

## **The Middle of the End**

My name is Richard, not Richie.

I am not a baby, I'm an adult.

I'm twenty eight...no thirty. Fuck, fuck, fuck!

(Keep it together Rich. Keep it together. You know numbers. You still know numbers. JUST FOCUS! START OVER!)

My name is Richard, not Richie.

I am not a baby, I am an adult.

I'm thirty years old.

Gwendolyn is my wife, not my mommy...mother...fuck!

(Keep going. Power through.)

I'm an...accountant?

(That doesn't sound right. Something with numbers though. Something with numbers. Ones and zeroes. Computer programmer? Maybe. Let's try that out.)

My name is Richard, not Richie.

I am not a baby, I am an adult.

I'm thirty years old.

Gwen is my wife, not my mother.

I'm a computer programmer.

(Yeah that sounds right. Keep going.)

I don't need to sleep in cribs.

I don't need to drink from a bottle.

I don't need to be spoon fed.

I don't need diapers.

I don't need any of this baby stuff.

One day, I will wake up, and this will all be over.

I'm lying in a crib, staring up at the dangling ducks on the mobile like I do every night and afternoon nap, reciting my mantra in my head. It's getting harder to concentrate, harder to focus, and it's not just because I'm getting sleepy.

I don't even get a pillow, I'm so young...I'm treated so young...I'm actually thirty-...ish... I think. Maybe late twenties...it's hard to tell. I'm wearing feetie pajamas with airplanes on them, and a diaper underneath.

I think I'm dry right now, but it's hard to tell. It's hard enough to tell how long this bucket of crazy that's my existence has been going on, the days just seem to blur together. Whether my diaper is wet or not- that's something that's beyond me at the moment. I'll be wet in the morning, that's for sure, and I'm in a nighttime diaper. So unless I wake up in the middle of the night, bawling, I'm probably not getting changed till the sun is up. So me being wet or not at the moment is irrelevant. By the time a grown-up; my wife, sees me tomorrow, I will be.

Shit, I gotta stop doing that: Referring to other adults as "grown-ups".

I'm losing it. I've been losing it. I've been losing it since that day when everything turned upside down. I still can't make sense of anything anymore. Reciting this mantra- reminding myself of basic facts about my life before-is the only thing that keeps me hanging on instead of going full on retard. Never go full retard.

Heh...that was a joke from some movie, but I can't for the life of me remember which one. I haven't watched anything that wasn't animated in I-don't-know-how long.

But I'm slipping: The mantra gets messier every time I recite it. Shorter too, I think; like I'm forgetting stuff that I used to put into it. I'm getting basic facts wrong; remembering them wrong, or just feeling off about it. Hell, maybe I was an accountant before my life went south. I don't know.

The mantra's losing its meaning too. It used to give me focus, I think; like meditation, or prayer. I'm afraid that it's becoming just something that I just say right before I drift off to sleep. "Now I lay me down to sleep, my name is Richie, I'm not a baby, I'm an adult, and if I die before I wake I pray the Lord my toys to break so all the other kids can't have them."

And every time I go to sleep, a little less of me, the real me, comes back.

I've got to remember more than just words. I've got to remember how it all happened. What did I do to deserve this? I didn't piss off a gypsy, or enter a magic shop, or volunteer for a hypnotist act or do drugs. God I wish I'd done drugs, then this would all make sense. I'm tripping balls or something and any minute I'm going to wake up hungover. But it's been too long for that.

It's been way too long. Was it a year ago? Thereabouts. Yeah. Maybe a year ago, when I pulled the car over to go pee. I don't even remember where I pulled over. Maybe it was a bowling alley. Maybe it was a church. Or a college campus. I honestly can't for the life of me remember. All I remember is it was a place where you wouldn't normally think of childcare, but you wouldn't think it that weird that they had a daycare or something like that. Bowling alleys have daycares, right? Right.

I had been driving, with Gwendolyn; my wife, (not my mommy) and I really had to pee. We had been driving for a long ways. Vacation? Road trip? Business? Going to a concert, maybe? I can't remember anymore. It's all fuzzy. You'd think I'd remember the exact day, but so much of my memory leading up to that moment has become multiple choice.

I wanna say that it was for something fun. Gwen had her hair down, and she was wearing that top that I really like: The blue one that shows a lot of cleavage. It makes her rack look like it did when we were in college. Damn she looks hot in that thing. And that long dark hair of hers, I don't care if she's already starting to gray a little bit up top; likely the result of stress from whatever the fuck her job was...or is... I can't remember and she never tells me where she goes to work anymore. It's just "work".

I'd look at her dressed like that, in that skirt that stops way above her knee, and get to thinking "If it weren't for me needing to pee so bad, I'd pull over and take her right now. We'd do it in the road like the Beatles song."

Gwen loves the Beatles. She's an old soul. I don't know if she still likes the Beatles, but she did a year or so ago. Now she just listens to Raffi, and the Wiggles when I'm around. That kind of kiddie garbage. No more "obla-dee obla-da". Now, it's just "skinamarink-a-dink-a-dink".

If I had known that would be the last time I was gonna be in the driver's seat, I would've pulled over and humped her in the back, Volkswagen be damned.

Now, were we on our way somewhere fun, or on our way home? I don't know. I don't fuckin' know. I'm getting over it and moving on before I lose that memory forever, too.

All I know right then is that I have to pee somethin' fierce. The dam's about to break, and I need to find a toilet since ten miles back. So, we pull off the interstate-I miss the gas stations, traffic is so bad and won't let me turn- and we come to the first place that likely has a bathroom.

Maybe it was a bowling alley. Maybe it was a campus of some community college. Maybe it was a church, for all I know. Not important anymore. Beyond me now. Moving on.

I rush into the place, ready to burst, and no one is there. Hallways- there were hallways, I'm sure- are empty. Doors are closed. No one's around. If it was a bowling alley, the lanes were empty. If it was a college, class wasn't in session. If it was a church, the rapture must've happened.

So I'm in an empty building, alone- Gwen didn't have to go, or something, so she'd just wait in the car- and I'm about to piddle on the carpet like a little purse dog, when I see a sign. It says "Nursery and Restrooms" and has a little arrow pointing left. So of course, I take a left.

I walk left. Then I run. Then I dash. Then I sprint till I finally, finally, get to a door that says "Nursery". It's got a construction paper rainbow over the word and little happy face stickers all over the door. No bathroom, though.

There's no toilet in sight, I must've run right past it, and I'm squeezing my legs together and shuffling my feet in a little potty dance like I'm three or something. So I do the one civilized thing I can think of and I knock on the door.

From here on out, I feel like I'm remembering things more clearly. The details are sharper; more definite. Maybe I'm brainwashed or something, and that's why from here on out everything is so much more clear. I'm not remembering things as they were, but as I've been made to remember them. Maybe I'm not really remembering this as much as I think, and I've just relived this nightmare so many times in my head that it's become real to me; the details exaggerated till they become fact instead of exaggeration.

Doesn't matter. I don't know. But maybe there's a clue in them. Moving on.

I knock on the door and a woman answers. She looks like maybe she's in her late forties, or early fifties, but life hasn't wrecked her yet. She's a little bit taller than me- not that I'm a giant or anything but it sticks out in my mind- and she's got light brown hair that's tied back into a bun. Her chin is square like an army drill sergeant and her eyes have this glint to them that says 'Don't fuck with me'. Definitely a mom look.

She's got a sky blue shirt on with little decorations of baby clothes like onesies, and t-shirts, and pants, and bibs and the word, "B-A-B-Y" printed out on building blocks, all along a thin black line, like her shirt was the sky and someone took a ton of little baby clothes and hung them out to dry on her shirt. Yeah, she worked here.

"Yes, can I help you?" she asks, all business-like, before looking at me, my hands pinching my dick with me doubled over in pain. My kidneys hate me so much right now. "Oh," she giggles a

little bit. “Do you need to use the bathroom?” I nod frantically and she opens the door for me so I can squeeze through, still dancing. “Come on in” she says.

She points me straight ahead, and asks me my name.

“Richard,” I say as I’m practically tripping over myself to take a piss.

“Are you here to pick up or drop off?” The nursery lady asks.

“Neither,” I tell her. “I just gotta go!” and I dash to the door with a little toilet on the front. I’ve got tunnel vision at this point. A derby horse with blinders on could still see around him more than me. For me it was straight ahead and nothing else.

“Okay, go on, Richie” the lady giggles after me. If there are kids in this daycare place right now, I don’t notice ‘em. I might be tripping and stepping over a couple of tots on my way to the john. I’m only hoping there isn’t some toddler on the pot so I don’t walk in on them. Last thing I need is to wind up on some list because preschoolers don’t know how to lock a bathroom door. But the lady seems cool with it, so I think I’m in the clear.

I open the door, and my belt is already unbuckled. The door closes, and my pants are already around my ankles while I’m twisting the little lock on the door so I don’t get walked in on. That’d be another great way to end up on the list. “What was he doing at a daycare bathroom if he wasn’t a parent?” they’d ask. “Why didn’t he lock the door?” You read about this kind of shit all the time.

Fuck the zipper, I’m not wearing any underwear that day, I’m not thinking straight, and I’m not getting my cock caught in a zipper as I make a desperate dash to relief. I am literally hopping to the toilet.

I lift the brown shell up, I aim in the middle, not even bothering with the seat, and I fire my steam out. My own moans of relief drown out the sound of piss hitting a plastic bottom. My brain is in too much ecstasy to realize that I should be hearing the sound of liquid hitting liquid and that normal toilets don’t have brown shells for lids.

It’s only after that my bladder is empty that I stop and take stock of my surroundings. I’m in a single, one person bathroom. With a little sink that you’d have to bend over to wash your hands in. There are little paintings and posters on the walls about remembering to wash your hands, and to wipe when you’re done, but no normal toilet.

Instead, right in front of me, is a turtle. A. Fucking. Turtle. It’s a plastic potty, like a two year old would sit on, but a heck of a lot bigger. The lid is patterned like a shell, with the rest of it being a nauseating dark green color. Right out in front is the turtle’s head with a big goofy smile and vacant, lifeless eyes. The turtle was smiling at me while I pissed inside its shell.

I think I had a sandbox like this once, back when I was in kindergarten, only with more urine in it- mostly from cats.

And it's a scaled-up version of a toddler toilet in every way, too. Big. Plastic. And no plumbing or flushing mechanism. Right then, my mind is racing. I just pissed into a plastic potty. Me. A grown-up. My stomach is doing flip flops, I'm so embarrassed.

Then I see a sign above the potty: "If you need help, go ask a grown-up." I wanna dash out the door, out of the nursery, through the empty hallway, and out to the parking lot back to Gwen so I can get my trip going again, but I'd feel like a real heel if I didn't at least fess up to my mistake. Somebody is going to have to dump my piss down the pipes and that doesn't seem right to me. Maybe if I explain it well enough, they'll at least let me do it myself; no hard feelings. The potty looks big, but it's mostly plastic, so it doesn't look that hard to pick up, even filled with a couple of my leftover liters in it.

I reach down and hike my pants up and button the snaps up. I don't bother to buckle my belt. It's not there anymore. (It's not there anymore? Wait a second...why was it gone?)

Where the fuck did my belt buckle go? Oh my God! I just had a breakthrough! The changes were starting right then and there! And my pants didn't have snap buttons before! The changes were starting by the time I was in the bathroom! I could have sworn it was the sippy cup full of juice that did it. Maybe it was something in the air, or the place itself. Shit, don't forget that, Richard! Don't forget that! Moving on.

So, pants back up, I poke my head out of the bathroom and call out, "Excuse me?"

The tall lady in the nursery turns her head and says, "Is something wrong?" Her brow furrows like she's concerned or something. I'm beat red just thinking about how my pee is taking up space in a plastic bowl that I can't just flush away. I just nod my head, feeling sheepish.

"Got a bit of a problem," I start to explain, but before I can even get the rest of the damn sentence out of my throat, she's on me. The bathroom door is open, and she's right in my personal space with her hand on my chest, pushing me backwards.

