehow, despite the circumstances, Joyce of all things found it in herself to be bothered and annoyed rather than frantic for almost being found out. After all, you couldn’t have a secret blown if it wasn’t much of one to begin with.

“Mom?” Joyce raised her eyebrow, and Emily kept avoiding looking at Mary standing right beside them. “Need something?”

“We were gonna start dinner,” Mary smiled, looking kind, caring, and considerate. And *especially* observant of the two on the stairs. Crouching down, right beside Joyce, she asked in a lowered voice, “If you want I can give you two a few minutes to get her changed?”

And Emily was too busy looking at the blank wall half a foot away from her to notice the outright audacity Joyce’s mom just had to ask about her diaper.

Joyce, meanwhile, went wide-eyed instead.

“*Mom? D-did you forget what we talked about?*” *What we JUST talked about?!*

“No, I did not,” Mary shook her head, looking quite smug and proud of herself. “I’m doing what you asked and am talking to you about it!”

DOING IT IN FRONT OF EMILY DEFEATS THE WHOLE POINT!

“...We’re talking again. *Later*,” Joyce frowned at the woman who could do no wrong.

“Okay?” Mary nodded, though it was clear she didn’t quite understand which rule of the game she had broken. “But Joyce?”

Did she even want to know what she had to say? “...Yes?”

“Since we’re all about to sit down, you might wanna go and change Emily so—”

“--Yup, got it,” Joyce briskly answered in a dismissive voice, sending her mother off with an untarnished smile. After shaking her head with a helpless groan, only Emily’s collective disbelief could calm her down.

And although it was a sore subject, particularly because Mary made it one, Emily awkwardly asked, “...so does that mean we’re gonna...”

“Yeah...” Joyce sighed, motioning with her hand to start Emily’s scurry up the stairs. “And *not* because my mom said so. Because *I* think you need one.”

“Mhm...” Emily nodded, then stood up to make her way first, all the while Joyce listened to the metal clinks of her opened onesie snaps flapping into each other. Invisible underneath her skirt.

And per Joyce’s decision, and not by any account of her mother’s own advice, they changed Emily’s diaper.

If there was a place to be when it came to having Thanksgiving dinner, surely it was Frank’s and Mary’s.

Turkey, stuffings, gravy, mashed potatoes, stuffings, casseroles, cranberries, butter and rolls, and so much more. Everything there was for food made it evidently tantamount to tradition in the truest sense, as between both tables plates were filled with all the meats and morsels any starved mind on such a holiday could want for.

“Frankh...!” Hannah gushed with a hand held against her food-filled cheek. “It’s all sho good...!”

“You can wait to tell me that after swallowing, you know?” Frank advised with a warning signal, but immediately broke out into laughter.

“Don’t be afraid to join us all for dinner, though!” Rob waved his arm over at the head chef, who was still toting an apron around his waist and a dish cloth over his shoulder.

“He’s right, Frank!” Ian laughed, son of Martha. “You made it all, so you should be enjoying it too!”

“Let’s not forget my co-chef who helped me make it all?” Frank jokingly scolded as the tables erupted in joking applause and laughs for Joyce with a fork stuck in her mouth. Clueless and caught off guard, only Emily heard the chuckle through her nose right beside her.

“Emily helped too this time though, didn’t she?” Mary quickly included, like a parent demanding credit for their kid’s hard-fought participation trophy.

“No way, really? You didn’t say any of that!” Hannah smiled at Emily from the other side of the table.

“It really wasn’t a lot...” Emily shyly laughed it off. *Because no, really, it WASN’T a lot...!*

“Jeez, between you both then every night must be a pretty nice dinner,” Charles, Daniel’s brother, said to Emily and Joyce. “Must be a pretty happy coincidence for you both to be such great cooks, though!”

“Mm, well, I tend to like hogging the kitchen, a bit,” Joyce put on a sheepish look, then laughed along with everyone else. “Blame my dad for always making me cook in his shadow!”

“Oooohh!” the tables erupted as the playful accusations were flung, and Frank threw up his hands just to cease the attack.

“I mean, you guys can’t cook *that* often, do you?” Trisha suddenly asked them both. “You must be going to restaurants like what, maybe four times a week at least? Heck, if I could afford it too, I know I would!” she laughed, and so did some others.

“I think we all would,” John chuckled, “but as a man used to going out to buy my meals, you can’t underestimate a home cooked meal, you know?”

And without a word, Joyce smiled appreciated at her brother.

Then Hannah looked at her fiance with a concerned expression.

“Hon, you know microwaved freezer food isn’t the same as a restaurant, right?”

Even Emily had a hard time keeping a straight face, as not a single person was spared from the killer comedic timing. Best of all was John dying proudly on his hill, taking it all in stride just to be the entertaining butt of a joke.

