When Nina had picked out what she wanted she handed the menu to Sam. They already knew most of the food options from looking at the restaurant’s section on the Midforest website so it didn’t take long for everyone to be ready. Sam had decided on a simple burger and fries along with a soda. Whilst they waited for the waiter to come back they spoke amongst each other but Sam was starting to get quite uncomfortable standing up like she was forced to. How she wished she had brought the booster seat she used at home. When the drinks arrived Sam had to say something.

“Erm, excuse me?” Sam said just as the waiter was turning away. He stopped and looked at Sam as if surprised she was addressing him. She’d already been told the answer to this question but was so desperate that she asked anyway. It was a different waiter and she hoped that meant a different answer, “Sorry to bother you but I was wondering if you had any sort of… booster seat?”

“Booster seat?” The waiter replied with a furrowed brow.

“Yeah, something I can sit on so I can see the table more easily.” Sam was going red in the face.

“We don’t, I’m afraid, we don’t encourage parents to bring their children here since alcohol is-…” The waiter started.

“I’m not a child.” Sam interrupted.

“Yes, of course, my apologies.” The waiter clearly had a hard time accepting that, “What I mean to say is that the only thing I think we have that would help in your, erm, “situation”… is the highchair.”

Sam felt like she was in an impossible situation. The highchair would certainly be more comfortable for her but it would also be humiliating. On the other hand her legs were aching from all the walking and standing on the chair was going to be taxing. That wasn’t to mention that despite standing the table was still a little too high for her.

“Your food is being prepared.” The waiter finally continued when Sam still hadn’t said anything several seconds later, “Why don’t you have a think about it and I’ll come back?”

Sam nodded her head mutely. She looked down at her small legs and wished she were normal. Even if she had been a foot taller, still remarkably small compared to other people, she would feel so much better about herself.

“You could sit on one of our laps?” Chrissy suggested with a non-committal shrug.

“I don’t think she’s going to what to do that.” Amy replied nervously.

The reason Sam’s friends got a little nervous when her height became a problem is because they knew she was liable to explode at them. She always tried to rein in her emotions but when she got frustrated she lashed out, she always regretted her actions very quickly but in the moment there was little she could do to control herself.

“It’s up to Sam.” Nina said to defuse the situation. She hesitated then continued, “But I think we would all understand if you took the highchair. I can see you’re struggling and none of us want that.”

“No one would know but us.” Amy continued, “And we won’t tell anyone. You won’t see any of these strangers again either.”

Sam didn’t know what to do. It was true that she wasn’t comfortable but the highchair represented everything she hated about herself and how people saw her. If she was totally detached from the situation emotionally she would know that it was the right choice, the problem was she wasn’t detached at all. She was a very emotional woman.

“Looks like you’ll have to make your mind up soon.” Chrissy said as she looked over her shoulder, “Dinner’s coming.”

“And it looks like they might be making your decision for you…” Nina muttered.

Sam had to stand on tip-toes to see over the top of the table. She saw three waiters coming their way. Two were carrying trays with their meals on them and the third was carrying a large white highchair. Sam’s face immediately went red and she pouted angrily.

“We’ll send it back.” Amy quickly said when she saw Sam’s face.

The waiters came over and started putting the food on the table. The highchair was pulled up to the side of the table, Sam looked at it as if it was somehow a threat to her. As the food was put down the girls remained in awkward silence.

“The highchair isn’t necessary.” Sam said without looking any of the waiters in the eye.

“I’m afraid we are going to require you to use it.” The waiter who had originally took their order said somewhat apologetically.

“Excuse me?” Sam asked in disbelief.

“I spoke to the manager after our last conversation and she says that you can’t stand on the seat like that to eat in case you hurt yourself.” The waiter looked very uncomfortable delivering this news.

“This is ridiculous!” Chrissy said loudly. Sam appreciated being defended but she wished her friend would keep her voice down, people were looking over at them now.

“Sir, could she just put her food on the seat next to her?” Amy asked as she indicated the leather booth seat.

“I’ll ask my manager.” The waiter said after some hesitation, “I apologise for the inconvenience.”

“We should make a complaint.” Chrissy said as the waiter hurried away.

“Please… It’s fine.” Sam looked up at Chrissy.

