

22 - Decompress

“Is it not going to affect your work?” Katherine spoke with James, and Dawn did her damndest to contribute.

“Don’t worry, I’ll be able to make the time,” James was casual as he passively rubbed his palms from his seat. “Thankfully my time is flexible when I’m at home.”

“Mm...” Katherine quietly agreed, and Dawn boredly watched the Amazon, sitting right behind her with her legs splayed out like retaining walls on either side. She watched her hand occasionally add a block to her amalgamation of cube, prism, cylinder and more. The once mighty tower had fallen and much like the result of Babel, better thought of as babble, that’s all either architect seemed to be communicating with each other. Dawn placed a block here, Katherine placed one there. Dawn implied step one, and Katherine opted for step six.

The conversation finally reached one of those quiet moments, and while Dawn seriously doubted that was for her sake, she certainly treated it like so. Speaking up, she said, “So did either of you two plan on asking me?”

“Ask what, sweetheart?” Katherine patted the top of her head.

“*Ask* if I was okay with *any* of this? What did she even call it? A Little-trician? Is that like a doctor, or something? I’m not going to any doctor.” There wasn’t a need for one. None whatsoever. Maybe mentally was an ongoing question, given how horrible things were becoming, but at least physically she was in tip-top shape.

“Well Dawn,” Katherine used her gentle, ‘too dumb to understand’ tone, “you have to go the doctor’s. What if you get sick?”

“I’m not going to get sick,” Dawn said, then immediately realized how ridiculous that sounded. “I’m *not* sick. Not right now. Fine, take me if I get sick, but not until then. I feel fine!”

“Dawn, we all have to go to the doctor’s,” James turned it into a double-team. “The LPS lady gave us an appointment. We have to go.”

“There’s a number on that, isn’t there? Just call and cancel, or something. Tell them I feel fine.”

“Dawn...you need to go,” the woman right behind her said.

“Just let me stay here!” Dawn insisted, and James looked up, like he was sharing a look with his wife beyond the Little’s scope of vision.

“Why don’t we all go tomorrow?” Katherine offered, not to Dawn, but to James. “I’d want to meet them, too...”

“Well if this works out, you can always take her the next time,” James suggested, and Dawn looked concerned.

“What do you mean ‘next time’?” the Little tried to interrupt. “I’m not going the first time either!”

“I can just call out for the afternoon; they’ll understand.”

“Hon, you called out once this week already,” James played the gentle opposition. “It’ll be fine, I promise.”

“I’m not *going!*” Dawn raised her voice, and Katherine calmly tried to shush her.

“Shh...shh...indoor voices,” she calmly reminded her, and Dawn was ready for another outburst. But all it took was that *stupid* look from James! It wasn’t enough to make her any less agitated, but...she felt far less willing to challenge his wife’s mercy.

“I know, but...” Katherine started, but started to drift.

“It’ll be fine, trust me,” James smiled, and Katherine did as well. Dawn sure didn’t though. “Let’s forget about that stuff, though. You two have a good day?”

“*Meh,*” Dawn scoffed just as Katherine looked like she wanted to say something much more glowing.

“*Meh?*” James raised his eyebrow, but looked at his wife for answers.

“Do you remember Dayna? She was in charge of the Littles today at work. Dawn had a little bit of a rough day...”

Rough day? Being forced into the custody of strangers, have her hobbies and interests be made mockeries of and held out of reach, and plummet her dignity by being treated like an actual child, and that was all just a “rough” day? It was a *fucking* horribly unfair day! The worst of the worst! *Shitty, no-good...!*

“Did you behave?” Suddenly Dawn was included, for the softest of softball questions only, of course.

“I *did* what I was told,” Dawn exhaled, dropping another block on what could have only been an architect’s worst nightmare.

“She was good,” Katherine said just as it looked like James was going to say something back. “Just a little nervous around new people, and that’s okay.”

More misdirection and misinformation. She was the farthest thing from nervous. Pissy and independent would have been more accurate. But she was sitting between the legs of a woman who had more or less been her safeguard all day, and even now against the person that spanked her once already. “I-...” Dawn came off the handle again, ready to correct her, but quickly went quiet. Maybe it was better to be misunderstood than to be punished...

“Well, good job, then.” James smiled, and Dawn’s head quickly fell down. Complimenting her? For what, enduring all the unfair treatment? Call her a soldier, maybe a veteran once she finally survived the war.

“Yes, she did a *very* good job,” Katherine was just as warm and affectionate, and Dawn was just barely trying to lean away from her hands now on her shoulders. “She ate all her lunch and we even got to look at a few books together!”

“Yeah? Anything interesting?”

Hardly, for all Dawn knew, considering she barely even got to read the first few pages of one. And that overly-complex book sorting system...

“We were looking at some fantasy books, and actually,” Dawn suddenly slid forward on her bottom just so Katherine could stand. “Where did I leave her diaper bag...?”

“Right here,” James grunted as he leaned back to grab the bag. “Bring something back?” That got Dawn’s attention.

“Uh-huh...” Katherine hummed as she flipped the top open and rummaged through. “Ta-dah!”

Dawn leaned out from the side and saw something familiar in the Amazon’s hands. It was the same book they were looking at right before lunch ended. They got it? She checked it out?

“Huh...” James mumbled as he read the back and front before handing it back. “Is that gonna be okay?”

