Brian Booboo

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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“Aw, you’re so cute!” Max said mockingly.

“Shuddup.” Brian muttered.

“Grandma’s the one who said it.”

“You’re in a sailor suit too!” He said, shifting on the hard wooden chair, all too similar to the one he had stood on for the photo with his cousins.

“Yeah, but somehow, it looks mature compared to you.” Matt snorted.

“Compared to him!” Max insisted. “Seriously, dude, you’re ten and too old to be dressed like that, but look at Brian. Fits him like a glove.”

“It does not!” Brian insisted. “I feel just as ridiculous as you guys look. And at least I’m not ugly to boot!”

“You’re right. You’re, what was it that one lady said? Cute as a button.”

“Bright as a button.” Max corrected his brother. “Whatever that means.”

“And he’d be even cuter if we took his shorts.” Brian groaned. They were always making dumb plans.

“I’m gonna go pee.’ He muttered, sliding off of the chair and hoping that his cousins had not noticed the way his feet

dangled from it.

“We’d better go with you.” Max said, nodding to his brother. “We’re a set, aren’t we?”

“That’s what the photographer said.”

“He did not!” Brian insisted.

“Oh, it must have been when he was spinning you around.” Max snorted. “God, how did you not die?”

“Look, it was embarrassing. We can all admit that, so” he sighed. “Can I just go pee?”

It was a simple request, but they soon became aware of a line for the bathroom. Brian sighed again, but knew he would have no problem holding it.

“You sure you aren’t gonna go pee pee in your pants?” Matt teased.

“Maybe he has to do the other thing.” Max observed. Brian punched them both in the arm. Why were they still flanking him? Did they have to pee too?

“This line is slow!” Brian observed, trying to make conversation.

“Are you on the verge of doing your potty dance?” Max asked.

“Show us your potty dance!” He glared at his cousins, still a bit taken aback at how almost mature they looked in their outfits compared to him. He was barely shorter than Matt

was, yet he knew to any onlookers, it was two boys and their little cousin. How was that even possible, he wondered as he stood as straight as he could to try and match Matt's height.

"Getting squirmy?" Max asked. Brian did not even dignify that with a response. "Your mom really should've put you in one of your Pull-ups."

"Pull-ups? What?" He glared daggers at Max. "What are you even talking about?"

"Don't you wear them at night? Matt still wet the bed"

"Hey!"

"Until like six months ago."

"More like a year."

"We all know." Brian said, relieved to get a chance to do some teasing for once. "There was that one Christmas where you woke up smelling like pee." Matt pouted.

The line moved glacially forward and Max sighed. He reached down and patted Brian's head.

"Keep holding it, champ. We'll get there eventually." Brian shoved his arm away.

"Quit! I don't need to pee that bad."

"You sure? Maybe we can go find a bush or something?" Brian considered it, but shook his head.

"Last thing we need is the photographer getting a photo of

me peeing in the bushes like this."

"That'd be creepy." Matt observed.

"Well, it'd be from the back." Brian shrugged. It was creepy. "Isn't this line moving yet?" He was starting to actually need to pee. He never should have had a third cup of punch!

"Keep holding it!" Max said, patting Brian's shoulder. "Brian's a big boy! Brian's a big boy!"

"Stop." Brian whined, but Matt soon took up the chant too. He groaned and rolled his eyes at his immature younger cousins, even as his bladder ached again. "Longest line ever."

"Excuse me, boys." The chant finally stopped as a woman tapped Max on the shoulder. "If the little guy really needs to go, I've got a training potty over here."

"What?" The very suggestion scandalized Brian, but Max and Matt knew it was too good to pass up.

"Oh, that'd be awesome!"

"Yeah, he looks about ready to burst. Is he your little brother?"

"We're cousins, actually. I'm Max, this is Matt, and this is Bribri." Max had improvised, but Bribri definitely sounded more babyish than his proper name.

"C'mon, Bribri. It's right over here where no one'll see." She took his hand, ignoring how he glared at his cousins following close behind.

“No, seriously. I can wait.”

