Anthony didn’t know whether he should look at the doorway or turn away and try to hide who he was. He knew hiding was pointless but it felt like any second spent delaying the humiliation would be time well spent. In the end it didn’t matter. He remained rooted to the spot as the visitors stood in the doorway. He expected the worst but he was still stunned by what he saw.

“Anthony?” The gruff older male voice said, “What in the blazes…”

“D-Dad!?” Anthony gasped, “Mom!?”

Anthony’s concentration had been fixed on holding his bladder sphincter closed. The shock made him forget all about that and as he sat on the floor of his playpen slack-jawed mouth hanging open he felt heat rapidly spreading around his crotch. He remained completely motionless on the floor as he flooded his diaper whilst his mother and father watched from the door.

“What on Earth is going on here?” Anthony’s mom demanded not unreasonably.

“If you want to follow me.” Jane said. She spoke calmly and pleasantly which was at complete odds with the situation, “I can explain everything.”

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Jane walked confidently through to the dining room. The large room was dominated by a large oak table. As well as the several antique chairs there was an enlarged highchair and as Anthony’s parents entered the room she was sure that was where they would instantly look.

“Jane, I demand to know what is happening with my son.” Harriett demanded impatiently. Her voice was inflected with that impossible to hide upper class accent.

“And I will tell you.” Jane replied, “Please have a seat. Can I get you coffee?”

“That would be-…” Charles started.

“Charles!” Harriett shook her head reproachfully.

“Well, she offered.” Charles shrugged, “She said she’s going to explain things so let’s not jump to any conclusions.”

Harriett looked like she wanted to argue but eventually just shook her head. She indicated that Jane should make them both coffees. Jane was happy to oblige, she turned around and started preparing her drinks as she prepared herself for what was likely to be a tricky conversation.

Jane had met Charles and Harriett not long after she started dating Anthony. She remembered being very nervous that day. She was just starting out on her career and was essentially at the bottom of the corporate ladder meanwhile Anthony was well on his way to becoming a fully qualified doctor and, came from an old money family. When Jane had first looked at her future in-laws’ house it did nothing to make her feel less intimidated.

The house Jane and Anthony lived in was large but it looked like a quaint little cottage next to the giant house Charles and Harriett owned. In the end Jane had little reason to be nervous. Although they were clearly testing Jane to make sure she was good for their son they were also friendly and within a couple of hours it was as if they had known each other for years.

As friendly as they were Charles and Harriett were never particularly close to Anthony and Jane. Anthony had always said it was because his parents didn’t want to visit until Jane found out that, in truth, he just never invited them over or scheduled anything. Apart from Christmases and major events in their lives like the wedding Anthony just couldn’t be bothered to keep in touch. Which explained why Anthony could be a baby for so long without his parents noticing.

Jane had been really upset when she found out how neglectful Anthony was of his parents. They had done a lot for the pair of them and when Jane and Anthony had got married they had gifted the pair the amazing house they were living in now… sort of.

The tricky thing was that whilst Jane and Anthony owned the house in all but the most official way the deed was still under Anthony’s parents’ names. They had said it was for tax reasons or something, Jane had always been too delighted with such a generous present to really question it. There wasn’t any hidden catches either, even when Anthony essentially neglected his parents they never raised a stink.

Harriett was the one that wore the trousers in the family even if she wasn’t the one who earned the money. She was always immaculately dressed and there was never a hair out of place. Charles was the one who had made their fortune. He had put on weight as he got older and his comb over did little to distract from the fact that he was balding. As Jane waited for the coffee to be ready she could feel them both staring at her. The silence in the dining room was incredibly tense.

They say a watched kettle never boils and it felt like the coffee machine knew everyone was waiting and refused to finish brewing. Jane turned to the side and leant on the counter she could see Anthony’s parents sitting at the table in stony silence. It felt like if they didn’t buy what she was saying they would take over the situation and kick Jane out.

Finally Jane was able to pour out the drinks and brought them over to the table. She hadn’t even sat down when Harriett opened her mouth.