“It should be fine,” Katherine said as she cradled the book with both arms. “I made sure it was appropriate.”

“Wait, you ended up getting the book?” Dawn asked, now beside the woman’s leg. It was an honest and admittedly positive surprise. “Can I read it?”

“Of course I got it!” Katherine chuckled, and Dawn shuffled awkwardly. “But remember, Dawn: we’re *borrowing* this from the library. That means we can’t keep it forever.”

“I *know* what borrowing means, so can I just read it now?” Maybe if she finished it fast enough she could convince her to bring back another one tomorrow. Given how intellectually starved Dawn was feeling, she probably did have it in herself to finish it in one go.

“We’ll read some later tonight before bedtime,” Katherine calmly assured the girl, but that was far from what she wanted, and even carried unfortunate implications.

“Wait, what do you mean, ‘we’?” Dawn frowned.

Katherine looked considerate, but again, there was that same feeling that she just wasn’t quite connecting with the girl. “These books can be big and heavy, sweetheart, and these aren’t like the books at the Little’s area; we need to be extra special careful with these. They’re not toys, okay?”

“I never thought of them as toys! I just want to *read!* I know how to take care of stuff! I don’t need help holding a book! I’ll just set it on the floor!”

“Nuh-uh, not with these,” Katherine shook her head. “That’s how they can get dirty and stepped on.”

There was hardly a chance of that happening, unless the Amazons themselves decided to be careless. Then she glanced around for a moment, remembering that the four-legged member of the household was still being kept in confinement. Maybe not everyone could be trusted...

“Then...fine, on the couch!”

“Dawn,” James cut in, “would you rather no books at all?”

“No! Ugh,” she groaned, “I’m just trying to say that—”

“We’re going to do things responsibly or we’re not doing them at all,” James quite firmly doubled down. “Do you understand?”

And with a bitter, horrible feeling in her stomach, Dawn finally croaked.

“*Fine.*”

“Dawn, sweetie? Where are you off to?” It was an observant and omniscient voice that had the flustered girl caught in her tracks, ready to disappear into the dark of the corridor.

“I-I...I just wanted to see something...!” she grumbled back, trudging onwards while trying to squeeze her own legs together as much as she could.

“Please play where James and I can see you!” Katherine called back, and given how things were, the fact she was giving Dawn the choice to walk back on her own rather than be retrieved was something in and of itself.

So she slumped back to the living room where Katherine was petting Waver, and Dawn was looking for a place to relieve herself.

“Did you wanna play with your blocks some more?” Katherine suggested with a smile. “Or I can put some cartoons on?”

“I’m fine...” Dawn huffed, feeling no appeal for anything right then. Correction, there was no appeal for remotely anything this house had inside of it, but at least once upon a time her one and only toy could occupy her mind for five minutes at most.

“Kay, girls, come and get it!” James called from the kitchen, and yet Waver was the first to bolt.

“Ah-ah! Waver, no—!” Katherine did her best to tame the beast, but the sound of pebbles hitting the metal bowl in the kitchen was like a lightning rod in a storm. Dawn bore witness to a barreling train that hopped over Katherine’s lap, to the arm of the couch, and then soaring for the kitchen.

He was just as well-received by James’ scolding once his paws scraped past the doorway and into the kitchen.

It was a bitter feeling knowing that a dog could somehow get off easier than Dawn, but she could certainly fly higher since every Amazon just seemed to think she was a collectible at this point. Katherine unannounced swooped her into the air and brought up the rear.

“Ready for some dinner?”

“What are we having?” Dawn asked and tried to focus, continuing to squeeze her legs.

“Yummy stir-fry,” Katherine bounced the girl lightly as they treated themselves to the aroma from the stove. “Mmm! Smells great, hon!”

“Feel like you’d say that if I only gave you a glass of water to drink,” James playfully rolled his eyes and Dawn watched him remove the apron around his neck.

“There’s such thing as good and bad water, you know,” Katherine coyly joked as Dawn was deposited into her special seat that hung from the table. Her legs were fed on either side of the center strap, and soon enough she was secure.

“Speaking of water, I’ll take that,” Katherine asked as she sat right next to Dawn.

“I’ll have water too—” Dawn also asked, but her jaw hung in silence as the timing couldn’t have been any more comedic or cruel. Her sippy cup came down on the table with the same old red hue hiding behind the plastic. “Can I please be asked for once what *I* want to drink?”

“Sorry, was just in a rhythm,” James said, but it didn’t feel like much of an apology. After all, she was expected to drink it anyway.

Katherine grabbed her cup and unscrewed the top, just the way she preferred it. “We’ll get you some water after. Sound good?”

“Mhm…” Dawn dejectedly hummed, but continued to fidget, finally admitting to her needs. “I need to pee.”

“Hm?” She was acknowledged, but not in the way she would have liked. Without being able to see, but certainly being able to feel, a hand went around her seat strap and firmly pressed against her lukewarm diaper. “Don’t worry, it’ll hold,” and before Dawn could make some kind of stink, Katherine’s head turned, “oh, thanks,” she accepted the warm, white porcelain plate of food.

“Mmm! Looks so good!”

“And here’s Dawn’s,” James with his last occupied hand gave Katherine a bright blue plastic bowl, not a plate, which then made the final shift in front of Dawn. The bottom was flat and rock-steady, as if to minimize the chance of tipping it over.

