

Isolation Escapism

Chapter 1

I cranked the thermostat up.

Not too high. Didn't want everyone to start melting! But high enough to fill the house with a pleasant, calm, summer-like warmth. Not a 'let's go to the beach' level of heat, but a 'let's have a barbecue' kind of warm. Nice and comfortable, ya know?

That done, I headed to the kitchen, made sure the snacks were all ready and nothing was missing. Sandwiches and chilled drinks and some fresh fruit. All stashed away in a cooling box. And, of course, a cake or two for dessert.

Should I add some biscuits?

Did we *have* any biscuits?

I shook my head.

No, this'd be enough. More than enough. No need to go overboard with making everything seem real. This would do.

I left the cooling box in the kitchen, walked to the house's living room. The plan cycled over and over again in my head, my brain searching for any flaws – any inconsistencies. But, deep down, I knew everything was good. It'd all fit together snugly.

Two beauties were waiting for me in the living room. Sitting next to each other on the sofa.

A black-haired woman in her late thirties, clad in jeans and a black turtleneck sweater that stretched wonderfully at the front. A beautiful woman with sharp cheek-bones and stunning green eyes, though a lot of that beauty was being squandered right now. She wore no make-up, nothing to enhance her natural beauty. Dark circles surrounded her eyes; a wordless admission that she'd been having trouble sleeping lately.

And next to her, a blonde girl that was just a single year older than my nineteen. Pretty, with a heart-shaped face and full, round cheeks. Glittering green eyes, full lips that were always curved into a smile – though too many of those had been forced in recent weeks. She was wearing a baggy white t-shirt and sweat pants; comfortable clothes that hid her slender, perky figure too well.

Both looked over at me as I entered; a nervous smile on the woman's face and an eager one on the girl's.

"Everyone ready?" I asked the pair – my mother and sister. "Good. Then let's get right into it!"

"A warm summer day," I said softly, eyes flicking between the two serene faces. "Not too hot, a little cloudy, but the sun is out and shining. Birds singing, a gentle breeze, everything calm and peaceful."

Both Mom and Kaley soaked the words in without hesitation.

"We're at the lake, sitting on a grassy hill with a beautiful view of the surroundings. There's no-one else around, it's just us three. Out enjoying the warm, lovely weather. The outside world – the real world – doesn't matter. It doesn't exist. All that matters is the three of us on that grassy hill, enjoying our time together as a family. Not a care in the world. Not a single worry to bog us down. Everything is... Wonderful."

It was evening. The three of us in the living room – my mother and sister on the sofa, eyes closed and bodies relaxed. If not for the thermostat, we'd have all been shivering. And yet, in their minds, I was painting this wonderful picture. A scene for them to lose themselves in.

Months into the pandemic, with no idea how much longer it'd go on for – save that it wouldn't be over any time soon. It was enough to stress anyone out. But, for Mom and Kaley, it was worse.

They were 'vulnerable'.

Kaley barely out of her teens, Mom no older than forty. And both were considered 'high-risk individuals' for the pandemic. Unable to leave the house or interact with the outside world in any meaningful way. All thanks to a rare genetic mutation that affected their white blood cells.

Me? I was fine. The genetic mutation that'd fucked over Mom and Kaley had skipped me. But I was trapped here with them all the same. I couldn't very well risk going out and catching something, not when I'd be bringing it back to these two.

The first few months, we'd managed just fine. Our family was close, so there wasn't any bickering or anything. Mom could work from home and me and Kaley could study online. For a time, the three of us coped with the isolation of our self-imposed prison sentence well enough.

But, as the months passed by, things began to strain.

The human mind wasn't built for long-term confinement. Even if we all got along just fine, it was only a matter of time before the stress and isolation drove us to madness.

It'd been my idea to do this.

Hypnosis.

A way of getting out of the house without *actually* going outside.

The idea was pretty simple. I set up a scenario for the three of us to act out, then hypnotise my mother and sister to believe it was really true. For a few hours, they could let themselves relax and unwind, fully believing that they were doing something utterly mundane. Then, when it's time to go to bed, I'd end the illusion I'd put them under. Simple.

Today, the 'scenario' was a picnic by the lake.

"Everything is calm," I told the women. "Everything is totally normal. No worries. No stress. No anxiety. Just the three of us sitting on our grassy hill with our picnic. Sandwiches and cakes and drinks..."

As always, their minds accepted my new, fake reality without complaint. Without hesitation.

They were both all too eager for the escapism.

We all were.

My sister's laughter rang out, loud and unrestrained.

"You didn't," Kaley gasped between bouts of laughter. "There's no way!"

"I did," I blushed, looking down at the living room carpet.

It was odd, knowing that my mother and sister would see and *feel* the carpet as grass. That lightbulb above us? That, in their eyes, was the sun.

"It was the only thing I could use!" I told them, face a shade of bright crimson. "There wasn't a toilet plunger or brush or anything that I could use. It was the only thing there!"

