

Eat to Grow

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Chapter 1

Tanya couldn't believe her luck. She always was one for having little self-trust, so it was understandable the young woman felt the way she did about her apparent windfall. Perpetually encouraged by her mother, Lois, the girl felt bad about their recent argument about her chances of being accepted into Storm Enterprises' new program. Tanya met all the parameters for it, after all. She just wished they were *positive*.

Tanya was thankful for the opportunity presented to her. Really. Looking down at her chubby belly, several fat folds layered atop one another, and her depression hit harder than usual. Of course, she should've been celebrating. In the back of her head, she was, in a sense. She just hated herself for letting things get this desperate. No matter how hard she tried, a regular diet never seemed to work for her. The gimmicky diet pills were even worse, resulting in her hospitalisation at one point. So, even before being accepted into its new program, Tanya wasn't so quick to consider Storm Enterprises' project. It wasn't as though she was the only girl needing some weight loss.

But Tanya was the one they chose for the trial. She looked at the business card whilst waiting for her appointment with Doctor Crawford at Storm Enterprises' offices in the city. They were situated in an excessively tall building that could be seen for miles, even from the countryside, its roof pointed like a blade. Storm Enterprises made a name for itself in the health industry, starting as an independent clinic owned by Harold Storm in the early fifties. It blossomed into a multinational corporation headed by his granddaughter, Penny Storm.

Penny's photo portrait was hung up on one of the walls in the building, dressed to reflect her powerful position as CEO. She wasn't much older than Tanya, somewhere in her mid-twenties, yet already a billionaire. With a PhD in business, Penny's brilliance allowed Storm Enterprises to rise to incredible heights, the Storm family name climbing even higher. Not for wealth or power, Tanya wanted to be like Penny. Instead, because she was in such good shape. Penny was almost perfect in Tanya's eyes. So it was no surprise she felt jealous.

"Tanya. Nice to see you again." Smiling, Doctor Crawford extended a hand, which the comparatively reserved girl shook without a word. The doctor noted that. She thought Tanya would be more enthusiastic today than all the others, considering what was coming: a better life. No matter. Crawford knew that would change in time. "We'll take the elevator to my

office, and then we can get started.”

Tanya followed, trailing behind the doctor. Some businessmen brushed past, offering disgusted mutterings in return. Tanya glanced, bracing to recoil. Most people couldn't stand the sight of her. Things weren't much different in college. So far, Tanya's mother, Lois, and Doctor Crawford were the only people who seemed to care genuinely.

The elevator pinged as it arrived. Luckily, there was nobody inside. Tanya was more relieved, knowing people wouldn't have to deal with her claustrophobia and gaining a few extra pounds since the last appointment didn't help either.

Tanya always hated the smell of antiseptic that drifted through Doctor Crawford's office. The tiled marble flooring was always in perfect condition, with no dirt in the grout. It was always obsessive in its presentation. Tanya had only ever been in Crawford's office for the past few weeks during her initial assessment period, so maybe all the offices in the building were that clean. But still, it was just so...sterile.

Whilst waiting for the good doctor to finish her report, Tanya looked at the framed photographs on the wall. They all had Crawford in them, alongside previous patients. Tanya recognised one of them: Philo Slater. He had been diagnosed with a crippling case of anxiety. In time, Storm Enterprises extended its hand to help him. The support provided certainly wasn't what Philo expected at the time, but he wasn't one to complain after the fact. Tanya inspected the photo more studiously, observing the prominent bulge between Philo's thighs. To put it bluntly, Storm Enterprises offered to give Philo a more prominent member, persistent in their belief doing so would help alleviate his anxiety and boost his confidence, which it did. Philo now, understandably, made a name for himself in the porn industry and was even offered roles in steamy Hollywood movies.

The bottle of pills rattled as Doctor Crawford placed it on her desk. Tanya didn't say anything then, still trying to wrap her head around the fact she was chosen. The bottle didn't look appealing; a simple white container with a long, uninteresting drug name was plastered across the front.

“Okay, so...be sure to take these once daily, on an empty stomach. Preferably, when you wake up.” Doctor Crawford opened the bottle and shook it so a few curious pills flowed onto her palm. The drugs themselves were gelatin hot pink capsules. There must've been over fifty in the bottle.

“How do they work exactly?” Tanya queried, finally breaking her silence.

Crawford smiled. She was happy to see Tanya finally open up again. Sure, she rarely was one to say much in the first place, but this was the girl’s chance for some real change. And with that, she could be as confident as Philo in the photo. “Right. These don’t work like those gimmicky diet pills you see on TV. These aren’t designed to help you lose weight.”

“But I thought—”

“Let me finish,” Crawford cut in, raising her hand. She knew Tanya would panic over her phrasing, but the doctor knew there was nothing to worry about. Well, mostly nothing. “These pills work by isolating the fats in foodstuffs and converting them into healthy proteins. They won’t help you shed the fat you have, but change it into more beneficial matter.”

“So what happens about my fat right now?”

“Don’t worry too much about it. Assuming you manage to keep up with your doses, you’ll already feel different after your first.” Doctor Crawford could see Tanya wasn’t so keen on seeing this through now, the idea suddenly feeling as gimmicky as the diet pills that put her in hospital. But she’d also exhausted all other options to the point where the one before her was all that was left. “I know this can be daunting, Tanya. You want to lose weight, I understand. But no drug is perfect. Sure, they work as intended, but all have trade-offs. Trust me. Please.”

Tanya grabbed the bottle. She didn’t have a choice, did she? In any case, Doctor Crawford smiled. She didn’t know it, but Tanya had taken her first step toward positive change.

“Now, a reminder: take one a day on an empty stomach, preferably when you wake. I want to maintain our monthly appointments to see how you cope. And, of course, you can’t get these pills over a pharmacist’s counter, so be sure to call me for a refill.” Crawford keyed in notes on her computer, booking Tanya’s next appointment for the week before the Christmas break. She eyed the girl getting up to leave, her fat ass leaving behind a deep crease in the seat’s leather. “Oh, and remember, this is a trial. So should you come across any side effects, do let me know.” The doctor smirked.

It took a great deal of self-discipline for Tanya not to take the drug given by Doctor Crawford on an empty stomach, initially aiming to pair it with her lunch the same day. But

between a light scolding from her mother and some last-minute scepticism on her part, Tanya decided it was best to wait. Besides, if Crawford knew she wasn't willing to abide by a simple set of rules at the outset, Tanya would likely be dismissed from the trial, putting her right back to square one.

When that new day came, Tanya practically bounded from bed and paced into her en-suite bathroom, the bottle of pills in hand. She couldn't wait to start a new, better life. Admittedly, she didn't quite understand what Crawford meant by her fat being changed into more 'beneficial matter.' It was likely something she should've brought up and had been further educated on, but Tanya was just too enthusiastic about changing for the better. So then, standing over the sink with the first daily hot pink pill between her fingers, why was she hesitant? Why was she now having second thoughts about all this? Sure, there was a history with the gimmicky diet pills to consider, but this was a different kind of reluctance.

She grabbed the pill bottle and held it firmly in her hand. Its contents rattled inside as Tanya looked contemplatively, a single question dancing around her head as if teasing: ***Would taking two pills hurt?*** Tanya couldn't believe she was already thinking about breaking a simple set of rules, desperate to shed her fat. Her hamster-checked face stared back through the mirror, a constant reminder of years of bullying, being laughed at and ridiculed. Things were bad enough for her already, and yet, in the back of her head, Tanya supposed taking the two pills at once could be just as bad for her or even lead to worse situations, especially when she had no idea how they worked yet.

Swallowing the single pill, Tanya heaved a breath and readied herself for the start of a new day, and if things went as planned, a better life, too.

For Tanya's mother, Lois, the apprehension she felt was understandable. She was happy about her daughter getting the chance at a better life thanks to Storm Industries, but the mother thought the pills prescribed were supposed to help her lose weight and cut back on how much she ate to encourage that. So then, why did Tanya insist on doubling her usual cereal portion quota this morning? The mother surmised it might've been a side effect of the pills taking hold of Tanya's system, working their way through it to slim down. But it didn't make sense to her. ***Why eat more to lose weight?***

Tanya didn't seem bothered by it, tearing into a side of fresh toast and gulping down orange juice. The cereal bowl was empty, and the soaked dregs of whole-grain wheat smudged into the rim. Already contemplating another serving, her stomach grumbled. It was self-

explanatory that Tanya had quite the appetite and liked her food, but it certainly wasn't this ravenous. More often than not, she would've been satiated sometime ago. But Tanya now just wanted more.

"Did you take just the *one* pill this morning?" Lois quizzed, her tone layered with suspicion as a second plateful of toast was placed on the kitchen table. The mother knew Tanya would've been sly enough to take double the recommended dosage.

Tanya's burp was loud, making some space for her to gorge on the toast her mother had just set out. She offered a knowing glance at her mother. So she did take the pill this morning. That was good news, at least. So then, why was she eating so much? Lois scolded herself. She knew she should've gone with Tanya yesterday to get the pills from Doctor Crawford and then go over the details of what to expect. But no, Tanya was insistent she go herself: something about it being uncomfortable for her otherwise. Because the pills were still on trial, there was no printed manual detailing what was or wasn't a side effect. For all Lois knew, Tanya's voracious appetite could've been expected.

Come to think of it, though, Tanya did feel a bit off, not quite herself. Sweat trickled down her brow as she looked at the half-eaten slice of toast. It was now sickening to even look at, as if her stomach was suddenly full, despite not even ten seconds prior feeling like she could eat a whole cow. Were her eyes bigger than her stomach, as though she had finally met a limit on how much she could eat that moment? Were the pills finally starting to work as intended? Shivers and shakes came next, her shoulders numb. It felt as though she'd been hit by a truck. "I don't feel so good. Think I'll go lay down for a bit."

"I should think so, given how much you've eaten in the past twenty minutes." Lois scoffed, relieved to hear her daughter's avid hunger was finally waning. Because now the mother could finally have something to eat, assuming there was anything left in the fridge to use. She watched Tanya trail off to the hallway, dragging her feet across the floor as she moved. "I'm sure there's some ibuprofen lying around here somewhere. Let me know if you need some."

"Uh-huh." Tanya was too weak by now to string even a simple word or two together, the pain shooting through her like an electric shock. Sure, Doctor Crawford mentioned side effects, but God, this was something else! "Could probably do with a few of them now."

Lois smirked a bit apprehensively. Things were going to be okay. Right?

Chapter 2

“And as you can see, our profit trajectories are skyrocketing.” Despite being familiar with them for a few years, Penny Storm always felt nervous when presenting for the company’s shareholders during the quarterly reports. She stressed whether the numbers had been cooked or inflated, always wanting to impress and be genuine, not for her sake but to do well by her late grandfather’s legacy. He entrusted Penny to safeguard the company’s future, something she initially felt hesitant to take on.

The shareholders read the data on the board behind Penny. Storm Enterprises was yet again on the cusp of record profits, taking in dozens of billions this quarter alone. Under Penny’s stewardship, the company was among the most significant businesses globally. So then, why could she detect an uncertain air within the boardroom? Penny opted to stay silent on the matter for the meeting’s duration, now closing in at over two hours, but there was only so much of the apparent disquiet she could take before the elephant in the room had to be addressed — something she was out of the loop on.

One of the shareholders, Agatha Brightford, had spent most of her time reading over the same data sheet from a few slides back for the past twenty minutes. Either she wasn’t impressed or had concerns she wasn’t quick to divulge. For Penny, however, that seemed to be the straw that broke the camel’s back.

“Okay, clearly there’s an issue here.” Penny eyed the shareholders individually as if trying to find answers from how they acted. Some turned away as if embarrassed, whilst others did look but in silence, muted by the young blonde’s sharpness. Penny threw her arms up in defeat. “I don’t understand. Three individuals have triple-checked the data, and we’re making more money than ever. It’s all there.”

“It’s not that,” Agatha said. She wouldn’t be the first to admit more profits meant more happy shareholders, but there was more to the situation now. It *wasn’t* just about how much money they could make anymore.

“Then what, Agatha?” Penny was flustered. She didn’t think Agatha would be the one to contend with her, especially considering her past friendship with Penny’s late grandfather. Penny thought Agatha would be the one to always be at her side. “What’s the problem?”

“Innovation,” another shareholder, Derek Cohen, said. His tone was sharp, as if the words from him were pointed directly at Penny, pinning the blame on her. “Or the lack thereof.”

Penny scoffed. Lack of innovation. She knew Derek was there when the company worked with Philo Slater to beat his crippling anxiety and worked on the drug that gave him his life back. No other company helped him save for Storm Enterprises. What *they* did was innovative. “What do you mean? The drug we gave that Slater guy is about to hit markets next quarter.”

“There was the issue of the drug’s formula being leaked out,” Derek mentioned. He heard the shareholders around him chatter privately, likely behind Penny’s back. She hated that like a pet peeve.

“If you’ve something to say—”

The shareholders didn’t particularly like that. At all. Notwithstanding being a family friend, even Agatha was taken aback. But Penny didn’t care. She’d been working her arse off trying to get Storm Enterprises where it’s at, keeping things straight and narrow, and even finding ways to maximise profits without layoffs. Her grandfather would be proud. She had every right to feel pissed off right about now.

“Since the leak, Yeager Corporation has replicated the formula and aims to release *our product* to the public *this* quarter.” Derek knew that particular bit of information would sting Penny. Yeager Corporation was Storm Enterprises’ biggest rival, so to hear they now had the company’s formula on hand was nothing short of infuriating. “Of course, we know about your plans to sue, but Yeager will have made the product public by the time we get to court proceedings.”

“The individual who leaked the formula has been fired, yes?” one other shareholder said.

“Yes, we terminated their contract immediately, forgoing an investigation.” Penny didn’t have the mental strength to say much else, now entirely distracted by the revelation that Yeager had her company’s formula. She knew about the leak, but the information getting into her rival’s hands was news. She felt like she’d gotten hit by a brick.

“That’s good news, at least,” the shareholder said. Their concerns seemed alleviated, but that of his colleagues remained prevalent.

“So what now?” At this point, Penny seemed almost clueless. She had an entire team

formed specifically to deal with the leak and its legal issues, who would report to her regularly, but the company's *immediate* future would need to be addressed.

“The formula used on Philo Slater would’ve been a defining moment for the company.” As pointed as her words sounded, Agatha hadn’t intended for their *meaning* to feel that way. Instead, they were meant to guide Penny to her next goal. “We now need something else as that defining moment.”

“A whole new product?” Penny felt relieved. She thought she was to be sacked from her position as CEO. This was expected, but Penny wouldn’t be so quick to agree. The leak wasn’t her mistake. Or perhaps, given her connections with the woman, Agatha was willing to give Penny another chance. The company’s stock would surely take a hit when the news of the leak would eventually go public, but it would recover in time.

“We assume you have some new projects in development,” Agatha said confidently.

“Absolutely. Although I’m not sure either would be suitable for public release within the next quarter.” Penny knew she was in quite a tight spot between looming legal battles and potentially fighting to keep her job. No doubt, a few shareholders would prefer she was let go immediately, but there was the question of whether the company would profit so much under new leadership if she were ousted.

“*This* quarter,” Derek said sharply. “To compete with Yeager.”

Penny scoffed.

“We trust you to make the right decision,” Agatha said, much to the chagrin of her colleagues. The seventy-year-old salt-and-pepper-haired woman leaned back on her leather chair with a slight grin, reminiscing of the years she minded Penny when a child, now a confident young woman. “The leak was not a mistake on your part, and we recognise that.”

Penny nodded.

“But understand any further mistakes made will see your position put into question,” Agatha added, her tone and demeanour shifting to mirror her colleagues’. “I would hate to have to do that, Penny.”

Penny nodded again, though this time with hesitation, as if in doing so, she was signing an agreement between her and the shareholders. In a way, she had consigned the fate of her

position as CEO with a simple nod should she not find a product suitable for release.

Doctor Vivian Crawford looked at her phone anxiously. With the clock now striking half-two, she had expected Tanya to call and give a brief update on whether she had started her course of pills. But nothing. All that had come through were texts and group chats about the leak. No doubt Miss Storm would be irritated by that news. It also reflected on Vivian; she was barely working between Tanya's lack of an update and it. And there was plenty of work to be done.

Vivian put her phone aside. The cursed thing wouldn't stop flashing. It wasn't usually this bothersome, but did it have to go off like a string of fireworks today? Things were stressful enough already. Perhaps her mood would improve if she focused on something else for a little while.

That was when the door was knocked on, completely derailing Vivian's thoughts. She cleared her throat preparatively. Perhaps Tanya had opted to come directly to the office for her first update instead of a call. A much more formal approach, if a bit unneeded.

"Come in."

It wasn't Tanya who emerged from the other side, but Penny. That only added to Vivian's strain. What was the CEO doing here? They didn't make plans for a meeting, did they? Oh god, they did, didn't they? Vivian was so off-kilter with getting an update from Tanya that she completely forgot—

"Mind if I sit?" Penny asked.

"Not at all," Vivian answered mously. Then her mind suddenly wandered elsewhere. What if Penny wasn't here for a meeting but to talk about the leak? While she hadn't directly worked with those who made the drug for Philo Slater, her department spearheaded its development. Maybe Penny was looking to trim fat and cut losses further. Was Vivian herself one to get the boot?

"So I'm sure you heard about the leak." Penny curled a loose strand of hair over her ear, crossing a leg over her knee. She could see Vivian was sweating.

"Yes. Unfortunate circumstances." Vivian swallowed, sure she was only mere moments

away from being ordered to pack her things. She even thought about asking Penny to skip the niceties and theatrics and ask her to leave already despite the years together as colleagues. It was Vivian who took charge. “I know where this is headed, so I’ll just get my things.”

Penny’s expression shifted from irritation to confusion as Vivian stood up. There were some differences in opinion on how this conversation would go. “What? No, I’m not here to give you the sack, Vicky. Sit down.”

“Really?” Vivian wasn’t so sure, halfway back to her chair. She felt like Penny was pulling her leg somehow. Granted, they were friends and had been since high school, but the loss of a job wasn’t something to joke about. But the grin from Penny solidified the CEO’s words as truthful. “Nearly gave me a heart attack there.”

“Sorry about that. We’ve cut our losses already, so you and your department are fine.”

“So what’s this about? You mentioned the leak.”

That was when Penny’s irritation returned, albeit far less pointed towards Vivian. She was still reeling from the conversation during the investor meeting. The company’s future was always in Penny’s hands, but now that fact felt particularly pronounced as of late.

“Investors want me to counter the leak by having another product ready by this quarter.” Just saying that stung Penny because she knew it wasn’t feasible. If the investors were perhaps open to giving her more time to next quarter, the situation would be different. But Penny knew they wouldn’t budge under the current pressure from Yeager and the leak. “I’ve done the rounds across the other departments, and they have nothing beyond the conceptual stage. So I was hoping—”

“—that we had something.”

“Do you?” Penny said almost pleadingly.

“We have something in testing right now....” Vivian could see that was enough to instill a sense of hope in Penny, thinking her troubles with the investors and keeping the company up were over. But it wasn’t that simple. Nothing worth having ever was. “...but it’s very experimental.”

Penny’s frustration now seemed pointed towards Vivian. Anything experimental was risky, especially if it was to be publically released within the quarter. Penny thought Vivian would be

the one to alleviate her stresses, not aggravate them. But it wasn't fair to pin the blame on her.

“How experimental?”

“So experimental that I don't know if it even works as planned.” Vivian keyed buttons on her keyboard and brought up Tanya's file for Penny to read.

“Oh, the Stokes girl with the weight problem. I remember.”

“Yes. She was supposed to call me earlier for a quick update, but I haven't gotten anything.” Vivian knew she should've let concern get the better of her, but she couldn't help it. Being Tanya's most trusted confidant for so long, it was bound to make her feel some way. “The pills we gave her were designed to help her weight, but I worry.”

“Worry? Viv, she's probably busy doing something. I can't imagine what, but there's no need to stress over everything; it's not good for you.” Penny always was the one to give Vivian words of comfort. “I'm sure she'll update you before the day's out. When she does, would you relay it back to me?”

“Yeah,” Vivian nodded.

“Great. Now wish me luck; going to see if I can convince Agatha to give me more time.”

As Penny left, Vivian reached for her phone. As expected, more group messages about the leak had come through, but Tanya was still a no-show. What help Penny's advice was worth, it wasn't long-lived.

“Come on,” Vivian fretted.

As Tanya bit into her third slice of bacon that morning, her mother Lois watched. Despite her dear daughter's portliness, she had never had such an appetite before, eyeing the other plates and bowls of foodstuffs at her side. Still, it was far better than having no interest in food and sitting there bony. Lois only wished Tanya didn't wear that XXL hoodie to cover herself up. There was no need for that.

“Did you start taking those pills Doctor Crawford gave you?” Lois was content enough with watching Tanya eat her fill, the TV in the corner showing a news report about a

company's major leak uninteresting in comparison. So as Tanya buttered a couple of slices of bread to make a sandwich filled with that bacon, the mother merely smiled back.

"Yeah, took one on an empty stomach." Tanya wasn't interested in saying much else, too wrapped in her ravenous hunger. With how much was being eaten, though, she felt Storm Enterprises had duped her. It especially stung when Doctor Crawford, whom she trusted, had also seemed to trick her. Now Tanya was convinced she was eating her sorrows away. "Don't think it worked, though."

Lois knew Tanya shouldn't have been so quick to dismiss. In the few occasions she and Doctor Crawford had met, it was clear the doctor knew what she was talking about and knew there was real potential for change in Tanya. She couldn't see it, though, depressively cramming a third croissant in her mouth. "I'm sure it'll work. Drugs like these take their time. That's all."

