

Muscles for Christmas

Lingster

Chapter 1

Becky came at me with both hands up and forward, in an aggressive stance. I raised mine to block her attack but she grabbed my wrists, instead. With all her strength she pushed down on my arms, meaning to force me against the wall. I twisted around and threw her down on the bed, and then jumped on top of her, easily pinning her to the bed as she laughed. After all, I'm a man and she's just a slender young woman. "Oh, it's not fair, Donald!" she said, giggling, as I tickled her and then kissed her on the neck. "It's not my fault that I'm so much stronger than you," I laughed, "Maybe you should lift weights!" "Maybe I will! Your sister's been sending me workout tips, maybe I'll do that and then I'll show you!" "Grace?" I asked a little nervously, "She's started working out?" "Oh, come on! It's been years," Becky said, "She told us when we saw her two summers ago in the Outer Banks!" "Oh," I said, "I don't remember." A year younger than me, Grace had always been competitive. Sometimes that caused friction in our relationship, and it was common for her to find some new obsession and stick with it for awhile before moving on to something else. I was surprised to hear she had stuck with a gym routine for as long as Becky indicated. "What kind of tips?" I asked. "Oh, lots of barbell stuff. Deadlifts, squats, presses," Becky shrugged, "Not really my bag." "I guess not!" I said, squeezing her soft upper arms, "You've got marshmallows for muscles!" "Maybe I will start lifting weights," Becky said, poking me in the side, "then I'll show you who's boss." Before Becky's mock attack, we had been busy getting the apartment ready for Grace's arrival. It was just two days before Christmas, and one day before my sister's arrival. Our second bedroom wasn't ready for guests, yet, but in our defense Becky and I had only gotten engaged over Labor Day, and moved into our apartment on October 1. As it stood, the room had some of the boxes we hadn't opened. There was also a desk, and some fitness equipment including Becky's yoga stuff and a set of dumbbells I owned, with two each in increments of 10 pounds, up to 50. Some of our family members were skeptical about our engagement. I was 26 and working full time, but Becky was only 20 and still in college. She was studying to be a nurse, and I was working as a front end programmer for a local software developer. Her family seemed to like me, but they thought it was too early for her to get engaged. My parents had both passed away in a car accident several years earlier, but my sister and some of our cousins kidded me about robbing the cradle with Becky. When we'd started dating Becky was still in high school, and they never let me hear the end of that. While I had gone to work after getting my bachelor's degree, Grace had taken her share of our parents' life insurance money and continued on to grad school. She was pursuing a PhD in archeology with a specialization in Mesoamerica. I had no idea what she planned to do with the degree when it was finished – teach, maybe? It didn't seem very practical to me. In the meantime, I got back down on my hands and knees and began turning the little hex wrench to put together the bed frame we'd picked up at IKEA. All this flat pack furniture wasn't going to put itself together, after all.

Chapter 2

Becky and I parked the car in the hourly lot at the airport and then made our way to arrivals. Grace was flying in from Denver, on a connection from Tucson. Becky saw Grace first, and started waving. "There she is!" she said, and a moment later Grace began waving back. She was wearing a long coat, one of those puffy parka things. Her luggage consisted of two carry-ons: a rolling bag and a duffel slung over her shoulder. As she reached us she put down the duffel. Becky gave her a hug and then I embraced her. Even through the coat I could feel that she had grown thicker and more solid. "Whoa!" I said, "You have been working out!" "You know it,"

Grace said, smiling. "Our car's in the lot over here," I said, pointing back towards it. "I can carry your duffel." "It's alright," Grace said, "I've got it." I made an embarrassed face, "What's the point of me being here if I can't carry something?" Grace arched one eyebrow and gestured that I could take it. "Make yourself useful, if you insist." I hefted the bag over my shoulder and began following the two women to the car, with Becky in the lead. We weren't half-way there when I had to pause to switch shoulders. "What's she got in here?" I mumbled. The bag was surprisingly heavy, and I noticed Grace looking back and suppressing a smile at my struggles. I fell further behind but the two women didn't wait for me. I could see they were smiling and laughing, but couldn't hear what they were saying.

