

52 - Going and Going

“Oh god! Wasn’t that so scary?” Joyce forced out a nervous laugh. While she cuddled and consoled she had a firm hand on the steering wheel as she walked them to a private restroom.

“N-nn...no it wasn’t...!” Emily tried to stay quiet, but her stuttering sobs were as clear as the stain on her pants. The only favor life was doing for her right then was the shroud of night at least somewhat hiding her shame.

“Yes it was!” Joyce rubbed her back. “You didn’t hear it, but I was screaming so much!” She did her best to walk them both, but the escort was difficult when Emily seemed wanting to move less and less.

From the frightened, crying girl’s perspective, every step was just rubbing warm, wet and uncomfortable clothes against her skin with each move she made. Without even looking she could tell how much of a number she had done to herself. There were streaks between her legs that said everything that needed to be said. She was wet all over but in only the worst ways possible. The clothes clung to her; glued by her own bodily shame.

Her own body didn’t even want to listen anymore. Why wasn’t she a practical doll by this point? Was she in shock and that’s why it wasn’t hitting her yet, was that it? Emily, a grown adult just peed herself in a public space, among a crowd of many; crying, no less.

The image in her mind was echoing over and over, making her heavier and heavier with angst and worry about another terrifying encounter. As they moved she felt the last few bits inside herself spasm, dribbling out whatever was left. Why did this have to happen? Why did the timing have to be so terribly inconvenient? Why couldn’t things just go right for once?

“B-but, but you were yelling...!” Emily whimpered, remembering something over the sound of a chainsaw, including possibly a few choice words.

“Mmm...I think you misheard me,” Joyce chuckled as she squeezed her shoulders. “Either way, that was plenty of excitement for one night!” she sang in a cheery, comforting tune, hiding away just how much contempt she held for herself and the very person who put Emily’s poor panties to ruins.

“I-I’m sorry...!” The girl finally let loose in another way once the door was shut behind them. What was already cracking could finally shatter in the privacy of just them.

“Sorry? For what?” Joyce innocently asked as she stood her girlfriend right in front of and facing away from the toilet. She reached around her waist and flipped up the seat then dropped the zipper along her jacket.

“I-I embarrassed us...!” her words could barely finish as the pitch was completely gone. Her legs kept her upright but her arms were limp like noodles as she let Joyce undress her.

“Embarrassed us? Emily, I don’t think you could hear how loud I shrieked! I doubt anyone noticed a little accident!” Joyce laughed as she dropped her jacket on an empty hook. And as a sign of truthfulness, Joyce certainly believed what she said, although...for *how* she herself caused a scene, there was room for debate...

Joyce squatted, face-to-front with Emily’s jeans, smelling what was unfortunately obvious.

“Let’s get these off, huh?” Joyce smiled up at the sobbing girl, working her fingers around the zipper and button with no hesitation. “And yes, I apologize in advance for not scheduling a potty break any sooner...” Joyce openly and jokingly lamented.

“I-it’s not your fault...!” Emily again tried to reason in a game that was designed to not let her win.

She can’t stay in these... Joyce was all smiles as the panties came down next. “Think you can sit down for me?” Joyce asked, but just as Emily started to obey her caregiver’s arm hooked around her back. “Wait, actually, let me wipe that seat first...” and she turned over to the sink where her bag was.

A packet of wipes came out and Emily watched with shame, recognizing them from their home and from her personal room.

“Just to be safe~” Joyce explained after a kiss on the cheek before wiping the seat. “Okay, bum down. See if you need to go any more, alright?”

And she did so with a sore feeling in her stomach, even more ashamed over the thought that she was doing that very thing before they even made it to a bathroom.

All she could see was the floor until Joyce was back in front of her face again. “I’m gonna take these off, okay?” she smiled up at the girl beside herself, gently tugging at the wet clothes that were already starting to go cold.

“Mm...m-m-hmm...” Emily sniffled back through her tears. “Is...is it gonna take long to dry...?”

“I don’t know if it’s gonna be quick enough, honey...” Joyce explained gently, even if Emily could suddenly realize that herself the moment her wet socks were being rolled off next.

“I-I’m...I’m sorry...!” she apologized again and again, somehow finding way after way to mess things up.

“Sorry for what, Emily?” Joyce laughed as she patted her head. “What, for being scared? Emily, I’ve seen you with enough scary movies to know not to let you near them. I didn’t know that was going to happen tonight, and *I’m* the one responsible for this. If I knew the park was gonna do this I wouldn’t have taken us at all...”

“I’m done...” Emily hiccupped and went to stand, but alas there was nothing around her ankles to pull up. “W-wait, but what are we gonna do about my...!”

“Hey, hey!” Joyce tried to shush her. “No more tears, okay? *Now*,” Joyce leaned back with a smug grin and crossed her arms. “Just who do you think you’re dealing with, huh? Who knows your favorite foods, keeps track of your bedtime, *and* remembers to pack your pacifier?”

“Y-...” Emily started, but frowned sadly. “I don’t have-a bed-”

“--Yes you do,” Joyce interrupted with a much more dead-tone response. Somewhere from the shadows of her pockets a magical seal was produced and a chewy bulb was between Emily’s lips. “I was hoping you’d say something like: ‘You, Joyce!’” she mimicked cheerily, “or... ‘You, Mommy!’” Joyce laughed at herself as her girlfriend squirmed with a red face where she was forced to sit. A few unanswered seconds went by, and Joyce innocently frowned. “What– not gonna answer?”

“Y-yooh...” Emily mumbled back.

“Yes, me,” Joyce quietly confirmed, but her pride was abundant. “Of course I packed accordingly!” *Sort of*... She stood back up and fished through her bag on the sink, pulling out a bundle of something.

“Ta-dah!” Joyce wow’ed as the clothing unfurled. A pair of navy blue pants covered in polka-dots hung from her hands with two beaded strings dangling from the waist.

Finally she pulled the pacifier out of her own mouth. “But those are PJs...?” Emily sounded unsure.

“Mhm,” Joyce nodded before leaning out just to look at them herself. “I thought we might be getting out late, so this was my idea of surprising you when we got back to the car,” she chuckled. Between the drive and all their spent energy, Emily really would be sleeping like a baby on the ride back. “So let’s call it an early surprise!”

“Did...did you bring so—”

“Yes, I brought socks!” Joyce quickly anticipated and answered. “Cold feet in the car?” she scoffed, “Emily, do you know who you’re dealing with?”

And it was the first laugh she got out of her, finally inviting a good kind of warmth into the tiled and unfamiliar room.

“Your shoes should be fine for the most part, but I wanna use a few paper towels on them...” she explained over the swiping of brown sheet after sheet from the dispenser.

