

26 - Do-Over Day

“I spy with my little eye...” Katherine hummed over a constant, rhythmic crinkle, “something pink!”

“The barn?” James guessed from his chair.

“No,” Katherine answered in an exaggerated voice, and finally clicked her tongue. “Barn’s are red! Dawn?” and the Amazon’s bare arm brushed against Dawn’s. “Do you see something?”

Boredly and simply, Dawn replied, “I really don’t want to play.”

“All I’m seeing are cows, Kat,” James turned his head every which way. “What if we start with an easy one? Like something red?”

“We’re not doing red,” Katherine frowned, but eventually giggled. “Dawn? Please help me before James starts acting silly again?”

“Katherine, I’m really not interested...”

The Amazon right beside her shifted, causing everything to crinkle again.

“...What if we worked together to try and find it, huh?” Katherine offered, and the Little’s willingness to play somehow dropped from zero to something in the negatives.

“If you already know where it is, why would you need my help?”

And then the woman put out a light gasp covering her mouth. “Oh no! I forgot where it was!”

“So let’s spy for something red,” James continued to beat a joke that was already dead.

This time the “scenery” was far more bland. Farmland was a place Dawn didn’t have much visual appreciation for. At least a giant tree implied a forest teeming with green all around it. Now it was just empty skies and fields of yellow. All painted on a wall, of course.

Her legs swung impatiently like a clock that just kept on ticking. She’d been dealing with the fullness between her legs and her dry, puffy pampers were just waiting to be broken in.

She wanted to ask for the alternative. She knew she could hold it if they went right now. Hold her over the toilet. Let her stand on the rim. She’d do anything if it meant not having to do it in

her pants. But James would refuse and so would Katherine. Appearances were like Dawn's diapers. They just had to keep them on.

Over the conversation between the two, Dawn tried to be quiet as she slightly raised her bum, tried not to tremble, and broke a sweat as the warm hiss started between her legs.

There was a brief knock before someone walked into the room.

"Good morning!" Dr. Wexler strode in on her flats. "Dad, it's great to see you again," she gingerly shook his hand, then turned to face Dawn— actually, proceeded to go right by her and offer a handshake to Katherine next. "And this must be Mom!"

"Y—" Katherine stammered, and Dawn couldn't even bear to look. "Y-yes, I am...!" Without even looking she could hear the dumb smile that must have been on Katherine's face. She was hearing exactly what she wanted. Of course validation like that would make her woozy.

"And good morning to you too, Dawn!" Doctor Wexler offered for a shake and Dawn reciprocated.

"O-oh," Katherine broke from her own trance, "and thank you for taking us today on such short notice, especially when it looks so busy here..." Unfortunately the busy part seemed to be true. The waiting room had looked even more packed than yesterday.

"Of course," Doctor Wexler adjusted her sweater sleeves before washing her hands. "We tend to expect one or two follow-ups within the week or so after the first appointment. Sometimes a parent might forget to ask something, we might not have all the information we need, or just about any kind of small thing to get us all on the right track."

"And sorry, I'll get down from here," Katherine apologized as the paper beneath her crinkled again.

"No, no!" Doctor Wexler waved out her hands. "Please, stay."

Dawn gave her a weird look. Who was the patient here?

"Are you sure...? I just wanted to keep Dawn company..." Katherine sheepishly explained, never noticing Dawn's frown beside her.

“Absolutely. Littles in a lot of ways can have the tendencies you might see in Amazon children, so simple things like them feeling safer or more secure around their mommy or daddy is absolutely a given. Even if they have a hard time showing it.”

“No. I’m fine,” Dawn crossed her arms. “Really. You can go sit next to James.”

The dismissal was given, but the words weren’t heeded. The doctor’s diagnosis was one step faster and suddenly Dawn’s words didn’t have any weight. “...But is it okay if I wanted to sit here next to you?” A shy, almost bashful smile crept on her lips.

Great, now it wasn’t her choice. The waters were poisoned and Dawn looked like the toddler that couldn’t be honest with themselves. Obviously she wanted Mommy to sit next to her. Obviously she was nervous without her. That was the tiny, secret voice Katherine thought she was appealing to, but thank goodness it didn’t exist.

All Amazons waited with patient looks, but the spotlight was practically scalding on the girl’s burning cheeks. A question with only one real answer that’d keep her in everyone’s good graces. So what? She wanted to sit next to her, right? But all the same, indulging in Katherine’s wishes painted a putrid picture that Dawn was somehow complicit with whatever lies the whole dimension was built on.

Do something nice, or dig an even deeper hole as the kid that just can’t be honest with herself?

“D-do whatever...” the Little cast her eyes to the side, and as gentle as she was in bumping back onto the bench, the giddiness was radiating from

“It’s only been a day, but have there been any changes?” Doctor Wexler asked James. “Well, aside from diapers, that is.”

Collective smiles formed and a humorous gasp left Katherine. Suddenly it wasn’t about discussing an adult demoted to diapers and framed as a toddler, but instead three adults chatting like friends over a cup of coffee. The concept of a grown woman being confined like a kid who couldn’t care for themselves was now humor. Peeing her pampers was joke-worthy. Casual. Like there wasn’t any gravity to it.

