

What is one of the most embarrassing things that can happen to you in a church? A girl suffers deep humiliation at her darling baby sisters' hands.

To be embarrassed

It was a warm Sunday morning but my sisters and I were inside of the house, playing Pong, an exciting video game, on our little black and white TV. Our father walked into the room smiling.

"Come on you three, we have to get to mass. Put the game up for now."

We sighed, but obeyed our father, respectfully. He was a good daddy. He took my sisters by the hands, and I walked ahead, happily.

"Wait Daddy. I want to say goodbye to Rug."

"Okay, hurry up."

I rushed off to my parents' room and ran straight to the hamster cage. I lifted off the top and slowly put my hand inside. I knew that smart people didn't startle the cute little things; they could really jump, when taken by surprise, and possibly bite you in the process. I let my mother's cream-colored longhaired hamster walk slowly over to me and sniff my hand in recognition. I giggled. He was so cute! He looked like a tiny throw rug, made out of bearskin with his shiny flowing fur. He had the longest hair I had ever seen on a hamster, and we've had dozens of them over the years. I was about to pick him up when my mother called for me.

Quickly I put the lid back on the cage and ran down our big twisting staircase. I stopped briefly at the landing in the middle and looked out the big glass window at the apple trees below. I wanted to climb them, but it would have to wait an hour.

I ran downstairs the rest of the way and out the front door. I leaped over the wide blue steps of our front porch and down the sidewalk. Daddy was waving to me. Everyone was already in the green and brown 1970 something station wagon. I jumped into the car happily.

"You look nice, Mommy."

"Thank you."

I looked over her long white dress with gold trim. She was wearing her black hair in a long braid today. She reminded me of her Cherokee grandmother, a woman that unfortunately, I never got to meet. My grandmother had told me a thing or two about her.

Later my sisters and I would comb out Mama's hair and braid it again. She would hunt for three brushes or combs around the house and divide her hair into three sections. If each section wasn't of equal thickness, the sister missing out would complain and Mama would have to separate her hair again. It was that way all the time. Once my sisters and I split a bag of M&M's. After doing a meticulous count, two were left over. I was the oldest and good at math. I did the calculations. I divided each M&M into thirds. We each got $\frac{2}{3}$ of an M&M.

Daddy grabbed Mama's hand and held it while driving to church. When we got there, us girls started giggling and skipping.

"Hold on girls!" Daddy said. "We're at church now, no playing around."

We slowed down and walked normally. We walked through the door and I felt a sense of reverence. I dipped my fingertips into the holy water and made the sign of the cross on myself. My family did the same. I could smell the wonderful familiar musky

scent of incense and knew that we had entered a sacred place. I looked ahead and saw a tall statue of Our Blessed Virgin Mother Mary and another of Our Holy Lord Jesus Christ. I bowed my head in respect.

We sat down at a pew and got comfortable. The priest came out and began the service.

“Let us pray,” he said.

I bowed my head and prayed the prayers of a devout 10-year-old believer. Shortly afterwards *it* began. My sisters excused themselves to go to the bathroom. My parents and I figured that an 8 and a 6-year-old could handle the chore well enough on their own, especially considering that this church was attached to our school and they knew where the bathroom was.

Moments later, the strangest noises were coming from the back of the church. The priest was momentarily distracted but continued, that is, until the noises got really loud. Mama leaned over toward Daddy.

“I wonder what’s taking the girls so long.”

I got a sick feeling. The noise was so distracting now, that the priest had to stop. He excused himself and stepped down from the altar. He made his way down the aisle and past us. I jumped up and followed him. The noise was coming from the ladies’ room. When we got there, I pushed open the door. My mouth dropped open in shame. My sisters were hanging from the stalls, swinging like monkeys, and making jungle noises. One took a flying leap through the air while yelling out like an animal or Tarzan or something. The priest was looking at them in shock. I thought I was going to throw-up from humiliation. My whole face and neck burned and was beet red I’m sure.

“Girls,” he said calmly but with obvious annoyance, “this behavior is totally inappropriate. You should know better than to act this way at church.”

They jumped down, shamefully, both muttering, “Sorry.”

I closed my eyes for a brief second and sighed. I grabbed their hands and the priest led the way out. Angrily, I muttered under my breath, “I’m so embarrassed I could die! Imagine what Mommy and Daddy are going to feel when we walk out in front of everybody and they all see us! They’re all going to know where the screaming monkey noises came from!”

They walked with their heads bowed, the way mine had been on the way in. We took our seats. The priest spoke to the people.

“I’m sorry for the disturbance, everyone. I had to make sure that everything was okay. Everything is fine.”

Then he went back to where he had left off. I looked up and sighed in gratitude that he had spared my family any more public humiliation. My parents looked at us in deep concern and questioned us in whispered voices. I swallowed in nervousness. I knew my sisters were busted. They were going to be in big trouble, and I would be climbing that apple tree alone today.