Gabey New Year

by andlat

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The Costume Box
2024

Chapter 1

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“Go on. Ask him!” Jamie whined, tugging on his brother's hoodie sleeve.

“We've still got time.” Kevin said with a chuckle.

“Time for what?”

“Granny said I gotta get ready soon.” Jamie mumbled into Kevin's sleeve. “Ask!”

“Ask me what?” Gabe asked again.

“Well,” Kevin smiled sheepishly. “Jamie wants to know if you'd be willing to be Baby New Year.”

“What? No way.” Jamie detached himself from Kevin and looked up at Gabe with all the pleading energy a five year old could muster.

“Please? Pretty please?”

“I had to do it until you came along, Jamie.” Gabe said, which was mostly true. Kevin, being two years younger than him, had done it once, but had somehow managed to miss every New Year's Eve where it would have been his turn, leaving it to Gabe to fill in. “Why don't you want to?”

“Cuz it's for babies!”

“What?”

“Well, it is in the name.” Kevin chuckled. Jamie nodded.

“But if you don't want to do it since it's for babies, why me?”

“Cuz you're a baby.” Jamie giggled.

“Oh, is that right?” Gabe reached for him and Jamie squealed as he was tugged in for a tickling.

“Stop!” Jamie pulled away playfully. “Can you please do it?”

“No way. I did it until I was seven. It's… fun.” He hoped Jamie did not hear the lie in his voice. It was embarrassing and babyish. “It's not real. You just wear the hat and you can wear the diaper over your underwear.”

“Then you'll do it?” Jamie asked hopefully.

“You'd be a lot better at it, dude.” Gabe said with a chuckle. To his surprise, Jamie sighed in defeat.

“Ok, but no one better laugh at me.” He said sullenly.

“We won't.” Kevin said reassuringly, though he gave Gabe an accusing look. Would it really have been so hard to just do it? “You'll do great, bud. Do you remember the words?”

“I think so.”

With Gabe and Kevin's help, Jamie ran through the performance, written by some relative, a few times.

“You really gotta wiggle.” Gabe said, demonstrating. “There you go.”

“You're better at that.” Jamie said. Here we go again, Gabe

thought just before Jamie started to whine. “You should do it!” Gabe chuckled and wiggled more to get Jamie to copy him.

“Ah, party's at the kids table.” A deep voice said. The three of them all turned to see Tyler standing in the doorway. “Sorry I'm late.” Kevin coolly fistbumped Tyler while Gabe wished Tyler had not walked in to see him wiggling and giggling with a five year old.

“Gabe's gonna do Baby New Year.” Jamie declared.

“Is that right?” Tyler said.

“Yup. Cuz he's a baby.”

“Well,” Tyler said. “I'm pretty sure he's bigger than you.”

“He's a baby.” Jamie said firmly.

“Am not.” Gabe protested.

“Remember three years ago?” Kevin said with a laugh. “The grown-ups made you as Baby New Year pose with Jamie.” Gabe frowned. It had been a great injustice. A two year old Jamie got to sit and watch as seven year old Gabe had to do Baby New Year. Five year old Kevin, meanwhile, was home with the flu.

“So he was Baby New Year then. Why can't he be now?”

“Cuz, J-dog.” Kevin said. “You're the youngest.” Jamie frowned.

“Make that face and the grown-ups will love it.” Gabe said as

Jamie pouted.

“But… but…” he began to rub at his eyes and sniffle. “But I'm five! I'm a big boy and.. And… and Gabe's a baby!” He bawled. “He's got food on his chin!”

“And you chew with your mouth open.” Gabe snapped back.

“Hmm…” Tyler said with the wisdom of a sixteen year old. “How ‘bout this? We'll give you guys tests. Whoever gets the fewest points, they're the baby and therefore, Baby New Year.”

“What? No way am I doing that!”

“Forfeiting is admitting defeat.” Kevin said at once and Tyler nodded sagely. Gabe tried to hide his nervousness.

“Does that sound good, Jamie?” Jamie nodded, suddenly all smiles with no proof he had been crying a moment before. “Gabe?”

“Sure. Wait, why’s Kevin not involved?”

“I’m a judge.” Kevin said.

“You’re younger than me.”

“Kevin’s too big.” Jamie said authoritatively. Gabe could tell this was a losing battle.

“Whatever.” He muttered.

“Alright, Jamie, Gabe. Shake hands.” Tyler said, getting into his role as arbiter. “May the bigger boy win!”

“How’s this gonna work?” Kevin asked.

