

Call me Daddy

by Champ (ChampTehOtter.com)

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When I'm exhausted, I like to just lay back, relax, strap on a diaper, and let my worries float away. That's right. I, Barry the bear, wear diapers. It's simple. Doesn't harm anyone including myself. That's just how I relieve my stress when I'm too exhausted to do anything else. And since I lost Peyton, I'm exhausted a lot. That's how I found myself splayed out on the living room carpet, tongue out, trying to beat the heat by hibernating it away.

What I really mean is I was moving as little as possible until the power came back on, and I could use the AC.

That's what happens when we have a heat wave.

While I was lying there, I heard a key in the door. By the time I paid enough attention to care, they were already coming into the apartment.

"Federal Bureau of Incontinence, this is a raid!"

"Wha? Who are you? The plumber?"

"No, it's the FBI. We heard a report of a very soggy, woggy bear in here."

"Huh, that's weird. I don't see anyone in here but me... Oh..." I gave a bashful little smile as the 'agent' walked into the living room and looked down at me with his paws on his hips.

"Up and at 'em, cub. You can't spend all day on the carpet like that."

Of course, it wasn't the Federal Bureau of Incontinence barging in but my friend and personal alarm clock, Emery the Otter. He always checked up on me to make sure I was doing alright, getting up, staying dry. Good luck with the last one.

"Come on, you lazy lump," Emery said, pulling me by my hand toward the bedroom. "Let's get you changed and dressed. Remember, we're going on a hike today!" I groaned.



End

"Aww, mannnn, do we have to?"

"Yes, we do, buddy bear," he said. "You have spent too long moping around in your apartment and this place is an oven! The fresh air will do you good."

"What are you, my Daddy?" I asked, immediately regretting the word as soon as I'd said it.

Emery stared at me with a conflicted frown, and I turned away from him, my face growing hot. I opened my mouth to apologize but he stopped me.

"Shush. On your back, soggy butt. The diaper fumes have clearly made you delusional. It's a good thing I got here when I did!"

I smiled and looked at him again. He always did have a way of making me smile, even when I had just put my paw in my mouth.

Which is good because I do that a lot.

Emery made short work of my diaper and then tossed me a pair of clean shorts and a tank top from the load of laundry he brought with him. "These **otter** do," he said with a cheesy grin, and I groaned at his terrible sense of humor.

"That joke was so bad, I can hardly **bear** it," I replied, and it was his turn to groan. "In fact, I think I pulled my funny bone. Can we take a rain check on the hike?"

"Not a chance, Barry," said Emery, putting his hands on his hips. He watched me like a jailer while I got dressed, and I was the one being led to my terrible fate. Exercise! "Okay bud. You ready to go?" he said, once I got dressed and knocked back a glass of water for the road.

"As ready as I'll ever be," I said, sounding about as enthused as a wet cat.

"That's the spirit," said Emery.

"What? Resigned acceptance?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

Emery shrugged and opened the front door. "I'll take what I can get."

The drive was awkwardly quiet for the first few miles. I could tell what I had brought up earlier when I said the 'D' word was still hanging in the air.

"Soooo... "

"Oh boy, here it comes," I muttered.

"Have you thought about my offer?"

"Yes, I've thought about your offer," I said, sighing and rubbing my forehead. "And I still just want to be friends."

Emery licked his whiskers and readjusted his grip on the steering wheel. I could tell he was trying to formulate his next thought because he always licked his whiskers like that when he was thinking hard. Finally, he said, "Is it because of Peyton?"

"Yes, because of Peyton," I said with a sigh. "You know I would never betray him."

"I know," he said, quietly. "I know."

Despair is like a warm blanket. It's hard to leave behind. But damnit if Emery Otter didn't make me want to do exactly that. The truth was, I wanted to say yes, but I just wasn't ready. I was too cozy in my cozy comfy sadness blanket.

