Opportunity

by TheMissingDays

The start of a new story. Will Paul get his opportunity.

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The Costume Box
2025

Chapter 1

Opportunity: Part 1 - Chapter 1

Loss

The air was crisp as Paul ran along the soccer field. He felt good, strong. He dribbled the soccer ball as he moved up the field. The years of hard work were paying off. His body felt light as he moved, he didn't have to think about minute movements. It was all coming natural to him, he was in the zone as he effortlessly moved through some defenders. There was nothing like this feeling to him. He was in total control. It was as if he could see the perfect path and he just needed to move along it and no one would be able to touch him. It was just a scrimmage during practice but he had something to prove. Everything was going his way until it wasn't.

Paul knew something was wrong as he laid on his back on the grass of the soccer field looking up at the sky. His friend Miles came into view. Paul watched Mile's gaze move down toward his leg as his face contorted. Paul went to sit up to see what had happened when Miles placed a hand on his chest keeping him on the ground. Miles told him not to look. Paul groaned. This couldn't be happening.

Paul sat in his hospital bed looking at his leg that had been been placed into a cast and was now elevated by a sling. The door to the room opened as his Mom entered in her hospital scrubs. She was a nurse at the hospital and had been on shift when Paul had arrived. His Dad had just arrived after getting

the call.

“Heard you had a rough practice,” Paul's Dad said as he looked at his son's leg. Paul said nothing as he let his head flop back down onto his pillow.

“I know you're not happy sweetheart,” Mom said rubbing his shoulder sympathetically. “Just be happy that you didn't need any surgery.”

“But the tournament,” Paul groaned.

“There will be other tournaments,” his Dad said. Paul just shook his head. His parents didn't get it. The doctor had already outlined what the next few months held for Paul. He was going to be stuck in the cast for awhile and then there would be some physical therapy. There was no way he would be game ready in time. That was a problem.

Paul was a forward in his sophomore year at college. He had been working hard to impress and it had paid off. The coach had approached him a couple of days ago saying that they were going to put him in the starting lineup for the spring tournament on the varsity squad. It was a huge opportunity to say the least. If Paul did well that could mean a permanent spot on the varsity squad, and if things went really well he might even catch the eye of a scout, those hopes were now all but dashed away.

Another doctor came into the room. She was skinny and had her hair up in a bun.

“Hey there Paul long time no see,” she said as she lifted up

his patient board from the end of the bed. “How're you feeling?”

“Fine I guess. The painkillers are doing their job.” Paul said with a gloomy resignation.

“Looks like it will be a little while before you're back on your feet, but I think you'll be back to normal after that.”

Paul looked up at the ceiling as the assurances were not what he needed at the moment.

“Paul's a little bummed Cici,” Mom piped up. The doctor was Cecily Brown. She and Paul's Mom had been best friends for a long time, even before Paul was born. They had both had plans to become doctors yet then Paul had come along and Mom had decided to become a nurse while Cecily had soldiered on to med school. “Apparently he is going to have to miss a tournament.” Mom then said.

“Its not just a tournament,” Paul said. “This was a big opportunity.” Paul then told his parents and Cecily about everything the tournament had entailed.

“I know you're bummed,” Dad said. “But sometimes these things happen and you'll just have to move on. Maybe this opportunity wasn't meant for you. It doesn't mean you'll never get another one.”

“But what if I don't?” Paul grumbled. Neither of his parents had a response.

“I might be able to help,” Cecily said. All eyes then fell upon

her. “What I'm about to suggest is a little unorthodox and what I'm about to say cannot leave this room.” She said lowering her voice as she went and closed the door. “But I might just have a solution here, that will get Paul back to tip top shape in no time.”

As Paul listened he couldn't believe what he was hearing. Apparently Cecily had been working with a team to develop a youth serum. They had seen miraculous results. It hadn't been tested on humans yet but Cecily may just be able to pull some strings. She said that it was simple. They would give Paul a dose that would regress him to a baby. His leg would be mended during the process, they also had a reversal that would bring him right back to his current age, it would have been as if he had never broken his leg.

“Just one little caveat,” Cecily said wincing a little. “You can't take one dose after another. There would be a waiting period until you could age back up.” The room was silent as everyone digested what had just been offered.

“I don't know,” Mom said. She didn't doubt her friends honesty for a minute. “I mean experimental treatments for a broken leg, its seems like overkill. Kind of risky too.”

“Its completely safe,” Cecily said. “The human trials are more of a formality at this point. Its just it takes awhile for the bureaucracy to get moving.” Mom nodded knowing full well that medical research was not a quick process.

“How long?” Paul asked.

“Trials should begin in about two years,” Cecily said.

“No I mean how long in-between doses,” Paul clarified.

“Three weeks,” Cecily responded. Paul's heart leapt. Three weeks and he could be right back in tip top shape. The answer to all his prayers were here.

“That sounds great,” Paul said with a smile.

“Hang on just a moment,” Mom said. “You haven't even considered anything about this.”

“Whats there to consider,” Paul questioned. “I can be healed in three weeks instead of three months maybe more.”

“Have you thought about the fact that you would be a baby for those three weeks?” Mom said crossing her arms.

“Oh yeah,” Paul balked. He had not considered that part, mainly due to the fact that it sounded so incredibly fantastical. “Is there anyway I wouldn't have to be a baby? Like can't we go with a smaller dose or something?”

“Fraid not,” Cecily said. “We haven't figured that part out yet.”

“Then how can we be sure that you would be able to restore him back to nineteen?” Dad asked as Mom nodded with a perfectly reasonable question.

“Not to get too technical, but the antidote is more like a reversal, we wouldn't be growing Paul back more or less just canceling out the regression. There is a time limit though which is why he would get the antidote soon after the three

week period, waiting too long after that there would be a point of no return."

"I don't know," Mom said. "I mean don't get me wrong having my baby back would be kind of fun, though I don't know if I really want to go back to changing diapers."

"Woah wait a minute," Paul yelped as his face went red. He hadn't considered that part. He didn't really know if he wanted to relive his Mom and Dad changing him let alone having to wear diapers.

"That wouldn't really be necessary," Cecily chuckled. "In our test we noticed that even after regression that the subjects still maintained their adult behaviors within that three week period. Paul's mental faculties would not be effected in that time frame. Maybe one or two little quirks but nothing to worry about. "

"That's convenient," Dad laughed. Paul could only nod as he calmed his nerves. Honestly this was starting to sound better by the minute. If the only change was just being smaller he could deal with that for a couple of weeks.

"Then lets do it," Paul said. There was no use in thinking about this. Its was a win win situation for him. He was on winter break now so he would be at home for the time being anyways. This injury couldn't have happened at a better time.

"Don't be so hasty," Cecily said surprising Paul. "You should at least take a night to think on it. You're here overnight for observation anyways. You can give your answer tomorrow."

“Okay yeah sure.” Paul said.

Afterwards Paul's parents and Cecily left to let Paul rest. They went off to talk more about how everything would work and get the paperwork started. In the meantime Paul was left to think on his choice. Part of him was beginning to have his doubts of whether or not he should go through with it.

His Dad was right, other opportunity's may just come his way and doing something so drastic may not be the best choice. Paul was starting to think he should probably just give up on the whole thing and take the normal recovery time. Yet he felt the nagging doubt that he had gotten his shot and he hadn't even got to shoot it.

Paul's coach and Miles stopped by later to see how he was doing. The coach seemed a little disappointed that Paul was definitely out for the tournament. Which only made Paul consider Cecily's offer all the more. The coach left soon after as Miles stayed to hang out for a bit.

“It really sucks that you're sidelined, guess we're not going to be training over the break together like we had planned.” Miles said sitting back in the chair.

“Yeah,” Paul said morosely.

“Guess you're more bummed about missing the tournament thought right?” Miles said.

“That too,” Paul said.

“Still it might not be so bad,” Miles said. “Honestly I was a

little bummed."

"What do you mean?" Paul asked.

"Don't get me wrong," Miles said smiling a little. "All the guys were pumped to see you move up, I mean we all kind of felt you were doing us proud getting on the varsity squad, but it also meant we wouldn't be able to practice together anymore."

"It would have just been for the tournament," Paul said. "Its not like I had a permanent spot."

"Oh please," Miles laughed. "We all knew you would make the team. You're the best player all ready."

"Even if that happened," Paul said. "Its not like we would never play together again. I mean you'll be on varsity soon enough."

"Maybe as a substitute. I don't got your talent though," Miles said. "It sucks that you're missing out on this opportunity, but it might not be so bad having you stick around on the squad for a little longer."

"Thanks," Paul said. Miles left soon after since visiting hours were ending. Paul began to think about his future. It really wasn't the end of the world to keep playing on the JV team with Miles and the rest of the guys. They were his friends after all. Still Paul couldn't help but shake the feeling that a real opportunity was slipping through his fingers.

Mom came in to give Paul some dinner and check on his pain

levels.

“Hey Mom, what do you think about what Cecily, I mean Dr. Brown is suggesting?” he asked. His Mom gave him a small smile as she took a seat on the bed.

“I think its quite something, you still want to do it?” she asked.

“Kind of,” Paul said. “But if you think its unsafe or whatever.”

“Its not,” Mom said patting Paul's leg. “She has reassured me its safe, and I trust her completely. If she says it will work then it will. She would never do anything to put you in danger.”

“Yeah I know,” Paul said. “Still it would be a bother to you and Dad.”

“We really won't mind,” Mom said. “Besides who do you think will be taking care of you while you heal? Your Dad is back home getting your bed sheets washed as we speak.”

“Oh yeah,” Paul said realizing no matter what his parents were going to be helping him out either way. “Sorry about all of this.” he really hated when people fussed over him.

“There is nothing to be sorry about,” Mom said. “Whatever you decide me and your father support you one hundred percent. Its about what you want.” Paul nodded. He ate while he watched T.V with his Mom. Soon enough he was laying in his bed trying to get some sleep, still trying to decide what he was going to do. It wasn't as if one way was worse than the

other. No matter what he was going to have to put up with having to rely on help. So what did he want? Simple, he really wanted to play in the tournament, and there was only one way to do that.

The next morning Cecily came into his room as his Mom was helping him get dressed to leave. Paul stood up with his crutches.

“So Paul on your way home?” she asked.

“Yeah but also I want to take you up on your offer.” he said.

“You're sure? You think you can deal with being a baby again?”

“Whats three weeks,” Paul said with a smile.

Chapter 2

Opportunity: Part 2 - Chapter 2

Changes

“So whats first?” Paul asked sitting on the deck in the backyard on a chair. His Mom was standing in front of him. He had his shirt off as she had told him to do.

“Well it says I rub this stuff all over you,” his Mom said looking at the instructions that Cecily had given her.

“All over?” Paul said with some worry.

“Just your top half, neck all the way to your waist,” Mom said donning a pair of medical gloves.

“I could just do it myself,” Paul feeling just a tad bit awkward at his Mom spreading the liquid on his body.

“It needs to go on your back too,” Mom said plowing straight ahead. She poured some of the stuff into her hand. It was clear. It wasn't gel or cream but still too viscous to be liquid. She went in spreading it all around his neck and back across his chest and under his arms. Paul couldn't help but laugh a little as she got under his armpits. His Mom thankfully didn't make any remarks. She was a medical professional after all and this was a procedure.

“So now what?” Paul asked once he had been thoroughly covered.

“You sit out here in the sun for a bit and let that stuff dry and

absorb into your skin," she said removing her gloves and throwing them into a bag. "You need to drink this as well, Mom said pushing a glass of cloudy liquid towards him. Paul lifted the glass taking a swig. The stuff didn't taste like anything in particular. As Paul sat drinking and letting the stuff dry on his skin he and his Mom talked.

"So what are you going to tell people?" Paul asked.

"We're not, remember this has to be kept a secret. Cecily is sticking her neck out on this one, I don't want her to get in trouble."

"Oh yeah," Paul said. He picked up his phone. He decided to text Miles. He came up with a story that he was going to be out of town for awhile. That would be enough so he didn't have to deal with texts messages asking him to hang out. The time passed leisurely as Paul finished the drink.

"How do you feel?" Mom asked.

"A little tired to be honest," Paul said.

"Hmmm, Cecily did say you might feel sleepy and a little dizzy. If you're dry maybe you should lie down on the couch?"

"Yeah I guess," Paul said getting up and using his crutches to hobble inside to the living room couch. He laid down pulling a blanket over his top half. Soon after he was asleep.

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Paul came too a couple of hours later. Opening his eyes it

took him a moment to remember where he was. Sitting up put him into a state of surprise as he looked around the room. Nothing had changed except now everything seemed big. As Paul looked around he brought his hands up from under the covers. They were small and chubby.

“Holy shit!” Paul exclaimed. His hand immediately went to his throat. His voice sounded so high pitched and felt foreign in his throat. Paul looked around. The house was eerily quiet. “Mom,” he called out. “Dad,” he said. Had they gone out? Was he home alone? Paul felt the smallest little feeling of worry before he heard footsteps coming into the living room. His Dad came and stood in front of the couch looking down at Paul, who was a little taken aback at how big the man now appeared.

“Hey sleepyhead, looks like you're awake,” he said with a smile.

“It worked,” Paul said looking at his arms and body placing his hands on the pudgy little tummy he now had.

“We noticed, but didn't want to wake you. You looked a little smaller one minute and then when we came back you were like that.” Dad said.

“This is kind of weird,” Paul said still not used to the sound of his voice.

“This is what was supposed to happen so its not that shocking,” Dad chuckled. “But look at this,” Dad said picking up a large leg cast that was on the couch.

“My cast,” Paul said with some surprise.

“You slipped right out of it, how does your leg feel?” Dad asked.

“Oh yeah,” Paul said as scooted off the couch before landing on his feet. His legs felt a little wobbly and he could feel a little tenderness but there was no pain from putting weight on it. “It worked, I'm healed,” Paul squealed a little as he gave a few hops.

“Careful its not broken anymore but it might not be fully healed yet so take it easy,” Dad chuckled. Paul couldn't help but smile, despite what his Dad said his leg was no longer broken, not even sprained, maybe just a little sore. It was a moment later that he realized he was buck naked standing in front of his Dad. Paul let out a small squeak as he grabbed the cover from the couch to cover himself.

“S-sorry,” Paul stammered.

“Nothing to worry about,” Dad laughed. “You used to run around the house like a nakie little monkey all the time so this isn't new to me.”

“Dad seriously,” Paul grumbled. “I need clothes.”

“Your Mom is at the store right now, she'll be back soon.” Dad said.

“Um do you think I could see what I look like?” Paul then asked.

“Sure wait right there.” Dad left returning a few moments

later with a mirror. Paul held up the mirror in front of him marveling at his reflection. He did indeed look like a baby. Two chubby cheeks, a little button nose and a big set of green eyes. His brown hair sat on his head looking a little disheveled and lighter than it had been.

“I kind of forgot how much hair you had at this age,” Dad said “And that chubby little tummy, hope you aren't too sad about losing your six pack.”

“Its just for three weeks,” Paul said putting the mirror aside. “Then I can take the reversal and everything will be back to normal.”

“So you hungry?” Dad asked.

“Kind of,” Paul said as his stomach grumbled. “But I'll wait for Mom to get back.”

“Sure,” Dad said. “I'll get something cooking up in meantime.”

Paul decided to watch some tv as he waited. Although he spent more time looking at his small fingers and toes not able to get used to the sight of them. At one point he did happen to peek under the cover. He immediately pulled the blanket back as he glanced at his crotch. There was barely anything there to look at! That was just too weird. Paul tried not too think too much about the changes which was harder than it seemed. Everything was different, the sensations of his skin against the couch and the blanket. Not too mention how different everything looked from his new perspective. He wondered if

he could get used to this. He then thought that it was probably best if he didn't get used to it. Soon enough he heard his Mom come in from the garage greeting his Dad.

“Hey sunshine,” Mom said coming into the living room. She smiled as he turned his head to look at her. “Look at you,” she said sounding a little breathless as she sat next to him. “I forgot how gorgeous your eyes looked,” she said as she held his face in her hands. “And those cute cheeks,” she cooed as she gave a kiss to one of his cheeks.

“Mom, knock it off,” Paul said as he moved his face away. “Just because I look like this doesn't mean you can treat me like a baby.”

“Sorry hun,” Mom said. “Its going to be hard not to cuddle you.” Paul let out an annoyed sigh. He figured he was going to have to let her give him some hugs and kisses, but anything past that was going to be strictly off limits.

“You got me clothes?” Paul asked eyeing the large bags at his Mother's feet.

“Yep, lots of things, wasn't quite sure about your size.”

“You didn't get diapers, did you?” Paul asked awkwardly. The way his parents had been commenting about how cute he was giving him some worry that they might get a little carried away with the baby treatment.

“No I got you underwear,” his mom chuckled as she dug through the bags before pulling out a package and setting them in Paul's lap. The boy held up the package as he

scrunched up his face. They were very colorful to say the least and decorated with images of Mickey Mouse.

“Why did you get these, you should have just gotten plain ones.” Paul said.

“I got you clothes sized for eighteen months,” his Mom said. “This is pretty much what they had,” she said as she tore open the package plucking a pair out as she unfolded them. “Look their sports themed I thought you would like that,” she said. The underwear was white with images of mickey playing soccer all over them. Paul did not look enthused. “I tried to get as much plain clothing as I could find.” his Mom said. “But you know most clothing for babies goes for more of a cute look.”

“Its just three weeks,” Paul reminded himself out loud. His Mom was busy pulling out and folding other clothes. There were t-shirts and shorts, as well as some jeans and some pajama sets, although Paul couldn't help but notice the two pairs of overalls as well.

“Here why don't you try these on,” his Mom said giving him a blue t-shirt with a large t-rex head on it and some gray sweatpants.

“I guess this is okay.” Paul said. His Mom didn't move as she sat looking at him.

“Do you think I could have some privacy?” Paul said.

“Oh sure,” Mom said seemingly forgetting for a moment that Paul was nineteen and capable of dressing himself. “I'll just

go put the rest of the stuff up in your room." She said gathering up the pile of clothes in her arms and leaving the room.

Paul got straight to work getting the underwear on quickly so he was no longer naked. He then got the shirt and the sweatpants on. The first thing that stuck him was how soft the clothes felt. The feeling of the shirt against his bare skin was certainly different than when he had body hair. The sweatpants were also more snug than he was used too. All in all the clothes felt nice enough. Paul walked into the kitchen as his Dad was setting out dinner. He was quite surprised that he had seemingly slept the afternoon away. His Mom stopped for a moment putting a hand to her ear.

"Do you hear that?" she asked as Dad looked at her. "the sound of little pitter patting feet," she said.

"Been awhile since we heard that," Dad chuckled, smiling at Paul who only gave an annoyed look. Enough was enough, he really had to nip this in the bud.

"I think we need some ground rules," Paul announced.

"We're just having a little fun dear," Mom said as she sat down at the table.

"You're going overboard," Paul said with a frown.

"Paul let your mom be, she just went and bought you a bunch of new clothes and other things. It is her day off you know."

Paul balked a little. He knew his Mom worked a lot and he

did hate to bother her on her days off.

“I didn't mind at all, it was fun to look through all those cute clothes” Mom said, though she did notice Paul's look of anguish. “Though I don't want to make you feel like I'm making fun of you, so why don't we discuss the ground rules over dinner.”

Paul nodded as he walked over to the chair. It took a little doing but he was able to climb up onto the chair before plopping down on his butt. Only his head could be seen. It was going to be hard for him to eat like this.

“Hmm I don't think that's going to work,” Dad said looking at his pint sized son.

“Maybe I should have gotten a booster seat,” Mom mused.

“Mom,” Paul yelped as his face turned a little red.

“I have an idea,” Dad said leaving the kitchen. He returned with a couple of thick books. He went and swooped Paul up in one arm before placing the books down and then set Paul on top.

“There that's better,” Mom said. “Okay so what did you want to discuss?”

“First of all,” Paul said with a huff of air. “Don't pick me up like that.”

“Okay sorry,” Dad said taking a seat. “I'll make sure to ask first and only if it is necessary.”

“When would that ever be necessary?” Paul asked.

“You never know, you're smaller now,” Dad said. “It might come up.”

“All I'm asking is that you don't treat me differently. I'm still nineteen I'm not a baby.” Paul said.

“We understand that dear, but we also want you to realize that you may not be able to do everything that you used to. You're going to need a little more help here and there.” Mom said.

“It'd be he same if you were still hobbling around here in a cast,” Dad added.

“Anything else?” Mom asked.

“I guess not,” Paul said. As long as they didn't start treating him like a baby that seemed to cover everything. He didn't doubt that his new size would make some things harder but he was determined to be as independent as possible.

“Good then lets dig in, this looks good,” Mom said smiling at Dad. Paul grabbed his fork finding it to feel weird in his hand. It was giant now in his small grip. He definitely couldn't hold it normally. He fiddled with it for a moment finally finding it easiest just to grip it with a fist. Paul stabbed into some of the noodles bringing them up to his mouth. He only managed to get half in his mouth thanks to the fact he had taken too much for his small mouth to accommodate and also holding his fork the way he was made him clumsy. Half of his forkful fell landing on his chest.

“Hang on a minute,” Mom said getting up from the table. She grabbed a dishcloth and tied it around Paul's neck.

“I don't need a bib,” Paul protested as his Mom sat back down.

“Sweetie those are brand new clothes and I would appreciate if you didn't get them absolutely filthy in one sitting. Now I know you're still getting used to things, so just wear that until you get the hang of it.”

Paul dropped his fork as he put his chin on his hands with a pout. It was starting to hit him just how hard this was all going to be.

“It's okay hun,” Mom said reaching out and rubbing his back. “You're in an adjustment period you'll get a feel for things soon enough.”

“You're in recovery,” Dad said sounding supportive as if he were consoling Paul after a hard loss. “A much shorter one than if you hadn't decided on this.”

“Yeah I get it,” Paul said picking his fork back up. The rest of dinner proceeded as Paul got used to eating. He could only eat one or two noodles at at time, that is if he did want to get it all over his face. Drinking was also a little bit of a challenge as he accidentally spilled a good amount of water that his bib caught most of. His parents thankfully didn't make any comments. Paul was thankful that his parents were being mostly supportive about this whole thing. It seemed they had been truthful when they said they would try to not treat him differently.

