

## 6 - Fuck Everything

“*Fuck you.*” It felt good to say. For once she truly felt as if she’d gotten something off her chest, and oh did it feel good to see a look other than cool, relaxed and calm on Katherine’s face. She looked surprised, as if the impossible had just happened; innocence itself had just vomited profanity and taint right before her eyes. Then she furrowed her brows in the slightest.

Hearing the words from Dawn, she looked somewhat bothered. “Wh...Where did you learn to say something so--”

“Because I’ve been trying to tell you this whole time!” Dawn shouted again, cutting her off. Her brows were arched at a much more intense angle with her arms crossed. “I’m not some kid you can just push around! I want you to start listening to me!” Maybe Katherine didn’t deserve the brunt of everything Dawn was dishing out, but how could she not be the perfect catalyst for it? She symbolized everything Dawn had come to fear and hate about this place. She represented domination, oppression, enslavement, belittlement; the list could go on and on. But by at least taking out her anger on something, anything that came close to it, maybe she’d be able to snap something other than herself into two.

Now with the ball in her court, Dawn could feel herself gaining a few metaphorical inches.

“Now are *you* ready to talk?”

Katherine looked speechless. The pause, the silence, it actually made Dawn hopeful. Did it work? Was this it?

Katherine did seem stunned, though after a few movements from her lips did they start making noise. “...After everything we’ve done for you, you say such...such mean things?” She was still hung up on the outburst. Dawn’s hope had dwindled into nothing and only intensified her frown. The Amazon slightly shook her head. “It’s one thing to throw a tantrum, but there’s only so much I can let slide, Dawn. I’m not going to toler--”

“I *don’t* car--!” Dawn was beginning to shout, but then, a much more powerful voice raised her voice back.

“And you will *not* interrupt me.” She needn’t even stoop to Dawn’s level. The grave tone in her voice alone was enough to make the girl freeze, much less yelling the order. The very gravity of her voice had changed the atmosphere entirely. Katherine didn’t look to be all smiles anymore. Dawn wanted to shout back again, but...but...she was scared.

“You have every right to be sad or mad; it’s okay if you want to scream or cry, but that is *no* excuse to take it out on me or James.” Just as she looked to be standing up, Dawn with a brief meep slid back on her bare bottom. The aura of the room had become chilled. The cushy and kind Katherine had become...well, exactly what Dawn was so afraid of. But, she wouldn’t do anything, right? She already said she wouldn’t touch her. So...so why did it rattle the girl so much?

“B-But...”

“We wait for our turn to talk.” Katherine said with a heavy-handed finality to her words. “It’s polite when we wait for others to finish speaking. I’ve given you plenty of time, so it’s only fair you do the same for me.” She stood there, waiting for something. Dawn, as if it were instinct, knew exactly what it was. Slowly, she nodded her head. Who was she even looking at anymore?

“You need to wear a pull-up for two reasons. One, everyone is expected to wear underwear under their clothes because it’s the responsible and mature thing to do. And two, we’ve already discussed that this store doesn’t have panties. There’s only diapers and pull-ups. I thought you would have appreciated us getting the pull-ups instead of diapers, but apparently not...” She sighed a little.

“But I do--!” Dawn was desperate for damage control. Reconsidering things, she *did* appreciate it, but how could she be blamed for wanting panties? Katherine gave her another stern look though. It wasn’t her turn to talk.

“I tried to find you the best clothes that I could; ones that I thought looked nice. I’m sorry they weren’t exactly what you wanted, but you only need to wear them for a short while? Shouldn’t it not matter so much?” The question was rhetorical, but Dawn was still answering it internally. They weren’t the best, but they weren’t the worst either. Was she really blowing this all out of proportion? She couldn’t have! Everything that’s happened so far has been so annoyingly unfair, it was impossible to not be aggravated over!

“I wanted today to be fun for us, Dawn, but it can’t be if you’re going to fight me at every single turn! Especially when you’re going to say such mean things. You’ll probably disagree with me on this too, but I think you have what it takes to be a pretty good girl. Before that can start though, you need to understand how compromises work. We do not shout at others just so we can get what we want, and that *especially* goes double for using bad words.” It seemed as if she had been working through her own steam. Katherine’s expression had softened somewhat since the start of her rant. But the way she loomed over Dawn with such authority, it was crushing.

