

## Chapter 2

"I think it's working."

I looked towards my sister. "Hmm?"

We were lazing on our respective ends of the couch watching a horror film. Clara surprised me when she suggested 'The Conjuring' to watch for our nightly movie ritual. She was never a fan of horror. Ever since we were small, she would always curl up into a ball, knees on her chest, hands on her face, and she would only occasionally peek through trembling fingers to watch the scares unfolding in front of her, like she was doing now.

"The hypnotherapy," she whispered in a ragged breath. "I think it's working."

"How so?" I leaned towards her and grabbed her wrist, chuckling when she squealed in terror as I tried to pry her hands away from her face.

"Stop it!" Clara slapped my hand away and gave me a face. "Seriously, stop it."

"Okay, okay." I sat back in my spot, laughing. My phone pinged a notification, and I reached to the side to grab it.

There was silence between us, only broken by the occasional loud bang and constant eerie music playing from the speakers.

"But for real," my sister said, still whispering. "I have had no urge to eat chocolate since our session."

"Really?" I tossed my phone away and sat up. "You said nothing when I asked for updates."

"Yeah, because I just wanted to make sure. I thought maybe I could be experiencing placebo or something. But it's been almost a week and every time I think about grabbing a bar, I..."

"You what?" I urged her on.

She chose her words carefully. "I have this... I think of this bad feeling. Like, whenever I try to eat chocolate, this unpleasant memory would pop up suddenly and it makes me not want to eat chocolate anymore."

"Really? That's great! That means the hypnotherapy was a success."

"Yeah, I guess."

I noticed her expression. "What's wrong?"

"It's just..." I watched her fidget. "It's just... why am I thinking about *that* memory in particular?"

I tried to fake ignorance. "You mean the bad memory? Oh yeah, while under hypnosis, I tried to connect the thought of eating chocolate to a terrible memory you experienced. And from what you're telling me, it worked out beautifully."

She was still unsure. "And while under hypnosis, I didn't, like, I didn't mention anything about this memory?"

"No."

My sister nodded and exhaled. A smile formed on her pretty features. "Okay, good. I was just a little worried. But, thank you. It feels like an enormous weight has lifted off me now that I don't have to worry about eating all that junk all the time."

"No problem."

Thank god. I was glad she was indeed an excellent responder to hypnosis. I didn't need to do any more sessions with her. Sleep had been poor after our session. The thoughts I had while she was under trance... the experience had made me feel immense guilt.

"Maybe you can hypnotize me again?"

Her words hung in the air.

"Aaron?" My sister turned towards me. "Did you hear what I said?"

"Umm..." I coughed into a fist and my next words came tumbling out my mouth. "Yeah, yeah. I heard you. But—you—uh why?"

My sister picked up the tv remote and paused the film. "I mean, your techniques are clearly working. I want to improve other aspects of my life. You can help with that."

"Like what?"

"Like that." She pointed to the tv. "You can help me not be a coward with scary movies, you can help me improve my confidence, you can help me..." My sister saw my expression. "What? You don't think I can improve?"

"No—yes, I mean, yes." I kept my attention on the paused film instead of her. "I mean, do you really need me to? Those things you mention, you can do those yourself."

“No, I can't. I tried! Come on, Aaron.” She scooted closer to me. “You just cured a huge problem of mine, all in one day! I mean, couldn't you help me with my other problems too?” She paused. “Or does it not work like that?”

I still didn't meet her eyes. “I mean, it could. Sometimes—”

“Then help me!” Clara grabbed my shoulder and shook. “Please?”

When I didn't reply, she shook me some more.

“Please? Come on. What do you want? More money? I'm already paying you your usual rates, right? If you want more—”

“No,” I shook my head. “It's not that.”

“Then what? Is it me? Do you think I can't be a better person?”

“No, it's not that either.”

“Then what?” She let her hand drop to cross her arms and puffed up. “What is the problem?”

I struggled to find an answer. “It's...”

She let me trail off for a moment. “It's what? What is it?”

I sighed. “Nothing. It's nothing.”

“See? Then you can do it? Will you help me?”

“I guess.” I dropped my shoulders. “Yeah, okay.”

“Yay!” She wrapped her arms around me and peaches flooded my senses. “Thank you. Seriously, if this all works out, I will be forever thankful.”

“Okay,” I mumbled, feeling like I had just sold my soul to the devil.

Why had I agreed to hypnotizing her again? What have I done?

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We finished watching the movie. Well, I mostly did. I wouldn't consider watching as hiding behind your palms and occasionally peeking through your fingers.

The movie was great, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. But my mood quickly soured when we stood up to go to bed and I remembered the dishes.

A groan escaped me.

"What?" Clara asked, looking up from her phone.

"The dishes," I said, nodding to the kitchen. "Mind if you do them tonight?"

