

The Ultimate Form

Chapter 2

Laugh lines. That's what people called them. The little wrinkles at the corners of my eyes, the faint sag in the skin. People said they were a sign of a happy life, one filled with smiles and laughter. That's how I knew they were lying.

They weren't laugh lines. They were wrinkles.

Ordinary, ugly wrinkles.

It wasn't just that I could see it, either. I could *feel* it. My skin losing its tight firmness, the sag and strain. I could feel the years creeping up on me in my very skin. My hair was beginning to lose its colour, my eyes were less vibrant, my lips losing their fullness. My bones and joints were beginning to ache with age too.

I was in my mid-forties. I shouldn't feel this *old*.

But I did.

I stared at my mirror, at the naked woman in the reflection.

Where had my good looks gone?

When I was younger – Christ, even just a decade ago – I'd been a stunner. Beautiful and sexy. The kind of woman who turned heads and got double-takes. Now I was just plain. Boring. Unattractive.

Dark circles surrounded my eyes, my shoulders and back slumped forward with the weight on my chest. Two large breasts – once round and soft and full. Now they sagged down, ugly blue veins surrounding their large, dark brown areola.

What'd happened to me? I used to be the sexiest lil' thing around.

Maybe if I hadn't married that asshole, I wouldn't have ended up where I was now. If I hadn't put my body through three pregnancies, maybe I wouldn't look and feel like I now did. If I hadn't been so stupid when I was younger, made the horrible decision to date Garry back then, how would my life have turned out?

I sighed.

No point thinking about that. Not any more. My glory days were over, I had to accept that. Accept that I let that asshole prevent me from enjoying them.

My eyes drifted over my body one more time – taking in the stretch marks, the sagging, the blotches and scars.

What I wouldn't give to have the last twenty years back.

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Garry opened the door, eyebrows narrowed.

Who the fuck was-

All thoughts ceased. His eyes shot open.

"Step aside," the nerd growled. "Let me into your apartment."

Garry's body moved automatically. His arm ignoring the desire he had to slam the door in the nerd's face, his legs shifting with a will of their own. He stepped aside, allowed the nerd to enter his apartment unchallenged.

As he entered, the egghead shut the door behind himself.

"What the fuck do-"

"Be quiet, thief," the head nerd said, voice harsh. "You will not speak until I give you express permission to do so. Lead me to somewhere we can sit down."

Garry's mouth clamped shut, refused to open. His body began moving again, leading the nerd to his bed.

His apartment was small. No chairs or sofa. Just a bed and a TV and a fridge that didn't work. No where to sit but on the edge of the bed or on the floor.

The nerd's eyes roamed the tiny apartment, a look of unmasked disgust written over

his face. He was wearing a white lab coat; a familiar-looking laptop held in one hand and the nine-button remote in the other.

What the hell was going on?

Garry tried to speak, tried to shout, but his mouth refused to obey.

He sat down on his bed, eyes wide.

What was this prick's name again? Something pompous. Xavier something-or-other. What was he doing there, in Garry's apartment?

The answer was obvious.

He wanted the special metallic pills back.

The nerd – Xavier – didn't sit down. He stood staring at Garry, eyes hot with anger. Garry stared right back, his mind racing. Why couldn't he talk? Why had his body obeyed the arrogant prick like that? What was going on?

On the edge of his vision, Garry saw the nerd's arm tense ever so slightly – his thumb pressing down on the nine-button remote.

"Where are the eight clusters you stole?" Xavier growled.

Clusters?

Eight things that Garry had stolen. That could only mean the metallic pills. They were called clusters?

Garry's mouth opened, but no words came out.

A momentary expression of confusion crossed the nerd's face. Then he rolled his eyes.

"You may resume speaking," the nerd said, thumb pressing on the remote.

"In my pocket," Garry answered instantly. His hand moved automatically, pointing to his upper left leg. "The left pocket."