“But...what are we gonna tell everyone...?” Emily continued to doubt and distress.

“That you did what frankly I wish I could be doing right now; get comfy.” She started stuffing the girl’s shoes with paper towels. “We’ll say something came up, yada-yada, and grab two of those scary-charms so we can get away from all those spooky monsters,” she murmured while she checked her phone.

“W-we’re leaving?”

Joyce looked up from her project at Emily who seemed taken aback, then glanced around as if to gesture that the situation clearly spoke for itself.

“Well yeah, honey?”

“But...Carol and Michael– they invited us!”

“And the park is scary right now,” Joyce rebutted, but with a sideways look. “Emily, they won’t mind. We’ll even make it up to them by—”

Quietly, but firmly, Emily insisted, “I wanna stay.”

“Emily...you saw what happened out there...” Her words came carefully, given Emily did much more than *see* wet pants. “I’m sorry, but no. We’ll even pick something up on the way back home, okay?”

“I...” Emily fumbled with her words and had the butts of her palms resting on her thighs, finding the courage to speak so insistently when she was naked from the waist down sitting on a toilet. “I-I’m staying!”

The math was quite simple.

Emily plus scary park equals another pair of wet pants. No matter how selfish Emily wanted to be, it didn’t change that they were out of changes.

“Emily, no, we’re leaving.”

“No I’m not! We’re staying until everybody leaves...!”

“Am I taking you out before we say bye to them then?” Joyce switched gears and added the pressure. “I can always tell them over the phone we had to go?”

“I-I’ll wear one of those charm things, so why can’t we stay?!” Emily whined, “they won’t scare me then!”

“Just because they’re not jumping at you doesn’t mean they won’t jump at everyone else. Emily, baby, why are you fighting me on this?”

“Be-because I...I can handle it now! I-I know what I did, and...and I won’t do it again!”

Wouldn’t or couldn’t was a very important distinction, and what Emily wasn’t saying clearly that Joyce was already feeling was the latter of the two. Emily could *and* would certainly get scared again, only now her bladder wasn’t full enough to do anything about it.

“You say that like you peed your pants the first time on purpose...” Joyce sighed with a small grin, and Emily’s face showed a shocked frown of betrayal.

“Ah-ah! If you get to say stuff like that, then so do I,” Joyce was quick to counter. “No pouty faces. Emily, why is this the hill you always try to die on? *No* scary stuff! None! Nada!” Honestly, why did she always get involved in the things Joyce didn’t want her to? Was it because she said no? “I wish somebody would’ve told me your twenties are just more of the terrible twos...” Joyce cupped her own cheek, rubbing the girl’s shoulder.

“I...I just... *I* want to make decisions too! They...they invited us! I don’t wanna leave because of me! I don’t care who made a mistake or what happened! I’ll wear the stupid charm and I’ll hold your hand all night, so please don’t make us leave! I don’t wanna make a scene!”

She couldn’t remember the last time she went to an amusement park. She couldn’t remember the last time she got to do something as spontaneous as this and with so many others. There was the zoo with Joyce and her parents, and tonight was just an extension of that. They rode on rides, played games, got lunch, dessert, and so much more. Just getting to chat with Michael and Carol while watching their kid go wild over all the silliest things was so much fun, and yet all of that was at risk of ending prematurely because of Emily’s own shortcomings.

So to try and save all of that, Emily did want to steer; she wanted to make decisions. But she looked up at Joyce from where she sat on the toilet, still waiting for her girlfriend to finish drying *her* shoes, being reminded almost painfully that she had no right to make a single decision. Of course she could, but only at the cost of resetting the mood and forsaking what was so important to them both. In other words, the best she could do was throw a tantrum.

“Emily...” Joyce’s voice went somber, “You *know* I do this for your sake, right?”

“I know...!” Emily sniffled. Why was being little so hard?

“You’ve been having a lot of fun today, haven’t you?” Between all the pictures Joyce had been getting, “I know I have.”

And it was another teary nod from her adult girlfriend.

“I’m sorry I’m crying...” Emily rubbed her eyes, “I’m just... I’m embarrassed.”

Understandable. “Don’t be. Em, the only people who know us at this park weren’t even nearby. If anyone even *thought* they saw anything, I bet they’ve already forgotten about it. Watch, you’re gonna hear *so* much screaming when we get out there!” Joyce laughed. “Trust me, a whole lot of other people are gonna be busy getting scared for us.” And while it was her comfort tactic, it still didn’t make Joyce any more adverse to the idea of letting Emily walk around a park at night filled with horrors.

“*Please?* Can we please stay until Carol and Michael leave? I won’t get scared again!”

They both stared long and hard at each other. Emily was simultaneously pleading and determined, while Joyce was resolute, erring on contemplative, and dangerously close to

cracking. Maybe when their roles were defined like this Emily couldn't call the shots, but she could seriously lobby and advocate for them.

"*If*," Joyce began and stopped the moment Emily's face lit up. "I said *if*," Joyce carefully reminded, implying that any enthusiasm should be seriously curbed. "If I decide we can stay, do you promise to listen to me? There won't be any arguing with what I do?" It's not like Emily had been misbehaving at all tonight; Joyce just wanted to keep her safe.

"Th...that depends..." Emily answered hesitantly. "You're not gonna show them anything...right?" It was a vague question to ask that Emily didn't even understand herself. Her main concern was anything diaper related, but she sure as hell didn't want to give Joyce the idea assuming she hadn't thought of it already.

"No, of course not. I do wanna—" but she stopped once her pocket started vibrating. She pulled out her phone and smiled. "Speak of the devil."

"What? Who is it?" Emily tried, but Joyce already answered the phone.

"Carol?" Joyce sat against the sink.

"Hey there! You two doing okay?"

"Mhm, all good. I just needed to use the bathroom real quick. We still need to get some of those necklaces."

Emily quietly sulked on the toilet.

"Joyce, I'm so sorry! I swear if we knew about Emily we wouldn't have asked— or at least we would have prepared a bit better..."

"Don't worry, it's okay. We were talking about maybe ending the night for us a little early, though,"

"*No...!*" Emily whined quietly beside her. Without paying her much direct mind, Joyce quietly rubbed the back of her head.

"Yeah, no...I understand. But actually, I talked to Michael and I think he found a small part of the park the actors don't go to? I'd still get the necklaces, but they don't do scares in the superhero part of the park. Maybe we could all move over there?"

With the phone still against her ear she quietly glanced down at Emily. "...Having a look wouldn't hurt... Are you sure it's okay over there?"

"Yep, it'll be safe! And actually, how about we make it the last ride of the night? Michael and I were thinking we could do a reservation somewhere for us all after the park— and it's *our* treat!"