Tanya wished she shared her mother's optimism. Really. What a difference in her life that would make. The doctor's lies so aggravated her that she never bothered to return her calls when eating over the past hour. As an email pinged in, Tanya turned her phone off.

"You shouldn't do that. The doctor can iron out these issues if you give her time." It hurt Lois to see Tanya behave this way, especially when she was brimming with optimism just a few days prior. Lois was of the mind to passive-aggressively steer her daughter in the right direction, but Tanya was now old enough to make decisions for herself. If she felt duped by Storm Enterprises, she was duped by Storm Enterprises—end of. "It just hurts me to see you like this."

Tanya wasn't in the mood for this anymore. She just wanted to eat away her sorrows. Why was that so hard to let be? At least her hunger was finally starting to subside; that extra sandwich she made was now beginning to look bigger than it was.

"Anyway, to change the subject...." Deep down, Lois wanted to keep talking about the more pressing issue, but seeing Tanya roll her eyes derisively was enough of a hint to move on. "...I'll be visiting your aunt Carol when finished here. Do you wanna come?"

"You know my answer to that." Tanya knew her aunt Carol would condescend to her if she sat in that fancy chair and made a crease in the leather. Even then, her uncle Dave would sit in weird silence because he never was one to talk. "I'll see you when you get back."

Lois nodded. She had hoped Tanya would feel different this time around after taking the

pills Doctor Crawford gave her. Guess not. “I’ll bring you something back.”

When Lois left the kitchen, Tanya angrily threw the remains of her bacon sandwich onto the plate and buried her face in her hands. She just felt so defeated. The hopes she had for positive change in her life amounted to nothing.

Penny’s private discussions with Agatha in the boardroom went back and forth. She had hoped to convince the shareholder and dear family friend for more time, but it was clear that wasn’t an option. As Agatha looked out the window to the road below, she could hear Penny’s continued pleading. Some points she made were curious but not convincing.

“An experimental project with Doctor Crawford?” Just saying that sounded dangerous for the company’s stocks, as if they hadn’t been hit enough. And the CEO, of all people, was suggesting this? “You think that’s going to help us?”

“I know how it sounds. But it’s the best I can do if you and the board aren’t willing to give me more time.” Truthfully, Penny didn’t have much confidence in Vivian’s work with this Tanya Stokes girl, but it was their only option. “I’m only asking you to bump this up to next quarter. That’s three months. Think about how much more improved the project will be with that much time.”

Agatha was torn. She knew too well what the other shareholders would say to this and how they would react, but neither had the same personal connection to Penny as Agatha. The other shareholders, especially Derek, were only interested in the results. Storm Enterprises was about to enter freefall with the news report about the leak airing live. Yeager Corporation would undoubtedly be enjoying the spectacle, their stock ballooning after announcing an event to reveal their ‘new product’ later this month—the gall.

“I just don’t think the other shareholders will—”

“Agatha. I don’t care how much money we make or lose. I’m not doing this to make them richer.” Penny hated to see her closest family friend so indecisive at a time when judgement was called for. Penny was willing to do whatever was necessary to maintain her family’s legacy. She didn’t think Agatha would be the one in the way of that. “If you’re not going to do it for me, do it for my grandfather.”

Agatha’s smile was reflected through the window. Penny always knew the old dame had a

soft spot for her old friend. Agatha didn't think she would prey on that weakness, though. "Sometimes I think you're a bit too smart, girl."

"I learned from the best."

"Which is precisely why he chose you over your father. You dedicated yourself to learning the ins and out of the company, not just how to maximise profit." Agatha turned to Penny, seemingly with more assurance than before, as if the young CEO's words cut deep, even if it was a cheap move. "You've made the company more successful than ever and better. Your grandfather would be proud."

Penny smiled.

"I can't guarantee they'll listen, but I'll do what I can to convince the board to give you more time." Agatha knew Derek would be the hardest to convince. The others would be more easily swayed with sales in stock from her shares elsewhere or other...ventures. "Just make this work, Penny."

"You can count on me. You always have."

Agatha chuckled.

Tanya had huddled herself in bed to watch TV, her depression returning hard to hit like a tidal wave. Despite no longer being hungry, her hand dove into a bowl of crisps and gorged on them as an episode of her favourite reality TV show flashed before her. This usually did the trick, but it didn't feel right for some reason, as if something was missing. Oh, that's right—her opportunity for real change. She couldn't believe she trusted Storm Enterprises. It was foolish of her, and she only realised that when it was too late.

It took some effort, but Tanya eventually got off her bed and moved to the mirror in the corner of her room. She was still wearing her hoodie, sweat stains around her armpits. It was ugly. *She* was ugly. How Tanya let herself get this much bent out of shape was anyone's guess. Sure, she grieved for her father and took it hard, but that was years ago. Everyone had moved on except for her. The issues were compounded by 'classmates' at college, with the tutors either directly ignoring the problem or failing to address it.

"Fuck." As Tanya looked at her reflection in the mirror, she wondered if there was any

point in removing the hoodie, knowing what would be revealed underneath. A while, those at college would often say. But it was almost routine to look at herself every day at least once, like clockwork. And so, with a preparatory breath, she lowered her arm under her hoodie to pull it up over her head, dropping it to the floor.

Then came the piercing scream as her reflection looked back. It was good that Lois was still out, or she would come barging in in fear of whatever was happening. Tanya's face was recognisable, but everything else was so different, as if she stepped into a stranger's body, swapping hers for theirs. Her pudgy gut was replaced with a washboard stomach and an adonis belt. She gasped profusely, seeing the drastic change but not mentally able to register it. It had to be a trick; she had to be dreaming. But even after pinching her arm that no longer had its usual flabbiness, Tanya's new self was still very much there, a reality.

And she couldn't believe it still.

"Holy shit." Tanya had taken a moment to explore her new body, running a hand over her toned arms and squeezing them for good measure. They were solid as if born from brickwork, with veins running subtly down the limbs from shoulder to elbow—a smile. "The pills did work! They were hiding all this under the hoodie."

She took a few steps back to better view her lower body. Then a scoff. Jesus, she had an ass like those women in the Wellness division shows she was so jealous of, accompanied by perfectly sculpted heart-shaped calves and teardrop quadricep muscles. Tanya turned and twisted in ways she couldn't before, giggling like a schoolgirl as each angle only positively emphasised her transformation. She cried for the first time in God knows how long, with good reason.

Tanya observed the most startling change as she looked at her new self, a hand firmly groping her ass. Even though she was no longer fat, she was still just as big as ever, as if all the fat had turned into muscle. She weighed over one hundred and forty pounds if she was right. That was quite the change. Tanya certainly wouldn't be complaining, but how would her mother react if she found out?

Tanya didn't want to think about that just yet, though. Instead, she took in the changes further, drinking in the new body that would renew her confidence. Not sure she was doing it right, Tanya brought her arms up into a flex like those big bodybuilders on TV. She lacked experience, but she felt like a bodybuilder herself. What would it be like to be on the stage, to win a contest? Tanya could hardly believe a question like that would dance around inside her head, and yet—

“I gotta let the Doc know.”

Tanya hastily grabbed her phone. Even holding that felt so much different now. She hadn't exactly planned what to say, though. There was also the issue of the doctor's calls being dodged over the past few hours, so no doubt she wouldn't be in the best of moods. But, of course, the call rang out longer than Tanya liked. Granted, Doctor Crawford was now out of hours, but she did say Tanya could call anytime she needed to.

“Tanya? I've been waiting patiently for your call all day. I was worried. I thought you had forgotten or decided against the program without telling me.” The doctor's tone was understandably coated with frustration. She had every right to feel that way, and Tanya knew that but only now that the pills worked as intended. If they didn't, the situation would be much different. “If that's the case, you have to let me know. This research is vital.”

“It works!” Tanya barked cheerfully. She laughed through the phone, making the good doctor smile as she sat on her home desk chair going through paperwork. Tanya was sure she was crying her eyes out now, which embarrassed her a bit, but she had every reason to. Just as her mother said, she shouldn't have doubted Crawford as she had.

“Really? That's great!” Vivian's anxiousness about the experiment seemed to be alleviated by Tanya's statement. This was the first big step towards Tanya's further improvements. Her life would change for the better for sure now. Vivian also had to consider the conversation she had with Penny. If the experiment with Tanya did well enough, perhaps it would help with Storm Enterprises' issues after all. Vivian leaned back on her chair, much more relaxed now, looking at the clock on her wall. “I realise it's rather late, but would you mind coming over to get some data? Just a few statements, telling me how you feel and so on?”

“I was just thinking the same thing. I'll be over in fifteen minutes. See you then.”

Tanya didn't know how to drive, and her mother was still out, so she was strapped for options for transport. She would make the seven-forty bus just down the street a few blocks if quick enough. One thing was for sure, though: she wouldn't be out of breath so quickly this time.

Tanya grabbed her hoodie off the floor and slipped it back on, taking some trousers too.

Considering she was high in Storm Enterprises' hierarchy, Tanya didn't expect Doctor Crawford to live in a four-storey flat. Tanya had never been there before, at number forty-six Kingsford Avenue. The name alone suggested the doctor was well-off. But no. Surely the company was paying the woman her deserved dues, at least?

Vivian smiled as she opened the door to greet Tanya. She was just in time for a freshly-brewed cup of tea, too. Tanya smiled back, though hers was more vibrant, her teeth barred. After all, this was the happiest day of her life in God knows how long.

"Glad you could make it." Vivian extended her hand for Tanya to shake it. The girl's grip was surprisingly stronger than usual, making the doctor grimace. "Come in, have a seat."

Tanya crossed the threshold into the doctor's humble home, which was comparatively more rustic than her work's pristine environment. It was far more welcoming than the offices at Storm Enterprises, that was for sure.

Tanya noticed the blonde-haired woman standing by the fireplace drinking from a glass. She knew who it was, but they still startled her.

"Miss Storm? I...I, uh...I didn't." Tanya was profoundly lost for words. She didn't expect Penny Storm, CEO of Storm Enterprises, of all people, to be here. For Tanya, this was like meeting her hero, someone who inspired her and aspired to be like her. Not the fame and fortune but the comparatively ideal body.

"I hope you don't mind her being here, Tanya." Vivian handed her a cup of tea whilst Penny approached with her glass of whiskey. When she shook hands with her, Tanya positively beamed like a fangirl, trying her hardest not to shriek out. The young woman's excitement got the better of her, tightening her grip on Penny's knuckles like a vice. "She knows I'm working with you on your, let's say, condition, and I wanted her to see whatever progress you've made firsthand. Is that okay?"

All Tanya did was nod gleefully, still lost for words. Penny chuckled at that.

"She's a big fan," Vivian explained.

"So it would seem."

The trio drank in awkward silence for a moment, each girl looking at the other back and forth as if trying to find who would be the one to move the conversation forward beyond the

fangirling. This meeting was to do with Tanya, so it stood to reason she would be the one to get things going, but she was still geeking out between sips.

“So, you mentioned the pills worked.” It was Vivian who chose to move the conversation forward. As happy as she was to meet a fan, the doctor knew Penny was busy.

“Oh yeah. I think it’s best to show you, though.” Tanya put the mug on the doctor’s walnut table and took a few steps back. Her presentation was almost dramatic like she was about to make a grand reveal, pulling her XXL hoodie over her head.

The sound of expensive China hitting the floor wasn’t what Tanya expected next, much less the profuse gasps of shock from the doctor and Penny. Vivian’s eyes trailed Tanya’s washboard abs up to her shoulders, then down again. Penny did much the same thing, though much more intently, taking in every individual curvature and groove Tanya’s torso had on proud display.

“So? Whatcha think? Amazing, right?” Tanya crunched her abs just like she saw those bodybuilders on TV do, smiling at the gobsmacked onlookers.

“What the *actual fuck!*” Vivian was lost for words. The results came far quicker than the doctor had anticipated, which ought to have been viewed in a positive light if it weren’t for the results themselves being so plainly unexpected. “How many did you take?”

“Just the one, as you told me.”

“Yeah, right and about ten more while you were at it.” Vivian was close to pulling her hair out and screaming the place down, caring not about how the others felt about it. Tanya was lying. She had to be. But the expression she gave in response to the doctor suggested anything but. “No. No, you couldn’t have gotten that from just the one pill. This is all wrong.”

Penny felt it was time to break her silence, standing on the sidelines, silently watching for too long. “Okay, I’m assuming this was not the intended result.”

“I should say so. The pills weren’t designed to work this effectively so quickly.” Vivian looked at Tanya and could see her confidence wane slightly, realising there might be a severe issue on their hands to deal with. The doctor looked at Tanya’s arms, noticing the distinct muscle bulges that dominated them. Nor were they designed to enhance muscular development.”

“Wait, what?” Tanya asked. “So what were they supposed to do?”

“They were designed to have you lose weight with each meal instead of gaining it.” That was the layman’s way of explaining it. The far more scientific explanation would undoubtedly go over Tanya and Penny’s heads, so the doctor spared them that. “In theory, you could eat as much food as you usually would and lose weight rather than gain, so long as you take the pills. But instead, we have this.”

“You told me this was experimental,” Tanya reminded.

“I did, but that doesn’t mean I wasn’t without expectations. At worst, I thought you would keep gaining weight while your body adjusted to the pills’ formula.”

“I don’t see much of an issue if you ask me,” Penny said. Her body’s in better shape than ever, which she wanted, and she doesn’t seem to mind.”

Vivian scoffed. She knew Penny was right; looking at her, she could see Tanya was the happiest she had ever been, running a finger over her bulging arm. “It’s the principle of it all. I spent years working on that formula, only to go wrong somewhere. That could be dangerous.”

Tanya’s eyes lit up. From those last few words by the doctor, she had a feeling about where the conversation was headed. “Don’t take this away from me. Not now. Please.”

“But you don’t—”

“You have no idea what I’ve gone through and fought just to get a slightly better body than the one I had only yesterday.” Tanya’s eyes almost welled up right there and then. She didn’t want to go back to living as someone bullied for being fat, especially when it wasn’t her fault. She didn’t want to go through the college corridors bracing herself against the inevitable comments. Doctor Crawford finally gave her a chance against that, only for her to take it away. “The results aren’t what you expected. I get that. But they aren’t worse either.”

Penny looked at Vivian knowingly. The doctor knew she was cornered in this argument and could see there was no convincing Tanya to backtrack.

“Fine. But I want to keep up with our regular appointments to get your data. It’s hard to say if the effects are permanent or not. If you have the slightest problem, let me know. You got that?”

“Absolutely,” Tanya said gleefully. She had Penny to thank, of course.

“I’ll also be working with my department to find the issue in the pills’ formula.” Vivian was willing to let Tanya’s changes from their usage slide for now but couldn’t let their effects become permanent. After all, the pills were designed for weight loss, not muscle enhancement. “This shouldn’t have happened in the first place.”

Vivian had her work cut out for the next while, that was for sure.

Chapter 3

Agatha stayed true to her promise to Penny. It didn't take much to convince most of the board to give the girl more time for the replacement product that would hit shelves within the next quarter. A few cash injections into their own companies here and there, and they were easily swayed, just as Agatha predicted. The real roadblock would be convincing Derek, as the board's decision had to be unanimous before it could be enacted. And unlike his colleagues, he wouldn't be swayed by further investments in his company's ventures. So Agatha's approach would need more tact.

But it was not going well.

"So let me get this straight," Derek said, sipping from his glass of bourbon, sitting by the fireplace alongside his colleagues, whom herself had a small glass of wine. Not much, just enough to be civil. But that didn't have quite the effect Agatha had hoped it would. "Neither of you knows what this new product can do, nor are you aware of its potential dangers in such a speculative condition, yet you expect me to give Penny more time anyway? Agatha...I know you to be smarter than this."

"Giving the girl more time will help us in the long term. We'll be able to ascertain these 'speculative dangers' during that period and quash them before the product goes public." Agatha had more to say but reined herself for modesty's sake. She had always known Derek to be the guy whose positions on things were firmly nailed to the ground, but he was especially rooted this time. "If you don't care about anything except money and how much the company might lose, think about how much you'll make by doing this."

"We wouldn't have to worry about losing money if Penny ensured the company ran as tightly as possible. This damn leak of hers is going to cost us billions." Derek heaved angrily, his hand reaching back to the glass of bourbon to cool off with a sip. But that didn't matter now. He'd already made his honest thoughts known. His unshakable position wasn't about the product's uncertainty but the fact Penny cost the company billions. It wasn't her fault, but Derek was set on blaming her anyway.

"She's not to blame, and you know that." The fireplace crackled, the only response Agatha's candid statement received as Derek chose to continue drinking. He acted like the

money lost was his own, yet still had countless billions that set him and his family up for life. Derek knew Storm Enterprises would recover from the leak and the legal battle. Still, all he cared about was that he was now investing in a £28 billion enterprise, not the £150 billion it used to be.

“Oh, she’s not? When did the company’s value last tank £122 billion overnight? You tell me.” Derek glared at Agatha intently, waiting for the inevitable answer to prove his point. But Agatha only looked away guiltily, which was equally delicious a response for Derek. “Come to think of it, when did we last lose money, period?”

Derek was right. And Agatha hated herself for agreeing with him. He hadn’t swayed her position on Penny’s new product. Still, he had undoubtedly opened her eyes to the severity of the company’s issues.

“You’re indulging the girl because of your past relations with Harold.” Derek looked at Agatha knowingly, who looked back sharply. How he knew about her former romantic ties to Penny’s grandfather was anyone’s guess. “She wasn’t even supposed to be CEO, but her father.”

“Harold knew Elias wasn’t ready and never would be. He was too money-minded.”

“At least that would’ve ensured he wouldn’t take on risky ventures like this product you’re proposing I side with without knowing how it works.”

Derek ran out of steam. Or rather, he’d run out of reasons to keep caring about this whole thing now. He hadn’t budged on his position, so the board’s decision to give Penny more time wouldn’t go ahead. But something itched in Derek. What Agatha had suggested about how much money he could make by giving Penny more time had quite literally given him a hard-on. Derek lived for his insurmountable wealth, and of course, the more he had—

“I’ll give Penny the time she needs.”

“You will?” Agatha was startled by the apparent, sudden shift in Derek’s opinion. She wasn’t stupid, though. Such a change had to mean there were strings attached somewhere.

“But I want her to ask for it.”

“She’s the CEO. She’s far too busy for—”

“Exactly! She’s the CEO, so it should be her making these demands, not you.” Derek knew his proposal, as simple as it was, hurt Agatha in a way she hadn’t reasonably expected. There was a sheer sense of panic when she heard Derek say that. “Unless this product of yours doesn’t hold as much weight as you say.”

The tables had flipped. Agatha had come to Derek’s home to convince him — as tricky as it would be — but he was in control.

Tanya had always been self-conscious about showering. Seeing her fat folds stack on her belly as she leaned down to pick up the soap bar was always unsightly to her. No matter how thoroughly she cleaned herself, there was always a hint of sweat hidden somewhere that drove people away from her. That self-consciousness and lingering smell had melted after Dr Crawford’s pills had transformed her. Tanya felt like a completely new woman, and it showed.

The water rolled down Tanya’s capped shoulders as she scrubbed with the loofah, forming scenarios in her mind she thought she’d never compose. Now that she had a body built like an American linebacker, the woman surmised she had the strength to match. Her forearm alone was packed with muscly sinews, each scrub from the loofah bringing the definition out. Her back had nearly doubled its size, the muscles like a string of mountains, quadriceps chafing as she leaned to lather her firm, zero-per-cent-fat glutes. Every inch of the woman had changed not overnight but within a single meal. No one knew why, not even the brilliant Dr Crawford, who vowed to figure it all out.

Then came the knock on the bathroom door. It was Lois. She hadn’t yet been let in on her daughter’s transformation, with Tanya unsure how she would react. Lois wasn’t conservative, but that didn’t mean she wouldn’t flip out. It was a sudden change, after all. “You okay? You’ve been in there for nearly half an hour. Got some fresh clothes for you.”

Tanya was okay. She was more than that. She was enjoying the changes for what they were, seeing her reflection on the shower screen. Her breasts were perkier than ever and even extra sensitive to Tanya’s touch. Pectoral development was something Tanya didn’t expect but appreciated all the same for how it enhanced her chest. The skill level didn’t match a bodybuilder’s, but she couldn’t resist trying to flex her pecs. That needed work.

“Uh, yeah. I’ll be out in a few,” Tanya said, finally breaking her silence. “Just leave the clothes out there, and I’ll get them.”

Lois placed the stack of clothes in front of the bathroom door. She didn't immediately leave, though. It didn't take much for the mother to figure out Tanya was a bit off today. Maybe she was still feeling down from the pills Dr Crawford gave her not working as they should. Of course, Lois was none the wiser to the truth Tanya seemed determined to hide. Still, Lois knew Tanya always was one to appreciate space, so she walked off downstairs into the kitchen.

"Jesus Christ." Tanya's transformation occurred a little over thirteen hours prior. She'd spent over six of those staring at herself in the mirror after returning from Dr Crawford's before eventually falling asleep. Now nearly two hours this morning, she was still in awe and wasn't accustomed to the changes. Tanya smirked as she performed a casual bicep flex. The muscle rose sharply, a distinct split running across the peak. She couldn't wait to measure it. It had to be at least fifteen inches. She couldn't wait to measure all of it, honestly. Every inch of every engorged muscle would be recorded to satiate Tanya's newfound curiosity.

"Bacon's ready!" Lois called up. "Want to ensure you eat something before meeting with Dr Crawford later."

That was when Tanya remembered the slight argument with Dr Crawford last night over how to handle things from now on with the changes. The changes that weren't even supposed to happen. It was anyone's guess how that meeting would go, though maybe the doctor wouldn't say much. Unlikely, but one could hope.

