Charlie Cheetah

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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“High score!” The video game's digital voice announced as Lucas landed another blow on the grunting orc before him. He pumped his fist in the air as the arcade game began to print a long chain of tickets.

“Almost got enough to-” his voice trailed off as he saw the door to the arcade open. The sounds around him of video games chirping, skeeballs rolling, and children squealing in the playplace seemed to fade as he saw Richie Collins standing in the entrance to Charlie Cheetah's. Why was he here? Lucas quickly dodged behind the arcade cabinet, methodically making his way up to the prize counter.

“Come on!” A kindergartner shouted, almost running into Lucas, his joyful shout almost scaring the eleven year old out of his skin. “This place has the coolest slide ever, you go into a tunnel and-” his soprano voice melted into the general cacophony coming from the indoor playground where little kids reigned.

“Wait for me, Joey.” Another boy said, half-skipping as he ran to catch up.

“Where is he?” Lucas muttered, peeking around and spying Richie a short distance away. Ok, get to the prize counter, get something, and then leave. That was all that mattered right now.

“Whatcha got your eye on?” The guy at the counter said. He only glanced down at Lucas before scanning the room again. It was a busy day like all Saturdays, especially since a lot of parents dropped their kids off here and just let them run wild.

“Um…” Lucas should have thought of that beforehand, but he was in panic mode. He turned and saw Richie closer to him. He winced as Richie's head turned and he definitely, one hundred percent saw Lucas. “This!” He grabbed the first box his hand brushed, tossing the tickets onto the counter and took off running, Richie giving chase. “Shit.” He muttered under his breath, dodging behind a Capricorn cabinet. “Ok, he definitely saw me.” There was no hope of making it to the exit. Derek stood a short distance from it and Lucas was willing to bet he had orders to nab anyone Richie was chasing. His only hope was to go into the bathroom. He knew Richie would follow him, but at least he could put a stall door between them.

“Hey!” Richie called and Lucas realized how close he had gotten while he had been strategizing. Stashing the box he had blindly grabbed into the pocket of his blue camo shorts, he made a mad dash for the bathroom, nearly tripping over his feet in his haste.

Lucas breathed a sigh of relief as he made it into the bathroom, but he knew Richie was close behind. He charged into the stall and locked it. He listened carefully for the sound of Richie, the bathroom absolutely silent except for the rapid tattoo of his pounding heart. Was he that nervous that he was blocking out all of the sounds of the arcade still? Richie must

be waiting outside, he thought. It made sense and probably aroused less suspicion.

Lucas yelped as the box tumbled out of his pocket and fell to the floor. He looked down at the red cardboard for a moment before picking it up. If he was trapped, he might as well see what he had gone to all this trouble for. He opened it.

“Ugh.” It was a cheap plastic ring. Shiny, but worthless. He read the card, rolling his eyes. “Wishing ring. Hold this ring in your hand. Make a wish, bold and grand.” He scoffed. A wishing ring? A dumb rhyme? What a waste. He turned the card over. “Make-A-Wish Co. Hoboken, New Jersey. A division of MacGuffin Inc.” He scoffed again. “To the bathroom, you did race. Now put that bully in his place? What?”

“Mucus!” Richie called, finally entering the bathroom. “I know you're in here.” Lucas held his breath, but he knew it was hopeless. Richie would get him. The ring grew hot in his hand. Lucas had not even realized he had pulled it out of the foam padding it had rested on. “Mucus! Come out and I'll make it easy on you.”

“Go away.” He wished he sounded more confident, but that would have required an actual magic ring. They didn't exist. “Go away, Richie!”

“I just want to talk.” Lucas could almost see Richie's sneer through the door of the stall, his blonde fade, his cruel green eyes. The sort of kid who just looked mean. “Come out.”

“No.” Lucas said firmly. The ring throbbed as if to remind him it was there. Magic wasn't real and he couldn't wish him away. What would even happen?

Bam! Bam! Richie pounded on the stall. Bam! At least it was just him. He must have left Derek outside. Good. Maybe he could- Bam! Maybe he could kick him in the shin and then run?

“Ow.” He muttered as the ring got his attention again. Fine. I'll make a wish and then I'll kick him. But what would he wish? It seemed to come to him out of nowhere. “I wish Richie was a baby!” He almost laughed at himself. He felt so dumb. Wishes weren't real and-

“Wha- what's going on?” Richie's voice trembled on the other side of the door. Gone was the affected deep voice he used even though everyone knew his voice had not deepened yet. He sounded scared. It had to be a trick, but was Richie that good of an actor? “What… what's happening?” His voice seemed higher now. “I- I-” Lucas felt his chest clench. No, there was no way Richie would be playing along. He opened the door just enough to peek out. Empty or so he thought until he looked down into the tear-filled green eyes of a little boy who had to be only two. “What did you do!?”

“Richie?”

“No duh!” The toddler said. Lucas opened the door the rest of the way and the toddler snarled, but he was much too small to do anything other than pound his tiny fists into Lucas's stomach.

“Whoa there!” Lucas said, catching his hands and squatting down to his level.