This whole episode was mortifying for Sam and the longer it went on the more people were taking notice. It didn’t take a rocket scientist for the people nearby to work out who the highchair was supposed to be for.

“It’s not fine.” Chrissy continued, “They should be prepared for people with special requirements!”

“Chrissy, calm down.” Nina said as she placed a hand on her friend’s arm.

Chrissy muttered darkly to herself as Sam sat down on the chair to rest her legs. If she had known what an ordeal this would be she would’ve stayed at home. A minute later the waiter finally returned, he was smiling which seemed like a good sign.

“The manager says you can use the seat next to you as long as you stay seated.” The waiter confirmed.

Sam smiled a little and nodded her head. As the waiter dragged the highchair away Nina helped Sam lower the food from the table to the seat. It was a less than ideal situation and it made Sam feel like she wasn’t really a part of the group. As her friends conversed she felt almost like a little troll hunched over and almost completely absent from the view of the others. Maybe the highchair would’ve been a better option if it meant she could feel like a part of things.

At least the food was nice. Sam thoroughly enjoyed her burger and by the time she was half way through it she was full. The problem with ordering adult-sized meals was that she could only rarely finish them, her small stomach filled up too fast.

After everyone was fed the mood had lifted somewhat. They all sat back in their seats and smiled, things felt less serious now that they had eaten and decompressed. It had been a stressful first day and Sam was ready to go back to the lodge and chill out. She felt kind of bad for how up and down her mood had been, the whole highchair situation seemed less serious in hindsight.

“Shall we pay and leave?” Amy asked as she finished her drink.

“Or we could just leave.” Chrissy jokingly suggested.

“Leave it to me.” Sam said as she slid her way to the edge of the seat.

“Are you sure?” Nina asked, “I know things didn’t exactly go swimmingly.”

“I’m positive.” Sam smiled.

When the waiter finally came over he looked at Sam’s three friends as he held the card machine. He seemed surprised when they pointed towards Sam. He crouched down so Sam could pay and when it came through he wished them a good night before apologising to Sam for the trouble.

The air had cooled somewhat as the four women exited the restaurant. The sun had nearly set and the air had picked up a noticeable chill. Sam shivered a little but she wasn’t too cold. They took their time going back to the lodge, the conversation was pleasant and they spent a lot of the walk laughing.

“Oh my goodness!” Amy exclaimed. She had stopped so suddenly that Sam ended up walking right into the back of her legs.

“What?” Chrissy asked as she stood next to the nerdy girl.

Amy pointed off the side of the road where there was a small clearing surrounded by thick woodland and at first Sam didn’t know what she was looking at. Sam was just about to ask what was up when she saw the tiniest movement, she gasped as she realised there were a couple of deep staring right back at them. They were so perfectly camouflaged that it was only when one of their ears twitched that she realised anything was there at all.

“Oh wow…” Sam whispered.

Standing barely thirty feet away from the girls was a little family of deer. Two adults standing bolt upright and staring at the women as well as a small baby deer that was sniffing the ground curiously. The scene was so peaceful Sam almost felt like she would be able to walk over and pet the wild animals. In felt like everyone stood and watched this lovely display of nature for several minutes before the deer finally moved on.

“I love this place!” Amy excitedly exclaimed once the deer had left their eyesight.

Sam smiled. Despite all the difficulties she had encountered she really couldn’t argue that Midforest was beautiful. For a city girl like herself it was almost magical. It was easy to forget that when Sam was being confronted by her own limitations but she hoped that after the stress of that day she would be able to enjoy the rest of her holiday much more.

By the time the four women had got back to their lodge the sun had set and it was getting dark. They had talked about playing a board game together in front of the fire that evening but it was instead decided that they would have an early night. Sam wasn’t going to complain, she felt exhausted, but when she went into the bedroom she was confronted with the baby bed yet again.

“How are we going to do this?” Nina asked nervously.

Sam walked up to the crib and looked around it. She could tell her cheeks had gone pink. There didn’t seem to be any way to lower the side and the top of the crib was several times higher than Sam herself. It seemed the only way in was over the top and there was no way she would be able to climb it.

“Maybe I should take it.” Nina suggested.

“It’s fine…” Sam sighed. She would’ve loved for someone else to take the baby bed but it was obvious only one of them would fit. Nina would’ve been hunched up and pressed against the bars.