But the mood cleared, as it always did, and we were soon admiring the trees and the wilderness of the California coastline.

"This is beautiful," I said. "Can we just drive the trail?"

Emery chuckled. "I don't think it's big enough for that, Barry. We'll just have to improvise with this brand-new technology they call shoes."

I rolled my eyes but despite my best efforts, that darn otter had done it again. I was smiling. I didn't complain the rest of the way there. At least not until we were parked and well away from the car.

On the hiking trail, I trudged along after Emery. "Can't we take a break yet?"

"Not even five minutes walking and you're already complaining! Come on, let's go."

"I'm sweating through my shorts already," I retorted. "Isn't there an easier way to get in shape? One that doesn't involve moving?"

"Nope! The sooner we finish the hike, the sooner we can get you back home, and in your cozy, wozy diapees!"

I gave out a big huff but couldn't resist blushing and smiling a bit. "Okayyyy."

Emery grinned back at me. I knew he could tell when he had hit a button, and in all the time he had known me, he had found all of mine. Some I probably didn't even know about.

We finally did get a chance to rest about three miles in. There was a nice view of the mountains and canyons in the distance.

"This loop is pretty level," said Emery, resting beside me on a rocky outcropping overlooking the Sycamore Canyon Preserve. "The car did most of the climb for us."

"Yay, technology," I panted, raising a fist.

Emery gave me a long look and blurted out, "I wanna show you something. It's not far!"

"Already?" I asked. "What about a nap first?"

"You've napped plenty, mister. Come on. This is *our day*. And it's my turn to pick the outing so no complaining. You'll get your choice next time."

"Okay, but this better be amazing or I'm going to leave you a bad review on Yap!"

"Oh no, not that!" he said, throwing his arm over his forehead in mock anguish. "I can comp your hike! I'll even throw in another one free if you're not completely satisfied!"

"Can't I just exchange it for a nice trip to the ice cream shop?" I asked.

"Sorry, I don't do exchanges. But if the little bear wants Ice Cream, I can certainly take him after. Only if he's good of course..."

I blushed and nodded. "Yeah, sounds good!" I said in a squeaky voice before clearing my throat and speaking in a purposely deep bearitone. "I mean... good. Yes, sounds very good to this big bear."

Emery laughed and patted my rump. The crinkly paff that followed was a reminder that regardless of anything else that happened, I was in the diaper that he had put me in. And that was always a good feeling. Like a hug that never ends.

We wound our way through rocks and then boulders until the trail stopped, and the walk became a climb. Now, I was genuinely testing my limits.

"You're suddenly very quiet, friend," said my companion, moving easily from handhold to handhold up the rock face. "Something happen?"

"Can't talk! Too busy trying not to die," I said from below, fumbling for handholds and footholds to support my weight. "You said it wasn't far!"

"It's not," he huffed. "We're almost there."

"That's what you said five minutes ago!"

Suddenly, an opening appeared in the rock. We had reached a ledge. A shallow cave lay behind it. Emery Smiled.

"This is it."

"Is it? Oh, thank goodness." I said, collapsing and kissing the rock.

Emery crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow. "You do know we're only, like, fifty feet up, right?"

"That's like, five bearlengths!" I said, getting up and dusting myself off. "I'll admit, this ledge is pretty awesome to see after all that walking and climbing, but I don't see why you brought me here. Unless..." I gasped. "You're planning to do me in so you can get my baseball card collection! You are, aren't you? I should have known!"

"Inside the cave, silly Billy." Emery said, nudging me forward into the cave.

Inside, it was cool. Light filtered in from the mid-day sun and the walls were covered in graffiti art. Inexplicably, there was a couch resting toward the back of the cave. It looked surprisingly comfortable, and I could see why my ancestors had chosen caves as their homes.

"A couch!" I cried, running over and leaping onto the soft cushions. "How?"

"People who have been coming here a long time." Emery said, flopping onto the couch next to me. "It's a special place. I'm glad you like it." He slid up next to me and raised his eyebrows. "And now that I have a captive audience..."