“It’s just cuz it’s an emergency.” The woman said with a smile. “It’s lucky my little guy just went.” She smiled down at a toddler wearing an outfit with a Peter Pan collar so babyish, it made Brian feel mature in his sailor suit. “You keep drinking your juice, Nathaniel. Mommy’s gonna help Bribri go potty.” Nathaniel nodded his consent, smiling at Brian, who was still trying to do anything to avoid this latest humiliation.

“What do you usually call it?” Nathaniel’s mom asked Max.

“Hmm?”

“Number one?”

“Oh! Uh, Bribri usually says” he drew a blank.

“Weewee!” Matt interjected. Brian glared at him.

“Alright, Bribri, time to go weewee.” Nathaniel’s mom said. Max and Matt did their best to act as mature caretaker cousins and hide their snickers as she all but wrestled the squirming boy’s shorts and Spider-Man briefs down, sitting him down on the blue plastic potty with all the grace of an experienced mother. “Go ahead, Bribri!”

“My name is Brian.”

“Oh, I’m sure.” She said, brushing a bit of his hair out of his eyes.

Brian could not decide which was worse: how trapped he felt

or how much his bladder ached. He sighed and did what he had to do, peed right there in front of his cousins, this stranger, and the little boy sucking on the straw of his juice box despite it being empty.

“Bribri’s a big boy!” Nathaniel’s mom gushed as the corner fell quiet enough to hear the sound of him peeing into the plastic potty. “Oh, and he’s just the cutest when he gets all blushy. Are you a shy guy? Bribri the shy guy!” Matt and Max looked as if they might explode with delight. They had nothing against their cousin, but somehow, it made them feel extra mature to see him treated like a total toddler.

“Can I get up now?” Brian asked, squirming on the humiliating training potty.

“You gotta wipe first. No stains in your cool Spider-Man undies!” Geez, say it loud enough for everyone to hear, Brian thought. “Is Spider-Man your favorite? I bet you’ve seen every episode of that Disney Junior series.” Brian did not answer, taking the wipe from her and quickly dabbing at his privates. “High five for pulling your pants up like a big boy!” Brian bashfully did so, wishing his cousins would go away. He realized too late that giving her a high five only gave Nathaniel’s mom an opening to ‘fix’ his sailor suit for him.

“Get me away from here.” He muttered as he finally escaped her maternal clutches, but he knew Max and Matt would never let him live it down.

“You know, I do have some extra Pull-ups if you think those might help.”

“What? No way!” Brian said, but the question was not directed to him. Max smiled down at Brian, clearly considering it. “Max, no.”

“Well,” he stretched the word out. “We won’t get you a Pull-up, as long” he fought back the urge to grin. “As long as you promise to be good and tell us right when you need to potty and not wait until the last minute next time.” Brian felt stung. That was not what had happened at all, but he knew it was the only way to avoid diapers.

“I promise.” He mumbled.

“I know you can do it, buddy!” Nathaniel’s mom said, smiling down at him. He mumbled a thanks and hoped she did not notice him rolling his eyes. The sooner they got away from this crazy lady, the better!

Things returned to normal once they were away from Nathaniel and his mom, though Brian kept looking to make sure they were not trying to find him again and force him to “potty” again. His cousins cackled and kept quoting Nathaniel’s mom, but it quickly took on less of a teasing tone and more one of incredulity.

“She really thought you were like three.” Max said. “That’s crazy.”

“Yeah.” Brian muttered sullenly. “I wish there was something to do.”

“I wish we could change.” Matt said. “These sailor suits are ridiculous.” Brian nodded. If he could go back to his own

clothes, he was convinced no one would ever mistake him for a toddler again.

“Couldn’t we go ask?” He said. “Your mom will probably let us.”

“I have no idea where she is.” Max said. “Have you seen her, Matt?”

“Let’s just go find her.” Insisted Brian. Now that the idea was in his head, he refused to let anything deter them. “There’s a lot of people, but it’s not like she’s hiding.” The brothers looked at each other as if silently communicating.

“Alright.” Max shrugged. “Let’s go, baby Bribri!”

With Brian glaring at the back of his head, Max led the way to try to find his and Matt’s mom. Brian did what he could to watch for his aunt, his mom, and Nathaniel’s mom all at once, but he almost made himself dizzy with how much his head swiveled to and fro. There were so many people and none of them look familiar. Literally none of them! Somehow, he had gotten separated from Matt and Max.

