TJ's Awful Easter Outfit

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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“Look, TJ!” Mom said, holding a big cardboard box. “A package came for you!” He tried to hide his displeasure. The last package he had gotten contained a bunch of baby toys. That was not even him exaggerating. Mom had heard about a brain stimulating toy subscription box at singalong and had not even hidden it from him, sitting as he was on her lap at the time, as she signed him up for the 0-36 month box. They happened to be the very same toys he was half-heartedly playing with now since he had already maxed out his allotted screen time for the week.

“More toys?” He asked, forcing a smile.

“No, sweetie. Your Easter clothes!” TJ tried to hide his growing displeasure as he remembered the horrible shortalls and bow tie of last year, already horribly babyish even before he got pulled into playing Bunny Tag with all the toddlers.

Mom tore into the package with relish. TJ did not know what he expected, but out of the box came a white and yellow striped t-shirt and pants. That did not look so bad, he thought until he saw the words Snuggle Bunny on the shirt and, far worse, the little white cottonball tail on the seat of the pants.

“These are some cute pajamas.” Mom explained. “Don't you think?” TJ smiled noncommittally. “But here we are!” TJ watched as she pulled out three packages, holding them out to him. The smallest was all white, the other two blue and white

checks.

“What's this?”

“Your Easter outfit.” She held up each plastic-wrapped package again. “Tights, bloomers, and this must be your blouse.” She tore into it with the same relish as the box had gotten to show him the embroidered Peter Pan collar.

“They sent you girl clothes.”

“No, these are for boys.” She held up the tights. Sure enough, it said boys and his size. This still felt like a prank. “It's special occasion clothes.” She said, almost seeming defensive. “I see them all the time on Instagram. Trust me, you won't be the only little boy at the party dressed so cute."

“Can't I wear what I wore last year?” Was he really asking for those horrible shortalls? “It probably still fits.” Now that really stung to admit.

“Let's at least try it on.” Mom said, already pulling him gently toward her to get him undressed.

Tanner could not bring himself to look at his reflection, but staring down at his toes in tights, hardly even visible with how his shorts – he refused to call them bloomers!-- ballooned out, did not make him feel any better.

“It's… cute.” Mom said, appraising him up and down. “It's a little bit more babyish-”

“Hey!”

“Than I expected, but you'll certainly get compliments.” She patted his bottom. “The bloomers are darling.”

“I am not wearing this.”

“You are, TJ. But if you want to make a decision,” she pulled him over and kissed his cheek. “You can pick between a diaper and your big boy undies.”

~ T ~

Tanner would have preferred to have pushed his awful Easter outfit out of his head until the day he had to wear them, but Mom had other plans. Multiple times a day, she would remind him that his tights were delicate and he would have to be the best little boy all day long. It got to the point where Tanner started to roll his eyes. By Good Friday afternoon, Mom had had enough of his attitude and he spent it diapered, sucking on a pacifier, and being bounced on Mommy's lap as they watched Bunnydale together.

“Who's that?”

“Yellow Bunny.”

“And that?”

“Blue Bunny.”

“But they aren't on your paci strap, are they?” Tanner nodded. One of the worst parts about watching this toddler TV show – really, everything about it was the worst part – was discovering that the denizen of Bunnydale that appeared most often on the things Mom bought him to wear was Baby

Bunny, seemingly the only character other than Granny Bunny and Mayor McBun to not be named a color. “Oh, we know this song!” She grabbed Tanner's wrists and, taking a page out of Miss Diane's book, began to dance him to the music.

It was almost a relief when Mom handed Tanner his yellow bunny pajamas – they might even have been actual Yellow Bunny pajamas, he realized. Mom insisted he bunny hop and waggle his cotton ball tail, but at least it was not as bad as the teddy bear footies Mom had made him wear for the better part of the winter.

Easter morning came and Tanner hoped he would at least get a little bit of time before he had to put on his Easter outfit. In years past, Mom had had him change at the party, but not this year. Tanner got Bunnydale briefs and had to sit on the edge of his bed, still rubbing the sleep from his eyes, as Mom slipped his tights up his legs. He was happy when she gave him his usual light-up tennies, only to realize they made his toddler tights and bloomers even more noticeable in contrast to normal shoes. He whined into his pacifier as Mom fussed with his hair until every curl was where it needed to be to make him look his most cherubic.

“Smile for Mommy!” She cooed, taking a few photos before smiling herself. Even without a diaper, the puffy bloomers made him look every bit like the sweet baby boy he was in her heart. Easter was a cute holiday and Tanner's natural cuteness only made it better.