The remote. Somehow, the remote was controlling him.

That had to be it.

His mind, unusually clear, focussed back to the drug trail. To the interviews, when Xavier was asking questions while using the remote. He'd answered them all correctly and honestly, hadn't he?

What else could it be?

The remote had power over him.

His body had reacted instantly after being given orders. To let the nerd into his apartment, to lead him somewhere they could sit, even gesturing to his leg automatically. He couldn't resist it, his body moved without him having any control over it.

"Pull them out of your pocket," Xavier growled.

Again, his thumb pressed the same button on the remote as he spoke.

Again, Garry's body reacted instantly, moved on its own.

Nine pills – clusters – including the one he'd swallowed. Nine buttons on the remote.

As he reached into his pocket, Garry's mind raced.

He'd do anything and everything the egghead told him to, so long as the button was pressed. He knew it, somehow. If the nerd told him to jump off a bridge, his body would obey. And he couldn't do anything he'd been told not to – like speaking. If the nerd forbade him from eating, Garry's body would starve itself to death. He'd do anything the nerd commanded, so long as the remote was involved.

But could he do something he hadn't been specifically told not to do?

All eight pills clutched in his fist, Garry pulled his left hand from the pocket. As the nerd's gaze locked onto the closed fist, Garry clenched his right.

The nerd hadn't ordered Garry *not* to attack him.

Xavier's mouth opened.

Before he could utter another word – give another command – Garry lunged forward.

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I walked down aisle after aisle, eyes roaming the shelves for the exact type of chocolate Alice liked.

Fussy brat. She'd always been like that, ever since she was a child. Would always have one particular brand of something that she liked, and refused to have anything else. It was either this type of French perfume or no perfume, this type of pompous Belgian chocolate or no chocolate at all. And, if she didn't get exactly what she wanted, she made life difficult for everyone else. As a kid, she'd thrown tantrums. As an adult, she complained and moaned for hours on end.

The other two were fine. They had their preferences, sure, but they didn't act like complete bitches when I forgot to buy one tiny thing for them.

I walked down another aisle, hoping and praying that Alice's stupid chocolate was there. That this stupid store had it in stock. Knowing my luck, they didn't. And I'd have to deal with complaining and whining about it all night.

"Over here," a girl's voice called.

I spun, sighed with relief.

Benny was holding up Alice's *special* chocolate, a wide grin on her face. She was standing in a section I'd already searched.

Must have missed it. Walked right past it.

My eyes weren't as keen as they used to be.

My middle daughter – the only one that chose to come with me when I went shopping – jogged over to me, chocolate in hand.

She handed it to me, strolled down the aisle ahead of me.

As I watched her from behind, I couldn't help but feel an ever more familiar sensation of envy. I tried to smother it, as I always did, but every day, the feeling got harder to fight.

My daughters – all three of them – were beautiful. Youthful.

And I wasn't. Not any more.

A few years ago, guys would check me out and flirt with me on the streets. Even with my daughters there, even knowing I was married, they'd want me. I'd been called a MILF on more than one occasion.

Now, when I was with one of my daughters, it was them that guys would check out. Not me. My much younger, much more attractive daughters. Guys barely spared me a glance any more. Even when I was with Benny, in her boyish clothes and lack of make-up, her indifferent to her appearance. Even when I was with Cat, who went out of her way to *hide* her looks and body.

I sighed, continued shopping.

Benny didn't realise how lucky she was. None of my daughters did. I'd kill to switch places with any one of them.

Seduce man after man, party, live the life I never had a chance to.

I glanced at Benny, at her perfect, youthful, sexy body. Envy and jealousy rolled around inside me once more. I turned my gaze away, forced my mind to focus on shopping.

Dinner. What was I going to make for dinner today?

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Garry towered over the crumpled nerd. Xavier was curled up on the floor, clutching his stomach. The remote and laptop had left the arrogant prick's fingers the moment Garry's fist had made contact. Garry leaned forward, snatched both off the ground and tossed

them onto his bed.