“So what? I’ll just go get changed myself.” If there was one place that was easy to find, it was the enormous building where the rooms were. He headed toward it. He would get out of this sailor suit and find something relatively nice to wear for the rest of the reception. He had done his time!

“Bribri! Bribri, sweetie!”

“Shit.” He muttered. Did the universe have it out for him or

something? He quickly pivoted away from the direction he swore he heard that awful nickname from and almost ran headlong into Nathaniel and his mom!

“Hey there!” She said with a smile. “Are you lost?”

“No, I’m going”

“How about you come play with Nathaniel until we find your big cousins?”

“I’m in a hurry!”

“Don’t you want him to play with you, Nathaniel?” Was she even listening to him?

“I can’t! I’m”

“C’mon, Bribri! Let’s play! It’ll be fun!”

“I can’t! My cousins are looking for me.” No matter which way he turned, Nathaniel and his mom seemed to be one step ahead of him.

“I’m sure they’ll find you over by the sandbox.”

“Let’s race, Bribri!” Brian sighed.

“I see my cousins right over there!” He pointed desperately.

“I don’t think that’s them, sweetie.” Nathaniel’s mom said. “Stick with us, kay? You know us, right?”

“Not really.” Nathaniel’s mom seemed to have mastered selective hearing.

“Let’s race!” Nathaniel declared.

“Wait until we’re away from the crowd, junebug.” She grabbed Nathaniel’s hand and then saw that as inspiration to grab Brian’s just as he was about to make a run for it.

“Please! My mom’s looking for me.”

“I thought it was your cousins.”

“Well”

“Whoever’s looking for you, they can’t miss you by the sandbox.” That’s what I’m afraid of, Brian thought as she half-dragged him toward it. The sailor suit was already bad enough. Being seen playing in the sandbox would only cement his status as a complete and total baby even more. He tried to pull free, but she held his hand firmly. Why did every mom have a grip like a vise? It made no sense.

“Sandbox!” Nathaniel announced, pointing with his free hand.

“That’s right, Nathaniel.” His mom said. “But we gotta get ready.”

“Ready?” She nodded and, kneeling down, began to undo Brian’s kerchief.

“What, what are you doing?” Brian asked, but she paid him no mind.

"Alright, junebug, can you get undressed for mommy while I’m helping Bribri?”

“Helping me what?” He tried to back away, but she pulled

him back to her.

“Get undressed to play in the sandbox! We don’t want to get sand all over your adorable sailor suit. Your mommy would be very cross, I’m sure.”

“Stop! I don’t wanna take my clothes off!” He tried to escape her clutches, but she was too crafty.

“It’ll be fun though, Bribri!” Nathaniel said, now down to his Paw Patrol Pull-ups. “Don’t you wanna play with me?” Where are you, Max and Matt? Brian wondered. He could not be sure if he wanted them to see him like this or not. His pondering it only made it easier for Nathaniel’s mom to get him stripped down to his underoos.

“There we go.”

“Let’s go, Bribri!” Nathaniel said, grabbing his hand.

“My name’s Brian!”

“That’s what I said. Bribri.” The four year old said with a shrug. “Look, there’s a pail and shovels here! Let’s build a sand castle.”

“I’ll just… watch.” Brian muttered, feeling very exposed as Nathaniel’s mom busied herself folding his sailor suit into a neat pile. All he had to do was wait until her guard was down. Then he could go grab it.

“Don’t you think it’d be more fun if you helped?” Nathaniel asked, seemingly entirely unbothered by being in just his Pull-ups on the warm sand.

“You’re doing good.” Brian said, watching both Nathaniel’s mom and the throngs of people around them. How long would it be before Matt and Max came looking for him? He had to escape before then.

“You don’t wanna help? You sure?”

“I’m sure.” Nathaniel seemed confused, but he kept heaping sand into the green plastic pail as Brian looked around, terrified that his cousins or anyone who knew him would see him there. Worse, Nathaniel’s mom was keeping close guard of his clothes. He had no hopes. He was stuck in a sandbox in his underwear!