“Change me back!”

“What are you talking about?” Lucas smugly examined his handiwork. The toddler wore a Paw Patrol t-shirt and matching light blue shorts. Richie's signature sneakers were gone, replaced by a pair of lime green foam clogs. Grabbing the shirt, Lucas raised it just enough to confirm what he had suspected: right there, against Richie's newly chubby tummy was a diaper. There was no doubt about it. Richie had been turned into a toddler! “This is-” what was this? “I can't believe it worked.”

“I know you did something.” The toddler said, glaring up at him. “Change me back.” Lucas wasn't sure if he could… and did he really want to? What else would he do? It was a tough question. He had turned Richie into a toddler, now he was throwing a fit. Obviously something had to be done before someone came to investigate a toddler screaming bloody murder.

“Turn me back!” Richie demanded again.

“Why should I?” Now that he was almost certain this was his doing, why not make the best of it?

“Cuz… cuz!”

“That's not a great reason.” Feeling daring, he reached out and tousled Richie's mop of hair. Had he looked like this when he was two or did the magic just make him into the

most babyish looking baby possible? “Tell you what, I promise to turn you back. If you be a good little boy for me.”

“What? No!” Richie glared up at him. “Quit being such an asshole!”

“Meaniehead? Really?” Lucas snorted.

“That's not what I said.” Richie protested. “I said asshole!”

“Poopoo head? Dude, if you used your diaper, I'm not-”

“Diaper? I’m not wearing a-” he stopped, face turning red. “But… but…” Lucas smirked and tugged Richie's shorts down, a move Richie had done to him and so many others over the years.

“Winnie the Pooh! Dude, that's like the most babyish diaper you could wear!” Richie snarled and, struggling a bit, got his shorts back up over his puffy Pampers. “This makes it even better.” Richie was too angry to even unleash the absolute torrent of profanity he wanted to, shaking as Lucas continued. “Here's your choices. One, you can be a good little boy until I decide to turn you back.”

“Decide!?”

“Or two, I strip you down to your Pooh Bear diaper and drag you out to your friends. You're a pudgy little toddler, but I bet they'll still recognize you.” Richie did not want to admit that he doubted it. He felt his bottom lip tremble. What choice did he have?

“I'll…”

“One or two?”

“Fine. One.” Lucas grinned and pulled his phone out. “What are you doing?’

“Are.”

“Huh?”

“You can't say your r's anymore, can you?”

“Can too!”

“What's your name?”

“This is dumb.”

“Your name's dumb? Yeah, I'll say.”

“My name's Richie.”

“You hear it now? Wichie.” Lucas grinned. “You're really two in every freaking way.”

“Shuddup.”

“Ok, new deal. I want video of you saying” he took a deep breath. “Randy the rapid rabbit raced ‘round the rocky river.”

“What?” Lucas repeated it three more times, tripping and stumbling over the tongue twister himself. “I'm not saying that.”

“Wasn't that Derek I saw with you out there? He used to call Alex ‘diaper boy’, so what do you think he'd do seeing his friend Richie in actual diapers?”

“It's too hard.” Richie whined, taking Lucas by surprise. He almost felt bad. He tried to see the sneering bully that Richie had been a few minutes ago. That made him feel less bad.

“Hmm, I s'pose so since you're like two.”

“I am not.”

“Alright, fine. You're eleven and wearing a baby diaper.” Richie glared at him. “Eleven and a half then? I think your birthday's around mine.”

“Shuddup. You need to change me back.”

“I'm not changing your diaper, bud. But” he grinned impishly. “I bet we can find someone who can.”

“That's not what I meant!” Richie screamed in his toddler soprano.

“Shh, inside voice.” Lucas grabbed Richie's hand and began to pull him along.

“Where are you taking me?” Richie demanded as Lucas wove through the arcade. He remembered seeing a sign by the door and a plan was taking shape.

“You're gonna have some age-appropriate fun.” Lucas said.

“What buh- does that mean?” Richie asked, furious that he had stumbled over the swear word. Why did this stupid toddler mouth not say what he wanted? “Let me go!” He tried to tug his hand free, but Lucas was now much stronger than him. “Stop!” He did not know what he would do once he

escaped, but he knew whatever Lucas had planned would not be good for him. He smirked as an idea came to mind. A way to make a distraction.

Richie rushed up to Lucas and grabbed at his shorts. He grunted with effort as he tugged them down, an old favorite.

“Hey!” Out of instinct, Lucas let go of Richie's hand to pull his shorts back up before the bully turned toddler got too good of a look at his Capricorn boxer briefs, a pair he had mocked him about in the past.

“Ha!” Richie took off running as fast as he could with tiny toddler legs and the foam clogs. He did not get far.

“That wasn't very nice!” Lucas said, landing a firm swat on Richie's butt. He snorted as he remembered that his most hated bully was wearing a diaper now. “Do it again and you're losing your shorts.” Richie glared up at him. “Now, c'mon. You don't want to be late!”

“For what?” Richie asked. Lucas grinned and pointed at a sign by the entrance for the play area. “A buncha squiggles?”

