

3 - Out and About

“The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round!”

Please, make it stop.

“The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish! Swish, swish, swish!”

With each ‘swish’ Dawn could feel herself in Katherine’s lap quite literally swish from side to side. What probably would have been the final nail in the coffin, or the final blow to Dawn’s eardrums was if the woman were a bad singer. She wasn’t, but it was the content that bothered Dawn the most.

Patty Cake didn’t work. Ba-ba Black sheep wasn’t so much a hit either, and there was no chance in hell Old McDonald had a farm in this car. So, with that in mind, Dawn was at her wits end as the woman was earnest in her efforts to find something the girl would like. Now it was The Wheels on the Bus; transportation Dawn was finding quite appealing over this car ride right now...

James, who was behind the wheel was being distant, thankfully. It actually gave Dawn hope that he was someone she could have a legitimate conversation with. With Katherine it was more akin to a game; trying to find out what age the woman was treating her like. So far that number was sitting at seven and below.

“~aaall ‘round the town!” She sounded quite giddy as the song drew to a close, probably happy with her little performance. “Well, did you like that one?” And in case if Dawn forgot she was the one being talked to, a squeeze on the shoulder reminded her.

“...Could we just listen to the normal radio?”

“What do you mean? This *is* the station meant for Littles?”

It was taking a lot not to sigh. “Katherine,” Dawn did her best to lean forward just so she could get a better look at her. The thick Amazon seatbelt strap was making that difficult, as it conveniently rode up right between the side of her jaw and neck. Lifting it some, she managed to put it behind her. “Do you really think that’s all we listen to? Nursery Rhymes?”

Before she could get an answer though Dawn was gently forced back against Katherine’s torso and the seatbelt was brought right back over her.

“Didn’t I tell you not to do that again?” Lightly, Katherine scolded.

It was embarrassing to be talked to like that, considering Dawn’s age, but in the company of themselves Dawn found it much easier to be annoyed more than anything else by this point.

“And I wasn’t sure what music you’d like... If you want there’s a few more stations we could try?”

Call it a sixth sense, but Dawn figured the maturity level on those other stations wouldn’t be much different... By this point, relaxing to the quiet hum of the car’s engine and white noise from tires rolling across the varying textured roads sounded like a better tune to her.

“...I think I’m good for now. Can we just turn off the radio?”

“Okay, but if you change your mind just let me know, okay?” Katherine already leaned over to the dial, and thank goodness she did, because Dawn could’ve sworn she had just heard the starting melody for the ABC’s song.

“Hey James,” Dawn spoke, starving for genuine conversation.

“What’s up?” He didn’t take his eyes off the road, but he was listening.

“What do you do for work?”

“Work?” He seemed to be thinking for a moment. Likely compressing a complicated role into a simpler one. “I’m an electrician.”

“That’s a person who makes houses and buildings light up.” And of course, if it weren’t simple enough, Katherine was there to feed it in soft-served bits.

“Uh-huh, we have those in our dimension too.” Dawn kept her tone cool while trying to make a point to Katherine. How thick was an Amazonian skull to not get the point across by now? Was it exclusively a female thing? No, probably just an aspiring parent one...

“What about you, Katherine?” The least she could do was make the woman still feel included.

“I’m a librarian! Those are people who-”

“Keep track of books, sort, organize and order them in a library?” Dawn didn’t have the patience nor the lack of annoyance to let her finish. She dialed it back before she spoke again. “We have those in our dimension, too.” This didn’t seem so fun anymore. Then again, Katherine being a librarian came around her head twice now. Didn’t that probably mean she was a fan of books?

“Actually,” Dawn started. “At my college I’m an English major.”

“Really? That’s precious!” Dignified? Admirable? Commendable? No. Just precious.

“Katherine tends to be a bit of a book fanatic,” James was thankfully filtering through the woman’s toddler-esque attitude. “Maybe you two have that in common?”

“Do you like to read, Dawn?” It was more gushing enthusiasm and engagement, but Dawn suspected there was also some genuine interest packed in there.

