

The Padded Palace Act II: Chapter 3

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Boredom. Every Little's true arch-nemesis was boredom. And as easy as it was for Skye to fall into Little Space at the drop of a hat, being left alone in a playpen for almost an hour with nothing but baby toys did start to wear on her without a friend to play with. She'd thought about testing out the new swing set, but her desire to play on it with her friends for the first time kept her butt planted. Carol had made it sound like she'd be back with Ellie in a few minutes, but as it stood, she wasn't even certain that they were still in the house with her.

Staring at the thin, pink walls of the playpen, Skye knew that all she had to do to get to the bottom of where everyone had gone was to stand up and step over it. The walls couldn't have been more than three feet tall. However, something inside of her refused to cross that line. If she got to her feet and walked over the plastic parameter, that would ruin the immersion of being a Little. No amount of boredom or loneliness or anything else that the world could conceive would ruin that for her.

GRUUUUUUMBLE!

Hunching over, Skye clutched her tummy in pain as it let out a painfully loud roar. Internally, she knew it was usually around the time that Latasha would give her a mid-morning snack. All of a sudden, her iron will to stay Little was crumbling with every ping in her stomach. Frowning behind her pacifier, she begrudgingly crawled over to the side of the playpen closest to the door and propped herself up on her knees. Stepping across was a no-no, but climbing over on your knees was nothing more than a bratty Little sneaking out. It was the perfect compromise.

Unfortunately, Skye slightly underestimated the sturdiness of the playpen. As she grabbed onto the edge and pushed all of her weight upward, the section of the wall she was clinging to snapped off from the rest and came crashing to the ground on top of her. "So much for staying in Little Space," she thought, rolling her eyes and chuckling at the cheap plastic the playpen was made with. Luckily, it was designed to break apart, so no damage was done. She tossed it to the side and got to her feet.

It had been a few days since Skye was last out of Little Space, a state of mind she seldom preferred. With a dejected sigh, she got to her feet and moved towards the door, toddling awkwardly with every step. She'd barely made it to the hallway before her lopsided footing started pulling her back towards Little Space already. There was something about waddling with a diaper on that threw her right back, regardless of the circumstances. However, not wanting to crawl around Carol and Ellie's expansive house on an empty stomach, she decided to restrain her instincts and held onto being big enough to walk.

Skye timidly started her search, having only been to Carol's house a few times before this. And with the vast majority of that time being spent in the nursery back before it was upgraded. With each room she went to, she walked back to the nursery immediately after, both so she wouldn't get lost and in case she'd just missed Carol and Ellie's arrival.

It didn't take long, though, for that to get exhausting quickly. Thankfully, on her trip back from one of the spare bedrooms, she caught sight of Carol outside in the backyard. Sadly, she could only see her through a window and had no idea where an exit might be. In true Little fashion, she raised her fist and started to bang on the glass repeatedly whilst screaming, "Auntie Carol!" repeatedly.

Carol instantly turned towards the window, startled at first before calming down as she saw it was only Skye. Stifling a chuckle, she strode up to the window. "I'll be inside in a sec!" she yelled, making sure Skye could hear her clearly.

Feeling her anxiety subside, Skye nodded before plopping herself back onto the ground. Now that she knew where Carol was and vice versa, she no longer needed her Little age to be high enough to walk. Grabbing her toes with both of her hands, she rolled onto her back and began babbling. While an odd sight to some, this was her easiest way back to Little Space on her own. It combined the feeling of being rocked, the sound of her diaper crinkling with each movement, or the childishness of holding her feet in the air with her hands to great effect, sending her back to proper mental age with ease.

Moments later, Carol arrived in the room with her, placing her hands on her hips and mockingly shaking her head. "Oh dear, what a mighty big baby I have on my hands," she said, bending down and prodding Skye's side with her pointer finger, "I'll bet you're wondering where Ellie is, huh?"

Squirming on the ground, Skye giggled at every single poke that impacted her soft sides, each one tickling her sensitive skin to no end. Mercifully, Carol stopped not long after, allowing Skye to collect herself. "I gots wonewy in da nuwsewy," she said, reaching out and curling her arms around Carol's legs, "Ans I hungry!"