“Looking good.” He said nervously as Nathaniel theatrically flipped the pail to try to make a tower.

“Sand’s too dry.” Nathaniel mused critically. “Momma, the sand’s too dry!”

“That’s too bad. Maybe you can dig.”

“Wanna dig, Bribri?”

“Not really.”

“What do you wanna do?” Nathaniel asked, trying his best to get his new friend to have fun. “Are you scared cuz you were lost?”

“I wasn’t lost.”

“You sure? You got sepear”

“Separated”

“From your cousins. I got lost once. It was really scary.”

“I wasn’t lost.” Brian sighed. “I was going to go to my room to get changed.”

“Oh.” Nathaniel crawled over to Brian. “Did you have an accident?”

“What? No!” He covered his crotch as Nathaniel studied it for proof of an accident. “Stop it.”

“You’re silly.” Nathaniel giggled. “I like you.”

“Uh, thanks? Can you tell your mom we’re done playing?”

“We’re not though.”

“Well, I don’t wanna dig, so…”

“Tag! You’re it!” Nathaniel jumped to his feet with alarming speed and took off running. Brian sighed and gave chase. They ran around and around the sandbox until Brian decided enough was enough. He dashed across it and tagged Nathaniel before running away, hardly even caring he was in just his underwear as his competitive side won out temporarily. Nathaniel grunted and Brian realized he had to focus on keeping away. This little kid was fast! “I’m gonna get you, Bribri!” Nathaniel announced. Oh, shit. Brian thought. He picked up speed, but stumbled. He landed on his hands and knees, but then Nathaniel landed on his back, pushing him to the grass. They struggled against each other, but Brian simply could not manage to get out from under Nathaniel or to even push him off of him. The four year old

was both heavier and stronger than he looked.

“Get off me.”

“Push me off.” Nathaniel said, straddling Brian as he held him down on his back, pinning his arms to either side of his head.

“Get off!”

“Come on.” Nathaniel giggled. “You’re a big boy, push me off.” Brian tried, but it was no use. His arms were stuck down on the grass. “Come on, Bribri!”

“Let me go.”

“Huh. Guess I’m stronger.”

“Are not!”

“You can’t get up. You’re a weak little baby. Right?”

“Let me go!”

“Why?”

“Cuz!”

“Cuz why?” Brian sighed and pushed. His arms came off the ground, but Nathaniel immediately pushed them back down. “You got close! C’mon, baby Bribri! Push!”

“Don’t call me that.”

“What? Bribri?”

“My name’s Brian.”

“Baby Bribri’s a lot cuter though. I’ll let you up if you say that’s your name.”

“What? No way!” Nathaniel’s mom had to have noticed by now, right? She never seemed to let them out of her sight, but now, Nathaniel had him pinned and she was completely unaware? That was crazy!

“Say it Bribri. Say that you’re a little baby.”

“I won’t!”

“Then I guess you’ll be stuck here forever.”

“Your mom’ll come.” Nathaniel looked over at his mom.

“She’s talking to Aunt Gladys. She’s busy.” He grinned down at Brian. “Say it, baby Bribri. I’m a little baby and Nathaniel’s a big boy.”

“I won’t!”

“Don’t you want up? Or do you like me holding you down like this?” Brian sighed. He was trapped. He knew it and Nathaniel knew it. “Well?” Could he hold out until Nathaniel’s mom noticed? Did he really want her coming to his aid and making him feel even more like a little kid? That almost seemed more babyish than just saying what Nathaniel wanted him to say. He pushed one more time, hoping to catch him off guard. Nathaniel smirked cockily at his efforts. “Nice try, baby Bribri.” How could such a little kid be so mocking? He groaned and Nathaniel’s smirk grew. He knew he had won.

“I’m a little baby and you’re a big boy. Now let me up!”

“Maybe I will, maybe I won’t.” He giggled as Brian tried to get free again. “I’ve got an idea. Let’s trade.”

“Trade what?”

“Well, baby Bribri should wear my Pull-ups and I’ll take baby Bribri’s big boy undies. You really shouldn’t be”

“Oh, my god!” Brian almost gave himself a headache with how quickly his head turned to look at Max, who stood there, staring at him in disbelief. He hit his brother’s arm to get his attention. Matt’s face lit up as he realized what Brian had been up to in their absence.

