

## 11 - Rude Awakening

Dawn couldn't sit still as she paced in the living room, harboring close to the exit where the door was, even if her vertical disadvantage made it an unlikely escape route. She was losing her patience and fast as the imaginary timer slowly ticked away with what time, if any at all that remained, dwindled away until her fast track home would become significantly delayed.

"She took *everything*?" Katherine asked her husband with a bothered look, clearly rattled by the contents of the story.

"It's what it seemed like..." James sighed. "When I found Dawn, she'd already picked the room clean trying to find her stuff. You'd think a tornado hit it."

"Can we please explain what happened while we're in the car?" Dawn finally drifted back over to complain. Why did everything need to be done in sequence? Couldn't they talk and drive at the same time?

Unfortunately for Dawn, she stood right next to the part of the sofa where Katherine sat. But instead of any real recognition, the only response she got was a brief pat on her head as if to console her. She continued to favor the Amazon's plight rather than the silly Little's as Dawn was getting ready to boil over.

"Once she explained the whole thing to me, I obviously couldn't let her stay there..." James mulled. What's more, they felt no seeming urgency, having the audacity for dramatic pauses.

"Absolutely not," Katherine affirmed her husband's decision with a small, adamant nod. "To think she could've been taken..."

"Guys?" Dawn spoke up again. "I'm right here; now please, can we go?"

"Dawn, sweetie, I promise," Katherine smiled down at her. She softened her tone that didn't carry the same attentiveness she just had for her husband. "We're gonna get this all figured out, but you just need to be a little patient, okay?"

She was going to scream back at her, but instead she turned on her heel as she stormed away.

*Why, why?! I can't afford to waste any more time!*

"So, I brought her back here..." James happened to look over at Waver who was lounging in his dog bed positioned just right for the sunlight from the window to hit him. He looked back at

Katherine. “Of course I was going to tell you; I guess I sort of wanted to broach it properly, though... You two didn’t exactly end on a high note.”

Katherine’s remaining smile she had given Dawn shrunk a little bit more at that. “No...we didn’t...” Yet she pursed her lips as she laid her palms on her thighs with a brightening look on her face. “But I know Dawn’s been through a lot, and she’s still going through something now, so...I can be patient.”

James did smile at his wife’s optimism, but his pure happiness soon dwindled as well. “I promised her that I’d find some way to get her back home, but...” In place of words, he rubbed the back of his head.

“You promised her that...?” Katherine looked to see if Dawn was in the vicinity. You’d think he had told her Santa wasn’t real. “But James, her passport and visa...”

“I know,” he didn’t let the unanswered doubts linger, “I just...” he sighed once more. “I’ll need to look into it at the very least. It’s not unheard of, right? Traveling Littles?”

The topic itself seemed to add awkwardness to the air.

“If they’re with their parents...” Katherine said, implying something that needed clarification.

“Amazon parents?” He asked.

Katherine quietly nodded with a brief glance over her shoulder, but quickly followed up. “They’d have to be officially adopted by that point, though...” She added with the faintest glimmer in her eye. “But we wouldn’t just be able to leave her there, James. Won’t that leave us in trouble here?”

“Of course it would,” he nodded without a second thought. “We’d be breaking the law if we left our child in another dimension.”

Finally, after Dawn had calmed herself down, she walked back into the living room a bit more level-headed.

“Look,” Dawn said clear enough, or maybe she was just lucky on her timing, because now both Amazons stared at her, “I’m sorry for getting so angry, but please...you guys have to understand that I need to get to the Portal Station, or the hotel!” She was practically begging. “There could still be a chance for me to get back now! Today!”

Unexpectedly, it was Katherine who was the bearer of bad news.

“But sweetie, you don’t have a passport or visa...?” It came measured and soft with that typical patronizing sense.

“We’ll...we can figure something out!” Dawn blurted out. She couldn’t accept it as just that. Just because she was short of her documentation, if need be, she’d force her way into the portal...somehow! “But we gotta go! I can’t miss my way home!”

She looked to Katherine for a response, but all she got was a saddened look. She turned to James. “Come on...! You promised me!” James was a lot of things, but surely he didn’t have the gaul to back out on a deal.

“...I promised you we’d figure this out,” James only partially agreed, “but I didn’t say that it could be done overnight, Dawn... This was never going to be that easy...” But instead, he had taken their contract and twisted and morphed the clauses that bound his obligation so underhandedly.

A frustrated whine left her mouth. Her muscles tensed as she balled up her fists. “No! It’s never been easy!” Dawn shouted, tearing up again. “I can’t be stuck here! I can’t! I’ll just...just drop me off there! I can sneak into the portal! Apparently I’m pretty small here, so I think I can manage?” She offered a small, deteriorating laugh of morbid humor.

For once there wasn’t the linger of silence and instead an immediate reaction was triggered. “Absolutely not.” Both James and Katherine said in half-synchronized unity.

The reply stunned Dawn for a moment. “Wh...what?”

James took the lead. “I said we’d think of something, but absolutely nothing that has to do with breaking the law, Dawn.” His words emanated an immovable attitude.

“Breaking the...? Why though?! How am I breaking the law if I’m just going back home? What law keeps you people from trapping me in this stupid dimension?!” Dawn shouted with a hot head.

“We could talk about why the rules are what they are if you want,” James started, “but I don’t think that’s what you want to hear.”

“No,” Dawn said with a sharp exhale of steam, finding her voice much thicker. “it isn’t.” All it would have been was more twisted logic that truly went above Dawn’s head both metaphorically

and literally. “W-what if we go there and just...explain my situation? Maybe we can find somebody in my group! I...I can tell them to send for help!” She pleaded, though in her mind she could only think of Heather, who had been poisoned into alienating Dawn entirely. She could only hope that word hadn’t spread...

