

Acceptance of the Self

Book 1: Attunement of the Hearts

Chapter 35.m - Vexing Introductions



Madelaine



[- Sunday, September 15, 2019 - 3:14pm - Anderson Family Kitchen -]

“What could this mean?” I ask Claire as we all stare at the pendulum in her right hand, which is gently swinging in another counterclockwise circle for ‘unsure’. We’d tried a few more questions about Sky’s whereabouts, we’d even tested it with Eve too, but so far no luck

“It means, most likely, that either they’re not on this planet, or they’re within some sort of anti-scriving field,” Claire explains with an undercurrent of anxiety in her voice. “That kinda makes sense in hindsight, no wonder no one’s been able to track down these kidnapers.”

“Do you ah, have any other spells that might work?” Aiden asks nervously from his seat at the kitchen table.

“I hate to say it but if my hunch is correct, I’m not sure any of my spells will work,” Claire answers, a frown tugging at the corner of her lips. “I’m guessing they’re being actively hidden from magical means of detection. I can certainly try scrying for them and using other means of divination, but I wouldn’t get your hopes up.”

She turns to Ellie and I, fixing us with her crimson gaze. “You said your Anne has magic that might help? I’d recommend trying her way of locating, it’s possible that she may succeed where I’m failing.”

Really? I wonder why, Ellie comments.

I nod to Claire, trying to keep calm despite the stress boiling away inside of me. “Anne sounded confident that she could come up with a spell that would help,” I say, “though I’ve no idea how her magic compares to yours.”

“In my experience, other worlds’ magics interact like oil and water if the worlds are different enough. So whatever’s being used to block my magic may not be able to block hers,” Claire explains.

Well that's really good to know, Ellie says from her seat in front of the viewing screen.

Yeah, I reply.

"Thanks, that's good to know," I repeat aloud.

Claire puts the pendulum away and Jay moves the large globe off the table and onto the kitchen counter out of the way.

"What kind of world is Anne from, if you don't mind me asking?" Claire asks curiously.

Ooo! Can I take this one? Ellie asks.

I don't see why not, I reply, vacating the front with a thought and appearing in my favorite navy blue loveseat. Ellie has already slipped past me into our body.

"It's got lots of magic, at least compared to here," she answers, "And real-live goddesses, Anne's a priestess of the Goddess of the Wilds over there: Artya. The vibe is kind of swords and sorcery, they don't seem to have technology the same way we do, but they've more than made up for it with magic. Um, this is Ellie by the way."

Claire whistles softly. "That sounds pretty sweet, not going to lie. Thank you Ellie. I wish my magic was more direct, able to do more to change this world for the better."

Jay leans over and puts a hand on Claire's shoulder. "Your magic is incredible Claire, certainly far more useful than the master's in history that I got from studying."

Claire scoffs. "Bluejay you shut your yap, you help show kids what's true about the world, and you help people learn from all humanity's past mistakes. Your knowledge is just as important as mine."

Jay smiles. "I knew there was a reason I liked you, Cladiator," he says with a wink.

Claire groans. "Please stop calling me that, I've had to get a lot more subtle about my approach to life since college. Becoming a professional witch has been quite the eye opener."

"Of course of course," Jay says, holding up both hands. "Sorry for bringing it up."

"It's totally fine," the witch reassures. "And you let me know if I'm overstepping too, okay? Is Bluejay still an acceptable nickname?"

"Absolutely! I think it's cool, and it reminds me of old times," Jay says with a smile.

"I hate to interrupt but we should probably get going soon," Aiden says, looking at his watch. "It's nearly time for us to meet the Sombersets."

"Good thinking, thanks for watching the time," Claire says.

Aiden smiles. "No problem."

The Andersons and I spend the next fifteen minutes cleaning up lunch and tidying the kitchen. Claire repacks her spell stuff into her bag, and Dawn goes upstairs and retrieves Sky's phone because she wants to 'look into something.'

Soon enough the five of us are filing out to the driveway and into Jay's red minivan. I don't see any strange cars on the Anderson's driveway or on the street in front of the house, so the mystery of how Claire got here thickens.

Do you think she can teleport? Ellie asks.

No clue but I wouldn't put it past her, that's for sure, I reply. I lace my imaginary fingers together and put them behind my head as I lounge on my loveseat.

