Siblings

by andlat

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Chapter 1

Siblings - Chapter 1

Cody stared at the plastic cup in front of him. He did not mind meeting the new neighbors, if only it weren't for two things. Firstly was the cup in front of him. Mrs. Dalton had said they were still unpacking their kitchenware, but he could not help but notice his mom and her got glasses while he got a faded pink Barbie cup that matched the cup sitting in front of Bethany, the second thing he did not like about this encounter. She leered across the table at him. Despite being five or maybe even six years younger than him, she seemed to tower over him enough to make him feel like a baby, even if she was really only about a head taller.

"He's easily the shortest in his class." His mom had said as if unaware that that particular fact hurt him more than any other every time it was brought up. He sighed. At least the cookies were good.

"Bethany, how about you and Cody go play in your room for a bit while me and Cody's mom chat?"

"Oh, sure!" Bethany said eagerly, practically leaping off of her chair. She grabbed Cody's hand. "C'mon, little Cody! We can play a game!"

"Little?" He said as she dragged him out of the room at a breakneck pace.

"Oh, yes. You're so itty bitty."

"That" he stammered. "That's not very nice!"

"What? It's just a fact. You have cute little feeties and you're itty bitty!"

"Stop saying that! I'm older than you!"

"Yeah," Bethany shrugged. "That's what your mom says, but I don't really believe her." She opened her bedroom door.

Cody had expected something pink and frilly, but honestly, her room did not look that different from his. Sure, the toys on the floor were Barbies instead of action figures, but all the same, she had a desk, a bookshelf, a bed, everything seemed a lot like his.

"So, what are we gonna play?" He did not know why, but the room being so ordinary put him at ease.

"Dress up." Bethany said at once.

"Uh, what kind of dress-up?" He had flashbacks to his cousins insisting he play house with them. They had outgrown that a few years ago, though Cody had not done much growing since.

"Well," Bethany giggled. "Let's pretend we're sis- siblings." Cody blinked, but dismissed the slip-up.

"And?"

"And siblings wear matching outfits, don't they?" Cody did not like where this was heading, especially with how Bethany had positioned herself between him and the door.

"I'm not sure about that." Cody said, feeling more and more nervous by the second. Bethany just shrugged.

"Let's see. First things first, we need to get you undressed."

"What? I'm not taking my clothes off."

"Oh, I know."

"Huh?"

"Well, obviously you'll need help!" She cooed as if he was a very small child. "You're so itty bitty!" Before Cody even knew what was happening, he found himself lying on the floor of Bethany's room as she tickled his bare feet.

Perhaps if Cody were not hopelessly ticklish, the afternoon would have turned out differently. Bethany, however, had had a good feeling that he would be and his squeals of laughter proved just how right she was. Even as he pleaded for her to stop, she pressed on until Cody lay there, out of breath and barely able to move. Smiling confidently, she pulled his shirt over his head. She had helped take care of countless little cousins. She knew how to undress little kids. By the time Cody had regained his composure, she had him stripped down to his underwear.

"Give me my clothes back!" She smiled and mimed tickling his feet. Cody was so terribly ticklish, he squealed and giggled.

"What a sweet little Cody." She cooed. "Little baby Cody's so tickly wickly, aren't you?"

"Stop. Give me my clothes back."

"I've got much better clothes for you."

"Better?" He shivered, though that may only have been because he was in his underwear.

"Alright, prettier. More appropriate for my little sister."

"What?" He turned red from a mix of anger and so much embarrassment.

"I know a girl named Cody, so you can be my little sister Cody." She giggled. "I guess you're the second girl named Cody I know!"

"I'm not a girl!"

"Well, I guess not technically." She allowed. "But you're so little and tiny that you're basically a baby." He tried to argue, but she quickly tickled him back into squealy submission. "And babies like you wear whatever they're told."

"I won't!" He whined. She knew all too well how much babies whined.

"Sure you will." Bethany replied matter-of-factly. "Now hold still while we get your tights on."

Through a combination of tickles and just plain overpowering the tiny boy, Bethany got a pair of white tights up his legs and over his waist.

"Oh, perfect." She cooed. "Now for your dress!"

"My dress?" Bethany giggled.

"Tights do not make a whole outfit. Since it's your first day as my little sister, I suppose there's all these girl things you need to learn, hmm?"

"I am not heheHE" There was nothing Cody could do as Bethany blew raspberry after raspberry into his tummy. "Stop! Stop!" He yelled.

"Only once you beg me to put you in your dress. Your pretty dress, actually." She alternated tickles on his sides and raspberries right into his adorable outie belly button. He had the finest, lightest hair on his tummy, which only made him seem more cute, more like a chubby little baby to dress and treat however she wanted.

"Fine." She kept her hands nearby, but stopped tickling him. He rolled his eyes and sighed. "Please put me in my dress."

"Your pretty dress." She said loudly, so he could hear her over his giggles and squeals.

"My pretty dress!" He gasped as she picked him up off of the floor and carried him over to her closet. Hanging there, waiting for him, was a white dress, a white cloud erupting below the bodice. He could not decide if the white cloud was a dress or a tutu. Even when it was on him, he could not be sure. It only fell to about mid-thigh.

"Oh, how lovely." Bethany said as she admired the boy's appearance. "And for your shoes." Pushing him back to the floor, she put a pair of light pink ballet flats on his feet. "I

wore these when I was four. I can't believe they fit you." She smiled at him. "Oh, you look as pretty as a princess."

"Take this stuff off me!" She smiled and kissed his cheek.

"Oh, how cute! You already understand that you're too little, no, itty bitty, to undress yourself. Such a good baby sister I have!"

"I'm not your sister!"

"Well, you're not a very good brother, dressed the way you are." She fussed with his skirt, as if to remind him that he, the boy, wore a dress, tights, and ballet flats, while the girl before him wore jeans and a t-shirt. "Alright, let's get you situated." She said, picking him up and depositing him on her bed. "Now, Cody, can you promise to be a good baby sister and sit right here?"

