The Starburst Academy

 Winne waited anxiously in her chair. She was sitting in one of the instructors’ offices at the famous but elusive Starburst Academy. It was a semi secretive academy where those gifted with magical ability were sent to hone their abilities. Mellisa, Winne’s daughter, was one such individual. She had been sent to the academy six months ago, when she started exhibiting more than passing levels of magical talent. Winnie hadn’t seen Mellisa since. Mellisa was well into her twenties, and living on her own when her magical abilities really started to show, so Winne was used to being in a house without her daughter around, but this was different. Mellisa didn’t have a choice, nor did any of the students here. Witches and Wizards were powerful and unpredictable especially without supervision. They were sent here and secluded for everyone’s safety as well as their own. Winnie should have been there to help her daughter with this forced transition.

A part of the reason she hadn’t been to visit was because the academy was so secretive. The location is secret, Winnie had to fill out a myriad of forms to finally allow her parental right to visit her daughter here and thus know it’s location. She did that three months ago though. There was another, more pressing reason Winnie was hesitant to come visit her daughter.

“Mommy!” a bubbly jubilant voice cried out as the door to the office swung open. Winnie stood up from her chair in surprise. There she was, Melissa. She bounded in and embraced Winnie in a tight hug.

“Melly, remember to be gentle,” an older woman followed behind Melissa. “Sorry Mrs. Calon. Melly has been very excited to see you again.”

“Yeah! I’ve missed you mommy!” Melissa said looking up from her hug. Winnie was taken aback by the sight before her.

Melissa was every bit the adult woman she was when Winnie las saw her, at least in body. She wasn’t dressed like an adult though. She was wearing a white blouse and dark purple skirtalls with a pointy purple witch’s hat on her head. The skirtalls were deliberately short and complimented the long white thigh socks with mary jane shoes to almost highlight the thick diaper Melissa was wearing. It was a purple diaper, decorated with yellow stars, some of which were notably gone. A purple pacifier, clipped to the collar of her blouse with a purple pacifier clip, completed the juvenile ensemble.

Winnie had to take a moment to measure her reaction to seeing her daughter after so long. The saddening look on Melissa’s face was an eerily familiar one to her, she was about to cry. Winnie forced on a smile and found herself sliding back into a cooing tone she long ago dropped.

“Hi sweetie so good to see you,” Winnie got up and hugged her daughter tightly and Melissa laughed, her sadness forgotten.

“Why don’t you let you mommy have a seat,” the woman behind her offered with a smile. “You can play next to her while the adults talk. I’ve got some toys for you.”

“Okay Miss Gans,” Melissa eagerly grabbed her mother’s hand and led her back to the chair. Once Winnie was seated Mellisa toddled over to a small toy box and fished out some toys, oblivious or uncaring that she was showing her diaper while she bent over. With her daughter facing away Winnie stopped hiding her expression. It was grim. If her dress didn’t give it away Mellisa’s attitude certainly did. Long gone was her edgy teen of an adult daughter, her complicated mind replaced with that of a toddler, if that. The diaper and pacifier that she had popped into her mouth made Winnie wondered if toddler was too generous for what Melissa was now.

Melissa returned and plopped down on the carpeted floor with a few toys and distracted herself while Winnie and Miss Gans talked.

“So …” Winnie tried to be both positive for Melissa’s sake but serious to get her concern across. “How is she doing?” Miss Gans peered over to Melissa on the floor by her mother. She was happily floating a few blocks with magic spinning them around and incorrectly spelling words in the air. Seeing that Melissa was sufficiently distracted Miss Gans spoke seriously.

“She’s progressing along how we expected,” Miss Gans said solemnly. “She is very powerful, so that means that the side effects will end up being pretty severe.”

“This isn’t severe already?” Winnie said looking at her adult daughter who was now playing with a doll on the floor next to her.

“This is pretty far along, but she has further still to regress. We’ve already got her a room in our nursery ward.”

“Nursery ward?”

“Yes,” Miss Gans nodded. “We can stop by her room a little later and you can see. I assure you she will be very comfortable and happy there. She’s already made some friends too.” Winnie was quiet as she processed things. With great power came great drawbacks. The more powerful a spellcaster a person was, the more their mind regressed. Most who were gifted settled with the mental capacity of a grade schooler, but it seems Winnie’s daughter was destined to go further. “She even got to sit in on arts and crafts. She made you a few things. Melly sweetie, do you want to give your mommy the things you made?”

