

Gregory

by TheMissingDays

Gregory is a twenty year old who had been infected by the AR Virus. He does'nt agree with his diagnosis, how could he ever be a little kid again?

The Costume Box

2026

Chapter 1

Gregory

“This is so stupid,” Greg mumbled as he dragged his feet across the linoleum floor of the department store.

“Gregory don't dawdle, we don't have a lot of time and we have lots to do,” Amber an eighteen year old girl said as she grabbed his hand and pulled him along. “You should be happy to be getting some new clothes. These ones will actually fit you.”

“Yeah right,” Greg said pulling his hand away. “And don't call me Gregory.”

“Your Mom said that's what you went by when you were younger,” Amber said. “Its supposed to help you, remember?”

“I'm not a little kid,” Greg seethed under his breath. A phrase he had said often over the last month and a sentiment that was ignored. To anyone looking at him they would see a five year old boy. His light hair of brown and blond and two dimple speckled cheeks that would explode when he smiled, which he never did, would complete the picture. An eyebrow would be raised upon seeing his clothes though. The oversized t-shirt that looked like it draped over his scrawny body and a pair of shorts that were cinched around his waist with a belt at its limit making the shorts appear to be baggy pants.

The truth was until a month ago Greg had been a twenty year old man with his own apartment and job as an auto mechanic.

That was until he had been infected with the AR-Virus. The doctors told him he was one of the lucky ones though. Of the three strains going around Greg had not contracted the strain that left the person regressed physically and mentally for the rest of their lives. Neither had he gotten the one that was a purely physical regression where the person would never grow but maintain their mental faculties. He had gotten the one that would physically and mentally regress him, but he would grow again – he would be back to where he had been in a short fifteen years.

Greg of course disagreed with the diagnosis. He didn't care what all those test said. He was still thinking like an adult which made it all the more frustrating when his Mom had gotten custody of him and he was forced to move back in with her. It was also most unfair when she had gotten control of his assets. He still remembered the fight they had when she had taken his wallet with his license away from him and even listing his car for sale since he could no longer drive. At least she had let him keep his phone although the thing was locked down now with parental controls.

“Gregory hurry up,” Amber said retaking his hand. This time Greg did not withdraw his hand. “Your Mom gave me a big list of things to get and I don't want to be here all day.”

“If you're so busy then why did you even come?” Greg asked. “I don't even see why you come around so often anyways.” as soon as he said that he did feel a little bad. Amber was his girlfriend and out of all the people in his life she seemed to be the only one who had stuck around. Greg didn't much

blame his other friends. They were all busy adults with busy adult lives. Not like he could go out to the bars or hang with them anymore.

“Because I care about you and your Mom and I want to help out where I can,” she said which only made Greg feel a little more guilty. Amber had been the one in his mind.

They had lived down the street from each other for years and had starting dating in high school. Everything had been perfect. They both got along with each other's families and Greg had promised to wait for her. The time had finally come, she would graduate high school next month and they would be able to move in with one another except now things didn't seem like they were going to work out like that. He didn't know where things stood with her; they had never discussed formally breaking up. Greg did appreciate her still coming around though, although he wasn't exactly thrilled that she seemed to be like his Mom and treat him like a little kid.

Just last week she had come around and taken him out to lunch at a fast food joint. Greg had happy to get a break from his Mom. He was disappointed when they got there to find she was meeting up with friends. Greg really didn't like hanging out with her friends. They seemed to only talk about high school gossip which was not interesting to him since he was no longer a highschooler having left the place. Perhaps sensing that, Amber had told him to keep an eye on some of the little siblings in the play place as a favor to her. Between that and listening to high school gossip Greg had elected to

go along with it. So what if he had ended up pushing that snobby kid into the ball pit making him cry. The kid had it coming when he had called Greg a little kid. Amber wouldn't he even listen to him afterwards and instead reprimanded him like a little kid in front of all her friends.

“Aren't you worried about catching the virus from me?” Greg then asked.

“You're not contagious,” Amber chuckled as she looked down at him. “Besides I'm vaccinated.” Greg rolled his eyes. That was a jab at him and he knew it. Greg had not gotten the shot. He had looked into it himself. In fact he had the opinion that getting it only made it more certain you would get the AR virus. There was a lot of chatter too that this whole virus was the governments doing because of falling birth rates and wanting to make sure that the population wasn't overrun by the elderly. For Greg now though it didn't really matter what the truth was, he had it.

Greg stood silent as he watched Amber pick out some polo shirts and some pants for him along with a couple of belts.

“Don't I get an opinion?” Greg whined as he winced at the light blue polo that Amber had in her hand.

“You're Mom gave me a very specific list for new school clothes,” Amber said flashing her phone at Greg to show that an image of the shirt on her phone matched the one in her hand.

“She could have just had this stuff delivered if she was just

going to pick,” Greg grumbled, crossing his arms.

“We’re not getting every single one,” Amber said. “She wants you to try them on too so we get the size right.”

“I’m not tying them on,” Greg mewled, stomping his foot.

“Gregory, don’t throw a little tantrum,” Amber chided. “You need to try these on so you look nice for your first day of school.”

“I’m not a little kid,” Greg protested. “I don’t need to go to school and I’m not in Kindergarten.”

