

Chapter 1

I straightened my back and leaned forward, my voice low and steady.

"Open your eyes and look at my hand, Kerry," I told my patient. "Focus on the ruby."

"That's it," I continued when her gaze shifted to the gem sitting on my palm. Her head was lolled to the side, and she was breathing softly. "Just focus on the ruby and the sound of my voice."

"Beautiful voice," Kerry mumbled.

"Yes," I said. "Focus on my voice. Now, I am going to count to ten. With each number I count, you are going to go up the stairs, and with every step you take, you feel yourself coming back up to consciousness. And when I reach the count of one, you will wake up feeling refreshed. Do you understand?"

Her voice was barely audible.

"Yes..."

"Good. You're doing good, Kerry."

"Mhm. Good..."

I started counting down. When I reached one, Kerry jolted up, as if a lightning bolt had struck her. She looked around for a couple of seconds before she noticed me sitting directly across from her, and then her gaze snapped to the ruby on my palm.

"Oh," she said, shaking her head and then rubbing her eyes. "Has it already been an hour?"

I smiled and placed the gem to the side. "Yes, and you were fantastic."

"Oh." Kerry was rubbing her forehead with a thumb. "It always feels like... like..." She struggled to find the words. "Like, I was just listening to you talking and then..." she trailed off in silence.

"Many people describe it like waking up from a dream."

"Yeah. Like that, but it's so weird, you know?"

"I know," I told her, my voice reassuring and my smile still in place.

"So, did you fix my smoking problem?"

"It's different for everyone," I explained to her. "Some people respond very well to hypnosis and it will only take one session. And for others, it may take a few sessions of continued hypnotherapy."

"Well, no offense, Doctor, but I hope this will be my first and only session. Getting hypnotized... it just feels so... ugh..."

My smile didn't waver. "I understand, and I hope we will fix your smoking problem as quickly as possible. For now, just take a few deep breaths and rest. You might feel a little weird for a couple of hours, but that's normal."

"I think I am getting a headache."

"Some people do. That's completely normal. For now, I want you to take a few deep breaths."

I tried to ignore her chest rising and falling as she did what I instructed. This was my first session with Kerry, and I was a bit taken aback by her attractiveness when she came into my office. But, as always, I had to remain professional.

"Okay, great," I said once I counted five inhales and exhales. "Now, when you get home and go along with your life, the thought of smoking will eventually come to you. Once it does, I want you to notice how you feel about that thought. It could be a neutral feeling or it could be a positive one. But we are hoping for a negative feeling attached to the thought of smoking. Do you understand?"

"Yeah."

"Excellent." I stood up. "I'll see you at the same time next week and you will update me on your progress. Does that sound good?"

Kerry stood up and almost fell backwards. "Oh, shit." She managed a stifled laugh and held up a hand to show that she was okay. "I'm feeling a little dizzy." She laughed again and nodded at me. "Yeah, same time next week. Thank you, doctor."

I walked to the door and opened it for her, smiling at her as she left. Once she did, I peeked out from my office and nodded at a familiar face, but not for the reasons you'd expect.

"What's up with her?" my sister, Clara, gestured as she walked past me. "She seems so out of it."

I ignored the soft scent of peaches that always accompanied my sister and closed the door behind us. "Sometimes that happens."

She furrowed a brow. "When what happens?"

"Sometimes a patient doesn't react well to their first time being hypnotized."

"Okay?" She placed her hands on her hips. "You're not helping my anxiety at all."

I chuckled. "Don't worry, nothing bad is going to happen. I have been in practice for three years already, remember?" I gestured to the chair at the corner of the room. "Shall we?"

"Yeah, yeah." My sister tried to wave it off, but it was clear she was still worried. She was fidgeting a lot.

I walked over and sat in my usual spot, on the chair opposite hers, and began speaking. "Okay, so, usually with my first time patients, I spend about half of the session getting to know them and trying to get them comfortable with me. But since, I basically know all about you..." My sister smiled, and I returned it. "... let's just focus on getting you as comfortable as possible." I gestured to her uniform. "Do you want to talk about your workday? You just finished a flight, didn't you?"

