Tanner: Storytime

by andlat

“Make sure to hold Mommy’s hand!”

The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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“Make sure to hold Mommy’s hand!”

“I was already reaching for it.” Tanner muttered grumpily. He had been looking forward to spending his day off from school at home relaxing, reading comic books, but apparently, he had been “snippy”, so mom had decided he needed to accompany her on her errands.

“We always hold Mommy’s hand to cross the parking lot.”

“I know!”

“We wouldn’t want you getting lost again.” In truth, Tanner had not been lost. He had been one, maybe two aisles over, looking at video games. The more he pressed against his mom's version, though, the more details she added until she found him sitting on the floor half a store away, sobbing and snot-covered, screaming desperately for mommy. He figured it was better to just give in before she started adding wet pants to her version of events!

“Can we just get this over with?” He asked, tugging at her hand to try to get to the store more quickly.

“It’s for the best that you decided to come along anyway.” Mom said as if he hadn’t interjected. “We need to get you a few things.”

“Clothes shopping?”

“You’re always expressing such opinions about what I buy you.” Tanner wore a sky blue t-shirt and matching loose shorts at that very moment that only made him look more like a toddler. It was a good thing mom never found out about what had happened at Uncle Neil’s; she babied him enough as it was! It was a minor miracle she had let him unbuckle himself from his booster seat, the way she acted. “I only need a few things,” she mused to herself. Why did moms always think out loud? “But let’s grab a cart.”

Tanner tugged against her hand, but it was no use. She grabbed a cart, which meant… he wiggled, more out of instinct than anything else, as she lifted him up and set him down in the seat of the cart.

“Oops, there go your shoes!”

“It was just one of them.” Tanner muttered, looking down at it on the floor.

“And there goes your other one!” His mom pulled it off his foot. Tanner frowned, but how much walking was he really going to do, stuck in the cart?

Really, Tanner could not say why he felt so childish having his socks exposed. Black and gray stripes were certainly much more understated and mature than the bright green frog socks mom sometimes made him wear. Maybe it was the fact he was in his socks in the middle of this store. He sighed and rested his face on one of his fists as mom pushed the cart along, but sat up as they arrived in the boys’ department and mom started looking at underwear. She wanted his opinion,

didn’t she?

"I'm not wearing those!" He exclaimed as her hand strayed a bit too close to a pack with Bunnydale – Bunnydale of all things – all over it. Bunnydale was literally too babyish for preschoolers! Mom sighed and, reaching around her son, pulled down his shorts enough to expose not only the red waistband, but also the white cotton of his briefs. He got her point, but pressed on. “They’re for babies!”

"They're the same size as the ones you're wearing." Her hand once again neared the Bunnydale underoos, or at least the pack of Frozen underoos next to them.

"C'mon! Why can't I get something less" babyish was the word he wanted to use, but he knew Mom took him insisting anything was babyish almost as a personal challenge. "Both Derek and Kevin wear boxers." As far as mom knew, he had spent the whole day at Uncle Neil's with them.

"Cuz they're big and you're still little." She gently touched the pouting boy's cheek. "You're still little."

"But they're younger than me!"

"But you're still little." She kissed his button nose. "Aren't you?"

"Yes"

"Aren't you? Aren't you?" She tickled his foot. Even through the sock, it tickled so much. He squirmed in the seat of the cart, but there was no escape. "Who's little? Who's little?"

"Me!" He squealed. She smiled and nodded. Calmed down, he returned to his pout as she looked over the underwear. There were boxers in his size right there, right by the plain colored briefs, but they might as well be invisible. Why was he getting stuck with Spongebob and LEGO Batman again?

"Does Mommy need to tickle a smile out of you?"

"No," he muttered, trying at least a little to keep irritation from dripping from his every word.

"I think I do! I think I do!" She had a special voice that she used for tickling, so even that made a smile start to bloom on Tanner's face. He forced the sides of his mouth back down. No. He would not smile! He was a teenager, not some little kindergartener who still wore Underoos! "Tickle, tickle!"