“Very funny. It says Jason's birthday.” Richie stared at the sign. That did look like a J and that one was a b, or maybe a d.

“Oh.” He realized. “I can't read, thanks to you, meanie!”

“Didn't even know you could before.” Lucas retorted. Richie kicked his shin. “Do that again, you're definitely in just your diaper.”

“Shuddup. Don't talk about it.”

“About what? Your puffy, wuffy diapie?”

“Ew. Don't talk like that.” Lucas snorted.

“Whatever, dude. Let's get you to your party.”

“No! Stop!” Lucas dragged Richie into the playplace with the toddler protesting. It naturally drew the attention of the adult in charge of the day's festivities. “I don't wanna do this!”

“Who do we have here?” She asked, smiling down at Richie, but clearly directing the question to Lucas. She must have been Jason's mom. Lucas did not know what possessed him to do it, but he decided that Richie shouldn't get to go by his old name. Lucas had said it with fear coloring his voice so many times, it felt almost as if the bully should have a clean slate now that he was a baby. But what would his name be?

Inspiration struck a moment later. Lucas's grandpa's brother had been named Richard, but gone by Dick. Sure it was a name, but it felt almost like swearing. Maybe he could make it sound more childish.

“Dickey.”

“What!?”

“Yes, buddy. We're talking about you.” He said cloyingly. “Dickey, can you say hi to Jason's mommy?”

“You can't be serious.” Richie growled. “I am not-”

“Sorry,” Lucas said, talking over him. “He's been so excited about this birthday party, I think he swung right into being a

little grouch.” The words seemed to be coming to him out of nowhere and he realized he really did sound like Richie's older brother. That felt like an ironic twist to a wish, like you'd see in movies. Your bully is a baby now, but he's your baby brother. He shuddered at the thought. A sister was bad enough, he did not need a baby brother.

Lucas's mood improved when the woman smiled in understanding before grabbing Richie's hand She knelt down to look him right in the eye.

“Well, you'll have lots of fun here.” She said. “We've got all sorts of games and there's the slide and ball pit.” Her eyes went wide as if she was about to announce the most exciting secret ever. “And we'll even have pizza and cake and ice cream! Do you like ice cream, Dickey?”

“My name's not Dickey.” He turned to see that Lucas had abandoned him.

“Don't worry. Your big brother will come get you once the party's over.”

“He's not-” Richie sputtered, unsure of how he was supposed to correct everything this crazy lady had wrong!

“Why don't you start over here?” She took him by the hand and led him over to a group of little kids all sitting on the floor around a woman reading a book. “I bet you like stories!”

“No.” Richie said.

“Aw, it's ok to be a little shy. Here, I'll stay with you until you

get comfortable.” If he was supposed to get comfortable with the nightmare he found himself in, he could not think of a worse place to do it than in her lap, but she sat on the floor and pulled him onto it.

“Let me go! I'm… I'm too old to be here!”

“Shh. The story.” Richie grumbled, but knew in his state, there was little hope of escape, so he sat there and listened to what had to be the world's longest story about a fuzzy bumblebee who could not find his flower.

“This book's for babies.” He muttered.

“And you're of course a big boy.” The woman murmured back, giving his diapered bottom a pat.

“Quit!.”

“Oh, ok.You just tell me if you need your diaper changed.” Horribly scandalized, he tried to get out of her lap. “The story's nearly over.”

She was right. The story was over quite quickly, but then there was a second one. He squirmed and squirmed as the storyteller got deep into a story about Carly the Capybara. Finally, the woman who had put herself in charge of him let him get up, though she went with him.

“What do you want to do now?” Richie wanted nothing more than to escape, but he could only move so fast with the bemused mom following close behind. “Oh, no. We're staying in here, Dickey.”

“That's not my name!”

“It's a cute name.” She replied. “And you're a cute little tater tot, aren't you?”

To his horror, she scooped him up, planting a kiss right on his chubby cheek as one of his clogs tumbled off and down to the floor.

"Stop!" He squirmed, whining every bit like a toddler.

"I can't help it. You're such a cutie patootie! Yes, you are! Jason's five now, so he's all about being a big boy. You're not in a hurry to grow up, are you?"

"I was like ten years older this morning." He said sincerely, but she did not seem to hear him.

"I know what we'll do. Face painting! Your adorable cheekies will be the perfect canvas for Danielle!"

"I don't want my face painted!"

"It's not the whole thing. Maybe she can do a super cool dragon? Or is that too scary?"

"No." He squirmed, but she held him firm as she walked over to the face painting booth. Richie found himself plopped down on a stool.

"Danielle, this is my new friend Dickey."

"Aw, hi Dickey! How old are you?" Before Richie even knew what was happening, his hand flew up with two stubby fingers standing. "Two? What a big boy you are!" Danielle

beamed and Richie tried to figure out where he had seen her before. He was pretty sure she was a couple grades above him, at the absolute top of the middle school hierarchy. And I'm in a diaper, Richie thought. "What'll we paint on your face, Dickey?" She showed him a laminated page with a few options. "A fairy? A unicorn?" Whether he was two or eleven, Richie thought the same thing about those suggestions. Danielle chuckled. "How about we make you a kitty?"