"But"

"Promise me."

"I promise." He sighed.

"That's a good girl. Now, remember what I said sisters do sometimes?"

"Um"

"About outfits?"

"Oh. They wear matching outfits." He felt ashamed to feel almost proud when she smiled and nodded.

"That's right. Now what I want you to do is" she took his hands and lifted them to his eyes, "is keep your eyes covered while I'm changing. It's okay for me to see an itty bitty boy like you in your undies, but it's not appropriate for you to see me in mine, understand?" Cody had no real desire to see her in her underwear, so he covered his eyes. "Very good! No peekies!"

Cody sat there, listening just to make sure she did not try to trick him and sneak out. He heard the familiar sounds of clothes coming off and going on and decided she was true to her word.

"Okay, Cody. Open!" He did and saw her standing before him in the exact same outfit as his. "Ta da!" She held her arms out and he noticed she was holding something.

"What's that?"

"Why, it's your wig. My baby sister's hair is a little short, so we're going to cheat." She led him over to the mirror, where he got to see himself in all his sissy glory.

"Oh, god." He moaned, his noises only growing louder as she situated the wig on his head. His darker hair was gone, covered by the wig that almost exactly matched Bethany's hair color. Just like that, he really truly did look like her sibling, her little sister.

"Like magic, hmm?" Bethany giggled. "I thought we might need some make-up, but you really do look like a girl just naturally, don't you?" She teased his sides. "And your pretty

smile just makes it better!" She grabbed his hands and twirled the boy around and around her room. "Oh, this is so fun!"

"Are we done?"

"We're dressed." She said authoritatively. "Now, we go show our moms!" Still holding his hands, she had no trouble at all dragging Cody toward the door. "If we're lucky, they'll let me keep you as my baby sister, just for a week or two!" Cody did not know how likely that was, but as he heard their voices grow nearer, one thing was certain: there would be pictures, and lots of them.

Chapter 2

Siblings: Sledding - Chapter 2

To Cody's relief, their moms did not make him stay with Bethany as her baby sister, but the ordeal did convince them that Cody and Bethany had become best friends. There was little Cody could do other than grin and bear spending almost every day at Bethany's house. He made sure never to go to her room with her, for fear of more dress-up, but their moms loved seeing Bethany dragging him around by the hand to go play hopscotch or jump rope or whatever game came to her mind. No matter how many times he reminded her that he was older than her, she simply smiled and continued to treat him like a mix between a little kid she was babysitting and a plaything. His mom said he was just at a sensitive age where he wanted everyone to see him as macho, but Cody felt it was something more than that.

Thankfully, once school started (the first time he could remember being happy for school), Cody did not have to see Bethany every day. Sure, whenever his mom worked late, he might end up spending a few hours over there, but his homework made for a handy excuse to not play with Bethany.

"I'd really rather spend time with kids my own age." Cody had remarked to his mom one day.

"I know, but you see them at school, don't you?" He nodded, not liking where this was going. "And Bethany's so close and she really does think the world of you." She smiled and

hugged him. “And her mom loves that you’re so willing to play with her.” Cody did not like admitting that he had little choice with how domineering, not to mention physically strong, Bethany was. At least school kept him busy, he thought.

School did keep him busy, up until it was time for winter break. He looked forward to a couple weeks of doing nothing, but then his mom broke the news to him over dinner.

“Since both you and Bethany’s schools have winter break now.” She said. “Her mom and I thought it’d be fun to have a playdate, just like we did last summer.”

“A playdate?” There had to be a better word for it than that. It sounded both girly and babyish at the same time. “Playdate?” He repeated, not even liking the feel of the word in his mouth.

“I know it sounds silly, but that’s the word Bethany’s mom used. We’ll head over there tomorrow morning and you two can play all day.” All day, Cody thought glumly. With all the snow outside, what would they do? Hopscotch and the other outdoor games Bethany liked were out of the question. “Maybe sledding.” His mom suggested when he asked. “Or a snowman. I’m sure she has some indoor games too.” Cody nodded glumly.

“Long as it’s not dress-up.” He muttered once his mom took their plates into the kitchen. She had recently rediscovered the photos of him and Bethany as “twins”. Cody had been happy to leave her mistake there, but his mom had remembered that they had been, in fact, sisters, with Cody as

the younger one.

Even as he got ready for bed that night, Cody could not shake the memories of that awful day. If Bethany made even one reference to him being her baby sister, he… well, he did not know what he would do. She was only like seven, so he could not very well punch her like he would his friends. He frowned as he climbed into bed, shivering a bit as his bare skin touched the cool sheets. He would figure it out in the morning.

Cody had hoped for a peaceful morning at least, but his mom was rushing him from the moment he woke up. When he got out of the shower, he half-expected her to throw clothes at him, but she allowed him to dress normally and even eat breakfast before all but pushing him out to the car.

“Mom, they live right down the street.”

“It’s cold. Do you want to walk?” Cody shook his head and went to get into the car. “Uh-uh. Back seat, mister. Remember what Dr. Baum said?”

“I need to grow like one or two more inches.” He muttered.

“That’s right. You’ll get there. Your dad and your uncle both hit a growth spurt when they were fourteen or so.” Cody nodded. He had heard it about a million times. He was not the shortest person in his class, but he was the shortest boy and Abby Denislow was only a hair shorter than him and everyone knew she had skipped a grade. “And you’ve grown since last year, haven’t you?”

“Yeah.”

“Buckled?”

“Yes.” She smiled back at him, but he knew it was more to check and ensure he was telling the truth.

“I know you don’t really like playing with Bethany, but it’ll be fun. I promise.” Cody sighed and groaned. He could already hear Bethany ordering him around. Sure, sometimes her mom reminded her not to be bossy, but it never seemed to take effect with the girl.

“Bethany’s just finishing up breakfast.” Her mom explained once they arrived. Cody took off his winter coat, handing it to her. “Have you two eaten?”

“We have.” Cody’s mom replied.