My hands go up instinctively and I find myself backing up instead of pushing back. I don't know if this lady is pissed, or what, but I'm not looking for a fight, so I just go on the defensive. I'm back in the bathroom with her, and now the door is closed.

Then, still looking me in the eyes, her hands go for my pants and unbutton them. Simple as that.

"Whoah!" I start to say something, but she's yanking my pants back down to my ankles. "Hey?! Don't?!" I'm sputtering out, thinking this lady's trying to give me a blow job or something. Yeah,

I sound like a creep saying it like that, but how many stories do you hear about a grown woman unbuttoning a guy's pants without any kind of warning and it not being sexual?

Before I can do anything about it, she pushes me back again, and the next thing I know, my cheeks are spread sitting on the giant turtle potty.

The lady takes a knee beside me and grabs my penis in one hand. I freeze. I don't dare stand up. I don't dare move. She's got me just north of the balls. I'm expecting her to start squeezing or yanking or something, but instead she's just holding my cock daintily in her fingers; thumb on the bottom, two fingers on top.

"What are-?" I start to say and then she presses her free pointer finger to my lips.

"Shhhh" she cuts me off. "Go potty first, big boy. Then we'll talk." She's got my dick pointed at the back of the potty turtle's head. It's a splash guard, I realize, for little boys that are too young, dumb, and short to aim down. This crazy bitch expects me to piss sitting down like I don't have the coordination to relieve myself standing up the way God intended.

No one's ever talked to me this way, and I feel myself go three shades of red. I'm too scared to move, though. Also, I'm running on empty, urine-wise, this woman has my dick in her hands and is watching me way too closely, and with the sudden rush of blood that I'm experiencing to my nether regions...well let's just say that I'm having the weirdest case of performance issues ever. I want to pee to get this over with and be able to run out of here, but I just can't.

"Having trouble?" she asks me, as if that weren't obvious.

"Yeah, but-", I start to say, but she cuts me off again.

"Denise!" she calls out. "Denise! A little help, please?"

Another woman opens up the bathroom door and pokes her head in. She looks closer to my age, maybe even a little younger. She's blonde, and her hair is kept back in a ponytail. It's obvious by her identical shirt that she works here too. I don't remember seeing her when I was pee-pee dancing in, though.

"Yeah, Kate?" this new girl, Denise asks. She's staring right at me, naked from the waist down, with my penis clearly in this lady, Kate's hands. Denise doesn't even flinch. She doesn't bat an eyelid. I don't register to her. I might as well not even be there. I'm not a real person to her, or something. I'm a fixture with the bathroom. I'm practically part of the big plastic turtle potty that I'm sitting on.

"Sippy cup of apple juice?" Kate asks the younger woman, also not paying any attention to me.

“Comin’ right up,” Denise says before slipping her head out, but the door is still open a crack. I don’t hear anything. As far as I know, me, Kate, and Denise are the only three people in the whole building. They must be getting their jollies off on me, I think.

Kate looks up from the door back up at me. “She’ll be right back with some apple juice,” she says to me as if I didn’t hear everything. “Let’s see if that helps you go potty.” I just sit there like a putz. I could pop her in the eye; maybe make a break for it. She’s got about an inch or two on me when we’re both standing, but I’ve got more muscle on my body, the element of surprise is on my side and my adrenaline is definitely pumping and telling me “fight or flight”. She’s also kneeling right now; not what you’d think of as a fighting stance. Worst case scenario, my common sense tells me, she digs her nails into my dick and I get scratches in some very uncomfortable places.

Still, I could get away and this just becomes one hella weird story to tell after a while.

But what if I don’t get away? What if she or her sick friend have some kind of pepper spray or Taser or something? Then the cops get called and it’s my word against two women who work in a fuckin’ nursery. I’m not even a local, so it’s not like I’ve got character witnesses or anything. I decide not to act and just see how this all plays out. That was Hamlet’s great flaw too, I think.

“Here you go,” Denise leans back into the little bathroom again, holding a decent sized plastic mug with two handles on it. Just like before, she looks at the woman who’s holding my privates hostage, and not me. I mean, she’s looking at me but she’s not really acknowledging me. Just as quick, she pops her head out, and the door finally closes, leaving me alone with just the one psycho woman holding my penis to the back of a potty turtle’s head.

“Drink this,” Kate hands the sippy cup to me, and almost instinctively I grab onto the handles. “This will help you go potty.”

I want to get this over with as quickly as possible, so I tilt it back and pour the apple juice inside down my throat. At least I think it was apple juice. It was sweet, and a little tangy I guess. More poetic men than me would describe it in more detail, but really, it was just apple juice to me. Nothing to write home about, not that I intended to write home about any of what was going on just now. Get me out of here let me pee in front of this sick woman, and let me get back to my car so my wife and I can get back on the road.

For the longest time, I’ve assumed that there was something in that juice that made what happened happen; like I was drugged or something. But the no belt thing now makes me think more was going on than I thought. Gotta stay focused and remember, though. What went on that day is the clearest that I can remember anything. Everything before then has been swallowed up in a never ending series of feedings, nap times, bath times, and diaper changes. That’s why I have the mantra: To keep what little I still have.



Holy shit, that last time on the turtle potty might have been the last time I relieved myself outside of my own pants. Rambling again. Stop that! Talking to myself? Fine. Rambling to myself? I'm drawing the line. Cut it out. Moving on. Just remember.

So there I am, chugging juice from a sippy cup, while a forty-something lady points my Johnson at a splash guard on a giant toddler toilet like I'm a two-something. Gwen's gotta be wondering what the hell is taking me so long, but I absolutely do not want her to see me like this.

"I'll sing a song to help you relax," Kate, the nutter, tells me, uninvited. Then she starts singing this dumb little song, my prick still between her fingers. It's a little like that one song: 'I like to eat-eat-eat apples and bananas' but it's missing a few beats.

"I can go poop-and-pee...on the potty," she sings to me like this is my first time. I mean, it's my first time that I can remember where someone else is holding my dick for me; it's not like it's my first time taking a piss, but it's definitely the first time where this level of bullshit has happened. "I can go poop-and-pee...on the potty." I'm more weirded out by this than anything, but if I'm showing it, she's ignoring it.

Her voice echoes off the bathroom walls. I gotta admit, it's kind of pretty. Not professional level, mind you, but nobody sounds professional in the bathroom. Kinda sweet though. The fuck am I saying? Moving on! Moving on!

Finally, after about two or three minutes, I feel something, and a little spurt of pee comes out of me. It's not much- barely a dribble-but it splashes against the back of the turtle's head.

"All done?" Kate looks up at me, her eyes making it a genuine question. It's like my cock is a loaded gun and she's a little afraid to let go cause it'll go off. Mortified beyond belief, I nod. Then she let's go of me and claps her hands while cheering. "Yaaaaay Richard!" she says

"Can I get up now?" I ask her. I probably shouldn't have asked her. I should've just stood up. But things were just too weird for me and I was failing on every level to take control. Moving on.

"Uh huh," she says, and I stand up, feeling like I'm almost home. I reach down to pull my pants up, but then Kate bats my hands away with a slap. I jerk my hands away from my own slacks like I just got caught trying to sneak a cookie. "Don't worry," she says, "let me," and she grabs my pants and starts shimmying them back up my thighs. My dumb ass lets her.

Just when I can feel the elastic waistband of my slacks start to brush against my bum, (Elastic waist band? Holy shit that's another difference I didn't notice before...the fuck happened?) she stops and I hear a little gasp from her.

"Richard," she says, her voice echoing off the wall with an accusation building up right behind it. "Two questions."

“What?” I gulp, feeling like I’m going to regret this.

“Where’s your underwear?” Kate asks, like I’ve done something wrong.

“I’m not wearing any today,” I tell her. What? I like free-balling. It’s not like there’s a law saying that I have to wear them. It’s not like I came in there wearing Underoos and ditched them in a trashcan or something.

“And what’s this?” she points to something on the front my pants. Her tone is like the lawyer that just asked the guilty schmuck the case winning question, proving that he did it; he killed old lady Whithers or some such bullshit.

I squint my eyes and look down at the front of my pants. She folds them forward so I can see a little better. Maybe a quarter inch to the right of the zipper, is a wet spot. A tiny wet spot. It’s like somewhere between the size of a dime and a penny. Okay, so maybe I leaked a little out in the last few milliseconds. It happens. It’s not a big deal. If you weren’t looking directly at my crotch, (which you shouldn’t be), and weren’t looking for it, (which again you shouldn’t be), you wouldn’t even notice it. It’d be dry inside of five minutes, anyways.

Her hand is on my chest again, and she’s pushing me back. I don’t want to move, but the back of my legs hit the big turtle potty and my knees instantly buckle. I’m sitting back down on the potty again. “Sit here,” she tells me, pointing her finger at me, “just in case.” She turns towards the bathroom door again. “Denise?” she yells. Denise pokes her head in again.

“Yeah, Kate?”

“Richard had a little accident,” Kate says. My jaw drops to my knees. “Do we have any extra shorts or undies for him?”

“Hold on, I’ll check,” Denise tells Kate before her head disappears out of the bathroom again.

“What-?” I start to complain, but the crazy woman just puts another finger to my lips and I find myself unable to speak up.

“Just hold on, Richard,” she whispers to me, all soothing like. “Miss Denise is checking.” The door opens again and Denise pops her head in.

“Nothing in his size,” she says to Kate, not me. I’m still invisible. This is an ‘A-B’ conversation and they’re making sure that I ‘C’ my way out of it. (Shit, can I still spell? R-I-C-A...R-I-C-C...fuck my life. Moving on.) Point is, I’m thinking “Of course there isn’t anything in my size.” I’m a grown-up. I’m too friggin’ big for anything they have.

“Pull-ups?” Kate asks.

The word “Seriously?!” might as well be tattooed on my forehead, I’m so confused and indignant. Who do these people think they are? Thing is, Kate’s face is completely straight. The pull-ups question is a serious and genuine question to her.

“Only girls” little blonde Denise says. She doesn’t even smirk.

“Doubt mom would like that,” Kate clicks her tongue.

“Nope,” Denise agrees. Why are they even talking about this? I don’t know. The real question is why am I not running? Something about this still has me paralyzed. For some reason, I’m still waiting to see how this all plays out. Hamlet’s flaw.

“Well then we’ll do what we have to do and then explain it to his mother,” Kate sighs. Denise disappears yet again and Kate turns to face me, my ass still kissing the plastic seat. She looks anxious, but not afraid; like she’s about to break bad news.

Kate takes a knee and looks me straight in the face. She’s wearing nursery scrubs and she’s suddenly the doctor telling me I’ve got three months to live.

“You’re not in trouble,” she tells me solemnly. “But you’ve had a little pee-pee accident, and your pants are wet.”

“So?” I ask her. “Who cares? Just let me go, and I’ll be out of your hair.” She sets her hand on my shoulder, like she’s trying to comfort me.

“You know I can’t do that, Richie,” she tells me, full on serious. “I wouldn’t be doing my job if I let you walk around in pee-pee pants.”

“Look, lady,” I say, “my wi-“

“Your mommy won’t be mad,” Kate interrupts me. “We’ll explain everything to her when she comes to pick you up later today.” Right then, Denise slips in, holding something in her hand. Something white and rectangular and plastic looking.

Kate turns her head to Denise. “Help me get his pants off.”

“WHAT?!” I yell, my voice echoing off the bathroom floor. I try to stand up, but before I do, both of Kate’s hands are on my shoulders and she’s standing over me. She’s pushing me down, and my arms are pinned to my sides all of a sudden. I expect to be able to push her back or off or something, but she’s not budging. I’m grunting and groaning like a motherfucker, but this crazy

bitch who's only an inch or so taller than me and who I've got to have like fifty to a hundred pounds on isn't even struggling.

Like, I'm not a fighter or anything, but I should be doing better than this. She should at least have to be right on top of me, straddling my naked ass and pinning me with all of her weight. Basic physics, right?

