

All Play and No Work

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Catelyn had her stocking feet up on the armrest of her couch and leaned back against comfortable pillows. Her hair was down, white blouse partially unbuttoned, and high heeled shoes on the floor in her office. She swished her glass of merlot around, taking periodic, short, sips from the soft red wine. Like many nights, she was in her high rise office long after the moon and stars had risen into the sky, with the streets fifteen stories down clear of pedestrians and bathed in lamplight. There were only a few other offices on this floor lit up, and most of those because their occupants didn't bother to turn them off after they left. While Catelyn didn't have her main light on, soft orange lamplight fell onto her papers and warmed her office.

As she jotted notes for casework, she heard a knock on her mahogany door. Catelyn looked up to see Paul stick his head into her office, backpack slung over his shoulder and tie pulled off. He had a pretty face with short blonde hair and a mat of stubble around his chin.

"Hey, I'm heading out. Want to come with?" He asked.

"No, I've got some more things to finish up," Catelyn said, "I'll be a while."

Paul frowned, "Promise you will actually go home tonight?"

"Promise," Catelyn said without looking up from her notes.

Paul sighed, and started to step out. But something stopped him and he walked into her office, "Look,

Cate, I don't mind waiting. I know it's late, but maybe we could head out and get a snack or something. Or some beer."

Catelyn smiled at him. "I'd love to, but I've got so many cases right now and I . . ."

Paul waved his hand, cutting her off, "It's ok," he said with a sigh. "See you tomorrow." He left her office and headed to the elevators. Catelyn turned back to her files. She tried to push Paul from her mind, but his cute face and soft voice kept invading it again. She rubbed her forehead and wondered if she made the right choice to stay here instead of head down with him.

When her door opened again, Catelyn's heart jumped a little. Maybe he had turned around at the elevators. But when she looked up, she didn't see Paul. She saw a thirteen year old girl with long black hair and chestnut eyes. Her blue shirt had a pointed hat on it and the words 'Witch in Training' scrawled across it.

Catelyn furrowed her brow, "Lily, how did you get up here?" She asked as she recognized the girl from a divorce case she had recently helped with.

"Oh, just a bit of magic. My mom and I are taking a trip to France tomorrow, and I wanted to give you a gift before we left." The girl held out a clothes box wrapped in bleu, blanc, and rouge wrapping paper.

Catelyn stared at it for a moment, a little dumbfounded. She had never been given a gift from any of her other clients before. And she was still baffled how the girl got up to her office. Catelyn smiled at Lily and sat up. She found the girl cute, and that wasn't normal for her. Kids, in her experience, were rambunctious, loud, and had no respect for how heavy law books were. But Lily would come sit in Catelyn's office chairs with her legs pulled up, playing silently with whatever doll she brought with her that day. Catelyn didn't think she ever saw the same doll twice.

"Lily, this is so thoughtful. Thank you," Catelyn said, taking the box and resting it on her knees.

"Well, aren't you going to open it?" The girl's bright brown eyes were eager and insistent.

Catelyn smiled and unraveled the strings wrapped around the box and lifted the box lid off. Curiously,

the inside of the box contained white pillow fluff and powder. Catelyn stared at it and frowned.

The stuffing burst right in her curious, confused face.

White powder clouded Catelyn's vision, and she gasped. She jumped off the couch, sending magical dust everywhere and all over her body. She coughed and waved her hand to clear her vision, blinking to clear her watering eyes.

"Kid, what the hell was that?" She asked between coughs. It felt like her face was caked in makeup, but when Catelyn tried to wipe it from her face, nothing came off.

"Wait for it . . ." Lily said, a stifled laugh in her voice and a big grin on her face.

"Wh-" Catelyn started to say, but her voice died as she opened her mouth. Now with her heart racing, the lawyer turned to Lily and tried to speak again. But she couldn't summon the power to make any sounds at all. Catelyn looked at the girl and tapped on her own throat, her eyes wide.

"You already look great, Ms. Cate. You really should see your face now," Lily said, her words causing a strange cascade of magic and knowledge to roll through the lawyer's mind. Her own mental self-image changed and Catelyn saw herself as she was. Her face was freshly white with theater makeup, eyes with thick liner, and eyelashes drawn on to look more expressive and excited than natural. Mime makeup. The girl had somehow forced Catelyn to wear mime makeup, like someone might see on the streets of Paris.

"I thought you deserved a vacation, Ms. Cate. But since it seemed like you never took one, I thought you could come with us to France!"

Catelyn shook her head no and slashed at the air in front of her with both hands.

Lily laughed. "Hey, that's not bad for a beginner."

The lawyer stamped her stocking foot, and pointed at her mouth which refused to speak.

"Oh, that's nothing. I haven't even gotten started," the girl said with a bright grin, having far more fun than the adult.

Catelyn's eyes went cross and she wagged her finger at Lily, then once again pointed at her mouth.

The girl rolled her eyes. "Whatever. We're going to play a game of Lily Says. And Lily says . . . put on some gloves."

Calmness washed over Catelyn as she obeyed the girl, though she felt silly for doing so. She daintily picked something out of the air in front of her. Then, just as daintily, she pulled an imaginary glove over one hand, and then the other with crisp and complete motions. When she was done, plush white mittens with a thick, cartoonish cuff materialized before her eyes.

She held her hands up and looked at them with doe eyes and her mouth dropped open. They were huge on her hands and looked like miniature pillows, her fingers beneath them useless and barely able to be flexed. Using one plush hand, she tried to pull the other mitten off. But it wouldn't budge, and in fact started to hurt as she pulled on it.