"Thank you very much for the offer," Joyce laughed, and Emily tried to decipher a conversation with only half the dialogue. "I think we're gonna have to pass on the offer, though. I know it sounds silly, but I have some meat in the fridge we were planning to have tonight... If it doesn't get used..."

"Oh, don't worry about it! We'll just take a raincheck on that. We should've asked in advance, but no biggie. So when might we be expecting you two? A few minutes?"

"Mmm...give us ten. We're about to go buy those necklaces. See you guys soon!"

And she hung up.

"What's happening?" Emily fished for answers.

"We're staying," Joyce said, and Emily was elated, "for one more ride."

And the joy had been killed.

"What? Why...?! That's not what we—!"

"--You *did* agree to that," Joyce tilted her stern head. "We're staying, but not for much longer. It's getting late and Carol and Michael were already looking to leave sometime soon. Everybody's gotta eat dinner, you know?"

"Wait, so we're going out to eat after this?" At least there was some kind of upside.

"No, no sit-downs. We can pick something up, but I want you home," Joyce decided as she pulled out a new pair of socks. That was how she'd like to spin the tale. She'd feel bad telling Emily they couldn't go because she peed through what she could have worn to a restaurant... Ignorance was certainly bliss.

"So are they leaving when we do?"

"Emily, don't start." Joyce's eyes started looking up at her.

“It’s just a question...!” Were questions not allowed anymore, or something?

“A question that’s all too familiar.” It was bedtime all over again. “Don’t worry about what they do. Our hands are full enough with each other.”

“I—...I’m just curious if they’re staying after we leave...!”

“So you can talk me into staying too?” Joyce looked expectantly, and Emily was hiding her face. “Can you stand up for me?” Joyce tried to move things along as she slid her dried shoes so she could stand on them.

“...What if it’s just two rides?”

“*Emily.*”

“I’m just thinking out loud...!”

“And I love hearing your voice, just not some of the words I’m hearing,” Joyce frowned, albeit grinning from ear to ear on the inside. Soon her polka-dot pajama pants were around her ankles and Joyce tugged them up. “Think you’re gonna be okay without undies?”

“I’ll be fine...” Emily mumbled with embarrassment.

“We won’t be here for much longer, but please, if you do need to go potty, tell me,” Joyce reminded, and the mention of limited time certainly put a sour look back on Emily’s face. “And as cute as it is, cool it with the temper tantrum, missy.”

“It’s not a temper!”

“Exactly what a temper-tantrum-haver would say. Now give me those footsies.”

Into the shoes they went. Dry, lukewarm, and clean.

“Now,” Joyce started as she zipped up her jacket, “do I get an extra-big hug for making my cutie all clean again?”

She did in fact receive an extra-big hug.

“Ou~! Is this a bonus?” Joyce giggled. A kiss was given too.

“...*Two rides*...” Emily whispered.

Finally, Joyce smiled back. “One ride and a spanking?”

An involuntary ‘*egh*’ escaped the girl. With distaste in her imagination, she softly groaned, “...One ride...”

Negotiations concluded.

Joyce was the first one to peer outside and made sure that the coast was clear. Now knowing what was afoot, the brave front Emily had in the bathroom was long gone the tighter she squeezed Joyce’s hand with both her own.

Vampires, zombies, psychos, goblins and ghouls roamed the paths, sneaking up on the unsuspecting and startling them with screams and laughs. How could people *like* this? Didn’t they come here for fun and thrills from the ride? Not walking from point A to point B?

It felt pathetic and cowardly the way Emily was holding onto her girlfriend. The guilt only came that way because she was just insisting on none of this happening. She couldn’t seem to get the pacing right as her head whipped every which way just to make sure nothing was sneaking up on them. They were two of many people walking by, but it wasn’t just one monster lurking about. She’d speed up and collide against Joyce’s side the moment she saw someone turn even remotely their way, or her sneakers may have started to scrape as she slowed down just to try and dodge someone walking by.

“So, Emily,” Joyce’s sudden voice startled her, but she could finally focus on something, “do you have a favorite ride from today?”

“Uh-m...” she kept looking every which way.

“Was it the bumper cars?” Casually, she steered them against one of the walls leading straight to a gift shop.

Her mouth may have been nailed down, but if Emily wasn’t looking for monsters, who would?

“N-no...it was the...the cups...”

“Cups? What kind of cups?”

“T...Teacu—” Then a nearby chainsaw roared in the night sky. “-Nonononono!” poor Emily screamed in Joyce’s jacket.

Meanwhile, all Joyce could think of was how much it hurt to humor the sweet girl. What mattered was that the shop was close and the short but frightening trek was almost over. A different group of people shrieked at the surprise of being scared, but their eventual laughs washed out everything else. With Emily shuddering and blinded by Joyce’s jacket and shirt, Joyce led the charge in getting them where they needed to go.

I wanna go home...I wanna go home...! There was a reason why Emily didn’t do scary, and this was exactly why. She knew it, and obviously Joyce knew it. While the breeze may have been chilly, even rawer than that were the potential frights just waiting to jump out at them lest they be in the wrong draft. Without her eyes though at least she didn’t have to see what she feared and could focus on feeling what she loved. And thank goodness she did.

It was a baseless hunch, or an imaginary sixth sense. She had no reason to, but she did anyway. Even with the entrance to the store right in front of them, Joyce played into the inkling of herself that was curious enough to turn her head back around and behind them.

Hunched over with a devilish grin and a pale-painted cracking face, some nightmare with long rusty nails for fingers had latched onto their blind spot like a parasite and was raring to jump out at them. Luckily they were too far to finish the job, or something else dissuaded them. Quite possibly and most likely the grim look on Joyce’s face, who without a word silently shook her head as if to imply that the beast would go no further. Without her whimpering girlfriend being any the wiser, a potential second crisis was narrowly averted.

“Hey, look!” Joyce carefully forced the girl out of herself and a roof over their heads with warm lights eased the tension. The double doorway leading back to the outside was wide and open for anything to walk through it, and yet somehow having their feet on wood and not the outside world made the girl feel refreshingly relaxed. With four walls and only one way in and one way out, a sense of safety was overtaking her.

Snacks, trinkets and plushies lined the walls and hung on decorative shelves. Promotional shirts hung from hooks and drink dispensers were stashed away in the corner. A few adults and kids were walking inside. *Human* people. No monsters, no surprises, and no scares.

“They won’t scare us in here,” Joyce quietly assured. “Not unless they want us to not buy anything, that is!”

