

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back – Part Two

A Henry, Amy, and Corinne Story

December 2023 – Commission

"Umm, Corinne? Can I talk to you for a bit?"

I'm trying not to let my tone take on the peevish, bratty whine of a kid. After all, I'm acutely aware that what I'm about to say is exactly what a little girl might complain about to her parent. Nor have I completely managed to forget the incredible shame of just a few hours ago: waking to hear her and Henry discussing what they're calling my "regression," and then having to squeeze my eyes shut and feel like some stupid, overgrown *baby* while Corinne cleaned my smelly diaper away...

Yeah, it was 100% awful. Which is all the more reason why I need to talk with her: NOW.

"Sure, honey," she smiles over her shoulder, her hands full of the rumpled sheets she's just removed from my bed. "Just be patient for me one more minute, okay? Can you wait until I've put these in the wash?" *Of course I can*, I want to retort. I know about waiting. I'm a grown-ass woman! But I bite my tongue and nod, then sit there, gazing around the room while I wait for her to return.

Like some little kid waiting for her mom, my mind taunts. Like some dumb little toddler...

"What's the matter, sweetie?" she begins, settling down on the bed beside me. The plastic mattress protector crinkles loudly beneath her, and I'm reminded once more of how weirdly juvenile this whole setup is. "Is it hurting somewhere? Are those casts being all itchy again?"

"No, no," I respond, wriggling the plaster casts in question as I search for the right words to open our discussion. I need to be diplomatic – adult – mature. "Look, Corinne, I really appreciate everything you've done for me," I begin, a trifle shakily. "I don't know how we- how me and Henry, you know- how we'd get along without you. It's just that, well, lately..."

I trail off, and she turns a look full of warm, kindly concern on me. "Uh-oh, what is it? Is it something I've done, honey? I know it must be hard for you-" "No, no, NO!" I cut in, and now my voice is rising in frustration despite my best intentions. "No, Corinne! It's just that I don't think all of this is necessary, okay? I'm a grown adult! And- and I don't think it makes sense that I would have to, you know... go to bed so early. And now you say I don't get to watch my shows, or drink alcohol anymore? And, like, not even play games on my phone and stuff?"

Ugh, I really do sound like a spoiled brat, don't I?

"But Amy," she begins with a wry smile, laying one hand reassuringly on my healthy leg. "Amy, didn't you hear the doctor? It's for your own good! You can't heal if you-" "No, just *listen* to me, okay?!" I wail, and now I can feel tears of irritation and anxiety welling and burning in my eyes. "It's- it's not just that. It's about me... and Henry..."

I gulp back a little sob, and she's finally silent, listening attentively for my next words. "Look, I'm an adult woman," I manage shakily. "I love Henry, you know? I'm freaking *married* to him! And I- I want him to think I'm, you know... attractive. Sexy." I gesture hopelessly down at my plaster-bound limbs and the stupid diaper bulging incongruously between my legs. "I'm no baby, Corinne. But with all this... the way I look... I don't think Henry remembers that anymore. I- I haven't seen him look at me... you know, like a wife... in forever..."

The first salty tear drops silently onto my pastel t-shirt. It's the final straw that breaks my sobs free: the overwhelming conviction in that moment that I've become nothing but a sniveling little diaper girl, sitting here whining to this incredibly attractive woman beside me about how unfair her life is and how someone doesn't like her anymore. And before I know it, I'm wailing despondently, sobs convulsing my entire body. "I- I don't wanna be a- a *disgusting*- *gulp* *pathetic*- *sob* baaayyy-bee..."

"Amy, shh," she's telling me over and over as the sobs wrack my body. And once the storm of emotions finally subsides, I realize her arms are around me, her gorgeous, warm and full breasts pressing against my pathetic little A-cups as she hugs me close. "Shh, it's okay, honey," she whispers softly. "Really. I know. I know you're feeling down. It's okay. It's gonna be okay..."

Is it? I don't know. But as she straightens up and begins gently wiping the tears from my messy face, she begins addressing my worries. "Honey, it's only natural you worry about that," she tells me with a beautifully gentle smile. "It shows what a wonderful devoted wife you are! Of course you want to be pretty for Henry. Of course you want him to like you. And you know what? I really, really think he does..."

"But you know what? Just so you can feel better, I'll talk to him about it," she assures me, patting my leg once more in reassurance. "I'll talk with him and tell him how you're feeling, okay? And I can bet you anything he's going to say exactly the same thing: that he loves you just as much as ever – no matter what you're wearing or how long you need to heal."