Time to get some answers.

"You were controlling me," Garry said, crossing his arms and watched the nerd intently. "How?"

Xavier glanced up at him, eyes wide.

The man's mouth remained shut, however.

Garry growled, planted his foot in the nerd's back.

"Talk!"

The nerd whimpered, curled up into an even tighter ball.

Garry was just about to kick the egghead again when the little man spoke, voice shaken.

"Nanites," Xavier mumbled. "It's the nanites."

Microscopic machines, thousands and thousands of them. That's what the metallic pills were – clusters of nanites, tens of thousand in each one. The nerd, with a bit of encouragement from Garry, told him everything.

Government funded research into nanites that could alter a person's body and mind. The goal – to create the ultimate solder. Strong, fast, obedient. Some of the nanites were programmed to enter a person's brain; tweak the signals in certain areas to achieve total obedience, or adoration and respect and loyalty. The rest of the tiny machines moved through a person's body; tugging at muscles to grow them, repairing damaged and worn flesh, altering chemical processes.

The remote sent out a signal that the nanites inside his brain would recognise, they'd activate and stimulate the area of his mind that controlled obedience and free-will. There were nine buttons for nine pills, nine unique signals.

The laptop, the nerd said, was more far more complex.

Garry hadn't stolen some medication that'd make him fit and healthy. He'd stolen technology that could be used to make perfect, super-human slaves.

Eight pills. Eight utterly obedient slaves.

An image of his wife entered Garry's mind. The cunt who'd kicked him out, who wanted to divorce him. The beauty who thought she was above him, who'd never treated him as a wife was meant to treat her husband – with total obedience and subservience.

He could change that now. Change everything.

And his daughters, their bitchy attitudes and lack of respect. He could fix them, too. Fix his broken family and take his rightful place as master of the house again.

With the eight pills – and the remote and laptop – he could do anything he wanted.

But, before that, he'd have to deal with the man crumpled on his floor.

Xavier Atenas, the guy in charge of the nanite project.

Garry couldn't just let the man go – he'd just come back with some goons, take everything from Garry and probably make Garry 'disappear' while he was at it. Nor could Garry make the nerd 'disappear'. Others would just come after him, looking for the nerd and the nanite clusters.

No, he needed the nerd on side.

Getting this arrogant shit to cover for him, take the fall for him, was the best solution.

And Garry had everything he needed to make the nerd comply.

He opened his still-bawled left hand, plucked out one of the metallic pills – one of the eight nanite clusters. He smiled at the frail little man, leaned down with his right hand outstretched.

"Open wide."

"How long does it take for the nanites to start working?" Garry asked.

Xavier glared daggers at him. The nerd's lab-coat and clothes were dishevelled, stained from the crap on Garry's apartment floor. Not so proud and smug any more.

"Well?" Garry growled, raising a fist.

"A few hours," the nerd said quietly. "They work faster when their host is asleep or otherwise unconscious."

Garry watched the man, searched his eyes for deception.

Satisfied that the egghead was telling him the truth, he walked over to his piece of shit TV and reached around the back of it. A few seconds later, he returned to the nerd, TV power cable in hand. The nerd tried to resist being bound, but Garry's new body was far too strong – the struggle was futile, over in a matter of seconds.

Garry gagged the man, made sure his bindings were secure.

He whispered a threat into the nerd's ear for good measure, then turned and snatched both the nine-button remote and laptop off his bed. He left his apartment, a wide grin on his face.

It was about time he put an end to his wife's bullshit.

She'd taken his house, decided to fuck some other guy on *his* bed. She'd turned his daughters against him. It was about time, Garry thought, to remind his wife who she'd sworn to honour and obey for the rest of her life.

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The doorbell rang.

I glanced around the dinner table, at the two daughters who were home and my partner. None of the three moved to get up, all of them fully expecting me to do it myself.