“What do we say?” Katherine hummed, and Dawn curled her toes just so her face wasn’t what looked annoyed.

“Thank you.”

“Course, kiddo!” And just like the night prior, all three were sitting at the dinner table. If only Dawn could eat as fast as Waver, who was already slumped by the table to her left with a full belly.

Dawn leaned in just to see Katherine’s plate. Noodles once yellow had gone for tinted orange and caramelized brown. Cuts of red and green vegetables were hiding in between with cubes and strips of meat, onions too. With it all bathing in a sauce, it did look good, and made a point that takeout wasn’t the means of getting good food here.

James really did look like he could cook...

But then Dawn looked at her own bowl.

If Katherine’s noodles could go on for miles, Dawn’s looked like they stopped somewhere in the realm of inches. They’d been deliberately cut and shortened to a bite-sized degree. Where the Amazons had slices and dices of whole vegetables, all Dawn got were slivers and smithers of colored specks; tiny cubes that could only imitate the little brother of the main course others were having around her.

The colors were mostly the same, but it was undoubtedly a doctored dish, and that didn’t sit well with her.

Staring at her food, Dawn spoke up just as the first fork that she did not have clinked with a plate.

“Mine is different.”

“Huh? What do you mean?” James asked, and Katherine looked over herself.

“What’s wrong, honey? It’s all the same,” Katherine insisted.

“No, it isn’t,” Dawn disagreed. “Why is mine in a bowl, but you both got plates?”

“That’s because this can get messy,” the chef explained.

“Messy just for me?”

“Yes, because you’re not using a fork.”

“So give me a fork?”

In her hasty pursuit for equality, James caught her by the tongue and scolded, “When we want things, we ask nicely.”

Before she could bite her tongue she said, “May I *please* have a fork?”

“We’ll get you something you can use, but we don’t have it yet. I cut it up so you can use your hands,” James said right before he took a bite, using his fork, no less.

Dawn stuttered, “Wh-but...but it’s covered in sauce? How am I not going to make a mess?”

“That’s okay!” Katherine sang beside her, “we’re gonna get you in the tub after this, so if you get a little messy, that’ll be fine.”

“Tub?” Yet again, the first she was hearing of her immediate and constantly changing life plans. But as much as she wanted to argue, at least on some level she knew she needed to get clean after all the things she’d done in...in things and in places. “But...I don’t want to use my hands!”

“You could just use your mouth like Waver?” James grinned, and suddenly imitated a bark. “Woof! Woof!”

“Ah-ah! His wife stared sternly at him, sinking his act into just a sheepish smile. Dawn wasn’t finding it funny at the start or by the finish. “Dawn, I can feed you while I eat too, don’t worry.”

“No, it’s fine...” Dawn sighed, yet again choosing the lesser of evils. Her hand hesitantly reached out for the bowl, feeling less like a person and more like a savage with every meal she had. All it was now was to be fed, or enjoy finger-foods or figure out how to turn a meal into one, and that’s what this was, only James did the figuring out for her.

She made a face once her fingers brushed against the layer of sauce atop the noodles, and she cringed as she grabbed a handful, trying to be as dignified as she could, but at least Waver could eat without getting his paws dirty, so where did that put Dawn?

The noodles weren't even long enough to hang out of her hand. Nevertheless, food like this wasn't meant to be eaten with hands, and that's why it looked less and less appetizing by the second. It was starting to become some sort of gross muck...sludge? Junkyard stew? All brown and orange, covered in—

She stuffed it in her mouth with speed, just as fast as a handful of hand soap could be smothered against her mouth. Everything about it was seasoned and refined. It had a good taste, but there were bitter and slightly spicy tones, like it was a touch burnt on the perfection it was meant to achieve.

“Is it yummy?” Katherine asked as Dawn swallowed. Her left hand felt unusable now that it was coated in sauce. She looked for a napkin, but it was yet another thing she hadn't been given.

“It's...” Dawn coughed, “good...”

“You didn't use any spice with hers, did you?” Katherine was already accusing James, and he briefly surrendered his hands.

“I promise! Separate batch, just for her! I had to use some of the powder though for a similar taste, just less of it.”

“It's not too spicy, right?” Katherine cooed while she rubbed the girl's back. Dawn could feel the light tingles and pricks along her tongue. It didn't hit nearly as bad as the pizza did, but it was a level of spice that she still did not like. And yet up until that point it did taste good, but now she could hardly taste anything.

“It's...fine...” Dawn lightly coughed and breathed.

“Here, drink some sippy,” Katherine brought the cup to her mouth and she sipped from the lid, swallowing a heaping helping of juice all while someone else held it for her. “All better?”

“I said I'm fine...” Dawn wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, still holding up the left like it was contagious.

“Sorry, Dawn,” James looked apologetic, “Let me know if that's too much and I'll put something else together for you, okay?”

And to answer his offer, Dawn swiped another handful of food and stuffed it in her mouth, mumbling through her mouthful, “I said it’s fine...”

Suddenly she squinted from a wet thumb rubbing the corner of her mouth.

“Messy is okay, but let’s not get too dirty,” Katherine laughed as she cleaned her mouth, and James chuckled himself. Meanwhile, Dawn furiously tried to keep her knees together, holding back emotionally and physically.