“Do I make myself clear?”

A slight whimper cracked the Amazon’s composure a little.

“Wh-what would you know...?” Dawn wiped her eyes. The last thing she wanted to do was cry, but there was too much pressure not to. “It must be easy to push me around and tell me to fall in line, right?” her words were getting shaky. She could barely support a sentence, much less her own legs. “You don’t know what it’s like; constantly being tormented by a population of people at least three times your size!” She wasn’t lashing, she was venting, and the sobs proved that. “Do you know what today has been like for me, Katherine? I was trying to endure my last day in a universe one degree of diapers and pacifiers away from slavery! Do you know what it’s like to be whisked in the air, taken hold of by some complete stranger, then be told you’re now their property? Can you know what that’s like? Suddenly being told your life has no meaning, which is why someone else thinks it’s their right to take yours?”

Her composure only worsened as the speech went on. Her nails dug into her arms as she lurched and wrenched her body. The despair was overflowing and she was thrashing desperately, doing anything she could to escape herself.

“And then they take you... They take you from your group; the people you know, your only landline in a vast, expansive and terrifying world, and then they try to break you. Do you know what that’s like? Having your pants forcefully stripped, panties taken off and torn in two, then be forced into a *fucking* pull-up?” She was starting to raise her voice, but it all came out shaky and panicked. “To spend the majority of your life as an adult, but then have someone else turn you into a baby again? Decide you suddenly can’t have dreams or goals anymore, just because their idea of ‘proper’ involves you being a baby?!”

“Dawn...”

“All you can think of is how to escape,” her gaze slowly turned to her hands, grasping for the imaginary. “But...but that becomes so, so hard to imagine,” the very repetition of her words made her shake. “She picks you up then starts taking you to her car, and just when you think there might be some chance; some opportunity to escape, she fucking drugs you?” Katherine probably didn’t like hearing the F-word, but frankly, Dawn was more concerned with telling her story.

“And then you black out, just to wake up in the arms of another Amazon in another strange place. No matter how kind they are, you’re still among strangers in a strange place, so what’s really changed?”

One sentence did come with conviction, however. “I don’t like Amazons, Katherine. I may have said some things I shouldn’t have, but what makes it all feel *so* much worse is when the Amazon that has shown me even a shred of decency starts to turn against me because I don’t fit the role she’s trying to force me into! I thought maybe I could trust you; maybe you were different, but...” She was silent, tears rolling down her cheeks. “But I guess I was wrong.”

And that was that. She had nothing more to say, nor could she imagine any of her words affecting anything by this point. Katherine wouldn’t change her mind, but at least Dawn communicated her piece. Taking it all out from within though, laying it all out so bare...she could feel the trauma welling back in troves. Why now? Was she going to have another attack?

All that was left was to hiccup and sob. Time could stand still and she’d be at least thankful from there. She may never get to go home again, but at least it meant not having to deal with such a messed up world she was near-trapped in. She felt weak; exposed. Even more than before. And it was another feeling, another sensation, a call-back to such a terrible experience. The visions haunted her and were etched like stone into her memory. She’d almost never been so vulnerable in front of someone before, but she didn’t care, nor did she have the capacity to keep herself composed.

The shadow over her head grew larger as the Amazon drew herself in. Katherine leaned over, picking the girl up.

Up and down she was bounced ever so slightly. Dawn hated it. Again, on the turn of a dime it felt like another paradigm shift. There wasn’t that same venom or ice-cold emotion. She was warm, soft and embracing. How could there be trust if nothing was guaranteed to last?

“Shh...shh...you’re okay. It’s alright.” Where did she get off? Talking down to her, then putting her right back together after the mess *she* caused?

Katherine sat down with her on the wooden seat.

Katherine stroked the top of her head. “I think we both got to say what we wanted to, right?” Dawn’s cheeks were still wet, but she was listening.

“I think we were both frustrated...” Katherine exhaled, rubbing the girl’s shoulder. For once, Dawn couldn’t agree with her more. “I’m sorry for scaring you like that; no matter how much you push, I shouldn’t put so much pressure on you like that... I was scary, wasn’t I?”