"That might be hard for him to hold still." Jason's mom said, looking at the wiggling tot. "How about we do a dragon just on one cheek?"

"Sounds good to me. Can you roar like a dragon for me, Dickey?"

"There's no way I'm gonna do that." Richie muttered. "Look, that twerp Lucas did... something and turned me into a baby. I know that sounds like impossible, but I'm actually twelve and I don't want my face painted."

"Roar like a dragon!" Jason's mom urged. "Want me to help you?" Richie stared at her. "On the count of three! One, two, three! Roar!" She made claws with her hands. "See? It's fun. I bet Danielle'll do it too!"

"You're crazy." Richie said.

"You can do it, Dickey! Let's go, Dickey, let's go!" He sighed as he realized his only way to get her to stop was to play along. Then again…

"Can we go on the playground?" He asked, trying his best to sound like a toddler. It was a little disheartening that he did not need to try all that hard.

“Sure.” Jason's mom said. “We'll be back, Danielle.”

“I'm here all day.” She said cheerfully. “Tiring him out might make it easier for him to sit anyway.”

“I am not getting my face painted at all.” Richie said, more to himself than to the woman who held his hand as they headed for the playground. There was a tall slide and a bunch of things to climb on. The most important part for Richie, though, was that it was too small for an adult, so he would be able to give her the slip without any problems.

“Alrighty, let's have you sit right here.” She picked him up and set him on a padded bench by a plastic shelf full of kids’ shoes. “You get to be a barefoot baby boy in the playplace. Won't that be fun?” Riche rolled his eyes. “But don’t worry, your shoes'll be right here waiting for you.” She easily slipped off his lime green foam clogs. “Bye-bye shoes!” She grabbed his wrist and made him wave before he snatched his hand away. “Oh, don't get fussy-wussy, Dickey doo.”

“Stop!”

“Let's see a smile!”

“No!” It was a sentiment that both the middle schooler and the toddler inside Richie could agree with.

“Oh, come on. It's a party!” She teased, grabbing one of his

little feet and giving it a tickle. Richie wanted to say no. He wanted to pull his foot away. He wanted to storm out of there. What he did do though was squeal and squirm. “There we go! Ticklish little Dickey!” She cooed, tickling him completely into submission. “Alright, now you can go play.”

Richie could not have been happier to be out of her clutches, but he would have preferred to not be clambering his way into a dumb little kid playplace. He climbed up the stairs, struggling with each one. Bigger kids who could be no older than five or six, Jason's actual friends probably, dashed past him, laughing, squealing, and paying him no mind. He knew he would have been able to bound effortlessly up these at his old size, which frustrated him more.

Finally reaching the top, he peered down. Jason's mom waved to him. He rolled his eyes and half-heartedly waved back.

"Hi, sweetie! I'll be down here, don't worry." Wasn't she curious why his parents weren't there? He pushed the thought away. Who cared what she thought. The most important thing was for him to get away from here, go find Lucas, and make him, force him to change him back. What if he had gone home? No, he couldn't have. He had to-

"Move it, baby!" Richie jumped as he looked at what his middle schooler mind still identified as a little kid, despite having to look up to meet he kid's eyes. "This part's for big kids!"

"I'm big." Richie heard himself say. It was technically true, even if he didn't look it.

"Psh." The kid snorted and pushed him aside. Richie fell on his amply padded bottom.

"Ow!" He whined, feeling... no. Nonono. He did not just pee his pants. He couldn't have! He felt at his shorts, even shoving a hand through the elastic waistband. He grimaced as he felt the crinkly padded diaper under his pudgy hand. It was warm alright. All the more reason he needed to find Lucas and kick his butt!

Richie looked back over at the stairs, but Jason's mom stood right there. He had to give her the slip, obviously. He hurried along, running and dodging around kids, hoping that the brightly colored plastic and his rapid pace would make it hard to follow him from outside. What options were there for getting down? The stairs were out. The slide? He knew there was one around here somewhere.

"Why didn't I pay more attention before I got in here?" He muttered to himself. It felt like the most complicated labyrinth possible this deep inside. He crawled through tube after tube, going from determinedly trying to find the slide to simply hoping he would find something, anything that would give him a hint on how to get out of this playplace.

Panic was beginning to set in right as inspiration struck. Richie would follow another kid. He refused to think of them as a bigger kid even if he picked a tall boy in a red shirt who would be easy to follow. He toddled along after him, having to half-run just to keep up. All the same, he was thrilled he would be out of there in no time!

Richie almost cheered when he saw the entrance to the slide. He was nearly free! He would slide down and then hopefully give Jason's mom the slip. Then he just had to find Lucas and demand he turn him back. He looked down at his stubby fingers. Maybe the wish or whatever would wear off? He did not want to wait to find out.

"Hey! This slide isn't for babies!" Richie sighed as he looked up at another kindergartner. Of course. They were everywhere.