“Can I get out of the chair, now?” Dawn asked yet again as her impatience was mounting. James and Katherine were gone from the table, leaving the Little with an empty tabletop and her pleas supposedly being drowned out by the sound of a running kitchen faucet.

“Don’t worry, Katherine’s gonna get you out in a second,” James strolled behind her, swiping the sippy cup still a quarter full of water along the way. “Did you like dinner?”

“It was fine...” Dawn said again, choosing to leave her review just slightly north of neutral. If cooking shows taught her anything, how the food tasted itself was but a single factor of many that constituted a “good” dish. It was not only that, but the quality of service and establishment that went into it. And given she was refused silverware, given a biased meal, and not even provided a napkin, maybe the real-feel of her scores were actually headed south.

“I’m sure I’ll get something you like going soon,” James chuckled like it was a challenge, one of which Dawn did not want to partake in. She didn’t want anything preferential; not in somewhere like this.

“Okay!” Katherine announced her return, though Dawn couldn’t see. “Bath time!”

“Bath time?” James played the game and egged her on.

“Nuh-uh, not for you~” She teased right back, finally roping Dawn into their marital banter. “For this little chick-a-dee right here!” Her two fingers found their way underneath Dawn’s chin, lifting her unwilling head up and looking up at the Amazon.

“One, two, three spots I can see right here!” she giggled as she pointed out each and every spot and splotch on the girl’s face. Was this teasing? Teasing her over something she wasn’t allowed to refuse?

“It’s not like you gave me a choice,” Dawn grumbled and shot her head right back down.

“Don’t worry, we’re gonna go clean you up right now. The tub’s filling up *right* as we speak! Annnd whoosh!”

Up she went like a rising star, but just as fittingly she missed the moon and was forced to drift. Riding against Katherine’s hip she held the girl as they made for the living room and then the stairs.

“Ope– let’s say goodnight to James right now, okay?”

“What? Why?”

“Because after your bath it’s gonna be close to bedtime.”

“But...!” She wanted to argue the time, but she hadn’t laid her eyes on a set of numbers since getting to this place. “It’s not even late!”

“It’s *gonna* be late,” Katherine corrected, looking like she bested the girl. “You’ve had such a busy day! I bet once we get you dried off and in your PJs you’re gonna feel a whole lot more tired than you are right now.”

“No I won’t, because I don’t go to sleep this early!”

“Goodnight, Dawn!” James waved from the sink with a soapy hand.

“No! Not goodnight, because I’m not going to sleep yet!” Dawn barked back, and all James did was shake his head after looking back down at the sink. “Oh, actually, hon? Did you figure out what you wanted to watch tonight?”

“Mmm...not yet,” Katherine shrugged, “but I’ll pick later. But okie-dokie, let’s go before the tub overflows!”

“Wait, what? Watching what?” Dawn looked at Katherine, then at James, but they were already moving, so that just left her escort. “Watching what?” she asked again.

“Nothing,” Katherine smiled, “just something for us later tonight.” Something *after* Dawn went to bed.

Without her? Fuck, it wasn't even about being without her! It was the fact that *life* went on without her. She was being forced to her prison while the wardens got free reign of the palace. She could hear the faintest sounds from downstairs, just as vibrant and lively while she against her will was committed to confinement.

"I don't go to bed this early!" Dawn insisted and fumed, "Just let me go to bed when you two do! Come on, this isn't fair!"

"You're not going to bed yet, though?" Katherine frowned. "Sweetheart, grown-ups don't need naps, and it's easier for us to stay up later," she calmly explained while they climbed the stairs.

"I don't nap *either!*" Dawn finally whined. "You just think I do! But I don't! Let me prove it, at least!"

"But you've already been napping for two days now?" Katherine countered, and Dawn went ballistic.

"Because *YOU* made me! I didn't get a choice! You can't just use that against me...!"

"Ahh, hear that?" Katherine tried to change the tune, "I think that's the tub getting full!"

"And stop changing the subject...!"

They reached the end of the dark hallway and re-entered the warm light coming from the bathroom ceiling. It was another giant room with all its giant faculties. The shower and tub were separate and the toilet was sitting right between them. The tub lined was an indent in the wall, right next to a door that must have been their closet. A giant mirror spanned the counter opposite to that, right next to the shower, sitting over the counter and sink just too high for Dawn to see over on her own.

The atmosphere was warm and humid, precisely because the faucet from the corner was gushing steamy water, and a calming buzz-hum from either a heater or fan in the ceiling.

"Oops, definitely too much..." and with Dawn still against her, Katherine dropped to her knees, reaching over and turning a flat metal dial. Then an invisible beast made a murky, bubbly groan as the insides of the nearby wall swarbled and gargled the draining water. Down and down, right up until...

"Perfect!" Katherine decided, stopping the flow.

Dawn was dropped the short distance to her feet, landing on the plush bathroom carpet. Her first instinct was to look at the exit and consider running, but even on her knees Katherine's feet were on their toes, raising her calves and heels that made for obstacles Dawn would need to hop over if she wanted to break free.

"Arms up!" Katherine cheered, and even though Dawn didn't listen, it didn't stop the shirt from coming off anyway.

The Little expected her bra to go next, but remembered the cruel reality she was given from the sight of her already naked breasts. She covered her chest, but was too slow to remember that there was still more to lose. Katherine grabbed her pants and tugged them off, sending Dawn back on her bottom as all that remained were her socks and diaper.