Slightly, she nodded. It was terrifying. She had used all her Amazonian traits against the tiny girl. How could it not feel overwhelming?

“Dawn, I would and will never do anything to put you in harm’s way. So even when I have to be stern, please know I’m not going to hurt you. You’re too precious for that.”

So she wasn’t going to do anything to her. That was a relief, but looking back on it, knowing she could be a moment away from fatal injury, she was quaking even now...

“...Maybe I have been a little too forward... You’ve been through things that I really can’t imagine. The best I can do is think about what’s best for you. I mean it when I say I’ve been trying to be helpful this entire time. I suppose it’s just...challenging, when you always seem to be against me. Truthfully, I’m not sure whether it’s because I’m in the wrong or you’re just having trouble...adjusting.” Dawn would have been happy to declare the former, but this wasn’t the time for that.

“I...I don’t want to adjust to anything,” Dawn sorely spoke. She hated herself; the way she leaned into Katherine. “I’m an adult, Katherine. I want to be treated the way you are!”

Katherine rubbed her back, making more soothing noises. “Okay, alright...let’s be calm...”

“Please...please listen...” Dawn moaned over a croaky and tired voice.

“I am listening, sweetheart. We have all the time in the world. So we’re gonna go step by step, okay?” The piecemeal approach she was taking, of course it was deliberate, but Dawn couldn’t help but feel herself receding into an inferior role once again. It truly was instinctual for Katherine, wasn’t it? She didn’t know if Katherine were the fool for being so hardwired or herself for thinking she could fight genetics.

“We don’t have all the time... I need to go back home... I’m supposed to go back tomorrow!” Raising her voice again earned a few shushes from Katherine.

“Dawn, please, I know we said a lot, but how about you give me a turn, okay? That’s what big girls do after all, right?” Dawn’s emotions grew limp.

“...You really don’t believe me...” she mumbled under her breath. She didn’t doubt Katherine truly was trying to be encouraging, but given the toddler approach she had used, it only further reaffirmed Dawn’s grievances. Katherine was a kind, caring and helpful woman, but only in all the wrong ways.

“My number one priority right now is you. That hasn’t changed. Even if you tell me to leave you alone I’m not going to. My heart breaks when I see you bottling up so many emotions at once and it all just...bursts. I’ll always be here for you when you’re feeling upset, but I wish we could avoid that altogether. I want you to be happy, Dawn, and I know you think you know how to get there, but there’s always more than one way to do it?”

She couldn’t afford herself the energy to speak.

“I promise everything is going to work out. You’ll be perfectly fine once this is all over, whatever that might look like. You don’t need to put yourself on guard around me or James.” She felt the hug grow a little tighter. “I want to know when you’re happy, sad, mad, confused and every other feeling you might have. I want to know you through and through, that way I can make it all better when things are bad, and know how to keep things right.”

“I’m an adult...”

“Even grownups have someone they can talk to.” Katherine calmly rebutted. “There’s nothing wrong with being small, Dawn. It’s okay to give up a little bit of control, even if it’s only for a short time.”

“Like when?” Dawn replied rather coldly.

Katherine didn’t hesitate to plant her lips on the girl’s forehead. “Like now.”

Dawn rubbed the spot where her lips touched. “Could, could you please not do that?” Amazons had proved to be quite the direct creatures, at least towards Littles, which is why Dawn did believe in Katherine’s ability to somewhat respect Dawn’s wishes, hence why her response was unexpected.

“I feel like I’ve done a lot to try and respect how you prefer things, so I think we’re going to try things a bit more my way. Everyone can use a few hugs and kisses when they’re feeling sad. You’re no different.” And she kissed Dawn again, who felt even more uncomfortably awkward.

“Stop it.” The woman’s stubbornness was getting annoying.

“No.” She pecked her again. Was this a game to her?

“I said stop it...”

“Will you try to listen to me if I do?”

Wasn't that her line? This dynamic was impossible to fathom for the girl. She lashes out, she resists, tries to maintain even a shred of her dignity, and then she's punished for it? Talked down to, belittled, then that same person who deals such a heavy hand has the gaul to be the same person that comforts her?