Claire ends up sitting in one of the middle seats while Dawn and Ellie take the back. Ellie sits almost in the middle of the backseat because she wants to be nearer to Dawn, and our girlfriend seems extremely pleased by this. She grasps our hand with a mischievous smile and pulls us into a quick kiss.

I get lost in the sensations of the kiss with Ellie, the two of us blending together slightly as I slide into the front on accident. The line between our minds blurs.

Aiden starts up the car as we pull away from Dawn, and the radio comes blaring to life with an NPR host talking about the latest breaking news.

"...latest problem for the job market? Artificial Intelligence is taking the place of middle managers in some companies," a femme voice says.

It snaps me out of it, and I quickly separate away from Ellie, reappearing in my loveseat and breathing heavily from how turned on the kiss had gotten me.

Woops, sorry, I say to Ellie.

No problem Madelaine, it happens, she replies, sending me good vibes.

"Everybody comfy?" Jay asks after turning down the radio.

There's a chorus of 'mmhmm's from everyone present.

"Good, then let's do this thing," Aiden says. He steps on the gas as soon as we're out on the street, and off we go.

"I have a question," Claire says as we get up to the speed limit.

"Shoot," Jay answers.

"How are you all holding up with everything that's happening?" she asks. "From Ellie and Maddie's situation to Dawn and them coming out to Sky disappearing, this is a lot of stress to throw on a family at once."

I see Aiden's face in the rearview mirror, he looks thoughtful.

"I think we're doing about as well as can be expected?" he answers, "I mean, learning more about how and why Ellie and Maddie are connected to Anne would be nice, but overall that's been an exciting and fascinating time, not a stressful one. Same with Ellie, Maddie and Dawn coming out, there's nothing but love and support for them from me and Jay."

Then his face darkens. "It's the kidnapping that's really getting to me. I feel so stupid for letting Sky get caught up in whatever supernatural stuff got them taken."

Jay lightly touches Aiden's shoulder. "Dear," he says softly, "it's a good thing that Sky has a life outside of our rules, they need that kind of freedom. This isn't our fault. Whatever kind of double life they were leading, nothing justifies them getting taken off the street at random."

Aiden furrows his brow, but nods, never taking his eyes off the road. "I know, I know," he says.

"I don't think this was random," Dawn says, speaking up beside me. She's taken Sky's phone out of her pocket and pulled up some texts on it.

"Oh?" Claire says, twisting around so she has an ear pointed towards us.

"Yeah, based on these texts Sky exchanged with Eve about why they were meeting last night, I think they were set up. They were supposed to meet someone named Drew at that abandoned lot, and instead they got kidnapped."

"True but how do we know that meeting has anything to do with them being kidnapped?" Jay asks. "It may have been going off without a hitch and those BPI assholes showed up to ruin it. I personally have a hunch that BPI was trailing Eve for longer than one night. They seemed especially interested in the fact that she's a 'V' which I'm guessing is code for some type of supernatural. Probably vila or vampire or something."

"Listen to this though," Dawn says, leaning forward and staring at Sky's phone. She reads out the texts on the screen. "Eve wrote: His name is Drew. Claims he escaped from you-know-where and has info on how to get inside. Then later she wrote: He seems legit, found us through that reddit post we made. I want to meet him first before I bring him to the family's attention, and I want you to be my backup."

"I tried looking up that reddit post while y'all were talking to Audre," Jay says, "I didn't see anything obvious on Sky's normal reddit account though, so I'm guessing they used a throwaway handle to write it, and I had no idea what subreddits to even look on."

"I think finding that post should be pretty high on our to-do list after we meet with these Sombersets," Claire says, frowning as she stares out the window opposite her in the car.

"I agree," Aiden says as we come to the red light marking the end of the Anderson's subdivision.

"But these texts, together with the BPI file on their computer with the eight apparently missing in action people, lead me to believe that Sky and Eve were poking around an already dangerous situation, and it caught up to them before they were ready," Dawn explains.

"Okay, you make a solid argument hun," Jay says, "For all we know Eve's you-know-where is the place Sky and Eve have been taken to. Assuming it's all connected, I think we need to find their reddit post even more, not to mention press the Sombersets for as much information as they can possibly give us."

"And we need to do both those things anyway, so let's keep an open mind about things until we get a clearer picture of what we're up against," Aiden adds.