But she's not. She's standing off to the side, holding me down on a humongous child's toilet and all I can do is grunt and strain so that I at least feel that I'm putting up a good fight. I'm not, though. She might as well be Thor's hammer or something, and I am definitely

Meanwhile, my shoes are off my feet and little blonde Denise is working my slacks off of me. I'm kicking and flailing my legs, trying to kick her teeth out by this point- fuck pressing charges, this has gotta be some kind of assault- but it's not working. She just yanks my pants off and holds my legs by wrapping just one arm around my ankles. The other hand is still holding the white plastic looking thing. I might as well be a fly in a spider's web.

"It's okay, Richard. It's okay!" They both say while I'm doing everything I can to get free. Meanwhile I'm cursing and screaming for help that's not coming. Maybe Gwen will hear me and come running. Why isn't she here yet? It feels like it's been at least ten minutes since I left the car, all told.

When I'm panting and heaving, red faced and feeling exhausted, Kate loosens her grip, and looks me in the eyes again.

"Are you done?" Kate asks me.

I nod yes, out of breath and feeling like I'm out of options.

"Now listen, sweetie," the older woman says like she's talking to a child, taking my chin in her hand. "You had a little accident. We're not mad. It happens sometimes to boys your age."

"All the time," Denise confirms, still holding my legs. Everything in me is telling me to run and hide, but Hamlet's flaw has run its course. I'm in too deep now. (I gotta wonder if this was the point of no return, or if there were other opportunities that I didn't take. Moving on.)

"But the thing is," Kate keeps talking, "Miss Kate and Miss Denise don't have any extra big boy undies that fit you. We don't even have any boy Pull-Ups. But we can't let you go walking around wearing pee-pee pants and we definitely can't let you walk around naked, either." She takes a deep breath. Here it comes, I sense. "So we're going to have to put you in a diaper."

“Diaper?!” I shriek. Then it clicks that that’s what Denise is holding; an adult diaper. What kind of fucked up place are these crazy witches running?! I feel Denise clamp down on my legs with superhuman strength, bracing for another round of my flailing. I don’t give her the satisfaction.

“It’s okay,” she shushes me and then starts trying to reassure me at rapid fire speed. “It’s okay. You’re not in trouble. This isn’t a punishment. You’re not a baby. You’re still a big boy. You can still use the potty if you need to. It’s just a diaper is all that we have that will fit you right now.”

“But, but, but,” I stutter, trying to interrupt this woman and not finding the words.

“You don’t have to use it,” Kate talked over me. “You just have to wear it till your mommy comes and picks you up.”

“But my wife is in the car-“ I argue, “I can just leave and-”

“No you can’t, honey,” Kate cuts me off. “Your mommy left you with us to take care of you, and that’s what we have to do till she gets back.”

“But my wife is right outside in the car!” I shout. “Let me go get her!”

“That’s not what mommy said,” Kate says looking deep into my eyes. “She said she’d be right back after she ran some errands in the car. Isn’t that right, Denise?”

“That’s right,” Denise echoes.

“GWEN!” I shout at the top of my lungs. “GWEN HELP!”

“Gwen?” Denise talks over me.

“Mom’s first name,” Kate says over her shoulder. Then she turns back to me. “Look, you’re not gonna get in trouble for wearing a diaper,” she lectures to me as if that’s my biggest concern.

“When your mommy, when Gwen gets here to pick you up, we’ll tell her what happened. If she gets mad; she’ll get mad at us. Okay?”

Damn right, she’d get mad at them. This is unlawful imprisonment. This is kidnapping, including literally treating me like a kid.

“Now, you have two choices, Richard” she says to me. “You can either be a good boy and let me put a diaper on you, and you can go play till someone comes to pick you up, OR you can make a bad decision, and we’ll still put a diaper on you, but you’ll be in time out instead. Which is it?”

It's only going to be a matter of time before Gwen comes looking for me. Maybe I can run, then. Worst part is, I know that I'm going to end up diapered regardless. There's something weird about these chicks. Something not quite human. I'd rather stay on their good side.

"Okay," I say. I'm resigned to my fate. This is gonna be one hell of a story. I'm sure I'm gonna look back at this one day and laugh. Denise lets my legs go, and Kate takes a step back from me. She holds out her hand behind her and Denise slips her the adult diaper.

"I got this one," she says to Denise, and Denise opens the bathroom door and walks out again with my pants, socks, and shoes. "You can stand up," Kate says to me, and I do what she says. I'm covering my junk and I'm hunched over, feeling really fucking small right then, in more ways than one.

Kate looks at me and giggles a little bit. "It's okay, Richie. Nothing I haven't seen before."

I was going to say that she hadn't seen mine before, but that wasn't true. So I just keep quiet.

"Lay down on the floor," she orders me, and I crouch down, feeling the cool tile beneath my now bare feet. Then I ease on and lay down. It's crowded here and I barely fit lying down. It's cold too. My ass is sticking slightly to the tile. The lady takes a knee next to me and starts to unfold the diaper in front of me.

I get a closer look at it, and I notice that this isn't an adult diaper. It's got little decorations on it. Teddybears with balloons and parachutes and stuff. I didn't know they made kid diapers that big.

I let out a little "ugh" of surprise and discomfort as she slithers her arm underneath my knees and lifts my legs up into the air. If she had just asked for me to raise my hips I would have planted my feet and pushed, but she didn't. Instead she just pushes my legs back till my ass is in the air. Meanwhile, I'm still covering my crotch out of embarrassment.

I watch helplessly as she slides the unfolded diaper under me and sets me down on it. It feels soft on my bum and it crinkles as my weight comes down on the thick padding. It's warm and comfortable compared to the hard, cold, bathroom floor tiling.

"Move your hands," she tells me, and I obey, knowing that I can't do much about it anyways. "Spread your legs," she tells me. I do what she says. Then Kate, this fucking nursery worker who I've known for all of ten minutes, tops, pulls the front of the diaper over me. She reaches down to my left side and tucks the front end past the back. She pulls the back of the left side up over the front and tapes it on to the front. Then she does the same for the other side.

The whole thing goes taut, and encases me. It's only held together by two big pieces of tape; it's practically a patchwork hanging by a thread. But you wouldn't know it by the feel of it. It's

one solid, soldered together unit. Yup. I'm wearing a diaper now. The baby perfume from the damn thing invades my nostrils. I can practically taste the stuff.

Kate stands up first and leans over. "That's wasn't so bad, was it?" I don't say anything. I'm probably gonna shoot my mouth off and I don't want some kind of 'roided up superwoman spanking me- I wouldn't put it past her. She leans over me and offers me her hand. I take it and she helps me to my feet.

When I stand up, I realize something feels off; and I don't mean about how I have to stand with my legs further apart than I'm used to. And I don't mean how the frilly little leg gathers tickle the inside of my thighs. I'm not talking about how my blue t-shirt only comes down past my waist, barely managing to cover up the little cartoon bears on the diaper, either. (Was it a t-shirt when I came in? I could've sworn it was at least a polo shirt or something with a collar. Moving on)

It's Kate. She seems... taller. A couple of minutes ago she had maybe an inch on me, but now I'm craning my neck up to look her in the eye. I come up to about her shoulder all of a sudden. My shoes didn't give me that much lift, did they?

I try to move past her and get out the bathroom, but Kate blocks my way. "Just a second, Richie," she tells me.

"Now what?" I complain.

"You better wash your hands," she tells me.

"What?!" The word just leaps out of my throat.

"You might have had a pee-pee accident," she says, "but you still got most of it in the big boy potty. Good job!" She raises her hand and offers it as a high five. I don't move. She puts her hand down. "Big boys wash their hands after they go to the potty."

"Are you serious?" I ask.

"That's what big boys do," she answers, completely missing the point of my question. "You're a big boy, aren't you?"

What a ridiculous question! I nod.

"So let's wash your hands."

Suddenly I'm being shoved towards the little sink. It doesn't seem as little now, though. I don't have to bend over as much. Kate's leaning over my shoulder now, turning on the sink.

She grabs my wrists and runs them under the water. “First we get ‘em wet,” she announces. Then she grabs a bar of soap and puts it in the palm of my hands. I’m like a puppet as she has me rub my hands together building up a foam, “Then we get them good and soapy.” I drop the soap and she doesn’t say anything. She just keeps having me rub my hands together. “Then we rinse them off.” It’s that scene from “Ghost” all over again, only I’m the little spoon and the soundtrack is her telling me how to wash my goddamn hands.

She reaches past me again, and turns the water off, and grabs a paper towel and hands it to me.

Drying my hands: This she lets me do by myself.

“All done,” she announces, as if I don’t friggin’ know. I throw away the little brown paper towel into some dinky trash can, and then I feel her hand on my shoulder. I whirl around and face her. She is still waaaaaay to close and in my personal space. She doesn’t seem to notice.

“Remember,” she says to me, “You’re still a big boy who knows how to use the big boy potty.”

I cock an eyebrow. I nod. Uh...duh?

“I don’t want you going potty in your diaper on purpose,” she rambles on. “You’re potty trained. You’re a big boy and I still want you to act like it. If you need to go potty, just come get me and I’ll help you take your diaper off. You’re not going to pee-pee in your diaper on purpose, are you?”

I just shake my head, but probably not for the reason she thinks.

“Okay, good.” She nods. I turn my head towards the bathroom door. Never before have I wanted to be out of anywhere worse than right then. Her hand is on my chin and I’m looking her in the eyes again.

“Oh, one more thing,” she adds. “If you do have an accident, come and tell me or Miss Denise about it. Don’t play around in a wet diaper. You won’t be in trouble, and we’ll just come back and change you in here like a big kid; not out on the changing table with the babies. Is that okay?”

I just stand and stare at her for a hot minute, saying nothing. Then I say the only thing that I can think of: “The fuck is wrong with you?!” That was a mistake.

Her eyes light up, her nostrils flare, and her lip curls into a snarl in all of half a second. Weird daycare lady to werewolf; no full moon required.



Before I know it I'm spun around and in a headlock. Her grip is a vise and I'm straining to breathe. My eyes are scrunched tight. I'm digging my bare feet in. My toes are curling. I've got one hand pushing against her back. I'm punching her back. Punching her kidneys. My other hand is wrenching at her elbow. I try her forearm. I try her wrist. I'm trying everything to wrench out of this hold she's got me in.

It's. Not. Working.

I'm a dumb dog with its head caught in the whole in the fence. She's the fence.

"Okay," I choke out. "Okay! I'm sorry." Nothing. No response from her. My eyes are still closed. Then I hear the sink come on.

My eyes open. I see a feminine hand with a wedding ring on it reach into the sink and grab a foamy bar of soap.

I know what's about to happen. I try everything. I kick. I buck like a horse, both legs going airborne. I think at one point, I manage to wrap around her leg in a weird bear hug. All that does is make me look like a little piss ant dog dry humping her. I even try going limp and dropping my weight. All that does is choke me.

It's right then that a big bar of soap, the same one that I was having my hands washed with, is shoved right past my lips, and my dumb ass doesn't even clench my jaw. My tongue is immediately tasting all kinds of foul. Instinctively, I start biting down, trying to...I dunno spit it out, or get some traction, but Wonder Woman's aunt is just shoving that vile piece of perfumed animal fat in my mouth. Little flakes are scraping off onto my teeth.

So now I can't breathe and there's soap in my mouth. With all the UFC pay-per-views I bought, you'd think I'd have learned a move or two, but I hadn't.

"This ends, as soon as you stop fighting." I hear. I can't breathe. My muscles ache. My face is red and my mouth is foaming. I stop struggling and I do everything I can to stop from puking as she slides that slippery brick around my mouth from side to side and front to back. It might've sounded like some kind of whimpering if you were listening in, but I was just clamping down on my gag reflex.

Finally, finally, she lets me go.

"Rinse," I hear her tell me. She doesn't have to tell me twice. Before the sound of her voice stops echoing off the bathroom walls, I'm already hunched over, my mouth to the faucet and I'm gulping, and swishing, gargling all the nasty out of my mouth. I spit into the sink and out come bubbles.

I stand up and wipe the last bit of saliva and bubbles onto my arm sleeve, and I hang my head. Rainbow colored teddy bears holding balloons are waving to me from just below my shirt. I'm going crazy. I just know it. Even then I realized that my shirt couldn't have gotten shorter. But somehow it did.