Clara perked up at that. She loved her job and would talk endlessly about it at home, all about her experiences in exotic countries. Usually, I drowned them out, but, right now, I was her hypnotherapist first, and brother second.

"Yeah." Her smile widened. "I had to rush down here after we landed. That's why I didn't have time to change." Her smile disappeared as a thought occurred to her. "Wait, why do I have to rush? I'm your last patient for today, right?"

"Yeah, well, you know I don't like to wait."

"Okay, so how is this going to happen?" My sister looked around the room. "Do you have to use those pocket watch things and wave it all around me?"

I laughed. "No, nothing like that. No, usually I use this." I took out the ruby and handed it to her. "I like to use something that catches a person's attention and holds it there. So, I use that."

"Hmm." Clara examined the ruby. "It's not real, right? It's plastic."

"Of course not. But the most important thing is that it's shiny and that will keep your attention."

"Well," my sister leaned towards me and handed the gem back. The scent of peaches floated around, teasing my nostrils. "So, you use this and then what? Do you swing this around or something?"

"You just relax and follow my instructions. Don't worry, Clara, I know what I am doing. You're in safe hands."

She sighed. "I know, Aaron. It's just.. The stories and movies about hypnosis and shit... it's kind of scary."

"What about it is scary?"

"You know, like in magic shows and stuff, like you can make me do anything you want me to."

"Well, yes, and no. But the most important part here is trust. You trust me, don't you?"

"Well... sometimes."

I started to say something, but she laughed.

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding. I trust you... most of the time, okay? Just don't make me do the weird stuff I hate if you actually manage to hypnotize me."

"Like helping around the house?"

She held up her hand. "I don't want to hear it."

That was a mistake, and I knew it. Her doing chores around the house was a touchy subject for both of us. I had to do everything except her laundry. Clara, being the youngest child and all, refused to do the chores because she hates them. No amount of argument between us could change her mind.

"Fine," I said. "Let's talk about why you want to attend this session."

My sister toyed with her hair. "Well, you know all about it already. I just have been gaining a bit of weight and you know that can't happen with my job."

I nodded. As a stewardess for a prestigious airline, Clara had to be under strict requirements, one of them being that she had to adhere to a certain weight.

She had gained a pound or two recently, but no sane person would say she was overweight, or even remotely close to it. My sister still had her thin, curvy frame, all thanks to her younger years of ballet, and more recently, from the gym.

So, I understood why she had approached me floating the idea of hypnotherapy to keep her chocolate craving in check to make sure she would never be in danger of losing her beloved job.

“Okay,” I said. “Like I told you before, hypnotherapy can solve this issue, and I have helped many people with problems like yours. Actually, cravings and bad habits are the number one reason people come to me, after they have tried, and failed, all the conventional methods.”

Clara nodded. “Mhm. So what was the lady's problem? The girl before me?”

“You know I can’t disclose that.”

“Right, right, patient confidentiality stuff. But you know,” my sister leaned in, “as a therapist, you must have heard all sorts of juicy shit.”

I offered a small smile. “Sometimes, but my lips are forever sealed.”

There was a brief silence between us, so I spoke up. “Okay, Clara, are you ready?”

“Nope.” She said it like a joke, but I could tell she half meant it.

“First and foremost, I want you to be as relaxed as possible. Do me a favor and take deep breaths. Do a four second inhale, a four second hold, and then a four second exhale. Do them ten times. I will perform them along with you.”

I could see my sister relaxing as we went through the relaxation exercise. She was not fidgeting with her hands as much, and her shoulders were not as stiff as when she entered my office.

“Good,” I said, when we were done. “Now, we are going to go through some more relaxation exercises.”

It was crucial to the process that she was relaxed. We did shoulder rolls, stretches, and a bunch more. Ten minutes had gone by before I was finally satisfied.

I picked up the ruby, and Clara stiffened a little when I held it up to her. I expected that reaction, so I kept my voice as comforting as possible.

“It’s fine, Clara. Just do as I say, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Just look at the ruby, Clara. Relax and stare into it.”

“Okay, Aaron, I am looking.”