“What is going on here?” Harriett asked immediately, “Why is my Anthony in the other room dressed like a… well, like a-…”

“A baby?” Jane finished for her mother-in-law.

“Well… Yes!” Harriett said.

“This coffee is lovely.” Charles said after taking a sip.

“Charles!” Harriett exclaimed at her husband again, “For goodness sake can we all concentrate on the important things here!?”

“I’ll start at the beginning.” Jane said as she took a drink of her own coffee.

Jane took a deep breath and then started to tell the story of the last year or so. She told her in-laws about the twins’ pranks and then the punishment that followed. She let the older couple in on what Anthony had done regarding his lack of patient safety and then continued with his other behaviour. She focused most on his laziness before coming to the most sensitive parts of the story.

“You see, he has NEVER been an adequate husband.” Jane said, “He is lazy, inattentive and shirks all responsibility. He never helped with the kids. He never changed diapers, even when I was ill he wouldn’t lift a finger to help out. And the worst part of all? He got fired from his job making him even more useless.”

“He was fired?” Harriett asked with her eyes widening.

“Yes, and from what I heard it was in circumstances that have left him essentially blacklisted.” Jane continued, “So now he can’t even bring home any money.”

“Sounds about right.” Charles had been silent the whole time but now he snorted and shook his head.

“I decided long ago that if he was going to act like a baby then I would treat him like one.” Jane finished, “And despite his arguments he just keeps letting me down and not acting like an adult.”

Charles chuckled and the two women turned to face him. He was shaking his head and Jane worried that things were about to go badly. Everything rested on these two people accepting that their middle-aged son would be better off kept as a baby.

“What’s so funny?” Harriett demanded.

“Sorry… I’m sorry…” Charles said as he continued to laugh, “But you’ve got to admit it’s funny. Strangely appropriate as well. You remember what Anthony was like at home? Lazy didn’t even begin to cover it.”

“He was a bit… low energy.” Harriett conceded, “But…”

“Remember how difficult it was to potty train him?” Charles continued, “He wasn’t out of diapers until he started going to school and the teachers complained”

Jane hadn’t known that little piece of information. Her eyebrows were disappearing into her hairline and she turned to look at Harriett whose mouth was still pursed.

“He wet the bed until he was practically a teenager!” Charles exclaimed, “Remember all the doctors we took him to? None of them found any problems. Then one day it just stopped, coincidentally it was right as he got his first girlfriend.”

“What are you saying?” Harriett finally asked.

“I’m saying…” Charles shrugged and leaned back in his chair, “Maybe Jane’s got the right idea.”

“You can’t be serious.” Harriett sounded flabbergasted, “Our son is in the living room playing with toys like a baby!”

“And from what Jane has been saying it’s precisely where he deserves to be.” Charles countered, “He’s been coddled and had life on easy mode. He’s never grown up. You can’t tell me you weren’t happy the night he moved out that someone else would have the burden of getting him to do anything.”

If Jane’s eyebrows weren’t already raised these last comments would certainly have sent them up her forehead. She looked back at Harriett who was suddenly looking much more bashful, she didn’t think it was her imagination that the older woman had a slightly blushing face. There was a silence as Harriett seemed to be digesting everything. Jane was on tenterhooks as she waited for the verdict, if Harriett decided her “little boy” deserved better Jane could be in a bit of trouble.

“Fine.” Harriett said rather forcefully after several tense seconds, “You’ve made your point. It may be… unconventional but maybe it will help him in the long term.”

Jane certainly wasn’t going to disabuse her mother-in-law of the idea that this was temporary. It sounded like she had actually “won” and may get exactly what she wanted from her, there was no need to throw a wrench into the works and inform her that if she had her way Anthony would be a baby until the day he died.

“Is that all?” Harriett asked Jane tersely, “Did you call us here to embarrass my son or was there another reason we’re here?”

“There is another reason.” Jane said.

Jane pushed her chair back and stood up. She walked over to the kitchen counter and opened a drawer underneath the granite surface. She pulled out a grey plastic folder and returned to the table. When she sat back down she slid the folder across to the two intrigued in-laws.

“I need some signatures.” Jane smiled.