“Alright, well, I’ll take these to the other room and then I’ll get you coffee and juice for Cody.”

“I’m good.” Cody said, but Bethany’s mom had already disappeared. Off to a great start, he thought. Neither Bethany nor her mom ever seemed to hear what he said.

He followed his mom further into the house. The second they reached the dining room, Cody found the air forced out of his lungs.

“Cody!” Bethany gushed, hugging him tightly. “You’re getting to be such a big boy!” Cody knew she was echoing things she had heard adults say to her, but it still stung for a girl half his age to talk to him like that.

“Hi, Bethany.” He half-heartedly hugged her back.

“Come sit next to me.” She pulled him along to her chair, pulling out his before all but pushing him into it. “Here.”

“I already” she shoved a fork of pancakes into his mouth. He looked pleadingly at his mom, who only smiled.

“We already ate, Bethany, so you can keep your breakfast to yourself.”

“You can’t have Cody help you cheat and finish your pancakes, missy.” Bethany’s mom said. “Look, you got syrup all over his face. Give him your napkin.” Bethany grabbed her napkin and began to wipe his face for him before Cody managed to get it away from her and finished the job. Did she have no boundaries, at all, he thought?

“Here’s your juice, Cody.” He thanked her even as he noticed that, once again, he and Bethany had matching cups. “We’ve been over this, Bethany.” Her mom said. “Cody is older than you. He is not a baby, okay?” Bethany’s doubt was obvious to everyone in the room.

“And Cody,” his mom added. “You don’t need to do everything Bethany says, understand? If she starts getting out of line, tell her you’re not a baby.” Both kids mumbled yes to their moms.

“Are you done eating, Bethany?” Her mom asked. “I’m sure Cody is very eager to see what things you’ve planned for the two of you.” She smiled. “She was almost impossible to get to bed last night.”

“I went to bed!”

“Half an hour late.” Mom reminded her. Bethany just shook her head and pushed her plate away.

“Come on, Cody! Let’s go play!” Cody squirmed as she pulled him off the chair, suddenly reminded of that first meeting when she had managed to carry him. He was taller and heavier now, but it still unnerved him how easily the younger girl was able to pull him along into the living room.

“Play nice!” Bethany’s mom called.

“So, what are we doing first?” Cody knew enough to accept that he was more or less along for the ride. Bethany grinned.

“We’re gonna color.” Childish, but acceptable, Cody decided. Much better than some of the things Bethany had made them do.

He still had no idea why she had decided he was a baby. Sure, he was shorter than her, but he did not think there was anything babyish about him. His mom used to coddle him, but even she seemed to accept that he was growing up. Everyone realized that, except for Bethany. He shuddered as he remembered last summer when they had gone to a waterpark. Bethany and their moms had gone to the women’s changing room and Cody went on his own to the men’s, Bethany terribly concerned that he would need help putting on his trunks, no matter how many times he promised he knew how. It got to the point that their moms decided they should all gather in a private changing room, where Cody had

to all but bite Bethany to get her to stop trying to undress him.

Cody was yanked from his thoughts and skidded to a halt as he saw the photo hanging over the mantle. That… that was him! Bethany saw where he was looking and giggled excitedly.

"Look! Mom framed the photo of us as sisters! Isn't it cute? Cody, isn't it cute?"

"Sure."

"Wasn't it fun pretending to be my baby sister instead of just my baby?"

"I'm not"

"You are, Cody. You are a baby and I'm your big sister."

"No! I'm older than you and you know it."

"But you want to be a baby, don't you? You hate pretending to be big. I can tell. I'm your big sister."

"You're crazy. I'm thirteen years old." And you're a little girl with dumb braids, he added silently.

"That's crazy." She said with a scoff. "How can you be older than your big sister?" An unnerving smile suddenly appeared. "I have an idea."

"What?" Cody tried in vain to keep his voice level to hide his apprehension. Bethany just shook her head knowingly.

"Let's color. We can play that after."

“Tell me!”

“Whine all you want, baby.”

“Bethany, seriously! I am not a baby!” He glared down at her.

“Oh, but you look so cute when you pout.” He gasped as she pinched his cheek. She honest to god pinched his cheek! He could not even contain his shock. “I know what’ll cheer you up!’

“No, Bethany, no!” Bethany giggled, her mind made up. “Bethany! Your mom told you to listen when I say no. And I say no tickling!”

“Wasn’t gonna tickle you.” She said slyly.

“You were too!”

“Was not!” She giggled.

“I know you were.”

“Nope.”

“What were you going to do then?”

“Tummy kisses!”

“That’s the same thing.”

“Isn’t. So you get to pick, baby Cody. Tummy kisses or tickles?”

“Neither.”

“That’s not a choice, silly baby Cody.”

“Can we just color or, or something?” Bethany grinned deviously.

“Course we can. We’re playing all day, aren’t we?” Cody nodded, all but certain that this day would feel like a million years as he sat down next to Bethany at the coffee table, taking care to put his back to the photo on the mantle. “Here, you can color this.” She handed him a small stack of coloring pages. “See? A bunny and a frog and a flower, and here’s even one with Elmo and Big Bird.”

“Where’s yours?”

“I’ve got this book of mazes to do.” She showed him the colorful cover. “See? Ages six and up, so it’s not for my baby.”

“I’m thirteen!”

“I don’t wanna hear it.” Bethany said. “You’re my baby and babies aren’t thirteen!” Cody fumed.

“I promise. I’m thirteen. My mom and your mom said it.”

“Well,” for a moment, Bethany seemed stumped. “I don’t remember them saying that.”

“They did!”

“Did not.” Bethany giggled as Cody grew more and more frustrated. He was so cute when his face got all red and angry. It just made him look even more babyish to her.

“Did too!”

“Maybe we need to tickle the truth out of you, baby Cody.”

“Don’t call me that!” Cody got to his feet.

“Sit back down, Cody. It’s coloring time.”

“No, I’m going to prove that I’m older than you.”