"Who helped Grace get this load in and out of the overhead compartment on the plane?" I wondered. Even if she'd gotten serious about lifting weights, there wasn't any way she'd been able to heft this thing over her head, or that any of the stew-ardesses had. The girls reached the car about thirty seconds before I did, but I had the key. I put the duffel down and fumbled for the fob in my pocket, before using it to unlock the car and pop the trunk. As I lifted the trunk open, Grace easily scooped up her two carry-ons, one in each hand, and plopped them down as I stepped aside. I drove, of course, with Grace spread out across the back and Becky next to me in the front passenger seat. They did most of the talking on the way back. As far as I knew we had planned on dinner for five the next day, the two of us, plus Grace (of course), and then our friends Sam and Kelsey, who'd been dating on and off for almost a decade, since sophomore year of high school. Kelsey didn't always get along well with Sam's family, so they'd decided to have Christmas dinner with no drama. During the ride I learned that, without telling me, Grace and Becky had also decided to invite Saanvi Ramcharan, a friend of Grace's whose family didn't celebrate Christmas. I wasn't crazy about Saanvi as an addition. She was a petite, pretty girl with a nice personality, but it seemed like she cried about something almost every time I was in her presence. It didn't have anything to do with me, she just seemed prone to getting upset. And she complained constantly about her parents, especially her father, who wouldn't let her move out on her own. So, there would be six of us, and maybe more drama than I'd anticipated. We arrived back at the apartment in good time, there hadn't been much traffic. Grace took the duffel and left the rolling bag for me. I was surprised to find that it was even heavier than the duffel, and I was happy to roll it across the parking lot. I still had to carry it up the stairs to the second floor, though, and I did so as nonchalantly as possible, even though I had to lean over to one side to manage the weight. Becky was first up the stairs, with Grace bounding after her as if the duffel weighed nothing. Again, I arrived later and last, after the two women had already entered the apartment. Grace smirked and said, "Sorry for packing so much. I know these bags are heavy, I just forget sometimes that they're a lot for, um, other people." "It's fine!" I said, forcing myself to take shallow breaths to conceal the exertion. The truth is I'm not in particularly great physical condition. Aside from light workouts with my dumbbells, I don't get much exercise. That was something I'd have to address, I thought, now that my sister was so committed to her fitness. It was a little embarrassing that she took the stairs so quickly when I lagged behind. "Probably she does a lot of aerobics," I thought. "Well, I just mean that not everybody lifts weights. Just because something seems light to me doesn't mean that someone like you or Becky will be able to handle it as easily," Grace said, smiling. "Me or Becky?" I said, my tone sharp. "Look here, I get that you're into fitness and everything, but I'm a full grown man. I'm sure whatever you lift, I can handle, too!" "You're probably right," Grace said, "My bad."

Grace was turned half away from me, now, taking off the long, heavy coat she'd been wearing since we met up with her. As it slipped off, I thought for a moment that she was wearing some

other large, blocky garment underneath. But my heart jumped into my throat when I realized that the canteloupe- sized things on my sister's shoulders were, actually, my sister's shoulders. She had grown big, powerful deltoid muscles and the sight of them erased any question in my mind about how she'd gotten her luggage into the overhead bin. As the coat slipped down further her arms were exposed – massive, thick slabs of muscle that looked like they belonged on the cover of a bodybuilding magazine. She continued turning away from me as she pulled off the coat, and the taper of her back became obvious. While her shoulders were massive and wide, and her back thicker than nearly any man's I had seen, her waist was slim. Finally the coat was off, and the lower part of her body, in Christmas-themed tights, was visible. I couldn't believe how big and muscular her butt had grown, the line of snowmen the paraded across her ass was distorted from the huge lumps of muscle that were her upper glutes. Grace's legs were quite simply thicker and more muscular than any I'd ever seen. They looked strong enough to have carried her bags plus me and Becky back from the airport on foot. Maybe our car, too. I felt like I'd been punched. My mouth hung open, dry with a metallic taste. I heard Becky squeal in delight, but her words seemed miles away. I realized I was getting light headed and groped for the couch before dropping heavily onto it. I realized I was staring but couldn't help it. Becky was laughing and was trying to wrap both hands around Grace's upper right arm, but it was too thick and she couldn't close her fingers. "It's eighteen inches, unflexed," Grace said, a wide smile on her face. She was pleased with herself, obviously, and who wouldn't be? My skinny little sister had somehow transformed herself into a veritable superhuman, with a body that anyone would envy. I was half-conscious and in shock on the couch, but I was burning with envy. Finally she turned her head towards me as she slowly raised her right arm and flexed the biceps. A mass the shape and size of one those Nerf mini footballs gathered and rose out of her arm as she twisted her forearm counterclockwise. "Oh my God, it's getting even bigger!" Becky shrieked. My mouth hung open in shock and she grinned back at me. My little sister.

Chapter 3

"I don't understand how this is possible," I said. Becky had gone to the store, leaving me alone with Grace. One look at the sheer enormousness of my sister, and Becky decided we didn't have enough food in the house, and certainly not enough for Christmas Eve dinner. She wasn't wrong. Thus the two of us found ourselves looking at each other across a little dinette table in the kitchen. The chairs had arms and Grace's thighs barely fit in them. Her forearms, swollen like hams, were resting on the table. When speaking, she gestured in an animated fashion with her arms, as women often do, but the effect was intimidating given the sheer size of them. Or maybe I was just plain intimidated. I'd given this woman a thousand noogies over two decades and now she'd come home with the strength of a Clydesdale, compressed into the shape of a young woman. A very burly young woman, anyway. "What are you trying to say?" she asked. "Women can't get... I mean, this is not possible." "You keep saying it's not possible, but I'm sitting right in front of you," she said. There was a smirk on her face, and it was the same smirk she'd had when she was twelve and thought she was getting away with something. Back then I'd have wrestled her to the ground while she screamed for our parents. But our parents were gone and I didn't think my odds in a wrestling match would be very good. "I saw you 18 months ago and you weren't muscular at all!" I said. "Well, I was. Becky noticed but you didn't. I was already benching 110 pounds for my max, then, so I was probably already about as strong as you."