"You will never use language like that again," Kate tells me. It's not an "or else" in her mind. This is fact.

I nod. I'm beaten. I'm humbled. My eyes...my eyes aren't tearing up. I must be remembering that part wrong. I'm losing stuff all the time, new details...fake details are just coming in to replace those memories. That's it.

"Okie dokie," Kate decides, "Time to go play." She opens the door and half-scoots, half-pushes me back out into the nursery area. She pats me on the butt and that garbage bag crinkling fills my ears as I cross the threshold.

My eyes bug out and I feel all the blood drain away from my face at what's in front of me. I expect to see an empty floor, with maybe Denise somewhere. Maybe not, I didn't see her coming in, why should I see her now? What I don't expect to see is...is...is...this!

Heee heeee heeee....heee..heee..heee...heh...heh...heh..hmmmm....duckies. Duck, duck, duck, duckies. Quack, quack, quack! Duck, duck, duck, duck, goose! Heeeheeee! Duck duck...duck...FUCK! FUCK! Snap out of it, Rich! Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuckity-fuck!

I fell asleep. Goddamn it, I fell asleep! Is my diaper wet? I can't tell! Why the hell is my thumb wet?! Where's my paci? I need my paci!

STOP IT!

DEEP BREATH! SNAP THE HELL OUT OF IT! FOCUS!

My name is Richard, not Richie.

I am not a baby, I'm a grown-up.

I'm twenty years old. (Damn I'm getting old. Moving on.)

Gwendolyn is not my mom.

I work with computers

I don't need to sleep in cribs.

I don't need to drink from a bottle.

I don't need to be spoon fed.

I don't need diapers.

I don't need any of this baby stuff.

One day, I will wake up, and this will all be over.

Phew. Okay. That was a close one. Too close. So where was I? Oh yeah.

So I take one step out of th0e daycare bathroom and my jaw drops to the floor. When I went into that bathroom, I had I-gotta-pee-tunnel-vision. Nobody was in there. Now, the place is flooded with at least a dozen and a half other bodies. There are blocks, crayons, and stuffed animals scattered pretty much everywhere.

I see onesies. I see feetie pajamas. I see overalls that end above the knee. And I see diapers. Lots of diapers. I see little leg gathers- like mine- poking out of onesie leg holes. I see waistbands- like mine – peeking out of the top of pants. I see people who look skinny but for some reason look like they have giant swollen asses. Out of the corner of my eye I get a glimpse of smooth plastic over padding as somebody in a dress so short it shouldn't legally count as a dress bends over.

Here's the rub, though: I see all of this baby stuff, but there's not a single baby in the room. All the diapers and stuff are on people way too old to be wearing that kind of shit. I'm not the best at telling how old people are...not anymore anyways...but I'm pretty sure everyone in there could be smoking and drinking and no one would get arrested...for smoking and drinking at least. The only people not dressed like babies were the people dressed like daycare workers in their nursery print scrubs. The fuck?!

I blink my eyes to make sure I'm really seeing what I'm seeing, and I wish I could do the same thing with my ears. I hear that old pop goes the weasel song, and when I whip my head around to see where it's coming from, there's like some friggin' guy sitting with his legs splayed on the floor with a jack-in-the-box between his thighs and he's clapping his hands like an idiot. I hear stupid, giggling laughter coming from a couple of people waddling around the room trying to tag each other. There's somebody crying like they got shot and they're laying belly first on the floor while one of the few people not dressed like a baby is rubbing their back and shushing them.

The smells? I can't really remember the smells so much. They're less vivid. I guess it's like when you've got a cat box, and you notice the smell at first, but then your brain kind of just tunes it out after a little while? You go smell blind until you go out, get some fresh air and then come back inside. You gotta get away from the smell before it registers again. I haven't gotten

away from the smell of baby powder, diapers, and the stuff that goes in diapers for a loooooong time.

For the last couple of months, at least – probably longer though, I think; hard to tell- a lightly perfumed bathroom wrapped around my ass has been the smelltrack of my life.

(Heh...smelltrack. That's clever. You still got it, Richie. You still got it. Richard! I mean Richard! My name is Richard, not Richie...fuck it. Freudian slip. I know I'm Richard. I still haven't forgotten that much. Moving on.)

Point is, it's not a nursery daycare, like I thought it was. It's a freak show. And I can admit- in hindsight- that I was both freaked out and a little relieved. Being in a giant baby diaper around a bunch of other people in giant baby diapers is a lot different than being in one surrounded by real little kids. At least I know where that nutter, Kate, got one that fit me. (Or am I just remembering it differently to make myself feel better? Does it even matter, now? Moving on.)

So I'm staring, and gawking, and trying not to puke a little bit; just taking it all in while hoping to God that Gwen doesn't walk in and see me like this, when a couple of kids walk up to me.

I mean, not really kids; and I'm not talking about how they were dressed either...though yeah, they were dressed like kids too, there was some definite...padding in their little pink shorts. It's just...ugh...how to explain this?

You know how when you're a senior in high school, and you look at a college student and you think "Yeah, we're about the same age." But as soon as you hit college, you look at those high schoolers you used to be and you can't help but think "kids"? And then, when you're just a couple years out of college and you see some undergrads and you just think "God, was I ever that young?"?

Yeah. With these two girls, same principle: They were old enough to vote and probably drink, but if I was at one of those parties where everybody else was only as old as them, I'd be the "creepy old guy", even though I'm only...(shit...hold old am I again?). Point is, I'm pretty sure I had a little under ten years on them, give or take. Not too much older, but old enough.

They both look at me, and one of them, this blonde with her hair in pigtails just sighs and says "Oh...another baby,". I can practically hear the eye roll in her voice.

"When Miss Kate took you into the bathroom, we thought you might be a big kid," the other one, this pudgy chick with black bangs starts shaking her head at me as if somehow I've ruined her day.

Then they both turn to each other and say "Just another baby."

I don't know why, but immediately, I feel like I'm on the defensive. I've been called a lot worse but for some reason being called a baby by these two feels like a slur.

First, I spin around looking for Miss Kate. She might be crazy, but no doubt she'll back me up in language these nutters can understand. Crazy speaks to crazy, and the first crazy told me in no uncertain terms that I was still a big boy even though I had peed my pants...wait...no, it was barely a dribble; after-squirts from not shaking good enough.

Don't ask me why, but right then, being "big" was important. I was the new fish in the madhouse and I was looking for a guard so that I didn't get thrown up belly first against the shower walls. Problem is, the tall lady is gone.

"Awwww," one of them goes, I don't remember which one, "Did the widdle baby lose Miss Kate?"

"Dumb baby," the other one agrees.

I whirl around, the diaper crinkling as I shift my weight and look them in the eye. I puff up my chest, and say in no uncertain terms or tones: "I. Am. Not. A. Baby."

"You're wearing a diaper," the blonde taunts me.

"Only babies wear diapers," the one with the bangs sticks her tongue out at me.

"That's not true," I hear myself yelling- and I am yelling, I realize. This is making me way hotter under the collar than it has any right to. "Lots of..." I tell them, "lots of people with medical problems wear diapers."

"Nuh-uh." They say in unison.

"Uh-huh." I say back.

"Nuh-uh."

"Uh-huh"

"Nuh-uh."

"Uh-huh."

This is how it goes for waaaaay longer than I'm comfortable admitting, but I think that's the gist of it. This isn't working. How do you argue with crazy? You can't. You can't use logic on people who accept it.

"I'm a grown-up!" I ball up my fists in frustration as I half-shout at them. (Wait, was it grown-up? I feel like it wasn't the first time around. Like, grown-up isn't quite the right word I used. What other word is there? Dang it. Moving on.)

"Then why are you wearing a diaper?" The blonde one taunts me.

"Because Kate...Miss Kate," I correct myself, "put it on me."

"That's what Miss Kate does," The one with the bangs says.

"Yeah," the blonde one agrees, "she puts diapers on babies."

"Big girls wear Pull-Ups," they both say like they've either rehearsed this bit or they're creepy twins from a horror movie. They peel their shorts down enough so that I catch a glimpse of their underwear. It's still pretty obviously plastic, but it's pink, and there's no tapes.

They do it so fast that all I can do is blush and turn my head while they hike their shorts back up. I feel a lump in my throat form and suddenly my adrenaline is starting to pump. All of a sudden, I'm all outraged. These two chicks who I don't know from Adam's housecat are acting superior to me because they're dressed like a couple of three-year-olds instead of a one-year-old.

"He's mad," the chubby one says to her mean girl buddy, "Betcha he'll have an accident if he gets madder." It's a bullshit stage whisper too. She wants me to get mad; and it's working. I was probably learning to drive when they were going into Kindergarten, and they're calling me a baby.

I feel a little twinge in my bladder. I just emptied my bladder and already I'm hyper aware of it filling up again. I used to tell myself it was because I was just self-conscious and wearing a padded toilet makes you more aware of what's going on downstairs with your plumbing, but that's a bit of nonsense looking back on it. Something was definitely happening right then, and I was just too dumb to notice it. Ugh. Moving on.

"Uh...oh!" the blonde one giggles and points at me. "Mad baby. I think he's gonna cwy!"

I might've too. My throat is so tight it's at the point where I don't know if I'm gonna be able to choke some words out. More than anything right then, I want these two chicks to leave me alone. Then someone comes and saves me.

"Leave the new kid alone!" A strong, feminine voice calls out. I look towards the sound of the voice, expecting one of the crazies who put me in a diaper, but from her waddle I can tell that she's Pampered up, too.

She's wearing a denim jumper dress, and her chestnut brown hair is kept in a weird top-knot ponytail that's too short to fold over, so she looks kinda like Pebbles from the Flintstones. Best part is, she looks like she's closer to my age than to theirs. Finally, someone resembling a peer.

Then I bear witness to one of the most bizarre catfights ever:

"Why should we?" asks the blonde one. "He's just a dumb diaper-baby."

"You're dumb diaper babies," Pebbles.

"Nuh-uh," they say.

"Uh-huh," Pebbles says.

"Nuh-uh."

"Uh-huh."

"Nuh-uh."

"Uh-huh."

I think I've set the tone pretty well.

Finally, Pebbles just walks up to the blonde one, bends over and just grabs her on the ass. Nobody so much as flinches. Then she grabs Blondie's hand and puts it on her bum over the dress and tells her to "squeeze". Then she points to Bangs and says "Now her." And like it's nothing, Blondie reaches over and grabs her some of her buddy's butt.

"Feels the same to me," Pebbles tells them.

"Sounds the same, too," Bangs admits.

"So if it feels like a diaper, and sounds like a diaper..." Pebbles let's the last part just hang in the air.

"But our Daddy told us that these definitely weren't diapers," Blondie says. Now it's her turn to be on the defensive. "They're panties that we wear just in case we forget to go potty."

"And what do you think a diaper is? I forget to go potty all the time." Pebbles gives them the biggest smirk, and I'm smiling right along. "New kid and me are diaper babies, and so are you. The only difference is the grown-ups aren't tricking us by telling us we're wearing big kid panties. So really, who's the dumb diaper baby?"

The two sorority chicks in Pull-Ups hem and haw and stutter for a while, but eventually huff and one of them goes “Come on, let’s get away from these stupid, stinky babies. Let’s go find some big girl toys to play with.”

I breathe the first, real, honest sigh of relief since I realized that I had just emptied my bladder into a plastic turtle potty. Pebbles crinkles up to me and claps me on the back.

“Don’t worry about them,” She says. “Their Mommy and Daddy put them into training pants a couple of days ago, and now they think they’re the queens of the crib. But just watch, they’ll be back on the changing table with the rest of us in a couple of days. Only real difference is they get changed in the bathroom. Name’s Jane, new kid. What’s yours?” She holds out her hand.

I take it and say “Richard. I just came here to use the bathroom. My wife’s waiting for me in the car.” We shake hands.

“Nice to meet you, Richie.” Jane says. If I had known that I’d be coming back to that place the next day, I’d have corrected her, or at least asked her to call me “Rich.” “Dude, it’s okay,” Pebbles smiles at me as she pulls me into a hug. “You don’t have to fib. You’re a baby. And that’s okay. Come on, let’s go play.”