“How?” In spite of herself, Bethany was curious just how he expected to do that. She had been told countless times that he was older than her and she needed to be nice, but having him there in front of her, it only made sense that he was little and the nicest thing to do was help the little baby. Sometimes though, she knew it was best to just play along. “Alright, fine. You’re big. Whatever.” Cody stared at her in disbelief. They had had so many encounters - he refused to call them playdates any longer - but now? Now she had decided to finally listen? Maybe she was growing up or something.

“Uh, thanks.” He said. Bethany smirked.

“So, big boy Cody, will you color me a pretty picture now?” Cody’s face twisted, but he nodded. He sat down and accepted the yellow box of crayons from her. Something felt wrong. That had been way too easy. He eyed her nervously as she took a colored pencil and began working on a maze. “Which picture do you want to color first, big boy Cody?”

“Just Cody.”

“Ok.” She said, still seeming strangely mild. “Do you want to do your flower or your frog or bunny?” She flipped through each page. “Big boys get to decide, after all.”

“You can cool it on the big boy stuff.”

“You’re never happy.” Bethany teased, hugging him and kissing his cheek. “How about you do your froggy? Do you know” she stopped herself. No, she was playing pretend and big boys were never asked the sounds of animals. “What color are you going to color your frog?”

“Green.” Biting back a few more questions, Bethany allowed Cody to color, smiling at how well her ruse was going, unaware of just how quickly Cody’s heart was pounding. There had to be a catch. There just had to be.

“That’s a very nice picture.” Bethany said once she had finished two whole mazes. Cody mumbled a thank you, feeling a little silly still. “Here, write your name on it so we can give it to your mommy to hang on the fridge.” He wondered if she would actually do it, but he wrote his name at the top. “No, no.” She yanked the crayon out of his hand. “Your name is Baby Cody!” She wrote it on the paper. “See? Baby Cody.”

“That’s not” she grabbed his chin and turned his face toward hers.

“You are. You are my baby. We’re done playing pretend that you’re a big boy. It’s time for you to be a good baby for me.” She frowned at him severely.

“Let me go.” He pushed her away.

“Don’t push! That was very naughty, baby.”

“I am not” Bethany grabbed his wrist and pulled him toward her. Cody tried to break free, but she had other plans, swatting his bottom three times in quick succession. “Ow!” It was more irritating than anything, but still Cody did not like being spanked by a girl half his age.

“You need to behave.” She said. “Be a good baby for me.”

“No! I am not a”

“What is going on in here?” Bethany released Cody’s wrist and he rubbed it as they both looked up guiltily at Bethany’s mom.

“We’re just playing, mom.”

“You’re both yelling quite a bit in here.” She said, looking from Cody to Bethany, but she knew who the culprit was. “Bethany, are you being nice to Cody?”

“Yes.”

“Is she?” Cody felt conflicted. Tattling on Bethany felt babyish.

“We just got carried away.” He said. “She was being bossy.”

“Bethany, you’re not in charge. You’re both friends.” Bethany’s mom said. “Cody, do you want a snack?”

“No thanks.” Cody said.

“I do!” Bethany exclaimed, dashing off to the kitchen. Bethany’s mom smiled as she saw the picture Cody had been coloring.

“Just tell her you’re not a baby, Cody.” She said. “She’ll listen.” With that, she left, Cody thinking to himself that Bethany never listened to him. He would just have to be more forceful.

Grabbing the black crayon, he crossed out ‘baby’ on the picture. He would not draw attention to it, but at least it made him feel better.

Bethany sat next to him, contently eating her chocolate pudding and smiling at him every now and again as he half-heartedly colored.

"Are you sure you don't want any?" She asked.

"No" in went the spoon full of chocolate pudding. Bethany giggled as he swallowed it.

"Can't believe that worked twice!" She exclaimed excitedly. "But I bet your mommy feeds you all the time, doesn't she? Doesn't she, baby Cody?" It took all of Cody's focus to fight the urge to deny it. He could see Bethany ready with the spoon. "No denial." She giggled again. "That means it's true."

"Doesn't." He muttered, trying to keep his lips locked tightly together. Bethany shrugged.

"Y'know, if I really wanted to feed my baby," she eyed him. "I'd just hold your nose closed until you had to open your mouth." He only rolled his eyes. "Course, chocolate pudding's probably not good for babies. I'll have to ask mom to make sure we have baby food for you for next time." Cody did not know if she was serious or just trying to annoy him

into opening his mouth. He was pretty sure her mom would never do that. At least she knew Cody was not a baby, even if Bethany seemed determined not to accept it. Either way, coloring was a useful means of ignoring her.

As soon as she finished her pudding, Bethany put the plastic cup aside and smiled at Cody. He tried not to meet her gaze, but her staring at him soon got to him.

"How about we do something else?" The chocolate pudding gone, Cody felt safe in opening his mouth.

"Like what?"

"Let's arm wrestle."

"What?"

"Well, yeah. You're so eager to prove you're big or whatever. Aren't you?"

"But arm wrestling?"

"What's wrong? Worried you'll lose? I'm only seven and a half. You can win."

"Then what's the point? We both know I'll win." Bethany nodded.

“I guess. How about this? We’ll see who can balance a book on their head the longest.” She knew she had an advantage since she had been taking gymnastics for almost a year now and the boy seemed much clumsier just in general.

“You’ll definitely win that. Don’t you take gymnastics or

dance or something?" She smiled, impressed. Cody did pay attention, it seemed.

"Alright, you got me. Let's just arm wrestle. It'll be fun."

"Kay." He said.

"Oh, but if I win, you gotta admit that you really are a baby since you can't even beat a seven and a half year old." Cody frowned. There had to be a catch.

"Ok, but if you cheat. At all."

"I won't." She drew an x over her chest. "Cross my heart." Cody frowned. Even if she did win, did it change anything? No, probably not. Even after he won, she would probably still insist he was her baby or whatever. Why was she so weird? His eyes seemed to move of their own accord over to the photo on the mantel.

