

Uncontrollable

by fyiagcg

Perhaps I've lost control. Perhaps I never really had it.

Shopping

Chapter 1 of 1

Perhaps I've lost control. Perhaps I never really had it.

"No, baby," I say, soothingly. "That one's too small. It won't fit." Her response is louder whining.

Though I'm not sure if she understands my words, the message is through; her arms won't fit through the sleeves of the pink, fuzzy sweater.

Her whines get more and more urgent, but she is four years old – though bigger than some six year olds – and trying to fit into a sweater marked ~~6-12 months~~. Nothing in this entire section is anywhere near big enough for her.

She pulls at the sleeve, getting frustrated. Her whines become screams and I can see tears threatening to spill.

She switches arms, and when it still won't go on, she begins to cry and starts flailing her arms. She hits herself; slaps her face, arms, and chest.

Apparently, she decides to hand the matter over to an experienced sweater-getter-onner. She pushes the fluffy infant's cardigan into my hands and returns to her futile attempt to get her arm in the sleeve.

When I try to put the sweater away, she screams and grabs onto my arm, my shirt, anything so I can't turn away. I try to put it down and she tears at my hands, scratching them, until I hold it up again for her to try to put on.

She's screaming and sobbing now, and throws herself to the floor. I am able, with her distracted by her tantrum, to throw the sweater on a shelf behind me – not where it belongs, but that really isn't my major concern right now.

Realizing, perhaps, that being on the ground is not furthering her agenda, she cranes her head to look up at me and then slams it to the sparsely carpeted floor. She brings it back up and then hits it on the ground, again and again.

People all around the store are looking at me. The sales clerk is glaring daggers at me, maybe for the ruckus or maybe for not folding and putting away that stupid sweater.

Mothers, some with their well-behaved children in tow, look at me with disgust. I hate the look they give me, the 'can't you control your child?' stare that makes me want to scream.

I get down on the ground with the screaming toddler and try to manage a tone both sweet and patient ~~and~~ loud enough for her to hear over her shrieks.

"Baby," I say, putting my hand on the floor behind her head, "stop, baby. We'll go look in the girl's section. I'm sure they have lots of pretty sweaters."

It's possible she's forgotten about the sweater, maybe she's too upset to listen, maybe her lack of language extends past speaking and to understanding, I don't know. But

my apologetic words fall on deaf ears, if anything she's crying harder.

She throws her head back and, because my hand is there, does not get the satisfying results. She brings it up and hits it down again and again, faster and faster.

Hopefully my cushioning will prevent this precious little girl from getting a concussion. But if she keeps this up, we'll be stopping by the hospital to mend my broken hand – so great is the force with which she slams her head repeatedly.

I pull her up and into my lap for a tight hug. She pushes away from me, still howling. When I hold onto her, she tugs at my hair until strands start to tear out in her tiny fists.

With an "Ouch!" I let go, but I don't think anybody hears me telling her that "hair pulling is not nice."

She's spotted the sweater where I threw it and, while I'm distracted rubbing my scalp, she stumbles over to it.

It hasn't grown and she hasn't shrunk, so it still doesn't fit. In rage she tears at everything on the unassuming shelf, throwing clothes to the floor in scattered waves.

I grab at the sweater, the only thing not now laying in a crumpled pile, and grab a sleeve. I try to pull it from her but she holds tight, tears mingling with snot to the tune of louder wails.

We continue in a tug-of-war for a few moments; I don't even want to wonder what people are thinking of the spectacle.

I hear it before I see it, the *therrriiiping* that quickly becomes evident in a tear at the seam of the left sleeve – baby clothes are not meant for this kind of mistreatment.

Her hold does not loosen with the ripping, but I let go in horror. She was pulling so hard that my release sends her practically flying backwards.

She hits her head on a shelf and sits, stunned, for a moment.

I have just enough time to think, *"Oh great. Yes, folks, I beat the child"* sarcastically before the tears are back full force.

As I gather her into my arms and whisper that I'm sorry, I have to hold back a laugh – the absurdity, that she should accidentally smack her head and shriek in pain, but when she does it on purpose it's me flinching, not her.

As she sobs against my shoulder (and into my ear, I might add) I rub and pat her back, making soothing *shh*'ing noises. She brings her hand into her mouth and sticks her fingers far in until she starts coughing.

I pull her away from me a bit, enough to look at her with concern.

"Don't put your fingers down your throat, baby." She coughs more and I yank her hand from her mouth. "I said don't choke yourself." The second I release her wrist, of course, her hand flies back into her mouth. She's crying and coughing so hard I worry she'll make herself sick – I've seen her do it.

She hits me, open handed, across the face. I feel her nails scratch my cheek and worry she's broken the skin.

"That's it," I say, patience gone. "We're going." I think it's rather admirable that I've been calm and understanding to this point, but I doubt onlookers are likely to be impressed by me any time soon.

I pull her to her feet, but she collapses, as though boneless. I try again; she tumbles from my arms and crumples to the floor, screams perhaps a bit more strained than they once were, but still with feeling. I grab her wrists and try again to pull her up, but she won't stand. She dangles heavily by the wrists, dead weight. I lift her up and move to carry her, she clearly won't walk for me, and she slaps my face repeatedly. As we walk to the exit she pinches the skin of my upper arms and neck.

I'm almost out the door when I notice the ripped sweater still clutched tightly to her.

I return to the register. Ripped and covered with snot, the sweater isn't quite re-sellable anymore. She still won't let it go. I sit her on the counter and pry her little fingers from the stupid cardigan.

She screams louder – which I thought was impossible – and hits my face with both (unfortunately) free hands. I struggle to pay the glowering sales girl, remembering the mess I just left and feeling horrible.

"I'm really sorry," I say through long blonde curly hair and slapping hands.

The girl dismisses me and I gather the screaming, hitting child back into my arms. She stops hitting me when I give back the useless sweater.

I'm almost out the door when a woman stops me. I try to sidestep and pass her, but she has something to say to me, I guess.

I know what she'll say before she says it.

"You should learn to control your child," she scolds me, and with a muffled apology I run from the store.

The crying and screaming have stopped by the time I reach the car. I try to scold her as I put her in the car seat. She understands that I'm angry, but has no idea why. She puts her arms around my neck and doesn't let go until I tell her, less angry, that it's ok and I love her.

I slide in behind the wheel and start the car.

Only then do I let my own tears fall.

A few things you might like to know about 'baby':

She was diagnosed with Autism at the age of two.

Most of the things in this story have happened, at some time or another, some more often than others.

I have two clear scars across my right cheek from times that she scratched me, one over a year ago and one about 4 months ago. Plus multiple smaller scars on my hands and arms from pinching and scratching.

She is not my child.