“Please, I promise if you let us take over a little, you might actually enjoy yourself...”

Her whining started to mesh with a groan. “I don't want to enjoy myself...! I want to go home!” A pair of lips touched her again. “Rrrrg! Stop it!”

“Only cranky girls need kisses, you know?” This was it; square one. Just when Dawn managed to rouse anything but her typical Amazonian self out of her massive husk, she was already back to her springy self. Dawn was back on the short end of the stick and Katherine held all the cards. Then, she kissed her again.

“God, I hate you! Let me go!” She pushed against Katherine, so hard that her injured wrist collapsed under the pressure, folding under with a yelp as tears stung her eyes. Weeping, she shouted up at Katherine, “LOOK! Can't you see what you did?!” She would've kept yelling, but it hurt too much to support her arm and vocals at the same time.

Instead of kissing Dawn, carefully, she held a hand under Dawn's wrist. “It must hurt, right? Poor thing... I promise we'll get it looked at as soon as we leave.” Despite hurting herself in the process, Dawn pulled her arm away.

“Leave me alone! I don't need your help! I don't need a doctor! All I need to do is go home!”

“Sweetie, yes, you do need to see the doctor. And you need to be careful with your wrist or the boo-boo is gonna get worse...”

“I don't need a doctor! Why can't you understand?” Her emotions were starting to run awry. “And it's not a boo-boo, it's called a *fucking* SPRAIN!” to emphasize, she shook her hand some, which was met with immediate regret. She leaned over herself in pain, whimpering. “A-and it...” sniffling, she tried to brace the pain. “I-it really hurts...!”

Katherine didn't say anything. Instead, she kissed her on the forehead.

“S-stop it!” She tried kicking her legs.

“If you promise to stop using bad words, I will.”

She wasn't the problem...she wasn't. But Katherine, why did she have to be so difficult? She wanted to help, but why did it seem like she was a complete obstacle instead?

*“Screw you!”*

Another peck on the forehead.

“Go fuck yourself!”

The next one was longer.

Katherine exhaled through her nose, still smiling, no matter what Dawn seemed to say or throw at her. “Maybe you're just looking for lots of kisses? Huh, is that it?” Then, she had the goddamn audacity to grin, as if she'd figured this whole charade out.

What arguments did Dawn have left? She'd said everything fathomable inside her head, used every defense written in the book. Her wrist was in pain, she was naked from the waist down, laying in an Amazon's arms, and all she could do was kick her legs, push, and swear. Any time she tried anything, all Katherine would do is kiss her. She wasn't hurting the girl, she wasn't punishing her. Well, she was in a way, but all she really was being was annoying. How stubborn could she be? Was this what she did to get her way? Kiss the other party into submission?

“Let me go...”

“Are you ready to stop?”

Dawn stayed silent for a few moments, until finally, still with an indignant look on her face, she turned her head to the side. She was done talking.

With somewhat of a tired smile, Katherine made a noise of approval. “It's progress...”

As spiteful as she was to the woman, she did start to cling to her once they stood up. With how high these giants stood off the ground, how couldn't she?



But then back down she went once Katherine set her feet on the floor. The interior to the dressing rooms were carpeted, though it was that cheap, thin sort of carpeted; the kind that did so little, you'd think it wasn't even carpeted at all.

"Dawn," calmly, Katherine said her name as she got on her knees, facing the naked girl head-on. "I'm sorry for making you so upset. We both said things we shouldn't have, but I still want this to be a good day, so do you accept my apology?"

Apologizing? Now she was? She had some nerve after all that antagonizing. And frankly, Dawn was still pissed off. She wasn't going to let bygones be bygones just because some high and mighty Amazon thought that they were being the bigger person. Seeing all the things *she* said and did to the girl, this hardly counted as an apology. If Katherine was going to treat Dawn like a child, she sure as hell was going to "apologize" like one.

Instead, Dawn narrowed her eyes, looking at the woman.

"Whatever," she mumbled, turning her gaze away.

Dawn was half-expecting another kiss, but it didn't come. Odd, because there wasn't any sort of reaction; one that Dawn could perceive. She looked a little back at Katherine, though she was smiling, but it didn't exactly seem like a chipper one...