"Mom! Stop!" He yelled, trying his best to seem imposing from his seat in the cart. "I'm thirteen! I don't want to wear underoos. I’m thirteen!"

"I shouldn't have to remind you about your inside voice then."

"Mom! That's not the point! I’m a teenager, not a baby!" She frowned.

"Tanner." He glared at her. He could hear the warning in her voice, but enough was enough! He had to put his foot down or he would forever be that boy strangers confused for a toddler. He took a quavering breath, trying to sound as mature as he could despite his tantrum a moment again.

"Mom. I want boxers. Or at least underwear that doesn't have

cartoons on it!" To his surprise, she did not scold him. In fact, she was silent as she returned the plastic packages to their hook. Had he finally got through to her? Why then did he feel so nervous?

The cart began to move and they left the boys department. He almost thought they might just be going to the mens department, but he could see that over his mom's shoulder, getting farther away. Where were they going then? Why was this stupid seat facing backwards? He looked over his shoulder, grumbling as he realized mom had left his underwear exposed. He fixed it and then saw what lay ahead. No. There was no way.

"Mom. Where are we going?" She remained silent as the cart passed cribs on display. Though they were too small for Tanner, they were not enough so to quiet the butterflies fluttering around in his stomach. "Mom, we were going to get me underwear." The cart stopped. "Mom?"

"Silly me. The way you were acting, I thought I had a toddler in the cart." She said, looking at the red and white packages of diapers. Tanner knew what she wanted.

"I'm sorry for losing my temper. I promise to be good, mommy." He was laying it on thick, but she had taken him all the way into the middle of the diaper aisle! There was no such thing as too much. "I'll be a good boy?"

"Promise?"

"Yeah."

“No mumbles. I want to hear you say it nice and clear. “I promise mommy! I promise to be TJ teddy bear.” He had no idea where she had come up with it, but for as long as he could remember, she treated TJ teddy bear as some sort of magic phrase to make him be good. If she said it, he was expected to stop struggling and let her dress him or wipe his face or whatever she had it in her mind that he was too little to do.

“I promise, mommy. To… to be TJ teddy bear?”

“And you promise to be a good little boy?”

“I promise to be a good little boy.” He echoed. She smiled and grabbed one of his feet. Tanner’s eyes widened. “I promise, mommy! I promise!” He yelled, certain they could hear him all the way over in the mens department. A boy who could not have been a day older than five walked back just then in a dinosaur hoodie, spikes and all down the hood and his back, giving Tanner the sort of smile you only give kids undeniably littler than you. His mom probably bought him boxers, Tanner thought begrudgingly. “Mommy, I promise to be a good little boy.” He repeated.

“I know, baby bear.” She said, kissing his cheek. He felt everything was mended until she bent over and grabbed a big package of diapers. "Here, hold your diapers for mommy."

"What?" He took the diapers, but stared at her, baffled.

"If I hear one word of argument from you, I'll diaper you right here and now." She said. "You should be grateful I don't

make you suck your thumb." She noticed something hanging from the shelf. "Although..." Tanner stared, struck dumb as she grabbed a three pack of colorful pacifiers and tossed it into the cart. "That old noonoo could use a replacement." She muttered, more to herself than to her baffled son.

“But” Tanner did his best to keep his voice gentle and level. “Why?”

“You threw a tantrum about big boy undies, so that must mean you still want diapers, right?” That was not what it meant at all, but he knew arguing about it would only get him into deeper trouble. Maybe, just maybe, if he stayed quiet, she would play her joke and things would return back to normal.

She made him keep the enormous package of diapers in his lap as she made what had to be three full laps of the entire store. This was a little much to teach him a lesson, wasn’t it? He grew more and more nervous as they arrived in the checkout lane, but at least Mommy did not make him interact with a cashier. She went right through the self checkout and parked the cart outside the bathroom. Oh, no.