She breaks off the hug, but keeps her grip on my wrist and starts leading me away from the bathroom. I’m too polite to break it off. Once again, like a certain tragic Shakespearean character, I’m more curious than horrified and I want to see how this nonsense all plays out instead of make an immediate break for it.

“No seriously,” I say as she leads me to a pile of big plastic lego type blocks. “I just came in to use the bathroom and then Miss Kate ambushed me and put me in...this.” And I motion to the thing wrapped around my ass. I’m too mortified, just then, to say that I’m wearing a diaper.

“Mmm-hmmm,” Jane smirks at me as she leads me around in a circle around the pile of blocks. “Suuuure.”

“No, really,” I tell her. “She took my pants off after I peed in the turtle potty, and I didn’t have any underwear on, so she put me into this. She didn’t have any big boy undies or boy Pull-Ups. That’s all. She even said that if I had an accident, she’d change me in the bathroom, like a grown-up...I mean big-kid...I mean...” and then I realize just how stupid I sound.

“Yeah,” she chuckles. “Cuz big kids get their diapers changed alllll the time.”

I had nothing for that.



Then, she bends over and looks at my diaper. My hands felt twitchy and I wanted to cover myself. Married or not, it's not every day that a pretty lady visibly stares at your crotch.

"Hey," she says, and then she yanks the hem of her jumper up. "We're wearing the same diapers! How neat is that?" I try to be something resembling a gentleman and turn my head to the side and use my hand as a blinder, but I still get an eyeful of crotch teddy bears. Weirder yet, her diaper looks little...puffier...more swollen than mine.

"Holy..." I whisper, and my mouth goes dry. Her diaper is wet, and she seems to give no shits. Had these people not heard of personal space before, or did they just not give a damn?

Then, Jane just let's her dress drop and she plops down on the floor, legs spread and she starts playing with blocks.

"Heh," she chuckles a little bit while she starts putting legos together. "If what you're saying is true, and that's not your diaper that you're wearing, maybe you're wearing one of mine."

I grimace at that for some reason. I mean, I know it's sexist, and it's wrong but the thought that I'm wearing some girl's diaper makes me more embarrassed than it should. Never mind that there's nothing particularly girly about my diaper, (Is that when I started thinking of them as "my" diapers?" Huh? I wonder) or that there's literally nothing different between a pink diaper and a blue one functionally, but something rubs me the wrong way about that.

"It's okay," Jane says. "You can keep that one."

Maybe it's because of the room that I'm in, and I'm surrounded by people acting like toddlers, but something about Jane's comment sends a shiver full of pre-kindergarten-girls-have-cooites-jitters into my brain.

I dunno. Maybe I was a little too sexist before; too much machismo. Maybe that's why I'm looking at ducks spinning in a crib, trying to figure where it all went wrong while I wonder if I've pissed myself tonight.

Maybe God, or the Devil or something sent me back to a state when the biggest differences between a male and a female socially were completely superficial. Nowadays, regardless if they have a penis or a vagina, all of my friends crinkle when they walk, we all play with the same toys and none of us can wipe our own asses anymore. I'm assuming they used to be able to, even if none of them remember or will admit it. Shit...I just admitted that I have friends like this. How sad has my life become? Moving on.

"Come on," Jane snaps me out of my embarrassment. "This castle isn't going to build itself."

I steal another look around the nursery- maybe Gwen is here to rescue me- and all I see is Miss Kate being handed another diapered grown-up over the top half of the nursery's dutch door. (Wait a sec? Didn't I say that I came into the daycare that first time and it was a normal door...not a door with a top half and a bottom half? I've been being handed over that door for months and I only just now realized that the first time it was a different door! Not only were my clothes changing, but the entire world was shifting right under my nose. Maybe I stepped into another dimension or something...Gah! Too many questions! Too many questions! Moving on.)

So finally, I sit down, and grab some blocks, and fiddle around with them as I start to help Jane build a castle. I'm quietly building towers, just trying to think of a way to make sense out of all this crazy while other twenty and thirty somethings run around crinkling and crying and doing baby shit.

"So," I say finally after building a couple of walls, "is this some kind of...I dunno...costume party?"

"Nope," Jane tells me, not even looking up from her blocks. "Not Halloween yet." There goes that rationale.

I start wracking my brain, trying to come up with other terms and reasons for "People dress up as babies." My brain becomes a nerd thesaurus for every weird hobby that my little brother and nerdy roommate back in college told me about in passing.

"So this isn't Cosplay?" I ask.

"What's that?" Jane asks, and she looks genuinely curious. Nope. Not that one.

"Is it a...L.A.R.P." I try.

"Huh?" she shakes her head.

"A Convention?"

"What?"

"A fetish-kink-thing?"

"Huh?"

"What is this place?"

"It's a daycare." Jane says. "Duh."

I'm about to throw in a giant "BUT" and point out that there isn't a single actual kid in this place, when a giant shadow looms over me. I look up, and practically standing on top of me is Miss Denise. She's about the same age as both me and Jane, but her underwear isn't nearly as bulky as ours. It's not plastic backed either. Hell, technically there was no "under" to my underwear.

I look at her eyeshadow and lipstick. She's very pretty. Her red nails contrast with the white milk in the baby bottles she's holding. That's when I notice another subtle difference between her and the "kids". She's wearing makeup. Jane's not. Blondie and Bangs weren't. But then again, most toddlers don't outside of Texas beauty pageants.

"Here you go," Miss Denise says as she hands me a bottle. I take it, almost reflexively. She hands Jane another bottle, and Jane eagerly accepts it, and starts chugging away. That's when I realize that Denise is looking at me, expectantly. There's no way out of this, I know. I put the bottle to my lips and start sipping milk gingerly. "Hydrate in good health, kiddos."

Miss Denise starts to walk away, and I start to sigh in relief as her shadow retreats; then she turns on her heel. "Almost forgot," she says like it's more to herself than to us. Her shadow is over me again. Slender fingers pull back the waistband of my diaper. I suck harder on the nipple to stop from shrieking.

"All clean," Miss Denise says. She leans down over my shoulder and two perfectly manicured fingers poke into the leg holes of my diaper. My dick is so shocked it doesn't know whether to shrivel up or stand at attention. She feels around the inside.

"Dry too." She sounds a little disappointed, but pats me on the head. "Good job, Richie. Your Mommy will be proud. Just let me know if you need to go potty, okay?" I silently nod, and I catch a look from Jane of genuine surprise and...what is that? Apology? Surprise? Admiration? Jealousy. I told her I was a big kid.

Miss Denise steps around me and bends over in front of Jane. I watch as she lifts Jane's skirt up- not that she needed to- and gives Jane's diaper a firm pat.

"Yup," Miss Denise says, as she takes the bottle out of Jane's hands and sets it on the floor beside her. "Let's get you changed, Jane-Jane."

As soon as she hears the words "changed", Jane reaches her arms up in the air, reaching for Miss Denise. Then, Miss Denise grabs Jane by the armpits and hoists Jane up onto her hip without so much as a grunt. Jane wraps her legs around Miss Denise's legs and together they walk away from me.

Logically, I know I shouldn't be shocked, but I am. This woman held my legs, kicking and screaming with just one arm, so her toting another grown-ass woman away shouldn't be a big surprise, but it still is. I pivot on my butt, the smooth plastic of the diaper on the carpet of the nursery making it easier, and watch as Jane is carried away to what can only be a giant changing table across the room.

My eyes widen, and I sit there, transfixed across the room as Jane gets her skirt hiked up and her diaper is put on as much display as well...mine. I scan the room to see if anybody is paying attention to what's happening. Near as I can tell, no one else cares a lick. This is weird. This is definitely weird and exhibitionist, and just freaky. Where's the curtain? There should at least be a curtain? But there's not.

There's two changing tables along that wall, and the other one has a guy with red overalls getting wiped down by a black lady with braided hair. No one seems to be looking, but it's not an avert eyes out of respect kind of thing.

Every other person, diapered or not, is doing their own stuff. No one cares. I'm the only peeping Tom in the room.

The guy in the overalls is getting a fresh diaper slid under him, right as Miss Denise rips the tabs open on Jane's diaper. I'm staring in disbelief and breaking into a sweat while I take a drag off the bottle, nervously.

I watch, hypnotized, mesmerized even, as Miss Denise starts gently caressing between Jane's legs with a baby wipe. I know I should look away, but my dick starts getting hard as I watch Jane's legs go up in the air Miss Denise starts wiping Jane's silky smooth bottom. My diaper is becoming less and less roomy as Jane sucks her thumb while and giggles while a smiling Miss Denise slides the wet and soggy diaper, balls it up, and tosses it into a nearby bin. My diaper isn't swollen, but something else is.

I promise myself that when I get out of here, I'm gonna try to remember this moment the next time I need to speed things up in bed with Gwen. Oh God! Why is this turning me on?! The hell is wrong with me? (Though to be honest, I wish it still turned me on. You see something so many times, you get desensitized, I guess. Or maybe the changes to me have more to do than just my potty training.)

I fight the urge to touch myself as a new diaper is slipped under Jane and pulled up between her legs. She coos and wriggles as Miss Denise tapes it on. I just nurse on the bottle; glugging down the last of the milk. My bladder feels a little fuller, but it's nowhere near close to critical mass.

Jane is pulled up into a sitting position, and is being carried back over to me before too long. No hand washing for her.

“All done,” Miss Denise coos. “Okay, Jane-Jane. Time to get down.” Jane unlatches herself from Miss Denise and her feet hit the floor, and Miss Denise gives her a little pat on the head before she walks away and starts playing with another “kid”. That’s when I realize that something is very, very wrong.

Jane is only coming up to Miss Denise’s breasts. I leap to my feet and run up to Jane. We’re about the same height.

“Hold still,” I tell Jane as she turns around to look at me. I put my hand flat on my head and move it over to the top of Jane’s head. I’ve got maybe an inch on Jane, at most.

“The hell is going on?!” I practically shriek at Jane.

“I just got a diaper change,” Jane thumbs behind her towards the changing table, now already re-occupied. “Couldn’t have been that long since you were getting them,” she giggles nervously. “Hey, sorry about not believing you about being a big kid.”

“No, I mean why is she,” I point to Miss Denise, “so much taller than us?”

Jane just cocks an eyebrow at me as if I’m trying to ask her a trick question.

“Cuz she’s a grown-up…?” is all she says.

I’m speechless. I’m fuckin’ flabbergasted. Miss Kate is taller than me? Fine. I get that. She had an inch or two on me to begin with. I get kicked out of my shoes, suddenly I’m only coming up to her shoulders. Makes sense enough. But I was a good half a head taller than Miss Denise when she was wrestling me in the bathroom. All of a sudden, if I’m standing I’ve got an eye level view of her rack.

Something is wrong here. Something is very wrong. Either I’m shrinking or the world is growing, and I don’t know which one it is, and I don’t know why at this point. (I still don’t know why, actually.)

“Storytime!” The black lady I saw changing some dude’s diaper, calls out. “Gather round everyone!”

The whole room booms with a giant “YES MISS KIESHA!” This isn’t a nursery. This is a friggin’ cult! Next thing I know, Jane’s dragging me by the hand, and people are pushing up behind me as all dozen and a half of us crinkle and waddle over to this black lady who is sitting in a rocking chair.

“Now boys and girls, I’m going to read you one of my favorite stories” she says, smiling, her voice is beautiful and kind of...of...melodious? Yeah that’s a good word for it. (Heh...the irony of it all. Tonight I can’t spell my own damn name, but I can remember a fancy word like “melodious”.) She talks with just a hint of some kind of foreign accent...Jamaican maybe...but I’ve never been good at. It’s not stereotypical or anything- she doesn’t sound like that Tarot card lady or Sebastian the crab- there’s just something a little...different about it...in a good way.

I’m penned in by a bunch of...I dunno what to think of them...Adult Babies? Is that even a thing? Point is, I’m in the middle of the group, and now is neither the time nor place to escape. I don’t even know how I’m going to escape, never mind make the attempt. I decide to sit and stare with all the other lemmings and pretend to listen to the story while I look around and try to cook up an exit strategy.