After dinner Paul made his way up to his room. He really needed to unwind a little. He turned on his game console which he had left behind when he moved to college since he was going to be too busy to play anyways. He fired up a shooter and began playing. The thing was with his hands so small it made it very hard to control and he found himself getting completely obliterated. Paul switched over to a turn based RPG game that didn't require as much. He found it was much easier to control. He had played games like this a lot when he had been younger. He actually credited them with helping him become a better reader. After a few hours he turned off the console finding himself a little sleepy. He felt some pressure in his bladder as soon as he stood up. Paul hurried to the bathroom. He found some new things in there. In front of the toilet and sink were plastic step stools. Attached to the toilet seat was a potty ring decorated with tiny little elephants. Paul rolled his eyes a little. He conceded that it was probably needed anyways. He didn't want to fall into the toilet. At the end of the day he was impressed that his Mom had enough foresight to get these things for him. Paul did his business before coming out into the hallway to find his Mom in her bathrobe.

“Oh Paul, everything go okay in there?” she asked.

“Uhh yeah,” Paul said. “The step stools were helpful.”

“That's good to hear,” Mom said. “Me and your Dad are going to turn in, don't stay up too late now.”

“Sure,” Paul said. “I was going to go to bed now anyways.

Still feeling a little tired."

"Did you see the pajamas I got you?" she asked.

"Not really," Paul said.

"I'll show you them now," Mom said. Paul was about to refuse but his Mom was already walking towards his room. His Mom was at his dresser when Paul walked in. "How about you go with these tonight," Mom said holding up a pair of orange footie pajamas.

"I'm not wearing that," Paul said a little more loudly than he had meant to.

"They'll be nice and cozy, you know your body is smaller now it gets colder faster."

"I at least want pants," Paul said as his voice edged into a growl. His Mom pulled out a couple of pajama sets each one them decorated with kiddie designs. "I though you said you got plain stuff," Paul said scrunching up his face.

"The only plain things I could find in your size were the sleepers." Mom said sympathetically.

"I'll just sleep in my underwear then," Paul said. His underwear was probably the most babyish thing he was wearing but at least he wasn't putting on more baby stuff.

"You need pajamas," Mom said. "Its getting colder and remember what I said about that smaller body, you'll be shivering all night." Paul puffed up his cheeks feeling like he wanted to scream. Why couldn't she just do what he wanted.

Paul caught himself slowly letting the air out.

“Fine, I'll wear the stupid orange ones.” he said.

“Great, let me help you with these.” Mom said.

“I can dress myself,” Paul protested as his Mom was already pulling his shirt off. Paul took a step back.

“You're going to need a little help with these,” Mom said. Before Paul could even reply his Mom told him to trust her with a click of her tongue. Paul rolled his eyes. He didn't see why she was being so insistent. He pulled off his shorts and stepped into the sleeper as his Mom held it out for him. She helped him thread his arms through it. As Paul looked down he realized there was no zipper.

“I think these are backwards,” Paul said.

“Nope,” Mom said as Paul heard a zipper being done up behind him. “These zip up in the back.” Paul's mouth dropped a little. “Told ya you would need help.” Mom said. Paul put his hands on his hips. He felt a little trapped all of a sudden and a little tricked. She could have just explained to him from the start why he would need help.

“So how do they feel?” Mom asked before Paul could come up with a response. He shifted a little noticing that like the clothes he had been wearing that day they felt incredibly soft even more so.

“I guess they're okay,” Paul said holding up one of his feet. They were certainly comfy and at least they were plain. “I

can deal with them for a night," Paul said.

"Then lets get you to bed," Mom said.

"Mom seriously, you're treating me like a little kid," Paul groaned. Mom gave a disappointed sigh before giving him an apologetic smile.

"Okay, okay you're right, but I still want a goodnight kiss," she said leaning over to give Paul a peck to his cheek.

"Ugg fine," Paul said as he hugged his Mom and gave her a kiss to the cheek.

"Goodnight, I love you," Mom said as she left the room. Paul turned off the lights and climbed up into his bed which felt huge now. Curling up under the covers it was easy to relax. He had never felt so cozy before. He figured that if this was what it was going to be like he could deal with it for three weeks and then everything would go back to normal. He would be good as new and ready for the spring tournament. Paul fell asleep that night imagining all the goals he was going to score.

Chapter 3

Opportunity: Part 3 - Chapter 3

Trip Up

That night Paul had a strange dream. He was on a boat. It was a nice day, until the sky darkened and the water got choppy. A monstrous wave then appeared throwing Paul from his boat. Paul tried to stay afloat thrashing among the water, yet the waves were too much and eventually he was pulled under, it was at that moment he awoke except he wasn't in his bed. He found himself on the floor hopelessly tangled up in his bed sheet. The door to his bedroom opened as his Mom stood in the doorway already wearing her hospital scrubs.

“Are you okay?” she asked though she didn't sound worried.

“Yeah I guess,” Paul said as he tried to untangle himself from the blankets. His Mom gave a small smile as she knelt down helping Paul untangle himself from the blanket.

“Let me guess forgot how much smaller you were and tried to jump out of bed like normal?” Mom said.

“Not exactly,” Paul said. “I actually woke up on the floor.” He was still a little confused in how he had gotten there.

“I see,” his Mom said as she pulled the blanket off of him with a final tug freeing him. He sat on the ground for a moment as he watched his Mom's brows raise up. She then stood up looking at the bed. Paul felt like it was just a little strange. What was she looking at? He got up and then noticed

it. Wet.

Paul looked down at his crotch. The bright orange sleeper did nothing to hide the large dark spot now on his crotch. Paul's mouth dropped as he looked over at the bed where another wet patch was.

“W-what i-is this,” Paul stammered as the dots had not yet connected in his head.

“Looks like you wet the bed.” Mom said as if this was a normal occurrence.

“I did'nt –“ Paul yelped contrary to the evidence that he could not only see but feel.

“Its not a big deal,” Mom said as she pulled the sheet off the bed.

“What do you mean, this wasn't supposed to happen,” Paul said as his voice began to shake.

“Paul, sweetie, its probably just because your body isn't used to it yet. Your bladder must have shrunk along with the rest of you. It was just an accident.” she said in a consoling tone.

Paul shook his head. Mom's reasoning did make sense, what he couldn't understand is why she was being so calm about all of this. Paul was in a daze of sorts before his Mom got his attention as she placed some clothes she had grabbed from the dresser on the ground at his feet.

“Let me help you,” she said as she spun him around unzipping the sleeper. He then heard some snaps along his

legs come undone as his Mom pulled the sleeper completely off of him in one motion almost as if it was a tear away suit.. Paul let out a squeak as the cold air hit him. He turned around to say something but was stopped as his Mom shoved some clothes into his arms. “Go and get changed I'll finish cleaning up.”

Paul walked off to the bathroom. As he sat on the toilet he felt beyond embarrassed. It was a small mercy that his Mom seemed to be taking it in stride. As Paul got finished cleaning himself he looked at the clothes his Mom had given him. He had a pair of green corduroy overalls. What the heck was she thinking? Paul just shook his head. It wasn't worth starting a fight with her especially after what he had just put her through. Paul got on another pair of the underwear he had been given, this one with Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse decked out in football gear running across the white fabric of the undies. He then pulled on the red and white striped shirt and finally the overalls. It took a little doing to get the straps on by himself but he eventually got them on.

Paul came out sheepishly into the kitchen where his Mom was packing her purse headed off to work while his Dad sat at the table. It was Sunday. Mom usually worked on the weekends. Paul climbed up into his chair where the books were. A small bowl of cereal and a cup of juice was set out for him. Mom came behind him securing another dish towel around his neck.

“Hey,” Paul said with a little protest.

“Once you get through a meal without a dirty towel then you don't need to wear it,” Mom said before she gave him a kiss to his cheek. “Any plans today?” she then asked.

Dad looked up from his paper. “Need to go to the hardware store today,”

“Oof sorry Paul looks like its going to be a boring shopping trip for you this morning,” Mom said.

“What, why,” Paul questioned. “I'm not going with him.”

“You have to,” Mom said.

“Huh?” Paul grunted still not understanding.

“You gotta come with champ,” Dad said. “We can't leave you home alone.”

“I'm nineteen, I can stay home by myself.”

“No you most certainly cannot,” His Mom said a little forcefully surprising Paul. His Mom stopped a moment almost surprised by the reaction herself. Paul also couldn't help notice that he definitely had recognized the tone. It had been her Mom voice. The one she had used when he had been younger to show that whatever it was Paul had been protesting was not going to fly. It was a parent talking to a bratty child. It had been a long time since Paul had heard it. He had after all grown out of the type of behavior around the start of middle school. “All I mean to say,” Mom then said taking on a more even tone. “Is that it would not be safe. Think, what if there was a fire. You wouldn't be able to get

out of the house easily. Not too mention everything is high up now, what if you're climbing on something and get hurt. I could go on for hours about any of the other number of bad things that could happen to you."

"Nothing like that will happen," Paul protested feeling all the more like her worries were more appropriate for a child that didn't know any better. He was smaller sure, but he was still nineteen in his head.

"Geez," Dad said sitting back in his chair. "I didn't know it was so terrible to have to be around me."

"I didn't mean it like that," Paul said letting his head tilt to the side. It wasn't often his Dad put a guilt trip on him, but when he did it sure was effective. "Fine, I get it." he supposed it was only natural for them to worry. Technically he was still injured even if his leg was feeling a whole lot better. He could sort of imagine that they wouldn't like to leave him alone even if he was still big and in a cast.

Mom then departed for work as Paul finished up his breakfast. Paul tried to eat slowly as to not drop anything on the makeshift bib around his neck. His Dad did seem to be rushing him a little. Apparently he wanted to get to the store quickly. That was the only reason Paul accidentally dropped his spoon on himself.

"Looks like you're still getting the hang of eating," Dad chuckled pulling off the bib around Paul's neck before using to wipe some of the milk splatter on Paul's face.

“It was an accident,” Paul grumbled. As Paul made his way to the door leading to the garage in the living room he looked around for his shoes. He didn't see them anywhere. That's when he remembered that they wouldn't even fit him.

“Looking for your shoes?” Dad asked.

“Yeah,” Paul said.

“Your Mom got those for you,” Dad said pointing to some foam clogs sitting by the door. They were bright red with a yellow strap on the back. “She thought they would be easier to get on and not have to use those tiny fingers to tie any laces.”

“I know how to tie my shoes,” Paul said as he pulled the clogs on with some resignation. Going out to the car. Paul went to get into the front seat when his Dad stopped him.

“You can't sit up front,” Dad said. Paul was about to protest before remembering what he looked like. Even he had to admit it would look weird if he was sitting in the front seat.

“Yeah I get it, I'll sit in the back.” Paul said. His Dad opened the back door. Paul's eyes bulged out a little when he saw the car seat sitting in the car.

“No way,” Paul said realizing it was for him.

“Sorry dude you gotta,” Dad said patting Paul on the shoulder.

“No I don't,” Paul mewled which sounded all the more like the whine of a small child thanks to his chipmunk register. “The windows are tinted nobody would even know I was

back there.”

“This isn't about people seeing you,” Dad said. “This is a safety thing. Given how small you are this is what you have to sit in if you're in a car.

“B-But,” Paul sputtered.

“Paul you know what would happen to you if we got into an accident, so don't even try to argue.” As Paul stood looking at the car seat he certainly saw where his parents were coming from. If they got into an actual accident he would be looking at more than a broken leg.

“Okay, I guess your right,” Paul said as his shoulders slumped. Even if he accepted that it was needed he couldn't bring himself to move. He then felt his Dad lift him up from behind.

“Its a comfy seat,” Dad said plopping him into the seat.

“Hey,” Paul said. “I said no picking me up.”

“I don't think you would be able to climb up by yourself,” Dad said innocently. “Now get buckled. Paul huffed a little air through his nostrils. He picked up the straps. He didn't really have any idea how they went together.

“Its like this,” Dad said taking the buckles and quickly strapping Paul in. Buckling a chest piece and then buckling a snap at his crotch before finally pulling a strap at the bottom which caused the straps to tighten around him.

“I could have done it if you had given me a minute,” Paul said.

“Now you'll know for next time,” Dad said as he closed the door.

Paul squirmed against the harness. He certainly felt secure now, if not downright restrained. The drive to the store passed without much incident. His Dad struck up a conversation about the spring tournament and what other prospective teams might be playing. Paul felt kind of normal in the moment having this conversation with his Dad. In some ways it reassured him that nothing had really changed between them. Getting to the store, Paul found he could not unbuckle the straps of the car seat. He just didn't possess the strength to press the big red button that held everything together. It was more than a little frustrating that his Dad had to do it for him.

Paul didn't like feeling weak like this. He had always been uncomfortable with the feeling, perhaps that's why even from a young age he had always done his best to be fiercely independent. He never wanted to rely on anyone. For someone like Paul an injury such as a broken bone that would force him to ask for help was the worst type. As they walked across the parking lot Dad grabbed Paul by the straps of his overalls pulling him back as a pickup truck sped past.

“Uhh lets do this,” Dad said as he picked Paul up into his arms.

“Dad no,” Paul squeaked.

“You almost got flattened,” Dad said as he continued to walk.

“The truck should have stopped,” Paul grumbled. “I was

walking.”

“They can't see you,” Dad said. “Its just until we are inside.” True to his word Paul was set on his feet as his Dad got a cart.

“Okay, I only need a couple of things,” Dad said as he began to walk off. As they walked through the store Paul was being hit with a strange sense. Everything seemed so large now. People towered over him and the tall shelves of the big box hardware store seemed like skyscrapers. Even something mundane as the shopping cart seemed gigantic. After some time Paul found himself panting a little. His little legs having to work so much harder to even halfway keep up with his Dad.

“Tired?” Dad asked grabbing some nails off the shelf and plopping them in the cart.

“A little,” Paul nodded.

“You know you could always ride up here in the cart,” Dad said motioning to the seat reserved for small children.

“T-Thats okay,” Paul said shaking his head. His Dad merely rolled his eyes as he went and picked Paul up and set him in the seat. “Daaad,” Paul hissed through clenched teeth.

“There is no reason to be so proud,” His Dad said as he began to push the cart. “Besides you are supposed to be taking it easy. Cecily said to make sure you don't overwork yourself.”

As much as Paul wanted to complain he couldn't deny the relief he felt not having to walk. His feet were already killing

him. Although he was a little annoyed at how comfortable his Dad was becoming just picking him up and he was still beyond embarrassed at the idea of what people might think upon seeing the scene. They would think he was ridiculous. However as his Dad was looking over some light fixtures Paul noticed that the passerby's weren't giving a him any notice. There was some semblance of gratitude towards that. To Paul it felt as if he was in disguise. Nobody knew the little boy sitting in the cart was actually nineteen years old. Paul looked at his Dad who had his back to him. For the first time Paul felt himself relax. Nobody knew anything, he didn't have to worry.

Paul leaned back in the cart closing his eyes for a moment. He had his hand up against his cheek, a minute later he felt his thumb brushing up against his lips. Thinking nothing of it Paul let his thumb slip into his mouth. His eyes shot open and he removed his thumb a second later. He looked to see that his Dad still had his back to him. Paul shook his head a little. His finger had just slipped a little that was all. He was still glad that his Dad hadn't seen it, probably would of made some joke about him sucking his thumb. Just as Paul was about to ask his Dad if he was done he was hit by another feeling. It came on suddenly. He really needed to go to the bathroom. Before Paul could even think about getting out of the cart he froze as he felt his bladder release. Paul sat frozen as he felt the warmth and the fabric become wet. Paul's mouth hung open as he stared straight ahead. His Dad came back to the cart tossing some fuses into the cart.

“I think I'm done,” Dad said smiling down at Paul who looked up at him with wide eyes. His Dads expression slowly changed as he looked at Paul before he noticed the small dark spot on Paul's crotch. “Oh,” Dad said clenching his teeth a little.

“I-I-I did'nt-it ju-just happened,” Paul stammered. His Dad gave him a small smile.

“Its alright, your Mom told me about this morning,” Dad said as he grabbed a flier off a display and placed it over Paul's lap covering up the dark spot. “You're just not used to that small bladder yet, that's all,” Dad said as he began to push the cart along giving a pre-emptive explanation as to why his nineteen year old son had just wet himself. The walk back to the car was humiliating as was having to get strapped back into a car seat by his Dad.

Getting home Paul immediately ducked into the laundry room to get the wet clothes off and in the dryer. The only problem was getting the straps off the overalls was proving difficult. Paul struggled with mewls and grunts as the wetness was starting to get uncomfortable.

“Want a little help?” Dad asked poking his head into the room having heard Paul struggling.

“No,” Paul scowled. His Dad merely chuckled walking into the room as he knelt down to un-attach one of the straps.

“Really you don't need to kill yourself trying to do everything on your own, its okay to ask for help when you need it. Its a

good thing you decided to wear these overalls today," Dad said.

"How so?" Paul questioned as he cocked his head.

"Heavy material, didn't show your accident off too much. If you had worn something lighter you probably would of gotten it all over the seat of the cart."

"Dad c'mon," Paul groaned.

"I'm just saying you were lucky," Dad said getting the other buckle undone. Once the overalls fell to the ground Dad stood up. Paul certainly didn't need anymore help as he stepped out. The air felt chilly against his sodden underwear.

"Um thanks," Paul said as he scampered off to his room. Getting to his room he went to his dresser to get a new pair of underwear and pants. He opened the bottom drawer to find some pants. Paul pulled out some blue sweatpants. They had some silly looking monster trucks going up the side of one leg. It didn't really matter and at this point he didn't want to dig through the drawer. He opened the other drawers not finding any underwear. He looked up seeing that they probably in the top shelf, which he couldn't reach. An idea then popped into Paul's head. He went across the hall to the bathroom and got one of the step stools. Bringing it to his room he now had enough height to reach the top drawer yet not high enough to see in. He got on his tiptoes and was just barely able to grab something that felt like underwear with the tips of his fingers. Pulling them down he found himself staring at a pair with multicolored stars on them.

“Whatever,” he muttered as he got the wet clothes off and the dry one on. Now that was done Paul felt a little better. Still he knew he really needed to get this under control. Paul spent the rest of the day taking it easy as the doctor had prescribed. Though he was sure to at least try the bathroom several times. Which seemed to work as he had no more accidents that day.

The day soon turned to night. Paul was up in his room sitting on his bed. He was thinking about his first day. He still felt horribly embarrassed about the two accidents, at least he seemed to have gotten it under control. He wondered what his parents really thought about it. At least to his face they had been supportive and not making a big deal about it. Yet Paul could only think that on some level he had let them down. He looked around the room trying to get his mind off it. He still wasn't used to the change in perspective. It was like this wasn't even his room anymore.

Paul stood up on his bed. He smirked a little. Standing up on his bed actually made things look normal, it was somewhat fascinating how a change in height had made his perspective change so radically. Paul found himself bouncing a little, his feet not leaving the bed. He noticed how he didn't even feel any pain in his leg anymore. He then jumped a little just to test it. Still there was no pain. Paul began to jump a little higher. His leg didn't bother him at all. He began to laugh. This is what it was all about after all. He was completely healed. It had taken two days not six weeks. This couldn't have worked out any better. Maybe he really had made the right choice. As Paul continued to bounce he was starting to

get that same feeling. He had his energy back and his legs felt strong his body light. It was euphoric as he continued to jump up and down cackling like a madman.

“And who is that giggling in here?” his Mom asked as Paul saw her enter into his room. He immediately fell onto his knees feeling just a little silly that his Mom had caught him jumping on his bed. He could only imagine what he had sounded like to her.

“S-sorry,” he stammered.

“Its alright,” Mom smiled. “But don't get too crazy with that leg it's still healing.” Paul wanted to tell her that he was completely healed of course but he simply nodded before noticing his Mom opening up one of the drawers of his dresser.

“What are you doing?” he asked crawling off his bed and going to stand next to her. She explained that she was going to bed so she just wanted to check on him and help him get into one of his sleepers before she went to bed herself. Paul found himself feeling a little annoyed. It almost felt as if she was telling him it was bedtime or something. But it wasn't like she said he had to go to sleep and he did sort of need help if he was going to wear one of the sleepers like last night.

“Have you gone to the bathroom lately?” she asked surprising Paul a little before he could protest.

“Um no,” he mumbled.

“Why don't you go try the potty then one last time and then

come back so I can help you with your pajamas" Paul bristled at the way his Mom had phrased her request. Now he did really feel small. "Go on scoot," His Mom said before he could form a response even giving him a playful swat on the behind. Paul scurried out of the room. In the bathroom Paul was more than a little embarrassed by the whole exchange. He took a deep breath before returning to his room. He just needed to remind himself that his parents were seeing a little boy in front of them so maybe it was kind of hard for them to not treat him as such he couldn't really blame them after the events of the day and not too mention what his Mom had just witnessed. He really had acted like a little kid. He would just need to re-affirm with his Mom that he was still the same old Paul. As he came back into the room his Mom greeted him.

"Hey Mom –" Paul began.

"You know I was thinking about your pajamas," his Mom said cutting him off. Paul came to a pause. Suddenly he began to feel a little nervous. Was she actually going to suggest it? It seemed to be a possibility to him. He had two accidents that day. What if she was going to suggest that it was necessary just like with the bib they still had made him wear at dinner. Was she going to try and sell it to him like that? That he had to wear a diaper just until he got used to a smaller bladder.

"I think you should wear a pair of these tonight," his Mom then said holding up a shirt from one of the two piece pajama sets she had gotten. It was powder blue and was covered with cute little dog faces. Paul stood a little dumbfounded for a

moment not expecting that was what she was going to say. He thought for sure he was going to be looking at a diaper. Paul mumbled out something unintelligible still a little flummoxed as his Mother continued on.

“I think it would be better,” she said placing the matching pants on the bed. “I mean those sleepers zip up in the back and you can't get them off without help. This way if you need to make a trip to the bathroom in the middle of the night then you can do it with no problem.”

“That makes sense,” Paul said looking at the pajamas.

“Something wrong?” his Mom asked.

“No, nothing,” Paul said feeling relieved that this had been all it was. His Mom then told him not to stay up to late before wishing him a good night and then left.

Paul got on the pajamas noting that they were even more snug than the sleeper had been. Just like the sleeper thought they felt incredibly soft against his body. Best of all he didn't have a diaper bulge. Paul got into bed. The pajamas soft feeling actually made him a little sleepy. He closed his eyes for a moment. The next thing he knew it was morning.

Chapter 4

Opportunity: Part 4 - Chapter 4

The Baby Ruse

Paul looked glum as he stood in front of the mirror in his room. He shook his head at the reflection staring back at him. There stood a toddler dressed in a plain white t-shirt and a thick pair of training undies with red chunky looking dump trucks plastered all over them. He looked ridiculous. He then turned around looking at his new bed. It was of all things a crib. Not just any crib though it had indeed belonged to Paul when he had been a baby. He was surprised his parents even still had it stowed away up in the attic. Of course they had needed to get a new mattress. Paul had of course tried to protest the training undies and the crib yet his parents were not too be swayed. To them this was all necessary.

