The Assault of Jamie Dawson

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In the beautiful city of San Francisco, the sun hid behind a blanket of clouds. The humidity made my forehead clammy, causing my pajamas to cling to my body. Every time I moved a certain way, my body felt like it would fall apart, almost like I was made of glass. The pain surged up my spine as I put on my black suit jacket, blue jeans, and black boots.

"Are you going to be alright?" my mom asked, her eyebrow rising.

"What do you mean?"

"Are you feeling well enough to go to work?" she rephrased her question.

"Why? Because of my disability?" I asked. My heart was hammering underneath my ribs, each breath a terrifying struggle. Despite that, I tried to sound calm and collected.

“Mom, I am a detective at the Northern Police Station. I’ll be fine,” I told her, trying to sound convincing. “Besides, what you are implying is very offensive.”

“What do you mean?” Mom asked.

“Well, you made it sound like I am too disabled to go to work by myself,” I said.

“I’m sorry. That was not what I meant. I just meant —”

“I know what you meant,” I said. “You’ve been taking care of me my whole life. Now, I need to learn to take care of myself.” I took a deep breath. “Because of my disability, you constantly think I’m too fragile, almost to the point of breaking. I am not fragile; I am a human being.”

“But you’re my baby. It’s my job to take care of you,” she told me lovingly.

“I know. But, Mom, I am not a baby anymore. I may have a disability, but I can take care of myself.” I gave my mom a kiss and a hug. “Now, I have to go to work. I love you.”

“I love you, too,” she replied.

I grabbed the keys that were attached to the keychain by the door in the living room and grabbed my cane. When I went outside, the door startled me when I slammed the door behind me.

The rain attacked me when I walked to the car. Each drop was hitting the pavement like hail. Falling was all too familiar. Luckily, I always managed to keep my head from hitting the ground. When I got up, I limped to my red convertible, putting my hands on the car to steady

myself. When I got inside, I waited until I felt steady enough to drive safely.

It only stopped raining when I got to work. I parked in the accessible parking space and hung my disabled parking placard from the rearview mirror.

I turned off the engine, stepped out of the car, grabbed my cane, and locked the door. The bottoms of my shoes squeaked as I made my way to the office.

“Good afternoon, Detective,” said Officer Reynolds, his voice warm. I responded with a quick wave. When I got to my desk, a folder stared at me.

“That’s a missing person report,” Lieutenant Tanner said, her voice calm as she sat on the edge of my desk.

“What’s the story?” I asked. Lieutenant Tanner picked up the folder and opened it. She examined its contents to ensure she would not get anything wrong.

“A 14-year-old girl went missing last night around 8 PM. She was last seen at Golden Gate Park,” she read from the report.

“Where are the parents?” I asked.

“In my office,” she replied, her voice somber.

“What are their names?” I asked.

“Mr. and Mrs. Dawson.”

I stood up from the chair, holding onto my desk. “Whoa.”

The lieutenant delicately put her hand on my shoulder. “Are you okay?”

"Yes, I just stood up too fast," I said as I grabbed my cane, heading to Lieutenant Tanner's office.

When I walked into the office, Mrs. Dawson's rose-scented perfume worked well with Mr. Dawson's dark chocolate cologne.

"Hi, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson." I shook the parents' hands. "I'm Detective Donaldson."

"Hello. You can call us Matt and Venessa," said the father.

"Do you want to come with me to my office to talk?" I asked, and they responded with a nod. We walked past Lieutenant Tanner into my office.

"Have a seat." I gestured towards a couple of chairs in front of my desk.

"Thank you," Venessa said, taking a place next to her husband.

“So, your daughter ran away from home?” I asked. They both nodded. “What’s your daughter’s name?”

“Her name is Jamie, and she is 14 years old,” Matt said.

“Are there any problems at home?” I asked.

“I don’t think so,” Venessa said as her tears started to pour out of her eyes like a river.

“Why don’t you tell me why you think Jamie left?” I asked.

“I think she left because she has been hanging around with the wrong crowd,” Venessa said.

“What do you mean?” I asked, confused. Every tear that fell from her eyes proved the pain was real.

“Jamie’s friends are runaways, too. Now Jamie thinks running away is the way to go,” Venessa explained. I took out my notepad and wrote everything Venessa and Matt told me.

