

The Christmas Pajama Pact

Created May 2025, main storyline supplied by Carg, text and pictures by ChatGPT 4o.

It was the first real snowfall of December when the Winters family packed up their SUV and headed north to Grandma June's cozy cottage, nestled at the edge of a pine forest in Vermont. The long driveway was already blanketed in white, and twinkling lights lined the eaves, casting a soft glow in the early evening dusk.

The kids, Emma (14) and Lucas (12), weren't thrilled to leave behind their screens and friends for a "quiet family holiday," but they had to admit there was something magical about Grandma June's place: the way the fireplace crackled, the scent of cinnamon and pine, the ancient grandfather clock ticking steadily in the hallway. Plus, the cookies were always a bonus.

After a warm dinner of stew and cornbread, Grandma June beamed as she disappeared into her cedar closet and returned with two neatly wrapped bundles. "I made something special for you both," she announced proudly.

Emma and Lucas exchanged wary glances.

Grandma held up the first bundle: a pair of red plaid one-piece footed pajamas, complete with a white collar, round buttons down the back, and—yes—a comically old-fashioned dropseat, fastened shut with even more buttons.

"I used to have pajamas just like these when I was your age," she said, her eyes twinkling. "Warm, cozy, and not a cold draft in sight!"

The kids forced smiles.

"Oh wow, thank you, Grandma," Emma said, the corners of her mouth twitching.

"They look... retro," Lucas added diplomatically.

"You'll both wear them tonight, of course," their dad said with a grin. "It's tradition now!"

"Tradition you just made up," Emma muttered.

Later, in the guest room they shared for the holiday, the kids stared at the pajamas laid out on their beds like relics from another century.

"You're kidding me," Lucas said. "These button down the *back*. How are we even supposed to—?"

"...And the feet are *attached*," Emma groaned. "I'm going to roast to death."

Their mom knocked and entered with a patient smile, holding a mug of tea. "Need help?"

"I can't even reach these buttons," Emma admitted, half-laughing, half-mortified.

"I think I need a team of butlers," Lucas added.

Their mom chuckled and set the tea down. "Well, good thing you've got me."

And so the three of them wrestled with buttons and tugged on fabric until the kids were fully buttoned, and dropseat-secured.

They shuffled down to the living room like reluctant elves, their footed pajamas scuffing softly on the wood floors. Grandma June clapped her hands in delight.

“Oh, you look *darling!* Just like me and my cousins when we were little,” she said, retrieving a yellowed photo from the mantle as proof. Sure enough, four kids, circa 1950-something, stood grinning in nearly identical pajamas.

That night, nestled on the couch under a quilt, hot cocoa in hand, the kids slowly thawed toward the idea. The pajamas *were* soft. And warm. And somehow, despite the indignity of the dropseat, they felt snug and safe, wrapped in layers of history and love.

Lucas whispered, “If anyone from school ever sees this, I’m doomed.”

Emma nudged him. “Don’t worry. We’re in the middle of nowhere. No one will ever know.”

Except for Grandma’s camera, which clicked softly in the corner.



The Pajamas Strike Back

Back home in the suburbs after their snowy Vermont Christmas, life slowly returned to normal for the Winters family—school, work, and the usual flurry of busy evenings. But something had changed. Namely, the presence of two extremely distinctive pairs of pajamas, hanging neatly in Emma and Lucas’s closets.

The first night back, as temperatures dipped below freezing, their mom suggested, “Why not wear your Christmas pajamas again? They’re warm, right?”

The kids groaned, but the memory of Grandma's beaming face—and the chill in their bedrooms—was enough to persuade them.

So once again, arms in, backs turned, buttons fastened.

Emma grumbled as she stood stiffly, dropseat secured like a vault. "I swear, this thing is escape-proof."

Lucas mumbled through the neck flap, "I feel like a prisoner in flannel."

But it wasn't long before the parents began to realize these pajamas had... benefits.

For one, Lucas's habit of sneaking downstairs late at night to raid the snack cabinet? Curbed. He could barely get the back buttons undone without help, much less wriggle out of the pajamas quietly in the dark.