Tanner barely even reacted as Mom buckled him into his booster seat. That was normal, after all, and at least the activity tray she slid across his lap kept his bloomers out of sight. Just as normal was staring out the window as Mom played a medley of nursery rhymes, sing-along songs, and Bunnydale as they drove.

The scenery out the window barely presented much excitement. He sat up a little straighter when he saw a 1973 Cadillac Eldorado next to them, but it happened to coincide with Bingo starting and Tanner had to endure Mom singing along and looking back at him to see if he was too. Good thing you can't make me dance all the way back here. He thought sullenly, sliding back down in his booster seat as much as the straps would let him.

The next time he sat up was when they pulled up alongside a minivan and Tanner saw a guy about his age sitting there. At first, Tanner thought that his nice shirt and suspenders made him look like someone's dad, but then he realized that that was normal Easter wear for a teenager. He gazed enviously until the boy faded from his view and he saw a toddler with angelic blonde curls, pacifier, and lacey collar ethereally reflected in the window. He looked away from himself, grumbling.

“Here's your favorite!” Mom called as The Wheels on the Bus began. How did she always time it for right when they arrived at a rest stop? Sure enough, Mom stopped the car and turned to watch Tanner sing and dance along with what had to be the longest version of the song she could find. What if I

really, really had to pee? Tanner thought. She hadn't even put him in an emergency diaper.

Normally, Tanner would at least ask if he could use the men's room, but dressed the way he was, he did not really want to be seen by other boys. Mom provided camouflage in that regard, even if it meant sitting on the toilet as Mom watched him pee, ready to wipe him and get his undies, tights, and bloomers all resituated.

Once he was dressed again, Mom took him to wash his hands. His heart almost stopped as the door opened and a woman and her daughter came in. They both cooed as they saw Tanner standing there, pacifier in his mouth, startled look on his face.

“My! What an adorable little” Tanner almost bit the bulb of his pacifier as he realized she didn't know if he was a boy or a girl!

“He's a boy.” Mom said.

“Oh, of course. What a handsome young gentleman you are.”

“Thank you.” Tanner said, almost before Mom squeezed his hand to remind him.

“You must be off to see the Easter Bunny.” She eyed Tanner's legs. “Oh, is the little darling wearing tights?”

“Socks would keep sliding down his legs, so tights are what we went with.” The woman nodded, but the girl eyed Tanner with curiosity. She probably had never seen a boy wear tights,

Tanner realized as Mom finally led him away.

` “You're being such a good little boy for Mommy.” She said as she buckled him back into his booster seat, picking a fleck of dust from his tights. “Do you want to listen to more Bunnydale songs?” Tanner knew the right answer, so he nodded just enough to be visible. “Okie dokie. I think you can listen through your headphones for a little while.”

“No.” Tanner whined, but it was too late. The headphones covered his ears and all he could hear as Mom kissed his cheek was the opening notes of Snuggly Little Bunnies. Bunnies provided the soundtrack as Mom opened a pouch of applesauce and held it to his lips, squeezing it into his mouth as his legs in their tights dangled from his booster seat. Finally, they were back on the road.

The headphones did not come off until they arrived at the park where the Easter celebration was and even then, it was only after Mom looked him over, shook her head, and said something he could not hear. Once he could hear again, Mom was her usual, infantilizing self as she fussed over his curls before finally pulling him out of his booster seat.

“Mommy loves her adorable little boy.”

“Love you too, Mommy.” Tanner mumbled, legs straightening out in anticipation of being put down. Instead, Mom shifted him to her hip and grabbed a big, colorful bag. Momentarily confused by this, Tanner's mind suddenly went blank in panic as he watched a second bag come out of the car: his diaper bag. Why?

“It's just in case, wiggly squiggly wiggle worm.” She said. Tanner hated to admit he felt a little better as she carried him over to a shady spot, a journey that took nearly twenty minutes as Mom stopped to talk to relatives, friends, Tanner wasn't even sure who these people were. He just knew he had to listen to their conversation from Mom's arms. Aren't I heavy? He wondered before realizing how babyish that thought felt. He was too old to be carried, regardless of his weight!

At last, they broke free from what was, by Tanner's count, the fiftieth conversation and Mom set him down to spread out a blanket. Tanner knew the blanket from past park adventures, but all the same, Mom gave him the rules: Sit on the blanket, stay on the blanket. That meant having to do a sort of awkward crawl to the edge of the blanket any time he was allowed to leave it to reach the edge where he could stand up.

“Let's get you situated.” Mom said, taking off his shoes, setting them at the edge of the blanket, and then alternating between laying out toys for him and taking photos of Tanner.