“Yeah yeah!” Melissa excitedly sprang up. She looked around the room then at Miss Gans who smiled and handed Melissa a folder from her desk drawer. “Tanks Miss Gans. Here mommy look I drewed a picture,” Melissa fished a crayon drawn picture out of the folder and handed it to Winnie excitedly. The picture, despite being in crayon, was very well drawn. It was a picture of Melissa waving a wand in the air and causing a meteor shower while Winnie looked on in amazement. It seemed that, despite her mental regression, Melissa retained her artistic skills. She may have even improved some. “Oh, and I made you this,” Melissa handed Winnie a white rock with a purple swirl carved into it on a thin black string. Winnie looked at it a bit confused but Melissa eagerly pressed the rock. The rock lit up and suddenly a ring of glowing magical lights spun around it. “I enchantaded it,” Melissa said smiling wide. “It’s a bracelet for you to member me by.” Winnie watched the magical lights with amazement. She pressed it with her own finger and the lights stopped. She pressed it again and they started again.

“Thank you, sweetie. I love it,” Winnie said smiling back at Melissa. Melissa’s grin somehow got even bigger. She looked to Miss Gans who gave her an approving smile.

“Good girl Melly,” Miss Gans approved. Melissa squealed happily.

“Oh oh!” Melissa suddenly said with an exclamation. “Dis too,” she fished out a letter envelope. Mom was written on the back with an elegant print. “Um uh open that one when you get home ok.”

“Sure, thing sweetie,” Winnie smiled.

“Melissa,” Miss Gans spoke to break the silence. “What do you say we show your mommy some magic huh?”

“Yeah yeah!” Melissa hopped a little. “I wanna make a boom!”

“Well come here you know you need your leash on to go out on the range,” Miss Gans motioned Melissa over and the girl stood still eagerly as Miss Gans grabbed a nylon chest harness from the back wall of her office. “It’s just a short walk to the viewing platform and the firing ranges,” Miss Gans said while strapping the harness onto Melissa. “Then after that we can show you Melly’s room. She’ll probably be ready for her nap by then anyway. Casting spells tends to tire our little ones out.”

“Doin magic makes me eppy,” Melissa confirmed while a lead was clipped to her harness. “Ok les go,” Melissa eagerly tugged against the lead to go to the viewing platform. Miss Gans smiled at the eagerness, but Winnie was still a little unnerved at her adult daughter on a leash. A leash that she sorely needed by all accounts as she tugged against it.

It was a short walk to the firing range, but as they walked there they passed by several other students of the academy. Mostly adult sized grade schoolers all thickly diapered and playing childish games while they were watched by the numerous caretakers. Finally, they came into a room with a large window overlooking an empty desert. A student stood in the middle of the room was twirling on the heels of her feet and humming a tune.

“Charmy sweetheart,” Miss Gans got the girl’s attention. She spun around and let the pacifier she was suckling on fall out of her mouth and get caught by the paci clip.

“Yes Miss Gans,” Charmy spoke with a much more mature tone. It seemed that even the most mature of the students here were diapered and had pacifiers. “Going to the range?”

“The polar bear range please,” Miss Gans said.

“Polar bear coming up,” the girl turned around and grabbed the air with her hands. As she spread her hands apart a magical hole appeared. Behind it, Winnie could see a painted picture of a polar bear. Miss Gans grabbed an egg timer that was nearby and turned it before walking through the portal with Melissa. When they were through the portal closed.

“You’re in for a treat,” Charmy walked over to the large window. “Melissa is one of the babies. Well …” Charmy noted the pacifier clipped onto her as well as the diaper she was wearing. “We’re all a little baby I guess but she’s like baby baby.” Winnie let the girl talk trying not to ruin her enthusiasm with how uncomfortable her choice of words was making her. She still couldn’t imagine her fully grown daughter as a baby, but that seemed to be where she was headed. “Polar bear is over there.” Charmy pointed to one in a series of bunkers in the desert. “But keep an eye over there.” She pointed to the middle of the field. “That’s where she’s gonna cast it.”

True enough, after a moment there was some activity at the area Charmy indicated. At first it was just a small light, then that light expanded until it was an impressively large ball of light and fire that persisted for a few seconds before rapidly collapsing with a series of loud explosions.

“Tera flare!” Charmy cheered. “So cool.” She looked at Winnie and then blushed at her outburst. Suddenly the egg timer went off. “Oh, gotta bring em back.” Charmy opened the portal again and Miss Gans and a tired looking Melissa still on her leash stepped through.

“Did ya see mommy?” Melissa panted.

“I did sweetie. Good job,” Winnie said still figuring out how she felt about everything.

“And it’s a good time to see Melly’s room because our little witch needs a diaper change,” Miss Gans sang.

“Makin boom makes me make boom,” Melissa said with a tired giggle.