"Right," Dawn says, "Good thinking."

"Oh one more question girls," Jay calls back to us as we drive past industrial lots, "do you want to use your new names and pronouns with these people?"

Dawn and Ellie share a glance. Dawn raises a questioning eyebrow at us as she answers, "Yes for me please, I'd like to be Dawn from now on."

We hesitate, and I feel a flurry of emotions ranging from fear to euphoria and back again emanating from Ellie.

What do you think? I ask her privately.

I think I want to be Ellie, but what if it gets back to Mom and Dad? she asks.

I say screw them, do what you want to do hun. This is our life, and I'm not prepared to live it in constant fear of needing our parents' approval.

Ellie nods thoughtfully, then she raises her voice loud and clear. "I'd like to be Ellie as well please, the only people we're not telling yet are my parents."

"Understood," Aiden says, "I'm so sorry you have to hide from them dear."

Ellie shrugs, then remembers he can't see it. "It's fine," she says.

Soon after that we arrive at our destination. I can see a small black honda fit with darkened windows and a baby blue chevy pickup truck parked in the parking lot where we'd found Sky's phone. There's a group of people standing near the cars and watching us as we pull up.

I recognize Deirdre Somerset as the short and stocky lady with blonde hair in a bun on the left side of the trio of watchers, and I'd wager Audre is the tall statuesque woman with long wavy auburn hair standing right beside Deirdre. On the right side is a tall masculine looking person with short black hair, sideburns and beard, they have their arms crossed and a scowl on their face.

Aiden pulls into a parking spot a few spots away from the group.

"Well this should be interesting," he says, before opening his door and getting out of the car. Jay follows suit, and Claire, Dawn and I all exit out the left side door.

I stick close to Dawn and Dawn sticks close to Jay. Claire walks on Jay's other side, and Aiden comes around and takes up position on the other side of me. As a little group we walk closer to the three others.

Do you think these people are human? Ellie asks curiously.

No clue, but I'd wager no, I say.

We come to a stop about five feet away from the Sombersets and their friend, and we all spend a few seconds eyeing each other.

"Howdy," Jay says with both thumbs in his pockets, breaking the quiet.

"Hello Jay, Aiden," Deirdre replies, her face lined with stress.

"Hello Deirdre, Audre," Aiden says, "This is our daughter Dawn, her girlfriend Ellie, and our family friend Claire."

I feel my cheeks heating up at being called 'her girlfriend' and I take a step closer to Dawn.

“Hello Dawn, Ellie, Claire, Jay and Aiden,” Audre says, “I’m Audre, this is my wife Deirdre, and our dear friend Maurice.”

I notice Audre eyeing Ellie and I strangely as she speaks, as if we’re a puzzle she can’t quite figure out.

Maurice grunts in acknowledgement. “Why bring the kids here?” they ask gruffly, sweeping a hand towards Dawn and I.

I feel all eyes turn on us, and I want to shrink away in fear but I’m not in control of our body. Instead, I feel Ellie squeeze Dawn’s hand and stand firm, defiantly staring back at Maurice.

“Because they’ve so far been the most useful at tracking our lost children down. They found Sky’s phone and preserved the recording,” Aiden replies, breaking the mounting tension.

Maurice narrows their eyes.

“We’re both twenty three,” Dawn says a bit crossly, “We’re adults by any legal definition.”

That causes the tall broad shouldered person to let out a bark of laughter.

“Maurice!” Audre says, crossing her arms, “Stop antagonizing them. If they want to be treated like adults, they can be here.”

Maurice shrugs. “Fine,” they mutter. “Forgive my hostility, but I see no evidence that you’re not collaborators with the enemy who took Eve.”

“Can you chill man?” Audre says exasperatedly, turning to face the masc person. “These are people Eve trusted.”

“And now Eve’s gone,” Maurice says, drawing themselves up to their full height of maybe just barely six feet.

“Fair point, but we don’t have many other options,” Deirdre cuts in.

“There are many, many others out there we could turn to for support. But I suppose I would trust them even less so, fine,” Maurice says, seeming to decide this on the spot, “I’ll play along for now.”

“Thank you,” Audre says.

“Now that that’s dealt with,” Deirdre says brusquely, “let’s get down to business. Where did you find Sky’s phone?”

"It was in this section of the parking lot," Jay says.

"Do you know exactly where?" Maurice asks impatiently.