And Emma's not-so-secret late-night texting turned into mild panic when her boyfriend Tyler mentioned he might "drop by" and tap on the window.

"I can't exactly open the window in *this*," she hissed to her mom the next morning. "I'd have to go *out* the window to let him in. I'm practically sealed inside."

Her mom just sipped her coffee and smiled.

"They're very... practical," she later told Grandma June over the phone. "Very warm. Very secure."

"I *told* you," Grandma said, delighted. "Back in my day, you couldn't get into trouble in footed pajamas if you tried."

Despite their annoyance, the kids secretly appreciated how warm and snug the pajamas were—especially when the furnace made its usual groaning sounds at 3 a.m. And the dropseat, while laughable, meant they didn't have to shimmy out of the entire thing for bathroom trips. Still, they didn't exactly love *being* seen in them.

Then, in mid-May, just as spring started warming into summer, a large brown package arrived with Grandma June's meticulous handwriting on the label.

"Another surprise," their mom said, setting it on the table.

Emma eyed it warily. "Please let it be normal clothes."

But inside were two new pairs of pajamas—same retro charm, same back buttons and dropseat, but this time made of lightweight cotton, with short sleeves and cropped legs.

Lucas held his up, dismayed. "She made *summer versions*?"

Emma groaned. "She's weaponized pajamas."

Still, the parents beamed.

"Amazing," said Dad. "Thanks, Grandma!"

Emma and Lucas looked at each other, resigned.

There was no escape.



The Great Pajama Escape

By mid-June, Emma and Lucas had grown used to their "summer sleepers," as Grandma called them—lightweight, breathable, and, of course, still with that pesky line of buttons down the back and the infamous dropseat flap.

Despite the initial embarrassment, the pajamas had become their nighttime uniform. Quietly, they admitted the soft cotton wasn't so bad. But their frustration at being unable to get in and out of them alone hadn't faded.

One especially warm night, after tossing and turning in their rooms, Lucas knocked lightly on Emma's door.

"Hey," he whispered. "Can you get mine?"

She blinked, bleary-eyed but understood immediately. She sat up and turned around. "Only if you do mine after."

And so began their silent little rebellion: a nightly routine of sibling cooperation, born not out of affection, but necessity. Each night, they'd slip into each other's rooms, undo the row of buttons, yank the flap back into place, and move on with their evening—Lucas to sneak a bag of chips, Emma to text Tyler in her "real" pajamas hidden under her bed.

For a while, it worked perfectly. No one suspected a thing.

Until one evening, Mom noticed something odd: Emma's pajama flap was askew. Not unbuttoned, but not perfectly sealed either. Suspicion piqued.

The next night, Dad caught a glimpse of Lucas darting back to his room from Emma's.

That was enough.

The next morning at breakfast, the parents said nothing. But as soon as the kids left for school, they picked up the phone and called Grandma June.

"They're working together," Mom said.

Grandma laughed. "Well, miracles *do* happen."

"But they've figured out how to undo each other's pajamas. We need a way to, you know... preserve the usefulness."

There was a pause. Then Grandma June, crafty as ever, said, "Leave it to me."

A week later, a package arrived: two small drawstring bags with the kids' names on them. Inside were modified pajama prototypes—same plaid pattern, same cut, but this time the back buttons were *covered* by a small flap secured with snaps and a *discreet padlock*. Alongside the pajamas was a tiny key for each, sewn into a decorative tag on Mom's keychain.

"They're... locking pajamas?" Emma asked in disbelief.

Mom smiled, holding up the key. "Just for bedtime. Nothing personal."

Lucas stared at the new design. "I feel like I'm being stored for winter."

"Think of it as a bonding experience," Dad said cheerfully. "And one fewer thing to argue about."

From then on, each night ended with a cheerful:

"Arms in!"

"Turn around."

Snap. Click.

Emma and Lucas groaned in harmony. But oddly enough, the bickering lessened. Maybe because it was hard to argue when you were both buttoned in like adorable, plaid-swathed burritos.

Or maybe... just maybe... those ridiculous pajamas were doing what Grandma had intended all along:

Keeping them warm.

Keeping them safe.

And—whether they liked it or not—keeping them together.