“Do you have a picture of Jamie?” I asked. The mother nodded and took her wallet out. She looked at the photo tearfully before handing it to me.

“This is the only picture I have of Jamie,” she said. I leaned forward to grab the picture and left my office to make copies. Some would end up on a missing persons board, while the rest would go into the case file.

Once I returned, I shook Venessa’s and Matt’s hands.

“Thank you for coming in,” I said.

"Here is my card if you need anything. And if you remember something crucial, you can call me. My direct number is on the card."

"Thank you for seeing us," Matt said.

"No problem. I'll walk you out," I said. Venessa kept her head down so I would not see tears falling from her eyes. "Will you please escort Mr. and Mrs. Dawson out?" I asked Officer Reynolds. He nodded his head at me.

Venessa looked over her shoulder as her husband rested his hand on her back. Her eyes met mine, and a silent echo of pain washed over both of us. It was like we were the same person.

A few seconds after the parents left, Lieutenant Tanner entered my office.

"How'd it go?" she asked.

“It went fine. That poor family,” I said sympathetically.

“I know. It’s horrible,” Lieutenant Tanner added. As she finished her sentence, I collected my things and headed out of the office. “Where are you going?” she asked.

“I’m going to Golden Gate Park to see if anyone has seen or heard anything,” I replied.

As I walked outside, cold air washed over me. I untied my oversized raincoat from around my waist and put it on. As I opened the driver’s door, I got dizzy again, so I leaned against my red convertible, waiting for my dizziness to pass. Once it passed, I got into the car and tossed my cane onto the passenger seat. I adjusted the mirror and the driver’s seat before starting the engine and pulling into traffic.

It didn't take long to get to Golden Gate Park. It was packed with couples having picnics, children running around, and people enjoying each other's company. I got Jamie's picture out of the folder and grabbed the notepad before getting out of the car. I decided to start with a couple eating lunch.

"Good afternoon. I'm Detective Donaldson," I introduced myself, showing them my credentials. I took out the picture and showed it to them. "Have either of you seen this girl around here?" They both shook their heads. Feeling slightly defeated, I handed them my card. "If you do see her, please give me a call."

"Okay," the couple said.

The sun broke through the clouds as I scanned the park to find someone else to ask.

“Excuse me, ma’am.” I stopped to ask an older lady some questions. She looked up from the book that she was reading.

“Yes?” she said.

“My name is Detective Donaldson, and I work at the Northern Police Station. Have you seen this teenage girl around here? She’s been missing since last night,” I said. The lady took the photo and then shook her head. “Here’s my card. Will you call me if you see her, please?”

“Yes, of course,” she murmured. I turned and walked away, scanning the park some more.

An elderly couple was walking around the park when I approached them.

“Good afternoon, sir and ma’am. I am Detective Donaldson. I am trying to find this teenage girl and get her back home safely. Have either of you seen her?” I asked.

“No, sorry,” the woman said.

“Thank you. Here’s my card. Will you call me if you see her?” I asked.

“Sure, no problem,” she replied before walking away. I asked a few more people, but no one had seen Jamie.

I didn’t want to give up for the day, so I put up flyers with my number all over the park. I didn’t want to stay in the heat because I might pass out in front of other people. So, I decided to head back to my car.

When I got back to work, I parked the car in the accessible parking space. I stepped out of the elevator and headed to my office. After taking off my thick black coat and putting it on the back of my chair, I sat down. Immediately afterward, Lieutenant Tanner walked into my office.

"What's up?" I asked.

"We've been getting phone calls about that missing teen," she said.

"What did the callers say?" I asked.

"She's been spotted getting into a car near Union Square Garden," she explained.

"Thank you," I said.

"Sure." Then she turned around and walked out of my office.

I spent the rest of the day making phone calls and looking for leads to help us locate Jamie. Someone knocked on my office door as I was deep into the files.

"Come in," I said. My mom walked in wearing a long red dress with white stockings.

"Hi, sweetie. I thought I'd come and see how you are doing," my mom said.

"I'm fine," I told her.

"What are you doing?" she asked, looking at the pile of papers on my desk.