“We'll go back and forth.” Tyler said. “I'll pick a test, then you. Gabe and Jamie will try their best and we'll judge who's more of a baby.” He rubbed his hands together eagerly. “Alright, who's taller?”

“Me!” Gabe said at once. What was he worried about? He might’ve even stood a chance against Kevin, though it was hard to tell if he was actually taller or just felt like he should be, being older.

“Go back to back. Judges decide.” Kevin said. Gabe and Jamie complied. “No tippy toes.” Kevin said, making a show of drawing his hand across Jamie's head and into Gabe's back a few times before nodding. “I think it's a point to Gabe.”

“I agree.” Tyler said solemnly. “Judge Kevin, your go.”

“Alright, who wet the bed last? Jamie?”

“It's been months!” Kevin nodded.

“Gabe?”

“Uh, years.” Kevin nodded again and gestured for Tyler to come over so they could consult with each other. They whispered melodramatically before pulling away.

“I can confirm,” Kevin said. “That Jamie last wore pull-ups to bed about two months ago.”

“Ha!” Jamie exclaimed.

“As for you, Gabe,” Tyler said. “Neither judge lives with you

and we haven't seen you since last summer, so Jamie wins this one.”

“What? That's not fair!” Gabe protested. Tyler clicked his tongue.

“Oof. Saying no fair to a ruling is a baby move. That's another point for Jamie. Two to one.” Gabe stared at him in disbelief. Jamie was half his age. How was he losing?

"Next test.” Kevin said. “Show me a handstand.” Gabe fumed. This was especially not fair. Jamie was in gymnastics! Jamie eagerly bent over and Gabe had no choice but to at least try. Maybe they'd tie if he managed one? He wobbled almost immediately and fell over.

"You okay?” Jamie asked.

“Yeah.” Gabe muttered.

“Three to one for Jamie.” Tyler said. “And, unfortunately, with only one more test to go, there's no way for Gabe to win.”

“Well, what would the last test have been anyway?” Gabe asked in what he hoped was a tone that reflected his maturity and grace in defeat.

“Oh, what grade are you in?” Tyler waved a hand dismissively. “Jamie's in kindergarten and with your point total, you obviously must be lower than that.” Gabe could not believe his ears! This was completely, totally unfair!

“Jamie,” Kevin said. “How about you go tell everyone that

Gabe's going to be Baby New Year while we get him ready?"

"But I wanna help."

"Won't it be more fun to see baby Gabe in his outfit with everyone else?" Jamie considered this.

"Ok." He came over and gave the furious Gabe a hug. "See you in a little bit, baby!"

"That was very nice." Tyler said, gently nudging Jamie out of the room. "I'm gonna go piss real quick. Get our Baby New Year undressed at least." The door closed and Gabe turned to Kevin.

"That wasn't fair and you know it." Kevin shrugged.

"So? It made Jamie happy. Besides, it's just for fun."

"But…"

"What a good example you're setting for Jamie showing him that a big boy can be Baby New Year." Kevin said. "Think about how many years he's gonna have to do it before they let him quit? Unless Tyler gets someone pregnant, I guess." He laughed. "Sorry, you probably don't know how that works yet." Gabe fumed. Why was Kevin talking like he was the older one in the room? "Don't look so mad. Even if Jamie tells everyone you're a baby, they'll just think he means Baby New Year." He grabbed the hat and threw it at Gabe. "Get undressed. Jamie can only distract them for so long."

Gabe could not believe that he was back as Baby New Year. He pulled his shirt over his head and heard the door open.

Maybe that was someone coming to intervene on his behalf. It was family tradition! The youngest cousin was Baby New Year. That was the rule.

“He's not undressed yet?” Tyler said. “We've got a schedule to keep, dude.” He crossed the room and yanked down Gabe's pants before fully lifting him up and depositing him on his back. “I've got his arms, Kev.” He said, holding Gabe's arms above his head with one hand, his other on Gabe's bare chest.

“What? What's going on?” Gabe felt his underwear come down. “H-hey, underwear stays on.”

“With how badly you did at the baby tests, we don't think big boy undies are right for you.” Tyler said. Kevin unfolded a thick diaper with relish.

“No! No!” Gabe protested.

“You'll still get to wear the cloth one over it.” Tyler said. “It's just to remind you that you were judged a baby.”

“Where did that even come from?”

“Jamie's only a few years out of them. Granny's still got tons in the bathroom.” Kevin explained as if it was obvious. “Plus you can never be too careful with a baby like you around.”

“I don't need a diaper!” Gabe protested desperately.

“You can't do your performance naked!” Tyler said.