“That’s not what the test showed,” Amber said offhandedly. “You took more than one and they all said the same thing. Maybe you should have studied.”

“So you think I’m stupid,” Greg said, frowning as he cast his eyes down. Amber looked at him with a sigh before she bent down getting to his level.

“That’s not what I meant,” she said. “No one is exactly happy about this, even your Mom. We all are trying our best though. You need to as well. Now if you can maybe work with me a little here I promise I’ll let you pick some stuff for yourself as well.”

Greg looked at Amber letting his face soften. He couldn’t stay mad at her. He gave a grunt as Amber smiled. They made their way to the dressing rooms.

“Okay do this one first,” Amber said putting an outfit in his hands. “Once you’re dressed come out and show me.”

“I can tell if my own clothes fit,” Greg said.

“I need to take a picture for your Mom,” Amber said as she shooed him off.

Greg got into the dressing room and began taking his clothes off. He went to get the pants on first but was having trouble keeping his boxers up. They were the same one he had worn as an adult and they simply did not fit.

“Gregory, do you need help?” Amber asked from the outside.

“No,” Greg said. He went to try and pull up the pants but his boxers kept falling he then tripped on the pant leg falling backwards with a large thud.

“Gregory, is everything okay?” Amber called out. Greg didn't respond as he pulled his boxers up. “I'm coming in,” Amber said as she opened the door quickly and slid in. “What are those?” she asked looking at the over sized boxers.

“They're my boxers,” Greg said.

“Didn't you get any underwear from your cousin?” Amber then asked, shaking her head.

“I'm not wearing someone else's underwear, I can see the stains in them.” Greg whined as he made a disgusted face. All the clothes he had were hand me downs from his cousin who was ten. None of them fit him, yet his Mom hadn't wanted to buy him a bunch of clothes until they were sure he was done shrinking.

“Those do not fit you,” Amber said as she helped Greg back

to his feet. “Hang on to them while I get your pants,” Amber instructed. Greg held the underwear up while Amber pulled the pants up. She then helped him put on the blue and white striped polo before she tucked it into his pants and then fastened the belt around his waist.

“Okay smile,” Amber said as she held up her phone. Greg did not. Afterwards he tried on five more outfits each time Amber took a picture and sent it off to his Mom for review. As Greg was getting his old clothes back on he saw Amber picking up the three outfits his Mom had chosen. Much to his disappointment one of them was the white polo with the airplanes on it.

“Are we done now?” Greg asked as they came out of the dressing room.

“Not even close, but you don't have to try on any more clothes now that we know your size,” Amber said, placing the ones that had been picked out in the cart. “Your Mom wants us to get you some play clothes you can get dirty for camp next week.”

“I can't believe she signed me up for that,” Greg fumed. The camp Amber was referring to was a local day camp that catered specifically to kids four to seven.

“You have to go somewhere,” Amber said. “She can't leave you home alone all day now that she's back at work.” Greg did not share that opinion, just what did she think would happen?

“She also wants us to get you some undies and socks which you clearly need,” Amber chuckled. Greg scowled but followed along. They got into the underwear aisle as Amber stopped in front of the shelf.

“What do you want?” she asked, taking a step back. Greg looked at all the packages before picking up some plain black boxers.

These I guess,” he said, going to put them in the cart.

“Not those,” Amber said, snatching the package out of his hand. “They are too big, you're a size five.” Greg looked at everything in his size. There were no boxers and everything had designs on them except for one.

“I guess these,” Greg said pointing at a package of plain white ones just out of his reach.

“Hmmm,” Amber said looking at her phone. “Your Mom says to get some with different designs on them.”

“What why!?” Greg exclaimed, throwing up his hands.

“She wants it to be easy to check that your changing everyday.” Amber said offhandedly.

“She's not going to see,” Greg yelled finding the reasoning to be more than a little embarrassing.

“Here these will do,” Amber said, grabbing a package and showing him. They had an all white background with a different type of dinosaur littered on each one. “See they're not cartoony or anything.” Amber said showing that the

dinosaurs looked more realistic.

“I don't want those,” Greg said, crossing his arms.

“If you want a different character then there are lots of options,” Amber said motioning further down where all the underwear with licensed characters like Spider man and Mickey Mouse were. Greg made a little whimper, not even able to imagine himself wearing something as childish as that.

“Those are fine,” Greg finally mumbled as Amber smiled, dropping the dino's into the cart. She then grabbed him a pack of plain socks before finally moving on. Amber went to another section of clearance clothes as she started going through the racks.

“We can save some money here,” Amber said as she began to place some plain colored pocket shirts into the cart. Greg did not have any objections to that. She then put a couple cargo shorts into the cart. The next thing she grabbed were clothing sets with a shirt and accompanying shorts. Greg saw her put a set with characters from some kids show in.

“I don't want those,” Greg whined as she grabbed another set.

“Why not?” Amber said looking genuinely mystified.

“They're for kids,” Greg said looking cross.

“You are a kid,” Amber said. “No one will make fun of you for wearing it. They're also cheap and your Mom won't mind if they get dirty. Besides, you don't have to wear matching sets. You can mix and match. I'm just giving you lots of

options.”