"I just want to go down." He hated how much he whined, but whatever worked.

"No. Go down the little slide."

"I don't know where that is." The kindergartner sighed.

"Dumb baby." He grabbed Richie's hand. "C'mon."

"Not so rough!" Richie whined. He could not believe that some little twerp was actually hurting him, but he was. This dumb baby body was so fragile!

"We're almost there." The kid said, pulling him around the corner. Richie spied a bright orange plastic slide that led down into a ball pit.

"I don't want to go down there!"

"You scared?" The kid asked, smirking.

"No. I... I want to go down the big slide."

"That's for big kids."

"Dude. I'm twelve. I just got turned into... into this by a kid I bully. If you don't let me-"

"Diaper!" The kid exclaimed, yanking down his shorts.

"Hey!" Richie growled and, giving into instinct, swung a fist at the kid.

"Ow!" The kid smacked Richie's arm. "That hurt!" Richie groaned inwardly, disappointed by how ineffective his punches were now. This dumb baby body was so weak! "Say you're sorry."

"I won't." Richie felt a nearly overpowering urge to stick his tongue out at this mean kid.

"Hmph." The kid grunted and pushed Richie. Taken by surprise, he stumbled out of his shorts and, as if he wasn't already having the most unlucky day of his life, managed to fall backwards right onto the slide, going down it on his back, headfirst, in nothing but a t-shirt and diaper. Right into the ball pit.

Richie crashed down into the colorful ocean of balls with a mighty splash! Richie got to his feet, stumbling and fumbling around in the balls. It was so deep, all he could do was try to half swim, half crawl toward the edge, but everywhere he looked, there were kids playing. This was so frustrating! Why had Lucas abandoned him here? He hated the twerp, but at that moment, he would have given anything to see a familiar face who knew he was not a toddler.

"Where are my shorts?" He muttered. Were they still up at the

top of the slide? Had they slid down with him? He pushed a few balls around, but knew they were as good as lost. “I'm getting out of here.”

Richie felt like it took him hours to get to the edge of the ball pit. He remembered playing in it when he had actually been a little kid and it had never seemed as big as it did now. At long last, he reached the edge. The only question now was, how was he supposed to get out?

"Alright, kids! Let's gather around for pizza!" As Richie struggled, there was a raucous stream of kids appearing out of nowhere to gather around the tables. His initial thought was it was a good distraction, but stuck as he was on the edge of the ball pit, it wasn't doing him any good. He whimpered as a familiar shadow fell across him.

"C'mon, Dickey." Jason's mom said. His chubby legs kicked as she lifted him out of the colorful balls. "Looks like you partied your pants off!"

"No one says that." He muttered as she set him against her shoulder. "Hey! You said you weren't gonna do that!"

"Who's a little soggy britches?" She cooed. "I'll have to change you in a bit, huh?"

"Change me? Nono, no way!" He pushed against her shoulder, but she seemed completely oblivious to his efforts. “I need my shoes!” He protested, but she had other plans.

Richie was almost certain he was facing being fed in her lap, but Jason's mom had other ideas. A highchair waited for him

over by a table teeming with excited little kids.

"Ew, stinky baby." One of them remarked as she plopped Richie down and put the tray in place over his lap.

"He's not stinky, Max." She said. "Babies smell good." The child's nose wrinkled all the same, but he quickly turned away to talk to his friends.

"I have to get out of here." Richie muttered, trying to pull his legs out of their designated holes and stand up. From there, it would just be a short jump to the floor. He looked down and realized that he might have a hard time of it. Now that he was so much shorter, it seemed like a lot further down. Little kids were basically indestructible though, right? "I've broken my arm before." Richie reminded himself, though he ignored the nagging reminder that that had been an awful summer for him. Well, maybe getting Lucas to put things back to the way they were would also heal him?

"Here's some numnums!" A woman he had not seen before said, bringing him what appeared to be a quarter of a slice of pizza on a brightly colored paper plate. "Let's get you re-situated here and someone needs his bib!"

"No, no bib!" Richie said, his toddler and middle schooler sides on the same track for once. He batted it away, but she was too crafty, getting the plastic bib with Charlie Cheetah down over his head. "Cutie." She said with a smile as she expertly got him out of the awkward half-out position he had managed before she interrupted him. "Now you can eat just like the big boys and girls!"

Richie sighed, but he was hungry. He looked out at the kids around him, feeling like he was on display. He knew he was the oldest kid here, but he looked like the youngest.

"Alright, who wants root beer?" Richie raised his hand along with a few other kids, but there were other plans for him.

"Pop's for the big kids, Dickey." A blue sippy cup landed next to his pizza.

"I don't want milk."

"Then how'll you get to be big and strong?" She asked. He looked up at her. there was something about the tone in her voice that made him wonder. He grabbed the sippy cup by its handle and brought it to his lips. He groaned in disappointment when it was just plain milk and he was still sitting there in a puffy diaper and a Paw Patrol t-shirt. "There you go, kiddo."