The Thanksgiving feast continued for all.

Well...

For most.

Emily played the part of piling up her plate with food, pretending to sample all the different things she “just had to try.” It was the result of a very serious conversation Emily and Joyce were busy having upstairs, possibly in the midst of a diaper change.

Emily, I already put aside some of those crackers and that cheese board for you. Does that sound good?

What? I’m gonna eat the same stuff as everyone else, though?

Because you want to, or because you think you have to?

...Because I want to.

Emily, you do a better job of lying when it comes to hiding your potty face...

I’m not lying! Joyce, I’m fine!

Alright, alright... Just let me know if you want what’s left from the appetizers, though.

I won’t. Because I won’t want them.

Okay, miss grumpy pamper-pants.

Don’t call me that.

Okay, Bougie Baby.

Don't call me that either!

Fine... Diaper Bum.

Joyce...!

Maybe she remembered a little bit *too* much, but that was the gist...and why Emily was...reluctantly committing to her own resolve. It felt wrong to say that any of the food looked gross, because it...didn't. But the vibe and feeling didn't quite match the girl's palette. Frank and Joyce were undeniably amazing cooks, but you can't take the signature tastes out of Thanksgiving without becoming something else entirely.

Hence the dilemma.

Turkey was far from Emily's favorite kind of meat, and mashed potatoes were just too much mush for her mouth to enjoy. Gravy just made it seem slimy, and at best the stuffing was just a sweetness that should've been saved for a dessert. The green bean casserole was a smash hit among everyone. Everyone but Emily. She tried tasting it all, but quite possibly mind had long-since beaten every bit of matter on her plate, already leaving her predisposed to not like anything she tried.

Could she finish it all? Maybe. Did she want to? ...Hardly.

So she was left to put on a performance. One where she kept on occasionally adding salt or pepper, just to seem like she was engaging with her food. Use a fork and knife here, section off some pieces there... Open up a roll from the baskets on the table, butter it, eat it, and act like that somehow meant she was eating the food already on her plate.

And just *maybe*, on the rarest of occasion, she'd stomach an actual bite of her food. Not without hurriedly washing it down with some water, of course. Water that even unprompted Joyce continually kept standing to get refills for. Whether Emily wanted it or not.

Luckily there was too much chit-chat, forks clinking plates, and overall commotion to keep anyone from really seeing the girl play her game.

Everyone but the person right next to her, of course.

Faster that food could leisurely go into her mouth, somehow food was vanishing even sooner than that. Occasionally bit by bit would go away, though it was simply for a reason that science couldn't explain.

"Oh, wait, Emily," John called for her attention. "Did Joyce ever tell you about the time a bug got into our tent when we were kids?"

"What?" The girl stalling her dinner's eyes went wide. "No!" she grinned at Joyce who could only roll her eyes. "What happened?"

"If you tell that one, then that means Joyce gets to share the one where Uncle Frank and Auntie Mary caught you drinking that one New Years!" a cousin taunted him right back, and the comedic tension only started getting more of a rise out of Luke and Oliver.

"Like beer?" the oldest of the two asked, but his mother, Trisha, quickly hushed him.

"No, like sodas," she put out a bland smokescreen that even the most gullible of minds might question. "And that's a story we can tell *later*," she stared accusingly at her husband, the one who suggested it to begin with.

And while Emily's head played tennis by pivoting from each player to the next, the mysteries about her missing food continued to unfold right beneath her.

"Are you actually afraid of bugs?" Emily finally asked Joyce, who was currently stuck with an unexplained mouthful of food. After all, her plate had been empty for some time.

"Mmmm?" she mumbled, swallowed, then sipped some of her drink. "Yes, I very much am... I mentioned that before, you know?"

And it did ring a tiny bell, but the moment the dentist started to become associated with it, she quickly chose to forget.

"More importantly," Joyce sighed, "I'm full." Then left with not only her own plate, but Emily's too without a single ask.

Quietly, Emily murmured a thanks as she passed around.

"So Emily," Trisha said right across from her. "How did you and Joyce meet? Let me guess: it was like one of those things that starts at an executive dinner or something, right?" she laughed at her own string of words, since it didn't quite seem like a joke.

“Uhm, no... It was more like...outside, I guess. Yeah. We just sort of...met on the sidewalk?” Because of course that told more than enough of the story.

It wasn't the best answer, and Trisha wasn't that great of a receiver either, hence the confused look on her face. Nevertheless she shrugged though, and that was the end of it.

Until the next question.

“So what kind of work do you do? Are you in medical like Joyce? Or well, I mean, more like management, I guess!”

“Yeah, Em!” Frank called from the oven nearby. “Everything at the office doing good?”