"But look at the size of you...!" "I was 5'6", and weighed about 135 pounds. Now I'm closer to 5'9", and about 245 pounds." "Wait, you've gotten taller? Are you going to tell me that's from lifting weights, too?" I asked. "I really don't need to justify myself to you. I wanted this, and I got it," she said. She turned her palms upward and it made her biceps swell out. It seemed like every small movement of her body was accompanied by solid masses of flesh bunching and swelling. I was reminded of that Bob Hope joke, "He's got muscles in places I don't even have places!" Except this was my little sister and the disparity in the development of our bodies made me feel ridiculous. "I just... I just don't know what to say," I said. "Well, it's natural for you to feel a little threatened," she said, continuing, "You think of your role as being the strong one. You're the man. And so now I've come home and I'm the strong one, so you feel displaced. I didn't need you to carry my luggage. I didn't need your 'strength' at all [yes, she put air quotes in there] because my strength is so much greater." "Well, I mean, I'm sure you're a lot stronger than me but let's not go crazy with this 'so much greater' business. I'm not weak." "OK," she said. But that smirk was there again. "I'm not weak. Jeez!" "Well, you don't lift weights. You're sedentary. I mean, I'm sure you can handle Becky well enough but you're probably not a whole lot stronger than her. The difference between Becky's strength and yours is a lot smaller than the difference between yours and mine."

"Oh, come on!" I said, incredulously. I knew I wasn't the strongest guy around, and I certainly wasn't in the kind of shape I should have been, but I was a reasonably healthy, full grown man. And even if she'd grown I was still a bit taller than Grace. "You want to test it? We can arm wrestle," she said. "Well, I'm not saying I'm stronger than you," I said, raising my palms and chuckling nervously, "I'm just saying I'm not weak." "You can use both arms," Grace offered, smirking again. "Well..." I said. "Against my left arm," she offered. "It just seems ..." I started, but she cut me off. "You can use both arms against my left, and if you decide to, you can use your whole body." "Well, that's ridiculous. I'll just, OK, I'll use both arms." "Alright," she said, "If that's what you want." We positioned ourselves across the table, and I wrapped Grace's left hand with both of mine. I realized now that her hands had grown significantly, they were bigger now than mine. And when she curled hers around my left hand, I suddenly felt weirdly small and every bit as weak as she implied. "On three?" she asked. I nodded and she counted. When she hit three I pushed with all my strength. Her arm didn't move at all, but I was pleased that I was able to hold her off. When I glanced up at her eyes, though, I realized she wasn't pushing at all. She was just maintaining her position. And she was smiling at me. I gave it everything I had and her arm budged just a fraction of an inch, but then she moved it right back to where it had been as if there was nothing opposing it.

"Like I said, you can use your whole body, if you want," she said, in an exasperated but almost sing-song voice. As if I was boring her. I could feel my face flushing and realized I wouldn't be able to keep up this level of exertion for much longer, so I kicked the chair back and rose to my feet. Now I leaned into it, pressing with my legs against my little sister's left arm, using every iota of strength I had. My face was only inches from hers and I could see that resisting all of my strength required effectively zero physical exertion from her. Enraged, I let out colossal grunt and redoubled my effort. After a few moments she let out a little laugh and I felt an obscene strength crushing my left hand as she tightened her grip. That was followed by a sudden, massive pressure and my whole body began to compress. With a flick of one arm, and without so much as shifting in her chair, she bent me sideways and slammed me into the ground, the table toppling over with me. Breathless and stunned, I looked up at her. She put her hands on the arms of the chair and pried her massive thighs loose from it, and stood up. She offered her hand

and I took it, and she lifted me to my feet. “I’m very, very strong,” she said, “And you’re not. Whether you think it’s possible or not doesn’t matter.”

Chapter 4

By the time Becky got back from the store, my trembling had stopped. The adrenaline rush and subsequent toss to the floor had left me shaky and out of breath, but I was trying to hide my condition from my fiancée by sitting on the couch, reading a book. “Where’s Grace?” she asked after she put the groceries down. “In the guest room,” I said, “I think she’s using the dumbbell set.” I got up to help her put them away. Fortunately I’m right-handed because my left hand was still throbbing from Grace’s crushing grip and my left shoulder had taken the brunt of my collision with the floor. Grace came out, then. She made as if to help us out in the kitchen but stopped at the portal, probably realizing that in the tight space her fullback-sized body would have created more problems than it solved. “I’m going to the gym tomorrow morning,” Grace announced, “do you both want to come?” “You bet!” Becky said, clearly excited. “I’ll pass,” I said, not relishing running into people we knew who would compare our relative physical development. “Are you sure?” Grace pressed. “I can show you how to bulk up.” “Totally sure,” I said, laughing. Becky punched me in the shoulder and told me I was no fun, but I knew I didn’t want any part of that. Grace had brought a bottle of wine – one of the things stowed in her luggage – and opened it while Becky made a quick dinner. After we ate, Grace suggested that we exchange gifts. She said that, with people coming over tomorrow for Christmas Eve dinner, it might be better to do it now. We all agreed it would be easier to do it this evening. Becky and I had collaborated to get a boxed set of Madeleine L’Engle hardcovers for Grace, which seemed to please her. For me, Grace had a homebrew retro arcade setup that a friend of hers had built. It had thousands of 90s and 2000s video games on it, plus older arcade games. Thousands of them. It was a nice gift – I’d never been a super-aggressive gamer and this seemed like it would suit my sense of nostalgia without becoming addictive. Grace had gotten Becky a whole lot of girl stuff: soap, candles, and a little tin of six cookies she’d made herself. “Are these the cookies you told me about?” Becky asked. “Yeah, I hope you like them,” Grace said. “I’m sure I will,” Becky said, smiling. After that I plugged retrogaming console into the TV and the three of us played Mario Kart using the Super NES emulator for an hour, and then we went to bed.