“We actually took some time off work,” James spoke up. “We decided that maybe it’d be better if we all spent some more time together during the day.”

What a terrible idea that’s turning out to be.

They were like creatures that lived off of chaos. The doctor's face lit up. "Wonderful!" she beamed. "The early stages of adoption can be some of the most important with helping your Little understand things going forward. It's a great chance to give her a routine, bonding time, establishing rules, and so much more. So great...! I'll make a note of that. Maternity leave..." she mumbled as her stylus scribbled before looking back up at the room. "Anything else?"

Finally breaking out of her own headspace, Dawn looked up. "Yes, actually."

Dr. W did look surprised for at least half a second, but in spite of her inviting smile, the tone was clearly different. She was like an aunt ready to hear about the family vacation. James and Katherine had all the real highlights, but she was nice enough to pretend like Dawn could contribute something too.

"Yeah? And what's that, hon?" Dr. Wexler nodded patiently, but she did slide her stylus back into its holder. After all, she needed to save digital ink for when actual important things were being discussed...

"James," *not dad*, "got us fast food the other day, and some drink he got me made me lose control of my bladder."

"She hasn't been as fussy about her crib lately..." Katherine openly pondered with a hand against her cheek.

Dawn winced, but she took the blow and let it fly if it meant avoiding a detour to try and tackle the real issue. Her food was *spiked!*

Doctor Wexler bundled her tablet like she was clutching a teddy bear before leaning against the counter.

"We just got something from Jr. Sprouts down the street." James shrugged at a loss. "I got her a Little's meal and a fruit punch; it seemed similar to the juice she already has at home. I haven't noticed any issues."

"I haven't either..." Katherine sounded unsure, and she had the gaul to gently rub Dawn's back.

"And I tried to tell you *both*, but you *both* didn't listen...!" Dawn groaned. "I'm fine now, I think, but that's only because it went away!"

"Jr. Sprouts?" the Little-trician asked James. "The fast food chain, right?"

“Yeah,” he nodded.

“And Dawn, you said after that drink you didn’t notice as much when you were going pee, right?”

“N...yes, I guess, but I *do* notice when I’m peeing. The drink made it so I couldn’t hold my bladder in... Wait! Like that chocolate at that store!” Dawn whined with a partway shift to Katherine.

“Chocolate?” Doctor Wexler tilted her head, but the question was clearly meant for Katherine.

“Cho...? Oh, well... We went shopping earlier this week to get Dawn’s nursery started. I let her have one of those free sample chocolates they were selling. They said it was safe for Littles and Amazons, but I think it gave her an upset tummy.”

“She went poopy in the store?” And Dawn cringed with shame. Was there somehow catharsis at the end of this gauntlet? The smartest head in the room was currently talking about her like she was a two-year old.

“But that was it. She was fine afterward.” Physically? Maybe. Mentally? Absolutely not. It was the farthest thing from a fond memory.

“Ah—” Doctor Wexler’s hanging jaw finally shut into a delicate smile. “” Then she chuckled. “That makes a bit more sense.”

“We didn’t give her anything unsafe, did we?” Katherine asked with worry in her voice.

“No, everything she had sounds like it’s perfectly fine. Actually, this sort of thing isn’t too uncommon to hear; I just haven’t had it so much myself.”

That was a relief. So incontinence-inducing drinks and foods were more of a norm than an anomaly? And why was she deeming something so destructive as “safe”?

“No, it’s not fine!. I couldn’t control my bladder for half a day!” her fists grinded the wax papery covering and she was feeling as warm as her diaper.

“This is similar to what we discussed the other day, Dad,” Doctor Wexler casually chatted over Dawn’s tantrum. “Mom, did Dad share anything about Dawn’s appointment yesterday?”

“No!” Dawn interrupted and grabbed Katherine’s leg, pleading up at her. “Whatever she’s about to say, it’s not true!”

A hand was behind her head and gently stroking her hair. “Shh...” Katherine soothed, “let’s just hear Doctor Wexler out, okay?” and she lifted her head again. “James told me a bit...”

The doctor nodded. “First, I’d like to be very clear and make it an extra important point to Mom, Dad, and especially Dawn: I would never think that you’re not telling the truth, okay?” Her smile was soft and demeanor was calm, yet the direct eye-contact she gave Dawn was downright deceiving. It had to be.

“*I’M NOT LYING!*” Dawn screamed.

“Dawn, can we please use our indoor voices?” Katherine tried to physically soothe her, but it was far too simple for a complex mind.

“Does she need a snack?” the doctor swiveled her head, looking for the diaper bag.

And her hands formed like claws that cut into the cushioned table. She really was ready to lash out at the next person that even *tried* to silence her.

“You’re not shutting me up!” Dawn seethed as Katherine tried to shush. And the moment someone lifted her chin she violently thrashed her head. But it had nowhere to go when another hand cupping the back of her skull steered her head against her will.

“Hey, look at me,” softly, Katherine commanded.

With no other choice, Dawn stared up at the Amazon with a bitter look.