Resigned to his fate, Richie ate. He had had Charlie Cheetah pizza before. It wasn't spectacular, but pizza was pizza. Better than the stuff they serve at school, he thought.

"Do you want more?" He nodded and another sliver of pizza ended up on the plate, though he couldn't eat until his face was wiped with the bib. How can I eat messily, he thought grumpily, if I'm getting such tiny pieces?

He shifted in his seat, the diaper not offering all that much protection from the hard molded plastic. Eating such small pieces would keep him here forever. The very thought of that made his stomach churn. No, that wasn't from that, it was-

“No! No, no, no!” He whined, but it was too late. All at once, he felt a warm mess under him. “Ewwwww!” Embarrassed tears welled up in his eyes as he realized waht he had done.

"We're gonna do cake and presents soon," Jason's mom called as kids began to disperse. "And no one leave the play area. Stay where adults can see you. That means no going over to the arcade, even for a minute, Mister Caiden." She surveyed the room before her eyes fell on Richie. "And that gives me just enough time to change a certain soggy little boy. Oh, and stinky. Maybe Max was right."

"Nonono." Richie said.

"You don't want a rash, do you, Dickey?" She asked. A woman next to her did a bad job of hiding a snort. "That's his name. Get your mind out of the gutter, Cheryl." Jason's mom came over and wiped his face with his bib once again.

“Stop!" He whined, stretching it out into a long, babyish whine.

"You've been sitting on your soggy, stinky diaper bum for a long time, huh?" She cooed, lifting him up.

"Quit saying that! Stop! No change!" Richie protested. There was too much happening all at once! The kids, his new body, the noise, everything was too much! "Where are my shoes and my shorts and... and..." he felt something rising inside him, almost like lava about to erupt out of a volcano. His bottom lip began to tremble as the day's events began to wash over him. "B'awwwww!" He began to bawl loudly, thrashing

against her shoulder.

Lucas had had quite a streak of success. He finally had enough tickets to get whatever he wanted from the prize counter and now the only question was, what now? He figured he would try his hand at another round of Veridian Emerald when he heard the ear-splitting sound of a baby crying. He did not know why, but something deep down inside him told him that was Richie. He sauntered over, wondering just how his bully was faring.

"Oh, wow." It took him a moment to find Richie in the small crowd. A dozen little kids were covering their ears in irritation as the woman he had left Richie with was doing her best to console the red-faced pantsless, bare footed toddler in her arms. That was Richie! "This is too good."

"Shh, it's okay, sweetie." She cooed, slightly bouncing Richie in her arms. "Oh! Here comes big brother."

Deeply immersed in his tantrum, Richie had to rub at his eyes to clear them enough to see Lucas walking toward him, an expression of absolute triumph on his face.

"Go away!" He shrilly exclaimed, snot dripping from his nose.

"He's a little fussy." Jason's mom said. "He needs his diaper changed." She looked expectantly at Lucas. "I'm sure big brother can handle it. Probably even heard his wails." Lucas looked struck.

"Um, uh" he stammered as Richie was pushed into his arms. "I don't have- y'know, stuff to" his voice trailed off.

"Hm" was all Jason's mom said before turning around to find him the supplies he would need.

"You are not changing my- me." Richie snarled.

"I don't know if I have a choice." Lucas replied. The last thing he wanted was to have to touch Richie there! He awkwardly touched Richie's hair to keep up the pretense that he was his big brother, still unsure if the wish had backfired like that or not.

"Here we go." Jason's mom held a diaper, wipes, and powder in her hands. Lucas smiled appreciatively.

"Let's go, Dickey." Richie snarled at the name as Lucas prodded him forward.

"Isn't there a bathroom over there?" He asked as they left the play area.

"We're going to the big kid bathroom." Lucas said.

"Why?"

"Are you saying you aren't a big kid?"

"Whatever it takes to get this gross thing off of me." He muttered. He did not want anyone else to acknowledge it, but he did need a diaper change and soon.

They were barely into the arcade before Richie realized what Lucas's plan was. Sure enough, there was Derek, right in front of them.

"Mucus!" Derek said with a smirk.

"Derek." Richie said. "Leave us alone."

"Psh. You've got some stinky baby defending you now?"

"I'm Richie." Riche said, but Derek kept sneering at Lucas.

"You really think your baby brother's gonna do anything?"

"This is Richie." Lucas said.

"Ok? Why do I care?"

"Like as in Richie your friend." Richie said. Derek snorted.

"This some dumb game you guys are playing?"

"I used this ring to turn him into a toddler." Lucas said, holding it up.

"What are you doing?" Richie yelled as Derek snatched the sparkly ring from Lucas's hands. "Hey!" He lunged for Derek, but only managed to trip over his own two feet, landing on his bottom with a squelch. All he could do was sit there and watch as Derek pocketed the ring.

“No! Give that back!”

"I better change him." Lucas said, picking the snarling, furious Richie up.

"What did you do that for!?" Richie yelled as Lucas carried him into the bathroom. "You were supposed to change me back."

"Ok," Lucas sighed. How was he gonna do this? "I guess we'll have to get you up on the changing table thingy, huh?"