Greg gave a moan as he rolled his eyes. It was not worth it to start a fight with Amber over this. He hated fighting with her anyways. After a few more juvenile sets found their way into the cart Amber began to walk off towards the pajama section. Much to Greg's dismay the only plain styled pajamas were sleepers and he definitely didn't want those which left the ones with graphics on them.

“Oh how about these?” Amber said taking down pair that were Mario Kart themed. “We used to play this a lot at my house.”

“Whatever,” Greg said, rolling his eyes. “Not like anyone cares about my opinion.”

“I'm letting you choose right now,” Amber said with a guffaw.

“Get whatever you want,” Greg said as he walked off to go and sit on a nearby bench. He didn't care what Amber got, he wasn't going to wear them anyways. A minute later Amber sat down next to him on the bench.

“Let's see what we got left,” she said going into her purse and getting out the envelope of money Greg's Mom had left for clothes. Greg watched as she counted it out. “So if I'm right we've spent about a hundred and fifty so far so we've got about fifty dollars left for shoes.”

“That's not right,” Greg said having watched her count the money. He did some quick arithmetic in his head. “You still have a hundred left.” Greg was a little surprised himself. He

would never admit that doing even simple math in his head was getting harder and harder by the day.

“Pretty good math there,” Amber chuckled as she took fifty out and putting it into her purse. “Its not all for you though.”

Greg looked a little confused. All that money had been left by his Mom why was Amber taking any of it for herself? It then dawned on him as a pit grew in his stomach.

“She's paying you?” Greg questioned, really not wanting the answer.

“Yeah she is,” Amber said nonchalantly. As Greg thought about it. He wondered how long this had been going on for. All those times Amber had shown up to take him out. Had she been getting paid for all those too?

“She's paying you like you're a..a..babysitter?” Greg sputtered out.

“Something like that,” Amber said almost as if she felt a little guilty. “I'll admit I was a little uncomfortable when she gave me money but its working out for me. You know I'm saving up for a car. With the extra cash from her along with the other kids I watch I think I'll be able to put a down payment on something for when I start college in the fall. Then we won't have to take the bus everywhere.”

“What the hell,” Greg hissed. “You're my girlfriend, and you're taking money to hang out with me.”

“Gregory,” Amber said, sounding a little sad as she cast her

eyes down. "I did this for you ya know," Greg looked at Amber shaking his head. "I only did this because I happened to see your Mom talking to the neighbors across the street. It seemed she was going to get that girl to watch you."

Greg's eyes widened. The people across the street had a daughter named Trinity, she was a gangly braced faced sixth grader with curly hair and thick glasses. Had his Mom really thought that she was a good person to babysit him? That he even needed a babysitter? "I knew you would probably hate that. So I told your Mom I wouldn't mind keeping an eye on you and making sure you got out of the house. She's the one who insisted on paying me." Amber said.

As much as Amber was right about how Greg would feel about being babysat by some nerdy middle schooler it still felt like a betrayal.

"Tell her you quit," Greg said, his voice cold and angry. "I don't want you as a babysitter."

Amber was silent for a moment looking as if what Greg had said hurt her. She then looked up, giving him a small smile.

"If that's what you want then I will," she said. "Guess you'll have to deal with Trinity then."

Greg did not respond. That was fine by him. If his Mom thought that would work he would make sure that the first time Trinity tried to watch him he would send her running for the hills tearing out her stupid curls. There would not be a second time.

“Anyways we still have to get you some shoes and then catch the next bus home in time for you to get to your soccer game,” Amber said standing up. Greg let out a huff as he followed along. He didn't care about some stupid soccer game. He couldn't believe his Mom had even signed him up for the pee wee soccer league. No matter how much he tried to refuse his Mom would only bring out the same line the doctors did. The reason for all this treatment was the same. He needed to live the life appropriate for his new age. It would help his transition and avoid any psychological issues. The more he was treated like a five year old the more natural it would feel. Hence now going by Gregory and all the other things his Mom was doing.

As they got to the shoe aisle Amber told him to pick something out. Greg looked at all the options. He picked out a regular pair of sneakers that were black with some orange. As he went to try them on he had some trouble getting them tied.

“Maybe you should get something with velcro,” Amber suggested. “They would be easier.”

“I want laces,” Greg huffed as he kept trying to tie them. Amber bent down and pushed his hands away as she began to tie them herself. “Hey stop,” Greg protested.

“We don't have time, we have to leave,” Amber said. “You can wear these out, your other shoes are way too big for you anyways. I don't want you to trip.” Amber said, referring to the over sized flip flops Greg had been wearing.

“Don't act like you care about me,” Greg sneered. “I'm just a paycheck to you.”

“That's not true,” Amber said standing up as she picked up the shoebox and put it in the cart. “But I know you've already made up your mind. So there is no point in us fighting about it,” she said as she began to walk off. Greg followed silently. She was right about one thing today at least.

The bus ride home was quiet. Greg was still angry about the whole babysitter thing. He couldn't even bring himself to look at her. Even if she said she did it for him, Greg would not buy it. He knew how aggressively she had been saving for a car. She just saw an opportunity. Betrayal, that's all this was, and after everything he had done for her. Even when he had graduated high school himself and they had taken a step back from being in a relationship yet promising to wait for one another, he had still given her a ride to school every morning just so she didn't have to take the bus. Maybe he should have expected this, perhaps she had just been taking advantage of him the whole time.