Despite Paul's best efforts he was still having far too many close calls and full on accidents that his parents had deemed the need for a little more protection. The crib had also been deemed necessary as Paul had been falling out of bed nightly. Some railings on the bed would have fixed that problem, unfortunately they didn't make them big enough to fit Paul's bed. His parents had suggested getting a smaller bed for Paul yet that would have been a big expense for the two weeks left until Paul could be grown back up. That's when Dad had remembered they still had the crib in the attic. Both of them had seem so pleased that they had kept it all these years joking that it was funny they were actually going to get some

use out of it again.

Paul grumbled a little as he left his room. He was trying, really hard in fact to get used to all this. He kept telling himself that it was only for two more weeks. Yet that didn't seem to help, it was all too much. The only people comfortable with this was his parents, in Paul's opinion they were too comfortable. He had noticed that they were treating him more like a toddler than a nineteen year old. It was little things. Such as calling him Paulie every so often, wiping his face if he got food on it. His Mom had taken to setting out clothes for him every morning as well when she would come to wake him up. He didn't understand why she even did that either. She could let him sleep in. Not that she even had to set out clothes for him. He didn't wear pants much now anyways. His parents said it would probably be better that way so that if he had to make a quick trip to the bathroom there would be less to take off.

Even with all this though Paul knew they were trying their best to respect his dignity. The training undies weren't diapers so there was that. They also never pulled the side of the crib up and only set it to halfway which with the help of a step stool Paul could climb in an out. His parents also did show restraint when they wanted to jump in to help him with a simple task but would catch themselves and back off.

Paul walked into the living room and crawled up onto the couch. The tv was already on yet his parents were not in the room. On the tv was the weather. The meteorologist was talking about some storm that was moving into the area. It

was going to be a late season hurricane. Thankfully they were not in the affected area so that was good. Paul looked around for the remote wanting to watch something else. He looked around seeing the remote was on a table across the room. Paul let out a grunt sliding off the couch. As his feet hit the ground his legs seemed to give out a little as Paul found himself on all fours. He began to crawl towards the table. It was a strange thing but Paul did find it to be rather natural to crawl. To Paul it was just more convenient than getting up on his wobbly legs. Although he did try to avoid it when he could. Especially if anyone else was around. He crawled quickly to the table and then with some effort got to his feet.

“Paul are you in here?” his Mom's voice called out as she walked into the living room. Paul spun around quickly which nearly sent him falling onto his butt. Yet he steadied himself on the table.

“Y-yeah,” he said quickly hoping his Mom had not witnessed him crawling like a baby.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Um getting the wemote,” Paul said grabbing the remote. “Not weally interested in the weather.”

“We need to talk about that actually,” his Mom said going and taking a seat on the couch, not for a minute showing concern over her sons trouble enunciating his words. It had been happening more frequently, Paul could speak normally if he took it slow. “Nick, Paul is in the living room,” his Mom called out as Paul's father came walking in.

“Hey bud, why don't you come and take a seat over here.” his Dad said patting the couch cushion. Paul cocked an eyebrow. Obviously his parents had something to say, and Paul couldn't help but feel it wasn't going to be good. He walked to the couch and crawled up onto it without either one of his parents helping him.

“What up?” Paul asked.

“Its about that storm,” Mom said taking the remote and turning down the volume.

“Its not going to hit us,” Paul said speaking slowly.

“No it won't,” Dad said. “Its your Aunt Lisa though.”

“Aunt Lisa?” Paul questioned.

“She has to evacuate within two days,” Mom said. “Your Dad will be leaving tomorrow to help her pack up.”

“Oh,” Paul said. “That sucks.” Paul felt a little guilty at the moment. If he wasn't stuck like he was he would no doubt jump up to help his Dad and Aunt. Though even if he wasn't shrunken down he would have still had a broken leg and still wouldn't have been much help.

“She'll be staying with us for a bit,” Mom then said. Paul nodded. It seemed to make perfect sense. Aunt Lisa had two young kids as well. A one year old boy and a four year old girl. With kids as young as that staying in a hotel long term would be tough. Paul's eyes then widened as he realized the one problem in all of this.

“Wait a minute. She can't stway here,” he lisped.

“That's why we needed to talk to you,” Dad said. “She has nowhere else to go, and we simply can't turn her away, but we also can't let her find out about you.”

“What about me?” Paul asked. “I gotta leave?”

“Of course not,” Mom said putting an arm around Paul. “You have nowhere else to go either. We're just going to have to adapt. Make sure she doesn't find out who you are.” Paul thought on his Mom's words for a moment before pulling away from her.

“You mean, she has to think I'm a baby,” Paul said not liking it one bit.

“That's right,” Dad said patting Paul on the back. “I know you're not going to like this bud, but she's going to have to believe that you're a real baby for this to work. That's not going to be a small effort on your part.”

“But even if I do that, she is still going to wonder why I'm here,” Paul said as his stomach twisted up a little at the thought of actually having to act like a baby.

“We could say that we are fostering you or something,” Dad suggested.

“That would never work,” Mom said. “He looks too much like you especially at this age, she'd never believe it.”

“Oh yeah,” Dad said looking down at Paul with a wistful smile as he mussed up his hair. “My boy.” he laughed.

“Knock it off,” Paul scowled as he moved his head away.

“Maybe Paul is a relative, perhaps a cousin's baby?” Mom suggested.

“That would explain the resemblance,” Dad said scratching his chin. “But how do we explain why we have him? Also we got to come up with something to tell her when the baby is gone and Paul is back to normal.”

“That's simple,” Mom said. “We are only just watching him for a short time. Maybe the parents are moving, you know like far away so they had to go ahead and set things up and will return for him later?” Dad nodded finding the reasoning satisfactory enough. “Oh they could be moving to a new country maybe France, wouldn't that be something.” Mom then said as if she were fantasizing herself.

“Yeah moving far away like that would be hard with a baby, better to leave him with a relative,” Dad said. As Paul watched his parents gleefully begin to concoct this story he sat back crossing his arms.

“You all sound like your having fun,” he grumbled.

“Sorry hun we got carried away,” Mom said placing a hand on his knee. “We know you're not thrilled and if there were any other way we would do it. Believe me, we're just as stressed about this as you are.”

“I get it,” Paul said with a sigh.

“He'll need a new name,” Dad then said. “You know, can't

really go around calling him Paul, it would be too much of coincidence."

"We can just use his middle name," Mom said. "That should be familiar enough for all of us."

"Oh so he's going to be William," Dad said.

"Yep little Willy," Mom smiled.

"I don't know about this," Paul said frowning.

"Its only for a little bit," Dad said with a reassuring tone. "Just think of it as putting on a play, we'll all have our parts to play."

"But what if I mess up?" Paul began to worry. He already had enough on his mind and having to keep some made up story straight in his head was just going to be another thing. "I mean, remembering all these names and stories, and what am I even supposed to call you guys?"

Paul's parents looked at each other showing that they hadn't even considered that part.

"Well we would be...your..." Dad said trying to think through what they would be to him.

"You can just call us Mommy and Daddy," Mom interjected.

"But that's not right," Paul said.

"It doesn't really matter," Mom said waving her hand through the air. "Lisa will think you're so young that you just don't know." Paul sat for a moment. This couldn't possibly work, it

was just too much. Even if he went along with Dad's idea that this was all just some sort of play they had to put on, Paul was no actor.

“I still think I'm just gonna mess this up,” Paul said.

“Then we should practice,” Mom said. Paul looked at her quizzically. “Lisa will be here in two days so we have time to get used to this. Okay Willy?”

“Okay Mom...I guess I can try.” Paul said.

“That's not my name,” Mom said with a smile. Paul looked at her before sighing.

“Okay Mommy,” he said his face going a little red.

“It'll get easier,” Mom said as she stood up. “But I think you should go and put some pants on.”

“Why?” Paul questioned. They were the ones insisting that he shouldn't wear them.

“Because you and me are going shopping,” Mom said.

“For what?” Paul asked.

“Props of course,” Mom said.

Opportunity: Part Five - Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Prop shopping.

Paul grumbled in the shopping cart at the store. His Mom hadn't even asked him if he wanted to ride in the cart she had just picked him up and plopped him in, even going so far as to buckle the safety strap across his belly. Paul had protested but his Mom had simply shushed him telling him it was easier this way. Not too mention it was better to rest his leg. Paul didn't see why that had anything to do with anything. His leg was healed anyways. He was as good as new, yet his parents seemed to think he was still recovering.

“Mom, can't I just walk even a little? I promise I'll tell you if I start to get tired.” Paul pleaded.

“You're fine in the cart, Willy,” Mom said placing emphasis on his fake name. “And don't call me Mom, its Mommy now.” Paul puckered his lips and rolled his eyes. “Also,” Mom said as she continued “You should change the way you talk. You need to actually sound like a baby. So remember. Keep your sentences short, no more than five words at a time, and use simple words.”

“Then I just won't talk,” Paul grunted.

“I guess that could work,” Mom said. “You could just suck your thumb that would give you a good excuse not too talk.”

“Hey,” Paul yelped as his face reddened. Had they seen?

“Relax,” Mom said with a chuckle patting Paul on the head. “It was just a joke, but we should get some of these,” Mom said reaching out to a shelf and grabbing a three pack of pacifiers.

“Wait a minute,” Paul shouted. Mom placed a hand shutting down his shouting.

“Not so loud,” Mom said. “Use your words the right way please.” Paul frowned before taking in a deep breath.

“Mommy, uhhh...me no want...paci,” Paul dribbled out awkwardly counting the words in his head.

“That was pretty good,” Mom said tossing the pacifiers into the cart. “You don't have to actually use them, just think of it like set decorating. We just need to make the house look like a baby lives there.” Paul let out a breath. He guessed that made some sense. “There is some stuff you might have to use though,” His Mom continued. “At your age you would still be in a high chair,” Mom said coming to a stop in front of a display of high chairs.

“Nooo,” Paul mewled. His Mom gave him an exasperated look. “Books...fine,” Paul said. His Mom shook her head before placing a hand on his cheek.

“Its not that big of a deal, its just a chair,” she said sympathetically. “Its not like I'm going to spoon feed you baby food.”

Paul just rested his chin in his hands on the bar of the cart. At least she was planning on letting him still eat solid foods, although he was really beginning to wonder how he was going to put up with this.

“We should probably get a pack and play too,” Mom said turning down another aisle. “Your Aunt will probably want one for Adam,” she added referring to Aunt Lisa's youngest child. Paul hoped that comment meant to suggest that he wouldn't have to use it. However his hopes were dashed with his Mom exclaiming about the size of an extra large one she was eyeing no doubt seeing it would comfortably fit Paul and his baby cousin. She didn't get it however musing that she didn't have room in the cart at the moment and would have Dad pick it up later.

The shopping trip continued as Paul's Mom filled the cart with all sorts of things such as bibs, bottles, sippie cups, eating utensils and even some toys and some incredibly infantile clothing that made Paul's tummy twist as he watched each babyish item be placed into the cart.

“This is a lot,” Paul commented after watching his Mom put an incredibly infantile shirt plastered with smiling farm animals into the cart.

“We can return the bigger things after you're done with them,” Mom said. “We'll donate the smaller things and I figure I'll just give the clothes to your Aunt. You and Adam are the same size right now anyways.” Mom's comment hardly made Paul feel any better. The cart then turned down

another aisle. Paul sucked in some air seeing they were in the diaper aisle.

“Wh-what are we doing here?” Paul asked as his voice quivered. They didn't need to be here. Even if they were making it look like a baby lived in the house, he didn't wear diapers. His Mom responded with a thin smile as if to say she was not looking forward to what she was about to say.

“Me and your father were thinking it would probably be better for you to wear some heavier protection.”

“No, please no,” Paul sound gripping the handle of the cart looking like he was about to have a meltdown.

“It would just be at night,” Mom said trying her best to calm Paul. “You have been having accidents every night.” Paul shook his head vehemently. “Honey no one has to know okay, like I said it would just be for at night when you're asleep.”

Paul took in some deep breaths he could feel some tears springing to his eyes. He wiped them away quickly.

“Okay just take some deep breaths and we'll make this fast, perhaps you want to pick something out. Lots of options.” Paul once again shook his head. There was no way he could do that. “I'll pick then,” Mom said as she began to examine the myriad of packages. Paul didn't concentrate on what his Mom was doing. Talking about his potty issues seemed to make him become hyper aware all of a sudden of his bladder. He actually needed to go.

“Mommy,” he said in desperate little voice. His Mom turned

to look at him. “Potty,” Paul said as his face was painted with urgency. His Mom's eyes widened. She grabbed a package and threw it into the cart.

“Lets hurry,” she said as she pushed the cart towards the bathroom. Paul was scrunching his legs together as best he could sitting in the cart. His Mom was moving fast but not nearly fast enough. Paul felt a few spurts escape out. Once they had arrived at the bathroom his Mom unbuckled him and carried him quickly into the bathroom. Paul was so concentrated on not having an accident that he didn't even realize they were in the ladies room. His Mom walked into a stall and closed the door. Paul wasted no time in pulling down his pants and undies. He balked at seeing the toilet, it was high off the ground and was going to take some maneuvering that might not be possible in his current state. A second later he felt himself being lifted under his armpits as his Mom put him on the toilet. His Mom was knelt down with a hand supporting his back as he let loose.

“Sounds like you made it,” Mom said in a cheery tone.

“No I didn't,” Paul said looking down at the training pants around his ankles. They were sagging and just barely hanging on with the extra weight. The few spurts had been more than just little tinkles.

“I see,” Mom said feeling the crotch of the underwear a little. She pulled them off folding them up.

“Unfortunately I didn't bring a change,” Mom said. Paul groaned. First at the insinuation that his Mom might have

needed to bring a change of undies for him and also at the fact that he did indeed need a change. “Why don't you just wait here for a moment,” Mom said lifting him off the toilet and setting him on the ground. Paul immediately covered himself realizing his state of undress. His Mom left the stall and then came back a minute later knocking on the door. Paul had gotten his shorts back on in the meantime. Paul stepped out to see his Mom standing in front of the door.

“Since we don't have a change, you're just going to have to wear one of these,” Mom said showing him the diaper in her hand.

“What! No way,” Paul exclaimed taking a step back, he still hadn't even agreed to wear them even if it was just at nighttime. His Mom just gave him a pained smile. “I'll be fine, I can just wear these shorts without anything,” Paul said.

“Paul, honey, it isn't a big deal,” Mom tried to reason.

“I just went to the bathroom, I won't have another accident,” Paul said.

“You and I both know that you can't promise something like that,” Mom said. “You can't go without nothing.”

“I'm not a baby,” Paul said as he hung his head in defeat.

“Paul is not a baby,” Mom said as she picked him up. “But Willy is.” The changing table in the bathroom was unfolded and Paul was laid on top of it. “This isn't such a bad thing,” Mom said unfolding the diaper. “Just wear this right now and you can get used to it a little. When we get home I promise

you can take it right off.”

Paul frowned at his mother. He didn't want to get used to it. He was about to voice his disapproval when his Mom unceremoniously pulled his shorts down leaving him naked the waist below. Paul let out a little yelp not from just the shock but from the cold air hitting his skin. He covered himself immediately.

“I know this might be a little embarrassing for you, but I am your mother, believe me I've seen this sight hundreds of times before,” his Mom said with a tut as she moved his hands away before lifting his legs up to the sky. Paul could only let out a groan. It didn't matter if his Mom had done this before, it had been different back then. Thankfully his Mom had decided not to use any cream or powder and she quickly had the diaper taped up around his waist. She then lifted Paul off the changing table and set him on the ground.

“Go get your shoes please,” she said. Paul took a couple of cursory steps not used to the bulk of the diaper in the least. As he toddled over to the stall he felt his legs wanting buckle so he could crawl. He of course relented and soon had his shoes in his hands as he toddled back to his Mom who was waiting with his shorts held out, each step being accompanied by a crinkle.

“Do they feel okay?” Mom asked as she helped Paul back into his pants.

“They're really thick,” Paul said. “I can't even close my legs.

“I bet,” Mom chuckled as she lifted him up after he had slid his shoes on. “They are nighttime diapers, remember you only have to wear them at night.”

Back in the cart Paul could not get used to the feeling of the diaper. It became even worse when he found himself buckled back into his car seat as the buckle pushed up against the thicker diaper. Getting home was a relief as he was finally able to get the diaper off and put on some underwear. He was surprised at how thin they felt when compared to the diaper. When he had first put on the training underwear it had felt like he was wearing a pillow. After the diaper he now knew what that actually felt like. Paul spent the rest of his day quietly, avoiding his parents. He didn't like the play acting. Another part of him was feeling embarrassed about the whole thing. His Mom had actually diapered him at nineteen years old. He wondered if he would ever get over the embarrassment. Even thinking about it made his cheeks go a little flush.

He was called for dinner. Coming to the table he saw the high chair that was already set up. His Mom smiled as if she was excited about all this as she knelt down.

“Hey Willy, ready to get some num nums in that tum tum?” she asked playfully poking Paul in the stomach.

“Stop –“ Paul went to say when he fell silent seeing his Mom shaking her head.

“What do you think Willy would say?” she then asked.

“Aunt Lisa isn't even here,” Paul said.

“Paul we're rehearsing,” Dad said. “Everybody has to get used to this.”

“Yeah well maybe Willy doesn't want to eat, maybe he wants to go play with his toys.” Paul said. He didn't really want to play with any of the toys his Mom had bought, he just wanted to get them to see how weird this was.

“So you're going to act like a fussy baby the whole time?” Mom questioned.

“It would be convincing, wouldn't it,” Paul replied more than a little snidely.

“I suppose,” Mom said. “But then we would have to react correctly as well.”

“We would have to punish you,” Dad said. “Its what Aunt Lisa would expect.”

“What, you're going to spank me!?” Paul exclaimed taking more than a little offense.

“No,” Mom said shaking her head. “We've never done that before.”

“We would probably put you on a timeout,” Dad replied. “So I guess you need to ask yourself what kind of baby you are going to be. The nice kind that doesn't bring attention on themselves or the kind that gets put on the naughty step that everybody looks at. So Willy whats it going to be?”

Paul looked from his Dad to his Mom. He conceded the point. Naughty babies only brought attention on themselves and that's the last thing he wanted.

“Me, hungee,” Paul said cringing a little.

“Wonderful,” Mom said as she lifted him up and placed him the highchair. Going as far to buckle him in and tie a bib around his neck. His food was served to him in a rubber molded plate that stuck to the tray of the highchair and his drink was in a sippy cup. Paul knew it was fruitless to argue, he was just going to have to get used to this. Dinner passed without much incident. As Paul was finally released from the high chair he headed for the stairs. Walking past the living room he spotted his Dad in the process of setting up the extra large playpen. Paul groaned as he ascended up the stairs.

He was sitting on the floor of his room. His eyes were closed as he dreaded the coming of his aunt. How in the world was he supposed to do this? He spent some time trying to think of ways to get out of this. Nothing was coming to him. Paul laid back on the ground for a moment he felt himself relax. He opened his eyes lazily a moment of shock shooting through himself as he found he was sucking his thumb. He withdrew his hand quickly sitting up rather frazzled. He didn't even know when he had started. His door then opened up as his Mom stood.

“Willy, lets go bath time,” Mom announced.

“Bb-ath,” Paul stammered.

“Of course, you haven't had one in a while,” Mom said. “Then I think its bedtime.”

“You can't be serious,” Paul yelped.

“Eight o' clock, that's going to be your new bedtime,” Mom said.

“Tats not fair,” Paul said crossing his arms.

“What do you expect us to do?” Mom said. She couldn't understand why Paul was being so obstinate. She wondered if he truly understood why this was important. She was also a little worried that he was in denial about his level of ability.

“I didn't expect all this,” Paul said turning away from his Mom. “It wasn't supposed to be like this.”

Paul heard his Mom walk into the room a moment later she had her arms wrapped around him from the back.

“I know it feels like everything is going wrong,” his Mom said gently. “Its just a short time though, soon enough everything will go back to normal. Besides you are looking rather tired these days.”

“I guess,” Paul said. The last few days had been a whirlwind and he was feeling rather drained by it all.

“Great,” Mom said as she lifted him up to her hip. “I'm working an overnight shift so I can be home tomorrow while your Dad is gone. So I got just enough time to get you washed.”

“Wait,” Paul yelped as he was being carried. “Do you really have to give me a bath though? I mean just for tonight, can we not?”

“Tell ya what,” Mom said. “You can take a shower in my bathroom that way your Aunt will never know.” She had to still try to work with him. She wanted to respect him as an adult. Even if he did need more help than usual.

“Thanks Mom,” Paul said letting out a sigh of relief. Paul was left to his own devices as he showered in his parent's bathroom. It was comforting sign that his Mom had allowed it. Maybe they were only going to do what was necessary. With some thought they might be able to find other ways to lessen the baby treatment that Paul would have to endure. His optimism was blunted however when he walked out to see his Mom sat on her bed with diapering supplies already set out.

“Do we really have to do this tonight?” Paul asked not even able to look his Mom in the eye.

“This has nothing to do with fooling your Aunt,” Mom said flatly. “Now c'mon lets get this over with.”

Paul could only groan, his Mom said it like she was dreading it too, yet somehow he knew she wasn't the least bit bothered. Paul approached the bed almost tripping on the towel around his waist.

“Guess I'll have to sit on the ground,” Paul said figuring out in his head how he was going to put it on.

“What are you talking about we'll put it on right here on the

bed, its easier for me than bending over." Paul's Mom said as she lifted him up before plopping him on the bed.

"I don't need your help," Paul yelped.

"Its just faster if I do it," Mom said shaking her head. "You've never changed a diaper in your life."

"I think I can figure it out," Paul said with some offense.

"Just lay back," Mom said pushing Paul onto his back gently. "I hate to say it, but you're going to have to get used to this sooner or later." as she said that she pulled the towel off of Paul leaving him naked.

Paul squeaked a little thanks to the cold air hitting his groin. His Mom quickly had his legs up and his but raised in the air as she slid the diaper under him. A tub of cream was already open as she scooped up some of the cream and went in spreading it onto his backside. Paul looked up at the ceiling not wanting to look down for even a second. It was incredibly weird. It got even worse when he felt his butt lowered onto the diaper and his Mom started to rub the stuff on his groin. Paul closed his eyes as he silently withered under the humiliation.