In any case—

Tanya's stomach grumbled at her mother's mention of the bacon. It was a deep growl-like murmur she hadn't heard before. Sure, Tanya was hungry, but the sound implied she was half-starved.

—it was time for breakfast.

"You fancy doing something later tonight?" Lois stood by the ironing board, stacking more clothes to be put by later, most of which were Tanya's because she went through so many outfits in a week. All that sweat, too. Tanya was being especially quiet today, the mother realised. Perhaps she might feel better if they went to the cinema together to see the movie Tanya's favourite director made. "I heard that the new Klarysa Hill movie is reviewing well."

Purposefully wearing all-black today to hide her changes, Tanya was too busy prepping for her checkup with Dr Crawford to notice her mother said anything, munching on her second bacon sandwich. She couldn't explain how, but it tasted better than the one she had yesterday. The bacon packed a punch of flavour with each bite, and even the butter on her tongue made the young woman moan. Lois looked perplexed as she stacked the pair of jeans on the ironing board.

“Did you hear what I said?” Lois urged, hoping she wasn't being ignored. She understood why Tanya was in a rush, but this haste was enthusiastic, the opposite of what the mother expected, considering she knew the pills Dr Crawford gave hadn't worked. Lois would be the last person to question someone's excitement, but there was no questioning that Tanya's was misplaced.

“What?”

“I said, do you wanna go to the movies later? I figured you might want some cheering up because those pills don't work.”

Tanya was hesitant to respond. She wanted to tell her mother the truth but was wary of the reaction. The pills didn't just work; they over-performed. Granted, the results weren't exactly what Tanya anticipated, but they were better than nothing. As she moved to grab her tote bag from the living room, she felt her thickly-muscled quads chafe under her tight black leggings—a feeling she would have to get used to. “Uh, maybe. Rain check?”

Rain check? Lois knew Tanya well enough that she rarely had to do that for anything. Outside college classes, she rarely left the house except for appointments with Dr Crawford. Beyond that, Tanya spent her time in the house watching TV. What she suggested now implied plans had been made for elsewhere. Lois wasn't suspicious, but it was quite the change for Tanya. “Oh. I didn't know you had plans.”

In truth, Tanya had no idea what those plans were either. The pills had just given her confidence, making her feel like she could go anywhere and do anything. She didn't know where to start, but that made it thrilling. She could maybe go to the gym and test her new muscles to see how far she could take them.

Her stomach grumbled. Despite the apparent changes she was so set on hiding from her mother, one of the things that didn't go away was Tanya's appetite. That was a good thing, at least — right?

“There’s still some bacon left if you want another sandwich for the road,” Lois offered, which was confidently answered with a smile from Tanya. The mother was happy to give Tanya as much food as needed before leaving, willing to whip up another batch of bacon if asked. And then, though it may have just been a trick of the morning light and her lack of coffee, Lois noticed Tanya’s jumper. “Is your—”

She hesitated to say, knowing it might offend Tanya, but there was no other way of talking about it. And bringing it up so abruptly, there was no dancing around it.

“What?”

“Is your jumper tighter than it was before?” Lois knew her eyes weren’t playing tricks on her. Tanya’s jumper did look tighter on her frame, more compact and close-fitting across her chest. But the young woman laughed it off, which was unexpected, as far as Lois was concerned.

“I think you need to get your eyes checked.” Tanya went to the door at that point, dismissing the extra sandwich. She knew her changes couldn’t be kept secret forever, but she would be embarrassed if she couldn’t hold firm on them for at least a week. Just enough for Tanya to be familiar with them, at least. Her glutes clenched and flexed when she walked into the hallway, the sleeves of her top tightening. “I’ll let you know if my plans change, okay?”

“Uh-huh,” Lois said perplexedly.

Storm Enterprises’ headquarters was far enough for Tanya to travel by public bus. She hated sitting in the moquette-patterned seats next to strangers, not knowing how they might feel about her and her then-excessive weight. But that changed since the pills did their job. Now Tanya was confident enough to ignore and block whatever comments she might receive. They were more or less the same, though with a distinct change she revelled in.

“Holy shit, check the size of that chick,” one of the teenage passengers sitting with his buddies casually blurted out without thinking. He had no regard for how Tanya might feel, seeing her bulky weight sink into the seat three rows down. The older woman at her side trembled, fearfully clutching her handbag. There was a stark contrast in size between them; not only was Tanya predictably wider, thicker and fuller, but she was standing a whole head taller too. The aged woman thought Tanya might try to rob her, but she was too busy smiling and eager to catch up with Dr Crawford.

Taking the next turn on the road, the driver glanced through the front view mirror at Tanya as she rummaged through her tote bag and pulled out a notepad and pen. She felt now was a good time to make some notes about her changes that Dr Crawford might be interested in. The most obvious thing to note was that her appetite hadn't changed. The bacon sandwiches were delicious, but she was still a bit hungry. And no wonder, with the size of her. Writing those details down, Tanya hadn't noticed her jumper's sleeve was tighter than when she left and tightened even further with each pen stroke.

The woman sitting by Tanya had tried to keep her head looking straight and think of anything else while the comparatively mammoth Tanya scrawled her notes silently. But the salt-and-pepper-haired septuagenarian was eventually distracted by Tanya's legs casually expanding larger without her even realising. It was subtle yet noticeable to the eye. The older woman thought she might faint if anything else happened. And Tanya was none the wiser to it all.

The bus driver was equally distracted by Tanya's inexplicable changes. He was so caught up in the display through the front-view mirror that he nearly veered into the car ahead, only missing the rear bumper at the last second. The bus's sharp jerk caused Tanya to strike through almost half the page she was writing in. With the jerk, she didn't notice the back of her jumper tightened itself around her freshly-grown lat muscles, giving the passengers on the rear side quite the surprise.

Then she saw it rising high into the sky in the distance, towering over every other building in the city, pointed like a blade: Storm Enterprises' headquarters.

As Tanya sat facing Dr Crawford's desk, the scientist watched mutedly as its metal frame creaked and sunk under her weight, one of the legs bending entirely out of shape! The scientist wasn't sure how to respond to such a display of raw power, gulping nervously as Tanya's impressive width enveloped the seat.

As this was a 'first case scenario, there was no precedent for working with Tanya's changes. So Vivian felt it was best they approached things slowly, figuratively throwing stuff at the wall to see what would stick. Anything could happen, but Vivian couldn't help but feel curious about the scientific discoveries and implications Tanya's new body might hold, which was odd considering her stance only just yesterday.

“You...want to take measurements?” Tanya had been taking small handfuls of peanuts from the bowl at Vivian’s desk, hankerings of hunger coming in small waves since she arrived. The doctor’s proposal was so unexpected she almost choked on the last peanut. Tanya wasn’t quite sure how to react. “What, of my bust? I’m flattered, but I hardly think that’s part of your job description.”

Vivian chuckled. Of course, what Tanya said was technically accurate, but data would have to be recorded to understand better what went wrong with the pills. A separate team was hard at work studying their formula, but getting results would take weeks. “No, not your bust. Your muscles. I’m hoping to record some data. However, that doesn’t change what you said. I hope that isn’t an issue.”

“Oh, right! No, I don’t mind that at all.” Tanya reached for the bowl and grabbed more peanuts, munching away. She wondered, then, about what the doctor might find. Tanya had no experience measuring anything, too embarrassed by her former fatness to take an interest in her size. But things were different now. “You know, I’m quite curious about that.”

“Great!” Vivian grabbed the measuring tape a little too conveniently positioned at her side. The smile that followed just might have implied she was looking forward to this quite a bit. She loved data, so that shouldn’t have come as a surprise, yet it did. “We’ll do your legs first.”

“Quadriceps,” Tanya corrected confidently. She stood up, the warped chair finally getting a chance to live its life without strain for a few minutes.

Vivian chuckled. “That’s right.”

Tanya moved to the middle of the room so both women had enough space to work with. Pulling her trousers down was surprisingly a struggle, easier to put on that morning, but she eventually got them down to her ankles. Tanya was familiar with the phrase, ‘A picture paints a thousand words.’ And Dr Crawford’s face was quite the picture when she laid eyes on Tanya’s bare quads. She hadn’t ever seen muscles so thick, full and defined; her eyes magnetised to every rippling inch on proud display. The doctor was so floored that she struggled to keep a firm hold on the measuring tape.

“Okay, let’s uh...let’s do this.”

Tanya watched sheepishly as the doctor knelt before her to wrap the tape around her left thigh. She’d done this before in some professional capacity; that much was clear. Tanya didn’t expect to feel such excitement over something so analytical.

“Um...how big did you say they were before?”

“I...didn’t,” was Tanya’s sincere yet tense reply halfway through eating the last peanut from the handful she grabbed.

Dr Crawford nodded in agreement. “Yeah...I thought as much.”

“How big is it?”

“Thirty-three inches relaxed. But if you flex for me, I—”

Dr Crawford didn’t get an opportunity to finish getting her point across. No one ever expects to hear someone moan in pleasure halfway through talking, which was what the curious scientist experienced, listening to the abrupt moaning from Tanya as her quadriceps tensed and flexed. But the doctor soon realised there was much more to it than that. Tanya’s legs weren’t just flexing but gradually grew larger before the doctor’s eyes. The meaty flesh pressed on the measuring tape, chafing against the limb. The other leg grew, too, matching in size, their definition becoming more pronounced.

Dr Crawford freed the measuring tape to preserve its integrity against the immense flesh, standing up to marvel at it.

A moment of silence, and then—

“What the *fuck*?”

Despite her pleasure, Tanya was clueless about what had just happened. She looked at the doctor perplexedly, every inch of her frame at least five inches thicker than it was only a few moments ago, with tears and rips throughout her outfit, but she was equally clueless about that too. “What?”

“What do you mean, what? You just grew bigger right in front of my eyes.” Vivian gestured to the mirror on the wall for Tanya to look at herself. It took a moment for the brunette to register the further enhancements to the physique, a smirk slowly but surely creeping into existence.

“Holy shit.” Though poorly performed, Tanya rushed into several bodybuilding poses without the expected grace.

Then the doctor noticed the peanut crumb at the edge of Tanya's mouth. A theory then formed in her head. "Do me a favour. Take more of those peanuts, as many as you want, and eat them."

"Isn't that what I've been doing anyway?" Tanya queried, confused.

"Humor me."

Tanya wasn't sure where the doctor was going with this, but she at least felt compelled to satisfy her curiosity. It was the least that could be done, considering. Taking what was left of the peanuts from the bowl, she ate them one at a time until her hand was again bare, save for some dust on her palm.

"How do you feel?"

"No longer hungry if that's what you meant. Are you trying to give me a free lunch or something?"

"I'm trying to test a theory I have." There were no immediate results, much to the doctor's surprise. Perhaps after a few moments, things might be different. She inspected Tanya's physique in the meantime, through silence. Tanya was too busy feverishly groping her muscles in an almost worshipful manner, squeezing every rock-hard inch of her arms like there was no tomorrow, as if they might disappear overnight. "But right now, it doesn't seem to hold any weight. You're still taking the pills. One each morning on an empty stomach?"

"Yeah," was Tanya's soft-toned reply as she covetously brushed a palm over her thick forearm, the sinews thickly corded like wire. "Why? What even is this theory?"

"I'm trying to determine whether this growth you experienced is linked to hunger." Vivian moved closer to Tanya, standing behind her broad shoulder. A breathy exhale brushed against the larger woman's ear. It caught her off-guard a bit before regaining her composure. A tear in Tanya's sleeve revealed the horseshoe tricep underneath, which Vivian looked at and marvelled at. "But if you're no longer hungry like you suggested, it may be difficult to prove right now."

"So..."

Tanya didn't immediately get a reply. Instead, Vivian seemed content with marvelling at the brunette's physique in silence, taking in every broad, thick, full inch of muscle she had. The

doctor was well aware of her previous comments that Tanya's changes could prove dangerous. But it was the logical, scientific part of her that felt that way. The emotional half felt different—it seemed to appreciate this opportunity with Tanya.

“So I want you to test my theory in your own time. The next time you're hungry, eat and record everything. What time you ate, what you ate, how much mass was gained—everything.”

This felt like homework to Tanya. As if getting actual assignments from college routinely wasn't enough. That said, she couldn't deny the curiosity. “How much of these details am I putting in?”

“As much as you can, daily, between now and our next meetup.” Vivian knew the task was a tall order for Tanya, but they needed to understand how the changes worked for her and Storm Enterprises. “I also want you to do the same when you're hungry but *don't* eat. We need to find the limits of these pills and their effects. They might not be permanent and work only in certain circumstances.”

“That's a whole lot of writing.”

Chapter 4

“Up shit creek without a paddle is what we are.” The limo jerked as it hit a bump on the road before making a sharp turn. Agatha knew the driver picked out wasn’t suited for this long-haul job. Three hours sitting in the back arguing with the army of Storm Enterprises lawyers would drive anyone mad sooner than later. At least Penny was there for company. “This court battle against Yeager will put us in the spotlight for months,” the older woman mentioned.

Penny did her utmost to distance herself from Agatha’s contentiousness with the solicitors, looking out the window to the English countryside. Her legs ached from sitting so long and could do with some air, but that would unsettle the appearance her aides helped put together; curly shoulder-length blonde hair, sharply dressed in a black business suit and white shirt, though her shoes were a bit small—the cute, unsuspecting CEO. In truth, Penny would rather be at home right now. Instead, she had to do her part in convincing someone to help with the company’s legal issues against Yeager.

“...and Penny needs to play her part in this,” Agatha said sharply. Her legal associates murmured in agreement. “She is the CEO, after all.”

“Be that as it may, this should not be her first legal battle.” The lawyers had been on Penny’s side over the troubles with Yeager for the most part but felt someone older, with more experience, should take charge of the proceedings, not her. Penny wasn’t stupid; she knew well enough that the lawyers would put Agatha forward for that task, but she also knew Agatha was right — she was the CEO.

“Storm Enterprises needs to show it isn’t afraid,” another councillor argued. “To show a position of strength. The CEO being the face of the company at its low point will show that, not her hiding behind someone.”

Penny’s head sank lower into the window armrest. She wanted to make her grandfather proud. But was she ready? Could she be the face of the company at its lowest point? Or maybe Agatha should take charge? The constant arguing between her and the lawyers continued further, the clash of egos almost enough to make Penny scream. It just wouldn’t fucking stop.

“It’s nice out, isn’t it?”

“What?” Agatha was confused. Penny hadn’t said anything for over an hour; the only inputs for conversation were disinterested grunts and shrugs, which certainly didn’t do much in the way of helping Agatha’s case. “I guess so.”

The lawyers weren’t impressed. To them, Penny’s comment only proved she wasn’t paying attention to anything and was nowhere near ready for what was coming. She may have been CEO long enough to learn the ropes, but no one’s ever prepared to lose billions overnight.

“You see? She’s not even paying attention to what we’re talking about.” The lawyer sifted through his folder in an attempt to veil his frustration. Anything was better than listening to his highest-paying client, less than half his age, who didn’t know what they were doing. “Literal billions are on the line; she only cares about the nice weather. Jesus.”

“You’re right; I’m not ready.” Penny turned from the window, finally acknowledging the faces of her army of lawyers since she sat in the car. They were all older, closer to Agatha in age than her. Penny remembered a quote from her grandfather that with age came wisdom, yet there was nothing wise she heard from any of these people save for Agatha. The comments imparted from them were more greedy than enlightened. “But then, who is?”

Penny’s tone then wasn’t as softly-spoken as usual but stern and pointed, commanding the attention of everyone in the limo, even the poor, unsuspecting driver for a brief moment. “Whoever *is* trained and ready to circumvent losing one hundred billion pounds sterling overnight? I have a hard time thinking either of you are. I’m not ready because no one ever is. But don’t think for a second I won’t try.”

“You would risk billi—”

“I DON’T CARE ABOUT THE MONEY!”

The lawyers, even Agatha, visibly flinched at Penny’s uproarious holler. They didn’t think someone as small and dainty as she would yell back at all, let alone so powerfully, instilling some sense of terror. When the silence fell, she inhaled heavily, collecting herself and calming. But she wasn’t quite finished letting her thoughts be known. “Unlike you lot, I’m not in this for the money. My grandfather chose me as his successor because he trusted me to care not about the money but about what Storm Enterprises stands for — helping people. If my grandfather cared about the money as much as you think he did, it’d be my father sitting here, not me. Understand?”

The lawyers nodded, too stiffened by terror to do otherwise. Agatha smirked, which Penny

noticed and glared.

“What?”

“Nothing. Just...you *are* ready.”

The limo turned the corner, and that was when Penny saw a quaint and tiny country cottage in the middle of nowhere with a hill in the background. This was where Philo Slater was living? Not reasonably what they had suspected, considering the stories about his success as an actor following his procedure at Storm’s expense. That certainly wasn’t a slant; Penny would’ve loved to stay someplace similar, but her position as CEO had expectations. She had to live close to the company, literally.

Philo’s humble abode had no driveway, so the limo stopped just before the main gate. That would give Penny, Agatha and the grouping of lawyers some time to think their words through. They had to be courteous, but Penny’s irate tirade still numbed the lawyers.

“Perhaps it’s best if Miss Brightford introduced us,” one of the lawyers finally spoke up, breaking their silence as they approached Philo’s door. The response to that suggestion was a glare from Penny.

“Think I can handle a simple introduction,” she snapped back before idiosyncratically knocking on Philo’s front door four times. Then a nervous rubbing of her hands as they waited. The words hadn’t quite come to Penny yet, as easy as they ought to be. As she said, it was just a simple introduction, so a simple ‘hello’ would suffice. Yet nerves rattled her for some reason. The expectations of being CEO had finally caught up with her, hadn’t they? She could feel the lawyers looking down upon her without looking for confirmation.

Then a figure approached from behind the door. Tall and broad but slow. When the door was opened slowly, Penny regarded Philo face-to-face for the first time. She had read and heard about him through Vivian Crawford’s reports when developing the drug that boosted his confidence and gave him a larger cock that certainly did the trick. When Penny remembered that, the first thing she did was look down and—

The immense thing positively bulged prominently under his custom-sized trousers. The outline of his balls alone hinted at their size somewhere close to a baseball ball. And his cock, long and thick like a tube.

—completely lost her thought when she saw what Philo was packing. Again, she knew

from Vivian's reports that the drug worked. She just had no idea how well. In any case, now she was standing awkwardly, numbed by the magnitude of Philo's cock.

"Can I help you?" he asked, hoping to break the awkwardness and understand why a group of people in professional suits were at his doorstep. Though he was pretty sure the blonde staring at him was familiar to him somehow.

Agatha took over. "Mister Slater, I'm Agatha Brightford, a....representative of Storm Enterprises. I'm here with a small legal counsel to discuss your potential involvement regarding a high-profile case."

"Oh. That." Philo knew precisely what 'high-profile case' was being inferred. It was the only thing being talked about everywhere he went. Internet forums, casual texts being friends, the news. Everywhere. Philo couldn't escape it even if he wanted to, despite the fact the company behind it helped him with his issues. He looked at Penny, then managed to put two and two together. "And you brought the CEO with you? Things must be more serious for you than the TV says."

Agatha laughed nervously, playing Philo's comment off jokingly. "Yes, quite."

Penny still hadn't said anything even when Philo acknowledged her. He was perfectly aware of her staring at his bulge, though he didn't draw attention to it because he was used to such behaviour over time from others. "Well, you all better come in then."

Penny led the group into Philo's rustic home, all decored in earthy colours. It was all rather cosy, with the fireplace crackling quietly in the background. It was nice, but Penny felt it didn't fit or make sense knowing the stories about Philo and his successes as both a Hollywood and porn actor after the success with the drug he was given. It was always possible that he liked living quietly away from the city between acting jobs, but it was a bit too quiet. Not to sound smug, but he ought to be a bit more welcoming to the people who changed his life for the better as well.

As the group turned into the living room, Agatha trailed behind to sift through the pile of letters atop the chest of drawers in the hallway. Most of the correspondence was boring, but what stood out, buried at the bottom in bold red lettering, was a final notice from the bank declaring its intention to take Philo's home from him if he failed to pay up his bills. Knowing Philo should be rolling in cash, it didn't make sense to Agatha. Believing this curious revelation would be helpful, she took a photo of the letter's contents.

“So what’s this about?” Philo said as he positioned himself on the couch. Penny and her group of lawyers faced him on the adjacent couch. As he spread his legs slightly, the fabric of Philo’s jeans chafed his crotch, enhancing the largeness of his appendage.

“Philo, as you know, you have some personal history with us at Storm Enterprises. We helped give you your confidence back and then some.” Penny trailed off unexpectedly, trying to find the following few words, choosing them carefully as a CEO should. Agatha and the lawyers were watching. Penny knew Agatha would support her, but this was her moment to show them all she could do this right. “Helped rebuild your life,” she added softly, caringly.

That much was true, and Philo was grateful for it.

“This legal battle we’re facing with Yeager Enterprises...is difficult. My legal counsel would have me say something different, something sugar-coated. If they had their way, someone else would be saying these words. They would even suggest we’re owed for what we did to help you.” At that, Penny couldn’t resist offering a cold glance at her solicitors hunched together at the far side of the couch. Their differences were broader than one’s opinion. “...but I believe in talking one-to-one, not as an executive to a consumer, but as someone who wants to help those who need it, who *has* helped someone, no matter what they need. Storm Enterprises is a symbol of that. Now, I know nobody ever places their trust in corporations, but—”

“Do you want me to be a witness or make a statement?” Philo asked bluntly.