Getting back to his house Amber followed behind carrying the shopping bag. Greg walked into his kitchen to find his Mom still in her office attire standing at the counter.

“Gregory, welcome back,” his Mom said cheerily as she hugged him.

“Mommy stop,” Greg mewled before stuttering a little at how easily the “mommy” word had just slipped out of his mouth. His Mom seemed to take no notice as she ushered him to the

kitchen table.

“Hurry and get changed or we are going to be late for your game,” she said picking up the red jersey and putting it into his hands. Greg grimaced looking at the jersey with the words dragons on it along with the pee wee soccer league. Amber set the shopping bag on the counter.

“How did it go?” Mom asked.

“Just fine,” Amber said. Greg waited for her to say she couldn't babysit anymore. But she didn't. Greg thought it was perhaps best. After all, if he had to get into that conversation again he knew he wouldn't be able to control himself. He was far too angry. His Mom would probably tell him to stop throwing a hissy fit maybe even try to put him on a timeout like yesterday. That had been an hour long ordeal with lots of yelling on his part since he refused to sit on the the stairs as his Mother had ordered. He had learned his lesson though. His Mom was crazy and you can't get through to crazy.

“Looks like you got lots of stuff,” Mom said as she started taking out some of the clothes.

“Under budget too,” Amber said, handing some money over to his Mom which she smiled at.

“Oh are those new shoes,” Mom then said “Laces hmmm,” she said obviously being of the same opinion of Amber that he should have gotten velcro straps. “I guess that's okay, you'll have to practice tying them.”

“I can tie my own shoes, “ Greg huffed, taking a seat and

undoing the laces before kicking off the shoes.

“Then I guess you won't need help with your cleats,” Mom said sarcastically as she tossed the cleats at his feet.

“Is it okay if I use your bathroom?” Amber then asked.

“You don't need to ask,” Mom chuckled. “Mi casa su casa,” she said. Amber gave a wave and walked off down the hall. Greg sat silently stewing lost in his own thoughts.

“Make sure you thank Amber for taking you shopping today,” Mom said as she began to unpack more of the clothes. Greg didn't think that was necessary. She hadn't done it for nothing anyways. Something he was going to mention yet didn't get a chance as his Mom interjected again.

“Gregory seriously you need to get ready or you're gonna be late,” his Mom said. Greg did not care if he was late. Yet his Mom had already walked over to him and had him quickly on his feet as she then pulled off his shirt before she started unbuckling his belt.

“Mommy stop,” Greg yelled but his underwear and pants had fallen around his ankles as soon as the belt had gone slack causing him to fall back into the chair making it easy for his Mom to grab his pants from around his ankles. Leaving him naked except for his socks.

“I can't believe you are still trying to wear these,” she said with a chuckle holding his boxers up in the air before she went and threw the clothes into the trash. “At least you have stuff that fits now.”

“Give me back my underwear,” Greg said, standing up and stomping his foot a little.

“You have underwear up in your room,” Mom said.

“I’m not wearing those,” Greg said. “They’re gross and they don’t fit any better.”

“I suppose,” his Mom said, a rare moment where she seemed to agree with him. “But you got new ones today didn’t you?” she pulled the package out of the bag before ripping the top open. “Want the t-rexes,” she said smiling as she let the pair unfurl. Greg was about to explode but his voice caught as he heard footsteps from behind. He turned his head to see Amber walking back into the kitchen. Greg yelped covering himself before snatching the underwear from his Mom. He quickly got them on though he saw that Amber hadn’t noticed as her face was buried in her phone. Mom’s then own phone rang as she answered. Greg got his shorts and jersey on as he listened in on his Mom’s phone call. It sounded like work and she did not sound pleased. His Mom came over with the phone pinched between her cheek and shoulder as she pushed him back onto the chair and began to get his shin guards on as well as putting his shoes on.

“Is it really necessary for me to come back in,” his Mom said, tying the laces on Greg’s cleats. “Can you not just reset the server? I’m trying to get to my kid’s game.”

Greg kept on listening as he let his Mom finish tying the shoes. This kind of sounded promising.

“Fine I'll be there,” Mom said curtly before ending the phone call. “Sorry Gregory we are going to be late. Mommy has to stop by the office first.”

“Well I guess if I have to miss the game,” Greg said, fighting back a little smile.

“I could stay with him,” Amber then piped up. “Just until you can get there.”

“Really,” Mom said. “That would be a big help.”

“I don't mind,” Amber said, holding up her own phone. “My plans just fell through anyways.”

That was what was decided. Greg sat in the backseat atop his booster seat as Amber sat in the front with Mom. She was going to drop them off at the field and then run back to the office. She hoped to be back before the end. Greg sat staring daggers into the back of Amber's head. Just what did she think she was doing? He had been very clear with her, no more babysitting. Still his plan seemed to not work as she didn't take any notice.

They were dropped off as Greg made his way to the field.

“Gregory, wait up,” Amber said, huffing a little as she caught up to him.

“What are you doing here?” Greg spat giving her a cold glare.

“I wanted to watch you play,” Amber said innocently.

