

## Fall to Temptation

### Chapter 2

Melody let out a soft, bright giggle.

"Got you!"

"You're not supposed to 'get me', Mel," I groaned, rolling my eyes. "We're on the same team."

"Nu-uh!" My sister laughed. "The game said to attack, and I won!"

"You're *supposed* to attack *them*," I told her, pointing at the screen. Sure enough, enemies began appearing – all focused on my laughing sister. "Not me."

The round didn't last long. Mel, busy giggling as she was, got slaughtered even more brutally than she'd just murdered me.

"I still won," she grinned, looking away from her character's lifeless corpse on the screen, eyes falling on me.

"Nope," I said, unable to hold down a smile of my own. "We both lost. Next time, don't shoot me in the back of the head the moment the round starts."

Thankfully, in the next round, I didn't get my brains blown out by my own, incompetent teammate. We managed to hold on for a respectable amount of time before Melody found another way to mess up and get us both killed. *Apparently*, she somehow thought that holding onto a grenade for a long time made the explosion bigger. Here I was, doing my best to keep her alive – turning around to check on her, seeing her with a live grenade in her hand. Then *BOOM!*

Game over.

The explosion made my sister jump. And the result of said explosion gave her another giggle-fit.

"I know this might be a difficult concept to understand," I sighed as she sat there laughing uncontrollably. "But you're meant to *throw* grenades. Not hold on to them until they explode."

It took a grand total of six rounds before I decided this game wasn't for Melody. I exited out, began looking for something a little less... chaotic. Something Melody should have no trouble getting to grips with. And something she couldn't find a way to shoot, stab, maim, or blow me up in.

As I searched, I watched my sister out the corner of my eye.

Smiling, wiping the tears of laughter from her eyes, more light-hearted and happy than I'd seen her in a very long time.

It was as if all the joy she'd been lacking over the last few weeks had come back to her all at once. She laughed at the dumbest of jokes, enjoyed the simplest of things. She'd enjoyed Mom's food enough that, more than once, I thought I heard an erotic moan coming from her as she bit into her gammon steak.

Gone was the dark, cocooned shadow.

Melody – my sister – was back.

She was still wearing the same clothes she had been earlier. An old, over-large t-shirt and track pants. Yet, somehow, she looked cleaner; less dishevelled and messy.

Not for the first time, I had to force my eyes and thoughts away from Mel's chest – the obvious lack of a bra's support.

"I know," I grinned, clicking on one of my many games. "This one! It doesn't have local multiplayer, but we should still be able to play it together if I use my computer and you use your laptop. It's all about building and farming and gathering resources."

I turned to my sister, saw the expression on her face.

My smile slipped away.

"I don't..." She said, voice soft and quiet. "My laptop doesn't work, I think it has a virus or something."

I raised my eyebrow at her.

"Want me to take a look at it? If it's a virus, I can-"

"No," Melody said quickly, shaking her head. "That's okay. What other games are there we can play together?"

How does the saying go?

'Nothing good lasts forever' or something like that?

The more the evening wore on, the more Melody's mood began to drop. At first, it was unnoticeable. Her over-eager laughter became easy, laid back smiles. Her attitude went from bubbly and excited to simply happy and relaxed. But, as the hours ticked by, I saw my Melody vanish more and more – replaced with the distant, cold, solitude I'd come to expect from her lately.

At around midnight, she sighed; tossed the controller I'd given her onto my bed and stood up.

She mumbled something about being tired, left my room before I could so much as ask her what was wrong. Walking with a hunched back, arms wrapped under her chest, eyes downcast.

It was the hypnosis.

It'd worn off.

I knew it would. If you hypnotised someone to act like a chicken, they wouldn't keep clucking for the rest of their life. Hypnotic suggestion had limits, and time was one of them. But, even so, I was sad to see the colour and life leaving my sister's eyes.

My idea of hypnotising Melody to remove her stress and depression had worked, kind of. It just hadn't lasted for long.

After my sister left my room, I hit the internet once again.

I didn't waste my time looking for a way to cure my sister's depression. Not this time. I *had* my cure. I just needed to understand it more. I needed to learn everything I could about hypnosis, how and why it worked, so that - next time – I'd be able to keep Melody smiling for longer.

By the time I went to bed that night, I'd soaked up so much knowledge that my brain ached.

A lot of the stuff online was contradictory and untrustworthy. I knew that some - if not all – of the things I'd learned couldn't possibly be true. But, somewhere in that mess of misinformation and hearsay and nonsense, there was the reality.

I just needed more practice. More trial and error.

I'd help Melody. Save her from whatever was casting such a dark shadow over her life. No matter what it took.

"No," my mother stated clearly.

"I know it sounds weird," I said, keeping my eyes as far away from my mother as I could while still standing there facing her. "But I really think it'll help. Melody, she-"

"The only thing that can help Melody," Mom groaned softly as her back curved. "Is Melody."