With a savage growl, Brian pushed Nathaniel off of him, though when he thought back to it, he couldn’t be sure if he had actually pushed Nathaniel off or if the little boy had been true to his word and let Brian up. He seethed as he stormed over to his clothes.

“There you are!” Nathaniel’s mom said as she saw Brian’s cousins. “The boys have been having fun.” She seemed completely oblivious to why the two of them were grinning from ear to ear.

“Not a stinking word!” Brian muttered, stumbling his way into his shorts as he tried to distance himself from Nathaniel’s mom, who had busied herself helping Nathaniel.

“We were just coming to find you for dinner, but this? This…” Matt grinned. “What is this?”

“Amazing.” His older brother said with a grin. “Little Bribri

playing with his new friend." Matt, spying Nathaniel's mom watching them curiously, leaned down and whispered into Brian's ear.

"How'd it feel getting your butt kicked by a kid in a diaper?"

"How'd you like to find out?" At least it had sounded tough in his head. He glared at them as he pulled his shirt over his head. "Let's just get away from here."

Having dressed in a hurry, his outfit was a mess, which made him feel far better about it compared to his cousins in their spic and span outfits. The moment his mom set eyes on him though, she saw him as nothing other than a little boy who had been roughhousing and messed up his outfit.

"What happened to you, Booboo?" His cousins snickered.

"Booboo. Why didn't we remember that?" Max whispered to Matt, snorting.

"Nothing. Get off!" His mom would not be deterred. She kept him right there as she fixed his outfit, even retying his neckerchief.

"At least we got those nice pictures earlier." She muttered, sighing softly before licking her hand and smoothing down his hair.

"Mom!"

"Complaining only draws more attention." She said. "And if you two don't stop snickering, I'll do the same to you!" Brian did not actually do it, but deep inside, he stuck his tongue out

at his cousins. “The four of us are sitting together over here with you two’s mom.”

Even after they sat, Brian still could not shake the worry that Nathaniel and his mom would reappear. What if they did? What if Nathaniel’s mom introduced herself and his mom revealed his actual age? Nathaniel’s mom would probably think he was some kind of creep for wrestling with a kid like ten years younger than him.

“Anyone remember what the meal is?”

“Steak, I think.” Brian’s mom replied. Seeing the excitement on his cousins’ faces, Brian did the best to hide his disappointment. His mom leaned down and whispered to him.

“Don’t worry, booboo. I ordered you something special.”

That something special proved to be a plate with chicken fingers and mac and cheese on it. It smelled so delicious, it made Brian’s stomach rumble, but he barely looked at it as he stared in disbelief at the cup the server set down beside it.

“Uh, what’s that?” His mom asked, sounding more curious than upset as she pointed at the light blue plastic sippy cup.

“Oh, the chicken fingers come with that automatically.” The server explained. “Does he need a bib?”

“No thanks.” Mom smiled at her son. “That was nice of her to ask, wasn’t it?” She gave him a little pat on the thigh.

“Thank you.” Brian mumbled. “Why’d mine come so early?” He asked, trying to not look at the sippy cup. “Even the head

table didn’t get their food yet.”

“Cuz you’re little Booboo Bribri.” Max whispered to him with a grin. He glared at him.

“The perks of getting the chicken.” Mom said, kissing his cheek. “Why don’t you start? I think our steaks will be here any minute.”

Brian could not shake the feeling that everyone at the table was watching him as he nibbled at his chicken fingers. He had already started on his third piece of chicken before their steaks finally arrived and their focus shifted.

“We got champagne!” Max exclaimed.

“It’s fake champagne.” Their mom said with a smile. Brian looked from his sippy cup to their bubbling glasses.

“A toast!” Brian’s mom said, raising her glass toward the center of the table. “To the happy couple!” The glasses all met hers.

“Come on, Brian. Join in.” Aunt Mary said, her sons grinning at their little cousin.

“With what?” Brian asked. He knew the answer and realized it would be more embarrassing to hear someone say ‘your sippy’. He raised it up, glowering. He knew someone would get a photo of it.