Plucking Skye up off the ground, Carol proceeded to carry the fussy girl to the kitchen, before placing her on her feet in front of the pantry door, only for her to fall back onto her butt again. "Alright, Skye Blue, lunch won't be for another hour or so. In the meantime, help yourself to any of Ellie's snacks. I keep them all on the bottom shelf for her."

"Waid, I gets ta choose?" said Skye, her anxiety slowly rising. Latasha always picked out her snacks, knowing that too many choices could lead to a meltdown.

This was a fact that Carol knew, but didn't have time to accommodate today. She was already stepping away from party prep as is, and couldn't afford to pause too long if she was going to have everything ready for tomorrow. Kneeling in front of Skye, Carol cupped her chin and presented her with a comforting smile. "Listen, I need you to be my big girl today. I wish I had more time to spend with you, but I have a lot of work to get done. Why don't you try to pick yourself something out and go play with Ellie for a bit? I'll bet she's still in her room."

"B-But I don know whewe hew woom is!" shouted Skye feeling a tantrum coming on, "Ans...ans why I am I hewe if no one ewse is?!"

Sighing, Carol broke eye contact and looked down at the floor. She couldn't just tell Skye that Latasha needed her out of the house so she could give Connor some much-needed babying. Having no answer at all was even worse, though. Thinking on her feet, she did her best to lie

convincingly, “Well, that’s because I asked her if you could come early. You see, I need a Little to test all of the party activities we have planned and so when things are more set up outside, you’ll get to test everything out before Ellie and the others do! Very exciting, no?”

Hook, line, and sinker, Skye bought every word that came out of Carol’s mouth. She had no idea that she was needed for such an important task. Blushing out how much she overreacted, she nodded her head. “Am happy ta hewp!” she said, puffing out her chest and pretending to be Big.

“That’s my good girl,” said Carol, giving Skye a few head pats, “Now, grab yourself a snackie and run along until I need you. Ellie’s room is just down that hallway all the way at the end.” She pointed towards one of the corridors and waited for Skye to nod her head, showing that she understood. With a kiss on the forehead, she waved bye for now and headed back outside.

Once again, Skye was left on her own. With Carol now out of sight, she turned to look at the pantry, its tall door making her more nervous than she already was. Crawling up to the door, she reached out and took hold of the doorknob, twisting it until it opened. As she looked inside, her eyes went as wide as dinner plates with the plethora of options she had to choose from. It felt like a mini-grocery store with how many choices there were. Cookies, crackers, candies, and more!

Skye was overwhelmed, to say the least. Still, with all the faith that Carol was placing in her, she didn’t want to let her down. Eying a fun-size pack of Oreos, she grabbed them gleefully and started to unwrap her delicious treat. However, just as she was about to take her first bite, something struck her. Why stop at one small bag of cookies? Carol had given her free rein over the pantry. Reaching out, she snatched five more fun-sized packets and shoved them into her diaper for later, also snagging some fruit gummies and peanut butter crackers while she was at it. Had to cover all the snack flavor profiles, after all.

With her diaper loaded full of junk food, Skye chuckled as she toddled off down the hallway, her eyes trained on the plain white door in the distance. All the while, she munched on her open packet of cookies, dropping crumbs everywhere with no regard whatsoever. “Ellie will be so happy that I brought enough to share,” she thought, feeling a strange sense of superiority over her genius snack idea, “Was this what it felt like to be Big?”

Before she had time to mull that thought over, Skye had arrived at Ellie’s door. She raised her cookie-filled fist and knocked on the door three times, waiting for Ellie to give her permission to enter. Latasha always reminded her that it was good form to knock first. Unfortunately, her patience could only hold out so long as no response followed.

Bobbing in place for about thirty seconds, Skye had finally had enough of waiting for an eternity and slowly opened the door. “Ewwie, I’b comin in!” she yelled, hoping that her friend would hear her intrusion. As she entered the room, though, she quickly discovered why Ellie hadn’t heard her.

Sitting at a computer desk with headphones over her ears, Ellie was busy shooting all of her enemies in what looked to be a very violent-looking video game. “Get no-scoped, loser!” she shouted before giggling manically and continuing her game.

TO BE CONTINUED...