"I know you're grumpy right now, but we need to get you dressed. And I'm sorry, but you have to wear a pull-up. It's either that or--"

"I know already," Dawn spat coldly, walking over to an old acquaintance. From where she stood she fanned out the pull-up some, though Katherine made a bold move and took the whole thing from her hands. Now she was pulling things out of her hands? When would she stop? "What the hell? I was doing what you said!"

"Language," her voice hit with authority, "please," then it softened. "The doctor still needs to look at your wrist. You've been moving it around a lot and I know it hurts, so it'll be safer if I dress you."

"I can dress myself. My wrist is fine." It wasn't, but more and more, Dawn couldn't stand the thought of any cocky Amazon getting their way.

"Your wrist is not fine," Katherine contradicted quite immediately. "You can throw a tantrum, but the only way you're getting dressed is if you let me do it. Don't you want to leave the store?"

The sooner you cooperate, the sooner we can go.” Objectively, Katherine had been nice through and through, and even now she seemed to be restraining herself; even Dawn could tell that, but everything up until now was so bottled up inside herself, it was like a bunch of tiny devils across her shoulders telling her to push further and further.

But she did want to leave the store, but she wanted to be difficult. She wanted to go home, but she wanted to teach Katherine a lesson.

“I can dress myself,” Dawn said gravely.

“Would you rather we leave the store with nothing?” Katherine asked, quite rhetorically. Or...maybe not. “No pants or pull-ups, and you’re definitely not going back into a wet one.” Even if she didn’t mean it, that last mention of the wet one made Dawn equal parts embarrassed and annoyed. “We’ll take you to the Doctor’s naked, but then they’re only going to have diapers for you, you know?”

It had to be a lie. She was bluffing. She was just trying to get her to give in. But...it seemed so plausible at the same time, and all that really bothered her was the negotiator behind the price. Maybe Dawn was the fool, because in the end, she never really had a choice, at least not now.

The cracking pressure was visible on her face, obviously annoyed that she was facing an ultimatum with only one real choice she didn’t want to admit to.

There was a sharp exhale from her nose before her voice shouted, “Fine, whatever!”

Katherine didn’t hesitate to start the motions from there. And despite Dawn being such a stubborn stick in the mud, she was handled carefully, albeit deftly. The pull-up was held open for her, and cringing the whole way Dawn did step into it. Up her legs they went and it was securely in place.

*So nice to be reunited...* Dawn glumly thought to herself. She didn’t have time to dread over how she looked in the mirror because Katherine was already moving onto the pants. A few seconds later and she was a finished package. Still, she kept side-eyeing herself in the mirror, sickened by the subtle curves she had, and not the good ones.

“I look ridiculous...” Dawn spoke under her breath, turning from the mirror.

It seemed like the perfect window for Katherine to inject some more of her optimism, but it was yet another cue she either missed or intentionally skipped out on. Even to Dawn, seeing such a

change in her mannerisms was weird. Falling back on a trusty word though, “whatever” was a leisurely approach to take.

“Is it alright if I carry you?” Katherine asked. Dawn was a little surprised. She was acting pissy and she knew it, so it was a growing surprise that Katherine didn’t seem to be stooping to her level. She always seemed to stop herself short before she became an outright bully.

Eventually, Dawn did nod her head, not finding it so hard to brace herself this time before being lifted. And even if the pants weren’t her favorite, she did have something to cover her lower half now. It was something to be thankful for...

This was annoying.

Not but five minutes later with a few thoughts to herself and Katherine’s pause on her pestering and cheery attitude, she could already feel the steam inside her head starting to dissipate. Katherine wasn’t acting high and mighty, probably, and she wasn’t being the bigger person simply because she was, nor because she was trying to be superior. She simply cooled off faster than Dawn did.

Besides, tension may not have been the way to describe it, but there was something obviously going on between the two. While she wasn’t thrilled about making enemies with anyone, especially Amazons, thinking about what James might say dampened her flare a little. Since he was the most compatible person she knew here, looking any worse in his eyes didn’t sound great...

“...Thank...you...”

Katherine was keeping to herself for a moment, then realized Dawn was speaking to her. “For what?”