“I like to, when I can. It’s mostly been the occasional novella here and there. We get sort of too busy with our workloads to enjoy one of the best things about language, funny enough.”

“I always like to get cozy and read a new book.” For once Katherine was speaking like a normal person, or rather sounded like she was speaking to a peer, not a Little. “You could leave me for hours and the time would just fly by!” She chuckled, and Dawn, oddly enough, found herself relating to the woman.

“I know what you mean.” A small smile started to appear. “I always try to pace myself, but then it just feels weird to stop in the middle of a chapter, and then that ends on a cliffhanger, so you have to read the next one, and--” She was losing herself in her own interests, and Katherine couldn’t help but laugh. Even James had cracked a grin from behind the wheel.

“Wh...what?” Trying not to smile herself, she looked to either giant.

“It’s nothing,” James brushed it off. “I think you just accurately described my wife’s constant dilemma, that’s all.”

Dawn was about to lean forward to see her face for confirmation, then remembered the seatbelt scolding she’d just gotten... She looked up ninety degrees, but that was only a reminder as to why she was leaning forward to begin with; two large bulges hiding behind Katherine’s dress, positioned symmetrically on her chest. They pushed her a little too far forward to clearly see Katherine’s face...

“I try to limit my books to a maximum of two reading sessions,” she laughed. “Any more than that and I probably feel guilty for not being done any sooner...”

Dawn was managing under the seat belt thus far, but the tight spot along her neck it was in was finally starting to bother her. Remembering how Katherine reacted last time though, Dawn limited herself to just pulling the strap away temporarily.

“Dawn, I’m sorry you have to ride like this,” Katherine apologized, likely able to tell because by proxy Dawn *was* adjusting her seatbelt, too. “I can’t imagine finding a car seat for you would’ve been difficult...” The opening was great, but like usual Katherine always knew how to end it on a flop. At least in Dawn’s eyes and ears.

“Uhm...I’m fine in a normal seat, you know? Just like you guys?” A squeeze on her foot was all she got.

“Thank you for being so understanding. I’ve wanted to adopt for a while now, but I suppose we weren’t 100% ready yet!”

She needed to remind herself she was safe with them a few times, and even more on top of that just to pack away her worst fears. Heather was in their crosshairs, and Dawn was essentially leading them right to her. Come to think of it, what better was she compared to the very Amazons who enslaved others of her own kind if she was arranging the perfect storm for something like that to happen?

She held animosity towards Heather, but did she really deserve to be confronted like this? She was starting to get annoyed with herself, already painting herself as the victim and assuming Heather’s supposed inaction was intentional. But then she considered the flipside. It wasn’t necessarily an absolute Heather would be adopted, right? That, and she’d be lying if she said there wasn’t some kind of debt to be repaid for her secured freedom... All things considered, Dawn could certainly see Katherine as condescending and belittling, but forceful didn’t seem to fit in her dictionary... James was a wild card though. He seemed average in a good way, though that meant he could just as easily swing either way.

Dawn’s foot suddenly jerked as a creepy, wriggly tendril had brushed its sole, otherwise known as Katherine’s finger.

“Gotcha!” The woman chuckled. Dawn didn’t find it so funny.

Forget James. Katherine is definitely the driving force in all of this...

“Alright...” James started to speak, and Dawn could see him leaning forward in his seat as if he were squinting to spot a sign. “I think this is parking for the hotel.”

“Is it? Hang on, let me check...” Ignoring the recently-enforced rules, Dawn slipped from her straps, causing Katherine to make a small surprised noise and found shaky footing on the woman’s thighs, specifically the fabric of her skirt.

Just as she stood she could see beyond the dashboard thankfully, and sure enough there was the hotel. It wasn’t much by Amazon standards, apparently, but the sleek, industrial look to its exterior always reminded Dawn how there was a plus to a dimension like this. The tall glass panels with the trim of black material and warm orange lights was her favorite.

She was marvelling so much that she didn’t realize they were just turning into the parking lot right then. The centripetal force was too great and the friction on her feet was too little as she leaned too far to the side and was going overboard. If it helped the chaos any more, James suddenly realized what was going on next to him and hit the brake pedal, adding another jerking force to the system.