“What’s going on?” the Amazon asked and the Little’s face grimaced. She spoke like it was just them; like a little girl removed from the rest of the class. She was mad and it was justified, but somehow no one else could see it. Was the disconnect that great? Did her rage look like that much of a baseless tantrum? What was Katherine thinking? Maybe she didn’t get enough sleep? Wrong side of the crib? Still dealing with big emotions from yesterday?

“Y-you think I’m just gonna sit here and let you make up lies about me and my body? I can tell when I need to piss!”

“No one is lying, honey. Sweetheart,” Katherine’s neutral look started sinking into a sad frown, “nobody says you can’t have a turn to talk, but you need to give others a chance too?”

No! She didn't go to the doctor for this! Not to be misdiagnosed with a leaky bladder! This was wrong! It all was! And again and again, Katherine tried to compel her as the voice of reason for why she should somehow let herself slip further and further. That this was all in some fucked up, twisted way *helping* her.

"But she's *lying!*"

"Doctor Wexler wouldn't lie, honey... She went to school for a *long* time just so she could be a Little Doctor. She knows all about how to be healthy!"

"But I *already* know what's good for me!"

"We can think that, but even when we think we're fine we still go and see the doctor, right? That's what check-ups are for; so they can check up and see if we're okay?!"

It was more misappropriated logic just to justify why Doctor W had a right to spout nonsense. On paper it made sense, but in practice against extremes and radicals like this, giving them a voice was downright dangerous. That was the only thing this entire place ran on. Unregulated delusions, mischief, and propaganda. Dawn didn't even know if there was anything to save James and Katherine from. After all, Doctor Wexler could have just been feeding into what misinformation they already believed themselves.

So Dawn settled for a hill that was far easier to defend. "N-no...nobody is gagging me!"

"No, nobody will," Katherine nodded in agreement, "but only if you behave and give others a chance to talk, okay?"

In other words, let Doctor Wexler speak about the worst things imaginable. She was back to making a difficult face, groaning, grumbling and whining, but finally yanking her head free and crossing her arms.

"Dawn, please?" Katherine asked again, and Dawn gave her a bewildered look.

"What?" Dawn bitterly hissed. "Does it not look like I'm behaving? I was trying to be quiet, wasn't I?"

"Attitude..." James warned from his chair, and promptly the Little flinched.

“Dawn, sweetheart, please. I need you to answer me, okay? Will you behave?” Katherine asked again. Her eyebrows curved upward as displeasure wore a frown on her face, like she had any right to seem guilty for performing what she must have seen as a necessary evil.

Everything was like pulling teeth.

“Yes.”

“Thank you,” Katherine smiled, but Dawn didn’t budge to see any of it. But she could feel her own sense of shame the moment Katherine was apologizing for her. “I’m sorry about that...”

That. So she really was just a thing, then?

“Mom, please, don’t ever feel the need to apologize,” Doctor–
Stupid-prissy-know-it-all-bitch-who-doesn’t-feel-the-need-to-wear-a-stupid-doctor-coat
responded. “Your daughter’s a Portal Little, isn’t she?”

And Dawn finally panned her eyes at the sound of Katherine making a quiet stammer.

“A... Yes, she is.”

“Don’t worry, Dawn told me herself yesterday. We had a big discussion about why it’s important to get lots of sleep, right Dawn?” and she gave her a knowing grin.

“She did bring it up,” James included from his chair, and Dawn was getting bothered all over again.

“So what– am I just not supposed to talk about that?” Dawn snapped again.

“Sweetheart, taking turns, remember?” Katherine gently touched her shoulder.

“Wh–?! But you and James got to speak!”

“I think talking about that sort of thing is completely fine,” a slightly stronger voice brought reason back into the room. Doctor Wexler was smiling as she always was. The same cartoon tiger was playing around the border of her nametag. “In fact, Mom, and Dad, moving forward, I’d strongly encourage you to make that clear to anyone involved in Dawn’s life.”

“Wh–” Dawn started to ask, but James was louder and faster.

“Does it affect that much?” James adjusted in his chair.

“Oh, absolutely,” Doctor Wexler went without hesitation. “Littles here or there may have a lot of the same biological needs and traits, but that doesn’t include their old patterns, habits, diets, homes, and so much more. In every sense it’s a totally different way of life. Again, just about adjusting from a 24 hour cycle to a 32 one is a very big shift for anyone! As far as we know, it’s only Littles that we can find in other places. How our society works is unlike anything they’ve ever experienced before. In other words, it’s a complete culture shock.”

My goodness. She actually said something that made sense.

“But– we’ve been trying to introduce her to new things?” Katherine spoke almost defensively.

“And that’s a very good thing, Mom,” Doctor W assured her. “Keep doing that. Slow, and within what you think are Dawn’s limits. Remember: what’s normal for you both is going to be a very new experience for any adopted Little, but especially a Portal Little. But consider this another way: you’ll be having a lot of first-times with your daughter. First trip to the park, first bubble bath–”

“We had our first bathtime just the other day!” Katherine couldn’t contain the enthusiasm and Dawn cringed. Apparently she popped her “bath time” cherry...

“Now can you please explain the part about how I’m actually potty trained?” Dawn asked in a bland voice, and while she didn’t feel well-received by her “parents,” she went uncontested and the doctor smiled.