That was the plan anyway. As soon as Miss Kiesha starts reading, I’m drawn right in. It’s like I black out. One second I’m getting ready to plot and scheme- or at least plot and scheme about plotting and scheming- and the next, the only thing I’m thinking about is what this lady is reading.

It’s some story that I’ve never heard before, and I find myself being sucked in. It’s about a girl who is like a courier and travels through dark, uncharted forests to deliver valuable rations to the sick an elderly. Then this wolf tries to con her by putting on a disguise- a little hokey I know, but have you ever watched Gotham? Sometimes, hokey is entertaining- and this courier has to do some serious detective work and facial recognition so that she can see through the disguise in time to tell a traveling mercenary.

It’s only after she says the words “And she lived happily ever after, the end,” and everybody, me included starts clapping that I’ve been listening to Little Red Riding hood.

“Okay children, go play,” this new lady claps her hands and everybody gets up and starts to scatter around the room. The quiet is gone as “kidults” crinkle off and start squealing like idiots. I look around and notice that Jane is gone. I can’t find her. What’s worse, I’ve got another problem as I start to get up: As I stand up and stretch like I just got out of a movie marathon, I realize I’ve got to pee.

I turn around and look towards the bathroom. The door is open, but I can see some giant woman in a daycare worker’s shirt dragging that chubby stuck-up girl with the bangs towards it. Bangs is having to jog a little bit to keep up with the other woman’s strides. In one hand, she’s dragging the snotty girl behind her, in the other hand I make out a pink rectangle and a big packet of wipes.

No way I’m going to beat them at the clip they’re going. The turtle potty looks smaller this time. I’m almost not surprised. Almost. The door doesn’t close as I catch the girl start to cry as her

pants are pulled down and she's shoved onto the potty. The daycare worker looks down inside the Pull-Ups, then back at a sniveling Bangs. Evidently she does not like what she sees.

As the nursery worker absent mindedly reaches back and shuts the bathroom door, I almost feel sorry for the little snot that called me a baby earlier. Almost.

A strong twinge in my bladder reminds me that I'm not out of the woods yet, and I run to the black lady with the braids who just made one of the oldest fairy tales around feel like a Spielberg movie. Her back is turned, but I can already tell that the top of my head wouldn't quite reach her breasts. I don't see Miss Denise or Miss Kate, but I'm willing to bet I'd find them taller, too.

I swallow my pride and reach up and tug on Miss Kiesha's shirt.

"Yes Richie?" she asks once she turns around and sees me. That's a little unnerving. I don't remember making formal introductions to this one.

"Ma'am," I say, "can I please go to the bathroom once..." I pause realizing that I don't know Bangs's real name. "...once that girl is done?"

"Potty?" Miss Kiesha says.

"Uh..yeah," I nod. "Potty."

She takes a knee. Goddamn she's huge. I think she's trying to look me in the eye, but she's really trying to get a better view of my crotch. Just like Miss Denise, she sticks two fingers in the inside front of my diaper and feels around, clucking her tongue a little. Then, rudely, she spins me around and looks down my backside. I just told her I needed to go use the toilet, and she's checking my diaper.

"You're fine," I hear her tell me, and then I feel her pat me on the bum. "Go play, dear."

"But I have to use the toilet!" I whine. Then I add, "I gotta go potty!" Maybe they'll respond if I say it to them like they wanna hear it.

"You're not potty trained, dear," Miss Kiesha smiles at me, a little condescending like, "you're wearing a diaper. You don't know when you have to go potty. Go play."

"What's going on?" Another lady in uniform comes up, this one more of a grandmother type.

"I think Richie here saw Bethany go to the potty with Miss Susan," Kiesha talks over my head, "and now he thinks he needs to go, too."

“Oh,” the older woman smiles down at me. “I remember when my children went through that phase. When one needed a change, the other one did, too. Didn’t matter if they were wet or not. Then when one went to the potty, the other one just had to potty too, even if everything in them had already been emptied out.”

“Yeah,” Miss Kiesha agrees and nods her head. Then she looks at me, but not really looking at me. More like she’s diagnosing me or sizing me up. “He’s a little jealous and just wants some attention. You wanna play a game with Miss Kiesha and Miss Geraldine, Richie?”

“No,” I shake my head, “I need to pee.”

Miss Kiesha just sighs, stands up, and says “Follow me,” as she grabs me by the wrist. We’re walking towards the bathroom. I’m thinking I’ve won. Then we take a sharp right towards the changing tables. I suck in my breath. I do *not* wanna go there.

At this point, I’m seriously contemplating holding it in just long enough to piss into the open air right as she opens my diaper up. Instead, we take a detour to right next to the changing tables.

There are two charts made in poster board, both are disgustingly pink and at my eye level. One says “Bethany” and the other one says “Clarissa.” They’re covered with different stickers of happy faces, stars, and sad faces. It doesn’t take a genius to realize that this is a potty training chart.

“Where’s Bethany’s chart?” she asks. I point to the one that says “Bethany.”

“Good,” the giant lady nods.

“Now where’s Clarissa’s potty chart?” Again, I point.

“Good,” she nods again. “Now, where’s yours?”

“I don’t have one.” I say.

“Right. Because you’re not potty training yet. You’re a little too young to be ready.”

“But...but...” I stammer. “Miss Denise and Miss Kate...they said that...if I-“

“I don’t know,” Miss Kiesha cuts me off, “what Miss Kate or Miss Denise said to you this morning when you leaked all over your pants and they changed you. They’re gone for the day, Richie. They left when I was reading you that story and they didn’t tell anyone anything about you going potty today. But we talk to your mommy every day, and nothing about you even being remotely ready for going potty has come up. You’re in diapers. Same as yesterday and the day before



that and every day that you've been here. I'll be happy to change your diaper when you need it, just like what happens every day."

Then she just gets up and walks off, before she tells me to "go play" again. What kind of gas lighting bullshit is this? I'm shrinking, and now the giants go from telling me that I'm on potty probation to I've always been in diapers?

As I stumble out to the middle of the room, now holding my crotch, I just wonder: "What now?"

That's when the dam breaks.

The dam breaks. No more warning. No more holding it in. I've got to go one second, and then I'm going, right in my pants. There's no middle ground. Honestly, there's almost no discomfort, either. I was holding myself, but that didn't do any good. All that plastic and padding must've kept me from getting a good grip on myself, or something. Definitely no potty dance, this time. (I guess that's appropriate.)

The dam breaks and I stop breathing. No air is moving in me, but liquid is sure as hell is moving out. I stand there and shudder as my bladder lets loose into the front of my diaper Yeah...it's mine now. Borrowed from somebody else or not, I'm marking it like a dog.

I literally don't know what to do. Do I try and cut the stream off? What's the point if I do? It's not like my diaper's gonna be any less wet...I mean technically yeah, but it's not like that's gonna matter to the crazy giant ladies who literally forbade me from peeing in a bowl just a few minutes ago. What if I can't stop peeing? What if I struggle to stop it and it won't? Do I really want to find that out? And as I'm thinking all of this, I'm still pissing my pants. (Except I'm not even wearing pants anymore...damn it...)

There's this hissing sound that's ringing in my ears as I keep peeing, too; as if I couldn't tell by how warm and wet my crotch is all of a sudden. And it's this low sound that I don't know if I'm the only one I can hear or not. It's kind of like when you're eating potato chips and you can hear yourself chewing but you don't know if anybody else can. I'm shaking, my knees are knocking together, and my bladder is finally empty. Finally, I remember to breathe, and the air that comes out of me sounds less like a gasp, and more like a sigh of relief.

I haven't been in this crazy place more than an hour and it feels like I'd been holding it till the end of one of those god-awful Hobbit movies and the credits just started rolling after the eighth ending. I'm not saying that I smiled when I finally let it all out and started breathing again there in front of everybody, but if I did, could you blame me?

That's when I look around, and it hits me. Holy shit, I've wet myself. I haven't done that since I don't remember when. I'm expecting the nursery to close in on me. I'm expecting to turn around and find everybody pointing and laughing at me for pissing my pants (except no pants).

If this whole thing were a nightmare (which would explain a lot...like what was taking Gwen so long, for starts), this would be the part where my teeth start falling out, or I'm naked, or my third grade teacher Mrs. Miller telling me that I forgot to do my homework.

But nothing happens. The walls don't close in. If anything, the playroom that I'm stuck in seems a little bit bigger. (Shit, does that mean I shrank again? I stopped keeping track of it when I ended up being a little bit taller than knee height to most of the grown-ups...I mean adults...I mean giants...fuck me...moving on.) Nobody's pointing or laughing either. Jane's playing with her blocks. The two stuck-up bitches in Pull-Ups are playing with some kind of knock off Barbie-dolls. All the daycare workers like Miss Kiesha are bent over and taking care of some other little kid. (Shit did I just say other? Keep it together.)

How do I feel? I'm relieved. I got away with it. I really got away with it. I pissed myself in public, literally felt pee dribbling down my privates and being wicked away by my diaper, and nobody noticed or cared. I can't believe I got away with it. There was still a chance I could get away, get out of this diaper, and get back to Mom...er...Gwen and...and what?

I've shrunk. I'm not wearing a big adult diaper with kiddie decorations. I'm wearing just a diaper. I'm wearing thick padding with a plastic coating held together by just two pieces of friggin' tape. Oh, and there are teddy bears on the waistline.

I sneak a peek at myself below the waist and realize that my diaper is starting to sag a little bit from all the extra...weight...I'll call it weight, that I just put in it. It's kind of amazing actually. It's kind of like that whole bumble bee ain't supposed to fly but nobody told it it can't thing.

Even if I haven't shrunk, and this world is getting bigger, what chance do I got? If I'm lucky, I get to find Gwen and then we most likely get caught and then she ends up trapped in this funhouse with me. But me getting out of here in the first place probably isn't on the table. If I had a chance, it's been fading since I laid down on the bathroom floor and let a weird lady slide this pamper under my ass. And it's been steadily going downhill from there. My fatal flaw has caught up with me.

My diaper is starting to cool, becoming less hot and warm and wet and more just plain squishy. It's not uncomfortable, actually. If I didn't know why it was so squishy I wouldn't mind it at all. But I do know, and that's the problem. I'm a grown-ass kid. (Kid? Kid...) I've been potty trained for years. I've got my pride. One way or another, I gotta get out of this thing. I take a toddling step toward one of the day, and maybe it's me, but the crinkle when I step is less obvious. The diaper is more muffled and I hear as much as I feel the squish. Still not as bad as the sound of a half-dozen grocery bags with every step. A dumb thought about peeing in this thing until it becomes poofy stealth underwear so I can sneak away pops into my head, and the bile in my stomach just stops that idea cold.

I take another step and open my mouth to, I dunno, cry or something. At least call out and ask a big person to change me; but pride makes me hesitate. Do I really want to admit that I just pissed myself? Will that help convince the people running this looney bin that I'm big? I mean, if I ask somebody to change my diaper for me, isn't that the same as giving up and admitting that I needed to be babied in the first place? I got into this whole mess by letting some strange woman pull my pants down grab my Johnson. Would it really be better if I asked another one to do the same?

Maybe it'd be better to play with a wet diaper between my legs, than to give up and ask for help. Yeah, I got some of that Devil's flaw too. (Fuck my life, I can still reference Milton. It's amazing the stuff that stays with you till the end when you're losing it. Hmm...maybe I didn't work with computers. Maybe I was a literary guy. Maybe I was at least well read. Moving on.)

"Hey Richie" a deep voice says from behind me. Before I even react, there's a big meaty palm on my shoulder. The front of my diaper gets a little warmer as I turn around, expecting to see one of the big people. I've been caught wet-Pampered.

I look up, but not as far as I think. Dude's big, but he's not BIG big. Compared to me, he could be a wrestler, or a bouncer. Maybe a football player. If he had any facial hair and didn't have that curly carrot top, he'd be really intimidating.

Still, he's not fee-fi-fo-fum big. He shifts a little bit, and I hear the same crinkle that's been ringing in my ears, only I know it's not coming from me this time. His overalls are red, like that cartoon baby from T.V. I can tell that he's padded below the waist, like me.