"Almost done," his Mom said as she sprinkled some baby powder. Paul let out a little moan. He really hated this. Not too mention he didn't like the smell of the cream, it was strong and when it hit his nostrils it was all he could smell, at least the powder covered it up a little. His Mom then got the diaper taped up before wiping her hands clean. "All done,"

she said cheerily.

Paul finally opened his eyes giving his Mom a grumpy look. She then handed him some pajamas. He grabbed the pants and pulled them on seeing they were yellow and blue striped. He then got he shirt on which was the same as the pants yet he was less than pleased to see the brown felt monkey face on the chest.

“Oh I knew you would look cute in those,” Mom commented. Paul wouldn't even dignify that comment with a response. He had avoided the really babyish stuff for awhile but that was now pretty much out the window. Not that any of the clothes weren't babyish.

“All right, now its bedtime,” Mom said standing up and beginning to walk out the door. Paul slid off the bed. As soon as his feet hit the ground he found himself naturally going down on all fours and he began to crawl after her.

“Paul, are you okay?” Mom asked as she stopped looking back at him and seeing him on the ground.

“I'm fine,” Paul said getting to his feet quickly as he realized what he was doing. “I just tripped,its hard to walk in this,” Paul said looking down and seeing just how obvious it was that he was wearing diaper. Mom didn't say anything more as they walked down the hall to his room.

Paul stepped onto the stool and got into the crib.

“Want a bedtime story?” his Mom asked.

“That's not funny,” Paul said. His Mom merely smiled.

“Sorry,” she said before coming to the side of the crib. She pulled the side up but she didn't stop halfway as they usually did, instead putting the side all the way up.

“What are you doing?” Paul asked astonished.

“Well given that you are wearing a diaper there is no real reason to keep it down, you won't need to go to the bathroom so we might as well put it up, you know just to be safe,” Mom said with a shrug.

“That's not necessary,” Paul said. “Even if you do that I can still get over it you know.”

“I'm sure you can, but that wouldn't be very safe now would it. I would hope you would be a good baby and stay in your crib.”

“Mom,” Paul said annoyed.

“Paul its one less thing for your Aunt to question okay,” she said with a sigh. “Now just lay down and try to get some sleep.” Paul furrowed his brows a little.

“Its too early I'll never get to sleep,” Paul said as he furrowed his brows. “Can I at least have my phone?” Paul's Mom gave him a smile before going and getting his phone off of the dresser and handing it to him before giving him a kiss on top of his head. The lights were turned out and the door shut. As Paul laid in his crib watching videos he kept getting distracted by the crinkling noise that accompanied every

slight movement. Eventually though his eyes did close and he fell asleep. He knew the next few days were going to be tough.

Chapter 6

Opportunity: Part 6 - Chapter 6

Learn to Talk

Paul sat in the living room on his butt. The tv was on as he flipped through the channels he was feeling kind of bored almost as if he couldn't focus on anything. His Dad had left that morning to go and get Aunt Lisa. The impending dread was palpable. Soon enough he was going to have to act like a complete baby, and he still wasn't used to the idea. Just then Paul felt two hands grasp him and before he could even react he found himself lifted into the air before he found himself held on his Mom's hip.

“Naptime Willy,” Mom said as she began to walk.

“Mom stop,” Paul mewled.

“No, no, that's not right,” Mom said as she gave him a little pat to his behind. “I don't want to hear any complaining. Your Aunt will be here soon so you need to be in character as Willy, and he takes his nap every day. Plus I want to test out this changing table. Need to make sure its safe for Adam.” Paul rolled his eyes as he was laid on a changing table that his Mom had spent the morning setting up.

“Now what does Willy need for his nap?” Mom asked talking to him like a baby as she pulled a strap across his stomach.

“I'm not gonna say it,” Paul said snidely.

“The answer is his diapee,” Mom said as she was pulling the training underwear off of him. “Can you say that, diapee?” she said continuing to mouth the syllables of the words as if she were actually trying to teach Paul how to talk. Paul remained silent crossing his arms as he turned his head away. He certainly wasn't going to play along and talk like a baby especially while his Mom had his legs up and his butt raised in the air as she slid the diaper under him. Paul was none too pleased to be wearing a diaper again. It had felt great that morning when he had been able to put on the training underwear after waking up in a wet diaper.

All day his Mom had been giving him suggestions on how to appear more babyish. At breakfast she had him sit in the highchair again. Giving him reminders to make sure to smear a little oatmeal on his face as baby's weren't neat and clean eaters. The only problem was that Paul was finding it a little hard not to get some on his face despite his best efforts. He had been feeling a little uncoordinated that morning. As his Mom was taping up the diaper Paul noticed another new piece of furniture in his room. It sort of looked like a chair but there was something different about it. It wasn't like the other chairs in the house.

“What's that?” he asked pointing at the new piece of furniture.

“Its a rocking chair,” Mom said as she undid the strap and lifted Paul off the table. “I was talking to Lisa this morning and she asked if we had one since she likes to rock Adam to sleep, so I moved it in here.” Paul was taken aback for a moment. Why hadn't he known that? Once his Mom had

explained it now made perfect sense what it was yet before it had seemed strange and alien. Although a far more important question came to Paul upon hearing his Mother's full explanation.

“He's sleeping in my room?” Paul said with a groan as he connected the dots.

“Where else would he sleep?” Mom asked with a chuckle.

“With Aunt Lisa in her bed,” Paul said annoyed.

“Its not that big of a bed and she is already going to have Mckenzie with her,” Mom said referring to

Lisa's daughter as she placed Paul into his crib.

“He's not sleeping in the bed with me,” Paul said crossing his arms.

“Paul, we are all making sacrifices,” his Mom said with a hint of seriousness. Paul merely scowled.

“With that grumpy face I guess its safe to say you really do need a nap.”

“I'm not grumpy, I'm pissed and you're being dismissive,” Paul said. He was more than a little angry that his Mom was actually writing off his emotions as a little grumpiness.

“I'm not trying to be,” Mom merely replied.

“This isn't fair,” Paul said throwing his arms up. “Its the middle of the day, I'm not tired and you're telling me to take a nap. Aunt Lisa isn't even here. So whats even the point?”

His Mom looked at him for a moment, Paul could see some gears turning in her head. Finally she nodded.

“You're right, so instead of a nap lets do something else,” she said lifting Paul out of the crib and bringing him over to the rocking chair. “We should work on your vocabulary a little. You've been talking too much like Paul and not enough like Willy.”

“I can't help it. Its harder than it looks,” Paul said. When he was trying to talk like a baby it was almost as if he was speaking a different language. It was frustrating to know what he wanted to say yet not how a baby would say it.

“Then lets practice,” Mom said as she revealed a book to Paul. He looked at the cover of the book. The title was “My First Words” There was a picture of a family eating in a kitchen and every object was labeled with what it was. Paul's Mom opened the book to the first page which was filled with animals.

“Whats this one,” she said pointing to a picture of a duck.

“Its a duck, I can read you know,” Paul said sarcastically.

“That's what Paul would say. What would Willy who can't read call it?” His Mom asked patiently. Paul rolled his eyes figuring out what the game was here.

“I don't want to do this,” Paul said.

“Oh c'mon its good practice,” Mom said sounding as if she were pleading. Paul sighed before looking at the picture.

“D-ducky, I guess.” Paul said.

“That's right,” Mom said giving Paul a little tickle to his sides causing him to let out an involuntary squeal. So the game proceeded. Each page having many more things for Paul to identify.

“Its a dog,” Paul then said as his Mom pointed at a dog.

“Try something else,” his Mom said. “You don't need to use proper names even for simple things.”

“Doggy,” Paul then said a little unsure.

“Yep,” Mom said with a nod. “And this one?” she asked pointing to a cat.

“Kitty,” Paul said somewhat enthusiastically.

“Very good,” Mom said giving him a pat to his tummy. Paul felt a little more confident now. He was starting to understand the rules. However the next one gave him a little more trouble as his Mom

pointed to a lion. He knew just calling it a lion wouldn't fly.

“It's a lion but I shouldn't say that,” Paul said.

“Hmmhmm,” Mom agreed. “A kid your age would have trouble with certain sounds like L's and R's so don't use those and just replace them or drop them all together,” His Mom instructed.

“Wyon,” Paul then said.

“Very good,” his Mom said giving him a cuddle causing Paul to let out an involuntary chirp. The next animal did give him more trouble as his Mom pointed to a tiger. Paul gave a grumble. “Remember you can also just replace the word with something similar,” his Mom suggested. “For instance see all the birds?” she asked bringing Paul's attention to the next page that was filled with different birds like flamingos, parrots, and toucans. “You wouldn't know all these different names so you could just call them all birdies.”

“Still,” Paul said going back to the tiger as he began to think out loud. “I can't just call it a kitty, I wouldn't be smart enough to know that a tiger is just a cat.” Paul was deep in thought as his mother waited a little curious to see what Paul would come up with. The idea then popped into his head. He could just replace it with something similar.

“Tigger!” Paul then exclaimed as if a light bulb had just gone off in his head.

“Just like Winnie the Pooh,” his Mom said. “That was very clever,” she said planting a kiss on top of his head. Paul felt his heart flutter hearing his Mom praise him. He wanted to keep doing that and showing her just how smart he was. They moved on to household items. Though he did find some of them tough like forks and knives for instance. Mom suggested that if he couldn't come up with something he could just babble some nonsense as well. As it went on Paul found himself actually begin to lighten up on the idea. He found that this game was more interesting than he might have thought. It was like a puzzle that he was solving backwards.

Each new item gave him a choice and he had to analyze the word to find if there was a simpler term, or if he could replace it with something else and if all that failed it became a babbled word. Cars were caws except for trucks, those became “tucks” regardless if it was a dump truck or a semi. Mom did pause when they got to a page filled with baby items.

“These are all things that you should know,” Mom mentioned making it clear to Paul that he had to have a new word for all these things. The first item was a bottle.

“Um baba,” Paul said.

“Correctemundo,” Mom cheered making Paul laugh a little. “Next one should be easy,” Mom said pointing to a diaper. “You got one on right now.” Paul felt his face go a little red as he squirmed a little which only made a crinkling sound.

“Diapee,” Paul squeaked remembering that's what his Mom had called it. The next item was a little harder as Paul looked at the picture of a pacifier. He let out a little grumble as he found himself just a little stumped.

“This one is hard,” Mom said as if she had translated his grumble into words she was responding too. “Do you remember what you used to call it when you were an actual baby?” Paul shook his head. How was he supposed to remember something like that? “Well you used to call it your...”

“Nu nu,” Paul shouted cutting off his Mom as the word came

to him.

“That's right,” Mom said as she hugged Paul tightly and rocked him back and forth. “You are so smart,” she said causing Paul to laugh. His Mom had noticed that the more they did the more Paul was starting to respond to her praise. It was a nice change of pace. He had been so anxious the last couple of days that it was good to see him laughing and smiling again. Paul for his part really liked when his Mom praised him. In fact he was so focused on getting her to do so that he had completely forgotten about his apprehension at reading the book in the first place.

They came to a page with a boy wearing only a pair of underwear with his arms up in the air pointing out each body part. Paul was giggling after each part giving silly names for eyes like peepaws and calling the nose a nooby. The hands became fingies which Paul repeated a couple times finding the word fun to say.

“And what is this part?” His Mom pointing to the boys stomach.

“Tummy,” Paul said.

“And what is this right in the middle?”

“Tummy boo,” Paul laughed as his fingers were in his mouth garbling his words even more.

“Very good,” his Mom said with her own laugh as she gave a poke to Paul's own belly button. Paul was going to get the next one before she even asked which would show her that he

was the smartest. He watched as his Mom's finger moved down to the boy's underwear. “And –“

“His pee-pee,” Paul shouted enthusiastically laughing as he did at the fact that he had said something that might be considered a little naughty. Just then Paul felt his face flush red with hot heat realizing what he had just said. He stammered a little, how could he have said something like that? He had been acting like a total little kid without even realizing it. His Mom however just laughed.

“I guess that is right, but I was asking about what he is wearing?” she said. Paul was unresponsive, still silenced from his embarrassment. “Paul honey, can you think of what you would call these?” she said still pointing at the underwear. “C'mon I know you know. Its what you wear.”

“Undies, I guess,” Paul said with a mumble. His Mom could tell that he was not as into the game anymore. She moved onto a different section of the book hoping to get him back into the swing of things, it was good practice after all. She could see however that Paul was not going to come back, he was like a turtle who had retreated into his shell.

“I think that's enough for today,” she finally said closing the book as she put her head back into the chair rocking back and forth. She forgot how relaxing it was. She had often fallen asleep with Paul in her arms when he had been a baby for this exact reason.

As Paul sat he looked up at his Mom seeing she had her eyes closed. It was pretty ironic that she had been telling him to

take a nap and now here she was falling asleep. Still he didn't want to disturb a peaceful moment for her. She had been working a lot lately and with everything going around at home too thanks to him. He would give her a few minutes before he said anything.

Mom awoke only a few minutes later looking at the clock to see that she had only dozed off for a few minutes. She looked down to see that Paul had his head back against her chest with his eyes closed. She chuckled a little, and he had said he wasn't tired. She shifted him a little so that he was now cradled in her arms. She had only suggested a nap more for his own good. All of this was certainly taking a toll on him. This plan was proving to be more chaotic than if he had just gone with a cast. Still she knew how much it meant to him that this work. As she looked down at him she could tell he wasn't all the way asleep. She kept on rocking as she hummed a lullaby that she hadn't sung in ages. She felt a warm feeling spread in her chest as she looked down at him. She had really forgotten how he looked when he had been a baby. Looking at photos was just not the same as having the genuine article in her arms. She knew that if he shot her that look with those doughy eyes she would have given him anything he wanted. It was a good thing he hadn't remembered how to do that yet.

Paul stirred a little as his hand moved up and he plopped his thumb into his mouth. His Mom merely smiled not too surprised. Cecily had given her some warning about this. There may be some signs of regression that would pop up

during the three weeks. Nothing too big and Paul's mental state would not be affected, it would be more physical things. Which made perfect sense. Even if Paul's mind was nineteen, his body was not. With him dozing off the nineteen year old was not their to stop his subconscious from taking over. She did think for a moment that she shouldn't let him suck on his thumb not wanting his teeth to be damaged. She then reminded herself that it didn't matter. However she did find herself feeling a little curious.

She looked over to see the pacifiers she had bought set in a small basket on top of the bookshelf next to the chair. She gently pulled Paul's thumb from his mouth. His face scrunched up a little but she brought one of the pacifiers near his mouth teasing his lips with the nipple. On instinct Paul's lips parted as she gently pushed it into his mouth. Just like that the pacifier started bobbing up and down and Paul didn't even open his eyes going back to sleep with nary a realization. His Mom stood up and carried him over to the crib and set him down gently. She watched him sleeping peacefully. He would probably be mad when he woke up finding the pacifier in his mouth yet his Mom simply reasoned that his body wanted some comfort that was familiar to it. She wouldn't be doing her job if she denied that. It was probably the best rest he had gotten in a while. No stress, no worry, just soft comfort.

As Paul woke up as he sat up wiping his eyes. It took him a moment to figure out that he had fallen asleep. Honestly he couldn't be upset. He really did feel well rested. As he sat

looking around finding himself in the crib he crawled over to the side. He pulled himself up. He had never been in the crib with the side up all the way before. He gave it a little shake. Paul wanted out so the first order of business was to figure out how to get the side down. It really shouldn't be hard. First he tried to push down on it a little. When that didn't work he then moved over to the sides to inspect if there was a latching mechanism. There was something that looked like it fit the bill, he pushed at the thing but nothing seemed to give. He then looked to the other side of the railing noticing there was a similar mechanism there. Did he have to use both of them at the same time? Paul gave a grumble. There was no way he could do that. He simply didn't have the wingspan. He was going to have to talk to his Mom about this. It was absolutely not okay to put up the side all the way, he couldn't get out on his own. As if on cue his Mom came into the room.

“Oh good you're awake,” she said coming up the crib. Paul went to say something to his Mom about the crib side yet was cut off. “Your Aunt just got here,” she said lifting him out of the crib and placing him on her hip. “Its showtime.”

Paul stayed quiet as his Mom brought him downstairs. His little cousin Mckenzie was already running around the house talking about how much bigger it was than theirs. Paul didn't see little Adam anywhere though.

“And here is the other little house guest I was telling you about,” Mom said coming to stand in front of Aunt Lisa. He looked at his Aunt who looked at him curiously for a moment. Paul felt his stomach go a little tight. This was the

moment of truth. Paul looked at his Aunt expecting for her to burst out laughing or looking horrified at what had happened to him. His Aunt then smiled.

“Hi there, I've heard so much about you already,” she said. “What was his name again?”

“Its Willy,” Mom said bouncing Paul a little in her arms. Paul was immediately taken over by a feeling of shyness. It was very weird for him to be in front of his Aunt like this. Out of instinct he turned away hiding his face away.

“Oh someone's shy,” Aunt Lisa cooed.

“Willy whats wrong?” Mom said. “Go on and say hi.” Paul immediately straightened up. He was really acting like a baby. True, that was what he was supposed to be doing but this wasn't exactly what he had in mind.

“Bulllo,” Paul said yet found the words garbled as something slipped out of his mouth. His Aunt was fast as her hand shot out.

“Whoops don't want to lose this,” His Aunt said. Paul's eyes went a little wide seeing that his Aunt was holding a pacifier in her hand. He hadn't the foggiest where the thing had come from. Had he really had that in his mouth the whole time? Paul stared back a little gobsmacked not even reacting when his Aunt pushed it back into his mouth.

“Suppose I should start unpacking the car,” Lisa then said.

“Let me put Willy down and I'll help.” Mom said before

carrying Paul into the living room. She put him down into the playpen where Adam was already sat playing with some blocks. Paul stood and shifted realizing he was still wearing the diaper.

“Muumpphy,” He said before pulling the pacifier out of his mouth and throwing it onto the ground. “Mommy wait,” His Mom paused as she knelt down to him. “I'm still wearing the diaper I want it off.”

“Just wait a little bit,” Mom said. “I'm going to help Lisa unpack and then I'll help you. In the meantime why don't you visit with Adam you haven't seen him since he was born.” With that she left leaving Paul more than a little huffy. He fell back onto his butt feeling the extra padding on his butt. At least his Mom had said he was going to get changed soon. Still he was more than little upset that she had brought him out wearing it. He looked down at his shorts which did nothing to conceal what he was wearing underneath. No one was supposed to know he had been wearing one. He swiveled around to see Adam who looked up at him before smiling.

“Pway?” the boy asked holding out a block to him. Paul merely shook his head before resting his chin in his hand. This was going to be a long couple of weeks before he could change back.

Chapter 7

Opportunity: Part 7 - Chapter 7

Paul awoke groggily. At first he didn't really know what was going on. He just felt cold. He tried to retreat back to sleep yet that became impossible when he felt something wet and cold touch his groin. His eyes shot open as he let out a yelp.

“Good morning,” his Dad said with a chuckle as he looked down at him. Paul's mind whirred into action as he realized two things. One he was completely naked on the changing table and his Dad was currently wiping him down.

“Stop that,” Paul demanded as he sat up.

“Thank you would be better,” his Dad said discarding the wet wipe into a trash can.

“I didn't need your help,” Paul said puffing up his cheeks a little.

“Okay then I guess you can get your clothes on yourself?” Dad said lifting Paul off the table and setting him on the ground before handing him a pile of clothes. “Your Mom got these out for you.”

Paul took the clothes letting the pile drop to the ground before picking up the underwear and getting them on quickly. His Mom usually helped him dress in the morning so it was a little weird for his Dad to be here.

“Where is Mommy?” Paul asked as he worked on getting

some blue sweatpants on.

“She got called in early for work,” Dad said. “Hospital is getting busy with the storm and I gotta get going too. Its all hands on deck at work with the storm.”

“But if you're both gone who is staying here with me?” Paul asked a bit panicked.

“Aunt Lisa of course,” Dad replied.

“But, but,” Paul stammered. This was not an ideal situation for Paul. Without his parents their would be no one there that knew he wasn't really a baby. “You can't leave me here with her.”

Paul's Dad laughed as he picked up Paul bouncing him up and down.

“Don't tell me you're nervous that Mommy and Daddy are leaving.” Paul gave his Dad a deep frown

which made his Dad stop bouncing him.

“She's gonna treat me like a baby,” Paul said almost as if he were pleading his Dad not to leave.

“She was going to do that anyway,” Dad said. “Remember that's a good thing. It means the plan is working.”

Paul felt his stomach twist into a tight knot. It was dawning on him that it was for real now. The previous couple of days had been the test runs. Even last night when his Aunt had arrived hadn't felt as serious with his parents still there. With

them gone though no one else would know that he wasn't a baby.

“Daddy do we hafta?” Paul asked his voice a low chirp. “Can't we just tell her?”

“No can do,” Dad replied. “You know what Cecily said. We can't go spreading this around.”

“But Aunt Lisa is family,” Paul tried to reason. Dad simply shook his head.

“Secrets are best when they're kept,” Dad chuckled. “Once you tell one person then its as good as out.”

Paul was brought down to the kitchen where two highchairs were set up and one was currently occupied by his cousin Adam. Dad placed Paul into his own highchair before setting the tray in place.

Paul wasn't surprised by this. He had of course eaten dinner yesterday in the highchair with everyone around. It had been somewhat stressful trying to act like a baby. His Mom had given him a print out to show him what someone his supposed age could do and Paul had been trying to remember all of it as to not slip up. His Mom had suggested in a moment when they were alone that he just do what Adam did to make things easier. Things did get a little easier once Paul had started to do that, but there were things that he just couldn't bring himself to do. Such as make a complete mess of his face while eating. The two of them had looked like polar opposites when finished with dinner. Adam had been a

complete mess while Paul had tried making sure to smudge a little food on his cheek and made an effort to get a little food on his own bib. Despite a quick wipe with a washcloth to clean his face, that hadn't stopped Aunt Lisa from suggesting that she would bathe all the kids in the bathtub afterwards together. Thankfully Mom had sidestepped saying the tub wasn't big enough and she would bathe Paul in their own bathroom. It had been a relief since that meant Paul had been able to take a shower and also get his diaper on for bed without the prying eyes of his Aunt.

The sleeping arrangements had been less than ideal though. Aunt Lisa hadn't been able to get set up all the way so Paul and Adam had shared the crib and Paul found his little cousin was a kicker. It had also made Paul feel just a bit angry that he had been put to bed with Adam all the while still able to hear his parents and Aunt and most annoyingly his other cousin Mckenzie who was only six, still up.