That being said, it wouldn’t have helped Dawn’s case if anyone was privy to the fact that her diaper was slightly wet.

“To be quite honest,” Doctor Wexler continued to address the Amazons, “We can’t say if Portal Littles are *exactly* like Native Littles biologically unless we were to break them down into *all* the itty-bitty pieces they’re made of and compare piece by piece,” she chuckled at the horror plastered on Katherine’s face. “But barring moral concerns, I think we can all agree that Littles are too cute for that. There’s research and inferences, but a safe conclusion is to treat a Portal Little’s physical needs like a native one. I wouldn’t say this in many cases, but if it looks like a duck and talks like a duck?” The doctor laughed.

“At home, Dawn sometimes brings up using the potty?” Katherine mentioned. “We weren’t sure at first... But...” she shared a look with her husband, “she hasn’t mentioned it so much the past couple days.”

“That’s because you won’t let me use it!” Dawn cried out, “Why would I keep asking if you’re going to say the same thing! You also said it’s because of LPS!” She couldn’t seriously be expressing her doubts, right? The person who was hiding behind mighty LPS this entire time was now claiming Dawn’s inaction was a sign of lacking potty training?! She couldn’t be serious!

Doctor Wexler nodded, but continued on with Katherine. “When you first adopted Dawn, I assume you moved her from big kid underwear into diapers?”

“Y–” Katherine started, but stopped. “It’s...complicated. Technically, yes, but when she was with us she was already in pull-ups.”

“She was wearing them on her own?”

More confusion and uncertainty brewed, specifically between the married couple.

“NO! I wasn’t! The fat *fucking* bitch who–!” A hand smothered her mouth.

“*Dawn!*” Katherine scolded. “James?” she called for him tiredly, and he was over with the diaper bag in a jiffy.

Dawn tried to wriggle and move, but it wasn’t doing her much good. The only time her mouth was freed was when a sippy cup spout was promptly shoved inside of it.

“Drink,” James sternly advised, and the look on his face made the poor miniature girl nervous down to her very core. So sadly, she did as she was told.

“I want that sippy washing all those bad words out,” Katherine tapped the top of the bottom of the cup, watching Dawn begrudgingly comply with a red haze over her cheeks. Finally the grown-up conversation resumed. “We don’t know,” Katherine apologetically explained.

“That’s okay,” Doctor Wexler scribbled a note on her tablet. Only for the Amazons. Not for Dawn. “So she was wearing pull-ups. How did she do in those?”

“It wasn’t for long...” Katherine sighed. “We...We’re dealing with LPS right now over a misunderstanding, but we don’t want to give them any cause for concern so we shifted to diapers not that long after.”

“So there weren’t any accidents then? She made it to the potty on time?”

“She did have at least one accident at a store we went to. But that was when she got lost in the store. She was scared, so we don’t fault her for it.”

An accident? Dawn? The girl sucked as strongly as she could to try and reach the bottom of her juice. She *needed* to say something. Anything to give herself a fucking leg to stand on!

“Well, LPS or not, moving to diapers after an accident for a new adoptee is a perfectly reasonable response, I’d say,” Doctor Wexler nodded as she wrote some more.

“It is?” Katherine asked, though she didn’t sound like she had any doubt for the “expert” words.

No, it’s fucking not!

“Oh absolutely. Even if they’re making it on time, a Little that dribbles shouldn’t be trusted outside of at least some form of protection. Remember: every day for Dawn right now is an entirely new normal. New bedtimes. Naps. Food she may not be used to having, places she might feel anxious about going, and a lot of nerves and emotions that Littles in general aren’t very well-equipped to handle. I explained to Dad the other day that our idea of potty training is much more robust than what Littles might consider to be sufficient. It’s like having her run a marathon when she only trained to run a mile.”

That’s not true! That’s not FUCKING TRUE! I know how to use the toilet! I’m potty trained! I can hold my piss, I can hold my shit!

“But is that the same for Portal Littles?” James asked. Wishful thinkers might read that as support, but Dawn only saw baseless curiosity.

“That’s a great question,” the doctor nodded, “and right now what we do know is based on research on adopted Portal Littles. It’s a small sample size, but our numbers lean towards Portal Littles behaving the same as their native counterparts when it comes to potty performance.”

Katherine’s voice came and the question dropped like a bombshell.

“So are you saying Dawn isn’t potty trained?”

No! No! I am! I AM!

“Since she was wearing pull-ups originally, that alone tells me that on some level Dawn would need protection on a good day. But on a bad one? Like having your whole world turned upside down?” she paused for what felt like dramatic effect. “Diapers definitely. Some parents do try to

potty train their Littles, but training panties or pull-ups tend to be the ceiling for most, and frankly the ‘training’ never quite stops. These munchkins aren’t set-it-and-forget-it types when it comes to potty training. She’d still need reminders, she’d still have the occasional accident, and so on.

I know you’ll both make Dawn feel loved and safe, but whether it’s exciting or scary, at least for the next few months she’ll still be adjusting. It’s a lot of changes for anybody, but especially a Little, so my advice? Handle the daily changes for her.”