Really? Did she have to be explicit? Though, she quickly checked herself before she lost her cool again... *Assume best intentions...*

“...For the pants.” She stretched the waist some. As stupid as they were, they served their purpose.

They leaned over so Katherine could grab the opened package of pull-ups, then with the same hand she grabbed the wet one as well.

“...I’m sorry they’re not your favorite. I tried my best.”

“I...I know. I was just being...stubborn,” of all people, why’d she have to admit it to her?

“Well, thank you. That was very mature of you to say,” Katherine smiled, for real this time, albeit patronizing.

“Can we leave now? I want all of this to be over...”

“That’s the plan. We just need to go find James, then we can go buy all this stuff.”

The door unlocked and off they went.

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“Dawn, please? It’s for your own safety.”

“No.” And to bolster her defense, she firmly crossed her arms. If she weren’t being carried, she’d have her feet firmly planted on the ground, though that wasn’t an option. She’d been doing quite a bit of compromising, but this was most certainly a hard, hard pass.

“Please? It’s only for a little bit,” now James was trying to negotiate, but this time around the price mattered much more than the dealer.

“No.” She was firm in her resolve again. What aggravated her the most was how this’d only been brought to her attention once they were in the parking lot and outside the store. They hadn’t even seen James since they broke up to go to the changing rooms, rather than meeting again in the store. Seeing what he had now, Dawn felt deceived, guessing James’s absence up until now was planned. Otherwise, Dawn would be making a scene regardless wherever she saw this monstrosity.

“I do *not* need a car seat.” They’d done a lot just to get her in pull-ups and toddler pants, but they weren’t going to get their way here. Not this time.

“The law says you do,” James tried to explain, sounding just as tried and stressed as Katherine had been starting to get earlier.

“You don’t need to keep setting it up because I’m not riding in it,” Dawn said combatively. Seriously, why did Amazons have to act like that? They did things like they knew the Little

arguing with them would fold regardless, so they might as well act like they won to begin with! James was seriously losing his brownie points with her.

“Whether you like it or not, we still need one in the car.” James was already fumbling with some of the straps, glancing at the instruction manual. The thing had already been put in the car, all that remained was fastening it.

“I’ll just ride in Katherine’s lap again,” she sufficed. It wasn’t the best, but it definitely beat riding in a car seat. She knew it was manipulative, but she wagered that Katherine wouldn’t turn down more time being able to hold Dawn...

Katherine, though, didn’t give any indication of a yes or no, just simple thought.

“Dawn, why don’t you want to ride in one?” Katherine asked. “Don’t you want to have your own spot?”

“Maybe, but I don’t ride in car seats. I’m an adult, Katherine.” Even if, literally speaking, everything about this situation seemed to contradict that.

“Well, if the police catch what we were doing before, then we’re all in big trouble,” James added, pulling one last strap. “...There, got it,” he wiped his forehead. “Gosh, these things are harder than the stuff at work...”

Dawn expected it, but she wasn’t thrilled to have the ‘law’ argument be thrown against her. Obviously it wasn’t worth jeopardizing everything for the sake of pride, but that didn’t make it any easier to forsake hers.

“Fine.” Need it be said she was pissed? Today had been filled with moments of bitter compliance. Even if Katherine and James were trying to be supportive, that didn’t change how much everything sucked. She couldn’t get the underwear she wanted, she couldn’t get the pants she wanted, and now she can’t even sit where she wanted?

“I’m sorry you’re mad at us, but we all have to follow the rules,” Katherine sympathized, trying to explain.

“I’m not mad at you guys,” Dawn annoyedly said, “I’m mad at the situation.” That was the worst part; being misinterpreted. She couldn’t be angry or mad without someone coming along to poke her with a stick, get bitten and then act like the victim. Why couldn’t they just stay out of her way? Obviously she’s mad, so why go playing with fire if you know you’re going to get hurt?

Up until now Dawn was too offended to even look at the torture device. A neutral look would have been one thing, though this one looked to be catering to a specific demographic...

It looked generously padded all throughout; the seat, armrests, backrest, headrest, everything. The seat even had a cupholder, though it probably wasn't meant for the kind of cup Dawn'd use. It had black trims for all the excess cushion, though everything else was predominantly pink. From the topmost of the seat even, a plastic bunch of butterflies and flower heads were suspended from above.