For the sake of time they skipped out on the browsing and went straight to the cashier. It was a conversation Emily didn't want to be around for, but she'd much rather the embarrassing admission than thinking she was totally safe on her own. As she remembered, only vampires respected boundaries, so what could be said about everything else?

There was already a knowing look on the girl's face behind the desk. All it took was one glance at the pair, how they looked and what their body language was like.

Just as Joyce opened her mouth, the staff asked, "Let me guess, scary protection?"

"Please," Joyce apologetically smiled back. "Could we make it two, please?"

"Sure thing." The girl swiped two rings off the wall where many more remained. "Cash or card?"

"Card, please," Joyce tapped her magic black card against the counter. Emily nuzzled against her partner, avoiding eye contact the entire time.

"Great!" The girl held up one of the rings while she glanced at the screen, then her fists touched and the necklace compressed with a loud crackle and snap. Suddenly the dormant, faded blue all around it started to brighten and glow. "So if you put these around your necks or just keep it somewhere visible," she ignited the other ring, "the monsters know not to scare you! Have fun and please enjoy the park!"

They pulled away from the desk and Joyce positioned Emily right in front of her.

"One for you," she dropped the hoop over her head, "and one for me," Joyce then donned her own. "Oh, and hey!" She dragged them over to a mirror. They stood side by side and their reflections stared back at them. "Aren't we a pair, huh?" Blue thing one and blue thing two.

Emily hooked her finger around it, taking stock in what would be her hero of the night. Only second to Joyce herself. Her first instinct was to flinch the moment they stepped outside. The night was cold and immediately she spotted the monsters. She shivered and shuddered, but a firm squeeze on her arm reminded her.

"All safe!" Joyce whispered, and slowly, but surely, they walked forward. Not everyone like them was protected though and just being near the scares frightened Emily, but the constant thought that she herself was supposedly safe was comforting... Now she was protected. Shielded. A spectator that couldn't be affected by the outside world.

Quietly, she exhaled.

“Sorry about that!” Joyce waved as they hurried over.

“Don’t worry; we played a few games while we were waiting,” Carol nodded over at the two hyper girls swinging from Michael’s forearms. “You two all set?” she smiled at them, and Emily gripped her blue ring awkwardly. “Emily,” she stuck out her head with a guilty look. “I’m so sorry!”

“It’s fine...really,” Emily laughed awkwardly. “I’m sort of a scaredy cat.”

“*My* scaredy cat,” Joyce tugged her closer. “We didn’t wanna leave you guys hanging, though, so we were thinking one more ride?”

“--Or more,” Emily quietly interrupted, and Joyce spared no effort in giving her a look.

“*One* more ride,” Joyce directed at Carol who looked like they were trying to avoid getting in the middle of something.

“Well in that case... kids?” Carol called and Jackie and Katie sprinted over.

“Emily!” Jackie smiled wide up at her, then gasped. “I want a blue necklace too!”

“Yeah, me too!” Katie insisted just as much.

“On the way out we’ll take a look at them,” Carol dismissed, and suddenly Emily’s lifeline had become a cosmetic accessory in the eyes of another. As a supposed adult, the only thing she could be glad for was that they didn’t know what it was actually for.

“Hey guys!” Michael showed back up, “and hey Emily, you’re looking cozy!”

“Yeah,” Emily tried laughing it off, “just felt like getting a bit comfier.”

“I wish I had thought to bring some...” Carol sighed. “It’d be nice for the car ride home.”

“Um...excuse me?” Katie was standing in front of Joyce, hiding her swaying hands behind her back.

Joyce blinked in surprise, but she knelt down with a smile. “Mhm?”

“Uhm...” Katie hummed without eye contact, bending and twirling, looking over at Jackie for support who was only giggling herself. Neither guardian looked clued in on the matter either, but finally the small girl found the courage. “Is it...uhm...do you really own a building?”

And the couple was dumbfounded while the guardians looked shocked.

“Uhh...Katie, sweetheart, that’s not an appropriate thing to ask...” Carol gently advised, but quickly changed her tune with her actual daughter. “Jackie? What have you been saying to her?”

“Nothing!” Jackie defensively cried. “I just said she has her own skyscraper! Daddy said it first!”

Now Joyce’s mouth hung open, erring on a confused smirk.

“Jackie, that’s not polite to...” Michael stammered now with the spotlight on himself. He looked apologetically at Joyce. “Sorry– Carol and I can ramble a little in the wrong places...”

“Don’t rope me into this!” Carol cried next and Jackie looked like she was searching for a spot to dodge the fallout. “And *you!*” the mother didn’t let the daughter get far. “We do not share gossip in front of others!”

“But you said it first!” Jackie whined.

“In private, missy!” Carol corrected, possibly teaching a warped, yet practically valid lesson.

Joyce, still without a word to be given from her end, now had a quiet whisper in her ear from Katie who had just started the blow over.

“*Do you?*” she doubled down.

The confusion, shock, surprise, and embarrassment could be found everywhere in one way or another amongst all of them, but now humor was an addition from Joyce.

There were many different ways to answer her question. A simple explanation of how it wasn’t really her, but the company that owned the property, or how she technically owned just a very large majority of it. A lot of ways she could split it that probably wouldn’t go down easy. So instead:

“That’s right, actually! I *do* own a building.” That was all it took to put stars in the little girl’s eyes. Meanwhile, Emily tried not to be jealous of a first grader that could ask something as “personal” as that and get away with it. How long did it take Emily to figure out Joyce’s work?

“So are you the boss?” Jackie asked, completely dodging whatever lecture her mom was trying to give her.

“Yep, I’m the boss!” Joyce laughed, and now she had two little fans in her corner.

“Joyce…” Carol moaned apologetically, but she waved her hand at both husband and wife.

“Does Emily work for you?” Jackie asked next, idealistically ignoring the conflict of interest.

What surprised Emily though was the long, exaggerated sigh from her girlfriend.

“If only…” she cupped her cheek. “Emily doesn’t wanna work for me, and it’s probably for the best. I think I’d try to talk to her too much all day and never get any work done.” Very true. After all, she’d see to it that Emily had her very own desk in the same office, chief position be damned.

“Alright, girls,” Michael stepped up from behind, “if Joyce is okay with it you two can ask her more *after* we get in line for a ride. Joyce and Emily are leaving after this one, so let’s make it a good one, okay?”

“*Whaaat?*” they collectively whined.

“You’re leaving?!” Jackie cried up at Emily.

“It’s getting late, honey, and we might just leave with them too depending on how quick we are,” Carol explained.

“Wait! Can they sleep over tonight?!” Jackie blurted out. Michael jokingly rolled his eyes and girlfriend and girlfriend shared an amused look.

“No, they cannot, because grownups sleep at their *own* houses. Besides, nobody packed their PJs,” Carol shut her down quickly.