“Shh...sweetheart, it’s okay...!” Katherine softly whispered. Dawn continued to shift over crinkling paper and a warm diaper as her shoulder was stroked over and over.

Why was she comforting her...?! I didn’t even say anything...!

She didn’t say anything, but without her sippy cup all she could do was sniffle, as pathetic as it was.

“B-but...!” Dawn tried not to cry any further as she opened her mouth. “I-I *am* potty trained! I *am*! You just won’t let me prove it!”

How could they not understand? They denied her at every point and suddenly started to pity her like she never had a chance to begin with! They never even *tried* to see if she was telling the truth!

“Honey, you don’t need to prove anything though?” Katherine’s sad voice tried to console her. “Doctor Wexler’s right. You’re going through a lot right now. Don’t you think one less thing to worry about is nice?”

“*No!* I just want my normal life back! My normal responsibilities!”

“I won’t pry, but you mentioned LPS is involved right now?” Doctor Wexler asked, and while Katherine was busy trying to console, James answered clearly.

“They are.”

“Parents potty training their Littles isn’t unheard of, albeit not the norm. It *is* difficult because remember, you’re holding them to standards far above what they’re used to. Whether you choose to or not, there’s a lot of anxiety for Littles when it comes to that. Will I make it to the potty in time? What if Mommy gets mad at me for wetting my pull-up? Does Daddy have the time to take me right now?” she articulated the simulated chaos a fictitious Little might have with her

hands. “It’s a major stressor, which is why I wouldn’t consider it at least until LPS is solved and you’ve all found yourselves a new normal.”

And that was that. Another goal post. Another pipedream that’d been kicked down the curb even further than before. Hell, Dawn hadn’t even considered “potty training.” So kind of the doctor to shine a light on something just to make it disappear completely. When LPS was gone, Dawn was gone. Whenever potty training was ready for her, thankfully Dawn wouldn’t be around to start it. Hopefully.

Silent tears rolled down her cheeks. Her tongue stopped working and her mouth felt foreign. What urgency was there to get a word in on a battle that was already over?

“Y-you’re lying...!” Dawn lashed out at the doctor. “S-stop making this stuff up! You *know* I’m an adult and you *know* I don’t need diapers!”

“Dawn, be nice to Doctor Wexler,” James was firm, but even he was sympathetic to the Little’s tears.

“And as unfortunate as it is,” Doctor Wexler chuckled as she took the Little’s insults like insignificant tickles, “attitudes and temper tantrums *are* going to be part of that new normal. Littles are a lot like Amazon toddlers, in that they’re going to test limits. They will try your patience, and they’re going to have trouble expressing their feelings or tough thoughts they might be dealing with in appropriate or direct ways.”

“I DON’T HAVE TEMPER TANTRUMS!” Dawn cried, but Katherine forced her back to sucking on a new cup of juice.

It was like Dawn didn’t even exist. “But remember that they’ll still love you lots,” Doctor Wexler included with a smile. “Because there’s going to be far more good times than bad ones.”

Dawn breathed fast and quick, seeing red with wet eyes and sore feelings. The checkup was just getting started and she was ready to storm out of the office. If only she was allowed the agency to do that, though.

“Let’s change topics,” Doctor Wexler decided. “Mom, how are you adjusting?”

Katherine blinked like she misheard the question. “To...to having Dawn?”

The Little Doctor nodded cheerily. “Being a mommy is a big deal, you know?”

It was like a gunshot went through Katherine's heart. She adjusted her palm on the bench like she was about to fall over. The M-word brought the embarrassed smile back on her face all over again, like she was holding hands with a boy for the first time.

"It's...a lot, but I love it. I love it so much...!"

"Good, and that's a very natural thing. There's a lot of different names for it, but I tend to call it 'imprinting'. Sometimes mother ducks in the wild can find a baby duck on their own and they'll adopt them as one of their own. A mothering instinct will kick in. I'm sure you've heard of dogs adopting puppies or kittens that are brought into the family?"

It had to have been the warmest, fuzziest feeling Katherine was going through. She looked over the moon and James seemed equally as pleased to watch his wife to process such pleasant emotions. But it wasn't mutual. Whatever euphoria and chemical pleasure it gave Katherine to treat Dawn like a toddler, none of the positivity was coming her way. If Katherine's brain got all the good stuff, it was Dawn's job to take on all the rest.

"It just feels...*right*," she was soft-spoken, but the words were resolute.

"I'm not an Amazon doctor, but I can say that it's a lot of pent up maternal instinct," Doctor Wexler explained. "Dads can get it too, albeit paternal," she chuckled at James, "but for every mommy or daddy to be, there's just some Little out there that'll check all their boxes. The first time you'll see them, you just sort of know!"

And an affectionate hand draped around Dawn's side, who wanted nothing more than to squirm loose and spring herself free.

"And as Dawn's doctor, I do need to ask Mom one of those important questions: "What are our thoughts on breastfeeding?"

Maybe there was a time dilation, or a hangover from the intoxicating amount of absurdity a doctor just packed into a single sentence. A sick feeling broke out in her stomach. The words were enough to give her an ear infection. Does a Little-trician get to charge for injuries they inflict?