Dawn waited for an answer, but one wasn’t fast coming. She looked to either Amazon, yet neither had a definitive response, as if it wasn’t as black and white as it should’ve been.

“You’re kidding...” She said at a loss for words. The drive in her eyes was lost as it fell to the floor. “So what? Do I really not matter? Do you both really care that little...?” Anything in the realm of logic Dawn could throw at them seemed to fall on deaf ears or continuously be “wrong”. If it appealed to emotion and feeling, though? Apparently that was something they *could* respond to.

“Don’t *ever* say that,” Katherine suddenly admonished her, “You are absolutely important and are our number one priority!”

Dawn didn’t look her in the eye, her passion was too bright to witness without flinching, but then Dawn remembered with a sour feeling just what Katherine wanted from her to begin with; why James and Katherine even bothered with her from the start.

“Then let’s *go* already!” Dawn complained with an urge to stomp her bare foot. “Doesn’t it take like an hour to get there? We need to hurry!”

“Dawn,” James finally said, “we aren’t going. Not today.”

She looked as if she’d just been insulted.

“Not...not today? My group leaves *today!*” Dawn shouted as she tossed her hands in the air. “Don’t you get it?! If I miss the portal, I’m stuck here for who knows how long!” She could feel her lungs closing up as the last few breaths of freedom were escaping her.

“And we’ve already been over this;” James spoke with an absolute kind of tone, “your documentation is gone. There’s not a single Amazon there that would let you get within a hundred feet of a portal without that kind of information, and especially without a ticket, even.”

His dose of reality was crushing, yet Dawn couldn’t get a grip as she remained in a mindset that still left hope.

“Then...I don’t care if I break the law! I’ll sneak in! Just take me!”

“We already said no.” James started to wear a stern expression. “Not only would you be caught, but then that would lead back to me and Katherine.”

Dawn nearly wanted to say ‘so?’, seeing that their comeuppance felt deserved after what they’d been trying to do, but she backed down a little. And if the guilt from dragging them down with her wasn’t enough, just a little more fuel seemed to be doused on her flame.

“Once you’re caught, Dawn, at best you’d only be shipped off to an orphanage that deals with lawbreaking Littles. You’d be conditioned and educated into a mindless toddler. Do you really want to risk that?” His voice and explanation didn’t carry any kind of luxuries or seem to hold any stops in its brutal honesty. Even Dawn felt and looked unnerved.

As she struggled for a retort, she felt a hand against her back.

“James...” Katherine said with a warning look at him. It was only after a silent scolding from his spouse that he softened his look.

“Dawn,” he said after taking a breath, “It’s unlikely that you’ll even see your group if we took you today. I know you’re upset, but it’s better that we approach this safely so that everyone involved stays safe.”

Dawn angled her eyes toward the floor where James’ feet were. She was trying not to look aggravated. These two already forced their way into her life without Dawn instigating anything, and yet it somehow becomes her problem and responsibility once her actions affect two intruders?

Of course she didn’t intentionally want to bring any kind of burden or legal trouble to these two, yet she was upset, impatient, and worried. It felt wrong to let such a possible golden opportunity slip through her fingers. Unless it was some kind of trap enacted by fate, wasn’t she just an idiot for letting such an escape stroll by?

Once again, somehow, she was wrong and the Amazon was right; a rule that never seemed to fail. It broke her heart to try and compromise and sacrifice what she dearly believed was her true means of escape, yet her word seemed to carry so little in this dimension.

“F-fine...” Her mouth quivered a little as she said it, feeling the brunt of the finality even from her own voice. “Whatever...” She spun on her heel as she stormed off to the stairs, trying to at least find a quiet place to cry.

Katherine was already standing up to follow her, “Dawn, sweetie...!”

“Don’t follow me.” She said plain as day with a quivering look, freezing the woman in her tracks. “I want to be alone...” Dawn said with a snuffle.

Katherine held her hands together, fingers interlocked as they wriggled amongst themselves uncomfortably.

“O...okay...” Katherine did say with a forlorn heart.

It was done. She was refused her best chance at getting home. How long would it take for her to get back now? That’s what she hated the most about herself. Only after blowing up and storming off did she think of the follow-up questions that should have been asked. But she couldn’t go back and ask them, not now. She was far too embarrassed and broken.

What’s more, her stomach gurgled uncomfortably as she entered the room where her makeshift bed was. What was she supposed to do? Feast on sleep so that she could manage to pass the time without splitting hairs entirely? She didn’t want to be here. She didn’t want any of this. Knowing that bearing with any of it hardly made a difference now in the short scheme of things, it all felt so foreign and strange. She wanted to go home. She wanted her familiar comforts back.

She sat on the bedding but didn’t lay down. She sat on her bottom, pulling her knees to her chest as she rested her face between them. Quietly, she sobbed.

James only had to give his wife one look before he sighed at the floor, “I know...”

“James!” Katherine wore a disappointed look, “You have to be more considerate; she’s only a Little...!”

“But still,” he sat up straight to look at her again, “on some level I think this was unavoidable. There’s no way around her being upset about this, Kath.”

Katherine’s stern look slowly devolved into a frowning face with sympathetic eyebrows. “I know that...! I just wish I could help her through it...” She said as her head glanced again at the stairs.

“Would you have rathered if I didn’t bring her home?” He asked a forward and honest question.

“Don’t even say that.” Katherine’s reply was near-immediate, looking absolutely unwavering in her response. “I’m glad that she’s here; I’m happy more than anything...! It...it has to be a sign,

right?” She looked at James hopefully. “I...I want what’s best for her James, and I want her to be happy...”

James embraced her in a hug from behind.

