

Profoundly POWERLESS

A Novel by Jenny Amara

Profoundly Powerless

Chapter 13 - How about a sandwich?

"Well, it seems that our esteemed guest knows more about me than I anticipated," Laurie Awl said with a calm demeanor. The CEO wasn't phased by the unexpected visitor or their physical appearance. Most people would be unnerved when they saw an identical clone of themselves suddenly appear, but Ms. Awl was unflappable.

"Who is this?" The mysterious woman resembling the CEO asked.

"My dear, but of course, I am the CEO of Call of Beauty. The real question is, who are you? Or who were you?" Ms. Awl responded calmly, turning her head and noticing the rush of security and others in lab coats approaching.

"Ms. Awl, are you okay?" A guard asked quickly after entering the room.

"Yes! Of course, I am," both women answered in unison.

"Hmm, curious," Ms. Awl responded as the guard wrapped his arms around her doppelgänger.

"Wait; there's no need to do that."

"But, Ms. Awl, this intern escaped our testing lab. We must return with him as soon as possible, or this might become permanent."

"Permanent? What are you talking about?" The former intern asked.

"We have to get Ramnaghast to reverse this. You aren't supposed to be... well, this," a woman in a lab coat pronounced.

"Why is this woman speaking to me? Concealer, can you please escort her back to her department?" The clone of the CEO asked.

"You know who Concealer is?" Ms. Awl asked before Concealer could respond.

"Of course I do. Now, I'd really like to get back to work. I have things that need my attention," the newly minted woman responded.

"Oh, this is too great. Darling, we have so much to discuss. Concealer, I trust you can advance our experiment downstairs without me. I suspect our favorite test subject will need his next dose of femininity any day now. I'd hate to disappoint," Laurie Awl cackled, laughter erupting as she concluded her thought. At the same time, she took her doppelgänger in her arm and walked side by side to her desk.

"Alright, Blake. We're here. What do we do now?" Paul asked.

"We wait; it's a stakeout," Blake answered, focusing on the building across the street.

"This is classic. Everyone knows that stakeouts are where heroes become best buddies!" Lee giddily cheered.

"Shh, Lee. We can't make a commotion," Blake chided Lee.

"Right, right. Gotta keep things lowkey. I follow you!"

An awkward silence settled over the group as they sat there watching an empty and motionless street. Paul sat shaking his head. He knew there was no reason to have been brought on this stakeout. The lack of any explanation from Blake only caused Paul's frustration to grow. Meanwhile, Lee seemed perfectly content to stare out the window at absolutely nothing.

"We're just going to sit here and watch an empty street?" Paul asked, looking annoyed.

Blake was blunt in his response: "Yeah, that's how stakeouts work."

"And why exactly did you need me here then?" Paul pressed the issue.

"Uhhh, pro—protection! I have to keep you safe!"

"From what exactly? It's not like anything you've done so far has worked."

"Exactly!"

"Huh?" Paul was surprised to hear Blake's agreement.

"I haven't kept you safe, but I should have. So I will be spending more time with you... to keep you safe!" Blake seemed excited but also nervous. Paul wasn't sure what was going on here.

"Well, if you're protecting me, then I'm going to focus on changing back to myself. I still have a lot of work to do to get better at using my power."

"Oh! Umm... yeah. I guess that's all right. If it doesn't bother you to change in front of us."

"Why would I care? You both know I'm a man. Being like this is the unusual part," Paul said, gesturing at his figure. Paul didn't notice, but Blake's eyes followed Paul's hand gesture from top to bottom as they moved. Lee noticed the look on Blake's face, however, and immediately recognized what was happening.

"Yo, Paul, I think you're totally good to go work on that. Blake and I have this for a while, dude."

"Thanks, Lee. I'll just be a bit. There are some leftover sandwiches from the cafe in the cooler if anyone is hungry."

"Thanks, Paul! You're the best!" Lee responded before turning his attention to Blake.

"So... we going to talk about that? Or are you just going to deny that you're into my friend?"

"What?! I'm not into Paul," Blake answered.

"No? Then it's just your eyes that are then. That's weird but to each their own. Maybe you could ask your "eyes" to stop ogling my best friend's curves then?"

"They're not—"

"Blake."

"Really, I don't—"

"Don't want to admit it because it's unfamiliar? Or inconvenient? Why not just admit it? You're both adults; there's nothing wrong with being into Paul."

Blake hung his head before beginning, "But what if he doesn't like me like that?"

"Have you seen you? You're like the personification of an Adonis. Why wouldn't Paul like you?"

"Is Paul even attracted to men?"

"I dunno. Maybe? He hasn't really dated a lot. Not since he learned about what his power was."

"Yeah... I heard about that whole Mr. Irrelevant thing. It was on the news and everything."

"Yeah, he retreated from life for a while after that. He gave up on his dreams of being a hero like Captain Kimper."

"Like Captain Kimper, huh?" Blake responded before muttering, "Apple doesn't fall far from the tree, I guess..."

"What's that?" Lee asked.

"Oh, nothing. Hey, take over for me here. I want to say something to Paul. I probably need to apologize for being... weird."

"Alright, man. Follow your heart! I got things here."

Blake knocked on the door to the bathroom, which Paul had excused himself to do. "Paul, can we talk?" Blake asked. After a few seconds, with no response, Blake became worried. "Paul?" Still, no answer came. Blake twisted the door handle to open it, but it was locked. "Paul, answer me. Are you okay? Paul!" With this final plea and no response, Blake assumed the worst and used his strength to break the lock and swing the door open.

"Whoa!" Paul yelled, catching the door with his hand.

"Paul! Why didn't you answer me?"

"I was focusing on..." Paul started before realizing what he was about to say. Instead of finishing, he pulled his arms up and crossed them over his exposed chest to hide his ample breasts. Blake also became aware of the situation as his eyes looked down on the exposed flesh. His face turned beet red in an instant.

"Would you mind, Blake? I'm trying to get things back to normal here, and you're not really helping..."

Blake stammered and shuffled back as he got a whimper of a response out, "Uhh, uh-huh."

"Thanks," Paul responded, using one hand to push the door back closed while holding his chest with the other. With his privacy restored, Paul put his arms down on the sink counter and hung his head. "What was that about? Did Blake get embarrassed seeing me like this?" Paul thought momentarily before the implications of those thoughts started to disturb him. Instead of continuing, he returned his focus to his powers and focused on getting back to normal.

Unfortunately, Paul was still poorly attuned to his powers, and as a result, his efforts resulted in only meager success. Turning side to side, he thought he could see a reduction in the size of his breasts, but he worried that it was just an optical illusion from posturing his back. So, he instead focused on other features that he knew he had more success with, like his voice and hands. These features seemed to be quicker and within his grasp to change quickly.

"Alright, this is probably as good as it gets for today," Paul announced in his usual masculine tenor.

"Shhh! Quiet, she's here," Lee chided Paul. The three men ducked down and approached their stakeout spots to catch a glimpse of their suspect.

"That's her alright," Blake pronounced.

"Her? But she's..." Paul started to respond.

"Is he ready?" Laurie Awl asked of her second in command.

"Yes, Ms. Awl. Ramnaghast has been returned to their vessel."

"Excellent. I want this delivered to Mr. Mansson by the end of the day. Hand-delivered."

"Yes, of course. I'll ensure it's handled personally."

"Thank you, Foundation. What would we do without you," a second identical voice sounded from slightly further away.

"My pleasure, Ma'am," Foundation responded, slightly unsure how to address her CEO's newly arrived clone.

"Ma'am is a bit too stuffy. Feel free to call me Ms. Lean, Mabel Lean."