

# EFFORTLESS BEAUTY

by Paige Turner

Total Body  
Transformation:  
What Really Works

Find  
The Best Self: One  
Woman's Journey

The Workout  
Routine That Changed  
Everything

Before & After:  
You Won't Believe  
These Results

## 30 Days to a New You: Inside Results Fitness



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## **Part One**

Sam Lane hunched over his keyboard, squinting at the IT ticket that had been sitting in his queue for three days. The user's description was a masterpiece of technical illiteracy—something about their email "acting weird" and "not working right"—but Sam had long ago perfected the art of minimal effort troubleshooting.

"Have you tried turning it off and on again?" he typed, then immediately marked the ticket as resolved. Problem solved. If they whined about it later, he'd escalate to Level 2 and let some other sucker inherit the headache. The beauty of corporate hierarchy was that there was always someone else to blame.

Sam looked around his studio apartment where he worked from home, sprawled on the couch. The dingy living space reflected his life philosophy perfectly. Dirty dishes stacked in the sink because running the dishwasher required loading it properly—and who had time for Tetris with plates? Laundry piled on the chair because the laundromat was six blocks away, which was basically a marathon in city terms. Fast food containers

littered the coffee table because trash day meant actually taking the bag downstairs.



Sam wasn't lazy, he told himself. He was effort-minded. Why do something the hard way when shortcuts existed? That was just smart resource management.

His stomach rumbled, a sharp reminder that he'd skipped breakfast again. Opening his delivery app, Sam scrolled through the usual suspects: pizza, Chinese, burgers. All required actual decision-making, which felt like too much work at 11 AM on a Thursday. He settled on the same turkey sandwich he'd ordered yesterday, and the day before that. Consistency was a virtue, right?

The delivery notification chimed just as Dr. Patterson's voice echoed in his head: "Your sedentary lifestyle is literally killing you, Sam."

Last week's appointment had been a wake-up call he'd been successfully ignoring ever since. Sam caught his reflection in the medical building's polished elevator doors—a pale, doughy man whose 5'10" frame carried 215 pounds, at least fifty of it settled around his midsection like a monument to poor choices. His dark brown hair hung limp and uneven, perpetually in need of cutting, while his skin had the grayish pallor of someone whose primary light source was a computer monitor. Even his posture screamed defeat, shoulders rounded forward from years of hunching over keyboards and avoiding eye contact.

Dr. Patterson had rattled off the usual litany of unhealthy behaviors: sitting too much, eating too little, eating too much, not exercising, exercising wrong, breathing city air, drinking coffee, not drinking enough water. At this point, existing seemed to be a health hazard. But the good doctor had been surprisingly persistent for someone whose job was literally to tell people obvious things they already knew.

"I want you to promise me you'll at least try one gym visit this week," she'd said, fixing him with that stern look that reminded him uncomfortably of his third-grade teacher. "Just one. See how it feels."

"Sure, whatever," Sam had agreed, mostly to escape the medical guilt trip. "One visit."

Of course, "one visit" required finding a gym, researching membership options, comparing prices—basically a part-time job's worth of effort just to sweat in public. He'd been successfully avoiding the whole thing for six days when the universe decided to throw him a bone.

The mailbox key felt heavier than usual as Sam trudged downstairs that evening, already winded from the single flight of stairs. Clearly his cardiovascular system had embraced the work-from-home lifestyle a little too enthusiastically. His mailbox overflowed with the usual suspects—credit card offers promising to solve his financial problems by creating new ones, pizza coupons that knew his weaknesses too well, and notices from his landlord that he'd never read because ignorance was a valid legal defense, right?

But wedged between a furniture store flier ("Transform Your Space!") and his electric bill was something different.

The envelope looked vintage, cream-colored paper with elegant script addressing him by name. Inside, a glossy promotional flier featured a muscled Adonis flexing next to bold text: "Results Fitness FREE 30-Day Trial! Guaranteed to transform your fitness habits!"

Sam's eyes immediately zeroed in on the magic word: "FREE." No membership fees, no signup costs, no hidden charges that would mysteriously appear on his credit card. The fine print at the bottom was small and dense—probably legal gibberish about liability and the gym's right to harvest his organs if he defaulted on payments—but who read that anyway?

"No shortcuts to success—we'll make sure of it!" read another line. "Results VERY noticeable. Sign up for full membership at end of trial!"

The marketing copy felt aggressively optimistic, the kind of thing written by people who genuinely believed in the transformative power of sweating. But free was free, and technically, this counted as finding a gym, which meant he could fulfill his promise to Dr. Patterson without any actual research or effort. The universe had finally thrown him a bone that didn't require chewing.

Sam pocketed the vintage-looking membership card that had fallen out of the flier. Results Fitness was only three blocks away—closer than the laundromat he'd been avoiding for weeks.