Chapter 5

Becky and Grace headed off to the gym at 7:30 and I got up a bit later. The apartment already smelled great from the turkey in the oven. I headed into work for a half day. Around 11 my company pretty much ceased work and everyone gathered in a conference room for a Christmas lunch. Rich, who owns the company, brought in a few crock pots and spent the morning cooking what he calls his “Christmas Chili”. The whole office smelled deliciously of it and so we were all pretty hungry by the time he called us in. There was Irish Coffee and cognac, too, served and consumed in moderation. One of my co-workers, Kelsey Sandwich, is a friend of my sister’s and one of our planned Christmas Eve dinner guests. Kelsey is a sales associate and puts together proposals and other materials for some of the more senior members of the sales team. Like every other woman on the sales team, Kelsey’s pretty hot. She was a cheerleader when we were in high school, and has a lot of charisma to go with her looks. Jeff, who runs the sales team, told me once when we were out drinking that Kelsey will make a ton of money when she gets her own clients. “Nobody’s ever going to say no to those tits,” he said,

quote- unquote. Jeff's motto for the women on the team is "up and out" – referring to the support garments they were meant to wear when meeting with prospects and clients, and the effect it should have on their bust-lines. So Jeff is definitely a guy who puts a lot of faith in the magic of boobs for the sales process. "So," Kelsey began, looking at me over a bowl of Christmas Chili, "Were you freaked?"

"Freaked by what?" I responded. "Your nerdy sister turning into a jacked meathead?" she re- sponded. "Oh, you know about that?" I responded, "Yeah, I was ... freaked. 'Freaked' is the right word." "So, what does she looks like? How big is she?" Kelsey asked, leaning in, "I want details." "Well, imagine the most muscular woman you've ever seen and then add about 50% more beef," I said. "Whoa," Kelsey replied, her mouth hanging open for effect, then, "You're exaggerating, I'm sure." "Oh, I am not. You'll see," I said. "OK, well, I think we're going to come over a little early," Kelsey told me, "After dinner us four girls will go out for a drink while you and Sam hang out." "You're going to leave me alone with Sam?" I asked. "It's your job to keep him in line." Kelsey responded. "OK, if you say so," I said, then changed the subject. "How's it going with the future in-laws?" "Ugh. It turns out I'm just not good enough for their baby," Kelsey said. "Is anyone?" I responded. "His mom thinks we should see other people," she said. "That's hilarious," I said. "I would probably find it funnier if it was happening to some- one other than me," Kelsey said. "Is Sam working today?" I asked. "No, his office is closed. He's having a grand old time. Went to the gym, going to a matinee with some of his other friends, living the life," Kelsey said. "It'll be interesting," I said.

Chapter 6

When I got home, Becky and Grace were already prepping for dinner. Being the tallest, I was tasked with hanging Christmas decorations from the ceiling and light fixtures, which I took to with aplomb. When I was finished with the decorations I set up the dining room table leaf so that we could fit six people around it, and then went back to the kitchen and asked if I could help with anything. "I'm going to take a shower and get ready" Grace said, "Can you come in here and stir the gravy?" She exited and I went in. With a moment alone, I put my arm around Becky and gave her a kiss. She felt different, though: kind of solid. So I gave her another squeeze. "What did you do at the gym?" I asked, "You feel like you've still got a ... pump." "Oh, yeah, maybe!" she said, separating herself from my probing arm and me. "We did regular gym stuff, I guess." "OK," I said, but I couldn't help but think she looked bigger, somehow. "Maybe it's just the sweater she's wearing," I thought, but something was definitely off. A few minutes later, Sam and Kelsey arrived. Grace was still in her room, so we sat down near the TV and engaged in small talk. After a bit, Grace came out. She was wearing an outlandish Christmas outfit, red and green, that was sleeveless and showed off her enormous muscles. Kelsey saw her first and let out a little shriek, "Oh. My. God!" She quickly made eye contact with me, acknowledging that I was telling the truth. She sprang to her feet and went to Grace, and began poking and prodding her to be sure the muscles were real. Sam was also staring at Grace, eyes wide but an expression of doubt on his face. "What the Hell, Grace, you look like you ate John Cena!" he said. "Wanna arm wrestle?" she said, smiling at Sam and flexing an arm that was almost as thick as one of his legs. "I don't recommend it," I said, quickly, to Sam. He was a lot bigger than me and a dedicated jock, but I didn't have any doubt that Grace would smash his arm down with ease. "Yeah, I'll pass," he said, laughing. Kelsey and Grace moved over by the door and engaged in an animated discussion. I couldn't hear it but Grace's posture was defensive. I imagined Kelsey was confronting her about how she got so muscular, so quickly, but