“Leave the lid on.” His mom murmured to him as his fingers brushed it. The thought had barely even crossed his mind and she was already on top of it. He groaned and sipped at his

milk.

Almost as soon as he finished eating, his mom kissed his cheek. She had missed him during the day and she wanted nothing more than to make up for lost time.

"Was that yummy?"

"Mom." He said, casting a warning gaze over at his cousins. They were chatting with their mom about something, but he knew they would not miss his latest humiliation if his mom had her way.

"Do you want me to wipe your face or will you do it?"

"Me!"

"I can see better." He knew it was a good point, but he was desperate to regain some independence and maturity. At least his cousins had spared mom the details about Nathaniel pinning him to the grass.

"Mom!" He said again. "I got it." His mom stared at him for a moment, her expression inscrutable.

"Alright" was the only word she said, but her tone made it clear just what she thought. Why was he on thin ice, he wondered, confused by her tone. She reached out and adjusted his neckerchief. He wanted to bat her away when he saw that both Matt and Max had removed theirs entirely, but he could not shake the feeling that his mom was upset with him. Well, he did not want her treating him like a baby when he was dressed like this!

Brian wiped his face and the moment of tension seemed to pass. He took extra care to wipe his face before looking around.

"What now?" Brian asked curiously. His aunt and his cousins all gave him a look as if he was ridiculous for asking. Somehow, that made him feel just as little as anything else that had happened that day.

"Once everyone's done eating, there will be speeches and things like that." His mom explained patiently.

"Then it'll be bedtime for Booboo." Brian punched Max's arm, but he felt his mom on his other side move to check her watch. He spun around and stared at her in disbelief, almost sensing what she was about to say.

"Actually, that might be a good idea."

"Mom!"

"Well, it's not that far from your normal bedtime." Brian heard his cousins snort, but he was too busy staring at his mom, totally betrayed, to shoot a glare at them. "And you've had a very eventful day." She brushed a bit of hair from his eyes. "Plus, you seem a little grouchy."

"But"

"No buts." She said.

"We haven't even had cake yet."

"Well," she pondered this. "Maybe if we hurry, we'll make it

back in time for cake." She went to get up, determined to get going before her son came up with another excuse.

"Actually, Aunt Jo. Max and I need to go grab something. How about we take Brian to his room?"

"Oh, would you, Matt?" He nodded.

"But mom!" Brian did not even care that he was whining. "They're... they're..."

"They're what, Booboo? Your favorite cousins?" Brian nearly squirmed in frustration. Why was she doing this?

"But..." he mumbled. "Mama, it's not fair!" She leaned in and whispered in his ear.

"The more you fuss, the more you prove it's bedtime."

"Bu"

"No. It's time you accept that your cousins are bigger than you. Shh, I know you're older, but you're still a little boy. I still remind you to brush and all those things, so I want you to be good and let your big cousins help you get ready for bed. Besides, all you'll really miss out on is the boring speeches." Brian sat there, numb, as she then whispered into Max's ear. He knew just what it was: his bedtime checklist. At least, he hoped that was all it was.

"Alright, Brian. Let's go." Matt extended a hand out. Brian glared at him, jumping out of his chair and trying to escape before his mom insisted he hold hands.

“No, we’re not going there.” Max said.

“But my room’s over here.”

“We’re going to our room first. You know, where we got ready?”

“Why?”

“Cuz we want these sailor suits off!” Matt said.

Brian had to stand there and watch his cousins strip out of their outfits. At least they didn’t spend too long in their boxer briefs to rub it in before pulling on t-shirts and shorts. Brian tried to undo his neckerchief, but Max immediately fixed it.

“Leave it on, Booboo. We’ll get to you.” He said.

“My name’s not Booboo.”

“That’s what Aunt Jo calls you.” Matt said with a snort.

“Aunt Jo means your mommy.” Max explained.

“I am older than both of you!”

“Aw, fussy widdle Booboo.” Max replied. “Don’t worry, we’ll get you into your jammies. You do have jammies, right?”

“You know he does!” Matt said, grinning.