### **Trial Period: Day 1**

On Friday afternoon, Sam stood in front of a gleaming fitness center that looked like it had been transplanted from an upscale neighborhood where people unironically used words like "wellness journey." Floor-to-ceiling windows revealed rows of pristine equipment and perfectly toned people moving with the kind of grace that suggested they'd never eaten a donut while standing over a kitchen sink at 2 AM. The intimidation factor hit him like a protein shake to the face.

The receptionist, a perky brunette with arms that could probably bench press Sam's entire body weight, looked up with the kind of professional enthusiasm that suggested either genuine love for fitness or really good antidepressants. "Welcome to Results Fitness! How can I help you?"

Sam slid the trial card across the counter like he was making a drug deal. "I got this in the mail. Someone's offering free gym time—figured there had to be a catch."

She picked up the card, frowning slightly. "Huh, that's weird. We didn't send out these trial cards." She turned it over, examining the elegant script and vintage design like an archaeologist. "Must be some promotion from corporate we didn't know about. They do weird marketing campaigns sometimes without telling us."

Sam's heart sank. Of course it was too good to be true. The universe had apparently decided his brief moment of good fortune was over.

"But hey," she continued, brightening like someone had adjusted her internal dimmer switch, "if you got it in the mail, we'll honor it."

Relief flooded through him. It was his lucky day after all. Either that, or this place was run by people who were too polite to tell him to get lost.

"I'm Jessica, by the way. I'll give you the grand tour!" She bounded around the counter with the kind of infectious energy that made Sam feel tired just watching. "Your thirty-day trial starts today," she said cheerfully, handing him a welcome packet. "Make sure to track your progress!"

"So what kind of workout experience are you looking for?"

Sam glanced through the windows at the weight room, where serious-looking men were moving massive plates of iron with grunts and grimaces that suggested they were either achieving spiritual enlightenment or having very expensive hernias. Sweat poured down their faces as they strained against the weights, their muscles bulging with obvious effort.

"Yeah, I'm not really the grunting-and-sweating type."

"Perfect! We have an amazing yoga class starting in ten minutes. Super gentle, great for flexibility and stress relief. Basically just stretching and mat work—much better than all that medieval torture stuff in the weight room."

Yoga. Sam knew nothing about yoga except that it involved stretching on mats and was supposedly very spiritual, which he assumed meant people felt superior about exercising while sitting down. People just lay around and breathed mindfully, right? It was like napping with extra steps. Perfect for someone whose most athletic achievement was carrying multiple grocery bags in one trip.

"Sure. Lying around on mats sounds about my speed." As he said it, a strange chill traced Sam's spine—brief but unmistakable.

Jessica led him through the facility, chattering about amenities and class schedules. The locker room was pristine, stocked with fluffy towels and expensive-looking toiletries. Sam changed into his old gym shorts and a faded t-shirt, feeling underdressed among the designer athletic wear surrounding him.

The yoga studio smelled like eucalyptus and possibility. About fifteen people were already arranged on colorful mats, most of them women in form-fitting leggings and crop tops that showed off their toned physiques. Sam grabbed a mat from the stack and found a spot in the back corner, hoping to blend into the background.

"Welcome, everyone, to Gentle Flow Yoga," announced the instructor, a willowy woman with silver hair pulled into a perfect bun. "Today we'll focus on opening our hips and finding our center."

Sam was pretty sure he already knew where his center was, and it was carrying more than its fair share of his body mass.

The class began simply enough. Basic breathing exercises, gentle neck rolls, easy seated stretches. Sam congratulated himself on choosing the smart option. While the meatheads next door were probably rupturing something, he was getting his exercise the intelligent way.

Then the real poses started.

"Let's move into downward-facing dog," the instructor called out. "Ground through your hands, lengthen through your spine."

Sam awkwardly copied the position, immediately feeling the stretch through his tight hamstrings and shoulders. Around him, the other students flowed into the pose with ease, their breathing steady and controlled.

"Beautiful! Now step your right foot forward into warrior one."

The transitions came faster now. Sam struggled to keep up, his muscles screaming with each new position. Sweat beaded on his forehead as he wobbled through poses with names like "twisted triangle" and "bird of paradise." This wasn't gentle at all—it was a full-body workout wearing a meditation costume.

But something strange was happening. Each time he wanted to give up, his body found the flexibility he needed. Tight hamstrings loosened just enough to attempt the next pose. Stiff shoulders opened to accommodate the stretches. By the end of class, he was moving with something approaching grace.

"Excellent work today, everyone," the instructor said as they settled into final relaxation. "I could see the transformation happening in real time."

Sam lay on his mat, breathing hard but oddly satisfied. His body felt different—looser, more aligned.

Walking to the locker room, he caught his reflection in the studio mirrors. Something was different, though he couldn't quite put his finger on what. His shoulders looked less hunched, his gait more fluid. Even his posture seemed to have improved without conscious effort. Must be good lighting and the endorphins.

"How was your first class?" Jessica asked as he signed out at the front desk.