Dawn yelped, Katherine gasped, but thankfully the larger one of the two could react promptly. Holding Dawn by the armpits, the silence in the car, minus the honking horn behind them, truly defined the gravity of the situation Dawn found herself in. James slowly put the car back into motion, giving his side a quick glance, likely to make sure his passengers wouldn’t be moving around again. Katherine merely sighed.

Instead of being fastened back into the seatbelt, Dawn was spun 180 degrees and sat in the woman’s lap.

The woman didn’t seem pleased. She looked a little stern... “What did you do wrong?”

Wrong? Dawn cocked her brow a little bit. “...Wha...? I was just making sure it was the right place...” Had she believed it herself, she wouldn’t have been struggling to make eye contact, hence why she kept turning her head to the left. Yes, maybe she did cause a bit of unneeded tension... Her feelings got the better of her, but that didn’t mean she was going to take a scolding from a fellow adult.

“We *never* jump around in a moving car, Dawn!” Dawn was guilty, but also annoyed.

“We were just turning into a parking lot! Besides, I needed to see if this was it! I don’t want to waste our time if it’s the wrong hotel!” Now she was raising her voice. Her defense was hardly as sturdy as she’d have liked because she knew there was a fair share of fault to her name. Still, she wasn’t going to let Katherine feel superior just because she was taller.

Katherine looked as if she was going to speak, but she didn’t at first. “...I appreciate that you’re worrying about our time, but the only way it’s going to end up wasted is if you get yourself hurt on our watch.” She breathed through her nose. “Making you feel better takes a lot longer than making a U-turn.”

Dawn was expecting further opposition, but the level-headed explanation surprised her. This woman knew exactly how to disarm the situation. She wasn’t speaking like an authority figure for once, and oddly enough, that made her feel exactly like one. “I...” Her flare felt significantly dampened. “I wasn’t going to get hurt...”

“Whether that’s true or not, my heart can’t handle taking chances like that.” Her voice was firm despite being so emotionally transparent. Dawn really was starting to feel like scum now. She should know better than that. She made herself look bad and even tried to defend it. Well, not exactly that. It wasn’t her goal to seem righteous, but rather not to admit an Amazon’s victory over her.

There was a small lurch with the vehicle once they fully stopped. Had they parked?

“How about we call it all water under the bridge?” James interjected. His timing always seemed to be perfect; a guard rail that made sure the ball never rolled too far off course. “We’re all a little bit at fault, so let’s take it in stride?”

“I think that’s a good idea,” Katherine chipperly agreed, with a tone only an on-edge Little might find patronizing. Unfortunately, one was in the car with them.

“You don’t have to beat around the bush,” Dawn crudely spoke. “I know I’m in the wrong. It’s my fault, so I’m sorry.” She probably didn’t sound sorry since the Amazons were seemingly taking extra steps to make her feel better about herself, which irritated her more than anything else.

Apparently they could see into her head though. “We’re not just saying that so you get a boost, you know?” Katherine nudged, both metaphorically and physically. “We should’ve taken the necessary precautions, too.”

“Like what?” They probably weren’t expecting her to call their bluff. This was total bull.

“Well, I definitely think we should have had a car seat beforehand. In truth, what we’re doing right now isn’t very fair to you at all. You deserve your own spot, and that way you’d have been able to look out the window.”

Just when Dawn figured she’d hit the bottom, there was still a few more feet of void right under that.

“But I said I didn’t...” Dawn did sigh a little this time.

“Something wrong?” James asked, seeming to be legitimately concerned. Did all Amazons expect Littles to be so 1-dimensional? Whatever the case, Dawn shook off his worries.

“I’m fine, I promise. Could we go inside now? I want to change out of this...stuff.” Stuff, being at most two of the two things she was wearing, which was a shirt and a pull-up. Only a rocket scientist could figure out which of those were top priority. Once she was stripped clean of her own accord, she’d be sure to take a boiling-hot shower; anything to kill any of the Amazonian germs the massive oppressors might have slipped onto her. Katherine and James not so much, but the other woman that was involved...

