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### Unnatural Selection

Although I can barely see through my translucent eyelids, I can still hear everything around me. I can hear her. She's distraught. Whenever she becomes distressed, her heart violently knocks against its surroundings, prying its way out of her ribcage. This is when I become unsettled. I need her to know she needs to breathe and slow down, for both of us. After all, I am inside her.

"Mum? Oh my god! What happened?", she exclaimed, her heartbeat accelerating ten-fold.

"Oh! Sienna, my baby!". I heard her footsteps approach us, and then an immense pressure.

"Mum! Careful, my stomach? The baby?"

"Right! Sorry. Its just—" she trailed off. "Honey, you're here because of your panic attack. Do you remember? You passed out. They had you on a sedative but they're keeping you in this hospital for 24 hours just for observation. Does any of this ring a bell?"

I felt her take a deep breath. "Y- yeah. It does. I remember I was hysterical. Where's Dustin? He was there too, wasn't he?"

"I'll go get him, honey." Her footsteps trailed off.

A familiar voice entered the room, his words spilling out in a hurry. "S? Jesus. I was so worried. Do you remember what happened? Is the baby okay? Are you okay?"

Another deep breath. "Dustin,", she breathed "I'm okay. Actually. I'm not. That's why I'm here. We need to talk about this." She hugged her stomach tightly. "Look. The baby is fine. For now. I remember we were talking about what to do. With the baby. And- "

"Sienna. Honey. We can talk about this later. When you're feeling better. You need to relax.", her mother interrupted.

"No, we need to talk about this now. Look, I get that this *situation* effects the three of us the most. The fact that I'm in here means we *need* to talk. I didn't want to talk about it before, which is probably why I *reacted* the way I did.", she said apprehensively, emphasizing certain words as if forcing herself to say them and admit something.

"Mrs. Baker? Would it be okay Sienna and I spoke alone for a little bit?", Dustin asked politely.

“Sure. That’s fine. I’ll go get some coffee from the cafeteria.”, she said as she closed the door. As the door clicked in place, an immediate tension filled the room. I could feel Sienna’s blood get hot with frustration and she took a long shaky breath.

“Dustin. You know what I want to do.”, she began.

“No”, he cut in. “You can’t.”

“Yes! I can. It’s my body and my choice. You have no right to tell me what I should do.”, I felt her reposition herself so she could presumably look at him face to face. “I’m not ready. I love you, but I’m not ready. We are 16. This is *not* the time to start a family.”

“S.”, there was a change in his voice. Softer, less demanding. “I’m the father. That baby has two biological parents. Don’t you think both should get a say?”, He sat on the hospital bed, lowering it in the process.

“Dustin, I’m carrying it. As much as I know you’ll be there for me, you won’t feel the pain, or have to restrict yourself from doing certain things. Like I said, we’re 16 and in 10th grade. You think this is a suitable time to raise a human being?”, she asked. Sienna mused about the classes in Biology, the immutable laws of Nature. “Oh! And do you really think I’m going to start walking around school with a baby bump?”, she added disdainfully. I could feel Sienna shift her position again. Her muscles tightened.

“Of course, you don’t have to. But what about home-schooling? And the timing isn’t ideal, but we can make it work.”

“Money?”

“ We’ll get jobs. I’ll get a job.”

“It won’t be enough.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Dustin!”, she snapped. “We would both be uprooting our lives. If you can miraculously get a full-time job, which will be impossible seeing as you haven’t finished tenth grade, then that leaves, then that leaves me alone!”

“What about your mum? And my parents?”

“What about my mum? She works full-time trying to support just me and her and we barely get by. It’s the same with both of your parents.”, her heart was now working overtime. She needs to know I need her to breathe. I start moving in hopes that she’ll feel it. Kick. Kick.

“The baby’s moving, Dustin.”, she took a long, deep breath. “You know, I’m pretty sure it can tell when I’m distressed because it was doing the same thing when I was having the panic attack.”

“I don’t want you to feel distressed.”

“I know you don’t.”

“This baby is making you distressed. *I’m* making you distressed.”

“Look, you’re not *making* me- “,

“You’re right.”

“What?”

“You’re right.”, Dustin stood up from the bed and began pacing. “I want this baby. It’s my view. I don’t want to kill something that we made, it has a *soul*. That’s what my parents taught me from the bible and you know how much they believe everything that’s in it. But it affects you more than me and you’re right. I can walk into school and not have everybody immediately judge me. And I might not have to deal with the physical pains. There is one thing you are wrong about though. You will not- *not* be alone.”

There was a knock at the door, three distinct thumps. I could feel they seemingly mirrored Sienna’s heartbeat. Dustin opened the door. “Thanks for letting us talk some of this out, Mrs. Baker.”, he began.

“Well, its pre-e-ety important and – “, She stopped, her footsteps rapidly approaching the bed. “Hey, Sienna, honey, why are you crying?”

She sniffled softly. “Just, everything.”, she scooted back under into the bed. “And I’m really tired, even though I just woke up. Hey, Dustin, can I talk to my mum for a few minutes?”

“Sure. Yeah, I’ll just get something to eat. See you in a bit.”, he said as he closed the door.

Sienna’s Mum’s voice was so distinctive to me. Too many cigarettes, a raspy, wheezy voice.

“Mum, I know what I want. But I’m not sure either way I’d be doing the right thing. I will never find someone who would support me like he does right now. But I’m not sure how long it’ll last.”

“Hon, you know I was in a similar situation when I was about your age. Your dad chose not to stick around and support me and I still got by. I chose to have you and I don’t regret it at all.”

“But I know I’ll regret choosing to have a baby.”

“Well, that’s your choice.”

“You know mum, in biology class, we learnt about natural selection. The survival of the fittest. Did you know that even animals abort their young when the conditions are not ideal for the baby to survive? Dustin and I wouldn’t be bringing this baby into world under ideal conditions. So, really, all I’d be doing is following the laws of nature.”

Kick. My arm moves up to my face. I suck my thumb. Comfort.

“No, Sienna, you’re not. It’s an *UNNATURAL* selection. You’re exercising free will, and animals don’t have that.”

“I’ve made my decision, mum.”

“It’s my choice.”

I feel so cold.

“I choose Charles Darwin.”