Then it hits me that I saw this guy getting his diaper changed around the same time when I was (I'll admit) staring at Jane.

"Do I know you?" I say trying to piece where I've seen this guy before. I mean, I think I've seen him before, but not from any actual memory. It's just that he called me by name. (Well, Richie...My name is Rich, not Richie.) And he's giving me that look like he knows me, but I can't place him.

"Seriously Richie?" he says to me, shaking his head. "It's me, Josh."

"Yeeeeaaaaah..." I say in that fake way that means "No Cluuuuuuue".

This big guy, Josh, apparently, sighs. "You're not playing pretend and not telling anybody again, are you?"

My eyes dart around, and I shake my head. No I'm not pretending. Only babies pretend. But I'm so freaked out and caught off guard that I have no confidence. Josh isn't buying it.

“Man, I hate it when you do this.” Josh says. “Are you pretending to be a grown-up, again? Cuz pretending you don’t know me doesn’t make you more grown-up.”

“No,” I say, kinda defensively. I shouldn’t have said that, though. I shouldn’t have just said “No”. I said “no.” But that no could have meant anything. “No I’m not pretending to be a grown-up again.” Yeah, I didn’t think I was pretending, that I was a grown-up, but that “again” part was me saying that I had been pretending to be a grown up. Maybe even my subconscious realized that too. Language influences thought. That’s why I’m so thorough and specific with my mantra.

“Good. That was really weird the last time.” The last time? *What* last time? Why is everybody suddenly acting like I’ve been here (and a baby, and in diapers) for forever and a day?! I just wandered in here off the highway so I could take a piss!

Josh turns around. “Come on, let’s go drive cars, again.” He calls back over his shoulder. “That always puts you in a good mood.”

“Uh...I wet myself?” I call back, though not too loud.

Josh shrugs. “So?” And he starts walking away. I do the only thing I can think to do. I follow him.

I don’t know what I was expecting when I started following Josh, but I wasn’t expecting a bunch of guys in onesies and whatnot pushing around toy cars on a floor mat, making “Vroom” noises with their mouths. Turns out, that’s what I got.

“Hey!” One of the calls out to me. “Richie, where’d you go, man?”

“He leaked through his pants, you saw.” Another one looks up from his toy fire engine. “They took him to the bathroom for some reason.”

“Must’ve been a mess if they changed him in there instead of up on the table. Did you have a blowout Richie?”

I just shake my head, trying not to laugh. This is so ridiculous. These guys were talking more like a couple of schmoes at the bar than anything. But here they were playing with toy cars on a mat.

“Why didn’t you come right back and play with us?” says this guy in a blue onesie.

“I saw him get stopped by Clarissa and Bethany.” Another one looks up from his dump truck.

“Ooooh,” A couple of them say at the same time. There’s some kind of understanding. Nobody likes the mean girls in the Pull-Ups.

“Those two,” Josh shakes his head. “Even for girls, they’re annoying. Think they’re better than everybody lately because sometimes they maybe use the potty. Who cares?”

“Yeah, but then before story time, he was playin’ with Jane.” One of the guys, a fella who was wearing nothing but a t-shirt and diaper like me pipes up.

Everybody stops playing with their toy cars and looks up at me. “Richie was with Bethany, Clarissa and Jane?” I smile a bit. I feel like I’m in the locker room again, and I’m about to get high fived by every guy for making it with two preppy girls and the head cheerleader.

“Do you want cooties?” Josh elbows me and I stumble a bit. “Cuz that’s how you get cooties.” And they all start laughing like it’s the funniest goddamn thing in the world. These guys weren’t serious, were they? Did they really think that girls had cooties?

“Cooties don’t exist,” I say. “That’s just something that’s made up.”

“By who?” Josh asks.

“I don’t know. It’s just something that little kids believe before they get big enough to like girls or something.”

The whole play mat goes quiet.

“Is he doing that thing where he pretends to be a grown-up, again?” I hear one of them ask Josh. Josh just shrugs.

“He said he wasn’t.” Josh says. “Dude, check yourself. Quit taking yourself so seriously, and relax.”

“This guy,” The dude in the onesie says. “His Mommy lets him wear cloth diapers for one day, and he thinks he’s grown up. He’s almost as bad as Bethany and Clarissa sometimes.” That...that really hurt my feelings there. Being compared to those two wannabe sorority girls just grinds my gears in the worst possible way.

I start having a major freak out. My face is hot and my vision is blurry. I can still see but my throat feels tight and the only way I’m going to get this next part out is if I shout it at the top of my lungs and stomp my feet. I don’t know how it helps, but it does.

“NO!” I scream. “THIS ISN’T RIGHT! I AM BIG! I AM!” Then I look at the play mat. It’s the kind you lay on a floor with fake roads and fake neighborhoods.

"I TOOK THAT OFF-RAMP THERE," I point down to the road where we turned off, like it's a map and not a foam mat. "AND I MISSED THAT LIGHT THERE!" I show these idiots where I missed the turn. "AND THEN I PARKED OVER HERE, AND IT'S A BOWLING ALLEY OR A CHURCH OR A COLLEGE OR SOMETHING." Just then, I start to listen to myself and realize that I'm in no way helping my case.

"Yeah," Josh says, putting. "That's when you started leaking through your pants, and Miss Kate took you to the potty to change you for some weird reason."

"I did not leak." I whine. "I used the potty, honest. I peed in the turtle potty and Miss Kate even held my penis for me and sang a little song." They're laughing and trying to hide it from me behind their hands. Under normal. Worst part is, they're laughing, but they're not laughing for the right reasons. They're not laughing because I just said a grown woman held my dick and sang me a song, they're laughing because they don't believe me. Like what I'm saying is too good to be true.

"I'M POTTY TRAINED!" I shout.

"Uh, Richie." Josh grins, and points at my sagging diaper. "Didn't you just say you wet yourself?"

"THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE WORN A DIAPER IN YEARS!" I swear.

More snickering at me. I don't like it. I don't like it at all. My lip curls up and on instinct I growl, like I'm some kind of wild animal. Then it gets worse.

I bend my knees and squat down. I'm ready to pounce. My growls become savage grunts. My body is clenched up and wound like a spring. My fists are balled up and my jaw is set. I'm running on pure instinct and adrenaline. Any second now I'm going to pounce and beat the snot out of the first jackass I reach. But first, all I need to do is one...last...oh...oh no! Oh God, no!

"Yeah," one of the jackasses smirks. "You're potty trained, all right."

What had I done? Why had I done it? It had felt so...so...natural.

"Dude, Richie. You're weird, sometimes. But you crack me up."

"But...but..." I start to tear up. "I'm not a baby. I'm..." (damnit I can't remember how old I said I was. It was a big number though, like 5 or 6. However old I really am.)

"No you're not," Josh tells me. "My birthday is before yours, and I'm not even two, yet. So how can you be older?" He claps me on the back and the...contents...shift around a little bit. My stomach feels like something is going to come out topside now, I'm so disgusted with myself.

That's when huge, manicured hands grab under my armpits. I don't even have time to scream as I go flying up in the air. I look down and see ruby red nail polished fingernails. I hear a sniffing noise.

"Yup," Miss Kiesha says. "We have a winner. Let's go get changed, little buddy." My legs dangle uselessly in the air as I'm trotted over to the changing table. Sad part is, after what just happened, a big part of me is relieved.

"Hey, it's cool, Richie!" I hear one of the guys from the car mat yell. "Just tell her your potty trained!"

I don't even have time to yell back a "fuck you" till I'm staring at the ceiling while laying on a plastic mat. I don't even bother to struggle. I honestly want out of this thing.

A giant hand reaches for a single tape on my diaper, and freezes. There are cubbies on the wall right above the changing table. Her other hand is in one, and staying there, almost like she's searching for something but can't find it.

"Hmmm..." Miss Kiesha looks up into the cubby above me. "Hey Susan?" She yells across the room.

"Yeah?" the lady who took the snotty girl with the bangs to the potty calls back.

"Richie's cubby doesn't have any fresh diapers in it! I think he's out!"

"Ha! Richie's out of diapers," I hear one of the jagoffs cackle, "and he thinks that means he's supposed to be *out* of diapers!"

Now's my chance!

"I didn't come here with any diapers!" I say. "Miss Kate put me in this one!"

"I know, I know" Miss Kiesha says to me. "Just stop squirming, and I'll get you cleaned up in a jiffy." The hell?! Why is she acting like she can't understand me?

"Hey, cutie," Miss Susan says to me, as she hands a couple of diapers, all in my size but somehow able to be held in a bundle in Miss Kiesha's free hand. "Here are some extras from storage." She says to Miss Kiesha.

"Gotta tell Richie's mom to bring more diapers," she tousles my hair and walks off.

I don't have time to think as Kiesha rips the tapes off of my diaper and cold, fresh air rushes in to brush against my privates. Damn plastic is like an air lock or something. I bite my lip as she

opens the diaper all the way. It doesn't take a genius to realize that my diaper is made for someone else to help me put on and take off. And by "help", I apparently mean, "with or without my consent."

My legs are up in the air, and Kiesha is wiping me up and down and all around. I'm less than pleased.

"I know, I know," Miss Kiesha coos at me as I grimace. "You just want to go back and play with your little friends."

Thing is, that's not the problem. I used to think that was the problem. Sometimes I'd go into the men's room and I see some little brat getting wiped down and they'd be crying up a storm. I'd think that they were crying because of all the gross stuff that was getting wiped off of them. That maybe they were so stupid, being so little, that they didn't realize that there was anything wrong till midway through the change.

But it isn't the gross stuff. It's not. The gross stuff you can get used to after a fashion. The gross stuff in the diaper isn't all that bad most of the time, not counting leaks and other stuff. Even the worst stuff, you only have to deal with once a day tops unless you're sick. (God, the problems I have now...fuck my life...moving on.) To anybody who thinks that diaper changes are fun, I say you try having a cold wet rag drug across your private parts a couple times a day and tell me how you like it.

She's quick, and she's good and gentle, but that doesn't make it any better for me. I'm beyond mortified.

My bum gets lowered down onto more soft padding. I'm being re-diapered. As two giant hands gently yank the front end of the diaper up between my legs and start to tape it back on, I sigh in relief. Relief due to what? New, crisp, clean, sweet smelling, diaper instead of toxic waste dump in my pants? Not having my ass up in the air on display with strange hands wiping cold rags across my junk? Both? Does it matter at this point?

I stretch a little bit as the new diaper is taped back on and I let out a long yawn like a cat.

"I know that yawn," I hear as I close my mouth over a rubber teat. I look down past my nose and someone's slipped a giant sized...or at least a "me-sized" pacifier into my mouth. I don't know why, but I start sucking on it instead of spitting it out like it was coated with battery acid. "Nap time, Richie." Miss Kiesha says, still carrying me; this time cradling instead of dragging me by the armpits. This: This is nice. She carts me off into a smaller, quieter room, with cribs and lays me down. My eyes are heavy and I'm exhausted like nobody's business. All of the adrenaline from my little tantrum over being potty trained has pumped out of me and now everything aches and I just want to lay down and stop thinking for a little bit.



Miss Kiesha obliges me and pulls a little blanket as I look. It doesn't have duckies on it, but it's still definitely a mobile and it begins to spin as I slow blink my way into oblivion.

As I drift off, binkie still in my mouth, I realize that on some level, I'm already starting to lose it. So for the first time I start my mantra. I need my rest if I'm ever gonna get out of this nightmare, but I have to keep myself. And so I say like I've said every night and naptime for close to a year now:

My name is not Richie.

I am not a baby, I'm a big kid.

I'm three years old.

Gwen is my mother, not my mommy.

I'm good at video games.

I don't need to sleep in a crib, I have a big kid bed.

I don't need to drink from a bottle, I can drink soda from a can with a straw.

I don't need to be spoon fed, I feed myself all the time with spoons and forks and all sorts of other stuff.

I don't need diapers, I wear big boy pull-ups.

I don't need any of this dumb baby stuff.

One day, I will wake up, and this will all be over.