Just as Katherine and James undid their seatbelts, Dawn felt herself needing to revisit a previous issue.

“Wait,” she halted Katherine.

“What is it?” she asked with a smile.

“Are you...sure you don’t have anything I could use to...uhm, cover up?” Hopefully the woman wasn’t dense enough to not realize even Littles desired modesty.

“Dawn, I don’t have any issue with it, but I suppose we’re a little short on clothing here...” She disappointedly spoke, which seemed to sing in tune with Dawn’s emotions as well. Katherine gave their surroundings a few more glances, then lit up like a bulb. “Oh, that’s right!”

Dawn couldn’t help but perk up over the woman’s enthusiasm. She wanted too badly to believe things were going her way for once, but that scared her just as much; what if she was wrong? She didn’t know how she’d react, but thankfully she’d never need to because Katherine from a compartment held a gray, balled up sweater.

“Ta-da!” Unrolling it to its full Amazonian size, it’d likely look like a cape on Dawn, but she didn’t care. Anything was something, and something to cover up was considered an invaluable blessing. Maybe Katherine wasn’t so bad after all.

Now donning a piece of legitimate clothing, Dawn could at least somewhat cover her front. The sweater was like a jacket, in that it drew together using loose, but generously-sized buttons down the middle. Unfortunately, using those wasn’t very practical for a Little, so a cape it would remain, but nonetheless a cape it was. And you’d think the situation was already strange enough, Dawn even spoke properly. “...Thank you, for lending me your sweater...”

“No problem! Anything we can do to make you a bit more comfortable, please don’t hesitate to speak up.” Anything would have meant being sent back to her dimension right then, so Dawn tried to keep her expectations grounded in reality...

Katherine opened the passenger door and with one arm around Dawn she stepped out. Dawn was waiting as patiently as she could to be put down, but it never came. But, giving herself a moment to think, it somewhat made sense. She was still barefoot and the asphalt was still rough and dirty. Truthfully, she may not have been feeling so bold anymore. Even if she was, she’d still be dragging Katherine’s sweater along it.

“So Dawn, can we just speak with the front desk to get you back to your room?” James asked over his shoulder.

She sounded a bit awkward. “Uhm, yeah, I think so.” Truth be told, she only realized now that she never even interacted with the staff at the hotel. It was all through a proxy; her tour guide; Stacy. Before and after their everyday outings she would make sure to collect everyone’s keycards for their rooms and likely returned them to the front desk for the time being. She probably thought Littles couldn’t be trusted with something so important...

Inside the minimalist lobby was a large black-quartz column in the center surrounded by a staff desk. Around that and hanging from the ceiling by varying lengths were an array of warm-glowing lighting fixtures.

“Hello!” A woman in a black blazer smiled from the other side of the desk. Her smile seemed forced at best and surgically permanent, provided by loving corporate of course, at worst. “Will you folks be checking in or out today?” Dawn wasn’t necessarily expecting it, but figured it made too much sense as she almost immediately deferred to James and not her, the one with a legitimate problem. Though, of course she wouldn’t see it that way. Amazons never seemed to

“get” Littles. No, because they came from a world that is a mere fraction of the one Amazons tread, that must mean their problems are of the same significance as well.

Quietly Dawn side-eyed the woman, waiting for what James would say.

“Well, we were hoping you could help out her more than us two,” he explained as he motioned towards Dawn. “She’s been having--”

“Oh, Little services are what you’re concerned about? Well, don’t worry. Rest assured we’re confident in our available resources. Your Little will be well-taken care of!” That same business smile now fell on Dawn and she felt quite uncomfortable.

“Is it a crib you’ll need for your room? We have the ones that lock from the top and ones that don’t if a difference to you matters. We as well offer playpens and an activity walker?”

“A playpen? You offer those?” Katherine spoke up, and it bothered Dawn even more because she sounded genuinely intrigued. This must have been right up her alley.