“Just in time,” Aunt Lisa said back in the present wasting no time in putting a bib on Paul. “Just got done making oatmeal for breakfast.”

“Sounds good, don't get too messy eating now you hear Willy,” Dad said lifting Paul's chin a little and giving him a wink. Dad then left out the door as a bowl was placed on the tray in front of Paul.

“So Willy want a little brown sugar on that?” Aunt Lisa asked. Paul nodded. As he sat looking at the bowl he looked at Adam who was already digging in. He studied the boy for

a moment watching how he didn't have much regard for keeping his face clean. He just held the spoon in his fist and moved the food to his mouth. If it didn't all get there it didn't seem to matter as he just went back for more. Paul took his own spoon into his hand. He remembered what his Mom had said about just doing what Adam did. Paul resolved himself. If he did what Adam did that seemed easy enough rather than keeping a bunch of developmental milestones straight in his head. He scooped a big spoonful onto his spoon and then quickly stuffed it into his own mouth. He could feel that some of it was now on the corners of his mouth. It was also a little hot as he chewed with his mouth open to let some the heat out just as Adam was doing. The other thing that surprised Paul was how sweet it tasted on his tongue. It was certainly a new taste. Is this why kids liked sweet stuff so much? He had forgotten. He didn't eat much sweets so he hadn't had any since the regression. He had noticed that his taste had changed but this was so totally different. He went in for another spoonful eager to taste more. Before long he had completely cleaned out his bowl.

“I see someone enjoyed breakfast,” Aunt Lisa said as she wiped Paul's messy face. He could do nothing but nod and hoped that she would offer him seconds. Yet no such offer was made. Instead Paul found himself and Adam whisked away to the living room and deposited into the playpen.

“McKenzie watch the boys while I clean up the kitchen,” Lisa said addressing her daughter who was sat on the couch watching tv in her pajamas.

“Okay Mommy,” the little girl responded with a smile. With that Aunt Lisa left. Paul sat in the playpen a little unsure what to do next. He looked at McKenzie for a moment catching her eye. He looked away quickly yet had caught her attention. The little girl was now at the side of the playpen looking down at him.

“Want to play with some toy's Willy?” she asked picking up a stuffed bear. “Look at the bear goochi goochi goo,” she said shaking the bear in front of Paul's face. He looked back at her smiling face with a unimpressed look. The one thing that hit him was how much bigger she was now and he wasn't talking about in regards to himself. He hadn't seen her since she had been in diapers.

“Don't you like the bear?” she asked as she let it drop, then a smile came to her face. “Maybe we should play the game Adam likes.” she said as her hands reached over.

Paul was too slow to move and a second later her fingers were moving along his rib cage. Paul let out a laugh as her hands moved up worming under his armpits. The ticklish feeling felt so intense that he could only let out squeals as his body twisted. McKenzie was relentless hearing his laughter which only seemed to egg her on as Paul fell onto his back. That's when she grabbed his foot tickling it which made Paul screech with more laughter. That's when Paul felt the wetness, he panicked even more noticing he was wetting himself. He didn't know what to do. He couldn't get enough breath between his squeals to get a word out and Mckenzie was not letting up.

“McKenzie,” Aunt Lisa's voice called out bringing a stop to the girls tickle onslaught. “Whats going on in there?”

“Nothing, just playing,” the girl replied innocently.

“C'mere you need to change out of those pajamas,” Aunt Lisa replied.

“Kaay,” McKenzie said running out of the room leaving Paul to think about what to do. For the first time he was actually glad for once to be wearing the training underwear as they had done their job of being absorbent and hiding the small accident from view. It wasn't his fault he had been tickled to the point of desperation. Though it was a little concerning how effective that had been. He couldn't remember ever being ticklish like that. He looked around. Adam didn't seem to pay any mind. Paul just nodded. He needed to change before anyone found out. He went to the side of the playpen and tried to get up and over. Yet just as with the crib he didn't possess the strength nor the height to pull himself up and over. Paul then looked around to see if he could find something to boost himself up. He didn't have time to devise a plan as he heard McKenzie running back into the living room with Lisa in tow. His Aunt came over to the playpen. Paul quickly covered himself with a blanket, paranoid that his accident would be discovered. She picked up Adam first before setting him on the ground outside of the playpen.

“You boys could use some time out of there, right?” she said as Paul saw her hands coming to him now. He tried to scurry away but his Aunt caught him by his torso lifting him up into

the air and plopping him on the ground. Paul panicked not having the blanket anymore. He looked up at his Aunt with a frazzled look. His Aunt had set him on the ground not having taken any notice. Paul took a breath relived that he had not been discovered. Now freed from the playpen his next objective was getting his clothes changed. As if by divine intervention it seemed Paul was going to be given his opportunity. For some reason that no one could figure out Adam had started to cry. Aunt Lisa was holding the bawling boy in her arms giving him soft shushing sounds and bouncing him gently all to no avail. She then decided it was time for the big guns and went to get his pacifier and stuffie that Paul had noticed the boy had carried around with him yesterday. Unfortunately for her both items were elsewhere.

“McKenzie watch Willy a moment while I go and get Adam's things from the room,” she called back.

“Kaaay,” McKenzie called back not giving much notice from her spot with her barbie dolls. Paul for his part could not believe his luck. He knew trying to leave the room with his Aunt watching would no doubt bring about questions that would lead to him being discovered but now seemed the perfect time to slip away and take care of his problem, heck he could probably be fast enough to get back before his Aunt. Paul walked into the hallway leading to the stairs when a woosh of air went past him and now McKenzie stood in front of him peering down at him with her hands on her hips.

“Where do you think you're going?” she asked leaning forward as is she were trying to force Paul into the ground

with her posture. Paul gave no response trying to walk past her yet the girl was nimble enough to block him. Paul was at a disadvantage no matter which side he tried McKenzie was quick enough to block that part of the hallway.

“McKenzie move it,” Paul suddenly shouted out of anger. He then froze realizing what he had said. That had been far too complicated of a sentence to say. Maybe the second half would not have been so bad yet he had said her name. Paul knew McKenzie's name was too complicated for him to say. Not even Adam who lived with her was able to say it. He looked at McKenzie who was still looking down at him.

“Wille, Mommy said I had to watch you so I have to make sure you don't get into any trouble,” McKenzie said. Much to Paul's relief it seemed the strangeness of his speech was not registering with the girl. She was far more focused on her moment of authority to really think of any peculiarities with her tiny charge. It dawned on Paul that he really didn't need to keep up the act around his little cousin. In fact this might actually work to his advantage. Kids like McKenzie were easy to manipulate. All he had to do was be a little forceful and McKenzie would probably back off. What was she possibly going to do when it became apparent that Paul wasn't going to just listen to her. Fold like wet paper that's what.

“I'm going to my room,” Paul said. “I'll be back in a minute.”

“Nuh uh,” McKenzie said. “We're going to stay in the living room.”

“I can go where I want,” Paul said rolling his eyes. He put a hand up as if to clear his way yet McKenzie just grabbed him by the wrist.

“C'mon Willie lets go, you can play with the cars,” McKenzie said. Paul tried to pull his wrist away yet the girl was too strong. He couldn't believe it. He could tell she wasn't even using all her strength yet this was enough to pull him along. Just how weak was he?

“Let me go right now,” Paul mewled. He had mustered enough strength to keep himself rooted in spot yet not enough to actually pull himself back. McKenzie looked back letting his wrist go with a frown.

“I'm in charge so you gotta do what I say,” McKenzie said with a pout look. “Now c'mon don't you wanna play with all the nice toys.”

“No,” Paul said curtly as he crossed his arms. He went back and forth with McKenzie for a moment before he realized he was just standing there arguing with a child. Paul shook his head feeling a little foolish. He turned and began to walk towards his room.

“No you don't,” McKenzie said. Paul felt her grab him. She pulled him onto the the ground with seeming ease so that now Paul was trapped up against her as she had her legs wrapped around him. How was she this strong?

“Lets go back to playing this game,” McKenzie said with glee. A moment later her fingers were once again going up

and down Paul's rib cage, worming their way under his armpits despite his best efforts to keep his arms tight against his sides. Yet the worst was when she got under his chin. Paul was helpless to stop his squealing. It was also becoming apparent that his little accident earlier had only been the opening act, he was on the verge of soaking himself.

“Ma- ma- zie, ahaahaha, STOP,” Paul squealed. Yet the tickling did not let up one bit. Time seemed to slow down for Paul has he felt his last bit of resistance give way. It honestly felt like he was having an out of body experience like he could actually see himself trapped and at the mercy of his six year old cousin while he helplessly wet his pants.

“Mckenzie,” came Aunt Lisa's voice which stopped the tortuous tickling. Paul opened his eyes to see his Aunt walking down the hallway. “What are you doing?”

“Just playing,” McKenzie said innocently. Aunt Lisa did not appear to completely buy it or rather could see that this game was more one sided, it wasn't like the little girl had actually meant to hurt Paul.

“I believe I heard Willy say stop,” Aunt Lisa said.

“He did? Did you want to stop?” McKenzie asked as she squished her face against Paul's.

“Yes he did,” Aunt Lisa said with a sigh as she went and got McKenzie to her feet which finally released Paul. “Remember you need to be careful with him. He is a baby just like your brother he can't clearly say what he wants so

you need to be an extra good listener."

"Willies good at talking though," McKenzie said. "He can even say my name, Adam can't do that yet."

"Can he?" Aunt Lisa with a rise in her voice that showed her interest had been piqued. Paul's body went rigid. He really had said too much.

"Willie do you know who that is?" Aunt Lisa asked as she was now bent down in front of him. A smile on her face as she pointed at Mckenzie who stood next to her. "Whose that? Whats her name?" she asked her voice soft as is she were prodding on a little puppy or rather encouraging a little baby which is exactly what she thought Paul was. Paul stared back. He did'nt know what to say. The only thought in his head was the words of his father that morning telling him that he could not blow the secret, that his Aunt had to believe he was a baby.

"Matenday," Paul then uttered. He hadn't even really thought it had just seemed to dribble out of his mouth.

"Thats pretty close," Lisa laughed as Paul felt some relief wash over himself.

"No," McKenzie said. "He said it the real way," she sounded as if she were offended to hear the babyish version of her name come from Paul's mouth.

"Now now McKenzie you might think that's what you heard but you weren't being a careful listener. You didn't even hear hims say stop and he said that as clear as day."

“But –“ the girl said before being cut off.

“Remember what I told you when you got upset at Adam for not saying your name correctly?” Aunt Lisa asked.

“Little mouths have trouble with big words,” McKenzie said sounding proud to have the supposed right answer on hand.

“That's right,” Lisa said. There was then a lull in the conversation as a moment of silence seemed to descend. In that silence was when Paul found that he was discovered.

“Oh no Willy, did you have a little leak?” Lisa asked before swooping him up. “Well Aunty will get you changed right away,” she said patting his butt. She stopped for a moment giving one more pat.

“You're not wearing a diaper?” she then questioned as she pulled the back of his pants out to take a look for herself. Paul was so mortified by everything that had just happened that he could not even form a response. “I am so sorry,” Lisa then said surprising Paul a little. “I didn't know and I didn't even give you a chance to go potty. No wonder you had an accident. Lets get you cleaned up.” she said smiling at Paul. He nodded a little still caught off guard by all this. He thought for sure she was going to question this more. “McKenzie watch your brother for a moment,” Lisa said carrying Paul off to his room.

Up in his room Aunt Lisa had wasted no time in getting his pants and underwear off leaving him standing in nothing but his shirt. Paul instinctively went to try and pull his shirt down

but thought better on it. A baby wouldn't do that, or would they? He didn't know, he instead just kept telling himself that his Aunt didn't know it was him. She certainly wouldn't be bringing this up in the future laughing about the time he had wet his pants and she had to change him at the ripe age of nineteen. A funny thought then occurred to Paul as strange as it was. This wasn't the first time his Aunt had to deal with wet pants with him. Although he had been much younger then, about four or five. Aunt Lisa had been his babysitter when he had been younger. She had been in high school then. The memory of her holding Paul's hand as they walked back to the house from the park as Paul was crying with a drenched pair of pants and her telling him everything would be okay was fresh in his mind as if it had happened yesterday instead of years ago.

“All right Willy step on in,” Aunt Lisa said holding out a pair of training undies decorated with Winnie the Pooh and buzzing bees dotting the fabric. Paul stepped in as his Aunt pulled them up. “Now you'll tell Aunty when you have to go. Don't want another accident in your big boy undies do we?” she said bopping his nose.

After that Paul was brought back downstairs. He spent the rest of the morning watching tv. It was the least infantile activity available to him. Unfortunately it was programming meant for kids. If it had just been cartoons that wouldn't have been so bad, yet it was meant for preschoolers and Paul could only find himself becoming incredibly bored with it in short order.

Lunchtime came soon enough and Paul found himself back in his highchair. His Aunt had prepared a plate of cheese and crackers with some grapes for the kids. Paul found this to be nice since there wasn't much opportunity to get himself messy with this offering.

Afterwards they were once again back in the living room. Paul couldn't stand it anymore deciding to wander off to his room. Which had been easier than that morning. He needed a break from the baby act. His nerves about being convincing had subsided and he found it easier than he had anticipated. The problem now was the brain rotting boredom of it all. He looked around his room and went up to his bookshelf. He took a comic book down from the shelf. It was funny, he hadn't read these since he had been in middle school abandoning them as a childish pastime. Yet as he sat on the ground flipping through one he was finding himself enthralled with it. Most likely because for once it was bereft of bright cheery colors and happy music. It was reminding him he wasn't really a baby and giving him a nice shot of pleasant nostalgia. He didn't even notice the footsteps coming up behind.

“No, no Willy,” his Aunt said pulling the book out of his hands. Paul looked up completely surprised to see his Aunt. A moment later he was hit with a feeling of anger.

“That mine,” he yelped getting to his feet. What right did she have to take it out of his hands?

“No its not,” his Aunt said calmly putting the comic back on

the shelf. “That belongs to Paul and I don't think he wants a little boy rifling through his things. Do you know Paul?” his Aunt then asked looking at him. Paul went to say something yet caught himself. He then nodded his head slowly. His Aunt smiled yet her face then morphed into a frown.

“Oh no,” she said kneeling down. “You've had another accident.” Paul's eyes went wide as he looked down confirming that she was telling the truth. He looked at the damp spot on the front of his pants. When had that happened? He hadn't even felt it. It still felt warm so it must have just happened.

“Looks like the carpet is okay,” his Aunt said before picking him and putting him on the changing table. “At least you chose a convenient time,” she said as she removed his pants. “Its nap time so I'll just change you into a diaper.”

“No,” Paul yelped as he sat up. “No diaper.”

“Ah ah ah,” His Aunt said gently pushing him back down and securing the safety strap against his chest. “Your Mommy aunty already told me that you wear diapers for nappy naps.”

Paul's mouth dropped open a little. His Mom had told her that? It was supposed to be a secret. As his legs were lifted into the air and he covered his face in embarrassment he couldn't help but be a little upset with his Mother. She wasn't supposed to be at work. She was supposed to be here so that situations like this wouldn't happen. As Aunt Lisa was taping him up. McKenzie walked into the room with Adam wearing a pair of footed sleepers.

“I got Adam ready for his nap like you asked,” McKenzie said proudly.

“Oh honey I just said get him undressed,” Aunt Lisa said with a sigh. “He might need a change first.”

“Nope I checked he's dry,” McKenzie replied.

“Well aren't you a good big sister,” Aunt Lisa said patting the girl on the head before lifting up Adam and setting him in the crib. She then went back to Paul and unstrapped him before putting him in the crib next to Adam. “Okay munchkins nap time,” Aunt Lisa said leaning down and giving both of them a kiss to the top of the head. Adam seemed to have this routine down pat as he laid down pushing a pacifier into his mouth and closing his eyes. Lisa turned off the lights and shut the door.

Paul didn't see much point in following Adam's lead. He wasn't even tired and whats more his Mom had promised that he would not have to take a nap. She had told him she would just take him to her room to hang out for a bit under the auspice that he could nap in there, but she wasn't here, so that arrangement was out of the question now. In fact Paul was starting to feel a little cheated. His parents had promised to respect him and not treat him like a baby if he played along when necessary. He had acted like a baby all morning, he had held up his end of the bargain. Enough was enough though. If he was going to get the short end of the stick then it was time to take matters into his own hands. First things things first he had to get out of the crib. Once he was out he figured he

could go back to reading that comic book until Aunt Lisa came back. When she found that he was more than capable of doing things on his own that should get her to back off a little. If they were going to treat him like a baby then damn it, they were going to treat him like the smartest, most capable, mature, baby ever.

Paul got to his feet grabbing onto the railing looking back down at Adam who was already asleep. Paul knew from last night the kid was a heavy sleeper. Once he was out he was dead to the world. Paul steeped onto a large stuffed animal to give himself a little height before lifted his leg high and with a little hop was able to get it over the edge. The sides of the crib were nowhere near as tall as the playpen. With a grunt and all his strength he pulled himself up before he was laying across the rail. He looked down feeling a little nervous about the drop. It was all in his head though, he knew that it wasn't as far as it seemed. It would be sort of ironic though if he ended up breaking his leg again. Paul took a breath and then went over the side landing onto the ground with a loud thump. Surprisingly though it didn't hurt. He was on his feet in a moment no worse for wear. He guessed there was some truth to saying that kids were bouncy. As he looked around he could hear footsteps approaching in the hall. He looked towards the door. There was no way. He hadn't been that loud. He then noticed the baby monitor sitting on the dresser. He rolled his eyes cursing his obliviousness to not have noticed it. The door then opened as Aunt Lisa's head poked in. When she saw him she closed her eyes and shook her head.

“Willy,” she said with a groan as she came into the room and plucked him off the ground. “Did you really just crawl out of there? That was dangerous you know.”

Paul shook his head he was determined to stand his ground.

“No cwib,” he said shaking his head. “I don't wanna nap,” he declared making sure that he kept his speech believable while still communicating what he wanted.

“No, no, its nap time and you need to stay in the crib,” Aunt Lisa said giving him a look. “Although I suppose if I put you back in there you'll just get right out again won't you?” she said moreso thinking out loud. With that she carried Paul out of the room and brought him to her room. Paul wasn't sure what was going on. She wasn't actually going to punish him...would she? No, there's no way she would do that. It would be crossing a line. Maybe Paul had gotten through to her a little. She was probably going to have him nap in here under her watchful eye. If she thought that compromise was going to work then she had another thing coming. Paul was surprised when she came back to the bed after digging through a suitcase for a moment.

“Adam went through a similar phase,” she said as she took off Paul's shirt. “Good thing I came prepared.” Paul struggled a little as his Aunt dressed him in a pair of footed sleepers just like Adam. She then picked him back up and brought him back to his room before setting him back down in the crib. She then produced a pacifier and slipped it into his mouth. “Just lay down and relax.” she said. Paul spit out the pacifier

and stood up grabbing onto the top railing with a defiant look. “Someones cranky, which means you need that nap.”

“No nap,” Paul shot back. His aunt put the pacifier back in his mouth before putting a finger to her lips. She then walked to the door.

“You'll tire yourself out eventually.” she said before closing the door. Paul once again spit the pacifier out this time making it land on the ground outside of the crib. He couldn't fathom why she had put him in pajamas as if that would somehow make him fall asleep. He gripped the railing of the crib ready to make another escape attempt. He was now engaged in a battle of wills. There was no problem with it either. As far as Paul was concerned babies did this stuff like this all the time. He could outlast his Aunt. He would do this for the duration of the afternoon if he had too. She would have to give up. As Paul went to raise his leg he found he couldn't. He looked down seeing a piece of fabric attached between the legs on the back at the knees. He reached down and pulled at it. He knew he didn't have the strength to rip it off. He stepped back. The strap didn't stop him from being able to walk but he could no longer lift his legs up to get out of the crib. He looked at Adam who was still sleeping peacefully and noticing his pajamas were the same as his. He now understood what his Aunt had meant when she said Adam had gone through a similar phase. The tyke had apparently been a crib hopper and his Mom had bought special pajamas that would train him to stay in the crib. Paul sat down demoralized. He had been defeated. He flopped

back onto his back kicking his feet up and down against the mattress. He was trapped. Hot tears of frustration came to his eyes. He held back actually crying though. He wouldn't allow it. He hated this feeling. The feeling of not being in control. His hand came up as his thumb went into his mouth. An act that was done with no thought, only pure instinct for comfort. He shut his eyes tight curling up into a ball. He couldn't do this, there was no way he could keep this up. He found himself wishing his Mom was there. He fantasized about her walking into the room and picking him up holding him in her arms and rubbing his back. That was how Paul fell asleep.

Chapter 8

Opportunity: Part 8 - Chapter 8

Be a Baby

Paul sat in the tent his Aunt had set up in the living for him and Adam to play in after she had gotten them up from their naps. Adam was currently crawling through the tubes with unbridled enthusiasm which Paul could not share. He shifted a little hearing the crinkle of the diaper still around his waist. He was none too pleased to still be wearing it. When his Aunt had taken off the pajamas he had tried to tell her he wanted his undies back yet his Aunt had shut that down saying he had already had two accidents that day and their wouldn't be a third before bringing the boys back to the living room in just diapers. At least he had woken up dry. He was definitely going to be bringing this up to his parents so that they could have words with his Aunt. He did wonder when they would be home. It was starting to get near dinner time, that and he did need a change.

He had tried to hold it but he could sense what a losing battle that was. He had decided that if he was going to use the diaper the least he could do was use it on his terms. He relaxed himself and let it happen, the relief was beyond words. He had looked down afterwards noting that the yellow line had turned blue. Yet Paul had opted to hunker down in the tent. He wasn't going to let his Aunt discover this and he was definitely not going to ask for a change.

Paul then heard the door to the garage open before he heard someone enter into the kitchen. He heard his Aunt say hello before he heard his Mom's voice. Paul scrambled through one of the tubes to get to her. He didn't have to go far as his Mom was already entering the living room as he got to his feet.

“Hey there sweetie,” she said warmly as she swooped Paul up into her arms. He didn't recoil from her embrace instead nuzzling into her. “Did you miss me?” she asked. Paul nodded his head against her. It felt great to be with her again. His Mom turned to talk to his Aunt. “How did everything go, he didn't cause too many problems I hope.”

“None that I wasn't prepared for,” his Aunt smiled. “It kind of reminded me of when I used to babysit Paul,” his Aunt chuckled as she mussed up Paul's hair.