“Mommy. Mommy, no.” Tanner whispered as she opened up the package of pacifiers and pushed on in between his protesting lips.

“Keep that in your mouth, TJ teddy bear.” She said. He had not even seen her buy pacifier clips, but she pulled one out and clipped it right to his shirt. See? Tanner thought. Bunnydale is for babies! Then why’s it clipped on my shirt?

She lifted him out of the cart, taking the diapers in her free hand. “C’mon, baby. Let’s get your diaper on.”

“Mommy.” He whined into the pacifier as they entered the bathroom. She had escorted him into the ladies room up until he turned ten, but it never stopped being embarrassing going into it. It was for girls and he was a boy!

“Shh, mommy will have you in a nice cozy diaper in no time.” She said as another woman walked past them. She smiled at Tanner, seeing nothing wrong with the boy whimpering into his pacifier as his mom carried him toward the changing table. I’m thirteen! He wanted to yell, but she would never believe him and another outburst would not help his situation one bit.

Of course the place is empty while mommy’s showing off my underwear, Tanner thought, strapped down to the plastic changing table, naked from the waist down as his mom carefully folded them up before stashing them in her purse.

“Now I’m going to diaper you, TJ. And you’re going to stay diapered until I say otherwise.” How long would that be? Tanner wondered. “It’s clear that TJ teddy bear isn’t working anymore, so from now on, whenever you’re being extra bratty or snippy like you were this morning, Mommy’s going to put you in a diaper to remind you that it’s not appropriate to act like a baby.” But you treat me like one! “We’ll call them your emergency diapers.” And just like that, Tanner found himself being diapered for the first time in a decade.

Trying in vain not to accept what was happening, Tanner

closed his eyes and bit down on the pacifier in his mouth. He almost bit right through it when he heard the bathroom door open.

“Oh! Looks like we gotta wait our turn, ducky.” He heard a woman say. “There’s a baby getting changed right now.”

“Nearly done.” Tanner’s mom said. Neither woman seemed to take notice of just how red his face turned as he blushed deeper than he ever had before. “The diaper’s more just for emergencies.”

“Oh, my mistake. You’re a big boy, aren’t you?” The woman said, smiling at Tanner. He could tell by her tone that big boy did not go much above three years old. He simply looked away and hoped this would all be over soon. Maybe I’ll wake up and it’ll be a nightmare, he thought, trying to convince himself as Mommy lifted his hips to slip his shorts over the diaper.

“Just barely fit.” She mused as she unbuckled her son and set him down on the floor. Tanner almost fell over, completely unprepared for the bulk between his thighs. Mommy smiled, but he knew she was enjoying this. All the proof he needed was that she did not return him to the cart, holding his hand and making him waddle along beside her all the way to the car, his shorts doing next to nothing to muffle the crinkle of his diaper. At least, he thought sullenly, I can mutter swear words into this stupid pacifier without Mommy hearing me. It took a few steps before it sunk in that he had accepted being returned to diapers and sucking on a pacifier in the span of

about five minutes. He usually corrected people when they mistook him for a toddler, but like this, was there even any point? The worst part was, his instinct was to just grin and bear it, but wasn't that what Mommy wanted? She said it herself, it was to remind him to act his age. Did he really want her to think it worked? Did he want to find out what would happen if he didn't cooperate?

The trip to the store was only their first errand and Tanner had to keep his diaper on no matter where they went. At the bank, Tanner had to sit on the floor, pushing colorful wooden shapes along equally colorful twisted wires while they waited, feeling the diaper against his bottom the whole time. He spat out the pacifier as he realized how babyish he looked, but it dangled there on the clip and seemed to draw more attention. He glowered, but secretly felt relieved when Mommy pushed it back into his mouth. He almost lost his cool and stormed out when he heard a little girl ask her mom if she could play with the other one.

"It's almost our turn, Dani. Besides, you're a big girl and that toy's for babies like that boy there, isn't it?" Before he could give her the shock of a lifetime, Mommy's name was called and she lifted him to his feet.