That caught Penny off-guard. She had more of her genuine, heartfelt speech about wanting to do the right thing for people. Neither she, Agatha, nor the lawyers expected Philo to catch on so quickly. Unexpectedly, Penny leaned to converse and confide in her lawyers, seeking their advice on which position Philo should take. Then a nod from Penny.

“This decision would be made at your discretion.”

“Even if that’s true, I will have to decline.”

Predictably, Penny was confused. She had thought Philo’s earlier comment inferred he was on good terms, but that couldn’t be further from the truth with how he spoke. His tone, while softly-spoken, was layered with resentment. Penny could feel the lawyers’ disdain for her grow, reaching out to her as if it had developed a cancerous limb. “I’m not sure I understand.”

Then Philo would do his best to help. He’d been meaning to say these words for a while

but strangely didn't dare speak them, even with his boost in confidence. Something about going head-to-head with a megacorp didn't feel all that smart, knowing they'd destroy him in court. But the situation was different now.

“Did you know it would start growing bigger on its own...after the procedure?”

“Again, I'm not sure I—”

“My cock. It's been growing steadily, a few inches at a time every week since you gave me that drug.” Philo could see Penny was confused. From her understanding, the drug was designed to make Philo's cock bigger. He now had the biggest known to man and could use that to his advantage; Vivian Crawford told him that much.

“Isn't that a good thing?” Agatha thought men would give practically anything to have a huge cock. But one that kept growing? What wasn't to love about that? “I mean, those porn movies you did—”

“It's now so big that it's turning people off. I'm losing roles because it's so fucking big. Women look at it and think I might tear them in half — literally.” Philo adjusted his position slightly as he felt his cock prepare its next growth spurt with a twitch. By his calculation, this would be the ninth spurt since the drug was taken. The crux of this issue was that the feeling from the growth was pleasurable, greater than sex itself. “Losing roles means losing money.”

“We'd be happy to compensate you for—”

“I'm sorry, Miss Storm, but no. I trusted you the first time, only for this to be more a curse than a blessing.” Philo tried to avoid moaning when his cock lengthened a few inches. The outline of his meaty appendage thickened to the width of a fully-grown arm, his testicles puffing out before he involuntarily ejaculated right in front of his guests, the stain in his jeans thick and damp.

“Oh my...” Agatha reared her head away, embarrassed though guilt-ridden.

“Sorry. Can't be helped; feels so...good.”

Philo was given a moment to gather his composure. Penny was bothered most not by Philo's unwillingness to be a witness or give a statement for the court battle against Yeager but by his predicament. She'd promised to help improve his life, but the truth was, she just might have made it worse.

“Besides, not sure I can trust someone who steals from others anyway.”

That was when the mood in the room had changed. Philo didn't go into detail about what he meant. He didn't have to. Penny knew exactly what he was implying. “No, I think you have it the wrong way, Philo. Yeager stole from us.”

“That's not what I heard.”

“You know of the leak our company suffered earlier this month, correct?” Agatha cut in. For an accusation as serious as Philo's, she didn't have as long a fuse or level a head as Penny would. Depending on his response, Agatha might tear harshly into him next.

“Is that a leak, or just Yeager getting back what was originally theirs?”

“You really should seriously—”

Penny cut Agatha off with a raised hand, knowing the older woman would burst into a tirade otherwise—no need to cause a scene. Penny didn't have the energy for one, at least. Even if there was no way to prove him right now, she did think Philo raised a good hypothetical: what if the formula they used on Philo was stolen? That was a frightening prospect that could weaken the company even further.

“Thank you for your help, Philo. We're sorry for wasting your time.”

“Hold on, we're not done here,” Agatha argued. “The boy just accused us of thievery.”

“We *are* done!”

That shut Agatha up quickly. Even so, as Penny walked off to the front porch, Agatha and the lawyers didn't follow. Instead, they quarrelled with Philo over his allegation. Penny blocked the arguing out as best she could, the once-discernable words now a filter of muffled noise as she inhaled the country air deeply.

“It's only been a few days since our last appointment, and you've filled this notepad already. Impressive.” On her office chair, Vivian Crawford flicked through the pages of Tanya's notebook, fascinated by how much detail had been put into her notes about how her growth

worked. There were little hand-drawn charts, tables and graphs—everything. Vivian’s math-loving mind was in heaven. “So, to begin, when did you last eat?”

“Just this morning. Had a couple of slices of toast.” That was Tanya’s modest reply. She didn’t want to be honest about how much was actually eaten, though she was sure the good doctor could see through the lies anyway.

“Really?” Vivian sized Tanya up from head to waist, from bulging trap to rippling ab. The girl was easily twice her original size. She was probably edging close to thrice that by now. Tanya’s biceps alone had to be over twenty inches thick, her quads even more so. Those abs of hers were already starting to show prominently under her top. “You, built like an American linebacker, only ate two slices of toast for breakfast? I find that hard to believe.”

“Fine. That was to start. I also ate three slices of bacon, two scrambled eggs, and some baked beans.” That was a much more reasonable breakfast for someone Tanya’s size. Not so much the kind of food but the caloric intake. Vivian would’ve been happier if the food was healthier and had more protein. “Three plates.”

“Y-you ate three plates of all that?” That revelation utterly gobsmacked Vivian. How did Tanya eat that much food and not feel sick afterwards? There she was, sitting on the adjacent chair, her wide frame nearly eclipsing its frame. It was an impossible, fascinating sight to behold. “Where’d it all go?”

Tanya answered that question in the best way possible, with a proud bicep flex. She could feel the flesh ripple and expand under her top, the fabric becoming taunt and pulling in its effort to enclose itself around the powerful muscle. Then came the grin, the confident, almost smug grin.

“Naturally,” Vivian said. “Did you take measure—”

“Twenty-three inches cold this morning. Twenty-seven after my caloric intake.” Tanya couldn’t resist flexing further, practically putting on a show for the doctor, who watched intently in a non-emotionally-professional way. Her blatantly unprofessional feelings aside, there was something oddly curious about it, the doctor realised. “Didn’t even have to lift anything to get bigger.”

“And when did you stop? Growing, that is?”

“When I was full.” Tanya was quick to make that connection. When she was hungry, her

body would shrink and lose its mass, which was regained when eating. When satiated, her body would stop growing. Even when Tanya tested her limits by eating when no longer hungry, her body didn't respond. Tanya put those observations in her notepad, which the doctor still read through. "Thought I could push myself to get bigger, but no luck with that."

"So your body's willingness to grow responds only to hunger? If you forced yourself to keep eating, nothing would happen?"

"It's all in that pad, Doc. Trust me, I tried."

Vivian closed the pad over and held it tightly. Covetously. She couldn't wait to pore over all the details Tanya inked in, this trove of information. What secrets could it reveal? Seeing Tanya's powerful body relaxed on the chair, its frame desperately trying to hold her bulky weight, the doctor postulated about the prospective future. "I would like to keep up with our appointments for now, if you don't mind. As often as you're willing."

The doctor's words were far more telling than she realised, and Tanya caught onto that. "You know, Doc, if it weren't for this whole experiment thing, I'd argue we're having these appointments so often now because you simply want to see me."

"I-I, uh, well—"

For Tanya, it was adorable seeing the doctor squirm so. She was like an obsessed teen. Not that Tanya had a problem with that, far from it. "Maybe we could talk about something in return. A fair exchange, if you will."

"What were you thinking?"

"Well..." Tanya trailed off, raising an arm into a flex. Her eyes trailed the thick blue vein across the peak as if stalking the blood vessels like a predator would hunt prey. It was great feeling powerful. There was no denying that. A far better feeling than depressed from being overweight, that was for sure. "...this new body of mine is great when it shows up. Was thinking we could work towards making the effects last longer?"

"How much longer? Like, all day after just one meal? After eating only one thing, no matter how big or small?"

"Even longer," was Tanya's sharp reply, followed by a slick grin.

That was when it dawned on Vivian. How could she not see that's what Tanya meant?
"You mean permanency."

"Can it be done?"

"In theory, yes." In her mind, Vivian was already theorising how she could bring permanency to Tanya's changes. Of course, they weren't the intended initial effects in the first place, but the doctor was looking beyond that now. "But it will take time."

"How much time?" Tanya was by no means impatient and could wait. But if she knew now that her muscles could be retained permanently, she would rightfully be miffed by having to stick to the current way for now, for God knows how long.

"I dunno. Depending on how much you're willing to provide for sampling, not to mention funding from the company, we could be waiting weeks, months or potentially a year before you get the new version."

"What if I lived here?"

"Y-you mean in the office building? On-site?"

"Is that allowed?"

"It's never been done before. Maybe?" Vivian postulated the opportunities that might arise from Tanya living in the Storm Enterprises building. Of course, she would have to talk it over with Penny first. Realising that if Tanya did stay, it would be easier to keep track of her changes and work alongside Penny on the new project that could bring the company out of its current troubles. "I'll talk it over with Penny first. No guarantees, though. If she disapproves, I'm sure we can think of a workaround. I'll keep you posted."

She knew it wasn't worth it to do it just yet, but Tanya couldn't help getting a bit excited about her prospective future of permanently having a muscular body.

"The biggest question remains: what'll happen if the situation with Storm Enterprises gets dire enough? Are we looking at liquidation? Maybe they'll merge with another corporation."

"Perhaps. Though I can't imagine Yeager would be interested in that. It'll lead to job cuts

and cost-cutting regardless.”

Penny had been half-listening to a pair of financial experts’ opinions on a podcast about the situation with the company throughout her workout on her earbuds, their voices grating and aged. Some points they brought up were valid, but most were flagrantly opinioned. No matter how extreme things could get for Storm, there was no way she’d ever merge it with another corporation. Not only would her grandfather turn in his grave, but it would also betray the company’s culture of independence, which Penny fought to preserve. And she certainly wouldn’t kowtow to Yeager.

She turned to face the mirror wall. Dressed cutely in baby blue gym leggings and a matching sports bra, Penny took a moment to appreciate her physique—one most women would kill for; toned like a fitness competitor with sculpted quads and defined abs. Penny didn’t take her fitness all that seriously, either. Gifted or genetics passed from her family, she surmised.

“Who’s to say Yeager won’t do that, though? You remember they tried to acquire Monarch Systems back in twenty-seven.”

“And I remember the legal trouble they got into during the proceedings.”

Penny remembered that well. When being groomed for the CEO role before her grandfather’s passing, she spent her free time watching the proceedings. She kept up to date with it all any way she could—reading articles online, listening to podcasts, reading the financial newspapers—every way she could. But it wasn’t to help her understand how the big scary world of being a CEO worked but rather to understand Yeager Corporation, now her biggest rival.

“And we all know how that turned out,” the expert laughed.

“They bought people off,” Penny said, plainly talking to herself as she racked up plates for the squat rack. Nearly double her weight’s worth in resistance had been put in place. It was hard to tell whether the young woman was eager to test herself or the podcast’s repeated mentioning of Yeager had angered her so much that her actions turned almost autonomous without her realising it. “Everyone knew that,” she heatedly added.

And that wasn’t just a bitter statement from Penny. Everyone did know Yeager bought them off. There was no evidence out there to prove it. Still, there was no reason for all the international antitrust committees to question Yeager’s intentions with Monarch only to have a

change of heart suddenly. Not that it mattered to the public since Yeager promised so much in return.

The podcast continued as Penny started her squats. She never was one to count her reps, preferring to go until failure. Much more fun that way, feeling her tight and toned muscles burn until she would collapse. At her sixth rep, she pushed upwards with a feigned grunt.

“And what about Penny Storm? You think she’s up to the task of taking Yeager on?”

“She’s the company’s second CEO in its lifetime and yet already its youngest. I’m sure her grandfather was well-intentioned with his choice and chose well, but she’s gonna have quite the fight ahead of her.”

“You don’t think someone other than her should be leading this legal fight against Yeager?”

“Well, it’s not for me to say because I’m not part of the company’s legal team, but...billions are on the line, so....”

Penny rolled her eyes derisively. Why did everyone keep thinking the same thing? Did they really think she’d lack the ability to do her job right because she's younger than most CEOs? That was a bit ageist. And again, she didn’t care about the fucking money. Her annoyance pushed Penny to squat deeper, her concentration drowning out the podcast.

And then, a hand on her shoulder. Agatha must’ve arrived at some point without Penny realising it. Kenneth, the butler, likely let Agatha in and guided her downstairs to the basement gym.

“What is it?” Penny queried with annoyance in her tone, removing her earbuds. Standing adjacent to Agatha, she could feel her leg muscles bulge from all the squatting, veins rising slightly to the surface.

“Just wanted to talk about earlier today.” From her expression alone, Agatha could tell Penny wasn’t all that interested in what had to be said but insistent it had to be—for both their sakes. She would get straight to the point, then, though not before taking a moment to glance at Penny’s bulging quads. It must’ve been a challenging workout this time. “Did you know Philo is going to lose his house? I saw a letter of final notice earlier.”

“Really?” Penny wiped herself with a cool towel she’d thrown over the fly machine earlier in her workout. That was when she felt the first hunger pangs, her stomach growling

ferociously. God, she was so hungry. But Agatha looking on patiently would get in the way of dealing with it. It was then Penny put two and two together. “You’re thinking we should settle his payment for the house, and that’ll convince him to be a witness or make a statement.”

“That’s my line of thinking, yes.”

“It’s a smart idea. Could work.”

“But...?” Agatha trailed off, suspecting a matter of contention.

“You heard what he said. He doesn’t trust us anymore. Not after what we did to his dick. I intend to see how that happened, by the way.” Penny was serious about that. She had every intention of going to Vivian’s home after her workout to ask questions about the serum used on Philo. Because clearly, something went wrong somewhere. “I don’t blame him for his mistrust. I said we’d help him, but we failed. Maybe we deserve to get our shit stolen since it doesn’t even work.”

“You don’t mean that.”

Penny sighed. Of course, she didn’t mean it. But the arguments and accusations against her coming from all sides didn’t help. She felt like tearing her hair out. Then, a light bulb. “He said something about wanting to get his dick size reduced, right?”

“He did say something.”

“Think he would be convinced to be a witness if we offered to do that for him..” Penny held off from mentioning the final detail, fairly sure she knew how Agatha would react. Penny’s selfless attitude was an admirable quality—most of the time. “...Gratis.”

“For free? Our company’s fighting for its existence, and you want to give something out for free?”

“Yeah,” Penny answered plainly. Agatha wasn’t looking at this from the angle she should be. It would do more good than harm if Philo got his reduction procedure for free. “Think about all the good press we’d get if we went public with that. Our stock would go up again. At least enough to stay clear of the red.”

Agatha couldn’t argue with that logic. But— “Even if you’re right, there’s no guarantee he’ll accept. You said it yourself; he doesn’t trust us.”

“Only one way to find out for sure, right?”

Chapter 5

Tanya's conversation with her mother about moving into Storm Enterprises' headquarters to help with Dr. Crawford's project wasn't going as planned. She had expected some resistance to the idea, but nothing this heated. Of course, Tanya wasn't being entirely truthful, either.

"Absolutely not! I appreciate all the good doctor's work with you so far, but feel that's pushing it, even if it is your idea." Lois had bundles of ironing to get through, a task she'd put off for the past half hour over this contentious conversation with her daughter, most of which the ironing belonged to. The mother realised Tanya'd been wearing fresh outfits much quicker than usual and was sweatier.

"But I love working with her." As honest as she was, that hadn't always been true for Tanya. There were, predictably, occasions when she felt her time was being wasted attending the appointments with the doctor. But now, times have changed, and the situation is different. "Helping her further improve the pills she'd developed—"

"That's the thing, sweetie, isn't it?" Lois hesitated and wondered if she should continue with her line of thinking. It may come back to bite her or hurt Tanya. But seeing her daughter stand there with a furrowed brow, it may have been too late. "They haven't worked though, have they? You've been taking the pills as directed, yet you're the same size. In fact—"

Lois plucked a pair of shorts from the stack of laundry and displayed them to Tanya. The younger woman had already grasped her mother's point, but she underlined it by pointing to the 'XL' tag on the rear end of the shorts.

"—you're bigger! Most of your clothes here are up a size, some two."

Tanya blushed. She was up two sizes already? That was hot and made her think how much bigger she could get if Dr. Crawford's pills lasted longer. Her mind trailed off elsewhere to an imagined scenario where she was larger than most male bodybuilders and quickly overpowered them. Maybe that could be the future if she and the doctor worked hard enough to improve the pills, but that didn't happen anytime soon.

“I can explain.”

“You’d better, or I’ll be making a stern call to the doctor for lying.”

It was Tanya’s turn to hesitate. She’d always known this secret couldn’t be kept forever but hadn’t suspected it’d be revealed so soon. Pulling the bottom of her oversized jumper to reveal the washboard abs hidden underneath was as awkward as Tanya had imagined. It didn’t stop her from flexing the muscles to make herself feel a bit better, though, even if her mother did look on in horror. The scream was predictable, too, if a bit loud.

“What the fuck happened to you!!”

“I can explain, like I said.” Tanya covered her abs again, though she had wished inwardly to let her body be free and breathe. It may be a bit before her mother could allow that, however. “The pills did work, in a way, doing away with my...fat problem. We didn’t think the results would be this...drastic.”

“I should say so. Jesus, Tanya, you look like your cousin Ben.” Lois’ eyes travelled to her daughter’s legs when she pulled her trousers up to reveal her bulging calves, equally powerful and shocking. It was a lot for the mother to take in.

“Nah, I think I’m bigger than him. I did the measuring.”

“So *that’s* why you wanted the measuring tape.”

Tanya chuckled. Her mother was okay with her unexpected changes, though it would likely be some time before she genuinely accepted them. Realising that, Tanya mentioned that the results weren’t permanent — at least, not yet — and that the effects resulted from food consumption. There was so much Tanya couldn’t wait to tell her mother about the discoveries she’d made under Dr. Crawford’s guidance.

“No wonder the fridge is always empty these past few days. So you’re telling me all your big new muscles come from eating food?”

“Uh-huh,” Tanya replied with a knowing grin, a glimmer of mischief dancing in her eyes. Unable to resist the urge, she casually rolled up her sleeve. As she flexed, she felt the steady pulse of strength coursing through her, coming hand in hand with a rhythmic throb and occasional twitch.

“Don’t have to work out still?”

“Well, working out gives me an appetite, which makes the muscles shrink, so...” Tanya trailed off, seeing her mother’s confused expression. She had trouble wrapping her head around the whole thing. “Don’t worry, I’ll explain everything over lunch. Speaking of which—”

Lois was visibly startled by Tanya’s grumbling stomach.

“—what we having?”

“Are those what I think they are?”

After hours of painstaking work, Penny’s words finally pulled Dr Crawford away from her research into why the pills she gave Tanya affected her so differently than assumed. The question was whether they failed or genuinely worked, just not in the way she thought.

The pills were stored neatly in a little box so Vivian knew precisely where they were. Nobody but her was allowed to touch them, not even the other scientists who’d worked on the project. Vivian felt personally responsible for the way things turned out for Tanya, so she thought it was up to her to at least figure out what went wrong.

“The second batch of the pills Tanya’s been prescribed, yes.” It felt weird for Vivian to mention ‘prescribed’ because the way the pills were supposed to work, Tanya was only meant to use one batch to melt away her weight issues. They were replaced with a completely different kind of ‘weight’ now. “She’s getting these later in the week, during our next appointment.”

“What about these here?” The capsules Penny referred to were see-through, contrasting with the pink gelatin capsules Tanya had been given, stored in a similar box. Again, only Vivian was allowed to touch them. “What’s different about them?”

“Nothing as yet. They’re just mock-ups for the improved version of the formula I’m working on, which is a work in progress.”

“Improved version? So you’re working out the kinks for the original, then?”

That was when Vivian hesitated. Now was the perfect time to bring up the theoretical arrangement she and Tanya made earlier in the week. Vivian just hoped Penny was in a good

mood right now. She seemed so, but that didn't mean the cards favoured her.

“What is it? What aren't you telling me?”

“I'm not working out the kinks, per se. Tanya likes how she looks, so I'm working on improving the pills' efficiency and longevity.” Penny seemed accepting of the information imparted to her thus far, but this was merely the ice-breaker, the point that would lead to painting the bigger picture. “I'm...I'm working on making the effects permanent.”

“PERMANENT!” Penny's response wasn't strictly in anger, but the intensity in her voice was no less of a shock, startling most of the scientists at their respective workstations. One such scientist even dropped a vial of a liquid; the CEO's voice was so unexpected. Penny didn't mean it, of course, but— she rubbed her temple. “Why? We haven't gotten approval from the board for the original version yet, and you're already doing this? We don't even know the lasting effects of Tanya's usage.”

Vivian's curiosity and eagerness, a defining trait she had always embraced, had come back to bite her. As regret gnawed at her conscience, she recognised Tanya's safety and well-being were more important than her self-indulgence.

“I am not having a repeat of Philo Slater's case. I can't handle that right now.”

“What do you mean?”

So Vivian didn't know. That came as a shock to Penny, honestly. She had thought Philo told her already, and the news hadn't made its way up the grapevine for some reason, as though Vivian's team didn't want Penny to know. Well, now she did — and had to learn it the hard way, which only worsened things for them. “Don't you know? Your little project with him failed. Sure, he's got a bigger dick, but now it won't stop growing, causing him more problems than before.”

“Uh...uh...”

“To add insult to injury, he claims what Yeager stole from us in the leak first belonged to them. He accused us of thievery to my face!” Penny rubbed her temple again, feeling the effects of a crippling headache come on suddenly. She didn't mean to be so antagonistic towards Vivian, especially when they were such dear friends. She didn't think the doctor could be so careless — twice. But that didn't stop the young CEO from stressing the point. “To my face,” she enunciated sternly.