it was strange to see an average-sized woman backing a massive one into a corner so easily. Within a few minutes our final guest, Saanvi Ramcharan, showed up. When she walked in, Saanvi looked up at Grace in wonder. The difference between them was pretty stark, Saanvi probably only weighed about 80 pounds, so Grace was literally three times her size. "What happened to you!?" Saanvi asked, her eyes popping out of her head. She cautiously placing a forefinger on Grace's upper arm and said, "You turned into Arnold Schwarzenegger!" Grace picked her up in a hug, lifting the tiny woman a foot in the air as she squealed, legs kicking. I made a pitcher of Manhattans for everyone and periodically visited the kitchen to stir the gravy. We sat around for about a half hour and then had everyone move to the dining room table.

Grace and Becky enlisted Sam in slicing the turkey. As a hunter and dedicated meat smoker hobbyist, he has some skill as a butcher. He did a great job. The whole thing looked like a picture-perfect Thanksgiving meal, with stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, the works. Becky also prepared a little dish of olives and gherkin pickles, which was something her grandmother always offered at Thanksgiving and adapted well to Christmas. Everyone dug in, including Saanvi. Having grown up in a vegetarian household, she didn't eat meat at home but freely consumed it the rest of the time. "Don't tell my parents!" she said, seriously. "Saanvi, you're 25 years old!" Kelsey said, "You can eat what you want!" "Oh, but my father would be upset." "When are you going to move out?" Kelsey pressed, "I still need a roommate, since Sarah left." "I don't know. My parents really want me to live at home until I get married. You know how traditional they are," Saanvi said. "It's your life," Kelsey replied, "I just can't imagine living under someone's thumb like that." "It's not so bad," Saanvi said, "I save a lot of money." As we finished up, Grace brought in gifts for the women. Both of them received a little tin of cookies identical to the one Becky received. "So," Grace began, "I think all of you know I've been working on my PhD in Mexican and Central American antiquity, and I'm working with relics that archaeologists have uncovered. About two years ago, I started working on relics and a statue associated with a little-known goddess called Qoataxatata. She's associated with physical strength and her priestesses were typically large, amazonian women." Grace continued, "So, I'd been working out in the gym before that and making very slow progress, but when Qoataxatata's statue came into my life, I started making faster gains. And I connected those two things but I thought I was out of my mind, because how could a statue make me stronger? But, when I had a good day in the gym, I'd be sure to thank Qoataxatata the next time I saw her." Sam snorted, "So you got jacked through magic?" Grace held up a finger and kept talking, "About a year ago, I left an apple overnight in the room where we keep Qoataxatata's statue and relics. The next day I ate it, and within a few moments felt a tremendous sense of power run through me. Immediately I grew more muscular. And when I went to the gym that night I found that all of my max lifts had increased between 30% and 50%." Sam started laughing and I suppressed a smile, but then noticed Becky crossing her arms in annoyance. "So," Grace continued, "I tried it again a few days later, but nothing happened. And I tried it again a couple times after that with no luck. Finally, though, I realized that the initial night had been a full moon, and when I tried it again on the night of the full moon, the effect was duplicated. As an example, over the course of just a few months I had gone from a top bench weight of 110 pounds to 225 pounds, from a woman with a fit build to one carrying more muscle than most men." Nobody said a word. Grace was convincing. I barely noticed Becky standing up and stepping back from the table. "The cookies that I've given you have been prepared and left overnight, during the last full moon, next to Qoataxatata's statue. Each one will have an effect similar to the apples I mentioned." She gestured behind me, and said "Becky and I tested

them this morning, and they obviously work.” My head whipped around and there was my fiancée, her sweater removed, striking a double-biceps pose and showing off arms at least as muscular as my own. She looked down at me with a big smile and said, “Marsh- mallows, huh?”

Chapter 7

“Becky!?” I yelled, “What did you do!?” “I ate two of Grace’s cookies!” She said, with as wide a smile on her face as I’d ever seen, “Now I’m as strong as you! Maybe stronger!” Saanvi got up from her seat and approached Becky. “Is that real?” she asked, gingerly touching Becky’s exposed, full shoulders. Becky responded by reaching down and easily lifting Saanvi off the floor, cradling her in her arms. “Oh, it’s real,” Becky said, “I’m as strong as a guy, now. You feel so light!” I couldn’t help but stare – my whole life had just been up- ended – but Becky looked hot. She was a built like a fitness model now, maybe a bit stronger-looking, and it was definitely an upgrade. What those two cookies had done for her ass alone made me come erect in my pants. I heard Sam behind me, saying, “What are you doing?” and I turned around to see Kelsey holding one of the cookies in front of her mouth. “What do you think I’m doing,” she asked, “I want to try this out!” “Hold off for a second,” Grace said, standing up from the table and walking into the spare room where she was staying. She returned a moment later with a burlap bag – I recognized it as my dumbbell set. Grace handed two ten pound dumbbells to Kelsey and said, “Let’s see how many curls you can do before you eat the cookies, and then after. Becky was able to do 12 reps with the ten pounders beforehand, and now she can do six reps with the 30 pounders.