“I feel ridiculous.” Tanner muttered, watching a kid who could barely even be three toddle by in an outfit that was a near dead ringer of the one he had seen the teenager wear in that car an hour ago.

“You look very nice.” Mom said. It wasn't cute or adorable, so Tanner accepted it as high praise of his maturity. As far as he could tell, there was not a single person dressed like him, but he did not actually see anyone his own age, so maybe-

“Oh, no.”

“Do you need to go potty, TJ teddy bear ?” Mom asked. Tanner shook his head, looking down at his feet and trying to pretend he was invisible. He wanted to double check, but he knew he did not need to. HIs cousins Kevin and Derek were here!

Using the flawless logic of ‘if I can't see them, they can't see me', Tanner focused on his toys, pushing the little wooden train around on the blanket. As an added bonus, it made Mom happy, which meant she mostly let him play as people came to visit like she was a queen holding court, the baby prince always close by.

“We really should get you a photo-”

“No.” Tanner said, cutting her off. “You promised last year was the last year.”

“I did not.”

“And the year before that too.” Tanner was not certain that that was the case, but it helped his, so he said it all the same.

“TJ. You promised to be a good little boy for Mommy.” Tanner fumed, but her tone told him he was on thin ice.

“No means no.” He mumbled into his pacifier.

“What was that?”

“I said no. No photos with a dumb old Easter bunny. He's not even real!” Tanner felt better for having vented a morning's

worth of frustration, but that only left room for a rising sense of dread to take its place.

“That's enough, mister.” Mom said, a sense of finality in her voice. But she was not finished.

“I'm sorry.”

“An apology doesn't count when it's to avoid consequences.” Mom grabbed the diaper bag.

“Not here.”

“You're behaving like a baby, so you're going to be changed like a baby.”

“But…” before Tanner could even think this couldn't get any worse, he saw Kevin and Derek walking toward them. They were dressed in the same dorky Easter outfits, blue and yellow plaid shirts, khaki shorts, bowties, and all, but Tanner would have traded in an instant. Let them deal with tights and bloomers and stuff!

“Hi Auntie.” Kevin said, not even trying to hide his delight at Tanner's outfit.

“Hi TJ.” Derek said.

“Hi, Kevin. Hi, Derek.” Tanner said around his pacifier, realizing they had never seen him with the pacifier. Should I spit it out? Leave it in? What do I do?

“Hi, you two.” Mom said. “Happy Easter.” All three boys echoed it. Maybe, just maybe, Derek and Kevin had

distracted Mom from- “I was just about to give TJ a change, but he's being a little difficult.”

“TJ!” Derek said, hardly able to keep from laughing. “That's not very nice. Mommy's just trying to help you.” Tanner fought to keep from rolling his eyes. How was Mom buying this?

“How about we distract him while you do it?” Kevin suggested. They both sat down on the blanket, picking up toys. Tanner groaned as Mom grabbed him under the arms and got him into position. He glared up at his two cousins as his bloomers, tights, and underwear came down. Even though they sat over him, waving the wooden toys in his face, he knew they had noticed he did not have a diaper on before, but was getting one now.

His face burned as he felt the spring breeze on his bottom as Mom slipped the crinkly plastic diaper under him. This was too much! He wiggled and squirmed, whimpering into the pacifier, figuring that a toddler tantrum right now was better than being diapered in front of his cousins!

“Fussy little TJ.” Kevin cooed, relishing every moment of this. Why did they enjoy his humiliation so much? Probably because it made them look bigger by comparison. TJ had laughed just as much as Derek when he had learned that Kevin still wet the bed a few years ago.

“All done.” Mom said once TJ's clothes were back in order. He sighed as he was pulled to his feet by his cousins. Now what? He braced himself for their comments.

“Hey, do you mind if we take Tanner for a bit?” Derek asked, all calm maturity.

“Sure. I was going to take him to get a photo with the Easter Bunny, but-”

“What do you think, Tanner?” Kevin asked. Now they had both called him Tanner. What was going on? “Do you wanna hang out with us or get a photo with the Easter Bunny?”

“We're gonna go check out that bean bag toss over there.” Derek said. “You can come if you want.” He gave Tanner a look that undeniably said ‘come', so Tanner nodded.

“I'll hang out with you.” He lisped around the pacifier.

“Awesome.”

“Well, alright.” Mom said. “TJ, sit back down and I'll get your shoes on.” Kevin and Derek, despite trying to maintain their composure, still snickered as Tanner sat down in his mom's lap for his shoes. Thankfully, they did not hear Mom murmur in his ear. “Be a very good little boy and no arguing with your big cousins. And keep your clothes clean and pristine.”