"If I win," he said as he took his position across from her at the coffee table. "You have to admit that I'm really, actually bigger than you, cuz I am."

"Sure you are." She grinned. "But sure, if you win, we'll play that pretend game all day long, kay?"

"It's not pretend. It's true."

"Don't pout or I'll put you down for a nap." He glared at her. "Are we gonna play or what?" Cody raised his arm, but then stopped.

"Best two out of three?"

“Sure.” She smiled. That would only make his defeat all the more fun and give him less room to argue when she proved, once and for all, that he really was her baby. “Ready or are you gonna keep trying to put it off?”

“Ready.” He held out his hand and she took it.

“So baby soft.” She teased.

“One. Two. Three! Go!” He tried to overpower her before she was ready, but quickly realized that that was not going to happen. She pulled him everywhere and even picked him up sometimes. He should have known that she would be more than a match for him. He whimpered as she easily beat him.

“Did I hurt you?”

“No.”

“Good. That’s one point for me. Good thing we’re doing two out of three. You warmed up now?” Cody furrowed his brow and nodded. She would not win so easily this time.

To his shock, Bethany did not even toy with him this time, pinning his arm almost instantly. He stared at his hand in hers in disbelief.

“Well, guess that proves it.” Bethany said. “Don’t even need a third round.” Cody felt tears welling up in his eyes.

“You cheated.”

“Oh, I forgot. You’re supposed to let babies win.”

“I’m not” he swallowed, trying to get under control.

“No one likes a fussy baby.” She scooted around the coffee table and pulled him into her arms, trying her best to cradle him even as he tried to get free. “Shh, it’s okay.” She cooed. “I should’ve taken it easy on you. You’re just a baby after all, aren’t you, Cody? My baby.”

“I’m not” he rolled out of her arms, but she grabbed the back of his shirt.

“We had a deal.” She said gently. “If I win, what did you have to do?” He only grunted. “So fussy. Maybe I really should put you down for a nap.” Cody sighed.

“I’m a baby.” He muttered as quietly as he could. How had he lost? He was thirteen, she was seven!

“What was that?” Bethany asked. “Speak up like a big boy, Cody!” Even as he fought to get free, she pulled him back into her arms. “Well?”

“I’m a baby, kay?”

“That is ok.” Bethany said. “Cuz I love my baby so, so much.” She smiled and, pulling up his shirt, blew a raspberry right into his belly button. He bucked in her arms, squealing. “Bethany says, say it again!”

“I’m a baby! I’m a baby!” Cody whined. She smiled and let the squirming boy escape.

“Here’s our new game. It’s called Bethany says. Whenever I say Bethany says, baby Cody does it.”

“Like Simon says.”

“Sure! You like that game, baby?” He shrugged.

“Bethany says answer the question.”

“It’s fine.”

“Good baby! You’re good at this game!” She giggled. “Still, I think we need to remind you to be a good baby.”

“What? I’m listening though!”

“Well, let’s test that.” Bethany shrugged. “Bethany says hop on one foot.” Cody complied as she nodded approvingly. “Good baby.”

“Not”

“Bethany says suck your thumb.”

“Bethany!” Cody stopped hopping on one foot. “This needs to stop. You promised your mom and mine that you would listen when I tell you that I am not a ba” Bethany all but tackled him, dragging him over to the couch and making him sit on her lap. “Baby!”

“You are.” She said calmly. “You are my baby. You kn0ow it, I know it. I’m big sister, you’re my baby.”

“I am not! Let me go!”

“Not until we’re done talking.” She said gently. “I know it’s tough always having to pretend to be a big boy, but you don’t have to with your big sister.”

“Bethany.” He whined. “Please stop.”

“Not until we get your mom and mine to accept what you and I both know; you’re a baby. My baby.”

“I am not!” He yelled. “Bethany, you need to stop. I am not a baby! I am older than you!” He hoped yelling would draw the attention of their moms, but they did not come. He was stuck contending with Bethany alone.

“Bethany says inside voice, Cody.”

“We’re not playing anymore!”

“But you’re talking more quietly already.” She cooed. “God, you really are so cute. But babies always are, aren’t they?”

“Bethany!”

“Face it, Cody, you are a baby. Look up there!” She guided his head so that he was looking at the photo of them in matching dresses on the mantle.

“You showed me earlier.”

“Well, who’s the big girl and who’s the baby in that photo?”

“I just see me and you.”

“Mhm.” Bethany nodded. “And just like right now, I’m big and you’re just the cutest little baby there ever was!” She kissed his cheek. “See? Sometimes you’re a boy” she gave him a squeeze to make it clear that this was one of those times. “And sometimes you’re a girl. But you know what you always are?”

“A baby?” His voice dripped with sarcasm.

“That’s right! See? I knew you’d expect it!”

“Accept.” He corrected, but she had already moved on.
“Bethany says it’s time for baby’s nap.”

“Nap? I don’t need”

“You’re very grouchy and that happens when babies are sleepy.” She said firmly. “Do you want to wear some of my jammies or sleep in your undies?” She giggled. “You told me that you sleep in your undies at home, even though I really think your mommy should make you wear diapers.” Cody remained silent. “Or does my baby want me to decide?”

“No! No.” He sighed. “I guess my undies.”

Bethany almost tackled him in her eagerness to strip him down, giggling all the while. Cody felt as if he could not breathe with how fast she seemed to move, throwing his clothes in a haphazard heap.

“You can nap right here on the couch.” She said. Cody realized he was at least glad that she did not make him tramp through the house in nothing but his underwear as she made him lie down,covering him with a blanket. “You take a nice nap and I bet when you wake up, you’ll feel much more like a good happy baby should.” Cody sighed. “Close your eyes, baby. You can’t sleep with your eyes wide open!”

“Well, I don’t trust you.” Cody mumbled, rolling onto his side so that he was facing the couch before realizing how vulnerable and exposed that made him feel. Why did Bethany refuse to see him as older than her? He had never done

anything to make her think he was a baby! She had dressed him up and babied him and all those other things from day one. Their moms half-heartedly tried to restrain her, but they clearly thought it was cute and harmless. Harmless? He scoffed. What if his friends found out? There was a freaking massive photo of him in a dress only a few feet away from where he was “napping”.