Vivian and her colleagues didn't know how to react to the accusation or their boss's uncharacteristic demeanour. It felt as though she was an entirely different person. But then, she was CEO, which was bound to stress anyone.

Penny took a moment to gather her composure. "Now, I'm heading to Philo's to make an offer. While I'm away, I hope you take the time to figure out whether he's right or not."

"What about—"

"The improved version of these pills?" Penny's eyebrows furrowed, her tone carrying a weight of authority. "They're on ice until I say otherwise."

Vivian drew in a deep breath, steadying herself before responding, "You can't—"

Penny leaned in, her gaze unwavering, and she continued, "Can't what? Fire you for gross negligence of your work, jeopardising our reputation by producing a broken product? For overstepping your position by embarking on this project without my explicit permission? You're fortunate I'm not as ruthless as some might be in my place."

As Vivian contemplated the situation, she surmised that now wasn't the opportune moment to delve into the other issue she had in mind with Penny. Bringing it up would only further irritate her already incensed boss. She resolved to wait for a more suitable time, perhaps when Penny had had a chance to cool off and reflect. Nevertheless, her concern for Penny extended beyond their professional roles; she genuinely worried about her friend's well-being.

As the oven pinged, Lois unruffled a dishcloth from the nearby rack. Before long, Tanya took in the aromatic scent of beef tacos that wafted through the kitchen. Between the baking process, she had dumped all the information and discoveries she'd made about Dr. Crawford's pills and how they worked. Tanya did her best to dumb it down for her mother's sake, but it was still a lot to take in. "But won't fatty foods like these tacos here hinder all that?"

"That's the thing! No matter what I eat, the pills turn all the calories into the necessary proteins for growth." Eagerly grabbing a taco from the baking dish, Tanya overestimated its hotness. Piping hot would be an understatement, nearly dropping it onto the table if it weren't for her nimble hands. "But I have to be hungry for it to work. If I eat for boredom's sake, nothing happens. And when I'm hungry, the muscles start to shrink."

“That explains all your different sizes for clothes these past few days. You’re fluctuating in size.”

“Now you’re getting it!”

Waiting for the taco to cool off, Tanya opted to take some of the pasta she’d bought as a side dish to share, though with her appetite, it could equally serve well enough as a whole meal. In sheer disbelief, Lois watched her daughter dump two-thirds of the cheesy dish onto her plate. It was then the mother realised.

“So then, once you start eating that pasta there, you’re gonna grow?”

Tanya smirked. She couldn’t wait to see her mother’s face once that started happening. Not to mention the feeling of growth as it swam over her again, a crippling rush of endorphins. Then, the first slow forkful, the young woman’s eyes staring back at her mother’s for the initial reaction, a gulp of uncertainty.

“Feel anything?”

“Doesn’t work immediately, but I can feel a tingle.” Tanya was surprised, however, by her mother’s creeping sense of curiosity. Tanya didn’t think she’d ever be genuinely interested in the logic behind Dr Crawford’s pills but rather feigning it. There she was, though, eyes drawn to whatever happened next.

“How does it work?”

“Well, from my minimal understanding, after I eat, the fat contents of each food are converted into proteins, like I said.” Tanya had been whittling away at the pasta portion mid-sentence, the cheesy foodstuff hanging loosely from the fork as she explained to her mother, who looked on fixedly. “After that, I think the proteins for growth are distributed throughout my body evenly because no limb grows bigger than the other.”

“But your legs are bigger than your arms.”

“Well, yeah, but that’s because the pills use my ‘pre-pilled’ body as a base. I’ve always—night—had a heavier—uuhhh—lower body.”

“It’s happening now, isn’t it?” Lois’ curiosity had now clearly taken hold. Gone was her motherly care and affection, swapped for appetites. “How does it feel?”

Without warning, a surge of growth coursed through Tanya's body like a lightning bolt. It was as if nature itself had conspired against her. Every muscle in her frame tightened and expanded instantly, creating an exhilarating sensation akin to a thousand tiny earthquakes rippling through her form.

The intensity left her trembling and unsteady. Desperate to maintain her balance, Tanya clung tightly to the nearby kitchen chair, her fingers gripping it with newfound strength. But the chair struggled to withstand the tremendous force. Under the pressure of her grip and the sheer force of her transformation, the chair's integrity crumbled, leaving behind splinters.

The sound of torn fabric abruptly diverted Lois' attention from Tanya's rapid growth. It was as if an invisible force had seized hold of every article of clothing on Tanya's frame, subjecting them to a relentless assault. The garments responded in a spectrum of reactions, ranging from subtle, barely audible rips to violent, explosive bursting.

The sleeves of Tanya's jumper were the first to yield to her swelling power. They strained and twisted futilely, and threads began to snap one by one. With grace, her burgeoning biceps forced their way through the weakened fabric, their contours unveiled as the material surrendered.

Simultaneously, Tanya's trousers found themselves engulfed in the throes of transformation. Her quadriceps swelled and expanded with an almost obscene insistence. The trousers surrendered with a thunderous tearing, their once-pristine fabric splitting apart to reveal the musculature that had bubbled forth.

Amidst Tanya's moans, a sensual symphony of sensations unfolded. Her toes curled beneath her socks, an involuntary response to the pleasure coursing through her body. It was a sensation she had become intimately acquainted with, a craving that gnawed at her whenever she was apart from it, even if only for a few hours.

Her veins snaked along the length of each perfectly proportioned limb. They pulsed and writhed like earthworms burrowing through fertile soil.

Lois's eyes moved to the small developments on both sides of Tanya's neck when the growth slowed slightly. Her trapezius muscles were growing, too, a new change in this latest transformation. They weren't overly large, yet prominent enough to be noticeable as they jutted toward the girl's ears. Eventually, everything calmed down.

“Well?”

Tanya took a moment to catch her breath. It was strange how this growth knocked the wind out of her lungs. That was...new. It was intense and not what she was used to, but the feeling was no less exhilarating. “A lot more intense than usual.”

“It’s not usually like that?”

“No, it’s much more subtle. No complaints from me, though. I mean, look!” With a flexing arm, Tanya’s jumper finally succumbed to her mass, her peak bloating mightily. But the young woman’s enthusiasm was quickly dispelled, frowning.

"What is it?" her mother inquired.

"Oh, it's nothing," Tanya replied with a sigh. "It's just that I seem to have hit a plateau. No matter how much I eat, I won't bulk up any further beyond this point."

"I'm not following," her mother said, a hint of confusion in her voice. "You do have clothing in different sizes, don't you?"

Tanya explained. "I've reached a point where my muscle growth has stalled. Unfortunately, this is as big as I'll get without some extra help."

Lois couldn't help but gaze at Tanya's physique with curiosity, her muscles clearly defined beneath her partially torn outfit. "Just out of curiosity, how large are your arms anyway?"

"Still have that measuring tape?" Tanya quipped.

Lois stood in the living room with a tape measure in her hand. She gazed at Tanya sitting on a chair, her sleeves rolled up, exposing her arms. Lois had decided to indulge their shared curiosity about the size of her biceps. As the tape measure slid around Tanya's flexed arm, Lois couldn't help but be amazed. “Holy fuck,” were the mother’s words. She was rarely one to swear, but the situation indeed called for it.

Tanya couldn't help but laugh as she heard her mother's astonished gasp. “I had the same reaction myself last time.”

“We should measure your quads next.”

Tanya's eyes lit up at the idea, and they both shared a laugh, realising that their shared curiosity was turning into a delightful bonding experience. It was odd, though, to think something so different for Tanya could have such a positive outcome when she only worried about her mother's reaction a few minutes ago. Maybe she was supportive after all.

Lois eagerly approached Tanya, who was now standing with a proud and confident stance. Lois realised it was no easy task as she tried to wrap the tape measure around her daughter's quadriceps. With Tanya's legs so muscular, the tape measure seemed almost reluctant to cooperate. Lois's brow furrowed as she struggled to get an accurate measurement. She glanced up at Tanya, who was grinning with amusement at her mother's efforts.

“Everything okay?”

Lois struggled; the tension in the tape measure reached its limit. Then, with an unexpected, sharp snap, the tape measure suddenly gave way, causing Lois to jump back in surprise. The broken tape measure dangled limply from her hand. “Shit! We've had that for years!”

Tanya blushed. “Sorry. I didn't think they were *that* big.”

“It's okay. Can always buy another.” Lois fought the urge to chuckle but inevitably caved.

Lois' eyes trailed down to Tanya's calves. A pang of jealousy crept into her. Tanya noticed her mother's gaze and couldn't resist a playful grin as she teasingly flexed, allowing her well-defined muscles to ripple beneath the skin. “Are you feeling a little jealous?”

Lois chuckled softly, shaking her head. She played it off lightly. “Oh, not at all, just a lot to take in. Quite the big change.” Her words masked any hint of envy as she continued to admire her daughter's impressive physique.

“Remember, it's not permanent,” Tanya gently reminded her mother, her voice carrying a reassuring tone. Knowing that her mother might have felt insecure, she wanted to offer Lois some comfort.

“Oh, I know. You don't have to worry about me.” As Lois admired her daughter's physique, she couldn't help but notice that it might be time for Tanya to update her wardrobe to accommodate it. “Now, why don't we order some new clothes for you? I'm thinking triple-X this time.”

Tanya laughed. "That sounds fun."

Agatha arrived at Derek's mansion, announced by the soft purr of her sleek, midnight-black luxury car as it pulled up the winding driveway. Stepping out of the vehicle, the sunlight drew attention to her tailored charcoal-grey pantsuit, her chocolate-brown hair shimmering like copper. Her eyes held a mixture of curiosity and anticipation.

Agatha approached the mansion door, a massive work of artistry seemed to dwarf her for a moment. As her knuckles rapped gently against the polished wood, a hushed echo reverberated through the entrance hall. Moments later, the door swung open, revealing a distinguished butler, Winston, dressed in a perfectly pressed black tailcoat and white gloves. His white hair gleamed under the chandeliers' soft illumination.

"Good afternoon, Missus Brightford. Thank you for calling ahead. Mr. Cohen is expecting you."

Agatha stepped into the mansion's foyer, her heels sinking softly into the plush carpet as she took in the surroundings. The interior was a symphony of luxury, with crystal chandeliers and polished marble floors. Priceless artwork adorned the walls.

As Agatha moved further into the mansion, her ears picked up a faint but distinct sound—a rhythmic clanking of metal emanating from below. Curious, she followed the sound, her steps guided by the ornate bannister that led to the basement.

"Mr Cohen will be with you shortly. He's just finishing up his workout. Why don't you look at the art collection here while you wait?"

Agatha complied, leading her to the mansion's grand gallery, where a stunning collection of paintings adorned the walls. Her eyes scanned the room, immediately drawn to an oil painting at the centre. The canvas depicted a pastoral scene with rolling hills and a serene countryside cottage among lush greenery.

"I didn't realise Derek had taste," Agatha said.

As Agatha continued to take in the art, the rhythmic metal clanking from the basement gym eventually ceased. Moments later, Derek emerged from the stairwell, his figure bathed in

the soft light. Agatha couldn't help but be taken aback by the sight. Derek's physique, hidden beneath his impeccably tailored suits during their board meetings, was in surprisingly good shape for a man his age. His shoulders were broad, his chest chiseled.

"Oh, forgive me, Agatha," Derek responded with a slightly sheepish grin, "I had no idea you were here."

"Not to worry."

If you give me a moment, I'll switch to something more suitable. Then we can have this discussion you claim to be important."

Derek's home office bathed in dimmed light's soft, warm glow. Now cleaned up and better presented, Derek stood by the crackling fireplace at the corner. He held a heavy glass tumbler filled with whiskey, the liquid swirling as he sipped. The aroma of the aged spirit hung in the air, contrasting with the chilly atmosphere of the room. Agatha, determined but composed, stood before him.

"Derek, I understand you're upset, but we must approach this with some decorum. There's no way of knowing yet what the Slater boy said is true."

"Not true? Agatha, you expect me to believe you called ahead and drove all this way not to believe it yourself?"

Despite her composure, Agatha was gripped by guilt and uncertainty about what Philo had revealed earlier. She couldn't shake the nagging feeling that there might be some truth.

"Maybe you're right. I don't know. But it doesn't change the fact we need to tackle this delicately."

Derek was now unable to shake off the feeling he shouldn't have ever trusted Penny. Haunted by the nagging suspicion that Penny may have had ulterior motives all along, for all Derek knew, she might have been complicit in the alleged theft of the company's work. "So what do we do? I know you're not going to suggest we oust her. You two are too close for that. If she goes, you're likely to follow."

"I do have one idea."

The bitterness of frustration washed over Derek as he took another sip from his tumbler. The fiery liquid burned down his throat, momentarily providing a numbing escape from the chaos. The glass trembled slightly in his hand as he knew that he likely wouldn't like it when Agatha revealed her suggestion. "Can't be any worse than being told our tech might belong to our rival, so just hit me."

"What if we try to...persuade Philo to change his stance."

Derek lowered his glass, arching an eyebrow at Agatha, his anger momentarily replaced by curiosity. "Elaborate."

"Pretty simple. We buy him off."

"Bribing him? I'm surprised you would even consider that, knowing how Penny would react." Derek's eyes narrow, his expression shifting to curiosity as he considered Agatha's proposition. Deep down, he can't help but wonder if this unconventional approach might be the key to resolving the crisis that threatened the company. "Though I suppose loyalty can only go so far in certain situations."

"Don't get it twisted, Derek. I'm not doing this for you. If what the Slater boy says is true, I fear how Penny would react. She's done so well so far."

Derek's hand, still clutching the whiskey tumbler, hesitated momentarily as he grappled with the complexities of the decision before him. The amber liquid within the glass seemed to shimmer in the dim light of his office. After a contemplative moment, he finally released a resigned sigh and placed the tumbler back on the table. His eyes darted to the bottle of whiskey resting nearby, its label glistening under the soft light. Derek reached for it, unscrewing the cap with a faint click. As he poured another measure of the fiery beverage, the sound of liquid filling the glass echoed in the room. Then, a realisation.

"She has no idea you're here, does she?"

An uneasy silence hung, punctuated only by the soft clink of the whiskey bottle against the glass. As Derek poured more, Agatha's gaze remained fixed on the flickering flames of the fireplace. The dimmed lights of the room cast shadows on her face, concealing her emotions yet leaving Agatha wrestling with guilt and uncertainty. "I'd like to keep it that way," she finally said, breaking her silence.

“So loyalty *does* only go so far,” Derek said with a cunning grin, his fingers idly tracing the rim of his whiskey glass.

Sensing the gravity of the situation and a need for a subtle gesture to confirm their alliance, Derek poured whiskey into a fresh crystal glass. Turning toward Agatha, who had been anxiously waiting, he extended the glass toward her. Agatha accepted the glass with a nod. Yet, beneath the camaraderie, a hint of reservation danced in Agatha's eyes.

Chapter 6

The warm embrace of Hellenic Delights, the new restaurant in town, cocooned Tanya and Lois as they sat in their seats. The restaurant exuded an inviting ambience, with soft hues accentuating the elegant Greek decor. Each dish arrived as a culinary masterpiece, with vibrant colours and tantalizing aromas promising a journey for the senses.

Tanya sat across from her mother, animated and engaged. The waiter presented a sizzling, perfectly seared steak—a culinary masterpiece—its aroma of seasoned spices and grilled perfection wafting through the air. Tanya's eyes widened with anticipation as the dish landed before her, a gleeful spark igniting within. Without hesitation, she dove into the meal, her knife slicing through the succulent meat with precision. Bite after hearty bite, she savoured the rich flavours. Her plate quickly transformed into a canvas of indulgence, the steak disappearing rapidly amidst the symphony of clinking cutlery.

Lois observed her daughter with a mixture of affection and unease, her smile masking the subtle worry bubbling beneath the surface. "Tanya, dear, you're really—uh, making quite a grand affair out of that steak," Lois commented, her attempt at lightness tinged with a nervous chuckle. Her voice carried a gentle note of concern. She stole glances around the restaurant, a faint unease settling in her chest, hoping the conspicuous attention drawn by Tanya's ravenous appetite wouldn't cause undue notice.

Tanya's response erupted with uncontrollable enthusiasm. "I can't resist, Mum. It's like my body's shouting for fuel today," she exclaimed with a contagious grin, the words accompanied by an animated gesture toward the steak. Her voice carried a hint of urgency as if her hunger had taken on a life of its own. The hunger pangs reflected not just in her words but in the subtle flex of her muscles.

As Tanya indulged in the succulent steak, with each precise cut and every hearty bite, her muscles seemed to pulsate beneath the fabric of her shirt, an almost rhythmic dance in response to the act of eating. The flex and release of her jaw muscles were mirrored by the subtle flexing of her biceps, a synchronised display of strength and movement.

As she chewed, the sinews in her neck tensed and relaxed. Consuming the steak seemed to fuel her muscles, causing them to ripple and bulge beneath her shirt with each deliberate

motion. Her deltoids swelled subtly as she reached for another bite, her arms becoming more pronounced with each movement.

It was as though eating became an accidental display of her strength. The flexing of her muscles seemed to sync with the rhythm of each swallow. The restaurant's lighting cast a soft glow on her, accentuating the definition of her musculature as it pulsed and flexed.

Lois acknowledged Tanya's enthusiastic appetite with a gentle nod. A furrow etched between her brows. "It's quite a lot already, Tanya. Are you feeling alright?" Each word had been carefully chosen to express the simmering concern. She gazed at Tanya, her eyes tracing the subtle shifts in her daughter's demeanour.

As Tanya continued her indulgence, her hunger for the steak reached a crescendo. Bite after bite; she savoured the flavours with an almost primal intensity, the steak disappearing surprisingly. Her focus on the meal was unwavering, her movements deliberate and eager, as if every morsel was an essential fuel to feed an inner fire.

Midway through a particularly sizable mouthful, a sudden, unexpected sound erupted—her stomach's loud, unmistakable growl. The restaurant's ambient hum seemed to hush momentarily as Tanya's robust appetite soon betrayed her, the growl reverberating in the air. She paused mid-chew, her cheeks flushing slightly with surprise, her eyes meeting Lois's with a sheepish yet hearty glance.

Tanya resumed her meal, each bite seemingly propelling her closer to the satisfying finish. Unbeknownst to her, the fabric hugging her biceps began to strain against the increasing tension of her muscles.

With a casual movement, Tanya's biceps subtly burst free from the confines of her shirt, the seams surrendering to the expanding mass beneath.

Meanwhile, Lois maintained her silence but couldn't conceal her discontent. Her concern swelled; the display of Tanya's musculature and the subsequent wardrobe malfunction amplified her unease. Her gaze alternated between glancing at Tanya's exposed biceps and averting her eyes.

Tanya engrossed in the flavours of the steak, remained oblivious. Her concentration wavered momentarily. With a calm glance down at her now exposed biceps, she chuckled lightly, "Oops!"

Lois attempted to conceal her growing concern behind a tight-lipped smile, though worry flickered in her eyes.

"We just bought that an hour ago!"

Tanya glanced down at the torn fabric with mild embarrassment. A sheepish grin played on her lips as she nodded, "Yeah...Guess my muscles had other plans."

Tanya resumed her meal with renewed vigour. The rich aroma of the steak and the succulent flavours reignite her appetite, compelling her to devour the remaining portion. However, a sudden and thunderous rumble erupted from her stomach as she savoured that bite. This time, the growl seemed more insistent, more primal, reverberating through the restaurant with an almost alarming intensity.

The loud rumble caught the attention of nearby diners, drawing momentary glances in their direction. Lois, her concern heightened by the abrupt escalation, watched Tanya. Her eyes widened.

Lois, her concern now palpable, leaned forward slightly, her voice carrying apprehension. "Will you make sure to attend your next appointment with Dr Crawford tomorrow?" she inquired, her words a gentle plea amid the unexpected turmoil, her eyes fixed on Tanya with a mix of urgency and tenderness.

Tanya hesitated, her fork suspended mid-air, a flicker of surprise crossing her face. Yet, as she caught her mother's gaze, a subtle understanding passed between them. "What do you mean?" Lois's worry seemed to echo unspoken questions, hinting at a possible connection between Tanya's unusual appetite and the pills she routinely took. "You think that's why I'm eating so much? I've got to! I mean, look!"

With that declaration, Tanya extended her arm, proudly showcasing her bicep, the muscle bulging beneath her skin. Her eyes sparkled with a hint of arrogance as she flexed, a confident smirk gracing her lips. As she did, the muscles in her neck tensed and swelled, a subtle but noticeable increase in size that seemed almost involuntary, like an uncontrolled response to her display.

"I am, like, the biggest person in this room, right?"

As Tanya proudly displayed her bicep, Lois's concern deepened. The display of physical prowess was overshadowed by the unsettling sight of Tanya's neck muscles involuntarily

bulging. "I know, but that's not the point," Lois interjected softly. "I'm no gastrologist, but I'm pretty sure your stomach shouldn't be making a noise like that. Just...it can't hurt—right?"

Tanya swallowed the last bite of her steak, a sudden, unexpected burp escaping her lips. The sound reverberated through the restaurant, loud and disrupting. As the burp echoed, the muscles in her chest visibly bulged and expanded momentarily, a reaction seemingly triggered by the force of the burp. The spectacle drew glances from nearby diners, their conversations soon halted, attention diverted to Tanya's rudeness.

Despite the disruption, Tanya reacted indifferently to her mother's concerns. "Mum, seriously, it's not a big deal," she remarked casually, attempting to deflect and downplay the situation and maintain a sense of nonchalance amidst the unusual display. However, her attempt at indifference clashed with the awkward atmosphere among the patrons, leaving a palpable tension in the air.