Now Katherine held her attention. “Yes, we do. All you need to do is request it with your--”

“Excuse me?” Dawn raised her voice, just so they could hear her. Though, if she were being honest, she was kind of nervous to speak up. Thankfully James and Katherine were with her...they actually gave her the confidence to speak up. The staff did look at Dawn, but only for a brief moment, as if they were entertaining the useless babble she made.

“So I take it you guys are checking--”

“Excuse me? Hello?” Dawn cut her off again, hoping to get her total, undivided attention.

“My, you’re talkative, aren’t you!” You could tell it was an act. Maybe it wasn’t totally, given it seemed like female Amazons in particular had the hungry eyes for Littles... That said, she seemed to be forcing an attitude. It was almost as if she were waiting for James or Katherine to jump in. Like responsible parents. That irked Dawn even more.

“We’re here for me.” Dawn said plainly, with a dash of annoyance. “I have a room here.”

“A room, huh? All by yourself?” she chuckled. “If that were the case, how are Mommy and Daddy going to look after you?” Maybe this is why they only ever had to deal with Stacy. Now she felt like she was dealing with two.

“Actually,” James spoke up again. “We are here for her. She’s not our adopted Little; just someone we’re helping out.”

“I...see.” The words she was given apparently didn’t match the scenario she was seeing. To give her the benefit of the doubt, it probably didn’t. A seemingly married couple just walked through the doors with a shoeless Little dressed in likely her mother’s sweater. God, would she kill for proper attire right now. She could feel the slight fringes along the leg bands of her pull-up tickle her thighs.

The staff worker kept placing her eyes back on either James or Katherine out of habit, then kept quickly double-backing to Dawn.

“So, what can I help you with, sweetheart?” It still didn’t feel like she was being seen as an equal, but expecting that much was probably foolish in itself. Unfortunately, she decided it was better to move things along than demand the respect she deserved.

“I already have a room here. I was looking to get my key; my tour guide always checks it in here?”

“Oh, you’re part of the tour group? The ones from Terra?”

“Yes, I am.” Thankfully they were getting somewhere. She was almost afraid the woman would feign ignorance.

“It shouldn’t be much trouble then...” Her eyes were focused on her monitor, typing away for a few moments. “Okay, if I could just have your name and a form of suitable ID, I’ll have your card to you!”

“My name is Dawn Kepler, and...” She leaned over to her side to reach for her...her...

...

..

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“Dawn? Is something wrong?” Katherine hoisted her a little. She seemed frozen still. Now James was looking, and so was the staff.

“My...” How? How could she have been so stupid to have forgotten?

“I don’t suppose she keeps it in her undies?” The worker chuckled. Dawn looked at her with a furious blush, then back to herself. Her sweater had come undone, revealing what she was trying to hide to begin with. And seeing the pull-up now was only a stronger reminder of her biggest blunder.

Her pants were gone.

Losing them was bad; terrible. She had no more modesty, yes, but only now did she realize how bad it actually was. Her pants had these nifty inventions called ‘pockets’, pockets she used to hold her phone and wallet. Her ID. Terrible didn’t even begin to describe her predicament.

In a broken, sorrowful voice, she whimpered, “I don’t have it...”

“I’m sorry?” She leaned in a little closer. “It was a little hard to hear...”

“I don’t have it!” Dawn shouted with a sudden outburst. The woman was a little taken aback, as were Katherine and James somewhat. Dawn still seemed angry and sad, but she calmed down somewhat, just so her rage could subside for worry and despair. “When that *stupid* fucking Amazon kidnapped me she took my pants, phone and wallet! Since the pants are gone so is my phone and ID!”

She had her passport, but that was locked safely away in her hotel room, the very place she needed an ID to get into. When?! When could that woman have disposed of her belongings if the police caught her? None of this made sense! Why did it have to happen to Dawn? What was she going to do now?

