

Just a Little Experiment

Part One - June 2020

"Sorry, honey, I'll be right out! Just a few minutes, okay?"

Of course it was okay, Sean consoled her. No worries! He'd be right out here waiting 'til she got back... And so he watched in mingled amusement and fondness as his wife retreated hastily in the direction of the toilets, her brunette bob darting and weaving nervously through the milling crowd. Very well - he could wait. Not that waiting out here was a problem, though, he mused as the minutes ticked past. Apple picking was one of their favorite fall excursions, and so far today was shaping up to be one of the best ever. Clear skies, warm sun, not too many big groups, and this lovely crisp fall air that made one just want to-

"All aboard the hayride! Last call for the hayride, folks!"

Bother. No sign of Erin yet. Sean stretched up onto tiptoe and craned his neck, searching the crowd for any sign of his returning wife, but in vain. Hmm. Maybe she'd had to wait in line for the bathroom? Missing the hayride wasn't the greatest tragedy, of course, though it certainly would have been nice to shave off fifteen minutes of walking to the back fields. That's always where their favorite varieties were...

Whatever, he shrugged, watching as the tractor, tugging insistently at the wagon piled high with shrieking kids and fussing parents, eased out in a cloud of diesel. They'd manage, just like always. So what if the two of them had to walk fifteen minutes extra? The morning couldn't be nicer, honestly, and this way they'd have more time to themselves.

At least, that was what he reminded Erin of when she came back, breathless and bubbling over with apologies at having taken so long. "I'm so sorry, honey, really I am. It's just... you know... the coffee just goes right through me..." Sean grinned and slipped a comforting arm around her waist as they headed off, sacks in hand, down the track toward the orchard's hinterlands. "Hey, stop worrying, honey! It's okay, really it is. And who cares about riding a silly wagon when one could spend time with you?"

"Riding me instead, you mean?" Erin murmured, a sly grin on her face. "But of course!" Sean chuckled with a playful squeeze to his wife's jeans-clad *derrière*. "Though maybe not *right* here... Besides, we've got some apples to pick first, remember?"

The apples were indeed plentiful this time of year, they found - as were the wasps, and the rotten

windfalls, and the annoying puddles of mud and rotting grass. It was worth it, the young couple kept repeating to one another - wasn't it? And wasn't it such a nice day, too? But it became increasingly difficult to keep all that in mind when, several hours later, the duo were trudging back to the orchard entrance, replete with muddy shoes, a ripped bag held awkwardly in Sean's arms - and on Erin's rear, a embarrassingly large wet patch graphically demonstrating just how soggy the ground had been where she had slipped.

As often happens, once the first few things seemed to go wrong, everything else began to follow suit. They'd missed the wagon ride back, and the bag had torn - and now Sean had to stand in an abysmally long line alongside distraught kids and parents in order to pay. Meanwhile, Erin was off to the bathroom again with a full-to-bursting bladder, grimacing with the realization that her impatiently shifting legs and the wet patch on her butt didn't exactly help her appear more mature...

And then, once the relieved young woman had reappeared once more, the now-hungry duo discovered the sad truth: that every single one of the orchard's semi-famous apple doughnuts had just sold out.

It was only once they were in the car on the way back that they began to sort it all out. "I'm so sorry. It's all my fault," Erin began, her dark eyes focused on the warm autumn colors streaking past her window. "I should have been helping you. I should have been in line for those doughnuts instead of running to the bathroom like an idiot..."

Sean shook his head and reached a sympathetic hand to pat her leg. "Honey, it's okay, really! I know we're both hungry, but we'll be home before we know it, okay?" "I know, I know," she sighed in exasperation. "It's just... you know..." She brushed back an errant strand of hair. "I feel bad, 'cause we missed the first hayride - all because of me. And then the bag ripped because I was the one who stuffed in too many of those Golden Delicious. And then I was the idiot who slipped and ruined my jeans, and probably the car seat now too. But as if that wasn't enough, then I had to go pee again, right when I was supposed to be helping you..."

"Hey," Sean responded, patting her leg gently. "It's not your fault, honey, really. It was a great time, on the whole, and I really enjoyed it. And... Well, I don't mind about the hayride. And our lunch is probably going to be better than those doughnuts anyway. It's not your fault that you had to pee, you know." He chuckled and flipped on the turn signal as their exit approached. "You know what Shrek says. 'Better out than in,' right?"

Erin shrugged and gave him a lopsided smile. "Yeah, I guess. I just wish... I don't know..." She gave a short laugh. "I just sometimes wish... It's weird, I know. But... You know how they say astronauts have to wear, like, *diapers* when they're in space?" Sean wrinkled his nose in surprise. "Umm... yeah?" "Look, I don't know!" Erin protested, seeing his quizzical expression. "I'm just repeating some clickbait article I saw online. But wouldn't it just be so handy? I mean, let's face it-"

Sean was having difficulty hiding his grin, but cocked his head to listen as she went on. "We missed the hayride because I had to pee. We had to find that row near the trees because I had to go find a bush - and pee again. And then slip and fall in the mud." She took a breath and continued. "And then we missed the very last of the doughnuts, all because I - you guessed it - had to pee yet again! Don't you see how much nicer the day would have gone if I hadn't been running off for a bathroom every ten minutes? Not to mention how many horrific diseases I'd not contract if I didn't have to use those filthy toilets?"

Sean chuckled and pulled up short before a red light. "So you're saying you'd rather just pee your pants instead? I mean, sure, if that's your thing, honey. Far be it from me to-" "No, no, not like that! Don't be a derp," Erin was growing more animated now. "But you can't deny that it would be handier not to need the bathroom. Right? And if little kids and old folks and astronauts can wear them, why not, you know... me?"

"I actually don't know," Sean admitted carefully, with a quick look over his shoulder as he maneuvered into the adjoining lane. "I mean, sure, it does kind of make sense, I guess. But wouldn't it feel pretty weird?" Erin sighed and sank back in her seat. "Yeah, that's what gets me. I'm sure it's fine and everything. I'd love to have the convenience, and it can't be that much more disgusting or germy than underwear... can it? But when it comes right down to it, I just don't know if I could bring myself to, you know, *pee* right where I am..."

He shrugged as they drew closer to their home. "Well, I'm sure that's something you could get used to, honey. I'm not saying you should or anything! I'm just remembering how weird braces always felt when they first put them on. You remember, right? They always felt so lumpy and cold and rough... And then after a while you'd get used to them - so much so that when they came off, your teeth would always feel so weird and slimy..." He chuckled and glanced over at his wife's thoughtful face. "It's all about what you get used to, right?"

As Sean eased their little Toyota into the parking lot of their apartment complex, Erin's face had become a study in rumination. "Yeah, you're right," she murmured at last, almost to herself as she opened her car door and stepped out. "Maybe it really is just what you're used to..."