Brian felt as if there was a rock in his stomach as he led the way to his room, feeling horribly childish in his sailor suit while his cousins walked alongside him in their normal clothes. He knew they would cackle at whatever pajamas mom had packed him. At least it was almost certainly a two

piece set. It was thankfully too warm for the footies he wore almost every waking minute at home once mom decided it was chilly enough for his winter pajamas. He shuddered at the thought.

As soon as they were in his room, Matt made a beeline for the suitcase on the bed. He grinned as he dug through it.

“Scooby-Doo tomorrow?” He held up a pair of green Scooby-Doo briefs. Brian glared. “Why’d you pick those, Brian Booboo?” Brian bit his tongue. He was not going to fall into the trap of admitting his mom packed for him.

“We’re looking for his pajamas, Matt.” Max said. “Booboo’s about to fall asleep.”

“Don’t call me that!”

“Why? Isn’t it the perfect name for a little guy who got his butt kicked by that Nathan kid?”

“Nathaniel.” Max corrected. “Isn’t it?”

“I dunno.” Brian muttered.

“Oh, these are great!” Matt triumphantly held up Brian’s pajamas. They were mostly a blue only a few shades lighter than the navy suits Matt and Max had worn, but both the t-shirt and shorts were covered with primary colored smiling whales and fish.

“Adorable!” Max agreed. “Let’s get you undressed, Booboo.”

"Come on, guys!" Brian whined. "Don't make me wear them!

Mom always packs pajamas, but I sleep in my underwear."

"With pajamas like these," Max said. "I don't blame you. But, you do gotta wear something to say your good nights."

“My good nights?”

“Your mom made us promise.”

“Like that’s the only reason.”

“Let’s get you undressed.” Max said. “Weren’t you itching to get out of that sailor suit just a minute ago?”

“Can I at least get undressed by myself?”

“Duh!” Both of his cousins laughed. “Why wouldn’t you?” Brian blushed so hard, his ears burned as he stripped down to his Spider-Man undies. He hated that he barely even cared about being in his underwear in front of his cousins.

“Give me my pajamas.” His cousins had other plans.

“We gotta do your bedtime checklist, don’t we?” Max said. Brian sighed.

“I normally put on pajamas fi” his cousins didn’t care. They each grabbed a hand and pulled him into the bathroom. “I can do it myself!”

“We gotta make sure it’s done right. Don’t you want to impress your mom so she doesn’t do all this for you?”

“She doesn’t.”

“Does so.” Max said with a smirk. “Matt, grab his arms.”

At least this time, Brian thought, it makes sense that they overpowered me. He squirmed and kicked all the same, though it did little good as Matt held his arms back as Max brushed his teeth, combed his hair, and washed his face for him.

“What’s next?” Matt asked, smirking as Brian stood there, all the fight gone out of him.

“Do you need to pee, Bri- Booboo?” Max asked.

“Why? You gonna hold it for me?”

“Ew! No freaking way!” Max’s nose wrinkled. “You can go on your own.” Brian realized that this was a momentary respite, even if they stood by the sink.

“Too bad we don’t have that training potty.”

“Or the Pull-ups she offered us. Geez, that lady was crazy, wasn’t she, Brian?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Then again, your mom usually treats you a lot like she did.” Max remarked.

“Dude, remember that time like two years ago she thought Brian was taking forever to eat his ice cream, so she made him sit on her lap while she fed him?” Brian’s face burned.

“You were still wetting the bed back then, weren’t you, Matt?”

“So? That was more private than you being fed like a baby in

public!”

“And don’t forget who was wrestling in his Spidey undies just today.” Max added. Brian fumed.

“Aren’t we done?”

“It’s your bedtime routine, Booboo. Don’t you know we have one thing left?”

“Oh, god.” Seeing Brian’s reaction, Matt eagerly grabbed him and held his arms back as Max grabbed lotion.

“This stuff’s literally for babies, Matt.” Max showed the bottle to his brother.

“Well, it fits for our little cousin Booboo, doesn’t it?” He laughed.

“Guess we know why you’re so soft, Brian.” Max said. “Does your mom really rub you with this? Tell the truth.”

“Just my face, hands, and feet.”

“And tummy, according to your mom.” Brian nodded and bit his lower lip. After this, they had to let him get dressed, right?