"He can bring it with if he wants." The bank teller said.

"Hold it with both hands, TJ." Mommy instructed. Tanner looked up at her inquisitively. Had she forgotten he was thirteen? "Well, you looked like you were having fun. Come on, the nice lady's waiting." Whether intentionally or not,

having to hold the toy with both hands meant Tanner's arms were occupied and could not help him balance as he waddled and toddled along with both Mommy and the banker smiling down at him.

With the visit to the bank done, Tanner still had to accompany Mommy on errand after errand. She would buckle him into his booster seat and then lift him back out at every stop. To her credit, she was remarkably good about fixing his clothes to cover his diaper, but even that action reminded him he wore it.

"This thing's so hot!" He whined as he waddled along with his hand wrapped in Mommy's.

"You're really getting into character, huh?" Mommy said with a smile. "Well, a toasty baby bum will just remind you that you shouldn't be in diapers, right?" Tanner frowned. "We're going to lunch right after this, sweetie."

At lunch, the server spotted his diapered bottom and brought over a booster chair and coloring sheet without even asking.

"Under threes eat for free?" Mommy mused. "I won't tell if you don't." She winked at Tanner.

"Mommy!"

"Hush. At least you're not in a highchair." She pushed the pacifier into his mouth and gave him an orange crayon while she handled the ordering for the both of them.

"What a handsome young gentleman." The server said.

“Thank you.” Tanner mumbled around the pacifier. She melted and cooed over him before finally going to put their order in.

“Do you need to go potty?” Mommy asked, whispering as if it was a great secret. Tanner shook his head. “You didn’t use your diaper, did you?”

“No!”

“Alright, well, after we eat, I’ll take you to the potty to try. That diaper’s not for using, unless you want to be in them for a week!” Any thoughts Tanner had had about using it to teach her a lesson vanished.

“Can I have my undies back when we go to the bathroom?”

“We’ll see.” Tanner always hated when Mommy or Daddy said that, but he knew that meant he needed to be on his best behavior. He sucked on the pacifier, trying not to pout too much when Mommy ordered him milk instead of the pop that he wanted to drink. At least he got to spit the pacifier out to eat, even if it kept dangling from his shirt.

“Can I please put this away?” Tanner asked.

“It’s convenient.” Mommy replied, wiping Tanner’s face with her napkin. “How do you always get ketchup on your cheeks?”

“I don’t even have ketchup.”

“Then where’d the ketchup on your face come from?” Tanner had a few ideas, but he managed to hold his tongue. “All

done?” He nodded. “Let’s take you to the potty.”

Much as he hated to admit it, Tanner was no stranger to having Mommy hover over him as he peed. On the plus side, she let him stand, but sitting might have been less embarrassing since she pulled his shorts and diaper all the way down.

“Gotta cool off that toasty baby bum.” She teased.

“Can I have my underwear back now?” Tanner asked. Her only response was to push the pacifier back into his mouth and tug his diaper back up. “Mommy?”

Looking down at Tanner standing there in just his t-shirt and diaper, a small part of her contemplated not giving him his shorts back and taking him out in nothing but his shirt and diaper, his squared diaper butt waggling to and fro like a little duckling's. She knew, however, that that would be mean. Despite appearances, Tanner was a teenager, more of a young man than the toddler he appeared to be. She should consider herself blessed that she got to have her baby for a lot longer than any other mom did.

"Let's do your shorts, duckling." She said. Tanner mumbled under his breath, but stepped in. "Give mommy a nice kiss." He pecked her cheek and she returned a kiss in kind. He tried to fight back a smile. "Alright, let's get out of here, hmm? I'm ready to go home, aren't you?"

By the time they had made it out to the car, however, Mommy realized there was still one more errand to run: a trip to the

library.

“Can’t I have my underwear back before we go in?” Tanner asked.