"Did you go pee-pee yet?" Katherine asked, but it very well could have been talking to herself. She stole the socks next, and before Dawn could even decide how she wanted to answer, an invasive finger proved between her diapered front and inner thigh. "Mm...doesn't feel different. Let's give it a few minutes."

She managed not to pee herself the entirety of dinner, somehow, but she was certainly at her limit. But what better place could she have been in?

"Katherine?" Dawn spoke up as she rose to her feet, stumbling over to the giant toilet. "I can use the toilet! I still need to pee! Please? Please just let me go?"

"Mm? Dawn, honey, it's okay to use your diaper. Look, I'm gonna get your towel and PJs, so I'll be right back." In other words, *make use of the five seconds of privacy that I'm giving you*. Assuming she even meant it like that. Today at the toy store did show that Katherine was cognizant of privacy, but only as far as strangers. Clearly she didn't consider herself separate from Dawn's business.

And naked from head to toe, save from her diaper already suffering from slight discoloration, Dawn sadly watched the toilet, standing taller and bigger than her, at a size that without a stool or any kind of help she'd have a seriously hard time using. And she looked down at herself, seeing where the padding just started to protrude beyond the plastic landing strip of puppies playing on her personal potty-pad. Something she couldn't even take off by herself.

With a thousand yard stare she watched the toilet, then looked beyond it, now not even able to hide her greatest shame from what she longed for the most. Had the toilet been animate she would have fallen to her knees in tears, pouring out for her imaginary second-boyfriend that this was all some unfortunate misunderstanding. That she was still committed to their relationship

and that this wasn't some horrible relapse. She wasn't cheating, just...taking a break. A break that hopefully wouldn't be long.

Not a single drop of pee went anywhere but where the Amazons wanted it to, and suddenly Dawn's diaper had become thicker, heavier, and warmer. With only an ounce of will left to give the toilet any recognition, trapped in her own diaper, salvation felt so frustratingly close, but of course impossibly far away.

"Brrr! It feels so chilly in the hallway now!" Katherine giggled as she came back in. With a small bundle of cloth in her arms she gently knocked the door shut with her hip and it closed with a click.

Everything she had went on the top of the toilet seat, because what else was it now to Dawn than just a place to park her bottom, assuming she'd even be allowed on it.

And as Dawn soaked in a new low, Katherine took the time to feel her soaked diaper once more.

"Good job!" the woman praised, and Dawn cringed. The tapes were like magic. Dawn remembered pulling as hard as she could, panting and straining her muscles without it budging in the slightest. They must have had fingerprint recognition from how seamless Katherine made it look and sound. Each tape was pulled with a flick and Dawn could barely feel the resistance pulling her forward. One. Two. Three. Four. Each one undone was an added sense of weight as the security on her hips finally fell through and her diaper dropped with a slump on the carpet.

Not another word was spoken on the matter of diapers, at least for now. Katherine rolled up her sleeve, skimming her hand through the bathwater.

"That should be good, but let me know if it's too hot," and she lifted Dawn up and over. The girl slammed her knees shut and tried to lift her legs— anything to give herself some modesty. The moment her toe touched the water it recoiled from the initial heat, but quickly hot became warm, and the discomfort was just from being apart from hot water for so long. It really had been a while since she bathed...

The water only reached somewhere more than half way, but it was more than enough for the girl's size.

"Nice and warm?" Katherine smiled.

"It feels fine... Where's the soap?" Dawn asked, turning in place on her feet. The sooner she finished, the more time she had to try and negotiate a plea deal from later tonight.

“Don’t worry, I got it, but thank you for asking!” she sang as she stood on her feet, opening up the closet door that was out of view.

“What are you getting in there?” Dawn tried to do the impossible and leaned out to see, but her cheek was already pressing against the tub before she could even get close to seeing around the corner.

“Something to keep the soap out of your pretty eyes,” and as she said it, a contraption descended onto Dawn’s head. It was a saucer or donut that went over. Suddenly she was shaded from the light, all except for her scalp.

“What...? What did you put on me?” Dawn grumbled and grabbed at the edges of the device, but Katherine was tutting all over again like she did whenever she disapproved.

“Ah-ah! No touching. You’re gonna get something in your eye and then it’s gonna sting reeal bad,” she warned.

And then the waistband of her head-frisbee was stretched as Katherine’s hand brushed against Dawn’s head, collecting tufts of hair , lifting then resting atop the silicone paradise above. Was she wearing a visor?

Soon after enough adjusting from Katherine’s end Dawn had no more bangs and was just all forehead, and while she turned every which way just to see what she was wearing, it wasn’t to much avail.

“Keep that head still...!” Katherine laughed like it was a game, but Dawn wasn’t having nearly as much fun. She couldn’t touch it, couldn’t see it, all because she was being *told* not to. Would James hit her again if she disobeyed over something like this...?

Then she watched Katherine drag a cup through the water, and suddenly a trickle was pouring on the girl’s head. It made her tingle and wiggle, starting from a sensitive place on her scalp that sent vibrations throughout the body. The warmth was spreading all over her head, but she soon started to hear the dripping from the flaps covering the back of her ears and soon watched the rain pour from the visor in front of her.

She sat there quietly and listened, then watched. She stared long and hard at the thing just above her vision and coming out from her forehead, finally noticing how yellow it was...and possibly a...design?