“But Emily’s got hers?” Jackie pointed and accused, and the blue glow did a good job at hiding the blush on her cheeks.

“And you’re already getting a sleepover with Katie, so don’t push your luck,” her mother was just as fast. “Alright you two, think hard about the last ride, okay? And it has to be one around here that you can see.”

Emily expected some kind of deliberation or a few moments to consider, but Jackie loudly decided.

“That one!”

Emily gave her a confused look. Her finger pointed at the one possible place that didn’t make any sense. The one spot she could have picked that not only wouldn’t hit a ride, but nothing even on this planet. Was there some kind of space race they didn’t know about?

“That one?” Carol seemed to humor her. “And you’re sure? If we go on, you and Katie can’t sit together. It’s either gonna be with me or Daddy. Are you okay with that too, Katie?” Carol really seemed to be playing make believe with them... What ride? Were they not just pointing up at the sky?

But then Emily remembered just how short the kids were. What was moderate to herself was giant to them, so of course it seemed odd at first. Just over the fence and some trees Emily did see a thick metal track above the ground. Oh, so a little coaster was all it was? Simple enough. And out of curiosity, Emily’s eyes traveled the path and followed the track backwards. It dropped down from a hill, sloped down, a little bit up, and then...up...and up...and up... and up, and up, and up, and up so high that Emily’s head couldn’t tilt back any further without falling on her backside.

The Atomic Dive! Come meet our park’s tallest coaster!

Emily thought they were being humored when in fact she was the one denying reality with delusions. And just then she felt the vibrations, heard the screams curdling by as the ground shook from the heavy coaster swinging by with a chilling breeze.

“We should hurry and get in line,” Michael nudged and Carol agreed. Even she didn’t look entirely thrilled at the selection.

It looked so impossibly high; unreal. It wasn’t real, right? Was it just a decorative piece? There was no actual way that *living* people went down that thing? Nevertheless, her shaky feet carried her along to keep in tow with the group. For as long as Joyce let her.

“No.” It was one word but implied more than enough by the way of Joyce’s tone, demeanor and concern.

“B-but Joyce, I—”

“No,” and she added a shake in her head this time. “Absolutely not.”

“Wh-...why?”

“*Why?*” Joyce’s eyes went wide. “Emily, I’m saying ‘no’ because it’s what you in the past *and* future would want me to say. We’re sitting this one out.”

If Emily’s heart could hang as low as her anxiety could get she’d be dragging her prized organ through several feet of concrete, dirt, and destruction.

“B-but...but Jackie and Katie are doing it...!” It sucked to compare herself to kids, but she felt the need for some kind of drastic comparison.

“And that’s them and you’re you,” Joyce seemed hardly moved. “Emily, you promised me, didn’t you? That you were going to behave if I let us stay?”

“But...! Please! Just this once! I’m allowed to try, aren’t I?”

“Emily...you haven’t ridden any of the high rides here the entire day, and *now* you want to fight me on the tallest one?”

“Because it’s the *last* one! Joyce...! Please! You’re gonna sit right next to me! A-and...we’ll get a picture of it, too!” It was a matter of pride. Yeah, sure it looked scary, but her ignorant wish to end the night on a bang was enough to trump or at least hide her fears that made her dizzy just from looking up at the titanium titan.

It was a debate and Joyce was going quiet. In any kid’s eyes that meant a very crucial thing; the possibility of success.

“Come on,” Joyce held out her hand, and Emily quietly accepted.

Did she do it? Did she actually convince Joyce? Was she really getting to ride on it...?!

But they made an immediate left turn away from the coaster entrance.

“W-wait, but it’s that way...!” Emily tugged back, but Joyce with a gentle yet firm grip kept her moving her way. Towards a small building... A familiar one. “But I just went?” Emily groaned as she was the first one in a stall, followed by Joyce standing right over her.

“And you’re going again...” Joyce sighed. She was hardly in the mood for risking the last pair of pants she had. A naked car ride was one thing, but they had a lot of walking to do before they actually had any privacy. “Why do I cave in with you sometimes...?”

“Cuz you know I’m right...” Emily sat down on the toilet.

“Because I know it means I’ll have a crybaby to coddle...” Joyce murmured with her own kind of amusement. “And Emily, after this, I am dead serious when I mean we are going home. We’re getting dinner, taking it home. We eat, then we go *straight* to bed. Do I make myself clear?”

“But it’s the weekend, why do we have to go to be—”

“Do I make myself clear?” Joyce repeated with an expectant voice.

“O-okay...jeez...yes, you do,” Emily pouted.

“And I don’t want any more back-talk tonight, either,” Joyce gave her a sideways look. In truth, it was all a roundabout way of trying to put herself back on top. After all, the child telling the adult how to parent wasn’t the best look.

One short bathroom break later (that may or may not have been productive for Emily’s bladder) and the couple rejoined everyone in line. There were a fair amount of people. The line was long and winding and everyone chatted just to pass the time. Where everyone else was casual and excited for simple reasons, the closer they got and the deeper they sank into the queue, Emily turned more and more to escapism.

She asked questions, did things or focused on topics and subjects purely meant to distract. The last thing she ever tried to do in her own head was confront what was coming, and in every private moment Joyce watched her with worry, wondering just when and how she could pull the girl out of this.

The winding track to the coaster had a spot just beside the high overhead covering them and the roaring coaster was deafeningly loud each and every time it passed through.

“All good, Em?” Michael whispered beside her. Every handful of minutes or so when the same routine repeated her hands would tighten around the metal bar.

The mere mention of Emily would always make Joyce lean in like another shoulder or a final authority to make an executive decision, but she begrudgingly didn't. While Emily was allowed to be silly, spontaneous, and selfish within reason, Joyce at least tried to fill a rigid parental role. Albeit one that could sometimes flex and bend...

"Yeah, I'm all set. It's just a little loud..." she'd explain, and Joyce would try to chase the guilt from even considering how to exploit the girl's discomfort just to get her off this ride. Not because she didn't believe in Emily, but because she wanted to save her from a meltdown. In place of that the best she could do was think of aftercare...

I should have brought Pip to leave in the car... I have her jammies...her pacifier... She can nap on the way home...

As long as the wait was, it was somehow paradoxically just as short. Soon enough they had climbed the stairs, entered the main stage, and finally pair by pair was funneled behind individual gates.

"Jackie, stay in front of Daddy, okay?" Carol leaned over her side just to move the girl by the shoulder.

"But I wanna be in front of Katie!"

"And you will if you stand in front!" Carol sighed, briefly landing her eyes on Joyce with a "helpless mother" kind of look.