“Oh I'm sure,” Mom said with a nervous chuckle. “What's with this?” she then asked changing the subject quickly as she patted Paul's behind noting the diaper.

“Oh that,” Aunt Lisa said waving her hand. “He had two accidents today and I didn't want a third, are you sure he is ready for the training undies?

“Uh well,” Mom said a little caught off guard as she shifted Paul to her hip. “It wasn't really my decision.”

“I just hope his mother isn't trying to rush him just so she can be done with changing diapers. He seems a little young for that.” Lisa said.

“I guess she is a little keen to have him grow up quick,” Mom

said with a chuckle.

“Someone ought to tell her you can't rush these things. Kids are ready when they're ready,” Aunt Lisa said giving a knowing look.

“I'll have a chat with her,” Mom said. The exchange was a little strange for Paul to witness. It was the first time he was seeing his Mom have to play out the lie that felt like he was the only one who had to maintain.

“Speaking of which,” Aunt Lisa said looking directly at Paul's diaper. “It looks like he needs a change why don't you give him to me.”

“That's alright,” Mom said moving Paul away slightly in a possessive manner. “I can do it.”

“You've been working all day, you should take a rest,” Aunt Lisa said.

“And you've been on child duty all the while,” Mom said with a nod. “Besides I've really missed Willy today. In fact I think I'm going to take him up to my room for a bit.”

Paul hugged his Mom to show his agreement with the plan. That and he didn't want Aunt Lisa to change his diaper again. Aunt Lisa conceded as McKenzie had decided to spill over her cup of crayons at that moment sending them all over the floor. Paul felt relief once his Mom had carried him to her room shutting the door. Finally he could drop the act.

“Mommy you have to do something,” Paul said as soon as the

door shut.

“I certainly do,” his Mom said setting him on the bed. “I've got to change you out of that wet diaper.” she said. Paul was about to start his tirade but fell silent as he saw his Mom start to grab changing supplies out of the shopping bag that contained all the diaper stuff that they had never moved into Paul's room and had let Aunt Lisa stock it with stuff for Adam.

“I don't need that,” Paul cried. “Just give me some underwear.” His Mom came over to the bed and sat down next to him.

“I've been thinking,” she began and Paul felt his tummy twist up. She proceeded to tell him that she thought it would be best if he just started wearing diapers all the time. She started explaining that perhaps the fact that he had not shown major improvements in staying dry just meant that his body was not ready for it.

“But I'm not a baby,” Paul said before crossing his arms. “Dr. Braun said this wouldn't happen that I wouldn't need diapers. That I would still be the same.”

“I know, but she also said that as things progressed that we might notice some quirks but nothing that would effect you long term inside of the waiting period. This is just one of those things probably. I've also noticed some other things,” his Mom said giving him a raised eyebrow as if he were caught in a lie that she had just cornered him on. “Like sucking your thumb or crawling around on all fours.”

“Y-you saw that,” Paul stuttered feeling his face go red. His Mom put an arm around him pulling him to her side. She told him it was okay and nothing to worry about. “I don't do it on purpose,” Paul said. “It just happens, but I can stop when I notice.”

His Mom gave an understanding nod. She went on in a consoling tone. Of course he was doing it when he wasn't paying attention. She hypothesized that it happened when he wasn't thinking about it because while he was still nineteen mentally his body was that of a baby. His body was giving itself what it needed. He sucked his thumb because that's how babies calmed themselves and it probably felt natural for him to crawl.

“You shouldn't fight it so much. The body wants what it wants.” Mom said. “Its just for a little bit and it will help you be more convincing. Although given the way Lisa was talking it looks like you did a good job keeping up appearances. Sounds like today was a success. It wasn't too bad was it?”

“It was awful,” Paul groaned.

“Okay,” Mom said patting him on the shoulder as she stood up before pushing him back onto the bed gently. “You can tell me all about it after a change.”

Paul laid still as his Mom un-taped his diaper letting it flop down with a certain heaviness.

“Ooo wee you really are a soggy little boy,” she laughed.

“Can we do this without commentary,” Paul grumbled.

“Alright grumpy,” Mom said. Paul sat thinking on all his Mom had just said as the process proceeded. He was not too pleased with the diaper thing the other stuff too made him feel a bit awkward. It was one thing to say it but another to put it into practice. Sucking his thumb without noticing or crawling around when he didn't notice was not really worrying him as his Mom's explanation seemed to make some sense. But could he actually will himself to do those things? He didn't have much time to think as he felt his Mom begin to wipe his groin. He felt embarrassed to be like this in front of his Mom. As she went in with the cream it only doubled. He just kept on telling himself that there was only a week and a half left and then he could change back and this would all be behind him. As his Mom went in with the cream covering his most intimate parts he wondered if he would ever live this down?

Paul's diaper was taped up as his Mom cleaned her hands before disposing of the diaper in the bathroom. When she came back into the room she had changed out of her scrubs and was wearing a baggy t-shirt and some sweatpants. She went to her bed and got under the covers before flipping on the tv and switching it to a low volume. Paul sat shivering a little. It was a tad bit chilly in just his diaper.

“You cold?” His Mom asked as she lifted up the blanket inviting him to crawl under.

“Mom we gotta talk,” Paul said as he crawled up to her.

“We can,” she said pulling him forward and putting the

blanket over him. She had him wrapped up next to her. “Okay tell me everything terrible your Aunt did to you.”

Paul sat up leaning forward a little coming up with the list of demeaning things that had been done to him. He had already mentioned the diaper thing so what was next?

“First she wouldn't let me read a comic book in my room,” Paul said. “She took it right out of my hand even though that's my stuff.”

“She doesn't know that,” his Mom said as her hand went to the back of Paul's head and she began to stroke her hand through his soft hair. Paul didn't pull away from her touch. It felt soothing.

“And then she made me take a nap,” Paul said as if it was a horribly offensive action taken against him.

“What a monster,” Mom said sarcastically.

“She trapped me.” Paul said with some bitterness. “She made me wear these pajamas that had a strap on them and I couldn't even lift my legs.”

“Why would she make you wear that?” Mom asked.

“Cause I got out of the crib,” Paul said feeling a little embarrassed to admit it.

“That was something you shouldn't have done,” his Mom said although not in a chastising way. “We talked about that.” Paul only gave a grunt. “So what else?” Paul turned to look at his Mom with an incredulous look but he stopped before

speaking a word. Her eyes were closed. He could see she was exhausted. The hospital was probably a mad house. Seeing his Mom so tired made him feel guilty. She had just had a stressful day and here he was complaining about having to take a nap.

“Nothing else I guess,” he said quietly as he laid at his Mom's side.

“I see,” she said airly. “Sounds like a rough day. I'll talk to her and see what we can do.”

“You don't have to,” Paul said. “Its fine, I can handle it.”

His Mom's arm was still draped across his shoulder. He brought his hands up to his Mom's and began to play with it rubbing her hand like he was massaging it.

“That feels nice,” his Mom said. Paul re-situated himself so that his head was on her chest and he held her hand in front of himself continuing to massage it. A foggy memory came to him. He could remember laying like this when he had been little. Back then he had played with her hand just like he was doing now. He was happy to do it if it helped her relax. After awhile he looked up at his Mom. She seemed to be asleep. He took the remote and turned off the tv before getting out of the bed and sneaking out of the room.

He came to the stairs. They looked big. He hadn't had a problem going down them before yet now he was struck with a feeling that made him nervous. He remembered watching Adam go down the stairs, scooting down each step on his

butt. Paul figured he could try it out. As he went down he actually found it kind of fun. He thought that he might even go back up just to do it again. As he reached the bottom stair the front door opened and his Dad stepped though. He looked at Paul for a moment before smiling.

“Hey there tiger, everything going okay?” his Dad asked.

“Yeah just fine,” Paul said standing up.

“Is your Mom home yet?”

“Yeah she's...” Paul paused as he saw his Dad bring a finger up to his lips and motioning with his head toward the hallway where Paul could see his Aunt in the kitchen but coming towards them. “Mommy sleepy, taking nap,” Paul said careful not to let his Aunt hear him talking in complete sentences.

“I bet,” Dad said casting a glance up towards his bedroom door. Aunt Lisa then came walking in.

“Just in time,” she smiled. “The table is set and dinner is hot and ready, hope you like chicken and rice.”

“Sounds good,” Dad said rubbing his stomach. “I am starved.” Aunt Lisa smiled but was called away as McKenzie called out for juice.

“We better get in there,” Dad then said. Paul walked up to him and lifted his arms into the air the universal sign that all babies employed when they wanted uppies. “What's this?” Dad then asked smirking a little.

“You should carry me and put me in the highchair,” Paul said

keeping his voice low. “You know to keep up appearances.” His Dad gave him a look as if to say it was a good idea. He lifted Paul up and put him on his hip.

“Whats with this?” his Dad then asked pulling up a little on the waistband of Paul's diaper.

“Aunt Lisa made me wear it,” Paul said looking away from his Dad.

“I see,” his Dad responded. “You want to change into some underwear first?”

“No,” Paul said shaking his head. “Its fine, not a big deal.” His Dad merely nodded as he walked to the kitchen getting Paul into his highchair. It was decided that bibs were unnecessary since neither boy was wearing clothes. Paul began to eat the chicken and rice in the bowl in front of himself. Aunt Lisa had inquired about Mom but Dad said it was probably best to let her sleep, it was then that Paul learned his Mom was going to be on call for the next three days. That meant she wouldn't be around.

Dinner passed without much incident except for Aunt Lisa chiding Mckenzie for picking out the broccoli.

“Look at Willy he's eating all of it,” she remarked.

“He has a good appetite,” Dad commented giving Paul a wink. Paul looked down just concentrating on eating. He looked up a moment later looking at his Dad. It was clear he was also tired. Paul wasn't super clear on what his Dad did at the office all day but he knew his Dad was doing search and

rescue operations right now thanks to the storm. Paul once again felt guilty. Things had really turned into a perfect storm. His parents were being called in to work all night and day, adding onto the pile was now having to host family, and then there was Paul. It really wouldn't have been bad if he had just healed normally, but instead he hadn't wanted to wait. He felt a little selfish. His parents had supported him through a lot even this bizarre situation they now found themselves in thanks to him. Paul knew he had to pull his weight to not put anymore strain on them. After dinner Dad came over with a cloth and wiped Paul's face.

“You sure got messy,” his Dad chuckled before moving onto Adam.

“You know its really not too bad out tonight,” Aunt Lisa said standing at the door to the back patio as she looked out the window.

“It is unseasonably warm for this time of year,” Paul's Dad said as he lifted him out of his highchair putting Paul against his chest. Paul was a little taken back by how oddly safe he felt against his Dads broad chest.

“Maybe the kids should go outside for a bit,” Aunt Lisa then suggested. “I mean we've all been cooped up in the house since its been raining all day.”

“It might be a little muddy out there though,” Dad then said. Paul could tell his Dad was actually trying to get him out of having to go and play in the backyard.

“I don't really mind if they get a little dirty they were probably going to have baths anyways tonight right? Besides Adam and Willy can just wear their diapers out there, who cares if those get dirty.”

Paul balked a little at the idea of only wearing a diaper. That was until he realized that he was currently only wearing diaper with no pants and had been for most of the afternoon. It was old news at this point. He watched his Dad's expression for a moment. Paul knew the face he was making. It was his Dad's thinking face, his Dad was really trying to find some sort of excuse to get Paul out of this. Paul saw a faint trace of dirt on the side of his Dad's neck reminding him of what his Dad had been doing all day. Paul didn't want him making any more excuses for him.

“Pway,” Paul suddenly shouted. His Dad looked at him for a moment with a startled look. “Pway wif Adam,” Paul said pointing at his little cousin, hoping that his message was getting through to his Dad. That it was okay. Paul could put up with running around in the backyard, especially if it meant giving his Dad a break.

“See,” Aunt Lisa said. “Willie wants to play with his new best friend.”

Paul's Dads eyes narrowed a little as he looked at his son.

“Okay,” Paul's Dad conceded but give me a minute though gotta check on something with Willy here.”

Lisa nodded and took her kids out to the backyard leaving

Paul and his Dad alone. Paul was placed on the counter in front of his Dad.

“All right out with it,” Dad said looking down at Paul.

“Out with what?” Paul mumbled looking away.

“You've been acting strange. You seem like all of a sudden your totally okay with the baby treatment.”

“I'm supposed to be,” Paul letting his dangling feet swing a little. “That's the plan isn't it.”

“You're my son,” Dad said with a sigh. “Which means you inherited things from me I wish you hadn't and stubbornness is one of them. So don't think you can lie to me about this. If I was in your situation I wouldn't suddenly be okay with it, which means neither are you.”

Paul had to give his Dad credit. He knew him well enough, and now he could see right through him. Paul figured that his only option was coming clean.

“You and Mom have to work a lot now and because of my selfishness you have to deal with all this other stuff and I don't want you too. Its not right. This is my fault so you shouldn't have to go out of your way to deal with it.”

His Dad shook his head yet was smirking at the same time.

“Paul that's not how this works,” his Dad said taking a knee and putting a hand on Paul's shoulder.

“Me and your Mom are behind you one hundred percent. We

know how important playing in that tournament is."

"Yeah its important to me, so I should be the one to deal with my choice," Paul said.

"We knew what we were signing up for when we decided to become parents," Dad said continuing.

"Whats important to you is important to us and we will do whatever we need to get you what you want, understand?"

"Yeah I get it," Paul said looking at his Dad with a smile. "Thanks Dad."

"Get over here you," Dad said with a chuckle not able to hold himself back from picking Paul up and giving him a big hug. "Now that is settled I hate to break it to you that it is too late to back out of playtime in the backyard," Dad said. Paul nodded. He didn't mind being held by his Dad at the moment, in fact he was feeling a great deal better about everything.

That was how Paul found himself in his backyard in just a diaper. At first he really wasn't sure what he was supposed to do. Not too mention he was far too annoyed to even concentrate on keeping up his baby appearance. He really couldn't complain about the weather. His Aunt had been right. It was unseasonably warm for the season so he wasn't exactly uncomfortable outside. Even so why did he have to go without clothes? Mckenzie still had hers and whats more she got to put on a pair of boots while Paul was relegated to bare feet. He should at least get shoes too.

The grass was wet and cold under his feet. As he walked it

tickled a little and the more he kept walking the funnier it got because every time he stepped his feet sunk into the soft ground and it made a weird squelching sound. Something about that made Paul want to stomp around kicking up bits of mud. He spotted Adam crouched near the ground. Paul came up and saw what Adam was looking at. The little boy had come upon a mud patch and currently had a glob of mud clutched in his hand. Paul saw the boy's hand moving towards his mouth as if the boy meant to eat it. A second later Paul realized that Adam did in fact mean to eat the mud. His hand shot out stopping his cousin who for his part seemed to understand that Paul was not going to let him. Adam then gave Paul a strange smile before a moment later pushing the clod of mud against Paul's chest and spreading it all over.

Paul felt anger rise up in himself before a moment later it seemed to dissipate. Honestly the mud felt kind of good against his skin. Not wanting to be outdone Paul plunged his hand into the mud and brought up his own clod and returned the favor to Adam covering the other's boy chest. Soon enough both boys were laughing as they spread mud all over themselves. Paul's top half was caked in mud and Adam had most of one arm and half his face covered.

Paul got to his feet. His diaper was sagging at his waist having absorbed the water from the ground. He took a couple of steps only to slip and fall face first into the mud. Paul shakily pushed himself up onto all fours. He was unbothered by the mud that was now completely covering his front side. He actually thought it really felt good. He kind of understood

what the deal with mud baths was now. It felt so fun that he crawled forward deeper into the muddies part of the patch before laying down flat and wiggling his whole body as he sunk into the mud more. He then rolled around a little. The image of pigs playing in the mud crossed his mind and he began to oink a little. He was so engrossed in playing like a pig that he didn't even realize that thanks to his diaper being absolutely full and him rolling around that the diaper ripped at one of the tabs and during Paul's rolling it had come completely off.

Adam seeing what Paul was doing decided to join in as he got on top of Paul. Both of the boys laughed as they rolled around. Paul then sat up grabbing more mud as he spread it around his face.

Paul then paused a moment squishing the mud between his fingers. It really did feel good to squish and looking at it sort of reminded him of chocolate pudding. His hand began to move towards his mouth in slow motion. Something seemed to be calling to him to give it a taste.

“Oh no,” Aunt Lisa's voice came stopping Paul before he took a mouthful of mud. She had him by the wrist a second later and was shaking his arm causing him to release the clod of mud from his grasp.

“Looks like they found something fun,” Paul heard his Dad chuckle. Paul felt more than a little foolish knowing that his Dad was seeing him like this. After all he had never really acted like a baby to this level in front of his Dad before.

“Look at you Adam,” Lisa said as she held Adam up by his arm pits. Paul looked at Adam and for the first time realized how dirty they had both gotten. He saw that Adam's diaper was sagging at his hips. Paul looked down to see if his diaper was the same and that's when he realized it was gone. He looked over to see it laying open a little ways away.

“Absolutely filthy,” Aunt Lisa said with a resigned sigh.

“Not a big deal,” Dad said. “They didn't have clothes on in the first place. Might as well get rid of Adam's diaper at this point. Then he and Willy will match.”

“Guess there in no harm in letting them roll around in the mud for a bit,” Aunt Lisa said setting Adam in the mud which the boy gleefully began to roll around. “I heard its good for their immune systems.”

Paul went to his knees only to hide his shame in between his legs. He expected there to be a lot of laughter from his Dad and his Aunt, how could there not be? Yet to his surprise it was as if they didn't care. Dad and Lisa just went back to talking, taking an odd glance towards Paul and Adam to make sure they weren't doing anything too wild. The only one who made any sort of comment was Mckenzie, who was complaining how it wasn't fair that she couldn't do the same. Her Mom dismissed her by saying that she wasn't a baby.

Those words seemed to make something click in Paul's head. It was similar to what had happened at the store with his Dad. He once again realized that to the world around him he was a baby. No one would judge him for crossing social faux-paus

or expect really much of anything from him. Even being naked in a mud puddle outside was nothing more than something for an adult to coo at. There was something sort of liberating to that for Paul. All day he had been so preoccupied with going between trying to act like the perfect baby and then being sick of it that it never dawned on him that he really was thinking too much about it. If he wanted to act like a baby maybe the best way was to just do what came naturally.

Paul sat back so his butt was now fully in the mud puddle. Even if he knew it was not a big deal now, he decided not to let himself get too crazy again. He picked up a glob of mud and and began to pat it forming it into the shape of a ball. It was kind of fun. He then squished it between his hand. It elicited another laugh from himself. He looked over at his Dad who was watching him with some interest. Paul felt a little self conscious in the moment. His Dad then smiled and gave him a wink. Paul then had a strange thought. He didn't take his Dad's expression as some wink and nod that Paul was doing a good job being convincing. Instead all Paul thought was that Daddy thought it was funny too. Not long after Paul had forgotten all about trying to take it easy and he and Adam were back to acting like two pigs rolling in mud neither one of them giving any thought to the fact that they were caked in mud or that they were naked outside.

It was a surprise when Paul felt two hands grab him and begin to carry him through the air over to another part of the yard. He looked back to see that his Dad had him. Paul found

himself being carried with his Dad holding him out like he was well...covered head to toe in mud. His Dad set him on a spot on the porch and Lisa set Adam next to him.

“Alright boys here it comes,” Dad said. Paul wasn't sure what was happening. That was until he was hit by cold water from the hose. The shock of the cold water seemed to be enough to shake him out of whatever state of mind he had been in. The one that had seen him playing blissfully in the mud was gone and the old adult Paul was back, yet even he was not able to stop from shrieking from the onslaught of cold water. The water came to a stop as Paul stood frozen. The air outside was starting to feel more than a little chilly and he wrapped his arms around himself. A second later he felt a warm towel get wrapped around himself as his Dad lifted him up.

“Guess its time for a real bath now, hmm?” Aunt Lisa said as she held Adam close wrapped up in his own towel. “All three of you need a good scrubbing,” Aunt Lisa said addressing the kids as even Mckenzie had gotten mud all over her clothes. Paul, now back in his adult mindset found his face reddening at the thought of having to take a bath. The very idea of being naked in a tub with his cousins not too mention having his Aunt bathe him filled him with a mortifying feeling. Sure, he had just rolled around in the mud naked but the mud had actually covered him a little, not to mention he had spent most of the time on his stomach sliding through the mud.

“No baf,” Paul said more out of instinct. In his estimation though he was plenty clean after having gotten sprayed with the freezing water from the hose.

“Oh no you,” Aunt Lisa said with a smile. “You just gotta a rinse now we need to give you a good scrubbing.”

His Aunt's use of the word “scrubbing only brought up ideas of more humiliating scenarios in his mind.

“I'll take Willie here and give him a shower up in my room,” Dad said sensing Paul's apprehension. “That way you guys can have the tub to yourselves.”

“Its really no problem Nick,” Aunt Lisa said. “You should take it easy you've had a long day. The tub is more than big enough for all of them.”

“Tell ya what. How about I give the kids a bath.” Dad then suggested. Aunt Lisa gave a little frown.

“Oh c'mon now you've been taking care of them all day. I'd like to spend a little time with all my family too.” Lisa gave Dad a half smile before sighing.

“If you insist,” Lisa said conceding. “I'll grab some towels and bring the kids up.” Lisa said.

“Great,” Dad said. “Me and Willy will go ahead and get the tub ready. Paul was disappointed that he had not been able to get out of this. He too k some comfort that his Dad was going to be the one giving him a bath. For some reason it did make him feel a little better that it was not going to be his Aunt.

Getting into the bathroom his Dad set him down and began to fill the tub. Paul was still apprehensive about all of this holding his towel tightly around himself. He knew it was kind

of silly, it seemed everybody had already seen him naked plenty of times. Yet something about this situation was really making him feel exposed. He watched his Dad checking the temperature of the water running his hand under the faucet before plugging the drain. Paul wanted to complain and get his Dad to find some way out of this for him. Paul held back though, remembering he was trying to make things easier on his parents. Suddenly an idea occurred to him.

“Dad, do we have bubbles?” Paul asked. His Dad looked at him for a moment before smirking.

“We might,” Dad said getting up and looking under the cabinet of the sink. He emerged a moment later with a bottle in his hand. “Must belong to your Aunt,” Dad said as he poured the mixture into the water creating a frothy mixture in the tub. “The kids will love this, great idea buddy.” Dad said.