I looked at his little pearly whites glistening in the light and gulped.

"We're going to have a talk we've needed to have for a long time."

"Emery, I..." I didn't know how to finish the sentence. I knew where this was going, and we seemed to be on two sides of an impassable gulf.

"Your Daddy's gone, Barry. I'm not. Let me make you happy."

"You know I want to, but..."

"But nothing," he said. "I know he's gone, and we all miss him. You're not the only one that lost someone you care about, you know..."

I felt a twinge of guilt. I had been selfish. Though I knew I had the right to grieve in my own way, I hadn't once talked to Emery about or any of my loved ones about how *they* felt.

"Emery, I..." I stopped and thought for a minute, then I scooted closer to him and put an arm around his shoulders. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Emery looked surprised. Like he hadn't expected me to ask. He hadn't prepared an answer.

"I...yes, Barry, I do. Thank you for asking."

"Okay..." I said, giving him a squeeze. "Tell Barry all about it..."

"I remember when we first met... I was all alone at the Southern California Sci-Fi convention and the guy I had been dating had ditched me... I didn't know what I was going to do, where I was going to stay, or how I was going to get home. Then, I met this adorable bear and his platypus boyfriend..."

I'm not sure how much time passed as we shared stories about my partner, and talked about how we felt, but I can say that the sun was much lower in the sky when we finished. At some point my head had ended up in Emery's lap. The conversation eventually just petered out and he was just petting my head.

"Why don't we just try it, Barry? You deserve to be happy again and if I can be the one to do that, I want to. Don't you think Peyton would have wanted you to be happy too?"

He was right, I knew. I looked him in the eyes. "Emery... I love you, but..."

"It's a simple yes or no, Barry. Do you want to try to be happy again? With me?"

I closed my eyes and nodded. That's when I felt his whiskers brush against my lips, and it took my breath away.

I opened my eyes and looked up at him with my head in his lap. "Emery, is it okay if I kiss you?"

He nodded and bent down, lowering his muzzle into a deep kiss.

I could feel that passion cutting through the layers of despair I had wrapped myself in day by day for the past nine months. I didn't want to end the kiss, and neither did he. Eventually he broke it off, and pulled his head back, slowly blinking away the ecstasy of the moment. I began to speak before coherent thought had fully regained its foothold in my mind.

"Emery... th-that was..."

"Please," he said, placing a paw on my chest and fixing me with his keen gaze once more. "Call me Daddy."

A few weeks later, I was on my back on the living room carpet again. It was hot as balls and I was in nothing but my diaper, trying to stay cool.

"FBI! Federal Baby Inspector!" said Emery, running into the room and tickling me.

"Daddyyyyy," I bellowed, chuckling and sitting up to try and swat the otter away.

"Don't 'Daddy' me, little cub," said Emery. "I want you up and dressed. We're going on our weekly hike."

"Ugh, okay, if I *have* to..."

"*After* our change, piddle pants," he said, guiding me into our bedroom.

"Okay, okay," I said. "Wait, do I have to wear *pants* again?"

Emery rolled his eyes, but he couldn't hide his smile. "Dork. Of course you do!"

"Okay, okay, don't get your knickers in a twist, old man."

"*Old man?! I'm only thirty!*"

I smiled, and so did he. Then we both burst out into laughter. Spontaneous bouts of joy. The first sign that we're both going off our rockers – or healing. But maybe that's what love does. And any day of the week you'll see us giggling to each other about nothing.

These days I've got more energy, and I feel healthier – both emotionally and physically. Emery was there for me through the roughest period of my life, and I'm proud to call him Daddy. We're both still healing over the loss of Peyton, but our weekly pilgrimage from our living room at home to our living room in the mountains has done us wonders in getting where we need to be.

Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to put in another call to the Federal Bureau of Incontinence.

I think you can guess why.