But it wasn't all over when I woke up.

"Richie?"

"Richie?"

"Richie, wake up honey."

"Mmmm?" I rub the sleep from my eye. I know that voice. I know that voice. I open up my eyes, and I see the most important woman in my entire life. It's Gwen!

“Gwen! Gwen!” I practically shriek. I don’t know how much time I’ve got left before the big people come and ruin everything so I just start babbling on and on.

“You-gotta-get-me-out-of-here-these- people-are-crazy- they’re-treating-me-like-I’m-a-baby-and-this-place-is-filled-with-freaks-who-think they’re-babies-even-though-they’re-not!”

“Oh really?” she says, seeming super interested in everything I’m saying and she’s paying super close attention to it all.

“And-I-know-I-left-you-waiting-in-the-car-and-I’m-sorry-about-that-I-just-thought-I-was-going-to-go-pee-pee-in-the-potty-room-but-instead-these-giant-people-put-me-in-a-diaper-and-they-changed-me- and-there-are-these-other-kids-that-are-really-mean-because-they-think-they’re-better-than-me- because-they-wear-Pull-Ups-instead-of-diapers-but-I-don’t-need-diapers-Gwen!”

“Oh, sweetie,” Gwen smiles down at me from outside the crib. “Mommy missed you, too.”

Mommy? Smiling down at me? That’s when it hits me: Gwen is big, too. She’s a grown-up. She’s outside the crib. She’s dressed like a grown-up. And she can’t understand a Goddamn word that I’m saying and it has nothing to do with how fast I’m talking.

“Come to Mommy,” she tells me, and almost on their own, my hands shoot up towards her. I want her. I want her in the worst way and I need her to hug me right then and there. I’m flying again, and burying my head in her cleavage, just doing my best to not cry, and failing miserably.

“Awwwww, baby boy,” She coos to me. “What’s wrong?”

“He’s had a rough day,” one of the daycare workers says. I can’t even remember which one. I wasn’t even paying attention when it happened. “He had a leaky diaper and I think it just threw him off for some reason. He’s been fussy all morning.”

“So that’s why he’s not wearing the pants I put him in this morning,” Mommy...I mean Gwen says. “Speaking of which...”

I feel her free hand cup the front of my diaper and give it a quick squeeze. It squishes a little bit. Damn. I wet in my sleep. Is this going to be the new norm? (Yup.) It hasn’t even been a full day, and already I’m two diapers removed from the last time I went pee-pee in a potty. (I’d kill to be only two diapers removed from going pee-pee like a big boy.)

“Thought so,” she says. “I’ll change you when we get home,” Gwen tells me, picking up and carting me out of the building.

“You can change him here,” the daycare worker tells her. “We don’t mind.”

“Oh,” Gwen says, pausing and then changing course across the nursery back to the changing table. “I don’t want my little man to get a rash,” and she says it to me in that gooey, syrupy way that mothers talk to their babies. I’m her baby now, apparently. I started the day off as her...her (what did I start off as?) I don’t know what, but now I’m just a dumb baby to her who needs and will need her taking care of him.

I can’t stand looking at Gwen as she wipes me down and slips a new diaper under me like I’m just some toddler. Her touch is gentle, but there’s something different about it, something less...I dunno...clinical. Maybe I’m just more embarrassed because she’s my...my...she doesn’t work at the Daycare. I wince a little bit as she reaches into a diaper bag and starts rubbing cream on my bum.

“Oh by the way,” the day care worker says to Gwen. “We ran out of diapers for him today. Would you mind bringing in some more tomorrow morning when you drop him off?”

“Sure thing,” Gwen says as she reaches for the baby powder.

I look around the room for friendly faces. I make eye contact with Jane, and Josh on different eyes on the room. They’re friendly enough. But they have no idea what I’m going through. To them, this is normal. To them, they have no idea why I don’t like this. I’m freaking out because I’m half-naked; the bad half no less, and they’re wondering why I’m so uptight all of a sudden, as if we’ve played together every day; even though I came in as a stranger and was the “new kid” earlier this morning. Was I? Was I ever? Or am I remembering things differently.

As Gwen finishes taping on diaper number three, she picks me up starts walking with me out of the building, I see Clarissa getting dragged towards the changing table by her wrist. Her free hand is covering her backside, like she was trying to smush something back in. Right as Gwen walks out the door with me, I get to catch a glimpse of the grown-up changing Clarissa start wiping her down and grab something white to replace the ruined pink thing ripped open under her ass. I hear that girl’s wail even as the door closes. She had it comin’.

I notice the parking lot is different as Mommy, I mean Mom...I mean Gwen (damnit), carries me out. This isn’t the place where we had parked. I had parked in front of a church, or a bowling alley, or some community college. Instead I’m coming out of a daycare. Not some place that might have a daycare attached, but a regular old daycare. There are cartoon characters and big baby block letters along the side and everything.

I’m too shocked to do anything as I hear the car door open, and feel myself lowered into a rear-facing car seat that Gwen, I mean Mom, straps me in, cooing to me the whole time. (I feel so weird calling her Gwen, but it helps me think. At least I know my Mom’s name. Babies don’t know that, do they?) Then, a short car ride later, I’m home and in my room; but I’m not sharing a

room with Gwen anymore. (Wait...why would I share a room with my Mom? That's not right...the hell is going on?)

Instead of my old room, it's a friggin' nursery. There are pictures all over the place, and I'm dressed like I'm not even two in every single one, with the same dopey expression on my face. Fuck my life.

That's how it all began, but it didn't end there. If only it ended there, but it didn't. Like, I shrunk, or the world grew, and now I'm in diapers again and nobody can remember me like I really am, and the grown-ups can't even understand the words that are coming out of my mouth. Okay...I can deal with that, to a degree, I guess.

But then I look at the other babies. They're all like me. Even outside of the daycare, when I'm being pushed around in a stroller or shopping cart, all the babies look like me. They're all tiny big-kids like me. I don't see any bald heads or toothless mouths. It's actually the complete opposite.

The super-hot chicks and ripped dudes that I remember being on Victoria's Secret and Hanes pictures have relocated to packages of Luvs and Huggies. They don't seem to mind that they're broadcasting that they wet their pants on the regular. I saw the Old Spice guy on the front of a package of Pull-Ups, with his hands raised in victory while he sat on a toilet with plastic underwear around his ankles. How can I be sure that I'm not really a baby when every baby looks about my age? I don't know.

I don't hear any babble when they talk; just English. Thing is, I hear the grown-ups talk in plain English, too, but they don't understand me. It's like Rugrats or something, and I'm Tommy Pickles. How can I be sure that I'm not really a baby when every baby sounds and talks like me? I don't know.

Then there's the concept of time. I hear about my "growing up" and how I'm getting to be a "big boy", all the time from the grown-ups, but I don't see any evidence. It's been close to a year, I think, at least ten months or so, based on the weather. If I was actually getting bigger, I think I'd notice it; like I'd be getting new clothes because I've grown out of old ones and it'd be easier to reach stuff.

But that's not the case. The grown-ups are just as tall, and the high chairs are just as high. I'm wearing the same onesies and jammies, and all those other baby clothes that I've been since I ran into that place and peed in a turtle potty. The only "new" clothes that I wear are the kind that get taped on and then thrown away after I have an accident. Sometimes Gwen goes "wild" and I get a pack of diapers with new decorations on it or something; or maybe they'll be a little thicker or a little thinner.

Hell, even the diapers aren't getting any bigger. Reading letters and numbers has gotten...hard these last few months. But I can still tell that the squiggly line on the front- which I think is a number- has always stayed the same.

The grown-ups are always talking about how "soon" I'm going to be ready for potty training (usually when they're wiping my ass). But the big kid pull-ups never come. No one has once asked if I need to go potty, even after they check my diaper and found out that I was still dry.

I don't even get a friggin' sippy-cup to drink out of. I'm still bottle fed and spoon-fed. I should be beyond that, right? Right.

But it gets worse.

A couple of weeks ago, Jane had a birthday party at the daycare. They said she turned two. I saw her unwrap a potty and a package of Pull-Ups as "presents". She was moving to the two and three year old room as soon as she was potty trained they said.

Funny thing is, for a week she wore those Pull-Ups. She wasn't as much of a bitch as Bethany and Clarissa were that first day- Bethany and Clarissa are stuck-up no matter what they're wearing; but she got a little hoity toity and condescending. Then, after a week of watching her fail and get taken to the bathroom to get changed in private, she ran out of Pull-Ups. I watched- maybe with a little more satisfaction than I should have- as she was laid back on the changing table, just like the rest of us, and put back in diapers.

She cried and pouted the rest of the day, sucking her thumb, and the daycare workers promised her that they'd put her back in Pull-Ups when her daddy brought some more for her. She just cried and pouted more when they checked and changed her the rest of the day.

When he came to pick her up, Jane's Daddy- a huge guy with a ZZ-top fuck off beard- just nodded, patted her on the rump while she blushed and promised to bring in a new pack of Pull-Ups in the morning. Next morning, she's still diapered, and he's coming in with a couple packs of Pampers, and is apologizing for forgetting to have brought them earlier.

I ask Jane if she's given up on potty training, and then she just gives me the weirdest look.

"Potty training?" she says to me. "I'm not potty training. Why do I need the potty? I'm one. Let's go play blocks." And no matter what I do, I can't seem to get her to remember that birthday party, or that week of almost being a big-girl. Nobody remembers it.

Josh is getting excited. He says his birthday is coming up, now that I think about it. Says he's turning two. Is that what's gonna happen to him?

Fuck that; is that what's gonna happen to me, soon? Will I get a two-year old birthday party, a week of so-called "training", where I get the luxury of being wiped standing up, and then back on my back, legs up in the air like usual, and thinking that I'm one? I don't know. I just don't know.

NO!

NO!

NO!

That's not going to happen! If and when I get my two year old birthday party again, and I get put back in my Pull-Ups I'm going to do it right! I will use the big boy potty! I'll prove that I'm a big-kid. I'll get to go back to the two and three year old room where I belong!

Then it'll be like I never got lost at daycare and wandered into the baby room where Miss Kate put me back in diapers on accident. I'll get to grow up again. I'll get to be a big boy.

The fuck am I saying?!

I still haven't figured out the "why?" of any of it, never mind the "how?". I'm slipping away. The real me; the big-boy me; is slipping away every day. I can feel it. It's like I'm going crazy, and there ain't a therapist around that can understand me. So I'm just stuck saying my little mantra, same as it always is:

My name is Richie.

I am not a baby, I'm a big boy.

I'm two...no...three years old.

Gwen is my mother, not my mommy.

I'm good at video games.

I don't need to sleep in a crib, I have a big boy bed.

I don't need to drink from a bottle, I can drink from a sippy cup if I want to.

I don't need to be spoon fed, I can feed myself.

I don't need diapers, I wear big boy pull-ups and can go potty. I just wear the pull-ups just in case I forget.

I don't need any of this dumb baby stuff.

One day, I will wake up, and this will all be over.

And I just hope that it's enough to keep me big-boy me instead of baby me for another day.

Huff...I needed to get that out of my system before I went to sleep. Thanks Teddy. You're always a good listener.

FIN

### **Retrospective**

When I was a kid, I heard that R.L. Stine first came up with the titles of his Goosebumps books and then wrote the plot around whatever catchy title he came up with. I thought that was complete bullshit.

Then I wrote Middle of the End.

I liked the play on words, considering the cliché is always "The Beginning of the End." And I went from there.

Lots of regression stories are transformation stories. They start at the beginning, and end when the main character is in diapers and a baby, either literally or effectively.

This is a transformation story. A fairly standard one if I'm being honest. BUT I'm happy with the tact I took with this one: The first person perspective. The use of tense to try and simulate like poor Richie is talking directly to you in the now, as opposed to reflecting in print on the distant past. The fact that by...oh about the Middle of the story, Richie is clearly not the most reliable of narrators. Explaining the "what", but never explaining the "why" or "how".

I think it gives this piece an interesting emotional or intellectual appeal. It appealed to me enough that I eventually wrote a "pseudo sequel" in the form of "Adult Babies Anonymous."