“Good. I want you to focus deep into it. Concentrate on all the edges of the ruby, stare into all the light reflecting from it. Be mindful of the ruby’s color, how red it is, how beautiful it looks.”

After I said the lines that I had rehearsed hundreds of times, I clicked my tongue and used my free hand to tap her left shoulder. Usually, a lot of clients would be caught off-guard by the brief physical contact or the sound I made, but my sister didn’t seem to notice. Her eyes were glued to the ruby.

That was a surprise to me. I continued on.

“You’re doing good, Clara. Keep focusing on the sound of my voice and the ruby. Notice how beautiful it looks?”

“So beautiful...”

Her words were low and monotone. I should be used to the tone by now, but it was a bit off-putting coming from my sister. She was going under extremely quickly. It was a good sign, since that meant Clara was a very good recipient of hypnosis, but out of the hundreds of people I have put in a trance, she was the quickest to go under, and it wasn’t even close.

I took a moment to compose myself before continuing. “Good. You’re doing beautiful, Clara.”

“Beautiful...” she mumbled out. Her eyes were glazed over and her gaze was still on the gem in my hand.

I almost jolted out of my seat when I felt pressure building in my pants.

No, this cannot be.

Out of all the weird boners I have had, this was by far the most inappropriate. It was even made worse by the fact that I have never had a hard on while putting someone in a trance before, and of course, it had to be when I was putting my sister under.

Great. Just great.

I tried to fixate my attention on the task at hand, but it was getting incredibly difficult to focus.

I adjusted myself in my seat and used all my willpower to focus on my job.

“Now,” I continued, my voice a little shaky. “As you stare at the ruby, I want you to imagine a door right in front of you. Do you see it?” I clicked my tongue and tapped her left shoulder again.

Her whole body went limp after the touch. Holy shit. She was responding very well to the hypnosis.

Her voice was barely audible now, and her strained eyes were producing tears.

“Yes...”

“Good.” I took a shaky breath out. “Good.”

“Open that door, Clara. You will see a flight of stairs, ten steps going down. You go down the stairs, counting every step. At the bottom, you will find another door.” I mentally counted to ten before continuing. “Open the next door. You find ten more steps. Go down the steps, Clara.”

I counted to ten again. “You will find another door and open it. You see another ten steps. You descend the ten steps again and see another door. Now, Clara, every time you open a door and descend, you will feel yourself sinking deeper and deeper, down and down. Your eyelids will grow heavier with every door you open, every step you descend. You feel so sleepy, Clara. Your eyelids are so heavy you barely can keep them open. Keep walking down the steps, Clara. Keep opening the doors.”

I ended my speech with a click on my tongue and another tap on her left shoulder.

My sister started slumping forward. I caught her with my free hand and pushed her back into an upright position. Drool was pooling around the edges of her lip and tears were rolling down her cheeks and onto her uniform. I could barely contain my amazement. Usually it took at least twenty minutes for a client to go under, but with my sister, it took only a few minutes, if even that. This had to be a world record.

My sister started mumbling something as she stared into the ruby, but I couldn't make out what she was saying.

Fully confident that she was out of it, I skipped a few lines and went straight for the finale.

“Your eyelids are so heavy, aren't they, Clara?”

“Mhm...”

“You just want to close them, but you cannot stop staring at the ruby, can't you, Clara?”

“Beautiful...”

“Yes, that's right. The ruby is so beautiful.”

“Beautiful...”

Fuck. I looked down at my pants. I was so fucking hard. This was so wrong.

“When you hear the click of my tongue,” I said, not bothering to keep my voice low and steady. It was just too difficult. “I want you to close your eyes and go to sleep. You will see nothing but flights of descending stairs and doors after doors. You will do nothing but keep going down and down, opening doors. And you will hear nothing but the sound of my voice. Do you understand?”

“Yes...”

Fuck, why is her voice suddenly so god damn sexy? After twenty-three years of knowing her, why is my brain linking her low, breathy voice to the thought of having sex with—

No, that was wrong. That was so fucking wrong. I need a therapist of my own after this.

What the hell is wrong with me?

With a final click of my tongue and a tap on her left shoulder, her eyes snapped shut, and she went completely limp. I was ready for it. I caught her so she didn’t completely fall forward and hit her head.

