

## Isolation Escapism

### Chapter 2

The four walls around me felt suffocating. Like I was in a cage without bars, a little prison cell with no escape. I tried everything I could to take my mind off what happened; played video games, watched movies and shows online, messaged friends, even got out my old guitar and practised.

None of it worked.

My thoughts always ended up in the same place, always drifted right back to Mom and her kiss.

She'd thought I was Dad. When she kissed me, she'd fully believed it was her husband and not her son she trying to make out with. What happened – the kiss – it wasn't her fault.

I should have known better. I should have predicted it.

All I'd wanted was to give her a few minutes of happiness. A little while where her husband wasn't half the world away – gone and not coming back 'til who-knew when. For just a couple of minutes, I wanted her to not feel that hole in her heart. I hadn't wanted the kiss. That's not why I'd done it!

And yet...

Why didn't I regret it?

I should, shouldn't I? I *should* regret my actions, I *should* regret that I'd ended up kissing my own mother – accidentally tricked her into kissing me.

But I didn't.

Just like I didn't regret rubbing one out afterwards.

I'd made a mistake is all. It wasn't *my* fault. I hadn't done anything wrong. On the contrary, I'd been trying to *help* Mom with her loneliness. *She's* the one who'd made a move on *me*. I wasn't to blame, so of course I shouldn't feel guilty about of it. Of course I shouldn't regret it.

And me jacking off afterwards? It was completely natural.

Mom was an attractive woman. Very attractive. And I hadn't gotten laid in months. So many months. It made sense that I'd be sexually frustrated and wound up. Me jacking off thinking about Mom after that kiss? It was natural for a guy who'd only had his right hand as company for the better part of a year.

It wasn't *my* fault.

We were all trapped here. That's what it all came down to in the end. The three of us, isolated in this house together. It was enough to drive anyone mad. Shit was *bound* to happen.

The question was; where did we go from here?

If not for the pandemic, I'd have left the house – stayed over at a friend's place for a few days. Let the awkwardness fade away before coming home and pretending nothing had happened. Unfortunately, that wasn't an option now. I was stuck in this house with Mom and Kaley. There was no avoiding the awkwardness.

Dammit!

Why did she have to kiss me? Worse still, why did she have to snap out of the hypnotic illusion like she did?

I knew the answers to both question, naturally.

She kissed me because she was craving affection from her absent husband. And she snapped out of the illusion because her mind had recognised something was wrong and, in a sense, rebooted itself – discarding the illusion and seeing reality.

Dammit.

How was I going to be able to look her in the eye today?

That kiss? It was the type of thing that might well scar our relationship and mother

and son forever. She'd never forget that-

Wait.

She'd never forget...

Unless, perhaps, she was *made* to?

Was it possible? Could I use hypnosis to make Mom forget all about what'd happened last night? Remove the memory from her brain, or else lock it away somewhere deep. Could I do that?

Theoretically, from what I knew about hypnosis, it *should* be possible.

Highly unethical and a total abuse of trust.

But possible.

The plan I had for today's hypnosis session with Mom and Kaley involved the three of us taking a 'car ride' together. A simple, ordinary event that most people wouldn't think twice about. But for Mom and Kaley – who hadn't left the house in months – even a car ride would feel freeing and fresh.

Slipping in a command for Mom to forget all about last night would be a simple thing.

But... Should I?

"Did you and Mom get into an argument again?"

I turned around, saw Kaley standing in the kitchen doorway. The light behind her cast her body in a silhouette. A curvy, slender, sexy silhouette with distractingly perky breasts.

"No," I answered quickly. "What makes you think-"

"You're both walking around on eggshells. Mom's being quieter than usual, and you're being all weird too. What's going on?"

"N- Nothing's going on," I glanced away, didn't want Kaley to see the lie in my eyes. "It's just quarantine. We're all tired and annoyed and a lil' stir-crazy. That's all."

Knowing Kaley, she wouldn't buy it.

She remained silent for a long moment. I could feel her eyes on me, staring at me. Trying to peel the truth out of me with her sharp, unwavering gaze.

Finally, she shrugged.

"Whatever," Kaley said, walking into the kitchen and heading straight for the fridge.

I made a hasty retreat, not looking back as I returned to my room. Once inside, I shut the door tight behind myself. Sat down on my bed and sighed.

In a few hours, when I hypnotised them both again, I'd have to make sure I convinced Kaley's mind that everything was okay too. Lock away Mom's memory of last night, make Kaley forget about me and Mom acting weird. Totally do-able.

In for a penny, in for a pound, right?

If I was going to be messing with Mom's memories, I might as well do the same with Kaley. Make sure everyone was on the same page.

It was for the best.