"Me?" She turned her attention back to Instagram. "No, I don't want to."

I threw my hands up. "But I do everything. I bought groceries, I cooked dinner, and now I have to clean the dishes. Where is your part in this?"

She didn't look up. "Eating."

I groaned. "Clara, you just talked about improving yourself and now you can't even be bothered to—"

"Don't twist my words like that! You're doing a strawman on me."

"I'm not doing—" I clicked my tongue. "Whatever. I'll do the dishes. But, Clara, you are twenty-three. When are you going to take responsibility?"

My sister sighed and dropped her phone. "And how is doing chores taking responsibility?"

"When you eventually move out, who do you expect to do the chores for you?"

"I don't know. Brad, I guess?"

I shook my head and massaged my temples.

"Stop doing that," my sister snapped. She sounded pissed.

"What?"

"That." She pointed at me. "The whole big disappointed brother act. It always makes me feel like crap."

"Because you're not—" I threw my hands up and walked towards the kitchen. "Whatever, see you tomorrow."

"For therapy, right?" Clara called out from the living room. "You're still helping me?"

“Yeah, yeah.”

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“Hellooooo,” my sister greeted me as she walked past me and into my office. A couple of people from the waiting room gave me looks, but I laughed it off.

“My sister,” I mouthed to them, before thanking Sam, my last client that I had just opened the door for.

I closed the door and turned around to my sister, who was already sitting.

“So, let’s start?” she asked, her eyes beaming.

Clara was sporting a simple ponytail and wearing a modest white striped dress. Her usual attire. Her boyfriend, Brad, had always complained about her dress style, pointing out that since she had a jaw dropping figure, she should show it off more.

I agree with him, but I would not voice that out.

“Yeah,” I said, and sat in my usual spot. My sister set her purse down and drummed her fingers on her thighs.

“Excited?” I asked, stretching my arms high. It had been a long day at work and I was excited to finally wrap the day up.

“Uh, huh.” My sister nodded. “If it’s anything like the first session, it’s going to be fun. You know, I rode that high for a few days after our first session. I felt soooo great after waking up.”

I let out a chuckle. “Good for you. Few people take hypnosis that well.”

My sister leaned forward and rubbed her hands together. “So, like we talked about this morning? Can we work on my confidence today?”

I nodded. “Yeah, sure. But let’s just keep our expectations in check. Confidence is a broad and complex feeling, and we might need quite a few sessions to see improvements.”

My sister was barely listening. “Uh, huh. Yeah, okay. I just can’t wait to feel better about myself!”

“Better about what exactly?” I asked. “What are you feeling unconfident about?”

Clara shrugged. “I mean, you know, just myself in general.”

“Care to elaborate?”

Another shrug. “Just myself.”

“Okay.” I exhaled. “We’ll try to get to the bottom of your discomfort. But first, let’s do some relaxation exercises.”

We did the usual breathing exercises and some stretches. It took about ten minutes before Clara could calm down from her excitement.

“Okay,” I said after we did some neck rolls. “Now we can start.”

I turned to the side to retrieve the ruby, which I usually keep in a mini unlocked treasure box, just to style up my desk. Retrieving the gem, I turned back towards my sister and got the shock of my life.

“Umm...” I snapped my fingers in front of her. “Clara?”

My sister was already looking at the ruby, her eyes half closed and hazy.

A low, breathy monotone reply.

“Yes?”

“Clara, stop messing around.” I made a face to show my annoyance. Sometimes, my sister could be a bit of a prankster. “This is serious.”

“Serious?” She was breathing softly, her hot breaths barely audible.

“Yes.” I snapped my fingers some more.

When she didn’t respond, I lifted the gem up and her gaze followed.

“Beautiful,” she whispered.

What the hell? Was she already in a trance? I have never had that happen before, or even heard of such an experience.

She had to be pranking me.

But there was a way to find out for sure.

“Clara,” I said, steeling myself.

“Hmm?”

“Your right arm is going to feel numb.” I waited a few beats. “Can you feel your right arm?”

“No.”

“Okay.” I turned to my desk and retrieved a needle and some alcohol wipes. Disinfecting the needle, I turned back towards my sister.

This had to be a prank.

“Clara, if this is a joke, you’re going to regret it.”

“Joke?” I had left the ruby beside me and her eyes were glued on it. Tears were forming at the edges of her strained eyes.

I raised the needle to her gaze, but she didn’t react. She just stared past it and into the ruby.

“Okay, Clara,” I said, moving the needle to her right arm. “Better cut it out.”

No reply. Not even a reaction.

With no more warnings, I pushed the needle against her skin. I wasn’t trying to penetrate the skin, just to frighten her enough to stop messing around. If she was really in a trance, she wouldn’t even feel the needle.