I swallowed hard at her words, because I mostly used the twenty pounders to work out. I could do a couple reps with the 30s but I doubted I could do six. “My fiancée is stronger than me!” I thought. Kelsey took the ten pound dumbbells and easily cranked out 12 reps each. “How many more should I do?” she asked, “These are pretty light.” Grace nodded and pulled out the two 20 pounders, “You’re stronger than Becky was, to start. Try these.” “Oh, yeah, these are a lot harder,” Kelsey said, barely finishing three reps with each. Grace said, “That’s about average for most of the women I’ve tried this with.” I breathed a sigh of relief because I knew I could do at least 20 reps each with the 20 pound dumbbells. But the implications of what Grace said chilled me. How many women had she made stronger? How many could she make stronger? Kelsey asked, “Can I eat a cookie now?” Grace said she could. I could see Sam frowning but he didn’t say anything. As we watched, Grace chewed and swallowed. She shuddered, as if she had a sudden chill, but a moment later she took a deep breath. Her whole body seemed to expand, and I could see her clothes growing tighter on her frame. It wasn’t a dramatic increase, but it was noticeable. I couldn’t help but notice her breasts, which had already been large, seemed even bigger than before. “Whoa,” Kelsey said, “this is such a weird sensation, everything seems smaller.” “Try the 30 pound dumbbells,” Grace said.

Kelsey picked them up and managed three reps with them, probably about as many as I could do. “You’re 50% stronger than you were!” Grace said, a huge smile across her face. Kelsey, also smiling, flexed her biceps. Her arms looked as muscular as those of a healthy but slender man. Kelsey looked over at Sam, “How many can you do?” Sam grinned, walked to the bag and lifted out the two 50 pound dumbbells. He did five reps with each arm, slowing down a little on the fifth but not really struggling. “Oh, OK,” Kelsey said, looking a bit frustrated, but adding, “I’m glad. It would be weird if I had become stronger than you.” Then, at me, “What about you? How much can you lift?” “I’m not getting involved in any of this,” I said, laughing in a way that seemed

nervous even to me. Sam looked at Grace and said, "Can I have a cookie?" Grace smirked and said, "Freely given, they have no physical effect on men." There was a mirror in the dining room and Kelsey went to look at herself in it. "Gosh, look at my legs!" she said, "They look amazing!" Becky walked over to her and the two of them took turns examining their altered bodies. I noticed Saanvi in the corner, looking even more uncomfortable than I felt. She'd already been smaller than the other women but now they must have seemed like amazons to her. Becky followed my gaze and asked her, "Are you going to try a cookie, Saanvi?" Saanvi shook her head. "I don't think so."

Chapter 8

The four women took their leave of us to go have a drink at a bar down the block. Sam and I got started cleaning and doing the dishes. It took about twenty minutes and then we sat down and turned on the TV. There were no football games on so we were watching some old Christmas specials. After a bit he got up to go to the bathroom. When he returned he had a tin of Grace's cookies. "Where'd you get that?" I asked. "In your spare room. Your sister has a couple more of them." "You're not going to eat any, are you?" I asked. "Why not? She has plenty of them," Sam added, and pulled four of them out of the tin. He handed one to me. "This is a bad idea," I said, watching as Sam stuffed three in his mouth and started chewing. He swallowed and said, "Come on, don't be a pussy." Reluctantly I ate the one he had handed me. When I looked over at Sam his face was red. He said, "Something's definitely happening." Then he stood and pulled his sweater sleeve up and flexed his biceps muscle. "Watch this," he said, "I'm gonna be the strongest dude around!" But that wasn't what happened. As I watched, Sam's biceps muscle rapidly began to lose size. Within moments it was no bigger than mine, and it kept dwindling. I jumped to my feet, stunned to realize Sam was no longer taller than me. He shrunk another inch or so, and by the time he was done shrinking was no more muscular than little Saanvi. He shouted "Oh, no!" but I barely recognized his voice, it was thin and weak-sounding, not the manly baritone he'd had before. He went as white as a sheet and collapsed backward on the couch. I looked down at my own body in terror, and sure enough it was happening to me, too. I could feel the strength leaving my body. I'd only had one cookie compared to Sam's three, so the effects weren't as bad. Like Sam had, I flexed my biceps, only to feel a barely-there bump. It felt like a girl's arm – not much more solid than Becky's arm before she ate the cookies. Taking a deep breath, I approached Sam and felt for a pulse on his neck. He had one, and he was breathing. He'd just fainted. Then I walked over to the dumbbells, took a deep breath and picked up the two twenty pounders. They seemed incredibly heavy. With effort I managed one curl with each arm, and then managed to cheat a second curl. After that my strength was spent. "Kelsey was able to do three! Before she ate the cookie!" I wailed in despair. If Grace's assessment from earlier was right, I now wasn't even quite as strong as an average woman. I'd never been a strong man, but in a moment of recklessness I'd become embarrassingly weak. And Sam, who had been a strong man, looked to have no more strength than a child. I walked over to the mirror and saw with disgust that my clothes hung loosely on me. My sleeves flopped over shapeless arms and my pants were crumpled at my ankles – I must have shrunk in height a bit, too. "What's Becky going to say?" I wondered, but then I heard the women approaching in the hall and realized I'd know soon enough. I turned toward the door with resignation.