“Wait– am I wearing one of those stupid things for kids?!” Dawn splashed the water as she stood, and Katherine yelped.

Dawn turned her head and so did the visor too. The Amazon was looking down at her chest, now clinging to her skin from where all the tiny streams of water were flung on it.

“I knew I should’ve worn a different shirt...” Katherine mumbled to herself, but shifted her focus. “Sweetie, let’s not splash so much, okay?”

“Why am I wearing a stupid kid visor?!” Dawn demanded answers, but her shoulders were grabbed and hands dropped on them like gravity times two, putting her back on her bottom.

“It’s so you don’t get soap in your eyes, sweetheart,” Katherine said as she scooped another pour of water.

“I won’t get soap in them if you just let me clean myself!”

“Some spots can be hard to clean, though? I’d really like to help?”

“I don’t need your help! Just give me the soap and shampoo; I’ll do it myself!”

“Sweetheart, there’s not gonna be any time to read after your bath if you don’t behave...” The woman warned, and it was another knot in Dawn’s stomach after having every little safe haven or benefit used against her.

“It’s not going to take long! Just let me prove myself for once. *Please!*”

It wasn’t even as if Katherine sounded mad, or even all that annoyed. She just sighed, like she knew how the story would end and where things would go, and understanding that impression completely made Dawn even more upset.

“You’re sure you wanna do it?”

“*Yes!*” God, was she finally going to listen?

“...Okay, you can try.” Katherine ever so graciously allowed Dawn to do the thing she’d been doing for herself for almost the entirety of her life.

Her hair was like an inverted turnip once the visor came off. The water made it thick and heavy, but the cage around it sculpted it into a momentary bundle that was quickly falling apart.

But like a badge of shame, what didn't go far was the visor. Katherine set it on the edge of the tub, still peeking over, and Dawn could now see that the thing sticking in front of her had been painted as the bill of a duck, right beneath to black and sparkly eyes. Cute for kids, but humiliating for Dawn.

“Hold out your hands, please,” Katherine requested, and Dawn complied. She held out a bottle and pumped a light purple substance into her hands. It was fragrant and sweet-smelling, honestly, but her mangled sense of trust could somehow misconstrue anything at this point to be cruel and unforgiving. But most importantly, instead of something at least viscous and closer to gel, this stuff was far more runny and thin, almost like water... “Now you need to spread that around in your hair extra good, okay?”

“I know how to wash my hair...” Dawn turned to her side and started lathering, but now with a critic most likely expecting her to fail, she felt the need to be fast and efficient.

“Be careful not to get it in your eyes...” Katherine warned again, and Dawn ignored her.

I know how to use shampoo... Dawn rolled her eyes, but found that with the amount she was using it was similar to having too much hand sanitizer in one go. In other words, the moment she lathered her hands, excess amounts ended up on the floor. So while she ran her hands through her hair, drips of water went down the sides of her head, and finally the front of her face.

But she ignored it and continued, merely blinking it off, but then feeling the need to blink again. Again until she could feel it stinging, and suddenly her eyes slammed shut.

“Ah-ow...!” she grumbled and started to rub, but the chance for prevention was gone and all she could do was grow more and more uncomfortable by the second as the stinging continued to permeate. It was actually starting to hurt... But it wasn't her fault! That stupid shampoo was so runny...! Was it diluted? Did Katherine get scammed?

Scam or no scam, it didn't change the fact that her face was scrunched and she was stumbling in the tub, feeling on the verge of tears. Did someone pepper spray her when she wasn't looking?!

“I know, I know... it stings, doesn't it?” Katherine was nowhere to be seen (given that Dawn's eyes were closed), but she was certainly heard. “Can you move your hands for me? Please? I'm gonna make it all better...”

And between Katherine's requests and finally just forcing Dawn's hands aside, a wet washcloth went against her face, rubbing up and down and gently massaging into her eyes. A hand on her shoulder kept her in place, and she tried not to snuffle as the unbearable pain went away.

"Can you try opening your eyes?"

She hesitated like it was a trick, or that the shampoo would come back as soon as she opened them.

"I-I can still feel it on my forehead...!" Dawn complained, already lashing out.

"It's just water, honey," Katherine said, but Dawn still felt the cloth wipe above her eyes.

Finally she did open back up, only now with a raw feeling around her peepers now that she could see again. She blinked and sniffled just a few more times, but ultimately kept her head tilted back, lest there be more shampoo she still had to wash out.

But in spite of the pain and the mistake, it didn't make her any less upset seeing the baby duck visor coming right back on.

"No..." Katherine warned as Dawn started to step away, but she froze. "We let you try, but now I'm gonna do it, okay? I promise that won't happen again." A promise that was likely to keep Dawn out of her own way.

And Katherine, the devil she was, kept on saying things like they were questions, or kept on "asking" for consent, but doing them anyway whether Dawn disagreed or otherwise.

"Wh-what...what do you guys even put in your shampoo? Why is it so runny? Why does that stuff sting...?!" she complained and complained, and they were all fair grievances. Everything Amazons had was so...deceptively difficult...!

"Sweetheart, it's just normal shampoo, but that's why we need to be careful with that stuff, okay? I'm gonna be extra gentle, so you just relax. But I'm really proud of you for trying!"