Tanya motioned to a nearby waiter, determination shining in her eyes. "Excuse me," she called, catching the server's attention. As the waiter approached, Tanya's request was accompanied by an air of confidence that bordered on insistence. "I'll have another steak, please," she declared, her voice cutting through the now slightly subdued restaurant.

The waiter, a young man in a crisp uniform, approached the table, his eyes inadvertently scanning the remnants of Tanya's meal—multiple empty plates stacked on her side of the table. A nervous swallow betrayed his unease at the prospect of yet another order. However, as he neared Tanya, an unexpected, almost beastly growl emanated from her stomach, loud enough for the waiter to hear. The sound sent a shiver down his spine.

Despite his unsettled reaction, Tanya abruptly changed her order, a hint of carefree whimsy in her voice. "Scratch that," she interjected, a sudden change of heart evident. "Make that two steaks this time." Her decision seemed impulsive, spurred on by an unpredictable craving. The waiter hesitated before nodding in acknowledgement and hurriedly scurrying off to relay the request to the kitchen.

"Don't you think you've eaten enough now?" Lois interjected softly, pleading as she attempted to temper Tanya's insatiable appetite. Her gaze lingered on the multiple empty plates scattered across the table.

Lois felt a wave of worry wash over her. The unsettling events of the meal—Tanya's unexpected appetite and the strange physical reactions—were questions, each more pressing than the last. Was it just a bizarre appetite surge or something more concerning? Could it be

related to the pills Crawford gave her?

Amidst the lingering tension at the table, Tanya's hand reached for her wine glass, her fingers casually wrapping around the delicate stem. As she brought the glass to her lips and took a sip, her biceps visibly swelled under the fabric of her shirt. The muscles flexed and bulged, almost as if responding to raising the glass to her mouth.

The increase in muscle size drew a few discreet glances from nearby diners. Tanya, however, seemed oblivious to the spectacle, her focus momentarily diverted by the wine's taste.

"That's it; I'm calling Dr. Crawford right away," Lois declared, her voice carrying an urgency tinged with worry. The unexpected and inexplicable physical reactions witnessed during their lunch had escalated her concern beyond containment. She reached for her phone. The atmosphere at the table shifted as Lois dialed the number, her fingers slightly trembling. Lois's heart raced as the phone rang on the other end, her worry escalating with each passing moment of anticipation. She glanced at Tanya.

As Lois engaged in the urgent conversation with Dr. Crawford, Tanya felt a peculiar sensation coursing through her body. A subtle ripple and bulge surged beneath her skin that demanded her attention. Her focus shifted inward, drawn inexplicably to the movements beneath her shirt. Her muscles seemed to throb and flex on their own accord.

Oblivious to her mother's conversation with Crawford, Tanya's eyes focused on where the sensations were strongest. The fabric of her shirt stretched subtly, betraying the growing tension within. She felt awe as the bulging and flexing intensified, a symphony of movement dancing beneath her skin. Her body seemed to have taken on a life of its own.

As Tanya and Lois exchanged glances, Tanya's focus shifted back to the strange sensations rippling beneath her shirt. Her fascination intensified when she noticed an odd twitch in her forearm muscles. Mesmerised, she extended her arm, observing the peculiar movement, oblivious to the surrounding commotion caused by her mother.

The movements grew more pronounced. Before either Tanya or Lois could react, a faint tremor coursed through the restaurant, causing a peaceful silence among the diners. Tanya's arm muscles continued their unusual dance, flexing and twitching in a rhythm.

As the tension built, a flicker of uncertainty flashed across Tanya's face. The involuntary movements, while intriguing, carried an underlying sense of unease as their eyes met in

realisation, an understanding passed between the duo. Concern flickered in their gazes, acknowledging that something was amiss:

The pills were to blame.

As the sleek black limousine cut through the idyllic countryside, Penny reclined against the plush leather seats, her gaze fixed on the passing scenery. Towering trees adorned the winding road, their vibrant hues casting a mosaic of golden and amber hues across the landscape. The limousine navigated through a gentle curve, revealing Philo's rustic home. The limousine slowed to a graceful halt, the gravel crunching beneath its wheels as it arrived. Penny stepped out, her tailored suit a stark contrast against the rural backdrop, her eyes scanning the estate's serene surroundings.

Her polished heels met the gravel path with a soft crunch. Her typically composed and assured demeanour now betrayed a subtle undercurrent of nervousness. She glanced around, taking in the serene expanse of Philo's front yard, where wildflowers swayed gently in the breeze. The air carried a hint of earth and autumn. Despite the idyllic setting, Penny felt an unusual flutter in her chest, an uncharacteristic unease that prickled at her. Her gaze lingered on the wooden fence that'd been weathered by time. She hadn't noticed that before, during her last visit. Her steps measured, and she moved toward the front door. Each footfall seemed to magnify her uneasiness, heightening her apprehension as she approached.

With a conflicted sigh escaping her lips, she muttered softly under her breath, "This is a fucking bad idea..." The nervous energy that gripped her tightened, winding tendrils of doubt. Philo's homestead, while welcoming in its simplicity, only accentuated the simmering anxiousness of Penny's usually composed exterior.

As Penny glanced back toward the idling limo, uncertainty rippled through her. The driver's expectant gaze, tinged with a hint of inquiry, heightened her internal conflict. Doubts clouded her mind.

Penny's internal struggle intensified as the confrontation loomed closer. The urge to retreat tugged at her. Yet, buried beneath the hesitation, curiosity and a sense of responsibility propelled her forward. Her shoulders squared after a firm exhale, and she braced herself.

Penny's knuckles hovered parallel to the weathered door. Before she could knock, the door swung open abruptly, startling her momentarily. The unexpectedness of Philo's sudden appearance caught her off-guard, her demeanour faltering. However, her practised

professionalism swiftly reasserted itself, and she regained her composure, straightening her posture and meeting Philo's gaze confidently, as expected of the young CEO.

"You again?" His brow furrowed, Philo's eyes widened slightly, a mix of curiosity and suspicion lingering. The memory of their previous encounter remained shrouded in unresolved tension and unanswered questions. He couldn't help but wonder why Penny would even think of coming back. Her presence here, devoid of her usual accompanying entourage, piqued his interest. "I've already said my piece. Please leave."

As Philo moved closer, a sense of urgency surged within Penny, compelling her to interject before the door slammed shut between them. She extended a hand, gently but firmly pressing against the edge of the door frame.

"Please, just a moment," she implored, her words earnest and urgent. Her gaze held a depth of earnestness, her eyes harbouring a plea for a *chance* to be heard. "I promise it's brief; after this, you won't hear from me again."

Philo's mind raced as he stood at the precipice of a decision. He was caught between the instinct to maintain his privacy and the intrigue of unravelling the reason behind Penny's unannounced visit. A torrent of conflicting emotions churned within him, reminding Philo of their prior encounter's tension. Yet, a flicker of curiosity lingered. His guarded exterior softened marginally, and with a reluctant yet measured nod, he eventually relented, gesturing for Penny to step inside, an air of cautious intrigue swirling in the motion.

As Penny moved through Philo's hallway, her eyes scanned the surroundings. Her gaze traced the exposed wooden beams and the eclectic mix of artwork adorning the walls, lending the space an air of rustic charm. Amidst this ambience, her attention snagged on an open letter, partially visible atop a vintage side table. The bold half of the company's logo, unmistakably belonging to Yeager Corp., seized her attention like a bolt of lightning, stirring a whirlwind of thoughts—a faint crease formed between her brows. Questions darted through her mind like rapid gunfire, each one accompanied by a mounting sense of unease. Why would Philo have a letter from Yeager Corp.? Was there a connection between them? Was it related to the company's claims about its technology?

With a hint of hospitality in his voice, Philo paused by the door frame, his hand still grasping the doorknob. "Tea? Coffee..?" His gaze met Penny's briefly, an attempt at maintaining a semblance of politeness. His offer hung in the air, an attempt to diffuse the unexpected tension that had permeated while also serving as a buffer as he contemplated Penny's request to hear her out. Maybe he shouldn't have let her in.

Taken aback by the letter and its potential implications, Penny's demeanour wavered, leaving her slightly disoriented. "Uh, tea, please," she stammered, almost reflexively, choosing the more fitting option. Yet, as the words left her lips, a pang of regret gnawed at her. Tea wasn't her preference, but it felt like the safer choice given the circumstances. As she considered retracting her request, the desire to not complicate the situation further won over.

As Philo moved into the cosy kitchen space to prepare the tea, Penny took a moment to collect herself. Her fingers deftly slipped from her jacket, and she hung it on the coat rack. This was a subtle attempt to appear composed. Feigning casualness, she glanced once more at the letter on the table. The urge to read it built an explosive desire to battle against her sense of caution. Yet, she held back, biding her time and suppressing the unsettling questions that danced within her head.

Philo's voice from the kitchen interrupted Penny's contemplation. "One sugar or two?" he called out, his tone polite and accommodating, seeking to make her comfortable despite their obvious tension.

Caught off guard by his question, Penny momentarily struggled to collect herself. "Two, please," she replied, her voice slightly faltering as she attempted to maintain a semblance of normalcy. The request for two sugars was a reflexive choice, of course. She didn't even know what tea alone tasted like, much less it with two sugars. Do people typically take sugar with tea, or was that an odd choice on Philo's part? They could just as quickly take salt with it, for all Penny knew.

Penny's steps echoed softly as she left the hallway and entered Philo's living room. The space exuded warmth with its earthy tones and furnishings. Sunlight filtered through the curtains, gently glowing the room's atmosphere. The ambience did little to soothe her nerves as her eyes scanned the cosy setup. The scent of brewing tea wafted through the air, intermingling with the distant crackling of logs in the fireplace. Her attention was drawn to Philo as he entered the room, carrying two steaming cups of tea on a rustic wooden tray. He placed them down carefully on the small table between the seating arrangements, his demeanour amicable but guarded.

Philo settled into the armchair across from Penny, his gaze lingering on her as she cautiously took the tea. There was a hint of hesitation, evident in how she held the cup, but curiosity eventually overtook her reservations. Penny brought the warm mug to her lips, taking a careful sip. The flavour enveloped her senses. Her eyebrows raised in surprise, pleasantly caught off guard by the unexpected delight of the brew. A faint smile tugged at the corners of

her lips. It was pretty lovely.

Philo leaned forward slightly, his gaze fixed on Penny. His tone, though measured, held a hint of wariness. "Penny—why are you here?" There was an edge to his voice, the uncertainty reflecting in his furrowed brow.

Penny squared her shoulders, gathering her thoughts before she began. "I'm here because we're both in a bind, Philo." She leaned forward, meeting his gaze directly. "Yeager Corp's got us by the balls in the court. I know you have your issues with us. I feel like you're owed. In return, I'd like your support as a witness against Yeager."

She watched Philo's expression closely, gauging his reaction as she laid out her proposition. There was a tense pause.

Philo's words were direct. He leaned back, his brows knitting together in concern. He took another sip of his tea, buying a moment to process Penny's proposition.

"I get that you're trying to strike a deal, but you've got it wrong, Penny." His voice remained firm, tinged with a note of frustration. "I've already told you I believe you stole Yeager's tech. There's no reason for me to jump ship."

Penny's expression softened, understanding the weight of his words. She knew she had to tread carefully to convince Philo without pushing too hard.

"What if I told you we would be willing to reduce your...girth in exchange for your support? Gratis, I might add."

Philo's attention diverted momentarily to his giant cock crudely hidden under his customized trousers as Penny's proposal swirled in his mind. The appendage, previously the size of a beach ball when Penny last saw it, now loomed larger, slowly inflating like some bizarre spectacle. Intrigue warred with caution within Philo even as arousal seemed to take precedence in his thoughts; Penny's offer seemed like a lifeline to reclaim normalcy, a return to the life he yearned for. However, his mind echoed with warnings, reminding him of the murky past tied to Storm Enterprises, the entity responsible for his current predicament. Trusting Penny felt akin to stepping into the unknown, unsure whether it led to salvation or yet another tangled web of deceit. As his shaft continued its expansion, Philo's inner turmoil, marked by arousal, mirrored the gradual growth before him, grappling with the decision to trust Penny.

Feeling the weight pressing upon him like an unrelenting burden, he felt his testicles swell

and chafe against his comparatively small leg.

"It does hurt," Philo said softly, his voice tinged with resignation, "feeling this thing pulse and grow inches at a time each day." His gaze flickered back to Penny, searching for reassurance amidst the turmoil. Yet, beneath her convincing pitch lay the shadow of doubt, a lingering suspicion threatening to unravel any semblance of trust he might be willing to extend.

"It doesn't have to any more than you want it to." Penny's gaze fixated on Philo's burgeoning cock, her eyes tracing the expanding curves of the colossal meat pole threatening to tear its way free from his trousers. A glint of fascination mingled in her expression, an amalgamation of awe and apprehension as the appendage continued its relentless growth. Her lips curved into a faint yet confident smile. She observed the cock's enlarging, each passing moment amplifying its dimensions. Then, an idea. "Maybe I can help ease the pressure a bit?"

At that moment, Penny grappled with an unfamiliar tension between her beliefs and the professional responsibility expected of her. She was at an unexpected crossroads as someone who typically navigated decisions with empathy and pragmatism. The integrity of Storm Enterprises, an entity she poured her heart and soul into to protect, just as she promised her grandfather, now stood precariously in the balance. The weight of this realisation pressed upon her conscience, forcing her to confront the stark reality that what she once deemed impossible now feels inevitable:

She was willing to fuck Philo to ensure his support. He knew that was what she implied.

Philo had fixated on Penny with anxiety. Tentatively, Penny unbuttoned her blouse, each subtle release of a button echoing softly in the otherwise peaceful room. The atmosphere had tightened with tension. His furrowed brow seeking to decipher the cryptic motives driving Penny's actions, Philo's mind swirled a mixture of anticipation and apprehension, leaving him captivated. As Penny's movements unfolded before him, questions hung heavily.

Philo hadn't resisted Penny's actions, however. Initially marked by surprise and hesitation, his demeanour gradually softened even as his cock finally burst free from his trousers.

"Are you sure about this?" Philo's voice was a hesitant whisper laden with concern; his words a delicate thread of doubt. His tone had a palpable unease as he sought clarification from Penny. Philo's gaze remained fixed on her; an intensity in his eyes mirrored the gravity of the situation.

"Trust me," Penny said softly, almost cooing as she dropped to her knees and gripped the

log-like appendage, feverishly rubbing it against her soft cheeks. “This wouldn’t be the first cock I’ve sucked.”

"I'm sure it isn't, but...the size..." Philo's voice tapered off, leaving the sentence dangling. His hesitation hung; his reluctance to voice a concern weighed heavily. It was evident with the slight quiver in his tone. His gaze remained fixed on Penny, but he could feel his cock pulse with an anticipation unlike any other. Philo's words and expression painted a man desperate for release from his torture.

"I think I'll be able to make it work," Penny's voice, though tinged with a hint of uncertainty, bore an eager determination. Her words carried confidence, a flicker of excitement in her gaze as she started stroking Philo—hard. “And even if I can’t, I’m sure you’ll stretch me until I do—right?”

Philo’s gaze darted around the room, unable to settle on any singular focal point, a nervous knot forming in his stomach as Penny ran her tongue along his length, her eyes never leaving his.

“The day’s young yet, so...we’ve got plenty of time to figure that out.”

The moon hung high in the night sky, its silvery light casting a serene glow over Philo's rustic home. The stars sparkled like scattered diamonds. A soft light from the lamp on the porch illuminated the surroundings, painting a warm halo around the entryway. Penny's limousine, still parked in wait, sat in quiet repose, its driver, Jack, having succumbed to sleep. The occasional gentle breeze provided a peaceful soundtrack, rustling leaves in a delicate dance.

Philo's room was simple and functional. The walls, painted in muted earth tones, exuded warmth and cosiness. A sturdy, wooden bed, its frame slightly weathered. The headboard, crafted from reclaimed timber, bore the marks of handiwork and time, telling its own silent story. A small desk sat against one wall, cluttered with sketches and notes. An open window welcomed a gentle breeze, allowing the curtains to sway delicately, revealing a glimpse of the starlit night sky beyond.

Penny stood by the window in Philo's room, gazing skyward. Her thoughts became a whirlwind. The twinkling stars mirrored the doubts that clouded her mind. Her decision to engage intimately with Philo lingered. Doubts about her actions nestled among quieter musings, questions, and concerns about the consequences. Had she crossed a line, delving into

a realm of risk that could jeopardise the situation? A part of her mulled, contemplating its implications on the dynamics and repercussions it might entail. Yet, amidst this storm of doubt, a subtle thrill lingered, a spark of daring that dared her to challenge the boundaries she had known. Amidst the uncertainty, there was a tinge of exhilaration, a strange allure in the ambiguity of the night and the choices made in its veiled embrace.

She turned, rearing her head over her shoulder to look at Philo, who slept soundly, then to the monstrous pillar he had for a cock. Even after countless hours of sex, well into the night's late hours, the bedsheets so thoroughly stained with sweat and cum that they were almost see-through, his manhood still stood upright, erect as ever. Even as he slept soundly, cum casually oozed from his cock and pooled on the floor.

Penny stepped out of the bedroom into the hallway. The air here felt different, less intimate, but still held a sense of comfort. She glanced back at the closed door behind her. As she moved further down the hallway, the plush carpet beneath her feet absorbed the sound of her footsteps. The hallway stretched ahead, her mind swirling with lingering questions about the night and her choices.

Penny descended the stairs, her steps cautious. Penny's mind raced, fixated on the letter she had seen earlier. She scoured the hallway, her gaze darting from one surface to another, looking for any sign of the elusive correspondence. It can't have been moved. It couldn't have. Her heart thumped with an urgency. Then, amidst the antique décor, her eyes locked onto the unmistakable logo of Yeager Corp once again. Dread and determination collided, urging Penny to retrieve the document.

Penny's hands trembled as she delicately unfolded the letter. Her eyes scanned the contents, and shock jolted through her frame. The letter detailed an offer of collaboration from Yeager Corp directed at Philo himself. If he agreed to testify against Penny, he would receive the same treatment she had offered and a substantial bonus of six million to alleviate his debts and secure his home. Philo's signature was scribbled at the bottom, confirming his intent to accept Yeager's proposition. The revelation hit Penny like a thunderbolt, shattering her trust and leaving a bitter taste of betrayal in her mouth. It rendered her actions, her past efforts to assist him, futile and tainted. She offered herself to him for no reason.

Penny's fingers curled tightly around the damning letter, her knuckles blanching with the force of her grip. Her movements propelled by a whirlwind of emotions, hastily, she reached the front door, wrenching it open with an enthusiasm bordering on desperation. The cool night air greeted her, her breaths coming in ragged gasps.

As she bolted, urgency propelled her toward her limousine stationed nearby. Her thoughts spiralled into a storm of confusion and hurt.

“Get me to Agatha’s. Now.”

The wheels of the limousine hummed to life, surging forward into the night.

The following morning, Tanya arrived at Dr. Crawford's office, the familiar hum of the room's fluorescent lights greeting her as she entered. She'd eaten quite a large breakfast that morning—pancakes, toast, bacon, all triple servings. And yet, even as she shuffled into the chair that directly faced the doctor, she couldn't help but still feel hunger pangs.

Tanya's gaze drifted across the meticulously organised space, from the orderly arrangement of papers on the desk to the polished gleam of the furniture. Her eyes flitted to Dr. Crawford, engrossed in her work. The clacking of keys echoed faintly as the woman typed, her brows knitted in concentration, giving away the weight of stress she seemed to carry from a previous conversation. Tanya shifted in her seat, the silence between them heavy as she waited for Crawford to acknowledge her.

Tanya cleared her throat softly, breaking the silence. The sound pulled Dr Crawford's attention from her screen, and she looked up, momentarily startled, before a small smile played on her lips. "Tanya, you're here bright and early. Apologies, I've been caught up in some urgent matters," Crawford said, her voice tinged with relief at the interruption.

“It’s fine.”

With a nod and reassuring smile, Dr Crawford acknowledged Tanya's apology. Swiftly manoeuvring her cursor to the top right corner of her computer screen, she clicked on the document she had been engrossed in moments before. Logging out, the screen faded into a blank slate. Adjusting her posture slightly, she leaned forward attentively, her gaze fixed on Tanya, ready to delve into the session and offer her undivided support. “You ready for your scheduled appointment? We would go for updated measurements this time. You seem to have grown a bit this past week.”

Dr. Crawford's professional curiosity mingled with personal fascination as her attentive gaze swept over Tanya's physique. Initially drawn to the body's notable changes, the doctor was captivated by the unprecedented growth and defined lines, marvelling at the sheer size and

sculpted form before her. While her primary objective centred on understanding the pills' effects on Tanya, curiosity lingered within the doctor. The meticulous notes she jotted down were as much for comprehending the drug's impact as for satisfying her fascination and wonderment at the hulking young woman sitting in front of her.

Tanya's stomach growled, and an unexpectedly loud protest filled the room. "I'm so sorry," she murmured apologetically, her cheeks tinged with embarrassment. "It just won't fucking stop." Her voice trailed off, a perplexed expression knitting her brows together.

Surprise flickered across Dr Crawford's face regarding Tanya's statement. Her pen paused mid-scribble on the notepad, and she glanced up. Her surprise deepened as she observed beads of sweat glistening on Tanya's forehead, the glint of perspiration betraying the discomfort beneath. "That's quite unusual," Crawford remarked softly.

Tanya shifted uncomfortably in her seat, feeling emptiness gnawing at her insides. Beads of sweat formed a glistening sheen on her forehead. "I'm just so fucking hungry..." Her words trailed off, a sense of helplessness threading through her voice, her hand unconsciously rubbing her grumbling stomach as if hoping to calm it.