“Maybe after some time has passed she’ll calm down.” James offered as he let her go, though he caught sight of a nearby time. “I really should start to get going...”

Katherine nodded. “Don’t worry about us; I’ll make sure it’s a good day,” she smiled confidently.

“Though what about tomorrow?” James asked. “I’m in the office again, and you can’t just take another day off...”

“We’ll figure something out,” Katherine gave him an inspiring look. “You go finish getting ready for work, okay?” She gently started to push him to the stairs.

“Oh, James, take the other car today, okay?”

“So you get the carseat?”

“Yes please~” She drifted away to the kitchen with a sing-song voice.

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Dawn could hear the front door from downstairs open and close. Obviously it could mean just about anything, but she figured someone had left. She wasn’t exactly crying anymore, but not being sad would have been a grossly incorrect description.

Though, in spite of her sorrowful mood, color her surprised when she could hear the door to the room slowly open, unannounced.

Spinning her head around she saw it was Katherine poking her head in. Her heart sank a little, seeing that it wasn’t James, but at the same time it was a small relief after their moment of tension. It took Dawn a second to remember what she was wearing so unashamedly, as she quickly pulled a blanket over herself.

She had half a mind to complain about knocking, but instead, “What?” A simple question that insinuated she didn’t want to be bothered.

“James just left for work,” Katherine said as she came closer to the makeshift bed, making quiet observations.

“I’ll be fine. You can go to work, too. I’ll just stay in here.” Dawn said with conviction. If it had to be her final resting place, just not to experience the rest of this hell, she’d be content with that.

“Awh, you can’t stay up here all day!” Katherine sounded much more friendly as she came over and took a seat beside her on the floor. “I’m not going in to work today, actually, so it’s just you and me!”

There was some coincidental timing however, as the jingle of a collar waltzed right in.

“Sorry, three of us,” Katherine chuckled as Waver casually came over and sat on the bed, though Dawn instinctively inched back a little. Albeit a small reaction, Katherine asked, “Not a fan of doggies?”

“Not used to big ones...” Dawn muttered, looking at the furry creature lounging about at the other end. She wasn’t going to start sympathizing or let her guard down, but... “...You didn’t have to take off work because of me.”

“I know,” Katherine nodded slightly, looking at Waver, “but I already wasn’t planning to go in even before I found out about the little surprise James brought home.” She giggled. “Besides, it makes me a bit more comfortable knowing there’s someone here to help you out with anything?”

Maybe it was the given context, but something about “anything” didn’t sit right with Dawn. She tried to discern it on the Amazon’s face, but it mostly seemed warm and inviting, like Dawn hadn’t cussed it out the day prior.

“...Well, I’m fine. I managed at my hotel,” for the most part, “I dunno, maybe if you guys have a stool or something I could use...” It sucked asking for things apart from having to be here, but she figured that she might need at least something like that to last a day or two.

“You don’t have to use any stools around here, sweetie,” she chuckled, “all you need to do is ask if you need something?”

“...I’d rather that I don’t get in your guys’ way...”

“You won’t.” Katherine responded with a smile.



There was a sudden, loud bark that felt nearly booming as it startled Dawn. Katherine looked at Waver with a frown.

“Jeez,” she tutted as he innocently wagged his tail, “Waver always likes to make it a big deal when we forget to feed him on the exact minute... He’s like a cat,” she laughed a little.

Dawn didn’t offer any words, just hoping that they’d both leave.

“Waver needs breakfast, and I know I do, too.” Katherine started standing up. “What do you say about joining us, huh?”

For breakfast? “I’m fine...I ate something last night.” A very big lie and certainly against her stomach’s wishes, but she’d rather not fraternize with the enemy.

“Well it couldn’t have been that recently,” Katherine started to poke holes, “You were with James for a good part of the night, weren’t you? I wish he’d have made you something when he brought you here last night...”

“I’m not hungry.” Dawn said and left it at that.

“How about you come downstairs at least?” Katherine seemed to try compromising, like Dawn was being an indignant toddler.

“I’d rather not.”

“I’d rather you did?” She asked sweetly, yet the pressure was light, but still there.

“I don’t have any of my clothes. It’s embarrassing.” It was technically true, but coupled with it were her many other reasons to not leave that room.

“I still can’t believe that tour guide did that to you...” Katherine sighed with a sad look. “I know you don’t want to walk around like that, but it’s only in the house? And...well, I’ve seen you in pull-ups already, honey, so a diaper really isn’t...--”

She reached out her palms to cease the verbal airwaves. “Stop! Don’t...please, just don’t talk about it.” She didn’t want diapers or pull-ups to be so nonchalant. Yes, she didn’t want there to be any attention to them, yet it felt like that was being arrived at by figuring the protection itself was the new norm.

Katherine looked troubled hearing that.

“Well...how about we just call them undies, then?” She offered as an alternative. Dawn went nearly deadpan.

Clearly she didn't get that Dawn didn't want to hear about diapers altogether, not just the word itself.

Dawn exhaled as she figured a response. “Actually, maybe going commando isn't so bad...” She started to say as she reached for the diaper tapes underneath the covers.

“Whoa, hang on there, silly!” Katherine said as she gently moved Dawn's hands away from her diaper. “What are you doing?”

Having her hands move away from her own body rightfully bothered her. “Doing what I should have done the second I got here. I'm not wearing a diaper. James made me in the first place just so I could sit in a car seat!”

“There's nothing else for you to wear, though...” She said delicately, yet as a mindful reminder as if Dawn had forgotten.

“You've already seen me naked, so it can't be that new for you,” Dawn practically scoffed, turning her “logic” right back at her. From another angle, it begged the question of how little Dawn cared to show off her naked figure by this point. In her mind, being naked was far more ideal than being diapered.