"So," Kaley said, inhaling a deep breath, smile spread wide. "Let me get this straight. You hook up with a girl and she takes you back to her place..."

I nodded my head, unable to look up at her.

"And you, for whatever reason, decide – before you and her have the chance to do anything – that you need to take a dump."

"I didn't 'decide'," I mumbled. "I had to go..."

"You take a massive shit in her toilet and end up clogging the thing. Straight up blocked the toilet. And, rather than ignore it and go get laid, you decide 'hey, I should probably unclog that, huh?'. And-"

"I wasn't going to leave it there!" I grunted. "That'd be-"

"What?" Kaley laughed. "Rude? Gross? *Embarrassing*? So you think to yourself 'I'll unclog it' and start looking around for something to use. But there's no plunger, no toilet brush, nothing like that. All you manage to find is..."

"Her dildo," I sighed, face hot. "Suction-cupped to the shower wall."

"And then, genius that you are, you somehow manage to *drop* it into the toilet just as the girl starts knocking on the bathroom door and asking what's taking so long."

"Yes," I choked out. "That sounds about right."

Kaley rolled onto her back, laughed at the ceiling. I glanced up, saw Mom's raised eyebrow, felt a piece of me die inside.

"You," Kaley laughed, "little brother, are *hopeless*."

Despite the raised eyebrow, Mom was smiling. And it was fairly obvious how 'entertained' my sister was from the embarrassing experience I'd decided to share. So, all in all, it was worth humiliating myself by sharing it with them.

"It's getting pretty late," I said, glancing at a clock on the wall. "Might be time for us to pack up and head home."

"Late?" Mom said, brow raising even higher. "It's barely noon."

"He's just being shy," Kaley chuckled. "Wants to head home so we won't be able to remind him about his *shitty* date."

"Nah," I sighed, shaking my head. "It really is late. We should go soon."

I lifted my right hand, pressed thumb to middle finger.

The sound of the finger snap cut through both women.

Mom's face slumped, her shoulders drooping instantly. Kaley's body tensed, back stiffening. Both looked at me, eyes filled with an emotion I couldn't quite place. Faint resentment at me stripping away their momentary joy? Longing for more escapism? Gratitude for my allowing them to have this time, even if it'd just come to an end?

It wasn't always like that.

Sometimes, they'd be smiling and happy even after I ended the illusions. Most of the time, they'd be neutral – neither happy nor particularly stressed.

My heart twisted inside my chest at the sight of them. Their worn-down exhaustion.

"Bed time," Mom spoke softly, pushing herself up off the carpet. "Yes, that sounds about right. Clean up and then bed..."

Kaley forced a smile onto her face, nodded her head.

I tapped on my mother's bedroom door.

"Come in," her voice rang out from the other side.

Before opening the door, I inhaled a deep breath. My hand turned the doorknob, and I stepped inside the master bedroom.

It was well past midnight. Usually, Mom would've been asleep by now. Yet, as I'd passed her room on the way to my own, I'd noticed the light was still on. I hadn't been able to help myself – ever since I'd started hypnotising Mom and Kaley, giving them their sweet escapism, it was like I'd become the family's appointed 'de-stressor'. If Mom was awake this late, it wouldn't be for any good reason, and so it was my job to make things better.

She was laying in bed, blankets covering everything below her waist. Wearing a tight-fitting but otherwise modest nightie, with the ever-present bags under her eyes. She set the book she'd been reading down on the bed beside her, forced a smile onto her face.

"Is everything okay, Michael?" She asked me. "It's late. Shouldn't you be in bed by now?"

"I'm fine," I shrugged, walking over to the bed. I sat down on the edge - a few feet from Mom. "I was just heading to bed, actually. I saw your light on and figured I'd check up on you. Any news from Dad?"

The smile on her face faltered.

"The usual," she said, voice sinking. "A text. His next flight is tomorrow."

"It won't last forever," I promised her. "The pandemic will be over eventually."

My father was a pilot.

Because of his job taking him all over the world, bringing him into contact with countless people on a daily basis, we all decided it'd be best for Mom and Kaley if Dad

stayed away for the duration of the lock-down. The risk of him bringing the virus home with him was just too high.

That'd been back at the beginning. When we'd thought the isolation would only last a few weeks.

Dad hadn't been home in so many months.

"I know," Mom sighed, closing her eyes.

The anguish in her face was obvious. A blind man could see how much she was suffering.

Locked here for months, her husband unable to come home, no end in sight for this self-imposed isolation. It was wearing her down, even *with* the daily hypnotic escapes. What I was doing with the hypnosis – it wasn't enough.

"I have an idea," I found myself saying before the thought had a chance to fully form. "Something to help you sleep easier."

For a moment, it looked as if my mother would decline. She flashed me a smile that seemed to say 'thank you for the offer but I'm good', opened her mouth to speak. But something stopped her. A weight on her shoulders that'd been building and building ever since our isolation began. Deep down, she *knew* she needed help. Needed *something* to keep her going.

"It's..." She glanced away. "What idea?"

In truth, I wasn't exactly sure *what* my plan was.