Maybe I should've waited to have this conversation. First thing in the morning, while Mom was doing yoga? Perhaps not the best idea I'd ever had. As it was, I could barely look at her – what with the pose she was currently in.

Laying on her belly, legs stretched out as she curved her back. Her chest – which was, if anything, even *bigger* than Melody's – protruding outwards in a tight, u-neck tank top. Sweaty cleavage exposed without a hint of shame or restraint.

And, if that wasn't bad enough, she was also wearing yoga pants that must've been two sizes too small for her, what with how they clung to her big, firm ass.

"This *is* her trying to help herself," I said, keeping my eyes fixed the wall behind my

mother. "She wouldn't have agreed to it if she didn't want to feel better. She just needs a little help, is all. And I need practice in order to be that for her."

"No," Mom repeated, back curving even more, putting her chest in an even more tantalising position. "Melody might be fine with you roaming around in her brain, I am not."

"It's not like that," I sighed. "I'm not *roaming* anywhere. It's just a different state of consciousness where—"

"No."

Well, this was going about as well as I thought it would.

Mom was kind of a health nut, but not really. She did yoga, meditated, trusted natural medicines and remedies over pharmaceutical drugs. She made all her own food, cooked with the most natural, organic ingredients she could find. Save for the occasional chocolate treat, I don't think I'd ever seen my mother eating *any* processed foods. She even made her own *bread*.

In her eyes, hypnosis was probably some kind of science-fiction, psychological treatment for crazies. If I wanted to convince her to let me hypnotise her, I needed to change the way she saw it. Somehow make it less 'medical' and more 'spiritual'.

"It balances the mind," I said, using the first thing that popped into my head. "Kinda like how yoga balances the body and the physical self, hypnosis helps with cleansing bad chakras from the mental self."

What the fuck was I even talking about?

Chakras? What the shit did I know about *chakras*?

It sounded like the kind of new-age, mystical nonsense my mother followed. But, even so, I felt like a moron as I actually *said* it.

"In fact," I continued, feeling my mother's eyes on me, "the two are often used in parallel. Yoga and hypnosis and meditation. You should look it up."

God, I hoped that was true.

It sounded like it *could* be true.

"Look it up," I said again, turning away from Mom and walking to the door, "and think about it. Even if it doesn't help Melody, it still might be good for you."

"Mel?" I tapped on her bedroom door. No answer. "Are you awake?"

It was almost midday, Mom was making food downstairs. As of yet, I hadn't seen Melody at all today. The last time I had was when she'd left my room the night before.

"If you're awake, you better make sure you have some clothes on," I told the door, "because I'm coming in."

Nothing. No sound from the other side at all.

Holding my breath, I grabbed the door handle and turned, stepped forward into my sister's dark room.

It took my eyes a moment to adjust.

Then I saw her, cocooned once again in her blanket, sitting up in bed. No illuminating from her phone, no light in the room what so ever. She was just sitting there, shadows under her eyes, not even looking in my direction.

"Melody?"

"What do you want, Ben?" My sister asked, voice cold.

"I was wondering if you wanted to play some more games today," I said, taking a step towards her. "Or maybe we could go out, get some fresh air. Remember when we used to go to the creek and collect rocks?"

We'd been young back then. Kids.

"Not in the mood," Melody said, still not looking at me.

That much was obvious.

"I can make you feel better again," I said, eyes on my sister. What could possibly have had happened to my happy, fun-loving sister to transformed her into *this*? "Just lay

down and-

"What's the point?" Mel snapped, finally turning to me. "I'm just going to feel like this again later. It's not going to *change* anything. Why bother?"

"Because..." I took another step forward, stood directly in front of her. "Because it's better than nothing."

She looked up at me.

"I'll make it last longer this time," I promised her. "I can't change anything, but I can make it easier. Do you really want to be cooped up in here all day, doing nothing, starving yourself? Let me help you, Mel. Please."

She didn't want to go outside. For whatever reason, the prospect of leaving the house made Melody's face turn white – weakened the hold my hypnosis had over her.

I didn't question it, didn't challenge her.

Just noted it, remembered it, moved on.

"The box," I said to her hypnotised mind. "The one you put all your bad, negative emotions in. Picture it for me."

Hypnosis couldn't kill emotions. It couldn't erase them.

Sure, I could stop Melody from feeling whatever pain had consumed her life lately. But only ever temporarily. I could press 'pause' on her emotions, but they'd still be there in the background. Waiting.

The only way to rid herself of those negative emotions was to resolve whatever event or issue had caused them in the first place.

If I knew what that was, if I knew *why* my sister felt the way she did, I might be able to do more to help.

But, for now, all I could do was contain her emotions.

Block them.

That meant daily hypnosis sessions.

"Fill the box up," I told my tranced sister. "Put all the negative thoughts and feelings inside it, just like last time. Put everything that's been bothering you, everything that's hurting you, inside that box."

More than that, it meant *programming*.