And again, somehow, some way, rock bottom kept getting deeper and deeper.

"W-well..." Katherine's tinge of timidness came through her finger lazily spinning on the bench paper. "I..." she made a nervous chuckle.

There simply weren't any words. Katherine was struggling to put whatever bubbly, fuzzy and fond-feeling ticklish in her heart and brain into words, and Dawn was bone dry from the waist up when it came to anything thoughtful to say. All she could do was stare. Her pupils strained as they stared long and gravely up at Katherine's stifled giddiness, also ironically at her bountiful bosom too.

It was a question so absurd and a scenario so impossible that it had to speak for itself, right? The answer had to have been obvious. One grown woman breastfeeding another. It was complete fetish material, yet here they were, in supposedly a legally licensed and federally recognized institution openly talking about such a thing like it was possible.

K-Kath... B...Breast...?

Images flashed through her head like a highlight reel of horrors. She had seen it. So many times. Christ, she saw *today*. It all looked the same. So innocent. So intimate. Warm, tender bonding between a mother and her baby. It was natural and one of nature's greatest beauties. A baby dependent on a mother's milk. Cradled in their arms, fading in and out of a milky sleep while their diapers sat somewhere between damp and dire need of changing. A baby.

A baby.

"She...—" Katherine quietly coughed and composed herself. "Dawn's still going through a lot, and I...don't know how we feel about that."

St-stalling, right? She's pretending? Just to get this doctor off our backs? But then why didn't she just say no? Why didn't...?

But just when they had jumped from the jaws of the beast, the dungeon master walked over to her shelf of torture tools and pulled a pamphlet off the shelf.

"It's a lot to consider, I completely understand. Just think about what feels right for you and your Little," Doctor Wexler smiled. "Dad? Maybe take this home with you guys?" She offered the small booklet and Dawn wanted to scream no. She trembled at the mere thought of bringing something so heinous into their home, but paper was exchanged and another thread leading off to yet another dangerous, unimaginable beast disappeared into the diaper bag.

They're joking. They aren't serious. We're just throwing it out after we leave. That's it... That's all it is...!

"Dawn?" Katherine's soft touch made the girl jump. "You okay?"

She started to swat the Amazon's hand, but for a moment her own multiplied into two. It was shaking like she had a shiver. So she firmly planted it onto her leg.

As calmly as she could, down her throat the anxiety and fear went. "I'm...fine..."

The Amazon had a concerned, discerning look. The same frown when she was trying to peer inside Dawn's head and no secrets felt safe anymore. The room was feeling raw and goosebumps were running down her arms. The thoughts of what could be were too chilling. Other Littles were subjected to all those things. Strollers. Walkers. Crawling. Diapers so wet and so full that they can't even stand on their own two feet. A mind so mushy that they're practically a two-year old in the body of an adult. What else? How much worse could it be? Ah, yes. Sucking on the breast of a complete stranger. How much of that was in her control?

What wasn't was Katherine's fingers brushing against her bare abdomen and digging underneath her shirt. Dawn went mute at the feeling of a cold draft wafting into her warm diaper.

"I'm sorry, but...should I change her before we keep going?" Katherine asked.

Dawn tried not to weep.

"Hi there, welcome to Lily's!" the waitress smiled at all three of them. Well, two, but maybe Dawn, she wasn't really looking. "My name is Zoey and I'll be your server today!"

Not a word was spoken about the doctor's when they were in the car, and frankly Dawn couldn't have been happier. The rest of that exhausting ordeal was practically a blur other than being poked and prodded all over again. She was bitter to hear about Katherine scheduling yet *another* follow-up. For what Dawn didn't know, and oh how much she wished she didn't care. But unfortunately she did. After all, it was all about herself.

Fuck this dimension.

"Hi," husband and wife said in unison. Dawn still had yet to comment.

"And I take it this munchkin is with you two?" the waitress giggled, then brandished the audacity to tug on Dawn's sleeve.

"What do you-?!" Dawn snapped, but James snapped quicker.

“*Dawn. Language.*”

“But I didn’t even say anything!” *Yet!*

“Ope—” the waitress blinked and bundled her hands over her mouth. “I’m so sorry! Did you just adopt her?”

“We did...she’s not used to being touched by others,” Katherine explained, and Dawn coldly reinforced.

“Yeah, I’m not allowed to be touched.” *And I’m NOT supposed to get used to it!*

“Mmm...!” the waitress hummed with a nod. “I see. *Very* new! Can I get you guys started on anything to drink? A bottle I could maybe fill for her?”

“I don’t drink out of a bo—!”

Dawn was promptly lifted from her seat and dropped in James’ lap. All the while the waitress did nothing but grin.

“Water in this, please?” Katherine gave her an empty sippy cup.

“Absolutely!” Zoey was peppy, cheery and mischievous-seeming all the same. Although Dawn was apparently the only one feeling it. “And for the two grown-ups?”

You absolute bitch.

“I’ll take a coffee, please?” James asked.

“Unsweetened Ice Tea?” Katherine went next.

“Absolutely. I’ll have that out to you in just a second,” the waitress mumbled with a pen and paper, then departed.