"Is that relevant?" Aiden says skeptically.

"Yes," Deirdre says, "it could help us pick up a scent."

"Deirdre!" Maurice hisses.

Ellie looks around in confusion for a second. *Do they have a dog with them or something?* she asks.

I think we're getting into the 'sworn not to discuss it' territory, judging by Maurice's reaction, I reply.

"A scent?" Jay asks cautiously.

Deirdre and Maurice both start to respond, but Audre cuts them off. "I have a really good nose," she says in a tone that brokers no argument. "And anyway it might help us identify who took our children, so please just tell us."

Aiden crosses his arms, looking frustrated, but he nods. "Dawn, Ellie, Jay, can you remember where we found it?"

Dawn and Ellie both nod.

"We parked over by that light pole," Dawn says, pointing to a lamp post with a wide circular yellow base about twenty meters to the southwest of our group.

"Yeah and it was in some weeds about... maybe ten meters southeast of the place we parked?" Ellie hazards.

Deirdre's group steps aside and lets Ellie and the Andersons lead the way towards the indicated area.

Once there, it's the work of a few minutes of searching to locate the exact weed patch we'd found the phone in. Everybody follows our lead as we troop towards a particularly large crack in the pavement.

"It was right down here," Ellie explains, kneeling and brushing our hand across the small patch of dirt and dandelions.

Maurice grunts in acknowledgement as the rest of the group spreads out in a little circle around us.

Audre comes over and kneels down across from us, placing her left hand down upon the loose gravel on the other side of the flowers. Jay, Claire, and Deirdre stay back, observing, while Maurice takes a stand behind Audre, and Dawn and Aiden do the same behind me.

“What the fuck were they doing out here?” Maurice mutters quietly.

“No clue,” Audre answers. Then she leans down and whispers something I can’t quite make out, looking quickly to the left and staring out at the vast swath of empty cracked pavement intently. For a moment, I swear I see a gleam of silver light shine from her eyes. Then I blink, and it’s gone. Audre’s gaze refocuses as she turns towards Deirdre.

“It’s the same people that took Gwen,” the red haired woman says brusquely.

“Audre,” Maurice says warningly.

“Sorry, but I’m with Deirdre on this one old friend,” Audre replies, “We need allies, hiding’s no longer serving our needs.”

“Why bother with a bunch of humans?” Maurice demands, their gaze sweeping over us all again. “No offense.”

“Some taken,” Jay answers amicably.

Maurice grunts. “Boohoo.”

Ellie and I watch the scene unfold, feeling distinctly uneasy. Aiden steps forward and puts his hand on our shoulder, pulling us back behind him. Ellie obliges, and steps back until we’re beside Dawn.

Claire steps forward from beside Jay and Deirdre. “Would you mind not doing magic without warning us first?” she asks Audre, gesturing towards the kneeling woman.

Audre looks up at her sharply, then gets to her feet and dusts herself off. Instead of deflecting as I’d expected, she says, “I needed to see what their vehicle looked like, to compare it with what we already know.”

Maurice looks to the heavens and spreads their hands wide. “Do secrets mean nothing to you?”

“And? What did it look like?” Aiden presses.

Audre takes a step backward towards Deirdre. "It was a big rectangular truck, kind of like a police wagon but painted blue and white with the 'Blue Project International' logo printed on the side."

There's quiet as we all process that.

"So you know what BPI is?" Jay asks, "It seemed like Eve and Sky were trying to figure that out."

"Yes, well, we didn't involve Eve or her human friends in our investigation and for good reason," Deirdre says. "BPI is a ruthless organization that has amassed a lot of behind-the-scenes political and monetary power in the few years they've been around. They've been implicated in many of the kidnappings our people have suffered."

"Fuck," Jay comments.

"Indeed," Deirdre replies.

"Could you spell out for us exactly who 'your people' are? And for that matter do you know why the BPI guy called Eve a 'V'?" Aiden inquires.

"No," Maurice answers gruffly.

"We're part of the Valence clan," Audre says at the same time, speaking over her friend, "And I suppose what you really want to know is that we're what popular culture thinks of as 'vampires'. 'V' is a ridiculously insecure codeword for that, I'd guess."

She smiles wide, and I watch as two of her canine teeth sharpen into fangs in real time.

"Called it," Jay says.

