Playground

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

Playground

Jake ached in that good way that meant that his trip to the gym had been a success. He could not wait to get home and just veg out in front of the TV. He had earned it, he knew. Maybe he would even have some of that ice cream he had hidden in the back of the freezer. Surely he had earned that, right?

He passed by a brightly colored playground and smiled as he heard the sounds of children running, playing, yelling, and just generally enjoying their lives. He missed the innocence of childhood. Sure, it had not all been sunshine and roses. Rules, bullies, and a hundred other little things still affected the lives of children. He could not say why, but he slowed down a bit to a stroll as he passed by the gate leading into the playground.

“Miss it?" He turned to find a woman standing next to him. Jake could not say why, but he sensed something almost magical about her. He immediately dismissed it, but she smiled at him. “What if I could make you a kid again, just for an hour?"

“Sure, why not?" Jake said with a shrug. She was probably just some crazy lady. She would ask him for change any day now, he bet. She chuckled and clapped her hands. Once, twice, three times. Jake felt strange as the world seemed to grow around him. The lady fished a pocket mirror out of her

bag and showed him his reflection. Jake the mid-twenties insurance salesman was gone. In his place was Jake the eight year old. “Oh, my god!" He gasped as he heard the voice of a prepubescent little boy come out of his mouth. “How?"

“Magic." The woman explained. “It only lasts an hour, so go play!" Jake did not need to be told twice, he ran over and started climbing on the jungle gym. He was not sore in the slightest anymore. In fact, he seemed to have more energy than he had ever remembered having! This was great!

“Hey, kid." He turned and looked to see a bigger boy coming toward him, his hands in fists and a menacing look on his face. “You new here?"

“Uh, yeah."

“What’s your name?"

“Jake."

“Pff." The bully said. “I own this playground, y’know." Jake scoffed.

“No, you don’t."

“Sure I do." He came right up to Jake and he realized just how much bigger this other boy was. “You gotta pay to use it."

“I don’t have any money." Jake patted his lime green shorts to prove that his pockets were empty. The bully smirked.

“Well, there’s another way you can pay." With surprising

agility, he yanked down Jake’s shorts. “Tighty whities!" He yelled. Jake quickly bent over to grab his shorts. Tighty whities? He had not worn those since he was fifteen… but he was eight now.

Sure enough, he saw the white cotton as he pulled his shorts back up. Was it over? The bully seemed to have other plans.

“Since you’re a little wimp in baby undies, there’s more you gotta pay." The bully grabbed Jake and dragged him toward the jungle gym. Why were none of the parents intervening? Jake tried to fight the bully off, but his strength far outmatched Jake’s scrawny eight year old body. He had not started weightlifting until senior year, he remembered, a pit forming in his stomach.

The bully managed to get Jake to the very top of the jungle gym and he smirked at the puny eight year old in his clutches. “Turn around." He ordered. Jake complied. It had to be getting close to the hour mark, right? He looked at a large clock across the street. Twenty minutes? It had only been twenty minutes? He had forgotten that time seemed to pass differently for kids.

“What are you doing?" He asked as the bully pushed him to the very edge of the platform they were on. The bully did not answer with words, instead grabbing the back waistband of Jake’s underwear and yanking. Jake howled as the bully gave him the first wedgie he had had in at least fifteen years, but the bully was not done yet. With that same surprising skill, he slipped the back of Jake’s underwear over a nearby post and

pushed him off the edge of the platform. It was a short drop and Jake did not even go all the way. He came to a stop just above the gravel of the ground, howling as his briefs dug into his body. He dangled there, kicking desperately in a vain attempt to get down. His only hope was that his underwear would rip. If it held, this would be a very long forty minutes.