She went back to reach for her diaper, yet Katherine stopped her again.

“Dawn, no.” She said firmly.

Dawn rolled her eyes. “It's whatever. I'm gonna be up here all day. No one is going to see me!”

She shook her head, contradicting whatever Dawn thought was the plan. “You're at least coming downstairs to get out of this room. I won't budge on this, missy; it's not polite or mature to walk around naked.”

Dawn narrowed her eyes. “I'm not leaving this room.” Unfortunately, as far as being a house guest went, she was being a piss-poor one.

“You can walk downstairs like a big girl, or I can carry you downstairs if you think that's what you need.”

“I *think* I just need you to leave me alone!” Dawn raised her voice, but started to reconsider her tactics just slightly. “I’m sorry I’m being stubborn, but I have my own standards, Katherine! I know you may not be thrilled to have me here,” she said with only all the bad moments they shared in her mind, “but I promise I’ll try to get out of your hair as soon as possible. Just put up with me for a little longer!”

“I can’t tell you enough how happy I am that you’re here!” Katherine said as she swooped Dawn into her hands and off the bed. “You have a place here, Dawn, and I don’t ever want you thinking that you need to leave,” she smothered the girl in a hug before she could protest, “but we do have rules. I’m sorry if I need to be stern, but if you’re always misbehaving I’m not going to stay quiet.”

“I wasn’t misbehaving,” Dawn grumbled, “I was telling you exactly what I was going to do!”

“Well I think we should change your plans a little.” Katherine smiled like it was a minor spat in a sea of good fortune. She held Dawn against her hip as she walked out of the room.

Dawn, without the physical strength to do much nor the desire to make things absolutely worse, kept her pissy attitude to herself as she was removed from the room against her wishes.

“Come on, Waver!” Katherine turned her head with a rhythmic patting against her thigh.

The dog stood on its fours and took the lead in walking out to the hallway.

“We have two cars, so once we have breakfast, maybe we can think about going somewhere to get you some stuff you’re going to need while you’re here?” Katherine asked, though in Dawn’s mind it felt more like she was telling her how things were *going* to be, not what they *could* be.

“I said I didn’t need any breakfast,” Dawn remained stubborn, “and I don’t really need a lot...I’m not going to be here for long...” She hoped.

“Join us in the kitchen, then.” Katherine corrected herself with a giggle. “And we need to at least get you some things for starters... We need to get you a toothbrush, some socks, a pair of shoes, a few sets of clothes, undies, PJs...” The list seemed to run through her head as she recited from memory.

“I don’t need any pajamas,” Dawn dismissed at least that part. “I just sleep in a shirt and underwear, anyways.”

“Okay,” Katherine nodded with a smile. Dawn was a little taken aback by how she agreed so easily.

“We’ll be around pajama sets at one point today though, so I’ll ask again, kay?”

Then the novelty quickly died. Of course she couldn’t just take a simple ‘no’. There always had to be some kind of followup.

Katherine walked down to the kitchen with Waver right beside her. Once Dawn started to sift through her worries, or at least forget about them, seeing the dog that was somewhat intimidating, reminded her of a family dog her distant relatives had. He was cute...

“...How long have you two had him?” Dawn found herself asking, and Katherine seemed to light up at the chance for smalltalk.

“Waver? Hm...I’d say that it’s been a little over a year and a half, by now. He can be a goofball, but he’s a very good boy, and he’s very smart!”

“That’s...cool. So you guys like pets?”

“I *love* them!” Katherine beamed. “James, though, he took a little convincing at first,” she laughed in what sounded like an apologetic manner. “He was willing to get a cat, but he said a dog was too much.”

“But you got one anyways?”

“I asked him to just try it for a month,” Katherine grinned a little as she reminisced, “he was all over this little puppy within the first week!”

“Mm...” She nodded to indicate she was listening, yet groaned inwardly as they descended to the lower floor.

“What do you like to eat for breakfast?” She asked Dawn.

“I don’t really eat breakfast...” Dawn shrugged. It was the truth, for once she wasn’t being combative.

“What?” Katherine said in turn with a hint of concern. “You don’t eat anything in the morning?”

“No...not really. I’m too busy, anyway.” It really didn’t make a difference to Dawn. She *was* busy. Busy with classes and coursework. Things that she’d be missing out on the longer she stayed here. That alone was enough of a stressor...

“Well I’m sure we can find some time for you to eat breakfast,” she smiled as she entered the kitchen.

“Like I said, I really don’t eat in the morning...” Now she was criticizing Dawn’s lifestyle choices? Then again, she probably had been from the start, except it’d all been kept to herself.

“You really should be, Dawn,” Katherine explained like a schoolteacher as she briefly looked around the kitchen, at a loss. “We’ll need to get you something to sit in, too...” She quietly murmured to herself before setting Dawn back on the floor on her own two feet. “The days here are a lot longer than you’re used to, so it’s extra important that you get all your nutrients and energy to get through the day.”

It was sound reasoning, but Dawn still wanted to believe that she could manage just fine.

Katherine walked over to a closet with Waver in tow as she pulled out a large bag of dog food, somewhat surprising Dawn as the bag looked to be as big as she herself was. Katherine seemed to handle it mostly with ease though as she poured a serving into a metal bowl beside the island.

“Do you like eggs?” Katherine asked.

“They’re fine.” Dawn plainly responded. Eggs were fine, but she needed a chase to go with them. Toast or something to blend with the...eggy taste.

“Then...how about toast?”

“It’s not bad.”

“Hm...cereal?”

“Sometimes, I guess...”

She continued her line of questioning, and seeing that until she didn’t receive a lukewarm response, she was just going to keep asking. Wasn’t she making breakfast for herself? What did Dawn’s input matter?