My 'idea', the one that'd come to me half-formed and incomplete, was simply to hypnotise my mother and 'make things better'.

The first part of that? Easy.

I stood beside the bed, eyes on my mother's serene face. Her mind, tired as it was, had been too simple to guide into a trance. At this point, I had weeks worth of experience under my belt – almost daily hypnosis sessions. *That* part wasn't the problem.

It was the 'make things better' part of the plan that was the issue.

I could probably put Mom to sleep. She was half-way there already, what with the hypnotic trance. In all likelihood, I'd be able to tell her mind to shut off and go to sleep, and it would. I was pretty sure I could do that.

But getting Mom to sleep for one night? That wouldn't help. Not really.

She'd wake up tomorrow, and all the stress and anxiety and pain would still be there. She'd still be trapped. Her husband would still be a thousand miles away, unable to return home. Nothing *real* would change.

One night's sleep.

That was easy.

But it wouldn't help. It wouldn't save my mother from her misery.

So... what *would*?

What could I do to help her smile - *really* smile – again?

"You miss Dad," my mouth moved, once again speaking before I'd had a chance to think the idea through. "You miss your husband. It's been months since you've seen him. Months and months. That can't be easy. It must feel like there's a giant hole in your heart. A piece of your life missing."

My words hit home.

Mom's face warped; eyebrows knitting together in a wince, lips pursing. Even through the relaxing haze of hypnosis, her pain was evident.

She missed Dad...

I couldn't bring him here and reunite them. *That* was outside of my powers. But I could make Mom *believe* he was here. If only for a short while. I could let her have that reunion, let her believe that everything was back to normal.

That *had* to help her, right?

I stood back as my mother's eyes blinked open.

My heart thumped loudly in my chest and I held my breath, waiting for her to snap fully out of the trance.

It always took a few seconds. From the moment their eyes opened, to them being fully awake and aware. There was a tiny gap where Mom and Kaley would blink away their confusion and realise where they were.

A few seconds of Mom blinking, rubbing her eyes, yawning.

Then she looked at me.

She froze. Every inch of her body went statue-still. Every part of her, except her eyes.

They widened, began to water.

The next thing I knew, Mom was launching herself off her bed – tackle-hugging me and wrapping me in an embrace so tight I couldn't breathe. Her slender arms hooked around my back, her huge breasts squeezed heavily against my chest, her cheek brushed mine, her long hair fell over my face.

I was stunned.

It'd been... too long since I'd seen this kind of energy from Mom.

"Honey," she breathed, voice shaky. "I've missed you."

I gulped, could think of nothing to say.

And so, silently, we stood there. Her arms tight around me, my arms gentle around her. I felt Mom melt into me, felt her trembling warmth.

When she pulled away, moved her head off my shoulder and instead looked right at me face, I opened my mouth to speak. Tell her that everything was going to be okay, comfort her properly. But, before any words could form in my mouth, my mother leaned forward.

Her lips met mine, her tongue found its way into my mouth.

I froze completely.

My mind just about exploded inside my skull. My heart felt like it'd stopped beating.

Mom – my mother – was *kissing* me.

That one fact consumed me.

It lasted only a moment. A brief, awkward second in which she kissed me like a lover and I remained totally and utterly motionless.

Confused, Mom took a step back away from me.

Her eyes narrowed and, behind her beautiful irises, I saw the cogs beginning to turn. Saw the hypnotic commands I'd given her – to see me as Dad – fading away. She stared at me, realisation dawning in her wide, horrified eyes.

A hand shot to her mouth. She took another step back, looked away from me. Her face bright red, her body trembling.

"I think," I croaked, "I'm gonna... go to bed now..."

She didn't look at me.

In fact, she turned her back to me, hand still covering her mouth.

I couldn't sleep.

Usually, it was pretty easy for me to knock out. All I had to do was lay down, close my eyes, and I was out cold.

But tonight? I couldn't stop thinking.

Or, more accurately, I couldn't stop *feeling*.

My mother's mouth on mine. Her body pressed to me. Her tongue pushing its way past my lips. Her arms around my body. Her breath on my neck.

Mom was attractive. I knew that. I wasn't blind.

But, even so, I'd never thought about her like *this* before.

When I closed my eyes, I saw her face staring at me. Biting her lip. Urging me closer.

Down below, my cock throbbed. Hard and demanding.

I wouldn't be able to sleep. Not with *that* there.

And it showed no signs of going away any time soon.

"Don't do it," I warned myself. "You can't go back if you do..."

But I was tired, my mind told me. I needed to sleep. And the only way I was going to be able to sleep was if I dealt with my boner. Did it really matter *who* I was thinking about as I rubbed one out?

Yes. Yes, it did.

But, against my better judgement, I reached down there all the same.

Eyes closed, cock in hand, images of my mother in my head.

What was the worst that could happen?

Twenty minutes later, I was fast asleep. Too tired and worn out to even dream. Totally unaware that I'd just taken my first step down a dark, terrible, wonderful path.