“Yeah right,” Greg said. “You're just hear to keep an eye on

me until my Mommy gets here,” Greg said, making sure to sound as sarcastic as possible.

“Did you see her give me any more money?” Amber asked, sounding like she was accusing him.

“Well no,” Greg had to concede.

“Then I'm here by my choice,” Amber said before looking at Greg with a raised eyebrow. “I don't babysit for free.”

Greg stood on the field as he waited for the game to start. He didn't know why he even went along with this. The whole thing was kind of stupid. This was hardly soccer. As soon as the ball got drop it would just be a blob of little kids kicking the ball back and forth across the field as they moved like a herd of sheep to get it for themselves. There were no plays or positions. Greg looked over and saw Amber sitting on the hill with the rest of the crowd. Maybe now was the time to show her something. If Greg actually tried maybe he could show her he wasn't some little kid. He could probably play circles around all these kids with little effort on his part. The whistle sounded and Greg was off.

His plan proved to be a little more difficult than he had anticipated. It was a lot harder to get the ball and Greg was no athlete. He could keep up well enough though. Finally near the end his opportunity came. The ball came skittering to him. He got up to it but as soon as he saw the mob of kids running towards him he panicked and kicked the ball off in the opposite direction diverting the crowd away from himself. Greg kicked himself a little. Another chance did not come.

As the final whistle blew Greg trudged over to the sidelines. He was full of dirt and sweaty. He took the juice box on offer and guzzled it down. It felt great on his dry throat. Afterwards they all took a knee as the coach talked about some things before they were finally released. He looked around the crowd and saw Amber waving him over.

“Where's my Mom?” Greg asked, looking around.

“She called and said she was going to be late tonight so I'm going to stay with you until she gets back.”

“You mean babysit,” Greg said huffily.

“There is no other option,” Amber said, shrugging her shoulders. “One last time I guess, I promise when I see her tonight I'll tell her I can't babysit anymore.”

A woman approached introducing herself and informing the pair that Greg's mother had texted and asked if she could give them a ride back home which Amber was grateful for. Greg not so much. He sat in the backseat next to another kid from his team who seemed interested in trying to get Gregory to look at some kid's book about trucks.

“I don't think I've seen you around,” the woman up front said to Amber in the front seat. “Are you Gregory's sister?”

“Oh no,” Amber said. “Just a friend.”

Greg held back a click of his tongue. Was that what he was, just a friend? He had cooled down a little in the time between the store and now and he did feel a tiny bit forgiving at the

moment. But not enough to just sweep his misgivings under the rug.

Arriving back home Greg walked into the living room and plopped himself down on the couch.

“So what now?” he asked. In all the time Amber had been secretly babysitting him they had never been in this kind of situation. In the past she would usually just go out somewhere with him or just hang out and watch tv and always during the day.

“Your Mom sent me some instructions,” Amber said. “Guess I’ll be looking through the freezer to find us some dinner.”

“You’re going to cook for me?” Greg questioned.

“Sure why not, you’re hungry aren’t you?” she said laughing a little as she texted on her phone.

Greg put his head back as he nodded. “Who are you texting?” Greg asked with some curiosity. Amber wasn’t necessarily the type to have her nose in her phone.

“Just my Dad.” Amber said. “I’m hoping he can come and give me a ride after I’m done. I know its silly since I live two streets over but I really don’t like walking alone at night.”

“Guess you won’t have to worry about that when you get your car,” Greg said, although not in a spiteful way. “How close are you to getting it anyways?”

“Well,” Amber said. “I’m not making too much money right now. A few of my regulars are out of town and now I’m

losing you too. So its probably going to be a couple of months.

“Oh,” was all Gregory said. He didn't know the reason. Maybe it was because he was tired and hungry but he was starting to feel just a little guilty about how he had been treating her all day. He hated fighting with her. He also knew how long she had been saving for. It was hard for her to get a regular job as she had been so busy with school with all the AP classes and extracurriculars.

Amber went out of the room into the kitchen and Greg could hear her rifling through the freezer. Greg started to think about how weird it was going to be not to have her around anymore. It was kind of sad in a way that this was how things were going to end between them. He understood there wasn't anything they could do. He then thought about how it was going to be when his Mom went back to work full time and he would have the girl across the street watching him. The thought still made him shiver. Greg undid his shoes and kicked them off the floor before pulling off his shin guards. He then got up and walked into the kitchen. Amber was at the stove dumping some frozen chicken nuggets onto a baking pan.

“Hey Amber,” Greg piped up, getting her attention.

“What's up?” she asked.

“Um well,” Greg warbled as he fidgeted with the hem of his jersey. “I just want to like apologize for today. That and all the other times too.”

“Apology accepted,” Amber gave him a smile “ For what it's worth I'm sorry too. I should have been more upfront with you about some things.”

“About that,” Greg said, taking a breath. “Um if you would want too keep being my babysitter then I think I can be okay with it. Just so you can get that car.” Greg expected Amber to give him another big smile and thank him. Instead her smile disappeared as she shook her head.

“I don't think that's a good idea,” she said.

“What do you mean?” Greg asked.

“Well all the other kids I babysit are actually happy to have me there. Now don't get me wrong I get why you were uncomfortable, that's fine. But I don't really see a point in continuing on if we are just going to fight. I don't like being like that with you.”