“Ok” was all he said, practically leaping out of Mom's lap.

“And don't leave the park.” Mom called after the trio.

The three of them walked for a bit until Derek saw they were out of Tanner's mom's earshot. He stooped down to Tanner's level and grinned. This was not his teasing grin. It seemed softer, almost relieved.

“We had to get you away from her.”

“Huh?”

“I mean, we know you're really our age. That was… geez. Your mom's weird.” Tanner realized he still had the pacifier in his mouth, but letting it dangle from his shirt would only make it more babyish. Could he sneak it into his pocket? He patted his shorts and grimaced. He didn't even have pockets! He didn't dare lose it, so he just kept sucking on it and sighed.

He looked up at Derek and Kevin, about to draw attention away from the situation he had just escaped, but Kevin met his gaze.

“So, like, does she make you use them? The” he leaned in close. “Diaper, I mean.”

“No, thankfully.” Maybe he should spit out the pacifier.

“You should shit in it, just to show her.” TJ smiled weakly. It was an idea he had had, but who knows how Mom would react? Put him back into potty training?

“Maybe.” He said, seeing they were waiting for a response. At least his cousins seemed sympathetic.

“That's a dumb idea. It would only get him into more trouble!”

“Well,” Kevin shrugged, seeming a little embarrassed to be called out by his brother. “I was just joking. Let's… let's go do something. Bean bags, right?” He started to walk with both Derek and Tanner following him.

Why'd they wait until I was in a diaper to rescue me? Tanner wondered, knowing all too well that he looked like a toddler following the big boys around. A stroke of genius led him to take out his pacifier and tuck it into his collar. It felt a little weird, but it was out of sight unless someone tugged the brightly colored strap.

The bean bag toss was surprisingly open, so Tanner sat down on a picnic table bench while Derk and Kevin played. Sure, he wished there was a way to do a three-way one vee one, but he still felt almost like a normal teenager, at least until he remembered his tights and what lay beneath. Still, every minute spent like this was a minute away from Mom.

“Awesome!” Tanner exclaimed as Derek nailed a behind the back shot to win the game. He was pretty sure they had mostly been goofing around rather than seriously playing, but wasn't sure.

“Do you want to try?” Kevin asked, tossing a bag onto the table next to Tanner.

“Uh, sure.” He slid down off of the bench and thought he heard a soft rip. He looked over his shoulder at the seat of his bloomers.

“Yeah, you've got a big butt.” Kevin said with a laugh. “And not even just cuz of the you know what. What are those shorts you're wearing?”

“You know his mom picked them, dude.” Derek said. “Mom picked our stuff.”

“And I'm glad she doesn't shop where your mom does, TJ.”

“Maybe it's the same place, just like the baby section- don't glare, TJ! You know how you look!” Tanner could not shake the feeling something was weird about the way they were acting.

“Come around on this side.” Kevin said before Tanner could line up his bean bag toss. “There's mud over there and your mom – especially your mom – will kill us if you get all muddy.” Tanner saw the reason in that and began to toss a few bean bags, not even noticing how much it looked like he was a toddler messing around while the older boys chatted, at least until he caught some relative snapping photos of him.

“So precious.” She cooed. “Don't mind me!” She looked at Kevin and Derek. “Is he your little brother?”

“Nope. Cousin.” Derek said.

“Oh, right. You're TJ. Melanie's boy.”

“He is.” Kevin answered for him, holding a hand to his eyes to shade them from the sun.

“Well, you are just adorable.”

“Thanks.” Tanner said with a weak smile. Now go away. She did, though not before snapping a few more photos of him, almost certainly going to show Mom.

“Done?” Derek asked, walking over and taking the bean bag right out of Tanner's hand.

“Guess I am.” He walked over to the picnic table.

“Shoot, looks like you got a little dirt on your shirt.” Kevin said, pointing. Tanner looked down.

“I don't see it.”

“It's right there. You see it, Derek?”

“Oh, yeah. Shoot. Well, it's not that bad.”

“I still don't see it.”

“Might be easier if you're not wearing your shirt.” Kevin immediately tugged it up.

“Hey!” Tanner felt his pacifier hit his nose as the shirt and attached pacifier went up and over his head. In the ensuing chaos, he did not even notice Kevin pluck the pacifier off and push it into his mouth until it was already plunging in.

“Oh, it's actually not so bad.” Kevin said. “Oh, well. Best way to keep it clean is to keep it off widdle baby TJ.”