And that left Dawn in a bitter mood for the rest of the bath. She felt cheated. Had she known how slippery and stupid that stuff was, she could have made a far better impression. One that didn't beget a sympathetic consolation or pat on the back.

So she wore her crown of shame, admittedly anxious now that somehow Katherine would slip up. A whole new batch of liquid death drizzled on her head; probably because the Amazon didn't

even think Dawn's handiwork was fit to pick up on. She ran it through her hair, slowly and carefully, massaging her scalp in a way that made her head bob and body rock ever so slightly to and fro.

Her eyes felt less sensitive and the pain was leaving. Just rhythmic massages for her head and the monotone hum from the bathroom fan. It was sort of hypnotic. Soothing. Katherine didn't try to talk to her, and Dawn didn't talk back. Coexisting in somewhat silence. What's more though was when there was a disturbance from Katherine's mouth. A melodic hum that was far from a song, but enough repetition to become one with the white noise. The heat, the warm water, her hair being washed...the hum, the rocking, the drifting, the sitting, bending forward...and...

"Just a little more to go..." a distant voice said with a chuckle, but it could have been a whisper. It didn't sting anymore, but Dawn's eyes were heavy, and suddenly they were flickering like lights, going from opened to closed. Back and forth. Back and forth.

Despite her protests, the defiant Little didn't even make it to the end of her bath.

She was dreaming before she even realized it, engrossed in some kind of unintelligible blurb of noises and feelings, but it made enough sense to her sleeping conscience, so she didn't think a thing of it, not even realizing she was sleeping.

The rest of her was cleaned, dried off, diapered, dressed, and finally whisked off to her room, all while she slept away the day's exhaustion that took a toll on her far more than she ever could have realized.

All until she finally opened her eyes with a start, lurching forward. She half expected the splash of water, but it was different. The warm air was gone and the room felt cool. It was dark, save for some moonlight and a crack in the door. Her body was warm and the mattress was cool; a kind of juxtaposition that was pure ecstasy after any long or exhausting day. She even stretched, feeling the gathers of her sleeper at the wrists and ankles stretching with her, and finally hearing the crinkle of a new diaper she never remembered getting put into.

Her hand reached out and collided with one of the many bars of her crib, dazed and confused about the details, but aware enough to understand the comfort and her horrid blunder. Not only would there be no reading that night, but no staying up either. Not unless she wanted to sit up in bed the whole night again.

She looked down at the fuzzy clothes she was in, brandishing a bumble bee embroidery on her breast. She wiggled her toes, pressing them into the soft mattress, completely and utterly defeated. And the worse part? Faintly, if she leaned her ears against the bars and towards the

crack in the door, there was the sound of something. Some show or some movie, but far too distant to sound like anything distinct. But in that moment, she could understand on some level what she was listening to.

The jealousy of missing out.

“...Shit...”

“I’m sorry we didn’t get to read last night,” Katherine apologized, but it didn’t seem like she really minded. “You went out like a light!”

“I wasn’t...tired... I just get that way when it’s hot,” Dawn poorly excused herself. “Wait, stop. I can put that on.”

“I know you can,” Katherine agreed, but it didn’t stop her from taking the lead. A bundle of shirt was stuffed over Dawn’s head then stretched and smoothed out. “Still dry?” Katherine frowned when she felt the front of her diaper, and Dawn took a step back as she blushed.

“Because I don’t need diapers,” she said for the umpteenth time, and Katherine only sighed.

“Wanna wear your pants today or something else?”

Dawn gave her a weird look. What else was going to cover the diaper? “Pants?” she said it aloud just as skeptically.

And a different colored pair went on. Today’s were a faded yellow, which was reminding her of things that made her stomach turn, particularly to do with bathroom habits.

“Okay, grab my shoulders and step in,” Katherine beckoned as she slouched over and held open a shoe for her.

“I can put on shoes...” Dawn groaned yet again, but stepped in anyway, knowing just as much how little the Amazon would bend. “I can tie them, too.” Certainly not the same way Katherine could, though.

She tried to watch her handiwork with the knot again, but it was like she was some kind of master at sleight of hand. Her movements didn’t make sense, and by the time Dawn was done giving up on how to decipher the first step, her foot was already entombed.

“Okay...” Katherine made a cursory glance around the room, then settled her eyes on Dawn and lifted her up in the air. “So, are we gonna be good for James today?”

“Yeah, maybe if *he* behaves,” she scoffed, and Katherine hummed her disapproval.

“Today’s about you, honey. I wanna hear only good things when I get back today, understood?”

More threats over being reported to the secret police. Be good for X and behave this way for Y. Was there anyone she could just be herself around? Everyone was a witness and a snitch, and the constant enforcement of unrealistic standards was making her go insane...!

“Dawn?” the girl blinked and Katherine was tilting her head, waiting for an answer.

“Fine,” she groaned, then turned her head. They kept walking down the stairs.

“And remember, it’s ‘Daddy’ today.”

Please don’t fucking remind me.

“Okay! She’s all set!” Katherine announced the moment they reached the end of the hall downstairs. The same office Dawn had been creeping into that one night was now bright and full of life. Waver was laying in the corner in his second dog bed, because apparently he was just that pampered, and James was at his desk with three different screens of all different sizes. A notebook filled with scribbles of pen as far as Dawn could tell were all over the pages and his hand was on some weird kind of mouse.