“You could take the couch?” Nina shrugged.

“I don’t think that would be very comfortable at all.” Sam replied. She had considered that possibility herself but whilst the couches were comfy she doubted she would get a good night’s sleep on them.

“OK, well, do you want to get into your PJs in the bathroom?” Nina asked. The light in the room was dim but Sam thought she saw her friend blushing a little.

“I, erm, I usually sleep naked.” Sam looked down at her feet bashfully.

“O-OK.” Nina stuttered.

“It’s fine though.” Sam quickly continued, “I can take my clothes off under the covers.”

“That’s all well and good.” Nina said as she walked over to the crib herself, “But how are you going to get in?”

Sam knew the answer and she was pretty sure Nina knew the answer as well but neither of them wanted to say it. Since there was no way of lowering the side of the crib the only way in would be over the top. There was no way Sam would be able to climb up by herself. She looked at Nina who still looked very nervous. As someone who hated any dependence on another Sam really wished she didn’t have to say this next bit.

“You’re going to have to be lift me up.” Sam muttered.

“W-What?” Nina asked. She was being polite but surely she knew that this was the only way.

“Lift me up and put me in the…” Sam didn’t want to say the word “crib” out loud.

“Right now?” Nina asked.

“I need to brush my teeth first.” Sam said as she turned towards their en suite bathroom.

Sam had to stand on tip-toes to reach the light switch and then walked into the bathroom. She let out a deep breath as she looked at the sink, it was predictably high. Sam lowered the toilet lid and climbed up on top. She reached up for the edge of the sink and again lifted herself up and into the ceramic bowl. She was a little out of breath after the effort but she took her toothbrush and put some toothpaste on it. So many daily activities most people took for granted were so much harder for Sam.

Sitting on the edge of the sink and looking into the mirror Sam reflected on just how crazy the day had been. She’d experienced such highs and lows already and it was only the first day. From nearly wetting herself, to being in such a pretty place to the scene in the restaurant… It had been very topsy-turvy.

After a couple of minutes scrubbing her teeth Sam spat into the bowl near her feet and turned on the faucet for a few seconds. She retreated back down to the floor using the same route that had got her up to the sink in the first place. She paused for a few seconds and then walked back into the bedroom. Nina was sitting on the edge of her bed, she jumped up when Sam turned off the bathroom light.

“Ready?” Nina asked.

“As I’ll ever be.” Sam replied grimly.

Sam wasn’t really sure how this was going to work as Nina stood right in front of her. She awkwardly raised her arms a little bit as Nina bent over and moved out her hands with trepidation. Sam could see Nina was trembling slightly as her hands touched Sam’s sides.

Not since she had been a child had Sam allowed another person to lift her up but now she could feel Nina gripping her slightly and a second later her feet left the ground. Sam couldn’t help a small panicked flail at the alien feeling as Nina kept her at arm’s length and slowly lowered her into the crib. When Sam’s feet touched the mattress Nina pulled her hands back.

“Was that OK? I didn’t hurt you did I?” Nina quickly asked.

Nina was looking at Sam over the top of the crib wither her hands clutching the top horizontal rail. Sam had never felt smaller than when she looked up at her friend like this. The vertical bars seem to stretch higher as Sam started to settle down.

“I’m fine.” Sam said a bit gruffly. Despite it being her idea she still felt a little annoyed that it had come to this.

“Alright, well, just let me know if you need anything.” Nina said. She flashed a small smile and then retreated to her own bed.

Sam slipped the covers over her and rather awkwardly got undressed. She pushed her clothes towards the far corner, unfortunately they fell through a gap in the bars and landed in a pile on the floor. Sam looked around at her new surroundings. There really wasn’t much to see. A couple of plain white pillows, plain white sheets and the towering metal bars which were also white.

“This feels like a prison cell.” Sam said as she wrapped her small hands around two of the bars.

“Does that make me the warden?” Nina asked jokingly as she got under her own covers.

Sam snorted with laughter despite her position. She laid back against the pillows and tried to pretend she wasn’t in a baby’s crib. She tried to think of it as just a different type of bed that had some bars on the sides. It wasn’t easy.

“Goodnight.” Nina called out into the dark room.

“Night.” Sam replied as she rolled over and closed her eyes.