“Oh! How about waffles?” Katherine smiled like she knew she’d hit the nail on the head.

“I dunno,” Dawn shrugged, “it’s been a while.”

Katherine’s smile drooped for a moment. “Alright... We’re really going to need to figure out the things you like, sweetheart...”

“Uh-huh...” Dawn gave a passive reply just to placate the Amazon. Waver busily munched away at his food while Katherine started looking through the fridge.

Dawn peered in beside her, which didn’t let her see much of anything, given how much shorter she was, but beyond the cool chill from the icy container was an array of ingredients and drinks.

“I can help if you want?” Dawn offered, quickly finding herself without anything to do. She’d preferred staying upstairs, but seeing as she was ousted from her fortress, she needed something to pass the time.

“Thank you so much for offering!” Katherine said earnestly, yet Dawn could feel a ‘but’ coming along. “But, there really isn’t too much to do. I’m just going to make some eggs and toast.”

“I can cook the egg for you?” She looked at a bar stool. “I...just need something to sit on by the stove...”

“Thank you, honey, but the stove can get really hot...I don’t want you to accidentally burn yourself?”

“Katherine, I’ve used a stove plenty of times back home.” Dawn tried to remind her.

“I’m sure you have, and I bet you’re very good at it, too,” Katherine said in a patronizing tone that felt like soothing fluff rather than any real recognition.

She sighed and abandoned the losing battle. “I can get the bread for you?”

Katherine paused for a moment. “Okay, then!”

Dawn was ready to hear which cabinet or drawer that was close to the floor she needed to look in, but no instructions came yet as she was lifted into the air.

“Whoosh! Upsie daisie!” Katherine cooed as Dawn suddenly floated off the ground, suspended by an Amazon’s firm grasp.

Suddenly it didn't feel like she was helping out anymore. She was being made to *think* she was helping, and frankly why Katherine didn't consider Dawn being aware of this very obvious point felt insulting.

Katherine held her out in front of a cabinet above the counter she could have easily reached on her own, only now she had a proxy in her arms for the sake of a "confidence" boost.

"Can you open up that cabinet right in front of you?"

With an annoyed frown, Dawn did open it. A mix of dry and boxed food items laid about. Sure enough, there she saw a massive loaf of bread cleanly packaged in plastic and tied off. It had to have been about twice in size compared to Earth standards.

Katherine had to hold her a smidge closer for her to reach, and clutched in her arms was the care package.

"Think you can untie the top for me?" She surprisingly sat Dawn on the edge of the counter, given the long drop down, but it wasn't so surprising once Katherine stayed right in front of her leaving no chance for falling off.

The loaf stood upright between her legs as she found the twisty tie. At least this hadn't changed. She did quietly notice that the tie was slightly more resistant to bending, but unlike the carseat, it wasn't anything that her own strength couldn't handle.

Untwist, untwist, voila. Or, that's what she expected it to be. She untwisted both ends, which seemed to work at first, but then it simply started to go back the other way around. Looking more closely, she saw a tiny knot underneath. Why?

"Are you having a little trouble?" Katherine gently spoke up.

Dawn suddenly looked up, feeling flustered for not being able to do something so basic.

"No, just...give me a second," she tried to use her nail to find an opening in the knot to loosen it.

Katherine did remain quiet for a few more seconds, yet Dawn was starting to get a bit frustrated.

"Why do you guys make it so hard?" Dawn complained.

"It's not hard, it's just a little tricky for the first time, that's all," Katherine slowly closed her hands in on it, insinuating that it was her turn to take over. "Here, watch how it's done," and she

made a quick demonstration of how to untie the packaging for a loaf of bread. If Dawn hadn't felt pathetic before, this was surely to bring her there.

She had been paying attention only partly, but even with that dedicated capacity, Katherine seemed to make no strained efforts in loosening a knot or whittling away at some kind of end. She seemed to roll it between her fingers and pull? Was that what Dawn saw?

"...Do it again," Dawn found herself saying, oddly curious now.

Katherine laughed as she set her down on the floor. "Tell you what: I promise you can try again tomorrow morning at breakfast?"

"...Nevermind." Dawn dismissed the notion. She felt like a kid now for getting so invested, and any attempt Katherine made to bridge anything felt like Dawn was lowering her sense of self just to meet her halfway.

"Thank you for being my special helper, by the way!" Katherine added with a chipper smile.

"Mhm..." Dawn reservedly accepted the gratitude. She didn't feel like she helped. If anything, she only impeded the process.

"Do you wanna watch some cartoons while I cook?" She asked her.

"I'm fine. I don't watch cartoons." Dawn said. She might have been receptive to normal tv or the news, but she felt silly for not expecting the diminutive offer.

"Okay... If you want to, though, just let me know, okay?"

"Uh-huh."

"And you're sure you don't want anything to eat?" Katherine asked once more, as if she knew Dawn's needs better than she herself did. "We're gonna need to go out after breakfast; a single diaper isn't going to last long."

Her casual remark towards the end left a hotness in Dawn's cheeks. "Yeah...I'm taking this stupid thing off once I need to use the actual bathroom."

"Hm...I should start making a list before we go..." Katherine thought aloud as she popped the toaster and cracked an egg over a pan.



Dawn considered the lack of rebuttal a good sign, but also fostered her concern at the mention of a “list”. She very much didn’t like the idea of that. It felt like another indicator that Katherine was making some sort of heavy investment in her, like this wasn’t just some kind of short-term stay.

“Wait,” Dawn suddenly realized, “I can’t go out like this. Everyone’s gonna see what I’m wearing.”

Katherine briefly turned her head from the stove as if to see the problem herself. Her slight discerning glance worried Dawn, seeming as if she didn’t think the way Dawn was dressed was strange at all.