Cody must have fallen asleep because the next thing he remembered was the voices of their moms standing over him. He opened his eyes and stared up at their smiling faces.

“Did you have a nice nap?” His mom asked as if it was the most normal thing in the world for her teenage son to be taking a nap. He shrugged, blushing as the blanket came off his bare shoulders. He quickly adjusted himself.

“Where are my clothes?”

“Oh, Bethany put them somewhere.” Bethany’s mom said. Why were they both so casual about this? Cody sat up, strategically adjusting the blanket to keep his modesty. “Come eat lunch. Bethany’s waiting for you.”

“I need to get dressed.”

“Oh, nonsense.” His mom said. “Here, we’ll drape the blanket over you.” Cody tried to stop her from pulling the blanket off of him, but he spent a panicked few seconds in just his underwear until his mom had wrapped the blanket around his shoulders. “There we go.” He could tell by their faces that they were very amused by the situation. Great, he

thought morosely. I'm entertainment for all three of them.

"Did you have a nice nap, baby?" Bethany asked as he shuffled over to the table in his blanket cape. He only grunted.

"Now, Bethany. You take naps too sometimes. Cody is not a baby just because he takes naps." Bethany made a sound that made it clear she was unconvinced.

"Sit by me, ba- Cody. I'll feed you." Her mom clucked.

"Now, Bethany, I don't think Cody needs to be fed." Definitely not! Cody thought. "Or wants to."

"Sure he does." Bethany insisted. "He needs help."

"No." Cody said, finally getting the courage to speak up for himself. "No, I don't."

"There? See, Bethany?"

"Well, he needs to wear a bib, doesn't he?" Cody growled as she looked at his mom, not him.

"No, he doesn't." She said, smiling as if she had given it serious thought. Knowing her, she might have actually considered saying yes, Cody thought gloomily. "He's barely wearing anything that could get dirty, even if he eats sloppily." Thanks, Cody thought, glaring down at his lunch. Macaroni with cut up hot dogs? Their moms were eating chicken alfredo!

"I think he wants to be fed." Bethany looked at him, but he steadfastly avoided her gaze. "Cody…" Bethany whispered.

“Remember?”

“You don’t get to feed me.” He hissed back.

“Fine, but only if you remind me who we are.” He sighed.

“Listen to you two whispering.” His mom remarked, smiling. “Just the best of friends.” Cody groaned.

“You’re my big sister, I’m your baby.” He whispered as quietly as possible. Bethany smiled and kissed his nose, both of their moms awwing over how adorable it was.

Bethany allowed him to feed himself, barely even looking over at him. She had much more grandiose plans to make.

“After lunch, can me and Cody go sledding?”

“I think playing outside would be good.” Cody’s mom looked out the window as if that would tell her everything she needed to know. “It’s not so cold out now.”

“Then it’s settled.”

“It’s settled.” Bethany echoed. Cody pushed his lunch around. He had a very bad feeling about this.

“So, after lunch, I get dressed?”

“Yep.” Bethany said. “Didn’t you see your clothes? I folded them and left them out for you.” She looked over at their moms for approval, certain that that would convince them over to her way of thinking; she was the big sister and Cody just a baby. Her baby.

“I guess I missed them.”

“No worries.” Bethany’s mom said cheerfully. “You can get dressed and we have plenty of winter stuff if you forgot a hat and mittens and all that.”

“I’m sure Bethany can show him where it is!” Cody’s mom laughed. Bethany grinned and Cody lost his appetite.

“The extra winter stuff is up high, Bethany. I don’t want you two trying to reach it without asking for mommy’s help, understand?”

“Okie dokie!” Bethany was so cheerful that Cody knew it spelled disaster for him.

“Cody, how about you go get dressed while Bethany puts the dishes in the kitchen?” Cody nodded, grateful for the opportunity to get dressed without her “help”. “Don’t you think that’s the big girl thing to do, Bethany?” Her mom asked, seeing her daughter torn between obeying her mom and helping her baby.

“I guess.” She said, watching Cody hurry back to the living room to make sure he was dressed before she finished.

Sure enough, Cody sat on the couch by the time Bethany came over. He could not be sure if she was slow about carrying the dishes or if her mom had finally done him a favor and delayed her. Either way, he felt normal again, even as Bethany smiled.

“We should get dressed for sledding.” She said. Cody nodded,

but did not move. Bethany eyed him. “Are you feeling okay?”

“Yeah, just” he searched for the right words. “What are we going to do outside?”

“Well, we could build a snowman or I’ve got a sled I can pull you around in.” It was easy to tell that she wanted him to pick the latter option.

“Um” Cody said. “That doesn’t really sound fun. Does it?” Even a seven year old like her had to admit that those were both boring options. “Maybe we could stay inside.”

“Nope. My mom and your mommy said we need to play outside.” Bethany put her hands on her hips, a sure sign of impending bossyness. “You’ve been grumpy ever since you woke up from your nap. Where’s my smiling little Cody?” She nodded to the hated photo. She grinned thoughtfully. “But I guess you can make a big kid choice cuz you’re totally not a baby.”

“What choice?”

“We can either go play outside or go to my room to play dress-up.” Cody gulped.

“I guess” Bethany swooped in and began to tickle his sides.

“Stop mumbling! I want my giggly baby back!” She tickled and tickled him, Cody squealing and squirming. “That’s more like it! Keep smiling or I’ll tickle you more.” Cody plastered a fake grin on his face.

“Let’s go outside.” He yelped as she tickled him again.

“Say it right!”

“Wha-wha-what are you talking about?” He asked as she kept tickling him, his shirt now up to his armpits as she tickled his sides and blew raspberry after raspberry into his belly.

“Who am I and who are you?”

“You’re my… my big sister and I’m… a baby.”