My boyfriend – god, it felt weird to call someone my boyfriend these days, made me feel silly just *thinking* the word – at least had an excuse. He didn't technically live here. He stayed almost every night, sure. But he owned his own house a short drive away. He was, despite having his own tooth-brush and coffee mug here, a guest in my house.

Benny and Cat had no such excuse.

I'd slaved away for them, made them this lovely dinner, and they couldn't even be bothered to get up and answer the door. No, as always, it'd be me leaving the dinner table, letting my food go cold, just so I could tell some salesman or religious tool that I wasn't interested in their snake-oil.

I shook my head, suppressed a sigh.

My partner looked over at me apologetically.

He was handsome, in a cute and nerdy kind of way. Wide rimmed glasses, short neat hair, white vest with tie. The polar opposite of my ex. Where Garry would have told me to hurry up and go answer the 'fucking' door, Ned at least showed some sympathy and empathy.

He'd have gotten up and answered the door himself, if not for the fact it wasn't his place to do so.

I spared him a smile as I rose from the table, my back aching as moved. I left the dining room, walked to the front door, opened it with a forced smile.

The man who stood in my doorway seemed impossibly familiar.

Tall and built. Strong cheekbones. Bald, wearing a stained white t-shirt and ragged jeans. His body, what I could see of it, was muscular and toned, athletic – perfect. A handsome, breathtaking Adonis, wearing the same type of ugling clothing that my ex might have-

Those eyes. I knew those eyes.

"Garry?"

The word escaped my lips, a gasp of surprise and uncertainty.

No, this man couldn't possibly be Garry. The last time I'd seen my ex, he'd put on

even more weight. Not an ounce of muscle, all fat. This couldn't be my ex-husband. It wasn't possible.

"Hey honeybuns," the man smiled. "How've you been?"

It was impossible.

Even his voice was different. Less gravelly, more strong and confident.

"What happened to you?" I asked in an awe-filled, embarrassing voice.

The man smiled wider.

"I'm glad you asked."

He reached a hand into his pocket, held out a tiny metal sphere.

"It's a pill from a medical experiment. A new anti-ageing medicine that's gonna hit the market soon. Super expensive. They gave me an extra one, so I figured I'd give it to you. As an apology for all the shitty things I've done."

Sincerity laced my ex-husband's words, though little of it seemed to reach his eyes.

He kept his hand outstretched, holding the pill towards me.

Tentatively, I reached out and took it.

If I didn't, he'd just pester me until I did. As soon as he was gone, I'd just flush it down the toilet or something.

We spoke for a few moments more, then he left – said he had something he needed to take care of, that he'd come by again tomorrow to 'catch up'.

I slipped the pill inside a pocket, went back to dinner.

For the rest of the day, thoughts of Garry plagued my mind. The way he looked – fat gone, looking decades younger. Could the pill actually work? I mean, it couldn't be a trick – he wouldn't have gone out of his way to get fit like that just to mess with me. And even if he had started working out and gotten into shape, he still wouldn't look so *young*.

As I walked into the bathroom, fully intent on flushing the pill down the toilet, I froze.

My reflection stared back at me.

Wrinkles at the corners my eyes, hair beginning to lose its colour and life.

My body felt weak. A dozen aches and pains, joints and bones and muscles all prodding me with their weariness. My breasts were ugly and sagging, my skin losing its tightness. My once amazing ass had long since lost its firmness.

Could the pill fix all that too?

My thoughts shifted to Garry – to his new appearance.

Was it possible?

I looked down at my hand, at the metallic pill held between a finger and thumb.

What was the worst that could happen?

"Fuck it," I found myself saying.

I closed my eyes, raised the pill and opened my mouth.

One simple gulp, and I felt the cool, metal object moving down my throat. I opened my eyes.

My reflection stared back at me, eyes filled with hope.

I turned from it, walked out of the bathroom.