Chapter 9

Becky opened the door and came through first. I could tell she'd had a few drinks from the expression on her face. She walked over and put her arms around me, and gave me a firm hug that made me see stars. "Uh, easy," I gasped. She pulled back in surprise, her hands on my shoulders. She slid them down my arms and squeezed the biceps muscle in each arm, then gaped in surprise. Before she could say anything, I heard Kelsey's scream. "What the fuck happened to Sam?" she yelled. Grace's eyes went wide. She looked at me, and asked, "What did you do!?" "We ate some of the cookies," I admitted, "I had one. Sam ate three." Grace palmed her face with her right palm and shook her head. Becky found her voice, "Donald, you're so small!" Her tone was a strange mix of shock and wonder, and she ran her hands over my whole body. Kelsey sat down on the couch next to Sam, and shook his puny frame, "Sam! Wake up!" His eyes opened and he looked at her. Sam said, "Hey. What's wrong?" "Why did you eat the cookies?" Kelsey asked. Suddenly a look of panic lit up his face and he craned his neck to look at his body. "Oh, no!" he said, "What did I do?" Kelsey put her arm around his ribcage and stood up, easily lifting his slender body off the couch. "Wow, I don't think you weigh 100 pounds, Sam," she said.

He stood, a little shakily, and realized he was looking eye-to-eye with his girlfriend. "You shrunk about five inches, too!" she said, staring at him. As Becky had with me, she began to probe his diminished physique with her hands. His bones had gotten smaller and narrower, and as I watched Kelsey was able to wrap her hand all the way around one of his wrists, and nearly all the way around Sam's upper arm. "Your arms! They were so thick and solid and now they're so small and soft!" she said. In a squeaky voice he looked up at Grace and pleaded, "How do we reverse this?" Grace frowned and said, "I'm not sure we can. It may wear off over the course of a few years..." "YEARS!" Sam whined, incredulous. "Or you might be able to reverse it, or partially reverse it, by making some kind of penance to Qoataxatata," Grace mused, "But the statue – and her presence – is in Tucson, so you'll need to visit where I work to do it." "Penance?" Sam asked. "You stole her gifts," Grace said. "Normally the cookies have no effect on men except to make them attracted to strong women, but you took them without any being offered." "When can we do that?" I asked, trying and failing to free myself from Becky's increasingly aggressive groping. If what Grace said was true, buff girls would now be a turn-on for me, and it seemed to be bearing out. "Any time," Grace said, "But it will probably work best on either the full moon or new moon. I can't say which." I finally stopped resisting and Becky pulled me into our room. She tossed me to the bed the way I'd tossed her just a few days ago and then jumped on top of me. She grabbed my wrists and positioned her legs on either side of my torso, pinning me. "Oh my God! I'm totally in control! You can't do a thing!" she said, delight in her eyes. It was true, I tried to move my arms but they barely budged. The two cookies she'd eaten had given more than twice my current strength. She brought my hands together above my head and then grasped my wrists with just her left hand. Then she brought her freed-up right hand down and started undoing my pants. I wriggled my right hand free from her grip and swatted at her right. "We can't do this right now, we have company!" She flexed her right arm, "Don't you want some of this muscle, Donny?" I swallowed hard at the sight of her muscles, but then found my resolve and said, "No, we have to wait until the guests leave!" "Oh?" Becky said, a coy smile on her face as she reached for her purse and pulled out the cookie tin, "But what if I got even stronger?" "No! Don't!" I said. Becky laughed, "The only reason I stopped at two cookies this morning is that I didn't know how you'd react to me being the stronger one in the relationship. But now I know! You're turned on! I'm going to get as big and brawny as I want!" I struggled furiously to stop her but she shifted her left hand to my chest and easily kept