"The only thing I can tell you is that I am trying to find a missing teen," I replied.

"Can I at least see her picture?" she asked.

“Yes,” I said. I took out the flyer that I made and showed it to my mom.

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The next morning, I woke up to my rooster-themed alarm clock buzzing on my nightstand. I reached for it, trying to turn it off, but knocked it to the ground instead. After a few seconds, my phone rang with a Pikachu ringtone. I smiled before picking it up.

“This is Detective Donaldson,” I said, greeting the person on the other end.

“It’s Lieutenant Tanner. I have someone here that you would be stunned to see,” she said.

“Who is it?” I asked. Her voice was happy and clear.

“It’s better if you come in,” she insisted instead of answering my question.

“Alright. I need to wake up, drink coffee, and shower. I’ll be there in an hour,” I said.

“Alright,” she said and hung up the phone. She had no choice but to wait for me. I got out of bed and headed to the kitchen to make some coffee.

“Good morning,” Mom said. “I made coffee.”

“Good morning, and thank you,” I said. “How did you know I needed to go to work early?”

“Because I am your mom and know everything,” she said, giggling.

“Mom?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Fine, I heard you on the phone,” she conceded.

“You’re such an eavesdropper,” I joked.

“Yeah, so?” Mom said, smiling. I laughed and grabbed a cup so my mom could pour me some coffee. I didn’t like black coffee; it had always tasted like butt to me. So I grabbed the creamer and sugar, put them in the cup, and then stirred. “Do you want a ride?” Mom asked.

“No, it’s okay. I’ll take my car,” I said. At this point, it seemed like my mom was trying too hard. She wanted to know everything about me and what I did. But I had to keep reminding her that I was an adult. While I knew she meant well, I needed to do things for myself, or else I wouldn’t learn. I gave my mom a goodbye kiss. “Ever since Dad died, you’ve been overly protective. It’s like you’re worried I am going to die too.”

“I’m sorry. From now on, I will stay out of your way,” she said, apologetic.

“No, Mom, that’s not what I am saying. I love that you care so much, but I want to do my own thing and go to work without you worrying about me just because I have cerebral palsy,” I said. “Now I have to take a shower and get ready for work. I love you.”

“I love you, too,” she replied, her voice fragile. I found a lid for my coffee cup and headed to my room. After gulping some coffee, I put the cup on my nightstand and went to the bathroom to shower.

The shower did not take long. Every drop of water washed over my aches and pains, making me feel better. I sat on my shower chair and let the water massage my shoulders and back. After finishing, I got my towel and stepped out of the shower.

I went to my room to put my uniform on, choosing to wear my hair down with a headband. I wore my black boots, which made me appear to be 5’7” instead of 5’2”. Finally, I put on lipstick and eyeliner before heading to the living room.

I picked up my phone to check the time, relieved after realizing I still had 30 minutes to get to work. Still, I hurried to the living room to avoid being late.

“Bye, Mom!” I yelled while heading out the door. My mom came into the living room from the kitchen.

“Bye, hun! Have a good day at work. I love you!” she responded.

“I love you too, Mom!” I hugged her and walked out the door.

It was sunnier than the day before when I parked the car in the parking lot. I decided to walk without my cane since I felt better.

When I got to work, I entered Lieutenant Tanner's office.

"Good morning," I said.

"Hi," she said. "Jamie, this is Detective Donaldson." Lieutenant Tanner gestured towards a young girl standing next to her.

"You're Matt and Venessa's daughter?" I asked, shocked to see her standing there.

"Yes," she replied.

"Did you call her mother?" I asked Lieutenant Tanner.

"No, she wanted to wait to talk to you first," she explained.

"Why?" I asked. Lieutenant Tanner looked at Jamie and waited until she answered my question herself.

When I sat next to Jamie, she was playing with the sleeves of her jacket.

“I was raped,” Jamie said. She looked down, gripping her jacket tighter.

“What happened to your face?” I asked her. Tears streamed down her cheeks. “Did someone hit you?” Jamie nodded.

“I tried to get away. And I got hit. That is why my face is bruised,” Jamie said.

“We’re going to have to call your parents and let them know,” I told Jamie.

“Do you have to?” she asked.