*They want to adopt a girl, not you. Remember that...* Dawn choked back a scowl.

"Looks comfy?" Katherine smiled yet again.

"Just put me in, please." The sooner she got in it, the sooner she'd be out.

The seat was comfortable, to its credit. It wasn't suffocating, but she definitely felt secure in an almost invasive way. And just before Katherine could do anything else Dawn cut her off.

"I can buckle myself in," Dawn leaned forward, suddenly noticing how the seat had her positioned. She wasn't upright like in a normal seat, as if her center of gravity, her bottom, were tilted back by just the slightest. Only leaning forward did she actually appear upright.

She didn't want to criticize Jame's handyman skills, but that was something he'd need to fix...

"Why is the seat tilted back so much?" She looked behind herself, putting her hands on the armrests to keep steady. "You may have messed it up when putting it in..."

"Sit back in it for a second?" James asked, and reluctantly, Dawn did, sitting like she normally would, or could, considering she didn't typically ride in car seats.

He had the manual in his hand, then for comparison held it at a height where he could pan his vision from Dawn to the paper. "...Nope, looks right to me. I think it's a feature."

"A feature? How? It's probably a safety hazard or something..." Dawn rambled, still not convinced. She couldn't ride in something like this, especially if it wasn't safe.

"Actually," Katherine interjected, "a lot of seats are like that. It's so it's easier to fall asleep for car rides."

“But...” Instantly it made sense, but it made Dawn no more satisfied. Less so, even.

“Give it a quick test spin? We could use an opinion on it, you know?” James suggested. “Kath and I are a little too big for it... Let’s call it payment for the pants and pull-ups?”

A hot-faced Dawn grew quiet. She could have gotten by with just the pants remark, but he also mentioned the other thing...

“She doesn’t owe us anything,” Katherine lightly admonished her husband, then looked back at Dawn with a much more friendly look. “We could use your opinion though? It’s only a short ride?”

Finally, Dawn did relent, leaning back into the seat, consciously aware of her offset angle now. Sitting on a few straps and a buckle, she did her best to organize them, decrypting the puzzle that was her seatbelt.

“Oh, don’t worry, I’ve got it,” Katherine helpfully interrupted, separating and distinguishing it all with such ease. It was all swift and quick, as a strap came over each shoulder, attaching to a small plastic breastplate, finally attached to a strap that came right between her legs and through the seat.

“Snug?” She asked; faster than Dawn had time to tell her to stop.

“Y-yes...” she tried to squirm a little in the seat, though the entire network of straps, albeit simple, restricted a lot of her movement. They didn’t have the give and stretch like a normal seatbelt did. They stretched a little when she leaned forward, but a little was all she got before they came to a complete halt. “Why are there so many straps?” She tugged at one of them. “I only need one like you guys.”

“This keeps you a lot safer, though,” Katherine contently said, giving the seat another onceover. “And hey, now you have your own seat? You’re high enough to see through the windows now, too?”

Defeated, she sighed and leaned back into the seat, finally giving it a rest. Almost.

“Wait, can we do anything about this?” Dawn pointed up to the plastic toys over her head, just slightly within reach. To emphasize, the tips of her fingers managed to touch them, leading to plastic jingle-jangles.

“Oh, do you want them lower? This seat does look a tiny bit big for you...” Her face was quickly out of view, tinkering with the device on top.

“No, I don’t want to play with them,” Dawn sharply corrected. “Can you take them out? They’re annoying.”

“I think we can...” she looked back at Dawn, “are you sure though? What if you get bored?” She wasn’t being sarcastic and Dawn wasn’t trying to be bewildered.

“I’ll be fine.”

Finally there was a popping noise and away the plastic chandelier went, though not far away. Katherine reached over to drop it by the seat. Also, as a side note, it was worth mentioning how clean the car’s interior was. Maybe a couple days shy of brand new, but the vehicle was well-kept.

Katherine gave Dawn’s straps a few more tugs before looking satisfied. “Okay...all set. Comfy?”

“Sort of.” It was a loaded question with no easy answer.