“That’s right!” She stopped tickling him and, grabbing his wrist, brought his hand to his mouth. “Bethany says, suck your thumb.”

“But”

“Fine. Bethany says suck your thumb or I’m stuffing snow down your” she snapped the waistband of his underwear. “What do you call these? Boy panties?”

“Underwear.”

“Mm.” She frowned, disappointed by the banal answer. “So, what’ll it be? Snow down your panties or suck your thumb for big sister?”

“Neither.” He tried to protect his stomach, but she tickled his feet. Even through his socks, he was powerless to stop the giggles from escaping.

“Are you even more ticklish now?” Bethany asked.

“S-st-stop!”

“Ask me nicely. With your thumb in your mouth.” Cody

groaned, but complied.

“Please stop tickling me.”

“That’s more like it. Keep your thumb in your mouth, baby.” Cody rolled his eyes, but as long as he kept his thumb in his mouth, she seemed happy. “Up you come!” She pulled him to his feet, fixing his t-shirt before nodding approvingly. “Come on.”

“Where are we going?”

“We need to bundle you up so you stay warm.” Bethany decreed. “You are my baby, after all.”
“I have my coat in the other room.”

“Coat’s only the beginning, Cody.” Bethany said. “You need snow pants, a hat, a scarf, boots, mittens.” He groaned as she grabbed his hand. “Don’t worry. Big sister has just the thing for you.”

It took another few tickle sessions to wear Cody down, but soon, Bethany had him right where she wanted him, which was standing in the middle of the guest room sucking his thumb as she dressed him. She had dutifully asked her mom to pull down the bin of old winter stuff. Thankfully, she had noticed Cody sucking his thumb and stayed silent. Through a combination of tickling and reminding him that he stood at risk of snow down his jeans, Bethany dressed Cody in all of her old and most girly winter clothes.

Clunky pink snow boots, pink snow pants, an equally puffy pink coat, thick white mittens that made it almost impossible

to even move his fingers, let alone grip anything, a white hat with sparkles, a pink scarf to match the majority of his outfit, which covered his mouth. Bethany pulled the fur lined hood of the coat over his head before stepping back. Cody knew even before Bethany pushed him to a mirror that he looked undeniably like a little girl. He whimpered into the scarf as he glanced from the mirror to the photo on the mantel. Both his reflection and the him in the photo looked completely feminine, albeit in different ways.

"There we go, Cody! My baby sister's all set to go sledding!"

“Bethany! This is too much!” Cody whined. Bethany giggled.

“What was that?” She held her ear up to his scarf-covered mouth. “I really can’t hear you.”

“Bethany! I just want to wear my coat! I don’t even know if I can walk with these snow pants on!”

“Aw, you’re welcome.” Bethany said with a smile. “I’m so happy to finally have my baby sister back.” Taking his mittened hand, she dragged him to the craft room.

“I think we’ll all set!” Bethany said. “Took a while cuz Cody’s still a little fussy about being woken up from his nap!”

“Oh, my goodness! He looks adorable!” Bethany’s mom cooed.

“Very warm. You should probably get him outside before he overheats.” Cody’s mom said with a laugh. He groaned indignantly. At least the weight of the pink and white boot

made a satisfying thonk as he stomped his foot. “Guess he agrees!”

“Mom! You can’t let her take me out like this!” He protested. The moms looked at each other, confused.

“Uh, Bethany. Did you catch that?” Her mom asked.

“Oh, yeah. He just said he wants to go out and sled already.” Bethany said with a smile. “Isn’t that right, Cody?”

“Bethany!” He whined.

“Ok, I think we can all agree that was Bethany, but Cody sweetie, we really can’t understand you with that thick scarf over your mouth.”

“I got an idea!” Bethany said. “Raise your left hand if you need to go potty, kay?” Cody sighed and nodded his head.

“Nods work too, so just ask him yes or no questions, I guess.” Cody’s mom said with a laugh. “What are you wearing, Bethany?”

“Oh!” Bethany had been so focused on Cody, she had not thought about herself. “My grandma sent me some new boots and Cody actually said I could wear his coat and hat. Kinda a clothing swap.” She grinned at Cody. “Siblings share both ways, don’t they, Cody?”

“You can’t wear my clothes!” Cody yelled.

“Cody, we already told you we can’t understand you with that scarf over your mouth.” His mom said.

“Then take it off me!” He pawed at the scarf.

“No, no. Leave it on.” Bethany scolded. “Come on, Cody.” She took his hand and led the struggling boy away from the moms, his last hope of rescue.

Bethany arranged her braids so that they stuck out of Cody’s maroon hat, shrugging his coat on. The pair looked for all the world like a girl and her girly girl little sister, which was exactly what Bethany was going for, smiling as Cody could only stand there, fussing helplessly as she pulled on her brand new purple boots.

“Ready?”

“Bethany, this is ridiculous!”

“I know, Cody, but I don’t have pink mittens, so you’ll just have to deal with only having mostly pink on.” She smirked at him. “Seriously. Can’t understand a word you say, so I’m just going to keep making it up if you don’t stop.” Cody growled. She grabbed his hand and tugged the boy out to the backyard.

Cody squinted into the sunlit backyard. With all the snow, it took even longer for his eyes to adjust. Bethany grabbed his mitten and helped him down the steps and into the yard proper. He had to swing his legs out wide in a sort of waddle and even then, it was tough keeping up with Bethany, who was not even wearing snow pants, just her jeans.

“So, snowman or what?” She asked casually. Cody wondered why, but then realized that she had completely settled into

seeing him as her little sister. He heard a shout in the distance and noticed a sledding hill a short distance away.

“How about that?”

“No, we can play tea party later.” Bethany said, smirking devilishly. Cody growled and pointed at the hill. Bethany just shrugged, enjoying her power over him. Snarling, Cody clawed at the scarf until it was low enough that he could speak clearly.

“Let’s go sledding there.” He said.

“No, sledding like that’s dangerous for my little baby.” Bethany said. “So you’ll just sit on the sled and I’ll pull you around the yard, kay?”