“Yes, you’re a minor, so we’re required by law to inform your parents,” I said. She let out a big sigh.

“Fine,” she agreed reluctantly.

“Why don’t you come with me, and we can call your parents from my office?” I suggested.

“Okay.” She tucked her hair behind her ears.

Jamie and I left Lieutenant Tanner’s office, heading to mine.

“Will you help me tell my mom and dad?” Jamie asked, sounding worried.

“Yes, of course,” I reassured her. “I won’t leave you unless you tell me to.”

“Thank you.” She gave me a faint smile.

“You’re welcome.” I dialed the number from Jamie’s file and waited for one of her parents to pick up the phone. After a few rings, someone answered the phone.

“Hello?” Venessa said.

“Hi, Venessa. It’s Detective Donaldson. How are you doing?”

“I’m fine,” she said.

“I have some great news. Your daughter is here with me,” I said.

“Why did she go there and not home?” she asked.

“It’s better if you and your husband come in so we can talk,” I said, not wanting to have such a serious conversation over the phone.

“Okay, we’ll be there in about 15 minutes,” Venessa said.

“Okay, see you then,” I said and hung up the phone. “Your parents will be here in 15 minutes.”

“Do you think they’ll be mad at me?” Jamie asked.

“I don’t think so,” I reassured her. “They’re just worried since you ran away from home,” I added.

“I know,” she said.

When Matt and Venessa arrived, Lieutenant Tanner escorted them to my office. When Jamie saw her parents, she gasped and began to cry.

“Jamie, I’m so glad you’re alright,” her mom said, giving her a big hug.

“Have a seat.” I gestured towards the small couch in my office.

“What’s wrong?” Venessa asked.

“Jamie said that she was raped when she ran away,” I explained.

“And because Jamie is a minor, we had to wait until you arrived to get consent for a rape kit.”

“But what happened to her face?” Venessa asked.

“She told me she got hit,” I explained.

“Oh my god!” Venessa exclaimed.

“I can take her to the emergency room if you want me to,” I offered.

“Okay, we’ll follow you,” Matt said.

“We’ll see you in a bit, okay?” Venessa said to her daughter.

“Okay.” Jamie turned to her mom and said, “I love you.” Her eyes smiled even though her mouth didn’t.

“I love you, too, Jamie,” her mom responded, hugging her.

It didn’t take long to get to the hospital. We arrived before Jamie’s parents did, so we waited outside the car.

“Do you want to wait for your parents or go inside?” I asked. “Oh, there they are.”

Venessa put some lipstick on before stepping out of the car. Jamie and I headed towards her parents' Mini Cooper. Once both parents were out, the four of us walked into the hospital.

"Are you okay?" Jamie's mom asked, putting her arms around her daughter's waist. Jamie nodded.

"Excuse me," I said. "My name is Detective Donaldson, and I work at the Northern Police Station. This is Jamie Dawson and her parents. We need a rape kit for her, please."

"We need her information from her mother to treat her," the receptionist said. Her mom quickly reached into her purse, took out her wallet, and handed Jamie's insurance card to the receptionist. She finished the paperwork quickly.

"Here you go," her mom said, smiling at the receptionist.

“Thank you. A nurse will come to get you shortly,” the lady at the counter said.

We headed to the waiting area, anticipating the arrival of a nurse or doctor. Jamie’s mom put her arm around her daughter again and kissed her forehead.

“Jamie Dawson,” a nurse called. The sound bounced off the walls, and Jamie swiftly looked over her shoulder.

“My name is Lacy, and I will be your nurse today,” the woman said before taking Jamie’s vitals. “I’m going to get the rape kit. I’ll be right back,” she said, disappearing out the door.

Jamie picked at the loose thread of her jacket. “How long is this going to take?” she asked me.

Before I had the chance to respond, Nurse Lacy came back with the rape kit and other equipment to perform more tests. “Hang tight. The doctor will be right in,” she added.

Moments later, the doctor walked in.

“Good afternoon. I’m Doctor Higgins, and I will be doing your examination today,” she said. “Before I start, do you have any questions?”

“No,” Jamie replied, shaking her head.

“Okay, let’s get started,” Doctor Higgins said.

The examination itself didn’t take long.

“Thank you. How long until we get the results?” I asked.