“I can be better,” Greg said. “I promise, I won't make it hard on you.”

“Really,” Amber said, crossing her arms as she stood in front of him. “You think you could actually listen to me and not try to bite my head off every other minute. Because the way things are now you really are the most difficult person I've ever had to look after.”

Greg felt that same pang of anger hit him hearing her say look after him. He fought back a sneer. He was trying to convince her after all.

“I could listen if its you,” Greg said, looking off to the side. “Better than that Trinity kid.” Amber still looked a fair bit unconvinced.

“Maybe I can give you a chance to prove it,” Amber finally said.

“Really,” Greg said looking hopeful.

“Yep if for the rest of the night you show me that you'll listen which means no fighting or being mean then I might just consider it. Sound fair?” Greg kicked his foot at the ground a little. It sounded easy enough. He had always gotten along with Amber even before they had ever been a couple. She wasn't some dictator. Still it felt kind of weird to promise to someone younger than him that he would behave.

“I'll do it,” Greg finally said.

“Okay,” Amber said, uncrossing her arms. “So first things first I think you need a bath.”

“B-bath,” Gregory stammered.

“Yeah dude you're filthy,” Amber said, brushing his shoulder a little. “We can do it while dinner cooks.”

“I can take a shower,” Greg said. Amber shook her head.

“Gregory, your Mom said I had to give you a bath and I needed to help you with your hair and back.”

“I –,” Gregory yelped before stopping himself. Baths weren't exactly new. He had already gotten plenty from his Mom. In

fact he didn't really seem to mind them so much anymore. But with Amber?

“Okay,” Greg squeaked as he put his head down.

“Good,” Amber said, mussing up his hair a little. Gregory let a little sigh as he followed after her. He kind of liked it when she did that.

Amber sat on the edge of the tub filling it up with warm water. Gregory took off his clothes until he was down to just his underwear.

“Those the new one's?” Amber asked, looking at him.

“Oh umm yeah,” Gregory said feeling a little bashful.

“They definitely fit better,” Amber said before reaching her hand under the faucet. “Alright waters perfect you can hop in now.”

Gregory hesitated a moment before pulling his underwear off. Amber had seen him naked before anyways so it wasn't that big of a deal. Gregory got into the tub. Amber first washed his hair making sure to put in a good amount of shampoo and worked it into his hair before washing it out with a cup to dump water on his head. She then took a cloth and helped him with his back. She then took the cloth and scrubbed his cheeks with it. The cloth tickled and Gregory couldn't help but giggle a little.

“There's that cute little smile,” Amber cooed. Gregory continued to smile. He couldn't help it. It seemed to make

Amber happy and that's what he wanted. Amber then had him turn around and she ran the washcloth along his back.

“Alright you can take over,” Amber said, dropping the washcloth into the water in front of Gregory.

“Can't you help,” Gregory requested. It felt good to have her help. Gregory found that not worrying about his regression and just letting things happen felt good, like he wasn't constantly pushing against something. That and he wanted to show Amber that he was all in on his promise to not make things harder for her. If she wanted him to listen he could do that.

“Gregory, you are more than capable of doing it yourself, I have to go check on dinner,” Amber said, putting a hand on her hip. Gregory frowned as he looked up at her with a saddened look like a drenched little puppy dog caught in the rain. “That's not fair,” Amber said, shaking her head as she came back taking a seat at the edge of the tub picking the washcloth back up and she began to wash his chest. Gregory was happy, for once someone had finally listened to him. Amber was so gentle too although Gregory couldn't help but squeal when she got under his armpits. Amber then filled the cup up and rinsed him free of soap.

“Okay, now I really do need to go check on dinner, stay in the tub and I'll be back,” she said before leaving the bathroom. Gregory looked around and saw the basket of toys his Mom had dug out of the basement a couple of days ago. Gregory leaned over the edge grabbing up a cowboy and pirate. He

had never played with the toys before, but he had nothing better to do to pass the time. After all he had to wait for Amber to come back. As he began to play with the toys a story began to form of a heroic sheriff chasing down a dastardly pirate. Their final showdown now playing out on the edge of the bathtub. Gregory did the voices for each. The sheriff with his southern drawl and the pirate with his rough voice interspersed with plenty of arr's and garrs. They were fighting as Gregory smashed them together, the climatic showdown came to its conclusion as the pirate stood near the edge.

“Yaaa don't have the guts you landlubber,” the pirate said. In Gregory's mind the sheriff gave a smirk before delivering the final kick as the pirate fell into the watery depths.

“So long pardner,” Gregory said.

“Alright bath time is over,” Amber said startling Gregory as he had not even noticed her come back. He quickly shoved the cowboy into the water wondering how much of that she had seen. Amber had a towel held out for him as Gregory quickly stepped out and let her wrap it around him. She took a little time to dry his hair before wrapping it around him.

“I set your pajamas on your bed,” Amber said. “Do you need help getting dressed?”

“No,” Gregory said as his voice edged dangerously close to a sneer. “I mean I can dress myself,” he said, pulling back.

“Alright, after you're dressed meet me downstairs, dinner is

ready.”