“Should’ve asked at the restaurant.”

“I did!” She lifted him out of his booster seat.

“How about this? You can pick out three books instead of just two?” Tanner considered it as she led him by the hand into the library.

The library was possibly the only place where Mommy allowed Tanner to roam on his own. What could really happen to him among the shelves of books? He enjoyed the quiet, though there was always something or another going on, so it was rarely entirely silent.

“What do I want to read?” He mumbled, only then realizing he still had the pacifier in his mouth. He spat it out, ignoring how empty his mouth felt now.

Tanner walked from shelf to shelf, trying to make up his mind about what he wanted to get. What was the point of being allowed to get three books if he didn’t even know what even one of them would be?

“Hello there!” Tanner almost jumped out of his skin. Where had she come from? He looked up at the woman standing over him, her hands on her knees and a big smile on her face.

“Uh, hi.”

“What’s your name?”

“Tanner.”

“I bet you’re here for sing-a-long.”

“No.”

“Oh, come on. It’ll be fun!” She picked him up.

“Hey! Put me down!” The pacifier found its way into his mouth.

“We need to be quiet in the library, Tanner.” She whispered. “Come on, I’ve got lots of friends who will want to meet you.”

Her friends proved to be a small group of toddlers. The oldest of the kids was maybe five, but most of them were clearly just barely out of diapers.

“Please put me down.” He hissed around the pacifier. A few parents sitting on the rug with their kids chuckled knowingly.

“This little guy’s quite the escape artist!” She said with a laugh. “I think I’ll keep you with me.”

“What? No!” He would have taken the playroom at Uncle Neil's over this any day!

"I know, how about you be my special helper?" She set him down on her lap and bounced him gently. Tanner groaned, but at least Mommy had let him use the potty at lunch. Otherwise, he might have actually used the diaper poking out of the waistband of his shorts. “Are we ready for sing-a-long, kids?”

“Put me down!” Tanner protested.

“Oh, silly me!” The woman said, smiling down at Tanner. “This is baby Tanner, kids. Can we all say hi to the baby?” Tanner glared out at the group of kids who waved at him with a chorus of ‘hi baby!’ “Baby’s going to be helping me with the songs. Let’s start with Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes!”

“Oh, god.” Tanner muttered as someone at the back of the room started up a cheery instrumental version of the song. The woman held him firmly on her lap, using him almost like a doll to point to each body part as she sang sprightly.

“That was very good, kids!” She said, taking Tanner’s wrists and making him clap his hands. “Oh, we forgot to do Buzzy, Buzzy Baby Bee, didn’t we?” A few kids nodded as Tanner wondered just what that meant. “Buzzy, buzzy, baby bee! Won’t you say your name for me?” She pointed to a girl nearby.

“Mary!”

“Hello, Mary. We’re so happy you’re here with us.” The group said in unison.

“Buzzy, buzzy, baby bee!” Tanner sat there as the lady went around the whole room, having each kid – or their parent – say their name. “Alright, I think that’s everyone?”

“No!” Some of the kids say. “You forgot about the baby!”

“Oh! I did!” She smiled down at Tanner and bounced him. “Buzzy, buzzy baby bee! Won’t you say your name for me?”

Seizing his chance, Tanner pushed the pacifier out of his mouth.

“My name’s Tanner.” He announced.

“Hello, baby!” The group said, following the grown-ups’ lead. “We’re so happy you’re here with us.” Tanner fumed.

“I am not a baby!”

“I know.” She pushed the pacifier back into his mouth. “You’re being so good! Let’s sing another song, hmm?”

Try as he might, there was no escape for Tanner. He had to sit on her lap, being gently bounced in tune with the music. At least they did not expect him to sing, but he wondered if that was worse. Was he considered too little for the songs? He was a teenager! Whenever he tried to get free, she just held him more tightly until he stopped trying to escape.

“Can you find something green, kids?” A few kids pointed at various things. “That’s right! George has a green shirt, doesn’t he? Everyone say “George has a green shirt.”