Dr Crawford's concern deepened at Tanya's distress, her pen moving swiftly across the notepad, capturing each detail meticulously. At the same time, her professional demeanour masked a growing sense of urgency. "How long would you say you've felt these effects? An hour? Two?"

Her words were measured. As she posed the question, Crawford's eyes remained fixed on Tanya.

Once again, Tanya shifted uneasily in her seat, the weight of her distress evident in how she squeezed the edge of the seat hard enough to warp it without much effort. "It's been... more than a day. I nearly caused a scene when having lunch with my mum yesterday," she admitted softly, a note of frustration tainting her voice. Her eyes flashed a hint of fatigue. Her mind harked back to countless meals consumed over the past day, each attempting to quell an endless want.

"I've eaten so much," she continued. "But it's like I can't stop. No matter how much I eat, it's never enough."

Tanya's recounting of the distressing symptoms abruptly paused as a peculiar sensation tingled beneath her skin: an inexplicable wave coursing through her muscles. A subtle tremor

began, with faint ripples of a movement seemingly underneath her flesh, imperceptible at first but steadily gaining strength. She shifted in her seat, unease creeping over her as the sensation intensified, causing her clothing to constrict. At first, it was imperceptible, the fabric gently stretching against the growing contours of her arms and shoulders. But soon, the tension became undeniable, the material straining as her muscles swelled rapidly, a visible bulge forming beneath her clothes. Tanya's eyes widened in shock and disbelief, her breath catching in her throat as she watched her muscles expand. Startled by the sudden physical change, Dr. Crawford reacted with urgency, her eyes widening in disbelief as she hastened to comprehend and document the rapid growth.

Dr. Crawford's voice held concern and professional composure as she addressed Tanya. "Okay, so... I think we can agree you're experiencing side effects..." Her words trailed off as she observed the transformation overtaking Tanya's physique. "We'll need to consider taking you off the pills if what you and your mother have said is true."

Tanya's mind swirled with emotions. The initial shock ebbed into a peculiar sense of awe as she felt the power within her pulsating, an unfamiliar yet strangely empowering sensation. But beneath the awe lingered a growing sense of panic, the fear of losing what she had gained. The mere thought of reverting to her former state of obesity, a past she had worked tirelessly to overcome through the drug program, crippled her with anxiety. She clenched her fists, feeling the tensing sinews beneath her skin, the relentless growth showing no signs of abating. Tanya's breath hitched at the realisation that her body was still changing, the muscles bulging with a newfound vigor that astonished and frightened her. The idea of losing this newfound strength, of relinquishing the healthier version of herself that she had painstakingly achieved, spurred a surge of determination within her. She couldn't afford to go back after all the progress she had made.

Tanya winced as her stomach emitted another thunderous growl, louder and more insistent than the previous ones. The sound reverberated through the room. The intensity of the hunger seemed to amplify with each passing moment, the grumbling becoming an almost deafening cacophony that drowned out her thoughts.

"Take a deep breath, Tanya. In... and out," Crawford instructed, her tone gentle yet firm. Tanya followed the guidance the best she could amidst hearing her bubbling growth, inhaling slowly and exhaling, her breaths deep and measured. As she closed her eyes, Dr. Crawford's words echoed in her mind, urging her to visualise a sense of calm within.

With each breath, Tanya attempted to find a semblance of peace, to focus inward. Once expanding uncontrollably, the sensation of her muscles began to ease gradually. The tension in

her limbs lessened, the relentless growth slowing its rapid pace. Tanya's eyes fluttered open.

"That's it, Tanya. Keep focusing on your breath," Crawford encouraged. She monitored Tanya's response, noting the gradual subsiding of her musculature. The sense of urgency lessened, replaced by a momentary stillness.

"Okay... I think... it's slowing down," Tanya murmured, her voice tinged with tentative relief. The muscles that moments ago seemed on the brink of an uncontrollable expansion now appeared to respond to her attempts at self-control.

A fragile calm settled over the room. Dr. Crawford maintained a reassuring presence, encouraging Tanya to continue focusing on her breathing. This temporary lull in the unpredictable transformation provided a moment of reprieve, a chance for Tanya and Dr. Crawford to gather their thoughts.

"Tanya, I really need you to give me those pills back. I expected side effects, but..."

Tanya hesitated, her brows furrowing in contemplation. She understood the gravity of the situation. However, a reluctance lingered within her. "But... what about my treatment? What if they figure it out and it takes even longer?" she questioned, a tinge of apprehension in her voice. The prospect of another delay in her treatment unsettled her.

"I understand, Tanya. Your health is our priority. Returning the pills for further testing is part of that. I trust you. Please, trust me."

Tanya's internal conflict intensified. Despite her reservations, she recognized the necessity of Dr. Crawford's request. Slowly nodding, she relented, conceding to Dr. Crawford's advice. "Okay, I'll return them," she admitted reluctantly, reaching out to place the pill bottle on the table.

Unbeknownst to Dr. Crawford, with a cunning sleight of hand, Tanya discreetly pocketed two pills, her fingers deftly concealing them behind her back.

Dr. Crawford, observing Tanya's compliance, offered a supportive smile. "Thank you, Tanya. It may take some time before you get these back. But when they do, they'll work properly this time. And yes, before you panic, that means keeping your musculature, too. How are you feeling?"

"Not hungry, if that's what you mean."

As they concluded their conversation, Tanya concealed the two pills, silently contemplating the potential implications of her decision to hide them. The weight of secrecy bore down on her. A part of her hoped this was a wise decision, while most of her being felt possessing the pills was more a need—that she couldn't function without them...

Chapter 7

Standing barefoot in the bathroom, Tanya gazed intently at her reflection in the mirror. Her chest heaved with each breath, showcasing the impressive development of pectoral muscles that rippled prominently beneath her skin. Her biceps and triceps pulsed rhythmically as blood coursed through them. Sweat beaded upon her forehead and trickled down her temples, glistening against her skin like diamonds.

With a steely determination, Tanya placed one foot carefully on the weight scales, followed closely by the other. She closed her eyes tightly, bracing herself for the number that flashed brightly moments later. Tanya's jaw dropped in amazement as the digital display came into view. She had never weighed so much in her entire life. In fact, the number staring back at her was almost double what it used to be before taking the pills Dr Crawford gave her.

Tanya let out a low chuckle, both amused and overwhelmed by the sight before her. The numbers displayed on the weight scales seemed almost surreal as if they belonged to someone else entirely. "Four hundred pounds," she repeated under her breath, trying to wrap her head around the magnitude of her bulk.

As she looked down at her abdomen, Tanya couldn't help but feel aroused. She relished in her enormity - how her abs rippled as she shifted her weight from side to side. Tanya sighed, gingerly running her fingers over the bulges protruding from her midsection. She knew that these feelings of power would only grow as time passed. And she loved the idea of that.

Lois knocked softly on the bathroom door. "Everything okay in there? Thought I heard shouting."

As Lois waited for a response, she noticed an unusual sound coming from the bathroom. It was a low, rumbling noise, growing louder with each passing second. Suddenly, the sound became unmistakable – it was the distinct grumble of Tanya's stomach.

Tanya let out a deep sigh and continued admiring herself in the mirror. "Uh, yeah. Say, uh...could you get some food?"

Lois raised an eyebrow, looking skeptical. "You're still starved after yesterday?"

Tanya shrugged, still fixated on her appearance in the mirror. "I dunno. I just have a pretty big appetite lately."

Lois hesitated briefly before finally agreeing. "Alright, fine. I'll go grab...something. But don't come crying to me if you get sick."

As soon as Lois left, Tanya began to fidget nervously. She quickly slipped the two pills she stole from Dr Crawford and popped them into her mouth, swallowing them whole.

Tanya stood tall and proud in front of the mirror, her arms stretched wide as she flexed every muscle in her body. A look of intense concentration etched across her face as she focused. With every squeeze and contraction, she felt a surge of power course through her veins that pulsed ominously beneath her taut skin. Her pecs bulged and tightened, while her biceps and triceps strained against their limits.

Penny leaned heavily against the windowpane of the boardroom, staring intently down at the bustling streets below. She checked her watch for the fifth time in ten minutes. Just where the hell were they? They were supposed to be already. The traffic outside seemed to conspire against her. Cars honked frantically, their drivers cursing under their breath as they crawled along the gridlocked arteries of London. Pedestrians shuffled past, their faces twisted into expressions of frustration and annoyance.

Penny's thoughts drifted to the meeting at hand. It had taken longer than hoped, but she was finally on the brink of a sit-down with the CEO and executives of Yeager Corp. This represented a real opportunity for Storm Enterprises' lawsuit to be put down for good, and Penny could not afford any missteps or misunderstandings. She took a deep breath, straightening her blazer and smoothing her hair.

As Penny's eyes lingered on the chaotic view outside, Agatha approached dressed immaculately in a tailored navy blue suit. She placed a reassuring hand on the young woman's shoulder.

"Everything will be alright. I know you and our own executives have differences, but trust me, you're ready for this."

"Agatha, I..." Penny looked up at Agatha. She had known the woman for many years, as a

family friend - to the point of becoming something of a mentor, someone she could trust. Now, as she faced perhaps the most important negotiation of her career, Penny felt all the more grateful to have such a person by her side. Agatha's words gave her strength, reminding her of the countless hours spent poring over case files and strategizing with the legal team. "I..."

"I know," Agatha said. "I know."

There wasn't much said beyond that. They both knew. That's all that mattered.

Penny squared her shoulders. As the clock struck noon, Penny sighed. Her eyes darted nervously around the boardroom, taking note of every detail. The polished mahogany table stretched before her, gleaming in the light filtering through the windows. The chairs were arranged neatly around it, ready and waiting for whoever might arrive first.

Penny's phone vibrated on the table, interrupting her thoughts. She hesitated for a moment before acknowledging the text from her personal assistant:

They're here. Coming up now.

Inside Penny's head, her nerves were getting the best of her. She wondered what tactics the other party would employ, whether they would come prepared to negotiate or try to strongarm her. Despite her preparation, she couldn't shake the feeling that something unexpected could occur. Another deep breath. Why were her palms so sweaty? Why was—

With a sharp rap on the door, Penny's heart skipped a beat. Her spine stiffened, as the doors swung open to reveal a group of impeccably suited men. In the lead was Richard Yeager himself, his piercing gaze scanning the room before settling upon Penny. He wore a sleek grey suit that accentuated the sharp angles of his jawline and a crisp white shirt that glinted beneath the fluorescent lights overhead. Flanking him were three executive officers, each equally poised and confident. First came Maria Hernandez, an elegant Spanish woman with jet-black hair and piercing green eyes. Next was Jack Chen, a tall Chinese man with angular features and a steely demeanour. Lastly, there was Michael Patel, a well-groomed Indian gentleman whose dark skin contrasted sharply against his pristine white dress shirt. Each took their seat at the mahogany table, their movements graceful yet deliberate, like predators sizing up their prey. Penny held her ground, maintaining eye contact with Richard Yeager as he settled into his chair opposite hers.

Penny noted neither of those people did so much as offer a hello. That annoyed her. Deeply.

Silence hung heavy as Richard Yeager cleared his throat but said nothing.

"Thank you for agreeing to meet with me, Mr. Yeager," Penny said, keeping her tone even.

Richard leaned back in his chair, studying Penny with a critical gaze. "I hope we can resolve our little issue sooner rather than later today, Ms. Storm. I am a busy man."

"Please, call me Penny."

"Oh, I don't think our relationship will extend beyond today's nuisances. Formalities will suffice," Richard said.

The tense silence continued, punctured only by the soft hum of air conditioning and the occasional rustle of papers being shuffled. Poised, Penny readied herself, drawing a deep breath before commencing her opening statement. Her pause, brief yet purposeful, allowed for the collection of her thoughts. Addressing Mr. Yeager directly, she laid out the purpose of their meeting with certainty. The weight in her voice underscored the gravity of the situation.

Maria Hernandez spoke up, cutting off Penny's flow. "Ms. Storm, we know your accusations regarding the theft of Dr. Crawford's research. However, may we ask if you have any concrete evidence to support these claims?"

Penny steeled herself, knowing that this was the crux of the discussion. Penny had weeks now to uncover something — anything — to prove Crawford's work had been stolen. Yet nothing had turned up.

Richard listened stoically, his face impassive. His assistants remained silent, their expressions also neutral. Penny sensed that they were trying to gauge her weaknesses, looking for any sign of uncertainty or hesitation. But she refused to show them any.

As Penny continued speaking, albeit deflecting the issue away from Crawford's research, Agatha watched her intently, her expression unreadable...

The negotiations dragged on, filled with heated debates and strategic moves from both sides. Penny and Richard exchanged barbs and counterarguments, each determined to emerge victorious. The tension in the boardroom grew thicker with each passing minute, punctuated only by the sound of pens scratching across paper and the occasional sigh. Penny felt beads of sweat form on her forehead as she struggled to maintain her composure, with no progress.

Flustered, Penny thought the only thing left to do was the unthinkable. Her gaze locked onto Richard, and with a hint of a sly smile, she casually mentioned, "You know, Mr. Yeager, it's fascinating how some secrets can find their way into the light. Take, for example, Yeager Corp's sizable payment to a Philo Slater within the past month. Quite an impressive sum, I must say."

A stunned silence fell over the room. Richard's steely expression wavered for a split second, a subtle flicker of surprise crossing his face before being replaced by a mask of indifference. The executive officers exchanged uneasy glances, and Agatha, standing by Penny's side, seemed momentarily flustered, her eyes widening in disbelief.

Penny pressed on, maintaining her confident demeanour. "I have a copy of the transaction records right here." She produced a neatly organised set of documents, placing them on the table with deliberate care. "I wonder how this revelation might influence our negotiations. It may be time for a more honest and equitable discussion."

Richard Yeager leaned back in his chair, a faint smirk on his lips. "Ms. Storm, if this is some attempt to divert our attention, it won't work. We're here to discuss the allegations regarding Dr. Crawford's research, not baseless accusations."

Maria Hernandez chimed in, her tone dismissive. "Exactly. We're not interested in your attempts at theatrics. This meeting is about the facts, not your attempts to distract us with unfounded claims."

Penny maintained her composure, her eyes narrowing slightly. "The evidence is right here, in black and white. A substantial payment to Philo Slater to testify against us. In doing so, he would receive six million to alleviate his debts and secure his home, and the same treatment we offered."

The room crackled with tension, and Agatha shot a concerned look at Penny. It was clear that Yeager Corp would predictably attempt to brush aside the evidence...

Tanya approached the table where her mother had placed a spread of food: grilled chicken breasts, boiled vegetables, and rice. Hunger gnawed at her insides. She picked up a piece of chicken and bit down savagely. Each chew sent waves of pleasure through her body.

Her mother watched her daughter with concern etched deeply on her features. Tanya could sense her mother's worry, but she couldn't bring herself to care. All she wanted was sustenance. Her muscles bulged beneath her skin, begging for nourishment. They needed to grow stronger, bigger, better.

Lois watched her daughter with growing concern. Her heart ached.

With a trembling voice, Lois spoke softly, her words filled with a mix of love and worry, "Tanya, are you...okay?"

As Lois continued, her gaze fell on Tanya's bicep, which throbbed menacingly beneath her skin, its veins pulsating. It was like it had a life of its own, demanding more.

Tanya barely glanced up, her attention fiercely drawn to the food in front of her. "I'm fine, Mom," she muttered dismissively between mouthfuls, her voice a low rumble. She tore into another piece of chicken, her actions more animalistic than human. The concern in her mother's voice seemed to fade into the background, drowned out by the primal urge to feed.

Lois watched in horror as her daughter consumed the meal voraciously, almost as if it were fuel for a machine rather than sustenance for a human being. As Tanya finished the last bite, she pushed the plate away and slumped back in her seat, her breathing labored. Sweat dripped down her forehead, mixing with the grease on her cheeks. Her stomach had bloated to over twice its size, and even then—

Tanya's stomach rumbled ominously, a deep and unsettling sound echoing through the small kitchen. Her mother's eyes widened in alarm as she heard the noise, knowing all too well the danger it signified. Tanya tried to ignore the hunger pains that wracked her body, clamping her fists tightly around the edges of the table. But it was futile; her belly growled once again, louder this time, as though pleading for sustenance.

Tanya slammed her fist onto the table, causing dishes to clatter. "More! More food!" she demanded, her voice hoarse from hunger. Her muscles thrummed beneath her skin, urgently calling out for sustenance. Lois looked on in terror, unable to deny her daughter's demands but fearing what might happen if she refused.

"We don't have any more food. You ate everything already."

But Tanya wasn't listening. She stood up suddenly, sending chairs toppling behind her. Her limbs felt heavy and unwieldy, yet every muscle screamed for more energy. With an animalistic

growl, she lunged towards the front door, heading in the direction of the closest establishment that sold any food. Anything...

Penny and Agatha stepped out of the boardroom, their faces grave. The conference had been a disaster, with Richard Yeager and Maria Hernandez refusing to acknowledge the evidence presented by Penny. Their arguments became increasingly dismissive.

Agatha moved Penny aside, to the corner of the hallway. She looked stern, disappointed even. "When were you going to tell me about the bribe Philo got?"

"I tried. You weren't in."

Agatha shook her head, frustrated. Agatha regarded Penny sceptically but ultimately nodded. "Alright. Let's focus on the next steps. We need to find a way to expose Yeager and get them off our backs."

Richard Yeager appeared from around the corner, his eyes fixed intently on Penny. His gaze lingered for a moment too long, making Penny feel uneasy. Agatha noticed and stepped closer to Penny, glaring at Yeager. Penny remained silent, her mind racing with thoughts of how to handle Yeager.

He spoke, "Ms. Storm, I trust you won't let your emotions cloud your judgment again. A poor display just a few moments ago."

Penny swallowed hard. She had words to say. Select and very unprofessional words. But with the company at stake, she wrestled hard for control of her composure.

Penny gritted her teeth, trying to keep her cool. "Mr. Yeager, I assure you my emotions don't affect my decisions. However, I must point out that the evidence presented thus far speaks for itself."

Yeager smirked, crossing his arms. "Is that right?"

Penny narrowed her eyes, her temper rising. "Like yours, our agency has a reputation to maintain. We will do what we must to protect it. Strongarming won't help."

Agatha put a hand on Penny's arm, silently warning her to tone it down. But the girl yanked

free.

Richard smirked. There was no denying Penny's ferociousness, whenever it dared show itself, was to be admired. "Yes. Yes, I suspect you will. You seem the type."

As Richard walked away, Penny turned to Agatha, who smiled reassuringly.

"Don't worry, Penny. We'll figure something out. In the meantime, maybe you should take some time off. Clear your head." Agatha was insistent on that much.

Tanya stormed into the nearest restaurant, a cowboy-themed establishment called Buffalo Bill's, her stomach gnawing at her insides like a pack of wild wolves. She could feel the blood pulsating in her veins, demanding nourishment. Without a second thought, she marched straight to the buffet counter and began stuffing her face with whatever she could find - plates of pastries, stacks of sandwiches, bowls of soup, anything that would satisfy her growing appetite.

The other customers stared at her, their expressions ranging from disgust to shock. Some even whispered among themselves, their voices low and hushed. Tanya barely registered their presence, lost in the world inside her own head as she devoured everything within reach.

Each bite sent shivers through Tanya's body, igniting her muscles and causing them to bulge and ripple in a way that seemed almost unnatural. It was as though her entire being was alive with energy. She chewed greedily, her jaw working overtime as she scarfed down plate after plate of food. Her throat burned with the effort of swallowing so much, but still, she pushed herself further, driven by the desperate craving that consumed her. It was almost as though her muscles were on fire, burning hotter with each mouthful.

Some of the other patrons couldn't believe what they were seeing. They had never witnessed anyone consume such vast quantities of food before. One man, sitting across from his friend, leaned forward. "Check the freak."

An elderly couple seated nearby exchanged worried looks. The woman clutched onto her husband's arm tightly, her knuckles turning white.

Meanwhile, Tanya continued her rampage, oblivious to the attention received. She stuffed her face without pause, not caring who watched or judged her, even taking from passing plates,

much to the waitress' shock. For a brief moment, she paused, feeling a sudden pain shoot through her abdomen. She groaned softly, clutching her belly.

With a deep breath, Tanya lifted her shirt upward, revealing a sight that left the other diners speechless. Her midsection was a mass of rippling muscle, coated in a fine layer of sweat. Thick veins protruded from beneath her skin, twisting and snaking along her torso like a labyrinthine network. The sight was both terrifying and fascinating. Tanya didn't care. All that mattered now was filling the hunger that raged inside her, fueling her monstrous physique with every last scrap of sustenance she could find. As she lowered her shirt back into place, she caught sight of a group of teenagers staring at her from across the room. With a cold, calculating look, she raised an eyebrow, daring them to speak out against her. No one did.

Despite the excessive amount of food Tanya had already consumed, her hunger persisted. Each passing moment saw her devour more dishes, unable to quell the fierce demand rumbling in her gut. Plates piled high with steak, rice, and vegetables disappeared in seconds. Sweat dripped down her face as she struggled to catch her breath between bites, her heart pounding erratically in her chest.

As Tanya continued her frenzied feast, her muscles grew larger and more defined with each passing minute. Her once petite frame swelled and expanded, stretching the fabric of her clothing. The other diners gasped and recoiled in horror as Tanya's biceps bulged and pulsed beneath her sleeves, her triceps elongating and thickening to freakish proportions. Even her calves swelled, pushing against the seams of her jeans until they threatened to burst open.