“Oh! No one is going to think you look out of place, hon...”

“I know I will!” Dawn had a minor outburst. “I’m only putting up with it right now because you made me! Can’t...wait, can’t I just wear that sweater again?” She suddenly remembered yesterday when she was first stranded with the two Amazons. Katherine had lent her a cardigan, albeit Katherine’s size, when bundled right she could hide her embarrassing pull-up.

“That shouldn’t be a problem,” Dawn could hear her smile as she kept her eyes on the sizzling egg this time.

She quietly sighed as she walked to the other end of the kitchen by the table, finally feeling like she’d achieved a definitive victory. She came up to a pair of tall, glass sliding doors that led into the backyard. A long, expansive porch extruded from the home with a wide staircase that led into a sea of green. It was decently sized, but for Dawn it felt a couple magnitudes more than what she was used to. From her viewpoint she could see patches of colorful flowers and sectioned areas of what looked like growing vegetables.

“Is this all your stuff?” It was sort of a dumb question the way she phrased it, meaning specifically Katherine’s work, yet as she asked, she did faintly remember her mentioning something about a garden the first time that they met.

“Hm?” She leaned back enough to see out a window sitting over the sink. “Oh! Back there? Yep!” She beamed. “When there’s time, I love to go out back and plant flowers and grow some vegetables.”

It did look impressive, coming from a girl with just about no green thumb whatsoever, to the point where not even a rainy season and photosynthesis could save a plant from Dawn’s gross

negligence. With that in mind, she did respect someone who could overcome that hurdle of forgetfulness.

“It looks nice.” She offered a simple comment.

“Thank you very much. If you’d like, you can help me water the flowers later today?”

The offer wasn’t a turnoff, yet Dawn didn’t quite consider garden work fun either.

“Uh...maybe...”

Katherine laughed in response. “You remind me of James; he’s always willing to do stuff, but he’s bad at hiding it when he’s bored.”

Dawn couldn’t figure out how to respond, so she sheepishly shrugged. Katherine chuckled some more as she took the pan off the stove.

Meanwhile, Dawn’s stomach was starting to get a little rowdy again.

Katherine finished spreading something on her toast and she loaded up her plate and walked over to the table.

“Wanna sit with me?” Katherine offered.

Finally, Dawn was smart for once. “Does that mean sitting in your lap?”

Katherine was quiet for a moment. “...Well, you’re not tall enough to sit in a chair on your own...”

“I’m fine down here.” Dawn decided.

Katherine looked a tad bit disappointed, but she conceded and started to eat.

Dawn’s stomach yet again made another gurgling noise. She probably should’ve asked for something...

“Do...uhm...” She felt shy asking now, hence her words falling off, but Katherine gave her full undivided attention. “Is there any...chips or something?”

“To eat?” Katherine asked, likely rhetorically. “Dawn, I thought I asked if you wanted anything for breakfast...”

“I’m not *that* hungry,” she lied, trying to repaint the picture, “I just wanted a little something... I’m still fine from yesterday...”

“Why can’t you be more honest with me?” Katherine frowned as she stood up from her chair. Dawn was going to tell her not to make anything, yet she picked Dawn up and sat her on her thigh on the chair, putting her head just above the tabletop.

“I said I’m not--”

“You just asked for a snack,” Katherine calmly contradicted, “and you definitely don’t get a snack until you at least have real food. You can have some of mine if you don’t want your own.”

“I don’t even like eggs.” Dawn complained, finally telling the truth for once. She could see especially how big the egg was on her plate, Amazon sized, which made her feel even more unsettled. The only props she had to offer was at least the yolk looking runny...

“That’s no good,” Katherine lightly chided, “you need to eat what’s put in front of you.”

“I can eat it,” Dawn groaned, “but it’s so bland!”

“Then how about like this?” Katherine sectioned off a portion and laid it over a chunk of toast. She lifted it up and drew it to Dawn’s mouth.

“Open wide~” She cooed, yet Dawn frowned at the approaching gesture.

“I don’t need help--” Dawn started to say, but the food was inserted into her mouth with deceptive speed as soon as she began to speak. She wanted to spit it out on the simple grounds of being manipulated, but she didn’t. She reluctantly chewed and swallowed. If it could even be called a plus, the egg tasted just like she expected; eggy. However, the toast did its job in masking the taste.

She chewed and swallowed before resuming. “I can feed myself.”

“This way we won’t have to wash your hands though?” Katherine countered.

But it didn’t feel like a justified reason shortly after breakfast as Katherine was still dabbing a wet washcloth on Dawn’s face anyway. She didn’t make a comment on it, but yet again she felt strong-armed into something.

“Clean as a whistle,” Katherine smiled, “You can go play with Waver for a few minutes while I get my stuff together?”

The use of ‘play’ felt demeaning, but Dawn did leave the kitchen. Sure enough Waver had gone back to his dog bed in the living room. Their couch was impressive, occupying a large span of one wall, then wrapping around to cover just as much length on the other. And while it was still on the theme of silver linings, their television looked quite massive as well. It was big, but, well, Dawn figured that some of the Amazon size factor was attributed to that as well. Not only had she never seen one so big, but Earth’s closest equivalent would likely be priced well in the range of a five-figure price...

Yet a sudden loud bark from behind stumbled the girl forward, forgetting about the tv entirely. Her startled heart took a second to calm down as she turned, staring now at the goofy face of Waver with a hint of droopy tongue.

As bothered as she was, a moment alone with just a simple, innocent animal did force her to crack a grin. Another thing that was too surreal for her though was his size. Despite every notion she had of housepets being so small compared to the normal person, not only did this furry creature rival Dawn’s, but even surpassed her size. Luckily he seemed friendly enough, otherwise being around an angry dog would be a whole other cause for concern.