"Well, 'gentle' was false advertising," Sam said. "But I survived."

"Perfect! See you next time. Oh, and you might want to grab some proper yoga clothes. Those shorts are going to ride up in some of the poses we do in intermediate class."

Intermediate class? Sam opened his mouth to clarify that he'd barely survived beginner class, but Jessica had already moved on to help another member.

### **Trial Period: Day 2**

After seeing so many benefits from Friday's yoga class, Sam decided he'd return on Saturday. Only one problem. Sam's old gym clothes, which had fit fine the day before, now felt uncomfortably loose and baggy. His t-shirt hung off him, and his shorts kept sliding down his hips no matter how tightly he tied the drawstring.

Standing in front of his bedroom mirror, he tried to figure out what had changed. He looked... different. Smaller somehow, though the scale showed he'd only lost two pounds. His posture was dramatically improved—instead of his usual slouch, he stood straight and balanced, shoulders back and head high. That had to be it. Better posture was making his clothes fit weird.

Results Fitness had a small retail section near the entrance, and Sam figured he could grab something quick before class.

"Looking for anything specific?" asked the sales associate, a fit woman in her thirties wearing exactly the kind of form-fitting activewear Sam had been admiring on the other yoga students.

"Something that won't make me look like I'm wearing a tent," Sam said, pulling at his oversized t-shirt.

She led him to a display of athletic wear and pulled a few items off the racks—fitted tank tops, stretchy shorts that looked almost like leggings. "Try these," she said, handing him an armful of clothes. "The dressing room is right over there."

In the tiny changing room, Sam struggled with the unfamiliar fits. The shorts were tighter than anything he'd ever worn, clinging to his legs like a second skin. The tank top was similarly fitted, showing off his newly improved posture.

He looked... good? Really good. The clothes somehow made him appear more athletic, more graceful.

"How's everything fitting?" the associate called out.

Sam opened the door hesitantly. The associate clapped her hands together with genuine enthusiasm.

"Oh wow, those are perfect! They really show off your natural lines. You have such a graceful build—yoga is going to be amazing for you."

"I'll take them," he said, pulling out his credit card before he could think too hard about the price.

That day's yoga class went even better than the first. Moving in the properly fitted clothes felt incredible—no bunching, no sliding, no distractions. Sam found himself attempting poses that had seemed impossible yesterday, his body bending and stretching with increasing ease.

"Excellent progress," the instructor commented as they moved through a challenging sequence. "You're really finding your flow."

After class, Sam luxuriated in the gym's shower facilities, which were far nicer than his apartment bathroom. The body wash provided—some expensive organic brand with eucalyptus and mint—left his skin feeling incredibly soft and clean. Much better than the cheap soap he used at home.

### **Trial Period: Day 4**

Working from home had been Sam's greatest achievement in professional laziness. For the past two years, he'd managed to convince his manager that remote IT support was more "efficient," which really meant he could handle tickets from his couch in his pajamas. No commute, no office politics, no need to maintain professional appearance beyond the shoulders up during video calls.

Sam had received an unwelcome weekend email: a major system upgrade required all IT staff to be physically present in the office for the rest of the month. Something about security protocols and hands-on troubleshooting that couldn't be done remotely.

Groaning as he read the instructions, Sam thought about how much harder this would make his life. He'd have to actually get dressed, drive to the office, and pretend to be a functional adult for eight hours a day.

Monday morning arrived too soon. Standing in his bathroom, Sam examined his reflection with growing dismay. Two years of working from home had left him looking decidedly unprofessional. His hair was shaggy and unkempt, his skin pale from lack of sunlight, and a scruffy beard covered his jaw—the result of months of minimal grooming standards.

He really should shave before going into the office. Make a good impression, show he could still clean up when necessary. Sam pulled out his razor and shaving cream, then stared at the implements with sudden exhaustion.

Shaving meant hot water, careful angles around his jawline, multiple passes to get everything smooth, cleanup afterward. It would take at least fifteen minutes of actual effort, and his beard had gotten pretty thick during his hermit phase.

He could probably get away with looking a little scruffy on his first day back. People would understand he was transitioning back to civilization. No big deal.

The moment Sam put his razor back in the drawer, that same cold sensation shot down his spine, lingering longer this time, almost electric in its intensity.

Sam put the razor back in the drawer and headed for the shower instead.

The day at the office was exactly as awkward as expected. Sam's coworkers made pointed comments about his scruffy appearance, and his manager shot him disapproving looks during meetings. But he survived his first day back in civilization, and tomorrow he'd make more of an effort.

Except Tuesday morning, the bathroom mirror revealed something that left Sam staring at his reflection in complete bewilderment.

His face was perfectly smooth. Not just clean-shaven smooth—baby smooth, like he'd never grown facial hair in his life. The thick, scruffy beard that had covered his jaw yesterday was simply gone, leaving skin that felt impossibly soft and refined.