Clara didn’t even flinch. Hell, she didn’t even look away from the gem.

“Oh my god.” I gasped, putting the needle aside. “This is really happening.”

“Hmm?” Even in a monotone, she sounded confused.

“Okay, okay,” I said, repeating the words to myself. “Just calm down, Aaron, okay? She is just highly sensitive to hypnosis. It’s just a rare and an undocumented reaction. But, it’s normal. It’s normal.”

I looked at my sister. Tears were rolling down her cheeks.

“Clara,” I said after a few beats. “Close your eyes.”

She obeyed immediately. Her head dropped forward.

“Shit.” I quickly reached for her and grabbed her falling frame before she could hurt herself.

I sat her upright on her chair, but her head kept falling to the side, so I left her like that.

“Oh god,” I said aloud, as I realized that yet again, pressure was quickly building beneath my pants.

Why the hell was hypnotizing my sister so... such a turn on?

And it didn't help that my sister was apparently the easiest person on the planet to hypnotize. Somehow that was... erotic?

*No, stop. Stop thinking these disgusting thoughts.*

“I need to breathe,” I said to no one in particular. I sat down and began inhaling deeply, focusing on my breathing. I took time for that, around five minutes. But when I was done, my boner hadn't changed in the slightest.

Whatever.

Shaking my head in disgust, I faced my sister and started talking.

“Clara, can you hear me?”

“Yes.”

*Just do your job*

“You came here today to work on your confidence, right?”

“Yes.”

“What is it you find unconfident in?”

“My body.”

“Your body?”

“Yes.”

Whoops. I hadn't meant to say that out aloud.

*But seriously, her body... of all things? What? How? A model would be jealous of her body.*



I gazed at her. I have seen my sister almost daily for years, but somehow it felt like I was seeing her with fresh eyes. Those curves that looked so natural... those hips that would make any man's natural instincts go wild... those legs, just toned and tanned to perfection...

I shook myself out of the daze.

"Okay." I said, feeling my voice tremble. "Why do you feel unconfident in your body?"

"I tell myself I am unattractive all the time, and I hate that about myself. I wish I could show off my body more and not be ashamed to do so."

I buried my face in my hands. I have dealt with this problem before, but it felt like I was a complete novice when therapising my sister.

"Okay, Clara," I finally said. "Imagine yourself free from doubts and anxiety. I want you to imagine you as the best version of yourself, fully confident. Can you visualize yourself like that?"

"Yes."

"Describe this version of yourself to me."

My sister smiled. "She would wear better clothes."

I nodded. "Okay."

"She would wear sexier dresses, she would reveal more of her skin."

I fidgeted. "Okay."

"She would talk about whatever was on her mind when she was with her friends and not worry about what she was saying all the time."

"Okay. What else?"

"She would have sex more since she enjoys it a lot and she would not feel guilty about it after."

I pulled my hair back and sighed. "Okay. Anything else?"

"She would tell her boyfriend to do more dirty stuff to her, and not just the vanilla stuff. She would adventure and explore more."

I stood up and faced away. I realized I was pulling at the ends of my hair and I released my grip a little. "Anything else?"

“She would get better at blowjobs. She would perform them every day if she could, just to get good at it.”

“Oh my god,” I said, my voice strained and heavy. “Have you always been this sexual?”

I didn’t mean to say that aloud. It was just a ‘what the hell’ kind of reaction. I never would have thought of Clara to be like this, but I had to face the truth. Hypnosis reveals a person’s true thoughts and feelings.

“Yes. I think about sex all the time.”

“Okay, okay.” I sat down and exhaled.

I probably needed another breathing session, but there was no way of staying calm right then. It was as if my entire worldview of my sister, the little angle our family loved, had shattered into a million pieces.

“Okay,” I said for the hundredth time. I chose my next words carefully. “Clara, I want you to know that sex is normal and is nothing to be ashamed of.”

“It is?”

“Yes, it is.” I felt like a fraud saying that, especially since we had grown up being told otherwise.

“Okay.”

Okay? No objections? Had her subconscious just accepted it like that?

“And, uh,” I continued. “I bet that you always compare yourself, especially your body, to other women?”

“Yes.”

“You should know that it’s normal to compare, but obsessively comparing yourself to other people is unhealthy. Be aware of that. You have a...” I fumbled my words. “A... like—you have a great body. Be more objective when it comes to yourself and don’t let your emotions dictate your thoughts and feelings all the time.”

“Okay.”

I was done with the session. Usually, it took much longer than that. Patients would have objected or disagreed with points in my statements, but with Clara, it’s just all ‘okay’ to her. I

would have to wake her up now and see if the information she had received subconsciously would make a positive impact on her confidence.

But I felt like I wasn't finished. Clara wanted to be hypnotized to be a better person. And she would be a better person if she were to start taking responsibility.