Husband and wife collectively sighed.

“Dawn...” James started, and Katherine dogpiled.

“Sweetheart, you need to mind your manners?”

“What?” Dawn threw her hands up. “She *touched* me! When did I give her permission?”

“Shh...” Katherine held a finger up to her lips over the sound of tables and booths of people laughing and eating, doubled by the tunes of music playing. “Indoor voices, okay?”

She fought hard not to make some kind of pissy noise, practically ready to whine as she looked up at the pendant light shining down on their dark wood booth.

“Dawn is right, we should have said something sooner,” James spoke up, and Dawn glanced up at his chin with stubble for just the briefest moment of admiration. And oh was it brief. “But that doesn’t mean you can act like that. You need to have patience, Dawn.”

She wiggled her head in absolute bewildered disgust. “S-so– neither of you would get upset if I just randomly decided to touch you?” Dawn gave Katherine a bewildered look. Yet the Amazon seemed completely unbothered. Instead, a stupidly dumb grin came across her face.

“Is that your way of asking for a hug?” And Katherine was already reaching across for her.

“No! That’s not...! Ugh...! Can I just sit back in my seat already?”

“Are we done with the attitude for the day?” James asked.

“Yes.” *Doubtful.*

“Alright, back ya go.”

And she rocketed into the air for just a moment before landing right back in her cage. Seats like these at restaurants actually made her appreciate what was at home. Her steep wooden pyramid of sorts was a sturdy frame lined with railings and a cloth strap between her legs that hung and dangled openly. She was close to the table but the chair was totally free from it. The one benefit was at least being without a tray, meaning she *had* to eat at the same table as Katherine and James too.

“Why can’t I just sit in the booth?” Dawn groaned.

“You know why,” James didn’t play the back-and-forth game.

But Dawn still did. “Then I’ll stand!”

“I don’t like that game,” Katherine admonished the thought with a parental voice. “Good girls sit in seats.”

“Well I’m not feeling so good right now.”

“And bad girls who back-talk get soapy mouths,” James didn’t skip a beat, nor bother looking.

Dawn opened her mouth for a retort, but past experience quickly shut her up. Unfortunately it probably wasn’t an empty threat. Especially when restaurant bathrooms had soap at the ready...

Needless to say, James wasn’t fun looking at, but Katherine was frowning. For a totally different reason, however.

“Don’t they usually have crayons to play with...?” the Amazon was already looking around like she was ready to flag down some assistance.

“No, I’m fine. I don’t wanna play with crayons. I’m fine with just sitting here and *talking*,” Dawn tried to stress.

“But what if you get bored?” Katherine tried to reason.

“I won’t.”

“No reason not to have some just in case?” James added.

“Reason being I don’t need any,” Dawn refused.

“What if I wanted them?” James turned it up with a smile.

“Then suit yourself,” she disconnected and deflected.

“One coffee, once ice tea, and one sippy of water!” the waitress declared with each cup coming to the table. Although, the warm, wonderful scent of coffee and mug was placed down squarely in front of Dawn. It had been *days on days* since she last tasted the sweet, exhilarating taste of pure caffeinated energizer. She drank for sustenance and for sport. The nostalgic scent tickled her nose and made her swoon over the thoughts of better days. Times when having coffee wasn’t someone else’s choice.

She blinked, tempted by the imaginary taste and briefly even considered some kind of excuse. The waitress put the mug in front of her, right? That meant it was hers to drink, didn’t it? After

all, Dawn was just a baby, wasn't she? She didn't know any better! So it only made sense that she give it a sip!

Her fingers, they wiggled. Her hands, they just barely moved. Her elbows started to bend and her back leaned slightly forward. Was she going to? She had to! If she didn't do it now, she'd never get the chance again! So she should. She would. She could? She would!

And just as the thought was finishing—

“Oops!” Zoey's hand dropped on the mug just as Dawn started to swipe. “That's not for you~!” she chuckled in a sing-song voice, promptly sliding the mug far and away from Dawn and over to James. “Sorry about that, tiny mistake!” she apologized to the parents, but Dawn wordlessly watched the shadow of her arm bend just to pat her on the head.

But the motion froze in place.

“Ah— actually,” James was already shielding the top of her head with his hand. “If you don't mind, could you please not touch her?”

The waitress' mouth hung agape for a moment, entirely caught off guard.

“Ah—ahm...” she started, “s-sorry about that!” She tried to laugh it off with an artificial chuckle. “I'm so sorry! I've just gotten so used to how parents usually are about their Littles!”

“That's fine,” James nodded though his voice was firm, “but please, not with ours.”

“We're still teaching her about boundaries and keeping her hands to herself,” Katherine added, while also making Dawn seem even more of a child.

“No, no! Of course!” the waitress agreed, and Dawn was too busy covering her own face, bitter that she wanted to grin over the tiniest modicum of karma. They hardly even did anything to her. It was far from justice, but at least the waitress got upset... Even if only by a little. “And actually, you know what? I forgot somebody's special place mat!” And she disappeared.