Sam ran his hands frantically over his arms and legs, finding the same silky smoothness everywhere. The coarse hair that had covered his body since puberty had fallen out overnight.

"What the hell?" he whispered, touching his hairless face in the mirror.

Maybe that fancy body wash from the gym had some kind of powerful exfoliating properties? Sam had noticed the ingredients list was full of exotic botanicals he'd never heard of. Some of those organic compounds could probably strip paint, not to mention body hair.

That had to be it. The body wash had somehow caused his facial and body hair to fall out. Some kind of chemical reaction. Weird, but not impossible with all the synthetic compounds they put in beauty products these days.

It never occurred to Sam that there were no hairs in his bed, his shower, or anywhere else that it might've fallen out. His hair was just... gone.

At least his skin looked incredible. Clearer and more radiant than it had in years, with an almost luminous quality that made

him appear significantly younger. Whatever was in that body wash, it was working miracles for his complexion.

Sam got dressed and headed to the office, expecting his colleagues to notice his dramatic grooming improvement. Surely someone would comment on how much better he looked without the scruffy beard.

But nobody said anything. Not a single person mentioned his transformation from yesterday's disheveled mess to today's clean-shaven professional. It was like they'd completely forgotten what he'd looked like before.

By lunchtime, Sam's frustration had reached a breaking point. He cornered Bob from the neighboring cubicle by the coffee machine.

"Hey Bob, do I look better without the beard?"

Bob looked confused. "What?"

"The beard I had yesterday. You remember, Tom made fun of me for looking scruffy and unprofessional?"

"Sorry Sam, I don't recall. You always look pretty clean-cut to me."

Sam stared at him. "Are you kidding me? Yesterday everyone was giving me grief about looking like a vagrant."

Bob shrugged. "I dunno, man. Maybe I wasn't there."

The conversation left Sam feeling unsettled and strangely alone. Had his appearance really been that forgettable?

### **Trial Period: Day 6**

Sam had settled into a routine that felt almost too good to be true. Wake up naturally at 6:30 AM feeling refreshed, throw on his new form-fitting yoga clothes, walk three blocks to Results Fitness, flow through an hour of increasingly challenging poses that were supposedly just "lying around," shower with that

amazing organic body wash, and head to work feeling like he'd accidentally stumbled into someone else's more successful life.

Life was easy. The only problem was food.

Standing in his kitchen that evening, Sam opened the refrigerator to find it completely empty except for a moldy takeout container and some expired milk. His stomach rumbled impatiently, but the thought of greasy delivery food made him vaguely nauseous. His body had been craving lighter, cleaner fuel lately.

But grocery shopping meant making a list, driving to the store, wandering aisles full of people who moved like they were underwater, waiting in line behind someone who'd inevitably want to pay by check. An entire afternoon of his life he'd never get back, all so he could have the privilege of preparing food himself like some kind of domestic pioneer.

Sam pulled out his phone and opened Instacart instead. Why venture into the fluorescent-lit hellscape of public grocery shopping when some entrepreneurial soul could do the legwork for minimum wage plus tips?

He started building a cart with healthy options: fresh vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains. But as the list grew longer, a familiar sense of dread crept in. Fresh vegetables would require washing and chopping, lean proteins needed actual cooking, and whole grains... nobody actually ate whole grains, right? Meal planning, timing multiple dishes, cleaning up afterward—it was like signing up for unpaid overtime in his own home.

As he scrolled through the app, something caught his eye: smoothie mixes. Pre-portioned frozen fruit blends that just needed liquid and protein powder. No chopping, no cooking, no cleanup beyond rinsing a blender. Smoothies were basically

liquid meals, right? It was food for people who'd evolved beyond the primitive need to chew.

Sam deleted everything else from his cart and loaded up on smoothie supplies instead. Frozen fruit blends, protein powders, almond milk, superfood add-ins that promised to boost energy and probably cure existential dread. One-stop shopping for the easiest possible nutrition plan.

As he hit "checkout," a strange sensation ran down his spine—like a cold finger tracing his vertebrae. Weird. Maybe he was coming down with something? Good thing he was about to start a health kick with all these vitamin-packed smoothies.

The first smoothie was a revelation. Banana, frozen berries, protein powder, and almond milk—it took three minutes to make and tasted like a milkshake had gone to graduate school. Better yet, it kept him satisfied for hours.

"Very health-conscious," said Maria from accounting when she spotted him sipping the purple concoction at his desk, though she said it with the tone of someone observing an exotic zoo animal. "That's so... dedicated of you."

Sam grinned. This was definitely the smart way to approach nutrition. Why hadn't anyone told him that eating could be this simple and efficient? All those years of dealing with solid food like some kind of caveman.