"Congratulations," Deirdre says dryly.

"I can't believe you," Maurice growls, "We may as well turn around and present our backs for the knife."

"We're not looking to backstab anyone," Jay says crossly, "And while it's none of our business what you are, every little bit of context for why Eve and Sky were taken helps. Is it only vampires getting taken?"

"No, I've heard through the grapevine that other supernatural communities have been affected as well," Deirdre replies.

Audre nods. "I don't suppose you'll share the same demographic information with us?" she asks, gesturing at the five of us.

"I'm just your garden variety human witch," Claire says from her position beside Jay, "Everyone else here is human sans the witch part, for now," she says, winking at Dawn and Ellie.

"Bullshit," Audre says. She levels a finger at Ellie and I. "What's going on with her, supernaturally speaking?"

Ellie's eyes go wide and her brain goes blank.

Here, allow me, I say, standing up from my loveseat and stepping towards the front. I don't really have a plan, but at least I'm not frozen. Ellie vacates the front gratefully, and I slide into control of the body.

Audre looks at us sharply as soon as I shift into the front, almost like she can tell something changed.

"Why do you ask?" Jay asks trepidatiously, before I can say anything.

"Because she's got one of the strongest auras I've ever seen on a 'garden variety' human," Audre says, never taking her bright calculating hazel eyes off mine, "and she's got a scent I've never encountered before."

This time it's my turn to blink confusedly at her. "What? What's an aura? And what do you mean about my scent?" I ask, taken aback.

"An aura is an energy field surrounding a person, place or thing," Claire explains quickly, "Auras generally are invisible, but some people can see them naturally, and sometimes using magic can briefly reveal one's aura's color."

"Okay," I say, processing that, "And what about our scent? What's weird about it?"

"You don't smell entirely like a human," Audre says cautiously, "care to explain why?"

What!? Ellie exclaims, *Maybe there is a third party governing our connection after all?*

Fuck I don't know, we need to get Anne to talk to this woman, I reply.

I shake my head and focus on the question, "That's bizarre, but very good to know. We don't really actually know what's going on with me, so that's more than we had to go off of before."

Audre looks surprised, but also suspicious. "Okay, let's say I believe you. What just happened to cause your aura to fluctuate like that?" she asks.

Uhm? I think, blanking for a moment.

I guess go with the truth? We switched? Ellie hazards.

“Oh, um,” I start, “it’s probably because Ellie and I are plural? My name’s Madelaine, and I just switched into the body from our mind,” I explain as simply as I can.

Audre blinks. “What does ‘plural’ mean?” she asks cautiously.

“Multiple minds sharing one body,” Jay answers for us, much to my relief. “It’s not necessarily a supernatural thing.”

“That... does make sense,” she says slowly. “Okay, so you’re plural. And what, you’re only partly human?”

Aiden steps in before I can answer.

“I’m sure there are quite a lot of secrets we’d all like to share, such as that one. But if we’re going to trust each other and we’re done doing magic here, why don’t we go talk somewhere more private? We can go back to our house, it’s safe enough, or if you have a more secure location we can go there,” Aiden suggests.

Maurice narrows their eyes. “I’m not so sure--”

“We’ll follow you to your place, just lead the way,” Audre says, cutting them off.

Maurice grumbles some more and Deirdre looks guarded, but both seem to accept Audre’s decision.

As a group we troop back to the cars and pile in.

Jay drives this time, while Aiden slides into the passenger seat and Claire takes up her spot in the middle row of seats. Dawn and I climb into the back of the vehicle and cuddle up as we buckle up.

Jay pulls out of the parking spot and moves a little ways away from the others, then waits patiently as Audre, driving the black honda fit, and Maurice, driving the blue chevy pickup truck, both start up their cars and get into position behind us.

“Alright, well that was exciting,” Aiden says in the meantime. “How is everyone holding up? Ellie and Maddie, I’m sorry you got put on the spot like that.”

“We’re okay,” I say, leaning my head on Dawn’s shoulder, “but thanks for checking in.”

"I'm hanging in there," Jay answers next. "Stressed but confident we'll get this sorted out still, somehow."

"I have faith that with these vampires' help we'll be able to find Sky and Eve, possibly soon if Anne can locate them," Claire says. "So I'm doing just fine."

"I'm glad someone has a positive outlook," Jay says.