Gregory walked down the hall to his room. He was glad that he had managed not to get mad at her for suggesting he might need help getting dressed. He wasn't a little kid. He was overall happy with how he had conducted himself at bath time. Hopefully Amber could see how hard he was trying. He just needed to make it through the rest of the night. He needed her to see he wasn't a problem, That he was a big kid who wouldn't make things hard on her. However when he saw the pajamas on his bed he got a lump in his throat. It wasn't the pajamas either. They were the one's Amber had picked out at the store earlier. The one with Mario racing forward in his cart with the grey and white checkered pants. What made Gregory balk was the Pull-up on top. They were not bed wetting pants either, they were full on toddler Pull-ups with Mickey mouse on them dressed in red footie pajamas and yawning showing they were extra thick night time pull-ups. Another hand me down from his cousin scrounged from the back of the closet where they had been for years and only being found when Gregory's aunt had completely cleaned out the room and gotten rid of everything that her child no longer needed. These particular items being something not even his cousin had used for years.

The reason they were now here was simple. Until the age of nine Greg had been a bed wetter. Now that he was shot back down to five his nighttime issue had re-emerged. As much as Greg maintained that his mental state was unchanged he could not argue that physically he was unchanged. So there

were certain things that even he had to concede. That hadn't stopped him from pleading with his Mother not to make him wear the protection especially one's meant specifically for a toddler. His mother had compromised saying that there were only a handful of them to begin with and that she would get him the one's meant for older kids once he made his way through these other ones since they still fit anyways. That didn't help Gregory at the moment though – Amber had already seen them.

Gregory couldn't help but feel embarrassed. All the goodwill he had created seemed for nothing now. She was going to think he was a little kid for sure. Gregory ponder for a moment not even putting them on. If she asked, he could just say that he didn't need them but that wouldn't work Amber had set them out, which could only mean that Mom had told her about them. He'd be caught in a lie.

Gregory took the Pull-up and got it on cringing a little at the crinkling sound as he pulled it up to his waist. This was the mature thing to do after all. He was nothing if not mature, he just hoped she didn't say anything about it. After getting the rest of his pajamas on Gregory walked downstairs to the kitchen where Amber was putting dinner on the table.

“Hope you like chicken nuggets and french fries,” Amber said. Gregory nodded as he sat down. Amber prepared a plate for him even squeezing out a glob of ketchup for him before she did her own. Amber even got him a glass of juice. Dinner passed by without much incident. Gregory found he was incredibly hungry and had two helpings himself and drank

down at least three glasses of juice. As dinner ended Gregory took his plate to the sink wanting to show that he was responsible. He then stood unsure of what to do now. Should he grab the rest of the stuff on the table maybe even offer to do the dishes? The other kids probably never did that. As Gregory pondered this he was slightly hopping from one foot to the other.

“Hey buddy, do you need the potty?” Amber then asked as she cleared the table.

“What! No, why would you ask that?” Gregory said, sounding scandalized.

“Because you just chugged three glasses of juice and it looks like you're doing the potty dance,” Amber said.

“I'm not dancing,” Gregory said, his fist balling up. “I don't have to go,” he said.

“If you say so,” Amber said, seemingly not concerned herself. Gregory walked off to the living room feeling a bit demoralized. He plopped down on the ground cross legged as he put his chin into his hands in a pout. He wanted to show Amber that he was grown up and mature, yet he couldn't help but feel they were going in the opposite direction, no doubt thanks to the pull-up. She probably thought he was some little pant's wetter now. He had to show her he wasn't some helpless little kid.

Gregory then spotted his new shoes. He crawled over to them and put one on his foot. He looked at the laces remembering

how Amber had been the one to tie them in the store. He took the laces into his hands. Yet it just wasn't coming to him. It was a weird feeling. He knew he had done this millions of times before without thinking about it but he didn't have the foggiest where to start.

“Going somewhere?” Amber asked airily as she walked into the living room.

“No, I'm just trying to remember,” Gregory said.

“Want me to find a video for you,” Amber said, pulling out her phone.

“I don't need a video, I know this,” Gregory mumbled.

“Suit yourself,” Amber said, shrugging her shoulders. “But there is no shame in asking for help. Everybody needs help sometimes.” Gregory let the laces fall from his hands. He didn't disagree and asking for help could be seen as mature and right now he was clueless.

“Can you help me then?” Gregory asked.

“Sure,” Amber said, coming and sitting in front of him. “Watch closely,” she said. Gregory did watch intently studying her every move. She then untied it to let him try himself. Gregory got past the first step but then hit a wall, before slapping the ground out of frustration.

“You'll get it,” Amber said reassuringly as she showed him again. “Make two bunny ears like this.”

Gregory tried again this time saying the steps out loud. “Two

bunny ears and then cross them,” he said, pulling the laces tight. “I did it,” Gregory exclaimed as a smile erupted on his face. “I did it,” he said again, jumping to his feet. “Thank you,” he said as he hugged Amber which was a little awkward since she was still seated.

“You picked that right up,” Amber chuckled as she hugged him around the waist before pulling his pants up since they had sagged before giving him a little pat to the behind which elicited a slight crinkle. Gregory stepped back with a small squeak as he looked at Amber still smiling. He readjusted his pants slightly just to make sure before a awkward silence came upon them.