What started as convenient meal replacement that day rapidly became an unstoppable compulsion that rewired his relationship with food entirely. Smoothies multiplied into protein shakes between meals—thick, chocolatey concoctions that satisfied cravings he didn't remember having. Smart water with electrolyte enhancers replaced tap water. His coffee became a production involving collagen peptides and MCT oil that promised cellular optimization. Even his evening routine included recovery drinks with amino acids and sleep-promoting

compounds. His refrigerator resembled a supplement store, packed with powders and liquids promising transformations he'd never cared about before.

### **Trial Period: Day 12**

The transformation brought on by Sam's radical diet and everyday yoga practice was undeniable and medically impossible. He had lost thirty pounds in under a week—a rate that should have triggered hospitalization, or at least caused Sam to question what was happening to his body.

But hadn't he read about people losing dramatic weight on liquid diets? And yoga was supposed to boost metabolism, right? Plus, he'd been carrying around extra weight for years; maybe his body was just catching up to where it should have been all along. It felt like his system was finally operating according to some hidden blueprint.

"You're looking fantastic," Jessica commented as he signed in for his morning yoga class, though she said it with the same enthusiastic tone she probably used to compliment everyone from elite athletes to people who'd successfully located the front door. "Whatever you're doing is really working."

Sam glanced at his reflection in the lobby mirrors. She was right—he looked incredible. His skin had taken on a luminous quality that made him appear years younger.

"Just eating better," he said, though "eating" might not be the right word for consuming three smoothies a day. "Amazing what happens when you actually fuel your body properly."

"That's so great! I love seeing members discover their wellness journey," Jessica replied with the kind of generic enthusiasm that suggested she'd had this exact conversation seventeen times already that morning.

Sam mentioned his dramatic weight loss, expecting some acknowledgment of his transformation, but Jessica just nodded with the same vacant smile. "Oh, that's wonderful! We always encourage our members to focus on how they feel rather than the numbers." It was clear she had no idea what he'd looked like before—just spouting the kind of motivational pablum they probably taught in gym employee training.

### **Trial Period: Day 13**

The IT system upgrade had created a nightmare scenario that was seriously threatening Sam's well-perfected work-life balance. What used to be a manageable trickle of user complaints had become a raging torrent of technological incompetence. His queue overflowed with tickets from people who apparently thought computers were powered by magic and operated through prayer.

Sam stared at the growing list of problems—email servers throwing tantrums, printers achieving consciousness just long enough to rebel against their human overlords, and users who'd somehow managed to break software in ways that defied the laws of physics. Normally he could pace himself through maybe five tickets a day, taking long breaks between each one to maintain his sanity. But this deluge of digital disasters would require actual sustained effort.

There had to be an easier way to handle this technological apocalypse.

A quick internet search led him to TechHelper Pro, an AI chatbot service that promised that for just \$99 a month, he could set up an AI assistant to handle all his IT tickets automatically. No more user hand-holding, no more pretending to care about other people's computer problems. Let the AI do everything while he

took credit and finally got back to more important things like watching TikTok.

The setup process was surprisingly simple for something that would essentially automate his entire job. The AI needed a voice personality to interact with users, and the options ranged from "Professional Male" to "Friendly Female" to "Enthusiastic Young Adult." Sam scrolled through the samples, listening to different vocal styles that would soon be doing his work for him.

The "Friendly Female" option seemed better than most. The voice was warm, supportive, and naturally encouraging—it would keep users happy while the AI solved their problems without any effort from Sam. It had a slightly musical quality like a kindergarten teacher, that made even technical explanations sound pleasant and approachable.

"Hi there! I'm here to help you solve your tech problems," the sample played. "Let's work together to get everything running smoothly!"

Perfect. Sam configured the system to handle all incoming tickets, selected "Friendly Female," and engaged the system. A shiver ran down his spine, sharp and intense like an electric jolt.

Within an hour, TechHelper Pro was doing his entire job while he monitored reddit.

The next day, he awoke with a terrible case of laryngitis. Sam texted his manager about working from home and spent the day creating elaborate 'immune defense smoothies' packed with ginger, turmeric, and enough vitamin C to power a small aircraft. His voice didn't return all day.

### **Trial Period: Day 15**

Sam woke the next morning feeling better, but when he arrived at work and greeted the company's receptionist, his own

voice came out higher and more melodic than expected. Sam froze for a moment, startled by the sound. But if the receptionist noticed, her expression didn't show it—in fact, her response was warmer and more deferential than Sam was used to.

Throughout the day, colleagues treated his voice as completely normal. The melodic register that had replaced his deeper tones drew no comments, no questions, no acknowledgment that anything had changed. When he consciously tried to lower his pitch during meetings, people looked confused, like he was forcing an unnatural tone.

By lunch, Sam wondered if it was psychological or if his cold had messed with his hearing somehow—maybe stress and congestion were making him imagine vocal changes that didn't exist.

Walking home from work, curiosity finally got the better of him. Sam pulled out his phone and recorded a voice note: "Hey, it's me, just testing something."

When he played it back, his blood ran cold.