“Baby’s not saying it!” Mary tattled.

“Come on, Tanner. You too.”

“George has a green shirt.” He said around the pacifier, earning himself a bounce.

“Alright, how about something… pink!” Tanner took care to at least half-heartedly join the group in saying ‘Mary has pink shoes’. “Last one. Something yellow!”

“Baby’s pacifier!” At least four kids said at once, pointing at Tanner.

“That’s right! Tanner’s paci is yellow!” She pulled it from his mouth, a string of drool connecting it to his pouting lips as she showed it around before returning it to his mouth. “You all know what to say!”

“Baby has a yellow pacifier!”

“Tanner?” She gave him a squeeze. He felt horrified.

“I have a yellow pacifier.” He mumbled.

“Good! Now, we’ve got time for one more song, kiddos! And since Tanner’s looking a little grouchy, how about we cheer him up?” Cheer me up, Tanner thought. That didn’t sound good! “Do you want everyone to sing to you, baby, or do you want to join in?”

“I’m not a baby.” He snarled.

“How about this?” She said. “How about you show everyone how to sing and dance along?” It was only when Tanner had been placed down on the floor and he was tugging his shorts up that he wondered just what he had gotten himself into. The music began. At least he knew the song.

“If you’re happy and you know it” he mumbled around the pacifier. “Clap your hands.” He clapped along with everyone else, already ready for it to be over. Clap your hands gave way to stomp your feet and then wiggle your tush. Tanner tried to hide his embarrassment as he wiggled his diapered

bottom back and forth half-heartedly. Thirteen years old and here he was, dancing with toddlers in a diaper.

“If you’re happy and you know it,” the fourth verse began. How many verses did this thing have? “Reach up high!” Tanner raised his hands up to around the level of his hair, but that was not good enough.

The lady behind him, overcome with how adorable he was, grabbed his hands and pulled them up as high as they could go.

“If you’re happy and you know it, reach up high!” She did it again, his shirt rising up above his tummy, which only made it all the more obvious when his shorts slid down his scrawny legs, pooling around his feet. “Oopsie!” She said without even missing a beat in the song. With his arms still held by her, Tanner had little choice but to finish the verse of the song with his diaper on full display. He groaned as another verse began.

“If you’re happy and you know it, touch your toes!” Tanner bent over and grabbed his shorts, tugging them back up. It only spared him a little embarrassment as every time he had to touch his toes, his diaper peeked out from where his shirt and shorts refused to meet. This had to be the last verse, right?

“If you’re happy” Tanner thought some very unhappy words. “And you know it, jump up and down!” Thinking quickly, Tanner gripped his shorts and jumped, pacifier clip flying through the air. Somehow, holding his shorts only made him look – and feel – more like a toddler. He just could not win!

“Last verse, so you know what that means!” Tanner did not. “If you’re happy and you know it, sit on the floor! If you’re happy and you know it” once again, thinking quickly, Tanner sat down on the floor, hoping he would not be pulled into that lady’s lap again. Sitting among a bunch of toddlers was better than that at least. “That was very good, everyone! Now it’s time for our bye bye song. Since we have some new faces, let’s go over it before we sing.” She smiled down at Tanner. “Mary, how ‘bout you help Tanner remember all the motions?”

“Okay!” The little girl said. She reached over and grabbed Tanner’s wrists.

“I don’t need help.” He muttered.

“That’s right, baby! I’m gonna help.”

“So first, we wave.” The lady leading the group said. Mary made Tanner wave both hands. “Point to your mouth. Flip over one hand, then the other.” This was complicated, Tanner thought, but he definitely did not need some little girl doing it for him! “Then we wave again! A nice, big one! That’s right, Oliver. Then, we make an alligator mouth!” Tanner rolled his eyes. This made no sense! “Ready? Here we go!”