"Imagine a car," I told them, voice even and calm. Relaxed. "A nice sedan. Black and modern and sleek. Driving along a lovely country road. Lots of trees, meadows, lakes. Vibrant greens and deep, clear blues. Not a cloud in the sky. It's warm. Not overly hot - the air conditioner is on. But a pleasant, summertime warm."

Both of them absorbed my words without so much as a fluttered eyelid. Their minds were accustomed to hypnosis at this point, knew to expect these illusions and false realities. *This* part of the hypnotic trance would be easy enough. It was what came later that'd be the real challenge.

"Me and Kaley in the back, Mom in the passenger seat, Dad in the driver's. He's too intent on the road and the journey to talk to any of us, or be involved in anything we're

doing. For the most part, we've all practically forgotten he's even there. The car might as well be driving by itself. It's just the three of us."

At the mention of Dad, Mom's lips quivered slightly – her eyebrows narrowing. She didn't snap out of the trance, but thoughts of Dad – especially after last night – were bound to have some kind of impact.

"The car windows are rolled down. Not all the way, but enough to let a cool breeze into the car as we drive along. It doesn't matter where we're going, or where we've been. In this moment, nothing matters at all. A pleasantly warm car, a gentle breeze, tunes playing on the radio, the three of us together – enjoying a summer drive. A relaxing, lovely drive."

I spent the next few minutes repeating that sentiment. Not word-for-word, but the general gist of it. Car drive, relaxing, happy, care-free. Over and over until my words sunk deep into Mom and Kaley's subconscious minds. I added little details here and there to give more life to the illusion – it was a road-trip, we were currently passing by fields of flowers, Mom had packed snacks for us before we left. Little details to help their minds accept this new, fake reality.

Once I was confident my illusion would stick, it was time to move on to *other* things.

"Sometimes," I said, taking a deep breath. Once I started down this path, there'd be no going back. "Sometimes, memories do nothing but cause us harm. They keep us from being able to enjoy simple things, and offer us nothing in return except discomfort. Some memories would be better off not existing."

A part of me wanted to stop then. To leave things as they were. Sure, Mom might be a bit awkward around me for a while. But she'd get over it eventually.

I shook my head, pushed that part of me deep down.

No. This way was better. For everyone.

"Like last night, Mom."

This time, her eyelids did flutter. Her frown deepened and her lips twitched. But she didn't wake up. Didn't snap out of the trance.

"What happened... Don't you want to forget it? Don't you want things to be normal between us?"

"Yes," Mom answered softly, voice holding a tiny hint of emotion.

"You can," I told her. "You *can* forget it. Things *can* go back to normal. Last night? It didn't happen. Nothing happened at all. It was just an ordinary, uneventful evening. All you have to do is take that memory and lock it away for me. Imagine a big box is your mind, a place for unwanted memories to go. Can you do that for me?"

"Yes," Mom said, face relaxing a little.

"Picture it. Picture the box. And, once you've done that, take your memories from last night and put them in the box. All the things you don't want to remember. All the stuff you want to forget from last night. Put them in the box..."

A minute or two of repetition and reinforcement, and I was confident that the job was done.

Curiously, I felt no guilt for it.

I'd done what was needed.

My gaze flicked to Kaley, checking to make sure the trance hadn't worn off for her during my instructions to Mom. Then, just to be sure, I went over the initial goal of the trance once again. The illusionary car drive, the fantasy I'd woven for them.

That done, it was time to wake them up.

"Today is lovely," Mom sighed happily.

She was sitting in the living room's armchair, head back and eyes closed – enjoying a breeze that didn't actually exist. Smiling and content. Her worries evaporating away.

"Mm'hm," Kaley hummed in agreement.

My beautiful sister sat next to me on the sofa, quietly reading a book.

It happened like this sometimes. Rather than spend the duration of the illusion chatting with each other, Mom and Kaley would spend the time relaxing in near-silence instead. Unwinding from the stress of daily life, I figured.

I was happy for them. Glad I could give them this opportunity to rest.

Even if it wasn't so great for *me*.

The two of them might be happy with the illusion, but I wasn't under the same spell as they were. They had a warm summer day and a cool, relaxing breeze – wonderful views 'n' all. Me? I was sitting in my living room with nothing to do but listen to the radio.

I sat back on the sofa, crossed my arms, and waited.

It was the only thing I could do.

Wait.

Give them, Mom and Kaley, an escape from the stress and anxiety. If it cost me an hour of boredom, so be it.

Still... The next illusion I crafted for them would have to be more entertaining. Something fun for me to be a part of. As much as I was happy to sit back and be bored, why settle for it when I could be having a good time too?

Come to think of it, what was the next illusion I had planned?

I think it was 'the three of us go to a restaurant'. Some dumb idea that involved us all eating imaginary food that Mom and Kaley would love. Which, as I sat there bored out of my mind, sounded anything but appealing.