Just as Dawn was approaching to tame the beast, a loud ring, likely a doorbell filled the home and Waver immediately turned his head.

Loud barks ensued as he scampered over to the door.

Dawn did groan a small bit at that discovery. “One of those dogs...” She sighed. But aside from Waver, the doorbell was unexpected. Someone was here? Obviously she didn’t want to be seen like this. She leaned around the corner down the hall, wondering where Katherine was. Even if Dawn wanted to answer the door, she might be just physically capable, but it wouldn’t be without its challenges.

Now there was a knock.

“Katherine...?” Dawn called for her, feeling oddly incapable as she did need to wait on the woman.

And luckily she did emerge. Apparently she didn’t know who it was either, because Dawn could hear her mutter above her head, “Who could that be...?”

Dawn stood by the couch where at least half of herself was hidden, watching the door as Katherine opened it after shushing Waver into a nearby room.

Another Amazon woman, standing just as tall as Katherine, albeit in a small set of heels. She was donned in a suit with some sort of yellow, metallic badge on her breast. Obviously Dawn didn't know who it was, yet she felt unsettled nonetheless.

"Hi there, how can I help you...?" Even Katherine herself sounded off. It wasn't a straightforward greeting.

"Hi there," came a cordial tone, "You wouldn't happen to be Katherine, would you? Married to a James?"

"Yes...? What's this about?"

"First," she outstretched her hand, to which Katherine replied with the same, albeit more hesitant. "It's nice to meet you. My name is Francine Bush. I'm a case handler from Little Protective Services. LPS?"

That unsettling feeling in Dawn's stomach seemed to solidify just a bit more. Hadn't she heard of that name before? LPS?

"Oh, uhm...nice to meet you. Would you...like to come in?"

"Please, if you wouldn't mind?"

Dawn leaned back a little as Katherine stepped aside to let her in. Unfortunately, the first thing that seemed to happen was this woman making eye contact with Dawn. It seemed like a warm smile, but instinct told her not to like this person; more so than Amazons in general.

Katherine's tone did sound slightly nervous, as she asked, "Is...is there some kind of issue?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that exactly," the woman didn't answer as definitively. "I'm just hoping to ask you some questions just to understand things a bit better. I'm assuming your husband isn't home right now?"

"No...he just left for work." Katherine said. She seemed to be looking for something, and once she spotted it, she briskly walked over to pick it up.

Now that Dawn was in her arms, Katherine sat down on the sofa with the Little securely in her lap. For once, Dawn chose not to make a scene.

“That’s alright then; this is just a visit, so I’ll try to pick a better time for the next one.” Her obvious mention of a ‘next time’ was a clear note to make. This woman intended on coming back.

Then, the woman leaned forward just the slightest bit from her seat, focusing her gaze on Dawn now. She upped her smile just a slight bit more as she said in a friendly voice, “And you must be Donna!”

Dawn hadn’t expected to be spoken to, hence her delay in response. But once she caught up she furrowed her brow. “I’m...my name is Dawn.”

“Oh?” The caseworker was apparently surprised. “I’m sorry about that. I think I was given the wrong name!” She said in an overly-apologetic voice, like she was putting on a show for the girl.

She slipped out a phone from her suit jacket and then asked Katherine, “Could you spell that for me?”

Of course. Dawn didn’t look any happier, especially having the spelling of her own name deferred to someone “more responsible”.

Katherine did give the correct spelling and the woman set her phone back down.

“Perfect.” She concluded, then set her hands on her lap. “Katherine, how long have you and James had Dawn? When did you adopt her?”

It was subtle, yet Dawn could feel a shift from Katherine’s hands around her waist. And more importantly, even Dawn knew the answer to this. She hadn’t been adopted, and she had zero intention of being.

“W-well...we only recently took Dawn in. My husband brought her here only last night.” Katherine explained.

“So currently it’s unofficial? There’s no documentation, correct?”

“... Yes.”

She nodded, staying silent for a moment as her eyes glanced at Dawn for just a moment.  
“Katherine, would you rather we do this privately? If you’d rather Dawn not hear, we could--”

“I want to hear.” Dawn finally cut herself in. The moment information started to withheld from her, then she’d most certainly take issue.

“It’s okay, I don’t mind.” Katherine then backed her up, as if a Little’s words couldn’t stand on their own.

“Okay, that’s fine too.” Francine smiled. “Katherine, your husband might know more about this than you then, but a report was made related to Dawn about a kidnapping?”

“Kidnapping?” Katherine’s confusion and concern was clear. “From who? She’s not adopted.” Her voice came off as defensive as well as protective.

“I understand that, and we did verify with the one who called to make a report. I can’t share explicit details about the one who made the report, but it seems like they are in a similar situation regarding Dawn as you and your husband seem to be.”

“So...they said we kidnapped Dawn from them? We didn’t. She chose to go with us.” It was the most defensive Dawn had ever heard the Amazon be.

Francine nodded, but looked no more swayed from her initial intent. “That’s why it’s a difficult situation, because we have two groups claiming the same thing. Do you know where your husband found Dawn?”

“A hotel?”

She nodded. “We have a witness report from one of the staff about your husband taking Dawn out of the hotel. They received a call about a man trying to take their Little, which is the description your husband fit.”

Now Dawn was starting to worry. This woman couldn’t actually “give” her back to that other deranged Amazon, could she? It was the only connection she could make; the reporter had to have been that wacko Amazon who offered to adopt her. That bitch!

But alternatively, Dawn suddenly saw this person in a new light. She was an authority figure, she dealt with Littles. Did that mean non-native Littles as well? Maybe this was her chance...! Her opportunity to go home! Maybe she’d be willing to hear her case out, considering James and Katherine could seem to care so little.