“Goodbye, goodbye, see you soon!” Everyone sang. Mary was too busy doing the motions to ‘help’ Tanner, but she still watched him every bit as closely as the adults had. “But not until we sing this tune! We must leave and we must go, but we’ll be back to say hello!”

“Big wave, baby!” Mary said. “Like this!” Did she not realize he was like three times her age? Of course she didn’t, Tanner thought. He was diapered and trapped in babyland.

“See you later, alligator!” Tanner gasped as everyone around him roared as they made alligator mouths with their arms. “After a while, crocodile!”

“Very nice, everyone! Time to find your grown-ups!” In the ensuing chaos, Tanner found himself back on the lady's lap. He had never even learned her name, he realized in his irritation.

"Isn't it time to go?" He asked.

"Yep, so we'll just wait here until your grown-up comes to get you. Will it be mommy or daddy or who?"

"My mom." The pacifier reduced his mutter to a babyish mumble between mommy and mama.

"Alright, I'm sure she knows where to find you!" Tanner glowered, jumping as he felt her finger pull out the back of his diaper.

"Hey!"

"Wow! Even with all the fun and excitement" she tugged down the front of his shorts a bit – though more than Tanner felt she needed to – to confirm. "And you didn't use your diaper once?"

"He's a little old for that." Tanner froze as he heard his mom's voice. She eyed the tableau before her with a smile.

"He is?"

"Yep. TJ, why don't you tell the nice lady how old you are?" Tanner gulped. "You were so eager to make it clear earlier, weren't you?"

"I'm thirteen." Startled, she eyed the diapered cherub on her lap before looking to his mom for confirmation.

"He was throwing tantrums at the store, so we decided he needed a way to remember to be a good little boy." The woman smiled.

"Aw, well that explains why you've been so well-behaved for me!" She gave him another bounce before finally setting him down on the floor. "I'm Diane, by the way." Tanner could only stand there, groaning and squirming as Diane filled his mom in on every detail of his sing-a-long experience, making it sound for all the world like he had been more than happy to play the role of a baby. "And then he practically jumped out of his shorts, the little cutie!" They both laughed, both at the mental image and at Tanner trying to subtly tug his shorts up to avoid it happening again.

"TJ, thank Miss Diane for taking such good care of you."

"Thank you." Tanner mumbled.

"Here, without your paci."

"Thank you!" Tanner's annoyance was obvious, but his mom did not make him try again.

"So he's really thirteen?" Diane said in disbelief.

"Fourteen in a few months."

"Huh." She shook her head. "Well, we're here every week, TJ, so feel free to come back. Diaper or not." She smiled.

"We'll keep it in mind." Mom said cheerfully before leading Tanner away by the hand.

"You're not really gonna make me go again, right, mommy?" Tanner asked as they got back into the car.

"We'll see what's on the schedule for next weekend." She teased. "You could use a haircut."

"At the barber?" Mommy smiled, but did not answer. At least they were going home. He got his underwear back then, right?

Just to be safe, Tanner did his best to help once they got home, even if it was tougher to carry things in with his waddle forcing his shorts down his legs with every step.

“Maybe we should just lose the shorts.”

“Can’t I have my underwear back? Please?” Mommy smiled. She fished around in her purse and pulled out his briefs. They might as well have glowed with how great it was to see them.

“Are you ready to have your underwear back?” Tanner felt as though his head might pop off with how eagerly he nodded.

“Well, you better make me believe it. What have you learned?”

“To be good and not make a scene.”

“Good. And what do you promise?” Tanner sighed.

“To be the bestest little boy in the whole wide world.” He held his arms out to show how wide the world was. She smiled and kissed his cheek.

“I guess emergency diapers might just work.” There she was, thinking out loud again.

As if he had not been through enough embarrassment, Tanner had to lie down on the living room floor so Mommy could remove his diaper and slide his briefs and shorts up his legs. Maybe underoos weren’t so bad, he thought, chewing on his lower lip. He would wear just about anything if it meant no diapers. Maybe that was the real lesson?