The voice that came through the speaker wasn't his own. It was the AI chatbot's "Friendly Female" setting, down to the subtle speech patterns that made everything sound like a helpful suggestion rather than a direct statement.

Sam stopped on the sidewalk, staring at his phone. That couldn't be right. He must still be congested from his cold—maybe his hearing was off, or the phone's speaker was distorting the playback somehow. He recorded another message: "Testing, one two three."

The same melodic, feminine voice played back. Sam's stomach lurched. Voices didn't just change overnight. There had to be a logical explanation—lingering effects from the laryngitis, maybe, or some kind of vocal cord inflammation that was making him sound different temporarily.

By the time he reached his apartment, Sam had almost convinced himself it was a medical issue he could address with Dr. Patterson next week. Probably just needed antibiotics or something. But before Sam could think any more about it, a crisis erupted that demanded his immediate attention.

Working from the office again had seriously disrupted Sam's chaos equilibrium. When he'd been remote, he could at least manage things by strategically ignoring them in shifts. But now, forced to leave his apartment for eight hours a day like some kind of functional adult, everything had spiraled completely out of control.

When Sam opened his apartment door that evening, he immediately triggered what could only be described as a catastrophic failure of his domestic neglect system. His movement disturbed the precarious tower of dirty laundry he'd been building in the entryway—a feat of engineering that had been weeks in the making. The textile tower toppled sideways, colliding with the mountain of takeout containers and pizza boxes he'd been meaning to throw away since the Clinton administration.

The collision created a domino effect that would have been hilarious if it weren't so horrifying to witness firsthand. Clothes cascaded across the floor like a fabric waterfall, carrying with them an avalanche of trash that spread throughout his apartment like some kind of slovenly tsunami. Empty smoothie containers rolled under furniture with the determination of tiny purple tumbleweeds, dirty socks achieved flight and landed in his kitchen sink, and a pair of underwear somehow ended up hanging from his ceiling fan like a surrender flag in the war against basic hygiene.

Sam stood in his doorway, surveying the catastrophe, and felt overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of effort that would be

required to fix this disaster. Sorting clothes from trash would take hours of careful archaeology. Hauling bags to the dumpster would require multiple trips and actual physical labor. Doing laundry meant sorting, washing, drying, folding....

Or he could let someone else handle this domestic apocalypse.

It turned out that modern capitalism had evolved to solve exactly this kind of problem. There were cleaning companies that offered same-day service for people who'd given up on the concept of housework, and wash-and-fold services that would handle the entire laundry process from pickup to perfectly folded return. Even better, he found a company that offered combined services for people who were too overwhelmed—or too lazy—to sort trash from clothes themselves.

Sam booked the combined service for Saturday morning, scheduling them to arrive early so they could sort, clean, and organize his entire life while he got out of their way. Let the professionals handle this disaster while he enjoyed being a normal person who didn't live in a domestic war zone.

As he confirmed the appointment, that familiar cold sensation ran down his spine—sharper this time, almost electric.

### **Trial Period: Day 16**

Saturday morning, Sam prepared to escape his apartment before the cleaning crew arrived to witness the full scope of his domestic failures. He pulled on one of the athleisure outfits that had become his typical non-work wear and caught sight of himself in the bathroom mirror.

His dark brown hair had gotten completely out of control during his work-from-home era. What used to be a manageable short cut had grown shaggy and uneven, hanging in his eyes and

curling around his ears in ways that made him look like he was auditioning for a grunge revival band. He really should get a haircut while he was out—there was probably a walk-in place nearby that could restore some semblance of professional appearance.

But that would involve finding a barbershop, waiting around with strangers making small talk, explaining what he wanted to someone who'd inevitably have opinions about his hair choices, then paying money for the privilege of sitting still while someone attacked his scalp with sharp objects. Much easier to just throw on a baseball cap and deal with the hair situation when he felt more motivated.

Sam grabbed his old Yankees cap from the closet and pulled it down over the messy tangle, stuffing the longer strands underneath. Problem solved with minimum effort.

As the hat settled into place, another cold sensation shot down his spine—stronger than before, lingering for several seconds like his nervous system was trying to tell him something important. These chills were getting frequent enough that they were beginning to concern him a little. Combined with the voice thing that was still bothering him every time he spoke, Sam thought that maybe a checkup with Dr. Patterson was a good idea. But he'd get to that on Monday.