Her back was to the rest of the restaurant, so all she had for sights were James and Katherine. “Can one of you hand me your menu when you're done finding what you want?” Dawn asked. She was the only one without something to look at. Apparently Littles didn't get their own menu.

Katherine and James looked up from their laminated booklets and searched around for something they weren't finding.

“What?” Dawn started looking as well, albeit much less freely and with zero clues as for what to look for. “Did one of you lose something?”

“She forgot to give us a Little’s menu too,” Katherine gave James a sideways look, and James seemed to be thinking the same.

“Little’s menu?” Dawn asked, but shook her head. “I’m fine. I’ll just get something off one of yours.”

“Nuh-uh,” Katherine shook her head. “You won’t like this stuff, honey. It’s spicy.”

“I like spicy,” Dawn insisted. “I’ll be fine.”

“Remember what we talked about at the doctor’s?” James nudged her whole high chair like it was a shoulder. “From now on your diet is staying in your lane, missy.”

“I *know* what I can handle,” Dawn tried keeping her attitude in check, albeit staying firm herself.

“Honey, Amazon food is a lot bigger than Little food,” Katherine stressed like a schoolteacher trying to explain something to her kindergarten class. “You’re not gonna be able to finish all of it.”

Excuses after excuses. “Then I’ll just share with one of you!”

“Our food’s gonna be spicy, though,” James said again. Dawn was not impressed.

“Gosh, I forgot the menu too!” Zoey came back with a splash of crayons, a paper place mat and finally a large piece of laminated paper. “So sorry about that! Please take your time!”

Dawn didn’t bother watching the woman leave, but certainly noticed the stars in Katherine’s eyes looking down at her.

“Oh my gosh! Look at this!” Katherine excitedly pointed down at the paper.

LILY’S LITTLE ADVENTURE!

Big bold font in the restaurant’s signature red advertised the crayon activity above the wide expanse of a playground with twisting and turning paths at countless different stops with blocks of text to go with them.

Hi there! I was at the playground but I lost my mommy! Can you help me find her?

And the adventure ensued. Dawn quietly scanned the sheet, looking from challenge to challenge that progressed across the paper, slowly winding and weaving toward a taller copy of the diapered caricature holding her hand flat above her eyes like she was seeking something out.

First challenge: Navigate the 3-Dimensional Net! *Lily needs to fold together a dodecahedron of THIS pattern to make a map to find Mommy!*

A short white path where a crayon could trace it moved on to the next point.

Second challenge: Solve the Electric Eels Equation! *Oh no! How did all these electric eels get tangled up here? Solve the silly circuit to turn on the electric slide!*

And so on.

Do...deca...? Only after looking at a finished frame of it did Dawn realize what it was asking for. But she frowned at the next one. Solving a circuit? Like an engineering one? She'd never done something like that before. Never in her whole life. She appreciated the arts, not numbers.

Third challenge: Balance Billy's Seesaw of Atomic Weights! *Poor Billy spilled his bucket of elements all over the seesaw! Helping friends is always important!*

Atomic weights...? Dawn gave the diagram a weird look. She hadn't taken a chemistry course since she was in high school. And her grade was...passing.

La?

Fm?

Fe? That's...fe...ferrous...? Wait, is that an element?

"These are so cute!" Katherine gushed right beside Dawn. Her shadow loomed over Dawn and her slow-moving gears.

Cute?

"These don't look too bad," James watched from the side as well."

Not too bad?

“Why don’t you try a few?” Katherine gently encouraged Dawn. “It might take a little bit for the food to come once we order.”

“Uhm...” Maybe the first...but the other two? She didn’t even try reading the other two after that. “I’m all set..”

“I think I do too,” James declared as he pulled his menu back up. Katherine scooched a little closer to the edge and picked up Dawn’s menu.

“Let’s see...” Katherine hummed and held it out in front of them both, but traced a finger with every item. “Ou, how does Tina’s Chicken-Tots sound?”

The menu was filled with splashes of color, finger-paint hand prints and cute-sy smiling faces.

Something for the Littles! Lily’s is a proud family-style restaurant that caters to customers of all sizes! All Little foods are served with appropriate portions, LCA-compliant Little flavoring and seasonings that abide the HIGHEST standards of culinary conduct! For any questions or concerns, parents please speak with your server!

She was imagining a steak or a rice bowl. But instead her options were:

Sweet ‘n Sour Sidewalk Sandwich

Grumbling Gecko’s Grilled Cheese

Cheesy Chicken Bites

Piggy’s Piping Hot Pasta!

And more and more names as basic as were the food options. They called it a Little’s menu, but it was undoubtedly styled like a kid’s one. The variety didn’t even fill a full page from either Amazon’s menu, and just seeing James turn a page on his made jealousy well up in the girl.

“Oh, see they do personal pizzas?” Katherine carefully traced the line like Dawn needed help reading. “You ended up liking that sweet tomato one, didn’t you?”

If it meant escaping her menu, Dawn weighed the worth of considering how to mentally unravel a dodecahedron. That, and she continued to stare at one of their menus with envy.

James sipped his mug. Katherine sucked from her straw.

And Dawn...slurped her sippy cup.

“Both hands?” Katherine asked in a sweet voice.

...With both hands.