By the time Lisa came into the bathroom Paul was already in the tub having created a healthy amount of bubbles around himself, which helped making him not feel so exposed. Adam was set in the tub next to Paul. Lisa then helped Mckenzie with her clothes and finally everyone was set for a bath. Paul was glad it was his Dad instead of Aunt Lisa but it was still a little weird. Dad took to washing both Paul and Adam with a washcloth and told McKenzie to follow along with what he did on herself. Paul didn't put up much fuss as his Dad washed his arms, and his back. He did squirm a little when his Dad unceremoniously went beneath the water and scrubbed him underneath, leaving Paul a little red faced as his Dad moved on to focus on Adam. The rest of the bath wasn't

so bad. Paul kept Adam entertained by playing boats with him. While Dad played hairdresser with McKenzie as he styled different hairstyles out of bubbles on top of her head. Paul smiled a little seeing Mckenzie laughing as his Dad was giving her a big spiky bubble-doo. He remembered his Dad playing similar games with him in the tub when he had been younger.

Paul's attention wandered back to playing boats with Adam. He was so engrossed with pushing his boat around on the water that he didn't even realize he was making engine sounds with his mouth. At some point Mckenzie had asked Dad to give her the colorful cups that were sitting nearby on the counter which Dad handed to her. She gave one to Adam explaining that her Mom gave these to Adam so he could learn how to wash himself.

“Okay Adam, rinse off,” she instructed. Adam filled the cup and then poured the water on top of himself. “Want to try Willy?” McKenzie then asked offering Paul a red cup. Paul took the cup and did as Adam had done. It was kind of fun and he liked watching the bubbles fall off his body with the water. He then thought that he could do even more if he stood up. Paul got to his feet and then dumped the water on top of himself. He watched as the soap was washed away. Adam laughed.

“Pee,” Adam giggled as he pointed at Paul.

Paul was silent for a moment as he looked down at himself.

“Pee pee,” Paul then shouted as he began to laugh and wiggle

his hips finding the whole thing uproariously funny.

“Boy's enough,” Paul's Dad said, yet still smirking. “We have a lady here. Willie sit down while we are in the tub.” Paul did as he was told not feeling embarrassed at all about his outburst.

Soon enough Lisa came in with towels as the bath winded down. Dad took Paul out of the tub wrapping him up quickly into a towel. Paul didn't recognize the towel, it felt incredibly soft. As his Dad held him cocooned Paul could feel his eyes start to get a little heavy.

“So I was thinking of having Willy sleep with me and Connie in our bed tonight,” Dad said.

“That's not necessary,” Aunt Lisa said. “The boys haven't really seemed to mind sharing a crib.”

“I'm sure,” Dad said bouncing Paul up and down a little. “Still I'm going to hit the hay early anyways and I think Adam might like having the crib to himself for a night.”

“I won't stop you,” Aunt Lisa said as she was drying off Adam in her arms. “I'll get his pack and play set up tomorrow so Willie can have his crib back. I think they'll both appreciate some space.”

As Paul was carried out of the bathroom he was happy that his Dad had gotten him out of sharing another night with Adam. His Dad walked into Paul's room grabbing some clothes before taking Paul to his parents room. His Mom came out of the bathroom drying her own hair and dressed in

pajamas.

“Paul's going to bunk with us tonight.” his Dad said setting Paul on the bed.

“He's already had a shower?” Mom asked looking at Paul on the bed. Dad informed her that he had given all three kids a bath noting that Paul had put on a good show. His Dad went into the bathroom and Paul heard the shower start.

“Looks like we are all having an early bedtime tonight,” Mom said gathering up the diaper supplies before going to the bed. “You sleepy after your bath?” she asked.

“Nuh uh,” Paul mumbled as his Mom smirked seeing that he was struggling to keep his eyes open. She got him diapered quickly but not quick enough for Paul's liking as it meant his cozy towel cocoon had to be pulled away leaving him cold. He didn't resist letting his Mom get him dressed in a sleeper that was blue and white striped with a cute little bear face on his chest. The pajamas brought back the warm fuzzy feelings. Paul then found himself laying next to his Mom in the bed. The lights were out and there was only the soft glow of the television to light up the room. Paul was drifting in and out of sleep. At some point his thumb had made its way into his mouth. He would have fallen asleep right then and there if he hadn't felt his thumb removed from his mouth. He opened his eyes to see his Mom looking down at him.

“You want this instead?” she asked dangling a pacifier above him. His first instinct was to refuse yet he thought about the conversation he had with his Mom earlier that night. He

didn't want it, but his body did. He nodded and his Mom gave a smile as she slipped it between his lips. “All nice and cozy now,” his Mom whispered as he felt her kiss his cheek. By the time Paul's Dad got into bed Paul was asleep, just like a baby.

Chapter 9

Opportunity: Part 9 - Chapter 9

Little Time

Paul sat in his highchair eating his breakfast of cut up waffles quickly, even going so far as to abandon the little silverware and eating with his hands. He didn't really care if his hands got sticky. He needed to get done quickly or he would miss the beginning. He shoved the last piece of waffle into his mouth.

“Out, out, out,” Paul repeated as if to summon his Aunt who was washing up at the sink. She came over seeing he was done.

“Hang on you're all sticky,” she said using a wet washcloth to wipe Paul's face and hands before removing the tray and lifting him down and setting him on the ground. He took two step before trying to toddle off but was stopped as his Aunt put a hand to his chest and pulled the back of his diaper out.

“Hmmm not you,” she said before smiling at him. “Off you go then.”

Paul went toddling off before going to all fours and crawled to the living room since it was faster. He came into the living room to find Mckenzie on the couch. On the tv was the princess sparkle hour. He grimaced. That show was inane not too mention it was time for his show. He made his way to the couch where he spied the remote, he got to his legs to go and

reach for the remote before it was pulled away by Mckenzie.

“No no Willie,” she said. “No playing with the remote.”

“Give,” Paul said furrowing his brow. He didn't have time for this.

“We're watching princesses right now,” the girl said authoritatively. Paul scrunched up his face. Mckenzie really had some high opinion of herself. Paul had endured a lot of this behavior. Everything from little comments about how she was such a big girl because she didn't wear diapers or how she was in charge because she was older. Just yesterday she had taken a toy right out of Paul's hands while he had been playing with it. She had claimed it wasn't a toy for baby's but Paul knew it was only because she had wanted to play with it herself.

Paul had found a way to deal with that however. He had worked himself up into a tantrum screeching and crying even getting some tears to come to his eyes. It had been so convincing that it had gotten Aunt Lisa's attention and after a moment of some detective work by his Aunt his toy had been given back to him. Paul had been rather pleased with himself about that one. If Mckenzie was going to pull a similar stunt with the remote than now might be the time for a repeat performance.

Paul decided against it at the moment. In some ways it felt a little wrong to use his appearance to manipulate people. He looked like a baby but he still had his mind so surely he could reason with Mckenzie, she was only a little kid.

“Puppet Pals,” he said smiling a little and casting her some dough eyes. “Please?”

“Eugghh,” Mckenzie said scrunching up her face. “No way that show stinks, its princess time.”

Paul puckered his lips. Negotiations had broken down. It was time to go nuclear. As if flipping a switch he began screeching, which brought Aunt Lisa into the room with Adam on her hip.

“What is going on in here?” she asked. Paul hadn't been able to get any tears flowing but his face was red enough to be convincing and Aunt Lisa set Adam in the playpen before picking Paul up. She began to comfort him bouncing him up and down and cooing at him. “Whatsa matter little boy?”

“Puppet,” Paul whimpered giving his Aunt some big doughy eyes.

“Oh is that it,” she said before looking at Mckenzie. “Honey put on the puppet pals for the boys.”

“But Mommy I'm watching my show,” Mckenzie whined holding the remote to her chest. Aunt Lisa shook her head taking the remote.

“You've been watching tv all morning. Its someone elses turn.” Mckenzie went to protest but Aunt Lisa held a hand up. “I also remember that someone was supposed to pick up some toys they left in the hallway upstairs.”

Mckenzie frowned but her mother proceeded her to shoo.

With stomps the girl departed and Aunt Lisa changed the channel before setting Paul into the playpen with Adam.

“Enjoy boys,” she said before taking a seat on the couch. Paul plopped himself down becoming transfixed by the tv. He didn't feel all that guilty. The Puppet Pals was the only show he liked. It was filled with colorful puppets and humans and they did skits and songs. Sure it was a show for kids but it was funny and the songs were total ear worms. Paul had been putting up with this whole charade for awhile now. It was easier now, but the most surprising thing was how boring it could become. His days were made of routine. Meals and playtime came at the same times not too mention naps. Paul felt that whatever small comforts such as tv shows or toys that were interesting to him were all he had to alleviate such boredom. So if he had to pull some strings to make sure he got them he would do just that. It really wasn't so bad though.

The more time Paul spent as a baby the more natural it came to him. He didn't notice having to go to the bathroom so much. He didn't have to think before he spoke as using simple words or just babbling seemed to make some sort of sense to him now. He had gotten really good at communicating with Adam and was able to tell what the boy wanted when he would come and garble at him, they had their own language which only they understood. Playing with Adam wasn't nearly as boring as he found it a week ago, it was actually kind of fun. The best part though was that it was all working, not only could he tell that his leg was completely healed but his parents seemed happy when they saw that he

was keeping up the ruse so convincingly. He knew they were relieved and it took some worry off their plate.

The show came to end as the hypnotic trance that Paul had been sucked into dissipated. He didn't have much interest in the next show and so picked up some toys to entertain himself. He looked over at Adam and saw the boy looking longingly at the tent with the climbing tubes at the back of the living room. Paul could tell he wanted to play in it. Paul stood up and got his Aunt's attention with some babbles.

“What is it Willy? What do you want?” Paul continued to babble not really able to come up with the words he wanted as he pointed to the tent. “Oh you want to play in the tent?” his Aunt asked as she picked him up out of playpen setting him down. He waited for Adam to be released before they both crawled off together. He did find the tent rather fun, and crawling through the tubes with Adam never seemed to get old as the both of them laughed spending the rest of their morning going in and out.

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“Wille!” Paul's Dad shouted running into the hallway with a towel. “Get back here.”

Paul paid no mind to the command running wildly down the hall buck naked without a care in the world with a shrieking laugh. As his Dad went to make chase that's when Adam decided to join in coming out from behind his Uncle with a laugh causing Dad to twirl around yet not fast enough to grab the other naked runner. Aunt Lisa came out of the bathroom

and went for Adam snatching him up in a towel. Paul was now at the end of the hall a cheeky smile on his face as his Dad approached.

“Where you going to go now?” his Dad asked. Paul didn't falter as he looked around. He wasn't going to let his Dad win. He looked at the space between the man's legs. If he ran and then dropped at the last second he would be able to go right through them. Paul smirked. Lets see what the old man thought of this one. Just then he felt himself be lifted into he air as he yelped.

“Gotcha,” Mom said cradling him in her arms as she tickled him.

“Here,” Dad said dropping the towel on top of Paul. “Didn't even finish drying his hair before he made a break for it.” Paul let out a moan as his Mom wrapped him up. He was sad that his little game was over. He hadn't been running from anything the idea had just popped into his head and he had acted.

“He's got some strong legs,” Aunt Lisa said from down the hall laughing to herself.

“A nice pair of strong healthy legs,” Mom said smiling down at Paul. Her words were not lost on Paul. It was official he was fully healed. “Now lets get you in some nice warm jammies hmmm?” Mom cooed as she walked down the hall towards Paul's room.

She laid him on his changing table and brought out one of his

footed sleepers with sleeping bears on crescent moons all over it. She then got out one of the thick nightime diapers. Paul had gotten used to diaper changes and he laid down letting his Mom do what she had too. As she taped up the diaper she looked down at him. She smiled. She was really going to miss having her little baby around, but it would be nice to have Paul back to normal. Paul smiled back unable to not give her a smile back. He was very happy at the moment especially since she had given him good news that day. It being that she was off for the next couple of days so she would be home. It was going to be good to have her around. These days it felt like he never saw his parents. His Mom stayed at the hospital while she was on call and his Dad was gone before he woke up and usually didn't come home until after Paul had been put into his crib for the night. He was starting to miss them a great deal during the day. The storm was over now though and his parents had both come home early.

Dad came into the room shutting the door behind him.

“I need to talk to you about Paul,” he said in a low voice. “I'm worried.”

“About what?” Mom asked. “Don't tell me you're feeling a little shown up by him getting away from you.” she said laughing as she looked down at Paul. “That was a really good performance,” she said tickling him a little. “Very convincing.”

“Was it an act?” Dad then said his face muddled as if he

wasn't convinced. Mom gave him a questioning look. Of course it was an act, what else would it have been? “Have you talked to Cecilly lately?”

“No,” Mom said shaking her head as she began to get Paul's pajamas on him. “I texted her thinking about setting up the appointment to get Paul changed back but she hasn't responded and I haven't seen her around the hospital either, but you know everyone has been really busy.” Mom explained as she zipped up Paul.

“Do you even know what day it is?” his Dad then asked as he held up his phone to show Mom. Paul sat up watching his Mom. He saw her face get worried as she brought a hand up to her mouth.

“Oh god I must have lost track of time,” she uttered. “How could I do that?”

“Don't blame yourself I just realized it a couple of minutes ago myself.” Dad said. Paul sat up looking at his parents. What were they so concerned about, it had something to do with the date. Paul looked around the room before he saw the clock that also displayed the date. As he looked at it to try and figure out what was happening he realized something – he couldn't make heads or tails of it. Everything just looked like a jumble of lines. He then looked back at both of his parents who were now staring at him.

“Mommy,” he began as he wanted to ask what was going on. But as hard as he tried he could only get out some garbled nonsense.

“You don't need to do that,” Dad said. “Aunt Lisa is downstairs she won't hear.” Paul tried speaking again. He knew what he wanted to say it was all perfect in his head. Yet when he went to speak it only came out it broken words or complete nonsense.

“Paul, can you not speak normally?” his Mom asked looking a little scared. Paul didn't know how to respond. “Oh no what do we do?” Mom asked looking panicked. “What if we're too late?” His Mom quickly picked him up bouncing him in her arms out of instinct as Paul fruitlessly continued to try and talk.

“Hang on a moment,” Dad said taking charge. He looked at Paul. “Do you know who I am?”

“Daddy,” Paul said the word coming out of his mouth without a thought.

“And who are you?” Dad then asked.

“Paw,” Paul said finding the L sound hard to say.

“That doesn't prove anything,” Mom said shaking her head sounding on the verge of tears. “Any toddler could do that.”

Paul was feeling frustrated. He tried to speak again, his attempts being in vain as his parents worry increased. He had to do something. He had to prove to them that he was still thinking clearly, that he wasn't some baby. He began to wriggle trying to get out of his Mom's grasp.

“Mommy down,” Paul said succeeding in stringing two words

together. His Mom set him on his feet. Paul looked around for a moment before toddling over to a bin filled with toys. He dug through before pulling out a small soccer ball. He held it up. “Me Paw, I wuv socca,” he said. Both his parents looked at with relief washing over their faces.

“I guess that settles it,” his Dad said. “He's still Paul.”

“Wuh,” Paul then said pointing at the phone in his Dad's hand wanting to know what the hell was going on.”

“We are so sorry,” Mom said kneeling down. “It seems that we are three days past the day that you would have been able to turn back and we didn't realize.”

Paul felt like a freight train had hit him. How could he have forgotten? The idea of changing back to normal hadn't crossed his mind. The days had seemed to meld together. He couldn't really blame his parents, he had forgotten too.

“Me want big,” Paul yelped patting the sides of his stomach as if to put emphasis on it.

“That's right,” Dad said going next to Paul and putting a hand on his shoulder. “You are going to be big again. We're alright, you're still in there ain't ya Paul?” Paul gave three big nods. “Cecilly said he didn't need to change back right on the date.”

“She also said we shouldn't wait too long,” Mom said taking out her phone. “I'm going to call her right away, but what if she doesn't pick up?”

“Leave a message then, if she doesn't respond by the morning

then we'll go find her ourselves tomorrow," Dad suggested. Mom nodded, they would do whatever they had too.

"She is so scatterbrained," Mom grumbled. "Honestly she would have never made it through college without me."

There was then a knock on the door as Aunt Lisa came in holding a bottle.

"Here, for Willy," she said extending the bottle towards Mom who looked at it with a bit of confusion. She had never given him such a thing, even at his small age he would still be considered a little old for it.

"A bottle?" Mom asked.

"Oh I know, he's too big. But I still give Adam one with warm milk right before bed. I offered one to to Willy one night as well and he took right to it. He seems to like it when I hold him and rock him while he drinks it, sends him right to sleep."

"I see," Mom said giving a look to Paul as she took the bottle. "Sounds nice, thanks." Aunt Lisa then left the room. "So you like some warm milk eh?" Mom asked smirking at Paul whose face went a little red.

It was true he had been getting a bottle of milk every night that week. He had only taken it because Aunt Lisa had offered it to him and he thought he was supposed to drink it. How was he supposed to know that he was considered to old to drink from a bottle – it had never come up in his research in how he was supposed to act.

His Dad then left saying he was going to go and talk to Lisa, apparently the evacuation order was going to be lifted soon so he wanted to get a plan together at getting her moved back to her place. As Dad left, Paul's Mom smiled at him with the bottle still in her hand. She went and picked him up off the ground.

“You want me to rock you while you drink this like your Aunt does?” she asked. Paul wanted to refuse now that he knew he didn't actually need to drink it. Plus he was alone with his Mom so he didn't need to keep up an act.

“No,” Paul said. “Gwow up,” he said. How could she even talk about bottles at a moment like this?

“I know sweetheart you're worried.” His Mom said turning off the lights before going to the rocking chair and sitting with him in her lap. “You heard me and your father. We're going to get this all fixed up tomorrow and your Dad's right too. Cecilly said it wasn't absolutely necessary to change you back right away. So do you think you could go through one more day?”

Paul let out a huff but nodded his head. One more day didn't sound like the end of the world.

“So you gonna drink this or not?” his Mom asked shaking the bottle. Paul was about to refuse again but as he looked at the bottle he found himself wanting it. He had gotten used to having one right before bed after all. “Its not a bad thing if it helps you get to sleep,” his Mom added as if she were trying to convince him.

“Otay,” Paul said quietly as he nodded his head shyly. His Mom gave him a small smile as she cradle him in her arms. His Mom found herself happy that he was accepting. Part of her was hoping he would. It had been ages since she had given him a bottle, it would be a nice moment. She lowered the bottle down towards Paul's lips. As soon as the nipple brushed against them she was surprised to see how quickly he latched on. As she began to rock she began to hum a little tune to herself. Paul was hit by a weird feeling. The milk tasted nice and as he swallowed it he felt his body get warm. That was normal enough. Yet it was different with his Mom instead of his Aunt.

Their was an overwhelming feeling of calm and closeness he felt that he didn't get with his Aunt. His eyes drifted shut as he continued to drink. All his worries about the date and changing back faded away. Mommy and Daddy would make sure that everything was okay.

Chapter 10

Opportunity: Final Part - Chapter 10

Connie and Nick walked into the hospital. They had left Paul back home with Lisa. He had seemed okay staying and he had seemed more interested in watching the Puppet Pals than coming along. Both of them seemed to chalk it up to him not wanting to cause any hardship for them. The car ride over they had discussed what to tell Lisa when little Willy suddenly disappeared and Paul re-appeared. They had decided they couldn't wait until after she left.

Upon getting to the hospital Connie lead the way to where Cecily's office was. Walking in they found no sign of Cecilly. Connie looked around at some of the papers on the desk but only found some mail that had been piling up.

“It doesn't look like she been here for awhile,” Nick said running his finger through some light dust that had collected on the desk.

“Someone has to have seen her lately,” Connie reasoned. “Its not as if she just up and quit, I would have known.” Connie walked out to a nurse's station where she found the head nurse at the desk.

“Hey Mel have you seen Dr. Braun lately?” Connie asked. Mel looked up from her computer looking towards Cecily's office.

“No, I haven't seen her for awhile,” Mel said shaking her

head. “Aren't you off today?”

“I am,” Connie said. “But I need to talk to Cecily and she isn't answering my calls.”

“All I know is that she said she was going to be working off site for awhile, that was before the storm though. She just said if she got messages to leave them on her desk and she would get to it when she got back.”

Connie took in some air before blowing out with annoyance.

“Sorry I couldn't be more help,” Mel said. “I'm sure she'll turn up eventually, you know how she is.” Connie could only nod. She looked at the board behind the nurses station seeing that assignments hadn't seemed to slow down yet.

“Still busy,” Connie said absentmindedly, grateful that she had a few days off from the madhouse.

“They are coming out of the woodwork,” Mel laughed. “I think we are going to be swamped for awhile. Just last night after you left three babies showed up. No family or nothing. Cute little things too.” Connie drummed her fingers a little not sure what was so interesting about some abandoned children. It was sad yet not uncommon. “Weird thing is they were found completely naked in some office building. They were brought in by a security team. Said they found them them in a room with clothes strewn all about they were apparently trapped in between a shelf that had fallen. Everybody is pretty mystified in how they got there.” Mel said as he continued to type.

Connie stopped drumming her fingers. Now that was weird, and for some reason she found herself looking at Nick who was staring back with a raised eyebrow.

“Where are they now?” Connie then asked.

“Down in the nursery of course,” Mel said. “Don't worry though they are perfectly fine but very fussy.”

Connie didn't wait for another word as she went walking off quickly.

“You don't think?” Nick asked catching up to his wife.

“No way,” Connie said as she continued to walk. “Its impossible but I just want to see.”

Connie walked into the nursery scanning her card to open the door she held it open for Nick.

“I'll just wait,” Nick said putting a hand up.

“Just hurry up,” Connie said waving him forward. “Just act like you belong and no one will even notice.”

Nick walked though putting his hands into his pockets trying his best to look un-assuming.

Connie looked around the room before she found some bassinets labeled with the last name doe. Three of them together two boys and a girl it seemed from the blue and pink colored hats on the babies heads. The two boys were asleep but the girl was on her back staring up at the ceiling. Newborns from the look of it, which made it all the more

suspicious after hearing how they had been found. Yet Connie still kept up her doubts. Its not like she wanted the idea in her head to be true. As Connie peered down at the little newborn girl she moved her face closer. The baby seemed to notice as she began to wildly swing her arms and babble.

“Oh my you are a fussy one,” Connie chuckled. “Want to sit up,” Connie said as she helped the girl sit up since at her age she would be unable to do so herself.. The baby kept her grip around Connie's wrist as she continued to babble as if she were trying to say something. Connie paused a moment before she knelt closer.