“Umm so like when is My Mom supposed to be back?” he asked changing the subject.

“She said she'll be back around eleven, apparently she has a pretty big mess to fix, so it looks like its just me and you for the rest of the night.”

“Oh,” was all Gregory had to say in response.

“Do you miss her,” Amber said, placing a hand on Gregory's leg as if he needed to be comforted.

“No,” Gregory mumbled. “I was just wonderin. What time is it anyways?”

“Its almost eight, and your Mom already said she wants you in bed before she gets back, that's not going to be a problem is it?”

“No,” Gregory said with a sigh. “I’ll go,” he said, taking off the shoe and beginning to walk off towards his room.

“Go where?” Amber asked.

“To bed,” Gregory said, a little confused. “You just said it was eight, that’s when Mommy makes me go to bed.” he explained feeling a little embarrassed to admit that he now had a bedtime. Something which he fought with his Mom about every night, but he wouldn’t put up a fuss with Amber, not tonight.

“You don’t have to,” Amber said, getting to her feet. “Your Mom said it was fine to let you stay up tonight.”

“Really,” Gregory said as his face brightened.

“Yes really,” Amber smiled as she went and put her hands on his shoulders. “I appreciate the honesty about bedtime though. Most kids try to lie to me about that one. So I think a little reward is in order.”

“What kind of reward?” Gregory asked, trying to make it sound like he wasn’t excited by the idea.

“How does some ice cream sound?” Amber said in a tantalizing tone.

“Yummy,” Gregory said with a smile as he rubbed his tummy.

Amber made up two bowls of ice cream and let Gregory do his own whip cream before he began to dump sprinkles on top.

“You want some ice cream with your whip cream and sprinkles?” Amber laughed.

“Sprinkles make it taste better,” Gregory said with some authority. As he ate the ice cream tasted really good to Gregory. So good in fact he began to wonder why he hadn't eaten it much as an adult. Gregory ate every last bit, even tipping the bowl to get the stuff that had melted. He didn't even mind when Amber wiped his face with a wet washcloth.

“We got some time before you go to bed, want to watch a movie?” Amber then asked.

“Sure,” Gregory said as he raced ahead to get a good spot on the couch. Amber sat next to him as she began to browse for something to watch on the tv.

“What to watch?” Amber asked, scrolling through the titles.

“Lets watch that one,” Gregory said, pointing to a horror movie. He and Amber had watched those together before.

“No way,” Amber said. “You're way too little for that,” she looked at Gregory for a moment as if she had just said a secret she wasn't supposed to. “It will give me nightmares,” she added quickly.

“I am not too little,” Gregory said, crossing his arms as he looked at Amber with a sideways glance. “But if you're too scared then we can watch something else.”

“Thank you,” Amber said as she clicked onto something else. “Lets watch this one.” Gregory's face screwed up seeing what

she had chosen.

“The Magical Voyage,” Gregory mewed.

“I love this movie,” Amber said as she hit play. Gregory sat back. It was going to be a long ninety minutes. However as the movie played Gregory found himself drawn in. The bright colors were enticing and the ships that the animal pirates had were kind of cool. Gregory even found some of the jokes funny, especially when one of the characters told another one they had a big butt. He could see why an adult like Amber liked this movie. At some point his eyes got heavy as he slumped against Amber. The next minute he felt himself being shaken awake.

“Gregory sweetie time for bed,” Amber said softly. Gregory wiped his eyes to see the credits playing on the screen.

“Oh okay,” he said after a big yawn. Getting up he grasped Amber's hand with his two small hands as he put his head against her side. She walked him upstairs stopping at the bathroom.

“Why don't you try the potty one more time,” Amber said. Gregory gave no objection as he went to the toilet pulling down his pants and pull-up to do his business. He didn't even care that Amber was standing at the sink while he did so. After he was done he went to the sink and washed his hands before she handed him a toothbrush already prepared with some bubblegum flavored toothpaste. Gregory sleepily brushed his teeth.

“All ready for bed?” Amber asked as she lifted Gregory up into her arms. Gregory gave a drowsy chirp as he let his head rest on Amber's shoulder. She carried him to his room placing him into his bed and bringing the covers over him.

“Wait Amber,” Gregory said, sitting up in his bed. Amber turned back and looked at him. “Was I good?” Gregory asked. Amber looked at him for a moment placing a finger on her cheek as if she were thinking.

“Yeah I'd say you were,” she said nodding.

“So you'll keep babysitting then right?” Gregory asked, looking nervous. Amber came and sat on the edge of his bed as she gently pushed him back down before re-covering him.

“Do you really want me too?” she asked.

“Well umm yeah because you're really nice and you make things fun,” Gregory said. Amber gave him a smile as she looked down at him. Gregory looked adorable to her right now. Part of her was a little sad knowing that the life they had once planned together was all but gone. She was happy though at the same time to see that he still wanted her around.

“I think I can,” Amber said before she leaned down and gave him a kiss on the forehead. “You're my favorite little guy after all.” She swept his bangs off to the side. “Now close those eyes and have sweet dreams kiddo.”

Gregory closed his eyes feeling relieved that Amber was going to keep babysitting. After all she was the bestest babysitter in the world.