Peaches. All I could smell and think of was peaches.

I tossed the gem aside and held her with both of my hands. Grabbing some tissues, I cleaned the mess from her chin and sat her back in her chair. She looked so peaceful like that, completely relaxed.

And completely under my control.

I shook my head. What the fuck?

I seriously needed to get my own therapist after this.

Pushing away the intruding thoughts out of my mind for the tenth time, I spoke up. “Clara, can you hear me?”

It took a couple of seconds for her to reply. That was normal. The conscious part of her mind was out of the picture by now. Only her unconscious mind was left to process what was being said to her.

A breathy, monotonous reply. “Yes.”

“Good. Umm... d-do you, uh...”

I was stuttering. This was not good.

She tried to process what I said. “Huh?”

I stood up from my chair and paced around the room. It took a few moments before I realized I was sweating.

Not good.

I went to my office door, opened it, and took a peek out. As expected, since Clara was my last patient for the day and it was close to evening out, nobody was sitting in the waiting area. I walked out of my office and opened the front door. Twisting the ‘open’ sign around to ‘closed’, I closed the front door, locked it, and walked back into my office, locking that door too.

Why the hell was I so worked up? I was a professional, for god’s sake. I had to treat my sister like she was just another patient.

She was just another patient.

With that mantra repeating in my mind, I steadied myself and sat back down on my chair. My sister was still exactly where I left her. She hadn’t moved a muscle. Her chest was rising and falling steadily and her eyes were closed shut.

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With that repeating in my mind, I steadied myself and sat back down on my chair. My sister was still exactly where I left her and hadn’t moved a muscle. Her chest was rising and falling steadily and her eyes were closed shut.

“Clara?” I finally managed a word out. My voice was finally back to being steady.

Somewhat.

I waited a few seconds for her response.

“Yes?”

Time to get back to work.

“You love chocolate, don’t you?”

A smile formed on her lips as she breathed out her reply.

“Yes.”

“But chocolate has been affecting your mood recently, hasn’t it? It has been affecting your confidence and self-esteem.”

“Yes.”

It was always good to start out with facts. It made her subconsciously go into what I like to call it an ‘agreeing mode’ or a ‘yes mode’. This was important as I was going into opinions later on and I needed her mind to be receptive to whatever I stated.

“You love your job too, don’t you, Clara?” I asked, knowing the answer.

“Yes.”

“But chocolate has gotten you worried about your weight gain, and thus affecting your job security, right?”

“Yes.”

“Okay,” I said, and allowed myself a long exhale. As I thought of what to say next, my gaze fell to her rising chest, the outline of her ridiculously curvy body, then down to her toned, tanned legs, only restricted by that tight, red pencil skirt...

Stop. I need to stop.

It took me a few minutes before I could continue with the task at hand.

“What makes you feel bad, Clara?” I coughed into a fist and clarified. “Do you have a memory that, when you think back, gives you a really bad feeling?”

This was the classic and foolproof method of using hypnotherapy to counter a bad habit. Associate the bad habit with a bad feeling or a bad memory and every time they think of doing the bad habit—in this case, eating chocolate—the bad feeling or memory will accompany the urge. I have used this method many times, and have had constant success stories with it.

“Mhmmmm. Yes.”

“What is it?”

“It was recently, when I was with Brad.”

I nodded, Brad was her long time boyfriend, someone whom I became friends with.

"We were in my room," she continued, "and I was sucking on his cock—"

I must have made a sound, because she stopped and frowned.

"Huh?" my sister asked, confused.

I have had many instances of a client confessing something intimate while under hypnosis, but I expected nothing like this to come out from my little sister's mouth. We grew up in a pretty conservative household, and Clara was always so innocent. I would never have expected a word like cock from her, even though she was a fully grown adult.

"Is there, um," I started, my mind still processing what I had just heard. "Is there—is there any other memory that makes you feel bad?"

"Umm..." She took a full minute to think. "Not that I can think of."

"Are you sure, Clara? Just try and think of another bad memory. Any terrible memories aside from that one?" I sounded almost pleading.