Because of course she forgot. She forgot how much Frank and Mary knew, which was that there wasn't any office of any kind. Not when they first met, and certainly not now. As far as they knew, she was still happily working away in real estate. The only people who had a semblance of the truth right now were Hannah and John, but even then it was grossly embellished... Now there were two different stories about her in the same room, and she had to decide which one to toss out quickly.

“Uhm...actually, I'm not really in real estate right now, anymore...” Her feet fidgeted underneath the table, finally brushing against a soft body of fur that was hiding beneath it.

“Oh wow, you worked in real estate?” Trisha drilled, and Emily tried to endure. “Maybe you scored Joyce a good deal on a house?” she self-inserted yet another laugh track. Others chuckled too, but none like the one who was giggling at the very words she herself was spouting.

“No, but that'd be a pretty cool perk, huh?” Emily tried to join in on the joke. “I just did office work, really.”

“Just office work?” Trisha nodded and listened.

Just office work?

“Yeah...” Emily answered, then sipped her water. “Just the office,” then she shrugged.

If only looks could kill. Though, they certainly could make unsuspecting girls nearly jump in their seats when they might least expect such a murderous stare.

Without a word and barely an expression, Emily finally noticed by the sink that very look coming from her one and only Mama Bear. Either Trisha just rubbed the back of her head out of coincidence or to feel the imaginary lasers that were being stared right into her.

Poor comments and supposed jokes that fell flat was something Joyce was used to, especially from her cousin's wife. Her skin was thick and a few petty jabs disguised as humor or "just curious" hardly made a difference to her; it was just an unfortunately annoying reality. An inconvenience. But that was Joyce. Emily didn't do so well as hiding the discomfort it made her feel, which is why an attack on her was an attack on Joyce's baby.

In the calmest way possible, Joyce looked downright feral to poor and frightened Emily. Not because of the things Trisha was saying to her, but because of what she worried about that Joyce might do.

But before both women could collide, Frank stepped in with an ushering voice.

"O-kay! O-kay! Let's get everyone's plates to the counter so we can all digest a little! Report back in twenty minutes for dessert!"

"I'll start us on some coffee!" Mary volunteered, along with her two other sisters Carol and Martha.

"Mom, can we go use the iPad now...?" one of Trisha's kids complained to her.

And Emily used it as a chance to physically remove herself from the situation, drifting over to Joyce who looked partly frozen on her hellbent hatred for someone in particular.

"Black, right?" Mary had her daughter by the shoulder, already forcing a mug into her hands. As unhinged as her mother could be when concerning the most private and embarrassing matters...she still knew how to at least begin defusing her own daughter.

"...Thank you," Joyce quietly accepted.

"Emily, do you want any?" Mary offered.

"Uhm...yeah, okay. Uhh...a lot of milk, if that's okay? ...Cream too, please."

"Give me just a minute!" Mary smiled, then joined her sisters back at the coffee maker surrounded by a sea of a thousand mugs.

“Okay, boys, break time!” John took the lead for his two cousins and marched them onward to the living room. “Let’s go see what the game’s like!” It didn’t take long for some of the uncles to follow.

“Text me the score~!” Hannah called after them, finally standing from her chair and joining Joyce and Emily. “Wanna go sit out on the back porch?”

“Yeah,” Emily suddenly blurted out. “I want to.”

And who was Joyce to argue with that?

“Carol, is it okay if Warden comes with us?” Hannah asked.

“Please do!” Ted’s voice shouted from the living room.

“What he said!” Carol carried her spouse’s sentiment.

And only because they were among others Emily wasn’t literally pushing Joyce to get outside.

“One with extra milk!” Mary delivered Emily’s mug before they left, and also a steaming cup for Hannah too.

Also because Emily had a mug now.

The three women, a dog included, went onto the back porch, save for Warden who trotted down the steps to roam in the backyard. All three sat on the steps, where Hannah sighed, Joyce exhaled through her nose, and Emily quietly sipped her mug.

“Joyce, you need to do better at not looking like you’re about to murder somebody,” Hannah flippantly said, then burst out laughing the moment Joyce’s expression twitched.

“I...I was fine,” Joyce tried to stiffen herself back up again.

“You...did seem kind of scary...” Emily shyly admitted.

“Did you tell Emily anything about Trisha?” Hannah leaned forward to ask Joyce.

“No...” Joyce turned the warm mug in her hands. “I figured she might have enough *decency* to keep her *stupid* comments just to me...”

And here Emily was, thinking it was all sunshine and roses at the Summers' household...

"I'm sorry," Joyce apologized to Emily. "Trisha's the only one that can be...annoying, sometimes."