That's how we leave it. I can only nod and gulp and thank her... hoping against hope that this woman whose kindness and care I both resent and appreciate is right.

"Henry... can I talk to you?"

It's essentially how dear little Amy began with me earlier today. That's where the resemblance ends, though, I suppose. Certainly no one would confuse me, Corinne, with Amy – not the way she's been behaving lately. I mean, how many times has she been bursting into tears lately? Not to mention those eternally wet and now messy diapers...

"Sure thing," he nods, glancing up from where he's just been depositing his empty lunchbox on the counter. He glances down at his shoes and chuckles. "Can it wait until I've taken these off?"

Of course it can. And a minute later, he's padding stocking-footed beside me, drawn by my beckoning gesture into the quiet refuge of the kitchen. Out of earshot of Amy – just as intended.

"So, Amy talked with me today," I begin, and proceed to explain what transpired. How she had a little tantrum. How she whined that Henry didn't like her anymore, and how she wanted to impress him so badly. "It's what we'd call 'clinginess' if it was a toddler," I explain with a wryly tolerant smile. "She says she wants to make sure you still love her, but you know... Honestly, she's just upset because she wants to spend time with you."

"But I *have* been spending time, right? At least... sometimes?" "And that's where the clinginess comes in," I nod, watching his eyes grow contemplative. "It's just like I predicted, actually. As she regresses more and more, her demand for attention is growing. It's all tied to a loss of object permanence – you know, how babies can't understand that someone still exists even when they can't see them..."

At his incredulous expression, I give a short chuckle and pat his hand affectionately. "Look, Henry: please don't worry too much. But I'm guessing that soon, if she doesn't get a good hour or two of time with you every day, she's going to be convinced that... well, that you don't even like her anymore."

"Really? Oh, god! But what- what more can I do? I'm at work all week, you know, and I can't just-" "I know, Henry, I know," I soothe, with another soft pat of his handsome hand. "Don't worry,

okay? That's why I was thinking we might try something to help you two out. As quickly as she's slipping backward now, I think we need to do, well... exactly what good parents do with a little kid. Maybe spend time in the evening with her before bed? I'd be happy to let you help me with prepping her for the night, or..."

"Oh, I know! How about reading her a bedtime story?"

I don't know what Corinne said to Henry. But the way he's smiling at me tonight, and stroking my hair, and bending down and giving me these soft forehead kisses... well, I almost feel like a grown woman again. A pretty wife whose husband can't wait to slip into bed beside her and start touching her most inappropriately.

It almost makes me ignore how he and Corinne are here holding their fantastic-looking cocktails... and how I'm here clutching what Henry just handed me: a literal sippy cup full of warm milk.

"Don't worry about us, dear," he's smiling, setting aside his glass and glancing quickly at Corinne. "Just relax and enjoy your milk, okay? Corinne and I are gonna get you all ready for bed! Won't that be nice?"

"Uh... yeah," I admit, even though I want to say I'd far rather that it was just him undressing me. That it would be a pair of sexy lingerie being tugged down from around my waist, and not the thrice-soaked squishy bulk of a giant diaper. That I'd remain naked and exposed before him so he could admire my body: *not* to smile paternally and urge me upward while Corinne slips her new portable changing pad, plus two fresh diapers and a booster, under my naked bum.

"Aww... do I really- do I have to...?" I begin, trying again not to slide upward into the querulous whine of a toddler. "Besides, it's barely seven- and I'm not even sleepy-" But Henry just smiles and leans down to silence my protests with a full kiss on the mouth. "Oh, sweetie, hush," he smiles, and I can't help but melt a tiny bit as his fingers travel through my hair, even as Corinne deftly massages lotion into my tender princess parts. "Just let me and Corinne take care of you, okay? You're gonna be fine, I promise..."

Mollified by his earnest and handsome smile, I obediently shut up and let them do what they want. Which is how I end up staring down over my still-full sippy cup of milk at the fresh, bulging weight of double nighttime diapers once more between my legs. Diapers which mercifully get

covered up a few minutes later: by what can only be described as a giant onesie. Complete with snaps at the crotch, which Henry fastens up with a smile and a pat to my uneasily shifting leg.