The guides I'd read, the ones I trusted, all came from one source – one author. Whoever wrote them seemed to know exactly what they were talking about, and so far I had no reason to doubt them. In their guides, they'd mentioned three distinct uses for hypnosis.

Suggestion, programming, and conditioning.

The first, suggestion, was the most simple. I'd already done it. It was a basic thought or idea placed into a person's hypnotised mind with no long-term implications. I had, helpful metaphors aside, told my sister's mind to stop feeling negative things for a short while. I'd 'suggested' that she set them aside, and she had.

Suggestions lasted anywhere from a few hours to a few days, depending on the individual. But, without regular reinforcement, they always wore off after a short span of time.

Programming was a little more complex. It involved planting commands or triggers inside a person's head, quite literally 'programming' instructions that could be used outside of the hypnosis session. That was what I planned to do today – give Melody some programming to help keep her sadness at bay more reliably.

It would be – hopefully - more long-term than a regular old suggestion.

The third – conditioning – was defined as permanent changes to a person's mind, personality, or self-identity. Whoever had written the guides I'd read had stated quite clearly and aggressively that they'd provide no instruction or advice on how to hypnotically condition someone under any circumstances.

"Remember this action," I told Melody. "Remember the sensation of transferring those thoughts and feelings into your box."

I inhaled a deep breath, prepared myself.

Hopefully, I didn't fuck this up somehow.

"I'm going to give you a special phrase," I said, eyes on my sister's serene, emotionless face. "Two words that, whenever you hear me speak, you'll automatically use to re-fill your negativity box. You won't be aware of the box, you won't realise you're doing it. But, on a subconscious level, you will take all the negative thoughts and emotions you're feeling and lock them away whenever you hear me say the two special words together. Do you understand?"

"Yes," my sister spoke softly.

"The two words, the phrase I'll speak whenever you're to lock away your negative thoughts and emotions, are 'floppy pancakes'."

That was it. That was the programming.

Whenever she heard me say those words together 'floppy pancake', my sister would subconsciously suppress her sadness and pain and negativity. Or, at least, that was the plan.

The more I used the phrase, the more it'd be reinforced in Mel's subconscious mind. The more it was reinforced, the longer it would last and remain active.

If I used the trigger phrase regularly – a few times a day – the programming would, in theory, last forever.

"Repeat the special phrase back to me."

"Floppy pancakes," Melody whispered.

"And what's going to happen why you hear me say those words?"

"I'll fill the box," my sister answered without emotion.

"Floppy pancakes," I said, eyes on Melody.

She blinked at me. The dark cloud that'd been looming over her faded in an instant. Her mood switched completely. The frown turned into a bright smile, her slumped shoulders raised up, her hunched back straightened. Even her eyes seem to brighten, the bright gold in her irises washing out the dull brown.

"I'm sorry," Melody grinned, "did you say something?"

I raised an eyebrow at her.

"Just said I'd love some pancakes right now."

"Same!" Melody said, hopping to her feet. "I'll go make us some. You keep building the castle, I'll be right back."

As she skipped out of my room, I turned my gaze back to the computer screen – to the pixelated fortress I'd been constructing. Single-player, not multiplayer. Instead of grabbing her laptop to play with me, Mel had just sat herself on my bed and watched.

My thoughts as I got to work making my medieval masterpiece were focused entirely on my sister.

Whenever I said the phrase, it was like she couldn't hear it. It worked, her mood lifted and she exactly did as I'd programmed her to, but she seemed completely unaware that I'd spoken the phrase – or even that I'd done anything at all.

That was unexpected. I figured she'd be confused or amused by my saying 'floppy pancakes'. Not totally oblivious to the fact.

I made a mental note of it.

As I played, and my sister made us snacks, I found myself wondering about Melody. About what was wrong. Why she felt the way she did.

What could possibly have affected her so much as to turn her from a happy, bubbly girl into a sad, depressed recluse?

Until I knew, the amount I could help her was limited.

If she just told me, just let me know, I could do so much more. I could help her. Make her feel better again. Properly, too. Not just locking away all the bad stuff constantly, but actually help her feel like herself again.

But she wouldn't.

She didn't want me to know.

And yet...

The more I learned about hypnosis, the more options I found myself with.

I might not be able to demand that she tell me what was wrong. I might not be able to force her to tell me something she didn't want to. But, perhaps there was a way I could trick her into letting me know. Some way to find out, through hypnosis, what was troubling my sister so much.

Would that be wrong? Ethically questionable?

Probably.

I mean, I'd be straight-up manipulating my sister into sharing a secret with me that she didn't want me to know. But, at the same time, it'd be all for her own good.

I wasn't going to use whatever it was against her or anything.

At the end of the day, I just wanted to help.

Even if it might be 'morally dubious' of me to pry information from Melody's mind, surely it'd be okay, right? In the end, she'd be better off and happier because of it.

Would it really be *that* terrible?

When Melody arrived back in my room, a plate heaped with pancakes in each hand and a smile on her face, I made my decision.

Melody deserved to be happy.

And I'd do whatever it took to make that happen.