“Cecily?” she whispered The baby became more animated as her shrieks only intensified. Connie picked the baby up into her arms. “Cecily?” Connie then asked again not believing it herself. The baby nodded. Connie then looked at Nick who was shaking his head.

“There is no way,” Nick said. The baby had stopped babbling and was now looking around the room before she pointed at a small basket where they kept some toys. Connie walked over setting the baby down on the ground in front of the basket while she supported her from the back. The baby began to dig and began to pull out blocks. It looked like it took the small infant quite a bit of effort to even pull out the blocks, yet she seemed to be on a mission and seemed to show some sign that she understood what she was doing which would be strange for an infant of her age. The baby set down the blocks on the ground and had them arranged so they spelled out a

name C-E-C-I-L-Y. Connie and Nick stared at the blocks both of their mouths hanging open.

“That's not possible,” Nick finally said.

“You going to say that a baby could do this?” Connie then asked before she looked down at the baby. “Cecily what happened why are you like this?”

Cecily frowned and began to cry a little.

“Its okay its okay,” Connie said rubbing the infants back. Of course Cecilly couldn't speak, her mouth did not possess the strength nor dexterity to form actual words. What was clear is that her mind was still intact.

“What should we do?” Connie asked looking at Nick. Cecily then began to grab more blocks as she began to arrange them. After a minute it was clearly spelled out.

Dr. Weltz

H129B

“You want us to find Dr. Weltz and tell him this?” Connie asked pointing at each word that the blocks spelled out. Cecily nodded.

“Excuse me sir,” a nurse said surprising Nick from behind. “You're really not supposed to be in here.”

“Oh um well you see,” Nick stammered caught off guard.

“He's with me,” Connie said standing up with Cecilly in her arms.

“Oh Connie,” the other nurse said. “Didn't know you were working today.”

“I'm not, just had to grab something,” Connie said. “Mel asked me for a favor to check in on this little patient here,” Connie said placing Cecilly back in the bassinet.

“And how is our mystery patient,” the other nurse asked as she gave Cecilly a little tickle under the chin which was meant by utter silence from Cecily.

“Oh very lively,” Connie said chuckling a little.

“Really,” the other nurse said. “That's strange she's been very quiet for me. Those two boys have been crying all morning but this one has been silent.”

Connie gave a nervous look at Cecilly feeling like she had been caught in some lie.

“I guess she likes you,” the other nurse smiled.

“Guess so,” Connie laughed. The other nurse went to her desk as Connie leaned down towards Cecilly and whispered so the other nurse wouldn't overhear her telling Cecilly not too worry and that they would be back soon with help.

Connie walked out of the nursery with Nick following.

“So where is this Dr. Weltz?” Nick asked.

“No idea, I've never heard of him before.” Connie said. Soon enough they were back at the nurse's station as Connie typed away looking for a Dr. Weltz.

“So is this guy around?” Nick asked.

“He has admitting privileges but he doesn't work here,” Connie said writing something down on a sticky note. “But I got an address so I guess that's where we go now.”

The drive over was tense. Connie thoughts were on not only Cecilly but Paul as well. Both of them were in serious trouble and she could only hope that this Dr. Weltz whoever he was would have a solution. Getting to the address Connie and Nick found themselves in a parking lot for a nondescript office building. There was no signage except for the numbers on the side of the building showing that this was where they needed to be. Walking in they were met with a quiet building that lead off down some hallways and a lone woman sitting at a desk at the front.

“We're here to speak to Dr. Weltz are they around?” she asked the woman who seemed a little surprised to see people in front of her desk.

“Do you have an appointment?” the woman asked. Both of them shook their heads. “I'm sorry then but unless you have an appointment the doctor cannot see you.” the woman said with a sigh.

“This is important,” Nick then said.

“Sir I apologize,” the woman said. “I am under strict orders though, he is very busy today.”

“He is not busy enough for us,” Connie said. “We'll find him.” Connie moved around the desk but the woman blocked

her way.

“You can't just walk in here, that's not allowed. I must ask you to leave or I will call security.”

“ Get Dr. Weltz down here then,” Connie said showing she was not backing down. “Don't think you can stop me.”

“Is there a problem here?” A voice called as the group turned to see a tall man with graying hair in a white doctors coat walking out from the elevator.

“Doctor Weltz,” the woman said sounding grateful that he was there. “These people were asking to see you but they don't have an appointment or any sort of clearance. I'm not sure what they want or why they are even here, but I already told them you are busy.”

“I see,” Dr. Weltz said looking a bit surprised. “How did you find this place?”

“We are friends of Dr. Braun,” Connie said.

“You know Dr. Braun?” Dr. Weltz said raising an eyebrow. “I don't know why she would have told you about this place, but Dr. Braun is not available at the moment.”

“We spoke to her at the hospital,” Nick said. “Just a little bit ago.”

“We know,” Connie then said. Dr. Weltz nodded his head slowly.

“Mary, I'll take it from here,” Dr. Weltz said to the woman

before motioning Connie and Nick to follow him. It was a short elevator ride up as Connie recounted their encounter with Cecilly at the hospital and how they had come to learn about him. Dr. Weltz listened with some interest.

They walked into an office as Dr. Weltz took a seat behind a desk and invited Connie and Nick to sit as well.

“I don't know why she told you to come find me,” Dr. Weltz said.

“To help her,” Connie said a little dumbstruck.

“What happened, why is she a baby?” Nick said crossing his arms.

“There was an accident,” Dr. Weltz said. “Dr. Braun was working with her assistants late one night preparing an antidote. We aren't really sure how it happened but the shelf where we kept samples fell over, it must not have been secured. Dr. Braun and her assistants were covered in the serum. Being that they got hit with such a large dose the regression probably happened quickly and they got trapped under the shelf until they were found a couple of days later by a security team.” Dr. Weltz explained.

“Oh my gosh Cecilly,” Connie gasped.

“They are lucky.” Dr. Weltz nodded. “ The shelf could have crushed them, honestly it feels like an act of fate that it did not fall directly on top of them and instead trapped them in-between the shelves, almost like a little playpen,” the Doctor said chuckling although he stifled his laughter upon seeing

that Connie and Nick did not seem to find it very funny. “All I mean to say is that they are very lucky indeed. Very few people know of what we are doing here. The security team found them by complete accident. Its a blessing that they were not hurt and didn't starve to death upon being trapped.”

“Then why take them to the hospital?” Nick asked. Connie nodded. If they were aware of who the babies were then why take them to the hospital especially if they were un-injured. It only brought attention to this supposedly secret research.

“Like I said,” Dr. Weltz responded. “The security team brought them in. They have no idea about what we are doing here. If I had known I would have kept them here. As you can see this has turned into a huge mess. I'm here trying to play catch up. Right now I'm contacting family members. I have been on the phone all morning with Dr. Braun's assistant's families who have agreed to take them in. You showing up is actually helpful,” Dr. Weltz said with a grateful look. “Since you knew Dr. Braun I'm hoping you can point me towards a family member of hers that could take care of her, since she didn't have any listed.”

Connie and Nick looked at another before turning back to Dr. Weltz.

“Why are you calling their families, I know you have to wait three weeks or whatever but surely you're going to change them back?” Nick asked.

“We can't,” Dr. Weltz said. “In the fall our antidotes were also lost. We would have to start back at square one. Creating

cultures and incubation times would already put us beyond the three week window to make another. It would be useless."

Connie and Nick looked at one another for a moment.

"What about Paul?" Connie finally asked.

"Who?"

"Our son," Nick said with some urgency. "He had been treated with the serum too."

"H129B," Connie then said. Dr. Weltz looked confused. "Cecilly told us that at the hospital."

The doctor rose from his chair he walked over to a filing cabinet unlocking it with a key. He flipped through some files before pulling one out. His face remained like stone as he read. He looked up after a minute with a look that Connie knew all to well from working at the hospital. It was bad news.

"As you can tell, this is the first I'm hearing about this. Its seems only Dr. Braun and a few higher ups were aware of Paul. If I had known I would have contacted you sooner regarding your son."

Dr. Weltz sat back down in his chair rubbing the bridge of his nose. "He has already been under the serum for three weeks and as I said before we simply cannot produce an antidote fast enough to reverse it."

Connie and Nick sat in stunned silence. Both of them lost in thought about what this meant.

“There is nothing we can do,” Connie choked.

“Just one thing,” Nick said placing a hand on his wife's shoulder. “We'll just tell him the truth and make sure he knows we are going to be with him every step of the way as he grows back up.” Nick said with a sort of sad chuckle.

“We can help you arrange for that,” Dr. Weltz said. “I can get you into contact with our legal team. They can assist you with getting Paul's records amended. He will be able to at least have a normal life. I'm so sorry I can't offer to do more.”

“And what about Cecily?” Connie asked.

“ As I said before if you could maybe help us contact her family so they could take her in...” Dr. Weltz began.

“She doesn't have a family,” Connie interjected.

“Then I suppose once she has fully regressed we will put her into foster care,” Dr. Weltz said.

“You can't,” Connie yelped looking to her husband. “Nick we can't.” Connie knew well enough how hard things had been for Cecily in the system and she couldn't bear to see her best friend have to go through that again.

“Of course,” Nick said not even having to take a moment to consider. “She's our family. We'll adopt her.”

Dr. Weltz looked at the two of them as he pondered the offer before shrugging his shoulders.

“That can be arranged,” he said

After filling out some paperwork Connie and Nick made their way back to the hospital to tell Cecily about everything. The woman who was now a baby seemed to not react much upon hearing about it all. Connie seemed to understand that Cecilly probably understood the dire situation she was in. It touched Connie in a way to realize that Cecilly had pointed them towards Dr. Weltz and had told them about Paul's file not to get help for herself but to try and help Connie and Nick.

Connie then told Cecilly about the plans to adopt her. Cecilly at first stared back with wide eyes before she began to cry. Connie quickly swooped her up.

“I'm sorry,” Connie said. “We should have asked first.” Cecily made some babbles as Connie leaned her forward supporting her head so they could see one another. “We'll figure something else out I promise.”

Cecilly shook her head. She babbled looking as if she were trying to make her mouth move a certain way. Her brows were furrowed as if she were concentrating very hard on something.

“Ma-ma,” the words came out sounding somewhere in between a gurgle and a whisper. Connie looked back at her best friend.

“You're okay with it then?” Connie asked a little unsure if Cecilly had actually spoken or if she had just happened to babble two sounds that when put together had sounded like a word. Connie wanted to be sure. As Cecilly was now she was practically a newborn perhaps only months old. She couldn't

even support her own head or sit up without help, talking was also certainly out of the question.

Cecilly managed to nod her head which would have been a great undertaking for her. Connie felt overjoyed as she held the baby close. Cecilly nuzzled into Connie seemingly grateful that she had been understood.

“I promise we will take care of you, I love you too much not too.” Connie cooed.

After some time Connie set Cecilly back in the bassinet as she held one of her hands.

“Dr. Weltz says we cant take you home for a couple of weeks until they get everything taken care of. But I'll visit you every day I promise,”

Cecilly seemed to smile as her eyes fluttered. Connie stood rubbing her head until the girl fell asleep.

On the car ride back home Connie and Nick were nervous as they made some small talk about getting ready for a new baby. Cecilly was so little after all. They were going to have to baby proof the whole house not just for her but Paul as well. Not too mention that they were going to have to turn the guest room into another fully decked out nursery.

“There have been times I've felt like her mother, guess its for real now,” Connie said as if she were making a joke to cover the awkward and uncertain air. “What in the world are we going to tell Paul?”

“The truth,” Nick replied. “Its all we can do.” Connie nodded. There was no other option. Neither one of them knew how he was going to take it. “I was thinking,” Nick then said. “Maybe we should move?”

“Really?” Connie asked.

“We've been talking about it for awhile you know, changing things up, and at this point it might make things easier.”

“Yeah, I think you're right,” Connie said. A new place would help navigate what they would tell people. How else could one explain what happened to Paul? A fresh new start seemed to be the only solution for the new family.

Paul was excited when his parents came home. He ran up to them wanting to be picked up. Some part of him was saying that they had something good to tell him, although he couldn't remember exactly what it was about. His parents excused themselves saying they had something serious to talk to Paul about to his Aunt and they took him up to their room shutting the door. Paul seemed more interested in crawling on his Dad's back than listening as they sat on the bed. That was until his Dad picked him up and set him down in-between the two of them and told him he needed to listen. Paul was a little disappointed as playing with Daddy seemed more fun than listening, yet he listened anyways perhaps sensing that he really needed to hear what they had to say.

His parents proceeded to tell him everything. About Cecily's accident and what happened to her and how they were not going to be able to change him back. They did their best to

reassure him that they were going to do everything they could to ensure that this transition went smoothly.

“When we move,” his Dad said. “We'll find a good school district with a good soccer program. We know that's important to you, so we are going to do everything we can to make sure you get the opportunities you want.” his Dad said offering up maybe the only consolation he could given the situation.

“Paul, sweetie, you do understand what we're saying, right?” his Mom asked. Paul nodded. He understood all of it. He fell onto his back looking up a the ceiling as the reality of the situation began to set in. “Is there anything we can do?” his Mom then asked.

“Can I be alone for a bit?” Paul then asked his speech sounding clearer than it had in days. His parents gave a worried look to one another before nodding and told him to get them if he needed anything else before they left.

Paul's parents told Lisa that Willie's parents were not going to come back as soon as they had said so they would be looking after him a little longer and that Willie was feeling sad about it. The lie seemed to be a good one at the moment, eventually they would have to tell family the truth, but they decided to do it later when everything was settled.

Meanwhile up in the room Paul stared up at the ceiling. He was trying to figure this out, there had to be something he could do, yet no great idea was was popping into his head. Then he got angry. So angry in fact that he began to kick his

arms and legs against the bed. This was so messed up. How could Dr. Braun have gotten herself regressed while at the same time destroying the antidotes. How could all those smart scientist not have some sort of back up plan. How could his parents not have some way to fix this? How could he have been so stupid to try and take the easy way out from his problem? How could he have thought this was a good idea? He eventually exhausted himself. Maybe this wasn't so bad though?

He had listened to his Dad talk about them moving. That would certainly solve a lot of problems. Not too mention them talking about making sure they went somewhere with a good soccer program. That could certainly give him a good leg up. In fact this all might just be the best thing that ever happened to him. Maybe...Paul's thoughts then turned to his friends on the soccer team. He thought about the rest of the guys. It was kind of sad to think he would never play with them again. Not too mention he was definitely going to be missing the tournament. The thought of having to grow up again was looming large. What had this all been for?

Paul sat up. This really sucked. He got off the bed and made his way down the stairs going down on his butt yet taking no joy from it. He came upon the large full length mirror near the door. He remembered growing up he would always give himself a little once over before leaving just to make sure he looked put together. He looked at himself seeing his baby self looking back at him. His blue shirt with the stripy green sleeves with the pastel brontosaurus and the red sweatpants

that had some material from his diaper sticking up over his waistband and peeking out from the shirt really did paint the picture that he was nothing more than a baby. He was going to have to get used to this. He would, he knew that. It had already started happening. Sooner rather than later this would seem normal to him. He would no longer be a fake baby. He was going to be real one.

Paul walked into the kitchen. His Mom was sitting at the table staring with a far off look into her mug while his father was sat across from her with a laptop opened in front of him typing away.

“Hey Willie,” his Mom said noticing him. “You need something?” Paul stared back for a moment. He was still Willie, the fake baby. How long until he was just Paul, the baby.

Paul felt his face crumple and he began to sob as tears ran down his cheeks. His Mom was quick to pick him up. Holding him close to herself. For Paul that's what he wanted. His crying subsided as his Mom held him. It felt nice. All the thoughts about his problems seemed to subside. He was safe here.

For the next day that's all he wanted. Every time he was sat down he would just start crying again. It was not necessarily conscious on his part. When he wasn't being held a terrible feeling would overtake him. The only time he wasn't being held was the previous night and that was only when he was asleep in his parents bed with them. His parents never got

frustrated with him either. It didn't matter if it was his Mom or Dad holding him just as long as it was one of them. They switched off throughout the day. Each of them reassuring him that everything would be okay, it helped.

It was now the afternoon as Paul was sat cuddled up against his Mom outside on the patio. He was sucking on a pacifier which seemed to keep him calm. His Dad had started up the grill for one last time before it became too cold to grill out. Adam and McKenzie were in the yard playing. They had all just gotten done helping Lisa pack up and she would be leaving the next day to go home. Paul had his head up against his Mom's chest. He could hear her heartbeat which was steady and soothing to him. All of a sudden he felt something bop him against his head. It didn't hurt but it did cause him to turn a little. He saw in his Mom's lap was a tiny rubber soccer ball. He then saw Adam standing there being the one that had thrown it.

“Pway?” Adam said, pointing at the little ball.

“Adam not now,” Aunt Lisa said. “Willie doesn't feel very happy. You'll have to play by yourself.” She went to go pick up the ball but Paul got to it first. He looked at the ball squeezing it lightly in his hands. As he looked at the ball he found that he felt happy. The pacifier fell from his mouth as he slid off his Mom's lap to her utter surprise. Paul looked at his Mom as he stood with the ball in his hands. She stared back at him almost as if she were ready to swoop him back up if he started crying. That gave Paul some comfort. He then looked towards the yard. He set the ball down before he gave

it a big kick. Adam went running after it as Paul went after him. As Paul continued to play he felt a huge happy feeling in his chest. It felt good to kick the ball, it felt good to run or rather toddle. But Paul did not make that distinction. All he knew was that this was fun.

Connie and Lisa watched the boys as they continued to run after the ball.

“He's pretty good at that,” Lisa commented about Paul.

“He sure is,” Connie said with a smile on her face. “I think he is going to love soccer.” She said watching Paul as he gave the ball a big kick, a huge smile plastered across his face as he laughed.

4 months later

Connie sat on the couch of their new home as she cradled both Paul and Cecilly in each arm. They were both suckling at her breast. Both of them seemed content, which Connie considered a good thing. Thinking back if she had tried this a couple of months ago Paul probably would have flipped, but now this was just a part of life and something he needed. Both Paul and Cecilly had made their transitions to baby hood. Although once in awhile Connie saw them do something that one would not expect from a baby that only served as a reminder to Connie of the people they had once been.

One day Connie had pulled out her stethoscope from when she had been a nurse and had let Cecilly play with it. Cecilly

had placed the stethoscope into her ears with ease and then had placed it on Connie's chest. A short moment later Cecilly had rolled back onto her back to suck on her toes. Connie often wondered what it was like for them. Did they remember or were these moments simply echoes of their old lives? Actions that they could not understand and were simply ingrained into them.

Both of them seemed happy though and that was what was it important after all. It brought her some peace to know that both of them could live for a little while without any worry, the same could not be said for her. She was more than a little nervous today. They hadn't told any family members the truth yet. That ended today though. Lisa was coming over to see the new house and today they would tell her the truth about Paul and Cecilly.

Nick came walking in from the backyard wiping some sweat from his brow.

“The lawn is now freshly mowed,” he announced coming over to the couch. “How is feeding time?”

“Just fine,” Connie said. Paul had detached and was sitting on the couch smiling at his Dad.

“You got a full belly there buddy?” Nick asked picking Paul up into his arms as he began to pat him on the back. Paul let out a large belch as his Dad laughed.

“I think we should think about weaning him soon,” Connie said. “He's getting to be old enough.”

“You think,” Nick said as he held Paul up over his head. “Pauly are you getting so big?” Paul was laughing as his Dad zoomed him through the air a little. Nick then brought Paul to his chest before pulling back his shorts. “Thought so, Lets zoom off to your room big man its time for a diaper change,” Paul was then lifted over his Dad's head again as he laughed and his Dad walked off making rocket ship sounds.

Connie smiled. It was good to see Paul so carefree. After Cecilly had finished Connie placed her into a bouncer in the doorway between the kitchen and living room.

“Get big strong legs,” Connie cooed giving Cecilly a tickle. “Just like your big brother.” Connie then went and began to put together a pasta salad for lunch.

Soon enough Lisa came with Mckenzie and Adam in tow. She came through the door pushing a large box that was wrapped up in festive paper.

“We brought gifts,” Mckenzie announced handing a bag over to Connie who was holding Cecilly. “That's for baby Cici,” Mckenzie announced. Connie pulled out some clothes and a headband with a pink bow and a stuffed white bear.

“Do you like it?” Connie asked holding the bear in front of Cecilly who grasped the bear giving it a big cuddle. Nick then brought Paul over to the large box.

“I guess that means this if for...” he stopped for a minute as he read the tag stuck to the front of the box with the name for it intended recipient written in big letters. “Paul,” Nick said

reading the tag.

“How did you know?” Connie asked looking at her sister with a shocked expression.

“Did you really think I wouldn't recognize my own nephew?” Lisa asked with a smile. “I used to babysit him all the time you know.”

“I guess we have some explaining to do,” Connie said with a sigh.

“Plenty of time for that,” Lisa said before beckoning towards Paul. “C'mon Paul this one is all for you.”

Paul walked up to the box before grabbing at the paper and ripping it away to reveal a soccer set that had two small plastic goals perfect for a toddler.

“Socca!” Paul yelped throwing his hands in the air.

“We better get this set up right away,” Dad said as he knelt down next to Paul putting a hand on his back to stop him from falling over as Paul jumped up and down excitedly with his hands against the box as he continued to shout “Socca”

Out in the yard Paul was excited. He stood in the middle of the yard. Each of the new goals had been set up. The blue and yellow plastic of the goals looked inviting. He looked back to see his parents sitting at a patio table with his Aunt. They were talking. Paul didn't understand why adults seemed to sit and talk all the time. Paul looked down at his feet to see his soccer ball. He gave it a kick and smiled as he followed it.

This was his favorite thing in the world. Every time he played with his ball it seemed to make him happy. He sometimes found himself frustrated. Some times it felt hard to do things and he had a sense that he had been able to do them before. But when it came to playing with his soccer ball he never felt that. He felt in control. The best part now was that he had goals.

Looking at them set up gave him a sense of familiarity. Paul moved along kicking the ball. He knew just what to do. He got close to the goal before giving the ball a huge kick. He watched it skitter through the grass before it went into the goal.

“Goooo,” Paul yelped falling to his knees. He fell onto his back with a smile on his face. He watched the clouds go by in the sky. It was sometimes nice to just lay back and stare up. Paul got the sense that it wasn't that long ago he felt like he didn't have time. For what he was unsure. But now it seemed he had all the time in the world and he was going to enjoy it.

THE END