“But”

“And Baby New Year needs a diaper.” Kevin said. “Besides,

no one but us'll know."

"I guess I don't have a choice."

"You don't." Kevin agreed.

"Babies hold still for their diaper." Tyler pushed on Gabe's chest.

"I am not a baby!"

"Jamie beat you four to one and he's only a kindergartner." Kevin observed.

"He's right."

"What? The last one-"

"Fine." Tyler's voice took on a tone like he was appeasing a pouting toddler. "You lost three to two, but three is bigger than two, isn't it?" Gabe glared up at him. "Dude, you'll be fine. You've done this how many times?"

"Too many."

"That's true." Tyler looked at Kevin. "You kinda lucked out, huh? Gabe came along so soon after you, you never had to do it."

"What? Kevin's younger than me!"

"You're a baby compared to Jamie, remember? Compared to his big brother, you wouldn't stand a chance." Kevin simply smirked and held his tongue. "Now quit whining or we won't have time to put the cloth diaper over yours."

Sure enough, Kevin and Tyler made sure the top hat was securely pinned to Gabe's hair and the sash was just right before even touching the white terry cloth diaper and its oversized pins. Gabe almost lost it when they made him run through the Baby New Year performance before finally it came time for the diaper.

“Y'know," Tyler said. “You really do look more babyish than Jamie would've.”

“Cuz I’m in a stinking-” he couldn't even bring himself to say the word.

“No, it's not that.” Tyler said. “Your cheeks are a little chubbier and you have a belly.”

“Jamie has a tummy like that.” Kevin said. “Must run in the family for little boys to keep their baby fat.”

“I’m older than you.” Gabe reminded him, almost relieved when the ridiculous cloth diaper was finally pinned around his waist. He knew all too well that his embarrassment had only begun.

“There's the little cutie!” Gabe's face burned. Between the disposable and cloth diapers, he had a very distinct waddle, which was not helped by Tyler and Kevin's clever last minute idea to each hold a hand as they led him out to the waiting audience. At least, Gabe thought, it's loud enough in here that no one can hear the crinkle.

““You were one of the best Babies New Year, after all.” Aunt Meredith said, coming over to unnecessarily adjust his sash.

“Babies New Year or Baby New Years?” An uncle asked.

“Isn't it like culs-de-sac?”

“Isn't that because it's French though?”

Jamie waved from his dad's lap, feeling very satisfied that the baby had ended up in his place. How could they have expected a big boy kindergartener to wear a diaper? Everyone had told him that Gabe was ten, but how could you deny that he was a baby?

“Told you, Dada.” He whispered. “He is too a baby.”

“Be nice, Jamie bug.” Dad said. “Why don't you go give your cousin a hug? He looks nervous.” Jamie slid off his dad's lap and the room erupted in adoring sounds as he hugged his cousin. It was too loud for Gabe to hear what Jamie whispered to him, but he knew it was something about a baby.

“Alright!” Aunt Meredith said, raising her hands as if she was about to conduct a choir. “Everyone to their seats and Baby New Year to his place!” Gabe groaned as he waddled to the center of the room and had to stand there for about a million photos as everyone got situated. “And we are set!” Meredith declared.

Gabe took a deep breath. Ten years old and here he was. He covered his face, groaning as the flash of the cameras went off. Let's just get this over with.

“Where's Baby New Year? Where could he be?” He could even hear Jamie joining in. He opened his hands like shutters,

as if playing peekaboo.

“Here's Baby New Year! Cute as can be!” He said enthusiastically. “With my fancy top hat and a diaper on my bum, the new year has finally begun! From my little baby toes to my little baby hand, here's to hoping the new year is grand!” Almost done, he thought. “With a Baby New Year wiggle,” he swayed his hips to and fro. “And a Baby New Year cheer” he jumped up with his arms raised, the pins just barely managing to keep the hat on his head. “Let's wave hello to a brand new year!” He waved and everyone waved back.

“Encore! Encore!” This was another tradition, but it stung to have Jamie to be the one saying it, sitting on his Dad's lap fully clothed while Gabe stood there almost totally naked.

“Maybe you can do it with me?” He suggested. Jamie shook his head, grinning.

“Encore! Encore!” A few others called. Jamie joined back in, clapping his hands. There were cheers as Gabe brought his hands back over his face.

He tried to maintain the same level of cheer the second time around. He just had to get through this, eat some cake, and then it'd be time for his own unofficial tradition of running into the other room to change as quickly as possible.