But Tanya paid no mind. Her focus remained solely on her insatiable hunger, driving her to consume ever greater amounts of food until her senses became dulled by the overwhelming sensations flooding her system. Meat juices oozed from her lips as she savoured the taste of raw beef, relishing the sensation of flesh tearing between her teeth. Vegetables and fruits alike were crushed mercilessly beneath her jaws, leaving nothing but pulp and seeds behind. All the while, her muscles continued to expand, thickening and hardening until they took on a life of their own.

It wasn't long before Tanya's newfound size began to cause problems. The chair creaked and bent under the weight of her bulk, threatening to snap cleanly in half. Diners near her scurried for cover, afraid that the very ground itself might shake beneath their feet.

The scent of cooking meat wafted into Tanya's nostrils, sending waves of pleasure coursing through her body. She closed her eyes, savoring the aroma, and let out a deep growl.

The restaurant owners looked on in disbelief. The sheer size and strength of the young woman before them were enough to make their blood run cold. They knew that something needed to be done, and fast.

One of the owners, a middle-aged man, reached for the phone on the table beside him. His hand shook slightly as he dialed a number, his voice trembling as he spoke. "Hello? Yes, we have a situation here... A customer has gone completely wild. We need help..." He listened intently for a few moments, nodding occasionally. When he hung up the call, his expression was grim. "They're sending someone."

Two security guards approached Tanya, their eyes widening at the spectacle before them. The first guard, a tall man with a shaved head and a menacing glare, stepped forward, his hands resting on the hips of his suit jacket. "Excuse me, ma'am," he said gruffly, trying his best to hide his anxiousness. "We need you to leave."

Tanya, however, showed no signs of compliance. Instead, she fixed her gaze upon the guards. Her muscles rippled and bulged beneath her skin, emitting a low grunt that resonated throughout the restaurant before diving back into her sixth steak. The second guard stepped closer.

"We insist, ma'am."

"I'm eating."

Ignoring the pleas of the security guards, Tanya dug into another plate of food, chewing voraciously and swallowing whole chunks of meat. The sound of bones crunching echoed around the room as she gnawed hungrily on a rack of ribs. The smell of roasting chicken filled her nostrils, watering her mouth even more.

Suddenly, there was a loud crash as one of the chairs Tanya had been sitting on snapped in two under her immense weight. The diners nearby jumped up in terror as Tanya towered over them. Her muscles flexed and strained beneath her skin, as if ready to tear apart anything within reach. The security guards backed away slowly, fear etched deeply onto their faces.

Just then, the door swung open, revealing a police officer.

"What is going on here?" he demanded, eyeing Tanya warily.

The security guards pointed towards her, who was currently stuffing her face with yet

another helping of food. The officer strode towards her, his footsteps thundering on the floor.

"Ma'am, please come with us," he ordered firmly.

Tanya hesitated for only a split second before rising to her full height. Her movements were slow and deliberate, as though every step required a tremendous effort. Her muscles rippled and contracted under her tight-fitting clothes.

"I told them: I'm eating."

The officer glanced nervously, unsure how to proceed. He had half a mind to reach for his taser, his fingers wiggling an inch away from the holster. As the police officer studied Tanya closely, he couldn't help but notice the pulsating veins protruding from underneath her tight clothing. With each heartbeat, they grew thicker and more prominent, almost as if they held a life of their own. Suddenly, Tanya let out a low, animalistic moan. As the officer watched in horror, he saw the fabric of her shirt begin to strain and ripple as her arms expanded beyond their limits. Both sleeves burst open in seconds, revealing her colossal biceps coated in sweat.

"You're getting in the way of that," Tanya warned.

The officer hesitated for a moment longer, studying Tanya's monstrous frame. Then, swiftly, he drew his taser and aimed it directly at her chest. But just as he pulled the trigger, Tanya lunged forward, knocking the device out of his grasp. The police officer stumbled backwards, tripping over a nearby chair. Tanya loomed over him like a giant, her massive fists clenching tightly by her sides.

As Tanya stood over the fallen officer, her muscles began to twitch and throb with an intense energy. Every fibre of her being seemed alive, pulsating. Her entire physique was convulsing beneath her skin. Each muscle group, from her neck down to her toes, seemed to ripple and contort independently. Veins bulged and snaked across her flesh like rivers made solid, while tendons stretched taut against bone like steel cables...

Penny and Agatha stood agitatedly in the hallway outside the boardroom, still deep in conversation about their next move against Yeager. Their voices were calm yet tense, trying not to get Richard's attention.

Penny felt her phone vibrate insistently in her pocket, its familiar ringtone jolting her briefly

out of focus. She hesitated momentarily, considering answering it, but quickly shook her head. This legal battle against Yeager Corporation was too crucial to be interrupted, no matter how pressing the call might seem. Penny straightened her shoulders and turned back to Agatha.

"Damn thing won't stop buzzing. That's the fifth call in three minutes," Penny said frustratedly.

Agatha raised an eyebrow in curiosity. "Who could be calling you so persistently during such an important meeting? Don't they know what's at stake?"

Penny shared Agatha's exasperation, hoping whoever was calling would finally give up. Penny cursed herself. "Anyway, you said something about..."

Dr Crawford sat stiffly in the backseat of the sleek black sedan, gripping the armrests tightly as the car weaved through heavy traffic. Two other identical black armoured sedans flanked the one carrying Dr Crawford. The cars easily cut through the congestion, making quick progress despite the crowded streets. Crawford looked at her phone again. Still no reply from Penny — neither text nor call. "How hard could it be to answer a damn phone?"

As the sedan sped along the motorway, three police cars suddenly appeared out of nowhere, one on each side of the road. Crawford's pulse quickened, having a hunch they were going to the same place...

With screeching brakes, a heavily armed SWAT van pulled up outside Buffalo Bill's. A team of officers in tactical gear emerged from the vehicle, their weapons drawn and at the ready. They moved with stealthy precision, their footfalls barely audible amidst the chaos already unfolding inside the building.

The SWAT team leader peered through the window of the restaurant with binoculars. His breath fogged in the cold air as he took stock of the situation. Dozens of people frantically scrambled around, shouting and pushing as they tried to escape the chaos engulfing the establishment. Amid all this commotion, however, one figure immediately caught his attention
- Tanya.

Tanya's eyes were fixated on the endless array of food before her. Her hands eagerly

reached for plate after plate, stuffing the food into her gaping maw until she could hold no more. Saliva dripped from her lips as she savoured every bite.

Meanwhile, the terrified patrons huddled together in corners, shielding themselves from her massive form. Fear radiated as they whispered amongst themselves. One man, trembling with terror, dared to glance up at Tanya only to freeze in fright as her muscles twisted and writhed beneath her skin.

As Tanya continued her feast, her body thrummed with intensity. Her muscles throbbed and twitched with an electric charge, every fibre of her seemingly alive with power. The police officer who had arrived earlier lay crumpled at her feet, completely forgotten amid her gluttony.

The SWAT team leader gave a sharp nod to his second-in-command, signalling they were prepared to move. Quietly, the officers crept closer to the door, breathing calmly and controlled. They could hear Tanya's heavy breathing from within, punctuated by chewing and swallowing. Sweat broke out on some faces as they neared their target, adrenaline coursing through their veins.

“What the fuck is that thing, sarge?”

“Never mind that. Focus.”

The team moved forward, silently slinking towards the restaurant entrance. As they approached, they heard the sound of bones cracking and flesh tearing apart as Tanya feverishly consumed all she could lay her hands on.

Without warning, Tanya spun around, her massive frame towering over the intruders. She let loose a thunderous bellow. Chaos erupted as glass shards flew everywhere, tables toppled, and chairs splintered underfoot. The SWAT commander barked orders in the commotion as he surveyed the scene. He saw Tanya lift a nearby table easily, preparing to crush them beneath its weight mindlessly. Without hesitation, he ordered his men to retreat.

But their efforts proved futile. The SWAT commander watched helplessly as Tanya smashed through Buffalo's Bill's walls, leaving a trail of destruction in her wake.

Dr Crawford stepped out of the black sedan, her heart pounding. A chaotic scene greeted her: debris littered the ground, broken glass sparkling like diamonds. Police officers swarmed the area, trying to contain the rampage. Dr Crawford scanned the crowd, searching for any signs of Penny. She should've caught the news about this by now. But there was no trace of

her.

One of the SWAT team members, a burly man, aimed his rifle from a car rooftop across the street, aiming for the hulking Tanya. Suddenly, Dr Crawford's voice from his left was low and urgent. "Wait! Don't fire!"

The SWAT member hesitated but eventually caved to the doctor's demand.

Dr Crawford cautiously made her way towards Tanya's towering figure. Every muscle in her body seemed to scream at her to turn back, but she couldn't ignore the situation's urgency. The woman standing before her was now unrecognisable. Her arms bulged with massive biceps and triceps with sizes unachievable by any normal means, while her chest expanded to fill out a shirt several sizes too small.

Crawford studied Tanya intently. She noticed the veins protruding from Tanya's neck pulsating rapidly, almost rhythmic.

"Tanya...is that you?" she asked tentatively, her voice barely above a whisper.

Tanya turned her head slowly, locking eyes with Crawford.

"We can figure this out, Tanya. Together." Crawford searched her mind for an explanation. How can things have gotten this bad so quickly? It had only been a day since their last meeting.

"I'm just so fucking hungry," Tanya explained, worried.

Dr Crawford gazed intently at Tanya's distended abdomen, which appeared remarkably similar to the extreme bloating often associated with excessive steroid use. Thick veins snaked their way across the expanse of her belly, pulsating visibly as it rumbled ominously with hunger. Tanya's gaze followed hers, a sense of shame evident in her expression as she realized the gravity of her condition.

"Your pills...did this."

"I know," the doctor said. "I know."

Tanya's muscles began to bulge and twist, expanding at an alarming rate. Veins pulsed and popped beneath the surface of her skin, snaking their way around her colossal form. Her wrists thickened into imposing hulks of bone and flesh, each large enough to encircle a tree trunk.

Her forearms lengthened and widened, becoming monstrous appendages capable of crushing steel beams. And still, her growth continued.

“We can figure this out - together,” Crawford said pleadingly. “Properly this time.”

As Dr. Crawford spoke, Tanya felt conflicting emotions swirling inside her. On one hand, she wanted nothing more than to return to her old self. But on the other hand, she couldn't deny the thrill of the power and strength that came with her newfound size.

“But my muscles.”

Crawford's eyes widened. Tanya's quadriceps began to expand even further. Muscles bulged and rippled. Crawford knew what was happening, and she feared the worst. This wasn't just a side effect of the experimental drug but bordering on a mutation.

Tanya's thighs swelled until they dwarfed her waistline, becoming thicker than most people's bodies. With every passing second, Tanya became less and less recognisable. Less human.

Her joints began to crack and pop as her muscles grew and expanded exponentially. Pain shot through her limbs as bones twisted and warped to accommodate the newfound bulk. Her skin stretched tautly against her enlarged frame, unable to keep pace with the relentless expansion. Finally, her legs gave way beneath her, crumpling to the ground in a heap, cracking the pavement.

Following her perfunctory hand wave, the group that arrived with Crawford gathered around Tanya's sprawled-out form...

“Penny’s gonna kill me,” Crawford whispered to herself.

The atmosphere in the boardroom was tense as Penny, Agatha, Richard Yeager, and the other executives resumed discussing the alleged theft of their research.

Maria leaned forward, her gaze fixed on Penny. "Ms. Storm, we've established that your evidence doesn't hold water. You must understand the seriousness of the accusations you're making."

Penny met Maria's gaze, her determination unwavering. "I assure you, we're telling the truth. Yeager Corp did send a substantial payment to Philo Slater to act as a witness."

Richard interjected, his tone condescending. "Ms. Storm, we've been over this."

As the tension built, Maria's phone suddenly buzzed on the polished mahogany table. She discreetly glanced down at her phone, her expression shifting from stern to curious. Penny noticed the change in Maria's demeanour and couldn't help but wonder what had caused it.

Penny's attention shifted to Michael reaching for his phone, too, causing Penny's suspicions to deepen.

Penny leaned in. "Look," she began, addressing the executives, "I understand this situation is highly sensitive, but we can't afford to sweep these allegations under the rug. We've worked tirelessly on our research. The evidence we've presented might not be perfect, but it's a start."

"Our research," Richard cut in.

Penny's jaw tightened at Richard's comment. Her gaze narrowed.

The sudden buzz of Richard's phone drew everyone's attention. His expression faltered as he checked his phone. Maria and Michael were still engrossed in their own phones. Penny's initial curiosity had now transformed into irritation. She leaned back in her chair, her eyes darting between the group. "Is there something I should be made aware of?" she inquired, her voice sharp, demanding an answer that might explain the strange turn of events. "Tell me, what is so important that it takes you away from all this?"

It was then Penny's assistant quietly entered the room. Her heels click-clacked against the flooring as she approached Penny, leaning in to whisper into her ear. Penny's eyes widened in shock, her lips parting slightly as she absorbed the hushed words. The news left her speechless, stiffened even. She glanced at her assistant, who nodded back.

Penny's hands trembled as she pulled out her phone, her heart pounding with anxiety. She quickly accessed a news report, her eyes widening in shock as she read the headline and the accompanying images.

Penny couldn't believe what she was seeing. The chaos and destruction of Buffalo Bill's depicted in the news report were beyond anything she could have imagined. As she scrolled down, she saw familiar faces amidst the chaos – Tanya and Dr Crawford's. Crawford's face

being so openly exposed in public allowed the trades to make the connection to her involvement with Storm Enterprises fairly quickly. Within minutes, Storm Enterprises was named and scrolling across the live feed.

As she read further, Penny's heart sank. A SWAT team had attempted to intervene, but their efforts were unsuccessful. Tanya's monstrous form had become an uncontrollable force, with tables and chairs shattered, patrons in terror, and the police officers struggling to contain the situation.

As Penny's trembling fingers held the phone, her eyes locked onto the recorded footage of Tanya wreaking havoc at Buffalo Bill's. She could sense the collective gaze of Maria, Michael, and Richard upon her. Panic swelled, not only due to the shocking incident but also because she realised the magnitude of the troubles this would bring to their company.

The trio from Yeager Corp exchanged glances at Penny, their expressions shifting from curiosity to concern. Penny knew this unforeseen development had intensified the stakes in their already contentious confrontation with Yeager...

Tanya slowly regained consciousness, her surroundings shrouded in an eerie silence. Blinking against the harsh overhead lights, she groggily tried to make sense of her surroundings. Panic welled up inside her as she realised she was lying in a hospital bed, the sterile scent of antiseptic hanging in the air. But this was no ordinary hospital. The room had a surreal, unfamiliar quality, and advanced medical equipment hummed the silence. As her eyes adjusted to the dimly lit room, she noticed the absence of windows and of any identifiable hospital staff.

Tanya's heart raced as she took in her bizarre surroundings. Her voice trembled as she whispered to herself, "What... what happened?" She struggled to sit up, the sheets rustling beneath her. Her mind raced with questions, her last memories a jumbled blur of confusion. Fear gnawed at her, and she couldn't shake the feeling that something was deeply wrong. The room remained silent, devoid of answers, leaving Tanya with nothing but her growing apprehension.

Just as Tanya's anxiety threatened to overwhelm her, a door on her left side swung open with a soft whoosh. It was Dr. Crawford, relieved. She approached the bed.

"Tanya. I'm glad to see you awake."

Tanya's eyes locked onto the doctor's as she struggled to recollect her memories. She furrowed her brow, trying to piece together the events leading up to this moment, but it was all a blank slate. With a defeated sigh, she finally admitted, "I can't remember a thing."

Tanya's sense of unease deepened as she searched Dr. Crawford's eyes for answers. "Where am I?" she pressed, her voice quivering.

Dr. Crawford hesitated for a moment, her expression clouded with regret. Finally, she spoke softly, "I'm not at liberty to say, Tanya. You're safe here, that much I can assure you. You've been here for a few hours now."

Tanya's frustration grew, but she could sense that pushing further might not yield the answers she sought. She nodded, reluctantly accepting the partial response, her mind racing with questions about the mysterious facility she now found herself in. "How did I get here? How'd you find me?"

Dr. Crawford sighed, her shoulders slumping slightly as she prepared to reveal more to Tanya. "Your mother, Lois, was deeply concerned about you, Tanya. She called us after that unsettling incident in your kitchen." She paused, searching for the right words. "You were found at Buffalo Bill's, where you had attracted quite a bit of attention due to your unusual condition. I arrived there after hearing about the incident and immediately recognized you, though you had changed quite a bit."

Tanya's eyes widened in confusion. She couldn't comprehend how she had ended up in this surreal situation. "What happened to me?"

Dr. Crawford took a deep breath, her gaze never leaving Tanya's troubled eyes. "Tanya, I need to know if you took more of those experimental pills after I explicitly warned you not to."

Tanya's brow furrowed in a haze of confusion. She stammered, "I... I..."

Crawford shook her head. Tanya's inability to speak was proof enough.

Tanya's heart pounded in her chest as she slowly turned her gaze downward, inspecting her body. What she saw left her stunned and disoriented. Her once-powerful, hyper-muscular physique had vanished, replaced by a much more ordinary, slim frame. Her bulging biceps and chiselled abs were gone, replaced by a smooth and unremarkable silhouette. Her fingers trembled as she touched her now ordinary arms, disbelief washing over her. With a voice filled

with desperation, she turned back to Dr. Crawford and choked out, "What... what happened to my body?" The fear and confusion in her eyes were mirrored in her trembling voice as she searched for answers in the eyes of the doctor.

"We did what we had to, to keep you alive, Tanya." She paused, her expression reflecting the difficult decisions she had been forced to make. "The experimental pills you took had an unpredictable and dangerous effect on your body. They were altering your physiology in extreme ways, pushing your muscles to a breaking point. We had to intervene before it became irreversible."

Tanya's eyes welled up with tears as she nodded, her thoughts a turbulent whirlwind of regret and confusion. "So, what now? Can I... can I go back to the way I was?"

Dr. Crawford sighed, her gaze still filled with concern. "It's not that simple, Tanya. The damage was extensive, and we had to reverse the effects to save your life. We have a team of specialists working on rehabilitation and helping you adjust to your new reality. You will have to re-learn some things, like walking."

Tanya's world felt like it was crumbling around her as Dr. Crawford's words sank in. Tears streamed down Tanya's cheeks as she struggled to come to terms with the enormity of the situation. She whispered, her voice trembling, "I don't know if I can handle this. I was... I was so proud of my strength, my physique."

"A physique that was cheaply gained, Tanya. You weren't supposed to have it at all, remember? I understand, though. It's a difficult adjustment, and it won't be easy. Physical therapy, counselling, and our dedicated team will help you regain your strength, even if it won't be quite the same as before."

Tanya nodded. She knew she had to find a way to accept her new reality, but the fear of the unknown loomed large. "Can I at least see my mother?"

"Not right now. We think it's best you have some rest."

The door to the room suddenly swung open again, this time with a brisk and authoritative presence. Dr. Crawford's eyes widened in surprise, and a faint worry creased her brow as she saw Penny stride into the room. Her presence was unexpected and concerning.

Penny's entrance was marked by a cold, calculating gaze at Tanya that sent shivers down her spine. She felt an inexplicable sense of unease, as if Penny singled her out, targeting her.

Ignoring Tanya for the moment, Penny turned her full attention to Dr. Crawford. Her tone was brisk and authoritative as she addressed the doctor, "We need to talk. Now."

Dr. Crawford exchanged a brief, worried glance with Tanya before nodding to Penny. She gestured for Penny to follow her out of the room, leaving Tanya alone.

Dr. Crawford and Penny engaged in a hushed, intense discussion. Their voices were barely audible to Tanya. Dr Crawford's face wore a worried expression; her brows furrowed as she spoke urgently to Penny. Penny stood rigid, her icy demeanour contrasting with Crawford's distress.

As Penny's anger reached its boiling point, her voice rose in a deafening scream, filling the hallway. "This is all because of you! Our company is teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, and our reputation is destroyed! All because of you and those fucking pills!"

Penny's fury showed no signs of abating as she continued her rant, her eyes fixed firmly on Dr. Crawford. "As if getting one from Yeager wasn't bad enough, in the last few hours, we've gotten fresh lawsuits from Buffalo Bill's and the fucking Met, blaming me for the fuck-ups."

"Penny, this isn't your fault—"

"I KNOW IT ISN'T!" The sudden loudness of Penny's outburst caught the attention of nearby medical staff, who stopped their conversations midway and looked towards her. Penny caught sight of them and glared menacingly. She heaved a breath, calming herself before looking back at Crawford. "Instead, it's up to me to clean up your mess. Again."

Dr. Crawford tried to interrupt, but Penny cut her off sharply. "Don't give me any more excuses. Your work has cost us everything. I can't afford another scandal like this. You're fired."

Penny strode back into Tanya's room, her footsteps echoing against the sterile walls. Tanya looked up at her wide-eyed, sensing something different about the woman standing before her.

Tanya frowned, confused by the change in Penny's demeanour. "What happened between you and Doctor Crawford?"

Penny hesitated for a moment, then spoke curtly. "That is irrelevant."

“So what happens now?”

Penny narrowed her eyes at Tanya, her voice low and clipped. "You'll undergo intensive physical therapy sessions every day. But let me make something clear - this accident is entirely your fault. If you hadn't insisted on overdosing on those experimental drugs, none of this would have happened," Penny said, her words heavy with accusation.

Tanya flinched at Penny's harsh words.

“Personally...” Penny said. She gazed unflinchingly at Tanya's mangled and weak legs, which lay beneath the hospital sheets. Silence hung for a long moment, punctuated only by the steady hum of machines monitoring Tanya's vitals.

“...I hope it hurts.”