Piles upon piles of people were behind them now, pressuring them into what was getting harder and harder to back out of. Emily was first in line and Joyce's hands were firmly planted on her shoulders, either for comfort or to keep her from bouncing off the walls.

Joyce leaned in and whispered, "Emily...we can still back out of this?"

"H-huh?" Emily visibly jumped; far more sensitive than usual. Her heart was beating at an erratic pace. She couldn't take her eyes off the thick iron rail, the same one that went up and up...then down and down. Up and down, winding and turning, spinning and...screaming...

And then suddenly, finally, it hit her.

I-I'm...I'm doing this...? She blinked, just barely turning her head. The giant chariot of doom just rolled in, fresh from the heavy breathing, laughs and some in tears of its latest round of passengers.

A high-speed rail meant to throw her around and make her heart stop... Heights...she was scared of them. Terrified. *Th-this is the last ride...so I had to go...to...to end the night on a high note...high...so high...*

Just to her right where the track left the station, it looked near vertical with its immediate incline. The immediate climb.

She nearly slipped trying to take a step back. *M-maybe...maybe this was a bad idea...i-is it too late to-*

“Attention, everyone! The gates are now open!” the man stashed away in the far corner, sitting high in his command center announced over the intercom. “The gates are closing again in five, four...”

“You first, Jackie!” Michael swooped his daughter into the air, stepping in and setting her in the further seat.

“Okay, Emily,” Joyce gently nudged and it was enough to make the girl stumble forward and onto the loading dock, past the gate and through the threshold. She was committed. Confined.

“J-Joyce, I-I...I...” she kept spinning and turning, but her body kept on stumbling the same ultimate way. She nearly tripped and fell from the shaking and the nerves, the fear of what was to come. Was there still a chance? Could she back out? Ask to skip the ride?

But behind her a crowd of at least a hundred was watching and waiting, all excited for their turn; itching for what Emily was nearing tears just to be rid of. But she was in her seat and right next to her was Joyce. Together they sat side by side.

“Katie? Can you see me?” Jackie excitedly giggled just two cars north of Emily with Katie in between them.

“No, the seat’s too big!” she shouted right back.

The distant sound of techno ambience wafting through the stage was making Emily queasy. She was caught between trying to shut her own mind down and to figure out just why on this beautiful green planet that anyone would risk their lives on it.

While she knew it, she still didn't accept that she really was beyond the point of no return. Her knees were weak and she was already feeling lightheaded.

“Doing good?” Joyce stayed comforting, but her very existence was the biggest, fattest case of the “I told you so”s in the history of world-class scoldings. She gave the warnings, the shut downs and the resistance, but Emily kept on stubbornly insisting. If a time machine existed she'd be slapping herself upside the head for not doing like she was told.

People watched them now, standing exactly where she did just a few seconds ago. The gates were closed and she was woozy in her seat. It was a live recording of her own execution and she was powerless to stop it.

“J-Joyce, I-I—”

Slam.

A mechanical click came from up ahead and her head turned immediately. The goosebumps and cold sweat were starting to pick up.

Slam.

It was closer this time. Louder. An executioner came this very way. Death itself, donning their crimson red collared shirt and logo khakis. She trembled as they spoke with a foreign tongue, reciting their last rites over and over to each and every damned soul.

“Please keep your hands inside your cart at all times!” The words sounded otherworldly...!

Slam.

It happened again and Emily jumped.

“Emily, you've gotta put this on...” and Joyce leaned over. Emily was about to simply fall over and hold onto her head for support, but something snug drew up and around her waist, clicking and going more and more snug. When Joyce pulled back Emily looked down at a buckle she'd never even noticed. Yet another nail in the coffin.

Slam.

It was loud. Very loud. Probably because it was the guillotine meant for her. The large obstruction swung and dropped. Just when she waited for the bones in her legs to be crushed it stopped hard and fast right above her thighs. Her shaky arms draped over the rest, finding it impossible to move.

“Arms inside the ride at all times!” The deathly hurrah came as fast as it went, and Joyce didn’t take much longer to be dealt the same fate, only she looked far more content with the ultimate conclusion.

“J-Joyce...!”

“Hm?” she blinked and turned her head then reeled back as best she could. “E-Emily?”

“I-I don’t want to anymore...!” she sniffled and tried to hold back the sobs. “I-I made a mistake! I’m sorry! I don’t wanna ride on this!” If it was Joyce, she could do anything, right? She could make the impossible possible? She was Mommy, goddamnit! Emily was frantic, scared, and terrified. If she cried enough would Joyce let her off? Would she talk to someone?

And as comforting as Joyce wanted to be, all she could do was exhale.

“Emily,” she gave her a smile and a chilling shrug. “You wanted to go on?”

“N-...no...!” Emily whimpered.

She...she had to be able to do something! She just needed to speak up and say something like she always did! But she had to be fast; there wasn’t much time left! She needed to—!

Then the machines whirred. The beast had stirred and the motion was immediate. She lurched forward as the burst of momentum threw her off.

No. No. Nonononononononononono! NOOO!

The train was leaving the station and the ride was starting. The roof of the stage that was her last bit of shelter was reaching its end. Day turned back into night once the land of the living was left in their wake. Reality couldn’t have felt any more cruel just as they began to ascend for heaven, only to inevitably crash into the pits of hell below.

The loud and heavy gears creaked and cranked as the mechanical monstrosity elevated them higher and higher at a frightening pace. It had seemed so deceptively slow from afar, but sitting in the near front now was making the poor girl frighteningly aware of her own mortality.

"J-Joyce...!" Emily whimpered in a shrill voice, too terrified to look forward, left, or right. The breeze was getting chillier as they went higher, and the gust across her hot face and frozen cheeks was the kiss of death. "I-I don't want to...!" she cried aloud with her regrets afoot and her mistakes clear as day.

But it was out of her hands and so the same for Joyce. With nothing left to do but experience the inevitable, as concerned as Joyce was, worrying wasn't going to do much for them any more.

"Emily, that's not how this works!" Joyce laughed right beside her, though even she at a forty-five degree angle was starting to sound nervous. Although, at least she wasn't in hysterics.

"Nonononononononono!" Emily begged, she cried. "Please make it stop! Make them turn it around! Joyce, please!" Her knees were shaking and she tried to move, but her seat was functioning just as intended and the thick bar over her waist had made her resistance a pointless endeavor.

"I-I don't want to anymore! Please!" Emily cried as loud as she could, with everyone in front and behind them long forgotten. Now it was just Emily, Joyce, and their 200-foot drop.

"Hey, Emily, look! Open your eyes!" Joyce urged her quickly. "Look to the right! You can see the whole park!"

And just briefly, she did.