The girl hiccuped as her stress quickly enveloped her. Why? Of all things, why did she have to cry, especially in front of three Amazons?! She couldn’t help it. Too much was going wrong and a single day of upsets was enough to throw her off course. The timing was what made it all so severe. If they didn’t resolve this by today, she’d be totally and completely screwed. She wouldn’t be able to go home. She’d be stuck here then inevitably be adopted by some sick creature that’d enslave her as a baby! It was all too much to consider; too much to imagine. She became a sobbing mess.

“Dawn, honey, please, it’s okay!” Katherine was back to bouncing her, seeming eager to try and bring some sunshine back into Dawn’s ever so rainy day.

What was the point in even trying? It was clear that fate had already made up its mind. Dawn would not be leaving this dimension. She was a prisoner to its oppressive will and would forever remain so...

“Excuse me,” James said to the staff, who was busy being an onlooker, being in both a mix of confusion and sympathy. “Is there any way we can get her room’s keycard without an ID? We just need to get her stuff.”

“Unfortunately, that’s not possible...” the staff seemed apologetic despite her hands being tied. “The only other way we could release something like that is if her tour guide were here. Only the person themselves or a government appointed official can receive it.”

“So you’re saying if we wait for her tour guide, they could get us the card?”

She nodded.

“I see...” he thought of asking Dawn when they might be back, but seeing as his wife was busy trying to sing her a melody, he figured it’d be better not to interrupt... “Do you have any idea when they’ll return?”

“Unfortunately no,” she seemed sorry again. “They have been coming back towards the later end of the day though... Though, poor things. They always look so tired by the end!” She laughed a little. “It’s pretty clear their tiny bodies can’t handle such a long day here... You know their days are only 24 hours long?”

“Is that so...” James humored her briefly, looking to be lost in thought. “Thank you for your help.”

“No problem. And I’m sorry I couldn’t be of any more help... I hope she feels better.”

“We do too.” He gave a brief smile as he turned back to the other two girls.

“P-please, just stop bouncing me...stop singing!” She mustered through her tears. “I just...I just need a minute.” And it was less than a minute she’d get, because James returned to drop probably even bigger of a bombshell on her.

“Dawn? You feeling any better?”

“No...” she sniffled. “How can I? Everything is ruined!”

“That’s not true,” Katherine tried to be encouraging. “You still have us?”

Dawn didn’t respond.

“I talked a little more with the worker; she says if we can talk to your tour guide that’s another way we could get your ID card?”

“But...” again, a new way of feeling hopeless. “I’m not sure when they’ll be back...!” She started to get upset again, facing a new challenge she’d been stripped of the tools to overcome.

“Hey, hey! That’s okay,” James said soothingly. “Everyone gets down on their luck; we’ll work through this. We may not know when they’re going to be back, but it’s probably safe to assume it’ll be later today? Closer towards night?”

Dawn sniffled some more. “I...I guess.”

“Right? So, in the meantime, how about we run around and do a few things?”

“Things?” Didn’t they need to wait in the hotel?

“Well, I take it you must be hungry? I know Katherine and I could eat...”

“Definitely,” Katherine agreed. “Being upset isn’t a great feeling, and it’s certainly worse on an empty stomach.”

Maybe she could eat, if her emotions weren’t so high-strung to prevent her from realizing it. Food probably did sound good, but that was probably the last thing she wanted right now. Apart from securing her ride home, it was her...

“But what about my clothes?” She didn’t want to go anywhere. She wanted to be front and center when that woman walked through the door. “I don’t wanna go to a place dressed like this...”
Need she remind herself of why she couldn’t change?

“I...I should stay here.” She wiped her eyes then looked around the lobby. Once her eyes fell on a sofa she pointed over to it. “I’m sorry for causing so much trouble for you two. You can just leave me over there. I’ll be fine from here.”

“Well, that puts us in a tough spot, don’t you think?” Katherine bounced her a little with a smile. “How will we know if you’re safe and sound then?”

Before Dawn could rebuttal James dogpiled her as well.

“We promised we’d help out, didn’t we? Don’t think you get to cut us loose so soon.”

“But...”

“And if we leave, that means I need the sweater, too?” Katherine teased, though in Dawn’s position she considered it a legitimate consequence. “Weren’t you looking for something to wear? There’s no reason we can’t go shopping for an outfit too?”