“Oh yeah, is she now?” James got up from his seat, smothering Dawn as he kissed his wife. Suddenly she was a rock stuck between a hard and soft place. James was all muscle and Katherine was all...love. Either way, they both had big breasts.

“Is it okay if she plays in here?”

“I don’t play,” Dawn tried to interrupt, but failed.

“Yeah, that’s fine. We’re gonna take off in a few minutes anyways. Think we already lost against the traffic,” James shrugged.

“Don’t remind me...” she sighed, setting Dawn down, then clasped her hands. “Okay, I left her diaper bag by the door and packed it with everything you might need. She has her juice, a snack

if she gets hungry, some of her blocks, a change of clothes, diapers...wait– I should probably put another pair of socks in there...”

“Kat, Kat!” James called, and Dawn felt the vibration in the floor as the herculean giant leaped one step forward for his wife. “It’s fine!” he laughed. “Just a doctor’s appointment?”

“And you’re gonna text me once you get there, right? Let me know how it goes?”

“I will, I will,” he nodded again, and Dawn fought the urge to keep on being openly pissy.

“...Alright...” Katherine gave in, but she sounded just as uneasy, as if the slightest breeze might change her stance entirely. “And don’t forget to ask them about those things we talked about, please?”

“Hon, I’m like a steel trap; I won’t forget,” and he kissed her again. “You should get going now or you’re gonna be late?”

“I know...” the woman moped again, and unlike Dawn, there wasn’t anyone who could carry the Amazon and make her do what she didn’t want to. How envious. “Dawn...?”

She turned her head and Katherine was low to the floor in a squatting position, holding her hands on her knees.

“Could I have a goodbye hug?”

What, was she actually going to *miss* her? The sense of attachment and affection was so one-sided that their reactions couldn’t have felt more opposite of one another.

Maybe hoping that the silence and inaction would speak for itself, Dawn didn’t move, other than shifting her pupils from side to side. *Is somebody gonna get this wackjob out of here?*

But standing behind Katherine was her significant other, one who was giving her a far less innocent and much more expectant look.

She choked down a distasteful sigh and shifted her eyes the other way once she took a hesitant step forward, and that’s all Katherine needed to practically fall forward like a gluttonous leviathan with her talons wrapped around her prey.

“Oooou! I’m gonna miss you so much!” Katherine squealed like her batteries were charged and her hopes were as full and vibrant as they’d always been. Dawn hardly even moved her arms, but she felt the death-squeeze from the woman that finally released her.

“Have a great day!” James called, and after petting Waver Katherine finally left, ending with the distant shut of the door.

“There’s no need to feel so distant, you know,” James said as he hung over his keyboard without sitting back down.

“Distant?” Dawn gave his back a sideways look. “You mean be all affectionate with people I’ve known for like three days?”

“We’re not strangers, Dawn. I know Katherine’s said it, but I guess I should make it clear too. This *is* your home. Even if you like to throw tantrums, we still want to take care of you.”

“Then start by realizing that I *do not* throw tantrums,” Dawn spat and crossed her arms. “Everything I’ve said has been fair and valid arguments, but no one ever actually listens! Ugh, forget it. This isn’t worth getting into…” she paced around, then stopped. “And wait, what stuff does Katherine want you to talk about? What did she say?”

“Huh? Oh, just some stuff with the doctor.”

“Yeah,” Dawn stressed and rolled her eyes. “*What* stuff?”

And James, the increasingly cheeky bastard, had the gaul to grin at her once the computer screens went black and he turned around. “Wanna know that badly?”

“Yes, I do, because it’s *my* business! It’s obviously about me!” Dawn fumed. “Just tell me! I’m gonna hear it anyway once we go, right? So just tell me now!”

“I could,” James nodded sagely, but his head stopped, “but, I feel like you wouldn’t be so chatty if you ran out of reasons to talk with me?”

She blinked as she scrunched up her nose.

“I hate you.”

“Hate me?” James said in a taken aback voice.

“Yeah, I do. You’ve been nothing but mean to me; pushing me around, telling me what I can and can’t do, *hitting* me, and then this: talking to me like I’m some sort of friend! You act like you didn’t just get finished beating me then pretend like we’re cool, or something! You think I just forgot something like that? So yeah, James, I *hate* you. What, you build a bed with bars in a room you’re lending to me? Gee, thanks. I already said I was going to behave for Katherine, but don’t act like that changes how I feel...!”

She was breathing over the silence that ensued, and while Dawn stood in a way far more primed for a fight, James looked far more neutral as he stood in place. But the moment he took a step forward it was the fire that lit the fuse for the regret in Dawn’s words.

She stumbled back, shying away headlong into fleeing rather than fighting. She talked a big game, but that was it when it came to Amazons, and she’d have it no other way. But she stumbled and fell, scrambling back up on her feet just to backpedal some more. All of this and James never went past the first step. He watched the entire performance and seemed sort of speechless, then finally pulled back.

But finally, James said, “We’re...gonna head out in a few minutes, okay?”

He had barely moved and only said that? Dawn’s little spurts of adrenaline were already dying as they gave way to confusion, like she was missing something, or was just surprised by the fact that things didn’t go the way she expected.

So with no other real sensible thing to do, Dawn slowly dropped her hands and quietly exhaled.

“...Yeah.”