"How about you Dawn, how are you doing?" Aiden asks, looking back at us with concern.

"I'm not great," Dawn admits, "I'm getting increasingly worried with every new thing I learn about who we're up against. These 'Blue Projects International' people scare the hell out of me."

I grip Dawn's hand tighter in mine and cozy up a little closer to her in a show of support.

Mind if I take over? Ellie asks, and I can tell she's itching to get some cuddling in herself.

Be my guest, I reply, taking a step back from the front as she steps forwards.

"That is extremely valid," Aiden says. "I'm sorry you're so stressed hun. If you need to take a break from thinking about this just say the word."

He looks over his shoulder at Claire, Dawn, Ellie and I. "That goes for everyone else too. If you need a time out, take it. This is a huge amount of stress and worry for all of us to bear. We need to make sure we're looking out for each other and ourselves as we try to find our child, and we need to all be functioning at a hundred percent if we're going to do this successfully."

I can see Jay nodding sadly in the rearview mirror as he replies, "Very good points all around love. Our mission, should we choose to accept it, is to rescue our child and possibly everyone else who's been taken against their will. That's some superhero bullshit right there, no one should ever be in this ridiculous situation. But I sure as hell don't trust the police to handle this, so here we are."

"You get kind of used to it once the supernatural becomes part of your life," Claire says. "Being the hero I mean. Magical folk are so marginalized that our existence is literally invisible to the public most of the time. And that means we take care of our problems on our own terms. Most of what I do day to day is help people solve supernatural or mundane crimes with magical means. That means serious robberies, kidnappings, murders, curses, you name it and I've probably helped someone out of it."

"And you do all this in Chicago?" Dawn asks incredulously.

"Yep, been a witch for hire for the past five years," Claire replies.

“Do you get many customers?” I ask curiously.

Claire’s cheeks turn a shade brighter. “Sometimes I do, other times I pick up another odd job or two for the season.”

“You’re going to allow us to pay your standard fee for helping us find Sky, right?” Aiden asks seriously.

“Alas, my pride was lost long ago. I will not refuse money honestly offered for a job,” Claire replies amicably.

“Good girl,” Jay says with a grin.

Claire just rolls her eyes. “Don’t make me start ‘good boy’ing you, blue,” she warns.

“That’s his plan exactly,” Aiden says with a smile in his voice.

Jay’s cheeks redden ever so slightly, but he keeps his attention focused on the road.

“It certainly wouldn’t sadden me if that were to happen,” he says.

“Talking about your feelings, eh? Good boy!” Claire exclaims with a slightly vicious smile. “Who’s a good boy? Jay is!”

This time Jay’s blush is significantly brighter and he chuckles. “Alright alright, not in front of the kids Claire.”

Claire’s smile doesn’t fade, but she remains quiet.

“Oh come on, let yourself have some fun dad,” Dawn pipes up.

“Don’t you start too missy, unless you want to get caught in the crossfire of compliments,” Jay cautions.

“Oh no, whatever will I do if the adults I love start complimenting me?” Dawn replies sardonically.

“I bet you’ll blush and cringe and look really cute,” Ellie says confidently, squeezing Dawn’s hand in hers.

Dawn blushes, cringes, and does indeed look super cute as she tries to deny it. “N-nuh-uh!” she says.

“Yeah-huh!” Claire says, turning around to pin Dawn with her crimson stare. “You all hatched just a few days ago, right?” she asks, looking between Dawn and us.

“Yes ma’am,” Ellie replies.

“And you already make a couple of stunningly beautiful young women, I’m so glad that Jay and Aiden brought you into my life, though I do wish it were under better circumstances,” Claire says with a sad smile.

“Yeah,” Dawn agrees emphatically, “Me too.”

“Me three and Maddie four,” Ellie says.

Jay puts his foot to the gas as the light ahead of us changes to green, and we reenter the Anderson’s suburb with the self-proclaimed vampires hot on our tails.

I wonder what makes them vampires? I think to Ellie.

What like, physically? Or how they turned? she asks.

Yeah, something like that. I guess I just want to know more about them in general, I muse.

I’m sure we’ll have plenty of time to talk and ask those questions once we rescue Sky and Eve, Ellie says.

Fair enough, I reply.

Soon enough we’re pulling into the Anderson’s driveway, and the next phase of Operation: Rescue Sky commences.

End of

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