But I shouldn't go off and add my own opinions to her very vulnerable mind. It would be stepping out of the line. Not only is it a violation of trust between a patient and her hypnotherapist, but it was also a huge violation to our bond as brother and sister. It was wrong to do this.

But somehow it felt like the right thing to do.

Screw it. It wouldn't hurt.

"Clara," I started. "You don't like to do the chores, don't you?"

Her frown was enough evidence of her disdain for it. "No."

"Any reasons in particular why not?"

"It's just hard work, and it's tiring to do chores."

"But wouldn't it be taking responsibility as an adult?"

"I don't see how."

Okay. Now she disagreed with me. Out of all the things I have said to her today, her subconscious mind had to stay firm about not doing chores.

"Chores help people learn about what they need to do to care for themselves," I explained. "They learn skills they can use in their adult lives, like preparing meals, cleaning, and organizing themselves."

It took a full ten seconds for her to reply.

"I don't see how."

Okay, this was going to be tough.

I stood up and paced around the room. I could snake a way to convince her subconscious mind that chores were a good thing. But, considering how adamant she was about chores, I might need to use another method.

I had to use the fool proof method of associating a feeling towards a thought. The same method I did to her chocolate cravings. It had worked out beautifully on that, so it might work here.

“Clara,” I said. “Think of a wonderful memory.” I paused for a few seconds. “Do you have one?”

“A good memory?”

“Yes, the best memory you have had. Could you recall one?”

A few seconds passed. Ten seconds passed. Thirty seconds passed.

Finally, after a full two minutes, she spoke up.

“I once orgasmed so hard to a porn video of a woman getting her butt spanked.”

“What?”

She repeated what she had just said.

What the hell? Was my sister this dirty minded? It felt like everything she thought about had to be related to something sexual.

“Umm...”

“Huh?” my sister said.

“Um, okay, Clara.” I started, my voice high.

Why was I feeling... Why was I feeling so turned on?

“Clara,” I repeated. “Any other wonderful memories?”

The answer was immediate. “Nope.”

“Okay. You can—okay.” I looked down. I was squeezing my fist so hard my knuckles were turning white. Forcefully, I relaxed my fists and looked back at my sister. “Okay, just—just focus on the sensation.”

Her hand slipped under her skirt, and a smile crossed her lips. “Mhmm.”

“No, no.” I stood up and grabbed her elbow. “Keep your hands on your lap.”

She obeyed, and I let out a long exhale. “Okay, good.”

Sitting down again, I repeated my words. “Could you focus on the sensation?”

“Mhmm.”

I had done something similar to this before to stubborn patients. I recalled a patient that was not having results with my hypnotherapy. After I started introducing sexual feelings to performing activities she enjoyed, we started seeing results.

Associating a sexual feeling was not uncommon for hypnotherapist to use. But, they usually used it as a last resort when other methods have failed, and it almost always worked. Humans are sexual in nature, and the strongest motivation a person could have was a sexual drive.

I really wanted to use any other motivation, but since my sister was apparently a very sexual person, and since all her subconscious mind could think about was sex, I used this opportunity.

I straightened my back and began speaking. “Focus on how good it feels right now, Clara. Focus—”

I stopped when a moan escaped my sister’s lips. Her fingers clearly wanted to slip away from view again—they were fidgeting—but my command to her was staying firm.

I cleared my throat when her moan finally subsided. “Focus on the sensation and whenever you would think about doing chores, and helping your brother out, you would feel this sensation you are feeling right now.”

“Helping my brother out?”

“Yes, helping your brother out around the house and doing chores. Being a responsible adult.”

“And I will...” She was breathing heavily, her chest heaving in and out. “I would feel this?”

“Yes.”

It took a few beats for her to process this. Finally, she nodded.

“Okay.”

I breathed a sigh of relief. It was time to wake her up and be done with this madness. “Okay, Clara, I am going to count down from ten. As I count down, I want you to feel yourself waking up. And when I reach one, you will wake up feeling refreshed. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

I counted down slowly. When I reached one, my sister opened her eyes.

“Done?” my sister asked, looking around.

I sighed. “Yeah.”

“What’s up with the long face?” Clara laughed. “Did something happen? Did I say something dumb?”

“No, nothing. It’s fine.”

“Nice!” My sister stood up and gave out a little yelp.

I looked up and saw that she was fiddling with her skirt.

She looked up at me. “Why am I—” she cleared her throat. “Why do I feel... like this?”

Before I could reply, my sister waved her hands at me. “Nevermind. Thanks for the session.” She grabbed her purse and hurried to the door. “So, uh, see you back at home?”

“Yeah.”

Clara opened the door and left in a huff, leaving me standing there contemplating what had happened.

What the hell happened?