“About two weeks to a month,” Doctor Higgins told us.

“That long?” I asked her. Doctor Higgins nodded.

“If you want it faster, I can expedite the testing,” she suggested.

“Yes, please,” I said.

“Okay, I’ll make a note on her file,” she said.

“How long will it take for expedited testing?” I asked.

“About 5 to 10 days.”

“That’s better,” I said. “Thank you.”

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After a few days had passed, I woke up to the sound of birds singing. My phone rang almost instantly.

“Hello?” I said after picking up.

“Hi, Detective Donaldson. It’s Doctor Higgins,” she said.

“Oh, hi, Doctor Higgins,” I said, trying to wake up fully.

“We got the results back for Jamie Dawson,” she informed me.

“Really? That was fast. It hasn’t even been a week yet,” I said.

“Do you want to come in and get the results?” she asked.

“Yes, I’ll be right there,” I replied and hung up the phone.

I quickly got ready and raced out the door.

“Hey, wait!” I heard my mom yell from the kitchen. “Aren’t you going to drink coffee first?”

“I can’t. I have to go. I’ll get coffee on the way,” I said. “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” I heard my mom say.

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Once I got to the hospital, I headed straight to the reception desk.

“Good morning. My name is Detective Donaldson. I am looking for Doctor Higgins,” I said.

“Okay, let me give her a call,” a lady at the counter said. After a few minutes, Doctor Higgins walked towards me with a chart.

“Hi. Thank you for coming in. Do you want to come with me to my office so we can talk?” Doctor Higgins asked.

“Sure,” I said.

Doctor Higgins’ office was right around the corner from the receptionist’s desk. Once we got there, she closed the door, and we both sat down.

“We got Jamie’s test results back. The findings are consistent with the assault she described,” the doctor explained.

“And what about her face?” I asked.

“Well, it looks like she has been hit, too,” the doctor said. “It probably happened during the struggle.”

“Thank you. You’ve been a great help. May I have a copy of the results, please?” I asked. The doctor nodded and handed me a copy.

Before calling Venessa and Matt to ask them to bring Jamie in, I returned to the office to find more information about Jamie’s case. They were already waiting for me in the police station parking lot.

“Hi. Thank you for coming in and beating me here,” I joked, trying to lighten the mood.

“Did you get the results yet?” Matt asked. I nodded.

“The findings are consistent with the assault Jamie described. She told me she was hit while trying to get away,” I explained.

“I’ll tell you what. You can go and eat lunch, and I can investigate this case further. It will take a few hours.”

When I saw them drive off, I went to the forensic scientist’s lab. Abby’s lab was filled with equipment.

“Abby, I need you to do something for me, please,” I said.

“What do you need?” Abby asked.

“I need you to take this and test for DNA, please,” I said.

“Okay, is there a reason?” she asked.

“This sample is from a sexual assault examination. I want to find out who did this and whether he’s been arrested before,” I said.

“Okay, I’ll call you in an hour,” Abby promised.

“Thank you,” I said. Abby smiled at me.

I took the elevator to the second floor. Before entering my office, I grabbed coffee from the lounge. Then I went into my office and grabbed my ham and turkey sandwich. I sat down at my desk, ate my sandwich, and drank my coffee. As I ate, I looked over the notes I had taken while waiting for Abby's call. I glanced at the clock on my white wall. Abby would be calling me in fifteen minutes. After I finished eating, Abby walked into my office. I looked up from my computer.

"I thought you would call," I said.

"It's okay. I don't mind," she said.

"What have you got?" I asked.

"I found a DNA match for a man named Jeffery Hubbard," she said. "He was convicted of statutory rape and spent eight years in prison

before being released early for good behavior. But he did not register as a sex offender."

"Do you have the address?" I asked. She nodded at me. "Thank you." I grabbed the folder Abby had given me and wrote down the address. I went to his house and arrested him. Months later, he was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison for rape and failing to register as a sex offender. After the conviction, I returned to the office. Lieutenant Tanner was waiting for me by the elevator. She was smiling at me.

"It's amazing how you come to work every day, dealing with these dangerous cases, all while having cerebral palsy. How do you do it?" she asked.

"Very carefully," I joked.