The moment was magical. A sea of starry lights not in the sky, but far and wide across the ground below. Exciting structures of castles, mansions, mines, gardens, spaceships and more dotted the park that still seemed so large. Bright whites, yellows, greens, blues, reds, and more seemingly formed the oasis from the encroaching shadows of the night. The only obstacle was Joyce's flowing head of hair beside it all.

"It-it looks ni--"

But the moment was only just a moment. For some strange reason it looked like the park was rising. Getting closer. And the closer it got the faster the breeze started to pick up. An emptiness was building in her chest, just beneath her lungs and heart where life started to flood her whole body in a frightening way.

The fall had begun.

"Here we go...!" Joyce giggled just before her excited shout, and Emily short of the same positivity screamed all the same.

“N-NOOOOOOOOOO!!”

It felt like freefall. They kept on falling and falling. They got faster and faster and the coaster roared as it clambered along the tracks, down and down to mach speed. Her hair whipped back and the wind tried to cut through the seams where her eyelids were slammed shut. She squealed and cried, screaming for dear life at the top of her lungs.

Her hands went rock hard as she grabbed onto the bar as hard as she could.

Was this really how she died? She couldn't breathe! She was losing air in her lungs! *WHEN WAS THE DROP GOING TO END?!*

It became a cacophony of chaotic cries, metal on metal, excited screams, and laughs.

And finally the forces flexed and turned. She fell forward in her seat, jerking forward and back as the endless descent found the bottom and immediately shot back up. Their speed was at its peak as they raced forward on the endless road of despair.

But somehow the worst wasn't over, meaning all of it. Some sick, twisted person decided up and down wasn't enough. Left. Right. Around and over. The thread of fate spun and swerved, knocking the tiny woman to and fro in her seat. All she could do was hold tight and cry and scream. Her knees were glued together and the wind that whipped through the cars sapped all the warmth from her legs and she was practically naked all over again.

The screaming scared her. The speed scared her. Everything was terrifying and she could bear to watch any of it. The moment she tried her eyes were irritated and the flashing lights and muddled blurs were too much. Things looked like head on collisions and it was stimulus overload.

And yet somehow, there was an escape from hell. A true light did exist at the tunnel.

The laughs and screams died down and so did the pace. The cart was slowing and she could tell. Was it a trick though? Was there a round two she didn't know about?

Until the reaper returned with more words of worry.

“Thank you for riding! Please exit the carts on your left!”

Death was merciful, for the children were spared.

The sheer giggles and laughs from Jackie and Katie ahead put Emily out of her psychotic daze.

It's...over?

“Hey, open your eyes!” Joyce laughed, and reluctantly, Emily did.

The lights were back. A familiar roof was over their heads. She slowly turned her head and there Joyce was with a bright, cheeky smile.

“It’s over!”

She blinked. Then she blinked again. And once more after that.

“Em, c’mon, we gotta give everyone else their turn...” Joyce leaned over just to undo her buckle. Only then did Emily realize the bar had lifted. She looked up and around with a muted delay.

“Em, you with me?”

“M...mm...” she mumbled as her buckle went free and her body stood on command. Her first foot swung out and she took her first step on the sweet, sweet ground again, and then almost immediately—

“*Emily!*” Joyce yelped and had her by the waist at the last second. “Did you forget how to walk?” she laughed.

“I-I...” Emily slowly started, but she never finished.

Jackie and Katie got similar treatments in being lifted out, but it still looked like their sanity was intact.

“Can we go again?!” Katie begged, and Jackie shouted all the same.

“No, once was more than enough...” Michael groaned. “I’m gonna feel that in my neck tomorrow...”

“*I’m not!*” Jackie proudly declared, and Michael’s eyes sunk.

“No...probably not.” If parental looks could kill.

“Emily, you don’t do coasters at all, do you?” Carol laughed as she helped Joyce bring up the rear with her.

“N-no...” Emily was groggy as she answered. She’d been tortured physically and emotionally to a point where she couldn’t even lie anymore.

“Well good on you for trying!” and Carol held up a palm for a high-five.

Emily raised her hand, weakly slapping back, but pins and needles traveled back down her arm. Slowly she clenched her hand into a fist, barely feeling anything but the prickles that started to form on the coaster. Her grip was so strong that the life in her fingers was gone entirely. Nothing but weak sensations to remind herself that the appendages still existed.

And even if she vehemently voted no... “I’m proud of you too,” Joyce whispered before a kiss that barely got any recognition. “Oh, wait– they do photos, right?”

“Just up ahead,” Carol led them along, and Emily was quiet, leaning against Joyce the whole way.

She was silent for the photo viewing session and while the parents paid for theirs and Joyce got their own. While she couldn’t fully tell, she was pretty sure Joyce was holding her hand tightly as they went down the stairs.

“Daddy? Can we get ice–”

And finally Emily could speak again. If only it was English. Instead she opted for something far more primal. From within. From her stomach.

With her girlfriend’s hand on her stomach to stop her from falling, right in front of everyone, Emily’s lunch climbed back outside her mouth.

If only the necklace kept her from scaring herself...

“Drink,” Joyce held out a bottle of water and Emily accepted. Her throat was dry and raspy. She felt gross and her screaming had finally caught up with her.

“I-Ihm so–”

“And *stop* apologizing!” Joyce laughed. “Is your tummy doing okay?” She solemnly nodded, sitting sideways on the back seat of their car. Joyce stood outside but in front of her. “Tell me this: how is a roller coaster gonna make you throw up, but teacups spinning that fast won’t?”

All she did was shrug, helpless and weary, and Joyce giggled again.

“Are they mad...?” Emily whimpered.

“Mad? Emily, no one is mad.” Maybe the person who had to clean it up though... “More importantly, are we done being brave when we don’t have to be?”

Another weak but resolute nod.

“Good,” Joyce nodded and sighed as she took off the necklace. “Let’s be glad your clothes are clean though, right?” she said as Emily’s jacket was slowly coming off.

“I wanna go home...” she groaned. Bed sounded unfortunately good. That one ride was enough to exhaust her body completely.

“Don’t worry, we are in a second,” she flung the jacket behind her. “Think you can lift your arms?”

“Why...?” Her arms went up regardless.

“Because I brought more than just pajama bottoms,” Joyce had her charge half naked soon enough. “Mmm...you didn’t get anything on yourself, but I don’t want any smells to stick...”

“D-do I smell...?”

“You always smell; it’s just all about what kinda scent it is,” Joyce deflected with a chuckle. “I didn’t pack another pair of panties, but...!”

And like magic, a diaper was in Joyce’s hands.

“Why...?”