"Don't stay up too late you two," Mom smiled, pushing herself to her feet. "Just because the world is on fire, doesn't mean you get to disrupt your sleep schedule. You've got lots of studying to do tomorrow."

"Yeah, yeah," Kaley waved, not looking away from the television. "G'night."

"Goodnight Mom," I said.

When she was gone, I looked to my sister – sitting with her feet up on the sofa, wearing a baggy shirt and sweat pants.

She was definitely attractive. Too attractive, really. Back when we'd been in highschool, every guy I knew wanted to date – or, more accurately, *bone* – my sister. It'd strained a lot of friendships, to be sure. But Kaley could hardly be blamed for that. It wasn't like she'd asked to be born beautiful.

Long blonde hair and emerald green eyes. Extremely pale skin from having spent so long indoors. She had full, pink lips and a pleasant smile – not a forced one today, either. Her eyes were on the television screen, the documentary she'd put on to watch reflected in her stunning irises.

Despite myself, I found my eyes flicking down at Kaley's body. Her slender curves, the massive protrusions over her chest.

I told myself it was because of the solitude. The isolation. I hadn't gotten laid in so long. *That's* why I couldn't help looking at Mom and Kaley. It wasn't *me*, it was just my dumb body and its stupid hormones lusting after the only females around.

"How long do you think this'll last?" I forced myself to ask. A question to take my mind off how unbelievably sexy my sister was.

"This?" Kaley shrugged, nodded to the television. "About twenty minutes left, give or take."

"No, not that. The pandemic."

Kaley tensed.

Slowly, with a soft sigh, she reached for the TV remote, pointed it at the screen. The documentary paused and Kaley turned to look at me, smile gone.

"Months more, at least," she said, eyes locked with mine. "If not longer."

"Are you... Are you holding up okay?"

She stared at me, a blank look on her face.

"I know it's difficult," I said quickly. "Mom's been having a hard time lately too. It's alright, you know, if you're not doing okay. I just want to--"

"No," Kaley stated clearly. "I'm not okay, Michael. Neither is Mom. And I doubt you're okay either. We're all slowly losing our minds in here. The hypno stuff you've been doing is nice 'n' all, but it's not really *helping* anything. It's not making life any easier. It's momentary escapes from reality, but it doesn't actually *change* reality. No, I'm not 'okay'."

"Uh..." I gulped. "Alright..."

"Anything else you wanna ask?" Kaley said, forcing a smile.

"Not really..."

"Great! Then I'm gonna go back to watching this, and you can go back to doing that silent brooding thing you do."

Brooding thing?

I shook my head, turned away from my sister.

The documentary she was watching resumed, filling the silence that Kaley's words had left behind.

I tried not to let my sister's mood get to me. She was a little snippy, sure. But who wouldn't be, given the circumstances? It wasn't her fault that she was being a little bitchy. Really, she was right.

Hypnotising her and Mom? It was just a momentary escape.

The illusions were nice, allowed them to let go for a little while. A couple of minutes every day where they weren't being overwhelmed by stress. Sometimes, even a full hour. But, it wasn't exactly *changing* anything. Not really.

Nothing I was doing – with the sole exception of locking that one memory away from Mom – would last beyond an hour.

Or, if I put it another way, I wasn't doing *enough*.

When I started hypnotising Mom and Kaley a few weeks ago, I'd been worried about doing something wrong – paranoid that I might accidentally put one of them in a coma or something, damage them beyond repair. But, after all the sessions since then, I'd grown a lot more comfortable and confident in my abilities.

Perhaps it was time to take things a step further.

Hypnosis opened a door directly to the subject's subconscious. Using that doorway to paint illusions and make mundane fantasies real, that was simple. Beginner stuff. But it was far from the *only* thing I could do. With that doorway, that access to the subconscious mind, there wasn't a whole lot I *couldn't* do.

Helping Kaley and Mom with their stress and anxiety, removing those things from them completely, was entirely possible.

I'd just need to push their minds a little further than I had up 'til now. That was all.

I could make Mom happy, put a genuine smile on Kaley's face. I was certain of it. I could make everything better. And I could do it without them ever knowing.

When Kaley's documentary finished, she headed to bed.

I stayed in the living room, thoughts circling around inside my head. Options and possibilities.

In order to help them - truly help them – I'd first need to widen my control. Open their minds up and give myself more power – more leeway – when it came to hypnotic programming. The more influence I had over their minds, the easier it'd be to make long-term changes to their thought patterns – fully shed them of their stress and anxiety.

It'd take time, and trust. And a lot of work on my part.

But it was do-able.

And, in the end, it'd mean Mom and Kaley *would* be happier as a result.

I'd be an asshole *not* to do it.

Right?