“Actually,” Miss Gans sniffed the air with expert precision. “Charmy come here.” The girl walked over and Miss Gans abruptly spun her around and pressed against the other witch’s diaper. Charmy gave a squeal. “Melly’s not the only one with a poopy diaper huh?” Charmy just blushed. “I’ll get a teacher to come change you in a bit Charmy.”

“Thank you, Miss Gans,” Charmy said with a blush. Miss Gans motioned for Winnie to follow and the group made their way to Melissa’s room in the nursery.

Melissa’s room was pretty small, only big enough to handle the furniture in it plus a small space for playing. The furniture included a large crib, an adult sized changing table, a small mini fridge, and a childish looking desk. As they entered Miss Gans let Melissa off the leash and she sheepishly groaned her way over the changing table, climbing on top of it. Miss Gans giggled and started changing Melissa’s diaper like it was the most normal thing in the world. To her it was, but to Winnie it was surreal. Thankfully Melissa was distracting herself with a stuffed rabbit to notice her mother’s weird expression.

It was strange to Winnie watching another woman changing her daughter’s diaper. Even with Melissa being very much an adult the whole scene looked remarkably like when Winnie changed her as a baby, which made it all the stranger to her that it wasn’t her doing the changing. Not that she really wanted to be changing her adult daughter's diaper, and Miss Gans seemed more than experienced.

Thankfully Winnie was able to collect herself by the time Melissa was in a clean diaper. When she was in a clean diaper Miss Gans started undressing her. Melissa and Miss Gans both seemed unbothered by Melissa’s nakedness as she was changed from her skirtalls into a pink onesie decorated with unicorns and rainbows.

“I think once you go down for a nap your mommy is going to be headed home,” Miss Gans said as she slid the onesie over Melissa’s head.

“Oh …” Melissa’s mood soured. “Well, buh bye mommy.”

“Don’t be so sad Melissa,” Winnie chimed in. “I’ve got a hotel room pretty close by I can come visit you tomorrow, and for a few days too.”

“That would be nice,” Melissa smiled sheepishly.

“Maybe your mommy can sit in on your play time one day,” Miss Gans offered as she helped Melissa into the crib. “See what you little ones get up to.”

“Mmhmm,” Melissa was already fading as Miss Gans raised the bars and locked the crib shut. She went over to the mini fridge and grabbed a large baby bottle from, it passing it to Melissa through the crib bars. Melissa grabbed it and was already asleep. Mis Gans motioned to Winnie by putting her finger to her lips and the two left.

“I do hope you can come by and see her play,” Miss Gans said walking out with Winnie. “I know that this can be difficult for parents, but several have said that seeing their children play with the others does help.” Winnie was silent as a group of students giggled down the hall. “Plus, Melissa enjoyed seeing you. I could tell.” Winnie looked back and smiled.

“Yeah, I would like that.” Miss Gans smiled at Winnie and escorted her out.

It was a long drive for Winnie to get back to her hotel room. She sighed as she collapsed onto the cheap bed. The folder with Melissa’s crafts fell onto the bed with her. With a thought Winnie opened the folder up and grabbed the envelope. Melissa had said to wait until Winnie was home to read it, but a baby might confuse a hotel room for a home. Either way Winnie opened the envelope and the contents inside were predictable. A letter.

Mom,

I’m writing this to you now while I still can. I’ve only been here a month and I can already feel myself slipping. Words are hard and I can’t think big thoughts any more, not so good anyway. I already need my diapers too. It’s so strange wearing diapers again, sleeping in a big crib, drinking from bottles. They have me in the nursery section. They say that I’m going to be like the other nursery students by the end of the year and that it’s better if I get used to things while I'm still big. I’m not gonna lie I’m pretty scared by all this, but when I look at everyone else here, I think I’m going to be ok.

I know that this is going to be hard for you. I know you’re as scared like I am, but I don’t want you to be. I may be gone by the time you see me. I may be a babbling baby brain like the others. So, I’m telling you now while I still can that I think I’ll be happy here.

When I heard about this place before I always thought it was like some jail. Some place where all the bad witches and wizards go to keep everyone safe, but I think it’s the other way around. I see all these happy innocent people here, and I think about what bad people would do to get to them. We can make like big booms and fireballs and junk. I think about the bad people making us do that to good people, and I realize that we are here to keep us safe and happy, not everyone else.

Everyone is safe and happy here. We’re going to be cared for forever. I know it will be hard, but I don’t want you to worry about me. I’m happy here.

Love you,

Melly.

Winnie folded the letter back into its envelope and looked at the picture Melissa drew her. Thinking that she would have to hand it on her fridge when she got home.