“She’s lying.” Dawn blurted out. The case worker looked down at her with a tilted look, eyebrows raised, like she was feigning interest in a toddler’s babblings. “That other Amazon is making it all up. I decided to go with James and she was just jealous.”

The woman didn’t immediately respond, like she was trying to dissect what Dawn believed was clear as day.

“Thank you for telling me that, sweetheart,” she smiled, but Dawn could feel the lack of true appreciation. “I’ll make sure to keep that in mind, okay?” But she clearly didn’t want an answer as she looked back up at Katherine.

“I...I don’t understand...” Katherine looked confused and worried. “Dawn hasn’t been adopted yet...so why is LPS even getting involved?”

The worker acknowledged and nodded, with more recognition than Dawn seemed to have gotten from her. “Usually we only get involved after the Little has been adopted, yes, but that’s typically because of unfortunate timing, taking our end to get a case worker involved a bit later rather than sooner... But what concerns us in this situation is the claim made about kidnapping. LPS does not take lightly to that sort of act.” The look on her face had become quite serious, creating an even grimmer shift in the room’s atmosphere.

“Whether the claim made is false or not, it’d be absolute negligence for us not to follow up on these sorts of things,” she explained.

“B-but...we didn’t kidnap her...” Katherine continued to be intimidated by the authority, yet still kept a tight hold on Dawn, who was beginning to see more of a foe from another faction than a potential ally.

Francine suddenly stood up.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean for today’s visit to put you for a scare; right now we’re just meeting with all the parties involved and investigating the legitimacy of the claims.” She glanced around. “Would it be alright if I just took a quick look around?”

“That’s fine...” Katherine answered hesitantly, “but we were just about to go out! We were going to get Dawn some clothes, diapers, a bed, toys, and anything else she’d need...!” She spoke in a hurry like her life depended on it. Maybe Dawn’s.



But for Dawn, hearing her short list involved a mention of toys and diapers, both red flags to her. She fought the urge to outrage on the spot right there. When did they ever discuss that? It better have been ridiculous lip service to this horrid woman, otherwise there would be hell to pay.

Yet the woman seemed to scrutinize. “So Dawn doesn’t have any kind of nursery here?”

“It...It was just going to be done today; we were already planning... We already got a carseat the other day...” Katherine continued to ramble and heighten Dawn’s confusion. Why was it suddenly a measuring contest? Why didn’t Dawn’s own word not carry enough weight?

“I won’t be long.” The worker smiled professionally as she turned to the stairs. Dawn could see her pull her phone out as she walked upstairs.

“Katherine...” Dawn started to speak up once they were alone. “Katherine...! Katherine!”

In a brief state of shock, Katherine only came to after the third call. “H-huh? Yes, sweetie, what’s wrong?”

“Don’t say that; say my name.” Dawn scowled. “You can let go of me now.” Her warm grip made Dawn feel like she was on a rollercoaster ride. “What the hell is going on?! Why are you so scared?”

Katherine exhaled, but the worry trembled her breath. “We...we’ll talk about it after she leaves, okay? Please, just be a good girl and don’t say anything else...!”

It was like all the tiny footholds, if they even existed, in making Katherine speak to her more as a person than a complete infant were completely lost. Unbelievable, so in the end all the “progress” Dawn had made with her seemed to be complete fiction in the face of authority?

She almost wanted to make a scene just to prove how sick of Katherine’s dismissiveness she was, but the only thing that kept her from doing so was a quiet voice inside warning her against it, for whatever reason.

Dawn continued to be a silent, pissy stress ball for the Amazon until the case worker came back downstairs.

“You mentioned getting a *bed* for her?” She sounded as if she’d seen things most unappealing to the eyes upstairs. Apparently the standards upstairs hadn’t been pleasing. So what, though? Sleeping on the floor for the first night was excusable, so why make such a big deal out of it?

“A-a crib,” Katherine retroactively corrected herself, earning an angry glare from Dawn, yet seemed to go entirely unnoticed, or willfully ignored by both giants.

“I see...Well, Katherine, it was a pleasure getting to meet you, and *Dawn*,” she said with a heightened pitch and a syrupy smile at her, maybe even saying her name with more emphasis just to prove to the “little” girl how she’d seen the error in her ways and corrected her name from Donna.

She fished out a card from her suit jacket and handed it to Katherine. “You can expect a visit from me within the week, however I can’t give you the time to expect, but I’ll try to come when your husband is here as well.”

“Is...is there any legal trouble?” Katherine asked with hesitation.

The woman didn’t respond immediately, which even Dawn knew was cause for concern.

“Not necessarily,” she finally did say, “this could all be a misunderstanding, after all. Two groups trying to adopt the same Little is a common dispute, but since kidnapping was mentioned...”

The silence only left unanswered for a second though, quickly picked back up by the woman.

“I should have some more information to share with you and your husband during the next visit. There aren’t any plans to take Dawn from your custody for the time being, given your explanation for only getting her last night. That being said,” she started to show signs of disapproval, “I hope to find that Dawn’s environment is a bit more appropriate for her by the time I’m back?”

Dawn had her unfortunate guesses, but Katherine had become a yes-man entirely. “Yes! Of course... We’ll be going out right after this; we were just planning to.”

The case worker’s unyielding look softened into a smile. “Great then. I’ll see myself out, but I’ll see you soon.” She said before opening and closing the door on her way out.

At the sound of it shutting, Katherine immediately started to sniffle, holding Dawn tighter in her arms as she was again smothered against her will.

“K-Katherine...!” Dawn groaned in her grip. “What...first, let me go!” After enough shouting, the Amazon relented and at least let go, though keeping her in her lap.

“What the *fuck* was that even all about?”