"Aww, no- I don't need those again, really!" I can't help but protest when Henry takes the now-familiar locking mittens from Corinne. "I promise, I won't touch my clothes, I promise-" But he just shakes his head and places his head on mine, then guides the sippy cup into my mouth to silence me. "Amy, you know better than that," he admonishes, and kind as his tone is, I can't help but shiver a bit when he tugs my right hand forward and the fabric begins to engulf it. "Remember, you said you didn't even *remember* trying to take your diaper off, right? So obviously, since you really can't help it – since you must be doing it in your sleep..."

"These are gonna be the only way to keep everything snug and dry." He smiles sympathetically and tugs the sippy cup free from my grasp, then hands it off to Corinne. "We don't want another wet bed, do we? Or you to end up hurting yourself during the night? And listen, it's okay if you aren't quite ready to go without yet – if you can't be trusted..."

"You can trust me, Henry! I promise-" I whimper softly, awash in the most confusing mixture of emotions and sensations. Here I sit: watching my husband's strong fingers tugging the buckles fast, locking each of my hands fast in its helpless wad of padding. He's being so sweet and kind, spending time with me like this. He's kissing me, and showing me how he wants me still. And yet, at the same time he's doing all of these things: taking away bit after bit of what I thought was my adult self. Locking me away in this weirdly babyish state. *Just a big baby with her babyish cup and her babyish sheets and her babyish onesie and diapers on a baby changing pad...*

"Shh," he tells me once more, and now he's tugging the sheets up over my bare legs and taking a seat on the crinkling mattress beside me. "Here, you've still got a lot of milk left, honey! Let's drink it all up..." And into my mouth he guides the spout, tipping it up in his hand... and leaving me to stare back at him, then resignedly begin sucking. Once again, like a literal baby being fed by her doting daddy.

It's weird, sure. It's humiliating. Yet, much as I hate to admit it – much as I'd die rather than confess it to either Henry or Corinne – despite feeling more infantile than ever, as the seconds tick by into minutes, I have to say... it feels kinda good, almost? I mean, the diapers are super soft – that goes without saying. The onesie is super soft too, and warm. The fresh sheets are pretty lovely. And I do like warm milk. It's just so creamy, and it always makes me feel nice and sleepy and snuggly...

And most of all, it's Henry here beside me – my husband. And the way he's smiling gently at me

over the sippy cup... I almost forget everything else. Even the stupid casts on my stupid limbs.

"Good. Good girl," he murmurs, half to himself, once the cup has finally emptied. I blink back to reality, suddenly aware that I was almost drifting off. Wow. That was... weird. But before I can do more than lick tentatively at my sticky lips, he's leaning close – taking a book from the smiling Corinne, and raising it to show me. "Here, honey. I know you're feeling a bit sleepy. Why don't we just cuddle a bit? Just relax and listen while I read to you, okay? See, this is a story about the Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig..."

Wow – I actually remember this one! I'm about to say so, but Corinne's slipping in and tucking an adorable stuffed bunny under my good arm. *Oh, whatever*, I muse in a brief stab of irritation, and then divert my attention back to the book before us. This story – it's actually so funny! There's the cute fluffy wolves building their houses, and the ugly bad pig who wants to blow them up or knock them down. Oh, that bad pig! Don't hurt... the wolves... nice fluffy wolves...

Again, it's weird. But right now, as Henry's lovely low voice wraps around me with all the warm softness of the sheets and onesie and diapers around me... well, I feel more loved than I have in a very long time. Which is a super weird thing to say – for a full-grown woman done up like a giant baby. But maybe not so weird for a woman who's finally spending time together with her husband... and feeling secure at last in his love.

Maybe I'm just dreaming it, but I swear I almost feel a gentle, long-drawn spurt of warmth blossom out between my legs. So what, I muse sleepily, as my eyelids drift closed. So what. It's all... good... good wolves... good girl...

"Good night," I hear faintly, and the feather-soft brush of kisses on my forehead makes me smile. "Good night, baby..."

I'm out: blissfully drifting into dreamland, where a joyfully reformed pig dances the tarantella alongside the delighted wolves he's finally befriended. And so deep in dreams I am that I don't even hear the low laughter of the two grownups in the room... the gentle hands under the covers that probe the palpable warmth of my crotch... those self-congratulatory whispers about it being smart to keep Amy safe in her nighttime diapers... the quiet steps to the door, and the sudden darkness of the light being switched off...

Because I'm asleep. And I'm Amy. A grown woman. Henry's wife... who right now just happens to need a tiny little bit more love and care than usual. And that's okay.