me pinned. Looking me straight in the eye, she slowly chewed the cookie, and then swallowed it. Moments later I felt her weight increase on me. Becky's legs, pressed against my sides, began to swell in size. I looked up to see her chest thickening, lats bursting out as she raised her hands above her head. Her shoulders inflated in front of my eyes, with the separate heads of the deltoids muscles separating as if she was a professional bodybuilder. Becky looked down at me – I guessed that she was maybe an inch taller than she'd been moments before – and then performed a double biceps pose. As I'd noticed with her deltoids, her biceps now had a cultured shape to them, separate muscles bulging out in different directions. The third cookie had added an inch or more to their thickness – most men would envy her upper body development, now. I put my hands on her waist to try to push her off me, but I couldn't move her at all! The sensation of tough abdominal muscles shocked me – her waist was as solid as a tree trunk. Becky repeated her move from before and clasped both of my wrists together with her left hand. I struggled, as before, but her grip had grown too strong for me to break. "You really don't want to?" she purred. "Not... Not now," I said, "Later." She pouted and rolled off the bed, then offered me her hand. She lifted me to my feet so quickly I flew right past her and nearly slammed into the wall. I looked down into her eyes, just barely lower than mine, now, and felt turned on but a bit intimidated by the confidence I could see in them. Becky strutted out the door into the main room, "Hey guys, look! I ate another cookie! Look at my muscles!" As I followed her out, I could see Grace and Kelsey standing by our table, as Sam and Saanvi arm wrestled each other. They seemed about evenly matched, but Sam had a slight edge and slowly pushed down Saanvi's arm. "I can't believe he's still stronger than me!" she said, pouting. "Eat a cookie!" Kelsey said. "Well, OK, maybe one," Saanvi agreed, and pulled the tin from her purse. She hesitated, briefly, but then ate one of Grace's magical baked items. Moments later her eyes lit up, and we watched as the tiny, slender woman became a bit less tiny and slender. It wasn't a dramatic change and she still seemed hopelessly petite compared even to Kelsey, much less my sister and increasingly- amazonian fiancée. Still, she and Sam agreed to go best two out of three. Sam seemed completely invested in these games, and it seemed obvious that the three cookies he ate had made him completely submissive to female strength. While girl muscle had become a turn-on for me, it had become an obsession for him. And sure enough, the extra strength was enough. Saanvi slowly pushed Sam's arm down on her second try, and then again on the third match. After, she jumped up in the air. I'd never seen her so happy.

Chapter 10

The day after Christmas I went in late to work. Grace was flying out at noon, Becky and I agreed to drive her back to the airport. Grace left her bags by the front door as we were getting ready and, without thinking, I went to take them to the car. With a hand on each bag, I tried to stand and then realized I couldn't lift either bag off the ground. Becky heard me grunt, walked over, easily lifted one bag and then the other, and told me to follow and open the trunk. I was humiliated but turned on. Whatever someone's feelings about female upper-body musculature, the effect of muscular development on a woman's ass is spectacular. I'd always been a fan, and now, like the bodies of the women at Christmas Eve dinner, that attraction was augmented. If Grace's math is right, Becky can now bench about 200 pounds, a lot more than I ever could or ever likely will if the weakening effects don't wear off. And even if they do wear off, it'll take months or years in the gym to get me to Becky's level. That's assuming she doesn't eat any more cookies. Becky dropped me off at work after our airport detour. She pulled me in forcefully and kissed me. We'd made love several times on Christmas Day and I was more than a little

sore and tired, but any display of her physical strength had become an incredible turn-on for me. She pinched one of my arms as I moved to leave the car, and said, "Don't work too hard, marshmallow muscles." I sighed ruefully and got out of the car. It was cold outside, but I was wearing a pea coat from when I was in school – I was about the same size now as I'd been when I was in my late teens and it fit well. Becky was wearing a nice Patagonia parka that had been mine but now fit her better, though she said it was tight across the shoulders. Trying to squeeze into most of her clothing was about as laborious as trying to put toothpaste back in the tube, so she was wearing some of mine today. When I got into the office I could see people were already well along in playing catch-up for the lost holiday time, so I dove in. As lunchtime approached I walked to the kitchen, which took me by Kelsey's desk. I made eye contact and smiled, like we shared a secret, but then I looked down and noticed she was sleeveless. "I thought you were going to wear long sleeves from now on," I began, but then did a double take, "Holy crap! Did you eat another cookie?!" Kelsey looked left and right to make sure we were unobserved, and then flexed her left arm. It bulged spectacularly, even bigger than Becky's. "I ate TWO cookies yesterday, as a matter of fact, and then went to the gym this morning and benched 225 for three reps. I'm strong as fuck, dude. There's a forum post on Bodybuilding.com that says that makes me stronger than at least 99% of the men in the world." "That's pretty strong," I agreed, "But, Bodybuilding.com? Did the cookies turn you into a meathead?" "Actually," Kelsey said, "I think they did. I spent most of yesterday reading up on lifting programs, and I ordered whey protein and creatine off Amazon." "Becky did some of that, too. She's at home doing 'meal prep,'" I said. "Oh, I need to do that, too. I want to see how much bigger I can get with weight training," Kelsey said, nodding. "Are you flying Business Class next week, then? Because you'll have trouble getting those shoulders into Economy," I said, referencing our planned trip. All five of us were flying out to Tucson on New Year's Eve to help me and Sam petition Quataxatata for penance and restoration. "Nah, I'll just crowd over into Sam's seat. He doesn't take up as much space as he used to," Kelsey said, laughing. Kelsey went on about how Sam had finally moved in with her, mostly because he didn't want his family to see him looking like he did, now. Saanvi was also staying with her. Saanvi had also eaten another two cookies and had grown significantly stronger than her father. There was an argument and she stormed out. "OK," I said, as she finished up. "I can't wait to get to Tucson and maybe get back to my old body. It feels so weird to be weaker than the average woman." "Oh, about that," Kelsey said, reaching for the waste basket under her desk. She held it out for me to examine and I saw two of Grace's cookie tins in it, both empty. I let out a gasp and Kelsey chuckled. "You may find," she said, "that in this office 'the average woman' will be hard to match." THE END.