“Lay back,” Joyce eased her on the shoulders. “I wasn’t expecting things to quite go the way they did,” she couldn’t hide her smirk, “but I figured you’d be tuckered out one way or another. Come on, let me spoil you?”

And even if Emily didn't, it's not like she had the strength to fight back. She simply let the pants slide off on their own.

"And yes, you do smell," Joyce giggled with a puff of powder on her crotch. "Baby fresh, that is!"

"Can I sleep...?"

"Yeah? Wanna nap in the back seat?"

At least some part of the girl still wasn't as easily malleable. She shook her head. "Up front...with you..."

"Okay, but your pants aren't going back on?" Joyce warned, yet she hardly sounded like she cared. It was all airs for what Emily would have worried about.

"Kay..." Emily went right back to her flexible self, sighing as the padding felt snug like it usually did.

"Can you feel your fingers again?" Joyce pressed her tips against her own.

"Mhm... Water..." she reached her hands out, but Joyce used it as a chance to sit her up.

"Let's get this on..." One set of polka-dots was swapped for another. While her pants were gone now she had a shirt and diaper. "Can you be a good girl and climb up to the front for me?"

Shortly thereafter Joyce was in the driver's seat, watching Emily slowly crawl up and around to her spot, showing everything on her backside that her shirt didn't quite reach.

"And water, I know," Joyce handed her the bottle then leaned back with her buckle to plug it in its socket. "Warm?" she cranked the dial on the console.

"Mm..." Emily shut her eyes with a sigh.

"Try and nap a little; it's gonna be a little bit of a drive home..." *Maybe I can get her in the crib if she falls asleep...*

The girl shuffled and laid her head against the door, crinkling as she found the sweet spot. Now she was half-wishing there was a pillow involved in the packing.

“Use this,” Joyce brushed her chin and Emily didn’t know what to expect, but she opened her mouth anyway. A kiss, perhaps?

Close. A pacifier. Good enough.

She was warm, tired, weak, but content. What a day it was, even if she couldn’t quite keep it all together by the end of it. They didn’t do any talking on the ride home for obvious reasons, but Joyce didn’t mind the silence. Better yet, at every stop or spat of traffic she had the most wonderful of ornaments to look at. Hiding in the dark of their car was a baby white that seemed to shine through regardless. A cute curvature that crinkled and bulged every time her girlfriend stirred.

The best of all?

By the time they made it home, there wasn’t a dry diaper to be found.

“Chop-chop, Emily!” Joyce called, holding a jacket too small for herself out with both hands. “We’re gonna be late!”

“I’m coming!” Emily whined back. “Wait– where’s my suitcase?”

“It’s with me! Just get your bottom over here and bring your cute self already! I have everything!”

A very unimpressed head of black hair turned the corner soon enough.

Emily narrowed her eyes. “Toothbrushes?”

“Uh-huh,” Joyce answered without a second thought.

“Socks?”

“Who put them on you this morning?”

“PJs?”

“Yes, and with the onesie Amy made you.”

“Not *that* one!”

“Maybe if you didn’t keep us waiting we could have unpacked it,” Joyce shrugged, conveniently forgetting the few hours they still had left. “We can see what Mommy packed in the car. Are you ready?” she waved out the jacket again. She raised her brows, just daring for a challenge.

“...I’ve still gotta get my shoes on...” Unfortunately, Emily knew better than to challenge the dominant.

“Then let’s get your shoes on,” Joyce invited herself into the mix and suddenly Emily was watching her shoes be tied by her most loyal attendant.

“When’s the flight again?” Emily asked.

“Soon,” Joyce stayed vague, lest Emily use that against her... “We’re gonna have lunch at the airport. Want something special?”

“Ice cream.”

“Something that’s a meal, not a dessert,” Joyce smirked as she traced her nails along the girl’s neck, turning her into a ball of fireworks. “I know a soup place that’s there?”

“No soup,” Emily shook her head.

“No?”

“No.”

“Hmm...better come up with something better then? That *isn’t* ice cream!” Joyce immediately doubled down the moment Emily went to speak, especially with that “I’m clever” glimmer in her eye.

“Ugh...fine. Sandwiches?”

“...” Joyce was quiet and pondering, trying to consider some kind of trick. “Okay, we’ll do that.”

“*Then* ice cream?”

“No, and just so we’re on the same page, missy, no ice cream for the whole weekend.”

“What? *No!*”

“You may have sweets tomorrow when it’s *time* for them at Thanksgiving. Final offer. Final decision. Case *closed*.” Then to emphasize her finality she grabbed the girl by the waist and lifted her back onto her feet.

“But—!”

All Joyce needed to do was turn her head and the conversation came to a close.

Playfully sulking, Emily followed her out into the hall with her phone in hand as some kind of distraction.

“Oh, actually—” Joyce stopped to fish through her purse. “Here, have this.”

Before Emily could realize what it was she was already sucking on it. A tinge of fruity flavor rubbed against her taste buds.

“You can have your ‘nana paci if you want,” Joyce didn’t even flinch when she zipped her bag shut. Without seeing a problem she walked Emily ahead with a hand on her back.

But before Emily walked ahead she stopped, turned, then pulled the pacifier out and dropped it into Joyce’s hand.

“No? Don’t want it?” Joyce wasn’t laughing. It was a genuine question.

And for some reason Emily’s face was feeling warm.

“Y-you’re...” Emily couldn’t help but build up air inside her mouth. “Y-you’re too good at that...!” Then spinning on her heel she raced ahead and down the hall.

“Emily, where I can see you, please!” Joyce called after her, finally laughing.

Emily, hiding just around the corner, hopefully waiting to scare Joyce, could only sigh as a new thought popped into her head. She was now tasked with trying to enjoy her last few hours as a free little girl.

She frowned, and with her last few moments of privacy she tugged her pants forward, finding the lines far too blurred now to really know what complete modesty and privacy meant anymore. Given that seeing was believing, Emily enjoyed the sight of what adult underwear looked like

and would need to burn it in her memory for the next few days. The only panties she'd get to be seeing were the ones Joyce would wear to bed...

"Were you trying to scare me?" Joyce suddenly peeked around the corner, promptly counter-scaring Emily herself.

"N-no...!" Emily jumped back. "I-I...I was waiting!"

Her girlfriend pursed her lips as a sweet smile overcame her.

"If you wanna scare me, don't let me see your shadow~!" Joyce sang as she rolled ahead with the suitcases. "And also, Emily?"

"What...?" she pouted with a sorely defeated look.

"It's okay to do it at home," she whispered, "but it's bad manners to pull your pants down in public?"

"I-I..." Emily stuttered as she turned into a strawberry. "*I-I wasn't doing that!*"

For emotional reasons, they took separate elevators.