

Father's Daughter

by Doomspark

A brief look at the events that shaped Petunia into who she is.

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When Petunia was almost three, she learned she could make some of her toys dance just by wanting them to. This entertaining discovery ended abruptly the day her father found out. It was just before her fourth birthday. He shouted and raged, and the thoroughly terrified Petunia promised him and herself over and over that she would never, ever do anything like that again. Something went *snap* inside her head, and suddenly the world wasn't quite as nice a place.

A few weeks after that, Father went away. Mother said he was never coming back. Petunia wasn't so sure. She remembered what he'd said on the Night of the Screaming – for so she had christened it – that he would always be watching her, and he'd punish her if she ever even thought about doing bad things again. She watched as people she didn't know gathered around a large, polished, rectangular wooden box, then picked it up and took it out behind the church and buried it. And once again, Mother said that Father was never coming back.

When Petunia was four and a half, Mother introduced her to Dad. Dad sat in Father's chair at the head of the dinner table, and Mother brought out the good dishes, the ones that were only for special occasions. When Petunia asked what Father would think, Mother scolded her and told her that she was a selfish little girl and Mother deserved to be happy. Dad didn't say anything but he scowled a lot.

Petunia had just turned five when Mother got sick. Her face and hands and feet were all swollen up, and she was tired all the time. Sometimes she picked at her dinner, and sometimes she'd eat three servings. It was a strange kind of sick, Petunia thought. When she asked if Mother needed a doctor, Dad laughed at her and said no. Mother said it was something all women did, and that Petunia would find out for herself. But Mother didn't get better, and after several weeks she went to the hospital. Dad went with her, and Petunia had to stay at home with a babysitter. The hospital made Mother better after a few days, and when she and Dad came home, they brought Petunia the most wonderful present: a little sister named Lily.

When Lily was two, Petunia found her making her toys dance. Terrified, she screamed at Lily to stop, that it was wrong, that Father would come and punish her! Mother and Dad came running. They didn't listen when Petunia tried to explain about Father. Instead, they scolded her and told her she was bad for being jealous of her baby sister. It didn't take Petunia long to realize that Mother and Dad liked it when Lily made the toys dance.

Petunia was ten and Lily was five on the beautiful summer day the strange bearded man came to visit. Mother and Dad were very excited and pleased. Mother said it was a great honor. Dad shook his hand and showed him around the house. The bearded man's eyes twinkled behind his half-moon glasses, and he smiled as watched Lily make the toys dance. Then she made a ball change color from green to blue, and the bearded man clapped his hands and gave her a stick. When she waved it, a stream of multi-colored stars shot out of it. Petunia scowled as she thought about how angry Father would be. And again, Mother and Dad didn't understand when she tried to explain. This time, they sent her to bed without supper "for being jealous".

Petunia spent that evening thinking. Lily wouldn't listen to her. Not while Mother and Dad were actively encouraging these freakish displays – that's what Father had called them. And Mother and Dad wouldn't listen to her because of the bearded man. And she didn't know how to get the bearded man to listen to her. So she would smile politely when she had to, and bide her time. And then when she could, she would leave. Go away forever. And Father would be happy.