And while Joyce was known not to be the biggest fan of actual kids, suddenly Emily could see why there might be a bit more anger with having an incident caused by the same woman's children now, too... But without even needing to explain, she could also imagine the friction between the two, although particularly one-sided. It was simple. Jealousy over Joyce's success, because whatever Trisha did have, it likely wasn't what Joyce did.

"She can be *very* passive," Hannah added, rolling her eyes. "Unfortunately I feel like we all let it slide just to keep the peace, and also because Joyce herself, as far as I know, hasn't said anything about it yet...?"

"Yet." Joyce said with a heavy sense of suspense.

"Yes, yet," Hannah repeated, then clarified, "specifically about telling her to stop; not murder."

"You...probably shouldn't do that," Emily agreed, scooting close enough for the two to touch arms.

It was enough for Joyce to spurt out a chuckle, and finally everyone started sipping.

"Warden!" Hannah was clapping her hands sometime later, sending the dog inside along with an empty mug in her hand. "I'm gonna go watch a little bit of the game with John. You two wanna join?"

"I'm gonna check some emails first," Joyce waved her phone in her hand, but looked at Emily. "Don't feel like you have to wait on me. Maybe Dad's getting out some of the desserts, too?"

And it was a low blow, because admittedly Emily was both curious and expectant of the delicious treats to come. The actual part of the holiday's cuisine that Emily did like, because it had no specific rules or regulations. Dessert was dessert, and that was more than enough for her.

But before Emily could leave, Joyce said to Hannah, "you can close the door first!"

Hannah was gone and it was just them on the steps.

"Sorry," Joyce set down her mug. "I figured you'd rather I check you in private..."

“...Mm...” Emily quietly agreed, bracing herself for the diaper check. A few snaps off and on later, and her diaper had been assessed.

“Bone dry,” Joyce announced, almost sounding disappointed. “But you’re free; I’ll be inside soon!”

“Uh huh...” her girlfriend said back, standing on her feet and trying not to hear herself crinkle back inside. She dropped her mug off at the counter station as the sisters mingled, then lingered by the entrance of the living room where most of everyone was watching football on the TV.

“Wanna sit?” Hannah beckoned over to Emily, who was already cozy on the couch beside her husband-to-be.

Why the heck not? “Sure...” Emily agreed, but her expression froze when her stomach made an unpleasant noise. Not the kind for when it’s hungry, but something else. A queasy knot. An uncomfortable pressure. Digestion went the wrong and ultra fast way... It gurgled and her sphincter clenched.

Uh oh.

“A-actually...I...” Emily muttered, only seen as stiff and awkward by Hannah. Then before she could start crossing her legs in discomfort, Emily hurried down the hall and up the stairs.

Toilet...toilet...! She frantically rushed, yet just as she reached the door, she froze.

Go inside the bathroom and then what? How would she use the toilet? How was she supposed to take off her diaper? Shifting nervously in place made her padded state speak volumes, of which she was powerless against. But her indigestion was making her sweat as she was feeling fuller by the second, desperate to poo.

Wetting her it was one thing, but *filling* her diaper at a party filled with Joyce’s family? It made her nervous just to imagine, and her stomach started to prick with sharp pains.

With few options and no time to think, Emily hurried through the open door into their bedroom and made a soft grunt as she closed the door as quietly as she could.

“A-ah...ow...!” she whimpered, dropping into a squat by the corner of the bed, squeezing the neatly-made covers and mattress underneath as she helplessly pushed. She felt her bum cheeks spread and the mess pushed into the back of her diaper in one long and large fell swoop. But her

diaper only had so much room to stretch, which is why she put on a thousand yard stare the moment it started to smush and creep along her skin. She shuddered as she did so, but the relief on her stomach was almost immediate, all of which as she stared directly ahead of and through the open closet door. The closet with its light still on.

The closet with a person sifting through the inside of it.

“Where could Frank have put that...?” an all too familiar voice muttered.

And unfortunately, Emily sighed the moment she finished messing.

And even more unfortunately, she was heard.

Right at the same time Trisha had moved something aside in the closet, causing a dumbfounded reaction from the woman.

“W-wait, what...?” Trisha muttered in what sounded like simultaneous shock and ridiculousness. And then she turned, facing the room outside of the closet. Looking squarely at Emily, the girl currently squatting on the other side of the bed like she was playing a poor game of hide and seek. Too bad the stinky smell reaching her nose was a dead giveaway.

And in Trisha’s hands, of all things, was certainly not an iPad. Far less digital and certainly thicker. Something that came in a pack of ten, was made of plastic and had four tapes. Something decorated in motifs and characters from preschool-hit cartoons, only of course sized for a petite adult.

Both women were staring at one another in disbelief. No one said a word.

But alas, Trisha made a very unfortunate noise.

She made an audible sniff.

Her mouth curled into a frown.

Then she blurted aloud,

“Did...did you just poop your pants?”