With each battering reason she became more and more reluctant. Reluctant of herself and her fickle resolve. “I have no money though...” She did, but not physically on her right then. What she carried herself was gone, and her reserves...well, it was where the rest of her stuff in this dimension was.

Katherine laughed a little, then so did James. Were they mocking her? A hand patted the top of Dawn’s head.

“Come on, don’t you think you’re being silly now?” Katherine scolded. “The last thing we’d ever ask from you is money.” She changed her mind. “In fact, we’d never. *You’re* the one that leans on *us*, got it?”

Dawn didn’t respond. She just looked troubled and conflicted.

“Dawn, Katherine and I did talk about this earlier. We figured this might be a way we could make up for the tour you missed out on? We could show you some stuff the normal tours don’t?” The rise in his voice suggested adventure and fun, but Dawn didn’t know how to take that.

“Come on, wanna go have a little fun?” Katherine softly spoke into Dawn’s ear. “Don’t you want to know what fashion is like here? How the food tastes?”

“...”

“It’s okay if you don’t want to talk right now; I don’t like talking so much when I’m feeling down either. So how about this: unless you say ‘no’, how about you let us take over a little? It’s

kind of like reading; quiet time always helps me calm down. No matter what happens, we have your best interest at heart, okay?"

Was it okay? Deferring to the exact kind of person that tried to deceive her? No, that wasn't right to say... Still, it was hard for her to distinguish good from bad; truthful from the scheming. She was up a creek without a paddle and countless conmen were trying to sell her a new one. Regardless, without a paddle she surely wasn't going to go anywhere good...

Briefly, reluctantly, Dawn slightly nodded. She wasn't sure if she was fully on-board with anything at this point. She wanted to cling to the tangible, like the sofa in the lobby. At least there she knew she'd find Stacy. But, maybe in a situation like this she should trust in someone else...Someone more qualified for the environment she was in.

"Don't worry Dawn, you made a good decision." James gave her a reassuring pat on the back. "And who knows, you might have a little fun?"

"Okay! No more tears!" Katherine cheered. "First, let's get you some clothes, huh? Girls shouldn't be flaunting their underwear around so much, you know?" The effect of her words wasn't exactly positive, nor was it negative either. Dawn simply blushed awkwardly as they moved for the door.

"Thank you for coming!" The worker called to them. "Hopefully your Little feels better!"

The were out of the building and already heading back to the car.

Dawn despite being a mess of emotions was leaning into Katherine. James kept looking at his wife with an odd smirk. She seemed to be beaming, making the occasional hum with every other step. The look on her face was too obvious.

"Okay, Kath, how about we swap off now? You drive and I--" His speech quickly dropped and he swapped it for a stifled laugh. It was the first time in a while that his wife looked genuinely irked. With a raised brow and a frown, Dawn may not have felt it, but Katherine seemed to be holding her quite protectively.

"K-Kidding~..." James tried to play off his joke with a nervous chuckle.

Back in the car they put their seatbelts on and were in gear again.

“Alright, how about we go to Little Haul first?” James was already tapping away on the car’s center console.

“That’s probably the best idea. They’ll definitely have some stuff for you to wear there, Dawn. That way I can steal my sweater back!” She snickered, but quieted herself once she realized. “I suppose quiet time did do you some good, huh?”

James looked over and could see Dawn had fallen asleep.

“To be honest, I’m a little surprised she survived the ride over here. Guess what happened in there pushed her past the limit...”

“I think so too...” Katherine agreed a bit more somberly. “Something tells me her tour didn’t ever account for a nap-time...”

“Probably not,” James shrugged. “We’ll head out in a second. I just need this bus to pull in here first... Wait, bus? Don’t you think--?”

“We should probably hurry if we’re going to get a parking spot.” Katherine said. “I wasn’t joking when I said I was hungry.”

“I am too... So it’ll just be a quick trip to the store for some clothes then?”

Katherine looked offended yet again. He husband innocently smiled.

“Or...not?”