“No! Let’s go sledding like for real.” Cody said. If he was going to be outside dressed up like this, he at least wanted to make it worth his while. “Look, there’s kids sledding over there. It’s not even far.” Bethany looked where he was pointing again. “Unless you’re scared.”

“Well” she shrugged. “Alright, but you should still sit down on the sled and I’ll pull you there. You can’t really walk, can you?” He begrudgingly sat and she stood over him for a moment. “Maybe I should go grab you a blanket.”

“Bethany!”

“I’m kidding, geez. Don’t be such a baby.” She laughed, fully aware that he was only a baby because she said so. “Here we go!” She pulled him just beyond the backyard, but then

stopped. “You know, I don’t really need you ruining our sledding fun with your whole ‘I’m a big boy! I’m not a baby’ stuff.” She came over and pulled the scarf back up. “This way I can talk for you.” She smiled and patted his cheek. “Course,” she said, returning to pulling him along. “The way you’re dressed, everyone will think you’re a fibbing little girl who claims she’s a boy. My imaginative little sister Cody. Don’t even know why you want to be a boy. They’re obsessed with farts and boogers and never get to wear the pretty dresses you do.” She smirked over her shoulder at him.

“Hey!” A girl around Cody’s age – his actual age – said, seeing Bethany coming. “The hill’s like perfect today. I’m Nicki.”

“Nicole.” The boy next to her said snottily.

“Nick.” She punched him in the arm. “This is my brother Benji. You can push him down the hill if he gets too annoying!”

“Hey!” Cody was pretty sure he had met Benji a couple times. He was a grade or two below Cody, he thought, which meant Nicki was probably only a grade above him. Great. And here he was, covered in puffy pink and being pulled around in a sled.

“I’m Bethany. I live in that blue house down there.”

“And this,” Nicki said, coming over to Cody. “Must be your little cousin? Sister?”
“Yeah, that’s my baby sister, Cody.”

“Oh, she’s so cute!” Nicki said. Cody fidgeted. Did they have to talk about him like he was not even there? Benji, bored of all this girl talk, launched himself down the hill face first on his sled. It was the sort of thing Cody would have done, but instead, he was stuck nearly immobile on this sled.

“Yeah, she wasn’t sure about climbing this hill. It’s a little steep for her, so I pulled her up.”

“Wow! Pretty awesome of your big sister to be a taxi service, huh?” Cody sighed and nodded. “Did you say thank you?” Why was she not letting this go? Cody pointed toward the hill, but Bethany did not seem to notice. “Thank your big sister, Cody.”

“Thank you.” He muttered.

“Oh, yeah. It’s hard to understand her with the scarf. I think she said thank you though.”

“Here.” Nicki removed her glove and pulled down Cody’s scarf with her elegant fingers. Cody sighed.

“Thank you, big sister.”

“Aw, you’re welcome, baby.” She said with a grin.

“Let’s get this back up before your cute little lips freeze, cutie.” Nicki ignored his protests and muffled him again. “Oh, so adorable. What did you say her name is?”

“Cody.”

“A pretty name for a pretty princess.” Nicki said with a smile.

“I assume she won’t be going down alone?”

“Nope. I’ll take her.” Bethany said. “She might get scared.”

“How about we race? You can take my sled and me and Cody will be a team.” Nicki took the lead from Bethany and pulled Cody to where he needed to be. “See, Cody? I have pink on my coat. We’ll be Team Pink!”

“Yay.” Cody muttered into the scarf. Nicki got in behind him, hugging him close to her.

“She’s like a cuddly dolly.” She said to Bethany, who looked as thrilled as could be by this turn of events. She could not wait to taunt Cody with how readily he had been accepted as a little girl. “Let’s wait until Benji’s out of the way and here! We! Go!” Down the hill they went, fast as could be!

Up and down, up and down they went, with Cody sitting in the sled and rarely moving. The only thing that changed was Nicki and Bethany taking turns going down with him. That, at least, was fun, but then there were the treks back up the hill with Nicki and Bethany chattering away as if they were best friends. If she went down with Cody, Nicki would ask questions about him, which Bethany eagerly answered. By the time the sun was low enough for ‘one last go’, Cody was established as a 4 year old who loved unicorns, Frozen, and playing dress-up. To him, this fictional Cody sounded awful, but Nicki seemed to be falling more and more in love.

“Well, we better get home.”

“Yeah, us too. We’re only here visiting our grandparents, but

maybe we can sled again."

"Sure!" Bethany said. "Say bye-bye, Cody!" She took Cody's mitten and made him wave. "Wasn't that fun, baby?"

"How could you do that? You told them I'm a girl!" Bethany laughed.

"Figured you were hoiding something in. Too bad your scarf made it so I can't - no, no, leave your scarf up. It's cold and I'll get you undressed when we get back inside."

She stayed true to her word, though not until after she had regaled their moms with a modified version of their sledding adventure. According to her, Cody had insisted on sledding with someone every time because he was too scared to sled alone. It was only a mistake that Nicki had thought he was a girl and he had been too polite to correct her. Cody seethed, but knew that his attempts to set the record straight would never work. Sensing the boy's frustration, his mom helped undress him and, before long, he was down to his t-shirt and jeans and back to boyhood.

"Well, I think you've had a lot of fun today." His mom said, taking his coat from Bethany and handing it to him. "I assume you want to wear this and not your other coat." He glared daggers at her and she laughed. "Give Bethany a good-bye hug. It's getting late." Cody groaned, but complied.

"We had so much fun, baby sis." She murmured in his ear. "I'm so excited for next time." He pulled away, her ominous comment seeming to ring in his ears. "Oh, I almost forgot!"

She announced. “Cody told me he’s really hoping for mittens just like these for Christmas, except pink!” Everyone laughed, but Cody could not tell if they were joking or not. He hoped he would never find out.

Part 3: https://andlatscaptions.blogspot.com/2022/07/siblings-photoshoot-why-did-i-ever.html