“Hey! Stop!”

“We'd better do the same with his itty bitty shorts.” Derek remarked. In no time at all, TJ wore nothing but a pair of tights, his diaper showing through them. He felt a sudden moment of panic as he imagined them making him chase them to get his blouse and bloomers back in nothing but tights.

“Is your Mommy okay with grass stains on your tights?” Kevin asked loudly.

“I'm gonna guess not.” Derek replied and soon, those too were gone, leaving Tanner in nothing but a diaper.

“There we go! No more fancy schmancy clothes, just a widdle baby TJ.” Kevin laughed, poking TJ's diaper.

“This isn't funny!”

“It's funnier than the last time. You had like Spongebob undies. Now you're in a diaper!” Derek said.

“You're like the only kid who grows down.” Kevin guffawed.

“Dude, that's dumb.”

“Whatever.” Kevin shrugged.

“Here's the deal, TJ. You can either go running back to Mommy after we make a few more changes or” he grinned. “We take you to see the Easter Bunny.”

“What kind of changes?” TJ lisped around the pacifier, suddenly aware of how far the bean bag toss was from help.

“Well, to make sure your mommy doesn't believe a word of what you tell her, especially since we were so nice to you, we smear chocolate on your face, hands, maybe even your tummy so she sees you as a fibbing little sugar-crazed baby.” Derek said.

“Or we keep you clean and you take a nice photo with Mr. Bunbun over there.”

“Is that his name?” Derek asked.

“TJ can ask when he meets him.” Kevin said a little too quickly. “If that's what you pick.” Tanner sighed. Mom was going to make him get a photo anyway, so maybe doing it on his own could be spun as proof of his maturity. Maybe.

“Let's do the photo.” He reached for his shirt, but Kevin shook his head.

“These are staying right here. You look picture perfect just the way you are, baby TJ!”

“You tricked me!”

“Our grown-up words just confused your baby brain.” Derek said, grinning at his brother.

“It'll be quick. Doesn't even look like the line's that long.”

“Does baby TJ” Derek gave Tanner's cheek a little pat. “Want to be carried or crawl?”

“I can't walk?”

“Exactly. You're an itty bitty baby who can't walk.” Derek said.

“Just carry him, man.” Kevin said. Derek picked up Tanner, laughing as he struggled.

“Off we go. Do you watch ShinoBen the streamer?” Derek asked.

“Uh, I hear about him at school.” Tanner said, taken aback by the question as if Derek did still see him as a peer rather than a helplessly babied boy he was about to torment further.

“Oh, well, his catchphrase is let's gooooo!”

“Dork.” Kevin said.

“Whatever, you like him too.” Derek said, awkwardly carrying Tanner along. Can't believe I miss the way Mom carries me. Tanner thought, feeling like he would fall at any moment.

“Hello there, boys.” The woman in charge of the photos said, smiling as Tanner was finally set down on the grass. “I take it a certain someone wants to meet the Easter Bunny?”

“Not really.”

“He sure does. This is TJ.”

“And… where are his clothes?” She kept smiling, but it was clear she was curious.

“Oh, his mom took them off to keep them, what was it, Kev?”

‘Clean and pristine.” Kevin said, nodding dutifully.

“Well, that diaper is pretty Eastery, but I think we've got something.” She squatted down and placed a pink headband on Tanner's head, two big bunny ears erupting from the top. “And just to be safe…” As soon as she backed away, Tanner tried to pull them off, but they wouldn't budge. “See?” She said to Derek and Kevin. “Bobby pins for the little ones are so handy.”

‘Do you mind if we take a couple photos ourselves? We'll pay for the good ones from you, of course.’

“Oh, that's fine.” She said, missing Tanner glaring daggers at his cousins. “Alright, TJ. Mr. Bunbun is waiting for you.”

“Holy shit, that is his name.” Derek murmured to Kevin. “How'd you know?” Kevin just held his phone up to record every minute of Tanner's latest humiliation.

Tanner waddled and crinkled over to the big white bunny with a yellow and blue vest. He waved at Tanner before bending over and expertly scooping him up and onto his lap. Tanner felt tears well up as he saw the photographer, Kevin, Derek, and countless others staring at him. Even worse, rather than just have him sit on his lap, Mr. Bunbun began to bounce Tanner lightly, causing his diaper to crinkle and his ears to flop. Tanner would not find out for a few days just what photo got chosen as the official one, whether it would be a serendipitous moment where he looked like an adorable toddler on the Easter Bunny's lap or if it was the moment when the ordeal became too much and he began to cry from humiliation.