On her way out a large hand found Dawn’s foot, squeezing it. Before she could complain though the door was shut. Now she had the wonderful view of the back of the passenger seat. Though, to her right, she could see out of the window now, comfortably even. It was as if she were an adolescent back in her world with the height she sat at, but looking down at herself would sober that kind of wishful thinking immediately...

Through the window she could see James and Katherine, talking about something, but almost entirely out of earshot. Regardless, Dawn was curious. She didn’t like seeing them talk without her around; it was a paranoia thing. Well-placed paranoia after everything she’d been through. Their conversation had no real hints, only with a few nods and basic expressions. No frowns, ecstatic looks or dynamic actions. Maybe it wasn’t all that important...

Staring straight again, she wasn’t happy to be looking directly at the head of the seat in front of her, thanks to the angle she was at.

“Supposed to help me sleep better?” Dawn grumbled to herself. “Only a little bit longer...” She leaned her head back some more. At least they knew how to design a comfortable seat. She



started swinging her feet, aimlessly, hanging high off the ground. Already she was bored. Not bored enough to play with dangling toys, though.

Her moment of silence was broken by the front doors opening, James and Katherine slipping inside.

After strapping themselves in, James turned the ignition then looked back at Dawn from the driver's seat. "So how is your wrist feeling?" At the same time he was backing them out of their spot.

"Fine," Dawn lied. Instinctively, the mere mention of it made it throb. She didn't need another obstacle today and was quite ready to be done with everything. "Are we going back to the hotel now?"

"Fine? Are you sure?" Now Katherine stuck her head over and James was already back to the driver's view. "It doesn't hurt anymore? Not at all?" She sounded like a helpful mom, giving Dawn a chance to reconsider.

"I don't need to see a doctor," Dawn looked in her direction, skipping their game of verbal tag. "I just need to get back to my room. I appreciate everything you guys have done for me today; I'm thankful, but I'm fine now."

"If she's feeling fine, maybe we can just skip to the--"

"Absolutely not." James was trying to speak, but Katherine was quick to the punch. "You saw earlier, when I tried touching her wrist? She probably hurt it even more in the dressing room."

Suddenly Dawn was feeling a tad bit sheepish. Admittedly, she wasn't being so kind to her injury earlier...

"I'm fine, though," trying to join the conversation, Dawn leaned forward out of habit to reach the other two in the front, though her straps stopped her just about immediately. The sudden force yanked her back as fast as she flung herself forward. "Stupid car seat..."

"Why don't we give it a little bit longer?" James suggested, "Get some food then see how she's feeling?"

Finally! Someone was fighting for her! “Yeah, besides, I know how it feels the best, so it should be my choice. It feels better already anyways.” Not completely true, but she didn’t need to give her any reason...

“What if she sprained it?” Katherine continued to speak with James, not Dawn. “Someone can report us for neglect if they see that we’re not bothering to take her to a doctor. She could really be hurt, James.”

“Hello?” Dawn raised her voice from the back a little. She looked at her centerpiece buckle. Was there any way to undo it? Obviously you could. Anything that came together could come apart...

“All I’m saying is we might be worrying for no reason...”

“It’s not for no reason. She’s our responsibility.”

By now Dawn was probably red in the face, trying to press down on the button to her buckle, yet it wouldn’t budge! Her fingers were starting to hurt from all the pressure she was using, yet to no avail. “Hey! I’m fine! I don’t need a doctor! Just take me to the hotel!”

“Will the insurance cover her?”

Angry as she was over the car seat, being trapped back here and from the conversation was starting to get to her. “Stop ignoring me...!”

“I’m not sure, but it shouldn’t be much anyways”

“Stupid Amazons...!” Dawn grit her teeth.

“Okay, alright. Doctor’s first, then we’ll talk about food?”

“Yes, we’ll do it like that. I’ll see if there’s a Little clinic anywhere around here...”

Again and again, her patience was constantly being tried, and yet again, she snapped.

Loudly breathing through her nose, Dawn took a deep breath before...

“AAAAAGH!” Thinking of the most ridiculous, loudest noise she could summon, she let it erupt forth. She could see James visibly tense up from behind the wheel.

Slamming her fists on the armrest and kicking her feet, she continued to shout, “WHY WON’T ANYONE LISTEN TO ME?!”