"You're not really gonna do this, are you?" Richie glared up at him.

"Well," Lucas frowned. "Maybe you can wipe yourself or something?"

"Dude, we need to focus. I can't stay a tod- a little kid forever!" Lucas folded down the changing table rather than answer, though Richie could have sworn he heard him mutter 'you'd grow up eventually'. "You gotta fix this."

"You were gonna beat me up."

"Was not." Richie lied.

"Little kids are bad at lying." Lucas said. "I gotta pick you up now."

"Why?"

"We gotta change you. Unless you want that lady coming in here to find out what's taking so long?" Richie actually wasn't sure which sounded better: having her change him or having Lucas change him. Lucas was a boy, at least, but he knew he would never live it down.

If you had just changed me back, then I'm not in a di- a di- a you know anymore."

"You're obviously wet and… other stuff, so... would your boxers be wet?"

"What kinda question is that? And I am not."

"Dude, you are." Richie wasn't sure why he had lied. He

could feel the wetness of his diaper pressing up against him and it was easy to see. "Whatever." Lucas said. "Let's just get this over with."

"Hey, wait!" Richie lunged forward, but Lucas was bigger and much stronger. He pushed Richie back onto his back and slid the vinyl strap across his chest, pinning him down to the the molded plastic surface of the changing table. "Don't!" He kicked his legs.

"Hey, no kicking!" Lucas said, catching one of Richie's feet. "Settle down or I'm leaving you here. You'll probably starve."

"That's dumb!"

"You're dumb." Lucas retorted. Richie glared at him. "Now, let's get this over with."

"No! Don't-" The rip of the diaper seemed even louder than Richie's shrill protests. Lucas scoffed and then began to laugh so hard, he had to wipe his eyes.

"Ew! I better not have any baby germs in my eyes." He walked over to the sink.

"Hey! Where are you going?!"

"To clean the diaper juice off."

"Ew!"

"Yeah, ew, little buddy." Lucas stared at his reflection. Why had he said that? Little buddy? Richie was a bully, definitely not his buddy, big or little. He wet his hands in the sink and

scrubbed at his eyes.

"Hurry. Up." Richie snarled.

"I'm coming, jerk." Lucas muttered. He snorted as he remembered just what had made him laugh so much. "Is it cold in here?"

"Huh?" There had been a weird breeze just a second ago, almost like the sensation that had turned him into a toddler, but-

"Maybe Dickey's little dickie is so itty bitty, you didn't even see it." He teased.

"Hey!" Richie snarled and bucked. "Don't!" He squirmed as Lucas grabbed a small handful of baby wipes, adding a few more to make extra, extra sure that he wouldn't actually touch Richie down there.

"How'd I end up your babysitter?"

“You're not!” Richie snapped. “We're the same age.” He pushed away strange memories of Mom handing him to Lucas that morning. That didn't make any sense! He hadn't seen Lucas until not even an hour ago. Things suddenly seemed blurry. He rubbed at his eyes and stared up at Lucas. Something was different.

“So crabby. I'm the one who's gotta deal with this.” Lucas muttered, holding his breath, dramatically puffed out cheeks and all, as he started to wipe the little boy's diaper area.

"You said you were gonna let me!" Richie whined.

"Shouldn't have squirmed so much, wiggle worm."

"Why are you talking like that?"

"You musta had a lot of sugar, huh?"

"Quit!" Richie groaned. "Lucas, I'm serious."

"It's so cute when you say my name, kiddo."

"Lucas, seriously. Stop! I'm not a baby, we go to the same school."

"Mm" was all Lucas said, lifting Richie's legs.

"Hey! Get- get off there!"

"I better make sure your mommy sends you with a buncha pacis next time. You get so crabby without them."

"What are you talking about!?" This was starting to freak him out. “Stop! This is scary!”

Richie's fear and embarrassment fought for dominance as Lucas showed no signs of remembering that he had ever been anything other than a toddler, a toddler named Dickey! He felt another wave of bawling despair rising up in him as Lucas rubbed powder into the folds of his skin. He couldn't, he wouldn't be a toddler again! He had to do something! But what could he do? He was stuck on this changing table, at the whims of the kid he used to bully.

His despair faded, replaced by anger. This was all Lucas's fault! He had done this and he needed to be punished. But how? Only one thing came to Richie's mind. He screwed up

his face and focused every ounce of his tiny, pudgy being. This would show him!

Poot! A small cloud of baby powder shot out as Richie farted.

"No!" He whined as Lucas giggled. He had been trying to poop right into the fresh, clean diaper under his bubble butt, but that was all he had managed to do, look even cuter.

"Aww, I can't stay mad at you, Dickey." Lucas said. Richie sniffled, slowly coming to terms with his fate. Lucas clearly, genuinely did not remember him as his age. He was stuck! "Let's get you finished up. I think your Mommy's supposed to pick you up soon." He chuckled to himself. "That's probably why you're being so grouchy. You're late for your nap, arentcha?"