To his relief, his cousins knew nothing about the silly voices and songs his mom usually used when she moisturized him, so he was able to hold back most of his giggles. There was nothing he could do about the strong scent of baby powder that seemed to permeate more of him than the lotion touched. He sighed. They weren’t really going to make him go out to everyone and say good night, were they? He had a horrible

image of him having to sing a song to everyone like the Von Trapp children.

“Hey, don’t fall asleep yet, Booboo.” Max teased. “We gotta get your jammies on, don’t we?” Brian did not say anything, pushing past them and going over to his pajamas.

“You sure you wouldn’t rather have your sailor suit?” Matt asked as Brian got dressed. “Those pajamas are so babyish.”

“They’re not that bad, Matt.” Max said, rubbing Brian’s shoulder. “C’mon, let’s go find your mom so you can say good night.”

“You’re not really going to make me go to bed, are you?”

“Mom’s orders, dude. What time is your bedtime anyway?” Brian sighed.

“Eight o’clock. Can you believe it?” His cousins smirked.

“Wow, buddy. No wonder you’re so tiny! Growing boys need sleep and staying up that late stunts your growth.”

“Shuddup.”

“Yeah, we better talk to Booboo’s mommy about his bedtime being 7 at the latest.” Max said with a snort. Brian once again held his tongue. 8:00 was only his summer bedtime. During the school year, he was usually in bed by 7:15.

His cousins grabbing his hands pulled Brian from his thoughts. He tried to yank his hands free, but they held onto him firmly, determined to escort him every step of the way.

As they emerged out into the hall, Matt had a new idea.

“Let’s swing him, Max.”

“No, no, no!” Brian protested even as his bare feet kicked in the air as they swung him forward again and again. That was how he arrived back in the grand hall where everyone was enjoying cake.

“We didn’t miss cake, Booboo!”

“But Booboo’s already brushed his teeth.” Max said, giving Brian’s hand a squeeze. “Isn’t that right, baby?”

They made their way back to the table where their moms waited. They smiled as Brian, hands still held captive, said good night.

“Nini, booboo.” HIs mom said. He sighed as she hugged him. At least his hands were free. “Were you a good little boy for your big cousins?”

“Yes, mama.” He felt defeated.

“Hey, we had a fun idea! What if Brian slept with us? It’ll be like a slumber party!” Brian could not deny he liked the sound of that. Maybe he wasn’t about to go to bed!

“Sorry, but Brian and I are leaving early tomorrow, so I want him well-rested.” She looked at Brian. “I’ll be in the room in a little while and I expect you to be fast asleep.” He nodded. “Boys, can you please bring Brian back to the room?”

“Sure can!” They grabbed his hands and turned back the way

they had come.

The trio had almost reached the door when a familiar voice cut through the post-dinner conversation.

“Bribri?” Brian froze and his cousins immediately turned toward Nathaniel and his mom. Nathaniel no longer wore his wedding outfit with the Peter Pan collar, but he was not wearing pajamas either. He had a Bluey t-shirt and jeans on and he held a sippy cup that matched the one Brian had had at dinner. “Are you off to beddy byes, Bribri?” Nathaniel’s mom asked.

“He sure is!” Max replied.

“I suppose that means it must be Nathaniel” she checked her watch. “Oh! My mistake. You still have about forty-five minutes, junebug.” She took the sippy cup from her son. “Why don’t you say nini to Bribri?” Brian was pretty sure he would have rather taken one of Mr. Gray’s surprise math quizzes, but he felt his cousins push him toward the toddler.

“Nini, baby Bribri!” Nathaniel said, giving him a big hug that pinned his arms to his sides. “You smell like a baby.” He murmured before making a thoughtful noise. Brian tried to pull away, but Nathaniel remained stronger as he pulled out the back of Brian’s shorts. “Hey! Why’s baby Bribri not wearing his diaper?” He asked loudly. Brian winced and quickly pulled away.

“I’m sure he’s on his way to getting it on, sweetie.” His mom said. She kneeled down and hugged Brian. “Nini, sweetheart.

And don’t worry. I’m sure you won’t need diapers at night much longer. You’re gonna be a big boy one day!” Brian was too shocked to even speak as his cousins led him away. Why did everyone think he was a baby?