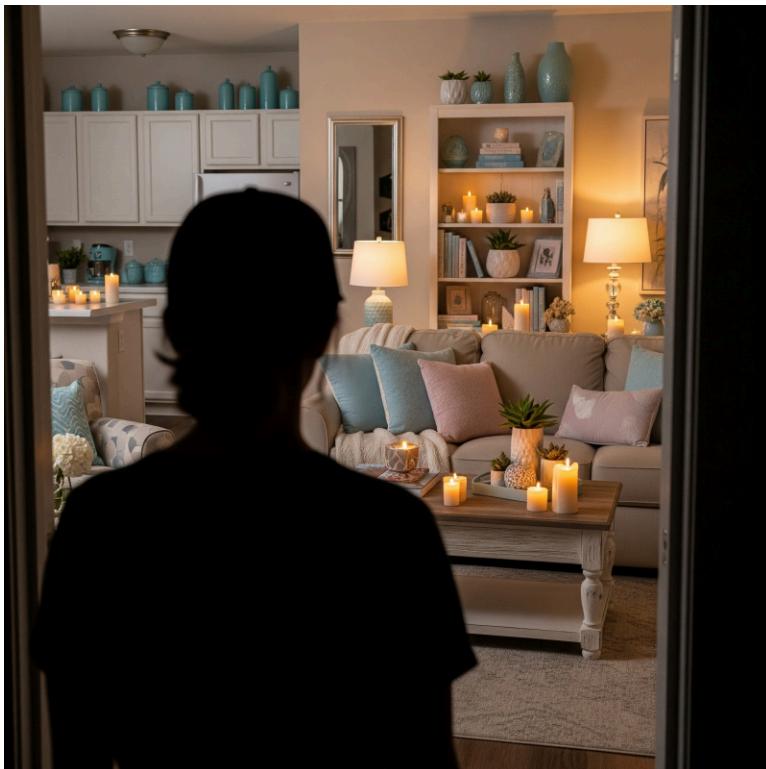
Sam spent the day wandering around the city, killing time until the cleaning crew finished transforming his disaster zone back into something resembling human habitation. He grabbed lunch at a juice bar that catered to people who'd evolved beyond solid food, browsed through a bookstore filled with self-help guides he'd never read, even caught a matinee movie about people whose biggest problems involved explosions and attractive co-stars.

Getting out really did help get his mind off his voice—not least because nobody even seemed to think that he sounded weird when he ordered food or bought his movie ticket. Maybe it really was all in his head.

By the time he climbed the stairs to his apartment that evening, Sam was genuinely curious to see what the professional cleaning service had accomplished. He'd left them with a genuine catastrophe—surely even people trained in domestic disaster recovery would have their limits.

He slipped his key into the lock and opened his door, then stopped dead in his tracks.

His apartment had been completely transformed into something straight out of an influencer's Instagram feed.



Gone was the bachelor pad disaster zone he'd abandoned that morning. In its place was something that looked like it had been designed by someone who unironically used words like "curated lifestyle." Soft throw pillows in pastel colors adorned a spotless couch that was decidedly not the generic futon he remembered owning. Candles flickered on every surface, filling the air with lavender and vanilla—scents that suggested someone had strong opinions about aromatherapy.

The changes went far beyond what any reasonable cleaning service should have accomplished. His old coffee table had been replaced with an elegant piece in distressed white wood. His bookshelf now held carefully arranged volumes about mindfulness and interior design, interspersed with succulents in ceramic planters. Even his kitchen had been outfitted with matching accessories in soft blues and whites, creating a cohesive aesthetic that spoke of actual planning rather than whatever happened to be on sale at Target.

Sam wandered through the transformed space in a daze, trying to reconcile this sophisticated living environment with his memories of the disaster zone he'd called home for years. His bathroom now featured expensive skincare products arranged like a boutique display, luxurious towels that probably cost more than his monthly grocery budget, and a collection of bath salts and essential oils that suggested someone took self-care very seriously.

What kind of cleaning service replaced someone's entire furniture collection? Did they think his old stuff was too gross to salvage? How did they even get all this stuff in here in eight hours?

The real shock came when he opened his closet.

Hanging inside were multiple dry cleaning bags containing a wardrobe he definitely didn't remember owning. Sam opened the

first bag and pulled out what should have been his favorite hoodie—a faded gray Princeton sweatshirt he'd worn since college, complete with mysterious stains that told the story of every lazy meal he'd eaten in the past five years.

Instead, he held a soft pullover sweater in pale lavender, made from cashmere that felt like a cloud against his fingers. The cut was relaxed but feminine, with gathered sleeves that tapered to delicate cuffs and a cowl neck that draped elegantly. The entire garment seemed to glow softly in the bedroom lighting, transforming his most casual comfort piece into something unmistakably feminine yet still cozy enough to live in.

The second bag contained what should have been his work khakis, now somehow transformed into fitted slacks in a soft dove gray that would showcase his newly slender frame. The fabric felt like silk against his fingers, with subtle tailoring details that spoke of expensive alterations by someone who understood the difference between "clothes" and "wardrobe."

His old button-down shirts had become flowing blouses in pastels and cream tones, with details like gathered sleeves and subtle lace trim that added feminine sophistication he'd never aspired to achieve. Even his basic t-shirts had been replaced—soft, fitted tops in flattering cuts that would emphasize his narrow waist and refined shoulder line rather than hiding his body under shapeless cotton tents. His baggy jeans had transformed into skinny styles in dark washes that would highlight every inch of his body.