“With a Baby New Year wiggle,” He was so close! “And a Baby New Year cheer!” He jumped up and felt the diaper go in the opposite direction. Gabe's face fell and he tried to grab

the terry cloth off of the floor.

“He's wearing a diaper!” Jamie screeched. “He is a baby!” Gabe tried to stammer an explanation at the same time as he tried to cover himself and fight back tears.

“No,” Jamie's dad said. “He's just playing Baby New Year, remember? It's just pretend.”

“But that's a real mmph.” Jamie's dad covered his mouth and leaned forward to give him a whispered warning.

“Let's get you resituated.” Gabe sniffled, his eyes too full of tears to even know which relative it was.

“Can't I go change?”

“There's just cake left. Don't you want cake?” Gabe wanted to say no, but he knew he would be overruled. Tradition was tradition and that meant getting wedged into a highchair while everyone gathered around.

“Everyone remember the words?” Meredith asked.

“It's just Happy Birthday.” Great Uncle Gary said with a chuckle.

“But there's the second verse.” Meredith said defensively.

“Oh, right. You only added that before even Tyler here was Baby New Year.” Tyler's dad said with a snort.

“Very funny.” Meredith sniffed. “Let's just sing.”

“Happy birthday, Baby New Year. Happy Birthday to you!”

Under Meredith's watchful eye, they moved on to her special verse. “Happy birthday to you, welcome all that is new!
You're the start of our journey, bringing dreams to pursue.
With your days warm and bright, You fill hearts with delight.
Happy birthday, Baby New Year, Shine your beautiful light!”

“Doesn't make any sense.” Great Uncle Gary muttered as they finished off with another round of the traditional birthday song.

“Now for cake!” A baby blue cake with the year on it was placed in front of Gabe, but he was surprised to see a fork as well. A silicone baby fork, but a fork nonetheless.

“We'll buck with tradition this once.” His mom murmured in his ear, kissing it. Everyone cheered as Gabe dramatically raised the fork and stabbed it in. He took his bite and then the group began to disperse.

“That's not how babies eat!” Jamie insisted, marching right over. How he managed to climb up to Gabe's level, grab a fistful of cake, and shove it into Gabe's shocked mouth before his dad grabbed him was anyone's guess, but the result was Gabe now fully embodied the baby part of Baby New Year with cake all over his face and bare chest.

“Jamie says good night, everyone.” Jamie's dad announced as he carried his squirming son out of the room.

“Well, that was exciting.” Aunt Meredith said. “Let's get a photo or two before you clean him up.” Gabe groaned once again, but acquiesced.

“Can I get out of this now?” He asked.

“Yes, sweetie. You were a very good sport.” Mom said, but Gabe had already run for cover.

He struggled with the pins on the diaper, but it was too snug to slide down. What do I care if I wreck the diaper underneath? He muttered. The door opened and he stared at Kevin and Tyler walking in.

“See? He's still dressed.” Tyler said.

“Perfect.”

It was like a strange reversal of getting ready. Gabe was held in place by Tyler as the cloth diaper, the sash, and the hat came off, his tormentors taking special delight in extracting each and every bobby pin from his hair as he kicked and crinkled. It was only then that he discovered their actual plan.

“You can't take me out there like this!” Gabe screamed as they pulled him to his feet, now dressed in a fuzzy yellow sleeper.

“Oh, we're not.” Kevin said.

“What?’

“If it's Jamie's bedtime, it must be past baby Gabe's bedtime.” Gabe's mind raced as they led him to an unknown destination. Had they found a crib somewhere? It proved worse.

The room they took him into had a nightlight and quiet sniffles coming from the bed. Jamie rolled over and stared at

Kevin and Tyler before his gaze moved to Gabe and he smiled.

Kevin pulled back the covers, fully revealing Jamie's mature black and white plaid pajamas, as Tyler, a hand over Gabe's mouth, lifted him up and deposited him in the bed before the pair were snugly tucked in.

“Good night.” Kevin whispered, leaving them alone. Gabe, furious, rolled onto his side so his back was to Jamie. He felt a small hand touch his back and then his butt.

“Hey!”

“You're still wearing your diaper.” It was a statement, not a question. “I knew you were a baby!” Gabe rolled over and glared at him.

“I am not a baby.” Jamie got up onto his knees and pulled down his pajama pants so Gabe could see his rocketship briefs by the glow of the nightlight.

“When you're a big boy, you can wear these.” He whispered. “But don't worry. Even though you're a baby, you can sleep in the big boy bed with me.” Jamie lay down and was soon quietly snoring, leaving Gabe to wonder just how he would ever convince the stubborn kindergartner he was not a baby.