"There, now you can't wag your finger at me."

Catelyn looked at Lily, at her shirt with the witch hat on it. She covered her mouth with one mitten and pointed with the other at the shirt, backing away. Lily laughed.

"Yep! Imma witch, just like dad said! Don't worry, though, I'm a good witch."

Lily looked at Catelyn thoughtfully, bringing her hand up to her chin. "Hmm. What should you put on next?" Then Lily snapped her fingers.

"Lily says put on this shirt," the girl said, throwing out her hand as if she tossed something. The lawyer, on command, reached out with a mitten and closed it around the imaginary object.

Catelyn unfurled the shirt, turning it upside down and pulling it over her head. The lawyer could feel, but not see, the tight cloth cover her body as she mimed it on. She pushed her mittens through a pair of long sleeves and her head through a hole in the top. Lastly, she pulled the shirt down to make sure it fit her just right.

When Catelyn finally dared to look down at her body, she was not surprised to see she wore a tight

black and white striped shirt. It pressed her breasts together and seemed to make them softer and more round. In fact, her entire torso looked pillow soft. It was deliriously numbing, and she didn't know if she wanted to fight it or accept it.

Lily looked utterly proud of what she had already done, "Ohh, you already look so cute, Miss Cate!" The girl ran up to Catelyn and wrapped her arms around the lawyer's seeming plush torso. All at once, a shocking happiness and contentment suffused through the adult, her heart felt like it was going to burst from her cloth chest as warmth spread from Lily.

And it wasn't just warmth, but another change. Suspenders rose from her skirt and over her shirt, simple strips of fabric clipped on with red buttons. Her suntan pantyhose grew thicker, and striped white and black, making her legs the same pillow consistency of the rest of her body. A beret popped from her head and her cloth hair, a cute black thing with a red pom pom on top. The lawyer was more of a doll than a human now, and she knew it. She had to regain control of the situation. She may be muted but her head wasn't full of fluff... at least not yet. Lily had done this, so Lily could undo this.

Catelyn took the girl in her mittens and pushed her back to arms length. She looked down at the girl with as stern a face as she could muster and spun her arms hands around as if unraveling something, or rolling something back. The miming only made Lily smile more. Catelyn, in an act of desperation, pressed her mittens together and pleaded to Lily.

"Aw, come on, Miss Cate! We haven't even had time to play yet," The girl said with a laugh, "you might find you like being my toy! Most toys do."

Catelyn shook her head vigorously, and Lily nodded hers just as forcefully. Exacerbated and feeling the loss of her voice, the lawyer finally used her brain. She ran back to her desk, flipped open a notebook and began to write as best she could with her cartoon mittens that could barely clasp a pen which caused them to come out in block letters.

“Wow, Mom was right. You just can’t stop working. You do need a vacation, and bad.”

The mime ignored the girl and held up her plea:

LILY, IF YOU TURN ME BACK, I WILL TAKE A VACATION.

ON MY OWN.

The girl was obnoxiously right that Catelyn needed a break, and it seemed a better tactic than her first instinct: sue her mother into bankruptcy. Lily thought it over, or seemed to, while Catelyn looked on in worry.

“Can I make a counter offer?”

Catelyn waved her arms no. But she hadn’t gotten her way at all since the girl walked in, and she wasn’t about to start. Lily took her own pad and pen to begin to write. After a minute, she turned the paper around and pushed it across the desk for Catelyn to read:

This is a very serious, legally binding contract:

- I, Miss Cate, do hereby agree to be Lily’s doll for the two weeks we are in France.

- Furthermore, I agree that I will not think about cases, judges, contracts, and other dumb work things and instead think only about having fun and being played with!

- Also furthermore, I agree to remain Lily’s toy until she decides to turn me back, and not one second before.

Just as she finished reading, and began contemplating a good way to tell a thirteen year old witch to jump off a cliff, the girl gave a command.

“Lily says sign the contract, Miss Cate.”

Catelyn’s eyes went wide as she mindlessly obeyed, her mitten held an invisible pen and scrawled a signature on the yellow legal pad. And her name materialized by magic, bubbly and fun. The ex-lawyer had just a second to stare in stomach twisting shock at what she had just done. What she had been made to do. What the contract told her she would be. A doll. A toy. Exclusive property of a child. No right to humanity.

She stepped back, and back, wondering what to do. She had no voice, no will the child couldn’t override. No magic. Catelyn stepped into something invisible. Something only she could see, but was real to the touch. Reaching out one mitten, she pushed against an invisible wall in front of her. To her sides. Above. Hurriedly, she pushed on the invisible thing. Each time she did, the box contracted. Her arms, at first, could reach out to a smaller space. Catelyn was so focused on the box she barely noticed the growth of her desk, of Lily, until she had to crane her neck up to look in the child’s eyes.

“Look at you, Miss Cate, an expert mime.”

As Catelyn arrived at her correct six inch height, her body began to weigh heavily. Twist ties appeared to hold her hands out and against the edge of a box that similarly materialized. It fell backward, and carried the toy inside with it. She was left staring at her ceiling and waiting to be moved by a person.

Being frozen and held in the box forced the lawyer to understand her fate. She would be a doll for this crazy little girl. A doll who couldn’t talk. A doll who was owned. And all at once she felt years of school and a career vanish into thin air. But instead of making her more despondent, those realizations did just the opposite. Her work worries melted away like cotton candy in water, leaving her ready and waiting to play.