"No." Richie said as matter-of-factly as he could. Obviously, even if Lucas's memory had changed, there was no way on earth Mom would have forgotten that she had reminded him to clean his room that very morning. No way whatsoever!

Despite still refusing to believe he needed diapers, Richie still felt relief when Lucas taped the white plastic diaper around his waist. He just wished he knew what had happened to his shorts.

"Need something to wear!" He demanded.

"You've got a shirt and diaper." Lucas shrugged. "That's good enough. Your privates are covered, right?" He patted Richie's bare thigh.

"You really don't 'member me being big?" Richie asked, stumbling over the words as he hoped against hope that Lucas was just really good at acting. Lucas only looked confused and he sighed. If this really was an act, he would pound him. He tried to vocalize that, but all that came out was ‘I'm big!”

“Sure you are.” Lucas said. "Alright, big boy Dickey doo. Back down on the- oh, right. Do you remember where your shoes went?"

"Over by the playground." Lucas nodded.

"Prolly should keep you off the floor. At least 'til we're out of the bathroom." He said, carrying Richie. "You do smell a lot better once you're changed."

"Shuddup."

Richie had barely enough time to wonder what new torment awaited for him. As soon as they had crossed the arcade and were back to the party, Jason's mom descended on them.

“I got Dickey's shoes, though his shorts are still…. Around here somewhere.”

"Stooop!" Richie protested as she gave his feet a tickle before slipping his clogs back on.

"Is Dickey in a clean diapie?" She cooed, patting his butt.

"Don't!"

"Sorry, I completely forgot to ask his mom for a spare pacifier." Lucas said. "He must've lost it while playing."

"It happens." Jason's mom replied.

"Quit! I am not a baby! I'm twelve years old! I'm not s'posed to be here!" Richie protested, but Lucas only bounced him in his arms. Worse, he grabbed one of his arms and brought his thumb to his mouth. Richie was so startled, he actually started to suckle on it.

"Yeah, definitely naptime for ya, kiddo." He said.

"Ew!" Richie groaned as he felt Lucas kiss his cheek. "That's gross, dude!"

"You're just so cute." Lucas said with a laugh. "I'll have to babysit again soon."

"Does that mean you're gonna-"

"Dickey!" He froze. He knew that voice probably better than any voice other than his own.

"Mom?" His instinctual joy faded as he wondered why Mom had called him that name. There was no way... no, not her!

"Come here, little man." She cooed, taking him from Lucas and turning him so he could look right at her. "Did you have a good time?"

"He sure did!" Jason's mom said. "Hi, I'm Debbie, mother of the birthday boy."

"Well, I appreciate you letting Dickey-"

"Mom! Richie!"

"Oh, you had fun, huh?" She kissed his cheek. "But we need to get home, Dickey Wickey baby bunny."

"Mom!" Richie whined. Even if Lucas didn't remember, it was still horribly humiliating to have Mom talking all mushy in front of him "Quit!"

"He's a bundle of energy now, but I bet he'll be asleep by the time we get home." Mom said with a sigh.

"It gets easier once they're bigger." Debbie said. Her head suddenly snapped to the left. "Jason! Get down!" She laughed. "Or maybe they just act out in other ways."

"I gotta do something." Richie realized. If Mom took him away from Lucas, his chances of getting this reversed would be shot. "Lucas! Lucas!"

"Bye, Dickey." Lucas said, waving. Richie searched his face for any sign that he remembered the old Richie, but there was nothing there. He had to think of something.

"We have a geography test on- mmph!"

"He lost his paci. Sorry." Lucas said sheepishly as Richie tried to get the pacifier out of his mouth. He felt a strange sense of calm wash over him, overwhelming every last bit of panic. He relaxed in Mom's arms. "Wow. That's like magic." Lucas said, amazed.

"It stops working before too long." Richie's mom said. "Can you babysit next Friday?"

"I'll ask my dad, but prolly." Lucas said. "See ya then,

Dickey!" He waved goodbye and ran off back to the arcade.

"Let's hit the road." Mom said, shifting Richie so that his head rested on her shoulder. "Thank you again, Debbie!"

Richie squirmed as Mom began to carry him toward the exit. Something deep inside him told him his only hope laid in Charlie Cheetah's. He spat the pacifier out as he spotted Derek leaning on a garbage can by the entrance.

“Derek! Derek!” He yelled, reaching a hand out toward his friend. “It's me, Richie! I need that ring!” Derek only looked confused as a toddler in his mom's arms, wearing nothing but a t-shirt and puffy white diaper, went by.

The next thing Richie knew, Mom had buckled him into a car seat, swaddling him in a fuzzy red blanket with bouncing bunnies on it. He remembered it from when he had been a toddler, but now it seemed brand new. He tried to get his arms free, to do anything, but reality was setting in: he was a toddler, trapped in a life of diapers, pacifiers, and only time would tell what other humiliations. Lucas was coming on Friday to babysit. Maybe he would have some way to change him back then. Why had he let Derek take the ring? As the car began to move, Richie's eyelids grew heavier and heavier as he wished he could remember how many days there were between today and Friday.