"Umm..." She took another minute before shaking her head. "Nope."

I exhaled.

Fuck.

"Okay," I said, slowly. "Tell me about this bad memory."

My sister continued without a beat. "So, I am terrible at blowjobs, so I practise with Brad one time. And I..." She stopped.

"And?" I both wanted and didn't want to hear what she was about to say next.

She took a few beats before continuing. "And I knew I did horrible, but he said I did great and I knew he was lying."

Okay. Breathe, Aaron, breathe.

"And this made you feel bad?" I asked.

She nodded. "Very."

“How do you feel right now, Clara?”

“Bad.”

“Okay, good.” I took another beat to allow myself a long inhale. My sister and I have never talked about anything sexual, so this was difficult for me.

Confusing too, because I was still as hard as ever.

Why was I feeling like this? Why am I having these thoughts about my sister? Yes, she was an extremely attractive woman, but for fuck’s sake, she was my baby sister.

“Capture this feeling,” I told her. “Relish it. Play the memory over and over in your mind.”

Clara began cringing as she did what I instructed.

“Okay, now, whenever you think about eating chocolate, you will feel this exact bad feeling you are feeling right now. Do you understand?”

It took a while for her to process that. Finally, she nodded.

“Yes.”

I let out a sigh of relief. Finally, it was over. Whether that idea that I had implanted in her subconscious was going to work or not, only time would tell. Now I had to wake her up and my job was done.

Or should I wake her up? It was clear she was very deep in a trance. I could ask her anything and her willing and ‘yes mode’ subconscious will most likely tell me everything.

And do anything.

I could twist my words in a way to make her agree to perform acts on me she would never in a million years do. I could make her test her self proclaimed horrible blowjobs on me and—

Stop. I need to stop these disgusting thoughts right now.

I turned my attention back to my sister. Drool was coming down her chin, so I quickly cleaned her up before straightening myself in my seat.

“Now, I am going to count to ten. With each number I count, you are going to go up the stairs, coming back up to consciousness. And when you wake up, you will feel refreshed and wonderful. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

It felt like an hour when I finally reached one. In an instant, my sister opened her eyes and looked at me, then around the room.

“Oh,” her voice was back to normal. “What happened?”

I crossed my legs, hoping to hide my amazingly still rock hard boner. “It’s done. You did—you were great.”

“It’s done?” She asked, looking at me questionably. When she saw I was serious, she took a glance at her watch. “Oh, wow, it’s already been half an hour! Man, what the hell?”

“Yeah.”

Clara stood up and stretched, which I wish she hadn’t done, because she was really pushing the boundaries on the buttons of her blouse. “I feel soooooooooo good! What the heck did you do?”

I shrugged and stood up. “I just did what I normally do.”

“So I’m cured?” She asked. “I won’t be a maniac with chocolate anymore?”

I shook my head. “We will see. Results will defer from person to person. Some people are done and out in just one session. Some people take a few sessions. Just journal yourself with your thoughts on eating chocolate and update me if you notice any changes.”

“Ok, sure.” She stretched again. “Oh, wow, Aaron, I really feel great. Like a million—no, a billion bucks!”

“Yeah, some people respond well under hypnosis.”

She raised a brow. “Did I do well? Wait, did I do or say anything dumb?”

I couldn’t meet her eyes. “No, you did great.”

“Okay. So, are we packing up and leaving now?”

When I nodded, her smile widened.

“Nice!” she said and almost skipped to the door. “Let’s grab Japanese. My treat!”

She winked at me before disappearing and I just stood there for what felt like an eternity.

I needed to stay away from hypnotizing my sister ever again. I really hoped that she was one of the rare, one and done, type of patients, and judging by how responsive she was to hypnosis, it wouldn't surprise me if she was.

I had to break the news to her. I had to tell her whether the therapy had worked or not, she had to find a new hypnotherapist.

But she would question why. And how could I answer that dreaded question? I had to admit that for the first time in my professional life, I couldn't trust myself alone with a patient.

I couldn't trust myself with my own little sister.

So, no, I couldn't say that.

So, I kept my mouth shut and continued hypnotizing her.

Worst decision of my life.