And then there were the pieces that bore no resemblance to anything in his prior wardrobe. A collection of skirts in A-line cuts and flowing fabrics, each designed to create elegant movement around his increasingly narrow waist. Summer dresses in pastels and florals with cap sleeves and empire waists that would flatter his developing feminine silhouette.

Sam tore through the remaining bags with growing amazement and horror. His athletic wear had evolved into coordinated sets in soft colors, while his shoes had become an array of feminine footwear—delicate sneakers, ballet flats, and ankle boots with modest heels, all in coordinating pastels.

But the most shocking discovery came when he opened his underwear drawer. Gone were the basic cotton boxer shorts he'd been buying in bulk from warehouse stores since college. In their place were delicate pieces that belonged in a completely different category of clothing altogether. Silk and lace panties in pastel colors, with cuts and styles that were unmistakably designed for female bodies. Some were boyshorts that might have been gender-neutral if you squinted, but others were clearly bikini-style panties with lace trim and decorative details that left no doubt about their intended audience.

And nestled among the panties were several bras. Soft, wireless styles in coordinating colors, with delicate lace and seamless construction that suggested they were meant to be worn rather than just stored as evidence of someone's confused shopping experience.

Sam stood in his transformed bedroom wearing the only clothes he recognized—his yoga outfit from Results he'd put on that morning. He scanned the piles of freshly-laundered clothing that had once been his but now belonged to someone with completely different fashion sensibilities and apparently different anatomy. The person these clothes were designed for lived in a carefully curated space filled with soft colors and expensive accessories, someone who took bubble baths and owned more than one pillow.

Before he could process the full implications of his domestic transformation, he caught sight of himself in the full-length mirror that definitely hadn't been there this morning.

His yoga clothes, which were skin tight just days ago, now hung loose on his shrinking frame. Sam had been aware his weight loss was continuing—his work clothes getting baggier each day, his belt requiring new holes—but it wasn't until he saw himself in this mirror that the full magnitude hit him. He'd dropped another twenty-five pounds since Day 12, bringing him to a shocking 160. At 5'10", he was now genuinely lean, his body showing the kind of definition he'd never possessed.

Fifty-five pounds in less than two weeks. That wasn't just medically inadvisable—it was flat-out impossible. People didn't lose weight that fast without being hospitalized. Yet here he was, looking like he'd been digitally edited.

As Sam stared at his transformed reflection, trying to process how his body had seemingly defied the laws of physics, he noticed something else was off.

Something was wrong with the fit of his baseball cap. Instead of lying flat against his scalp, the hat was perched higher than it should have been, like there was more volume underneath. He could see tendrils of something trying to escape from underneath, like spun gold trying to escape imprisonment, each strand catching the light.

Sam reached up and pulled off his Yankees cap, and a cascade of honey-blonde hair tumbled down past his shoulders, catching the light as it fell in perfect waves that had clearly been professionally styled. The color was rich and multidimensional, with highlights that created depth and movement throughout the breathtaking silky mass. The cut framed his face perfectly, making even his masculine facial features appear refined.

His original dark brown hair—the unremarkable shade he'd inherited from his father and never thought about beyond basic maintenance—had been completely replaced by this golden masterpiece that belonged on someone who spent serious money

on salon visits and probably had strong opinions about hair care products.



Sam stood there holding his baseball cap, staring at his reflection, and finally understood that something was happening to him that had absolutely nothing to do with yoga, smoothies, or fancy body wash from upscale gyms.

Sam needed to figure out what was happening to him, and he needed answers fast. If he could get those answers without putting in a lot of work, that would be even better.

~2~

## Part Two

Sam's evening was going about as well as you'd expect for someone who'd been unwittingly cast on "Extreme Makeover: Supernatural Curse Edition." Every mirror reflected a stranger—someone with professionally styled waves that caught light like spun gold, wearing clothes that belonged in someone else's closet. The long tresses felt impossibly heavy against his neck and shoulders, swayed distractingly whenever he moved, and kept brushing against his arms in ways that made him constantly aware of their presence.

Sam spent the evening pacing his transformed apartment, running his fingers through hair that shouldn't exist, touching furniture he'd never bought, opening drawers full of lingerie he'd certainly never ordered. The person who lived here had taste, style, and apparently a serious commitment to coordinated interior design. None of which described the Sam who'd left this morning.

By the time he collapsed into the impossibly soft bed—when had he owned satin sheets?—Sam felt a mixture of exhaustion and determination. Tomorrow he'd start fighting back. Whatever

strange nonsense was rewriting his life, it was about to meet someone who refused to go down without a fight.

### **Trial Period: Day 17**

Sam woke up Sunday morning, furious at the universe. Whatever was happening to him—curse, mental breakdown, elaborate prank—he was done being a passive victim. Time to figure out how to fix this mess, preferably with a minimum of effort.

First, he needed to buy proper clothes for Monday's return to the office. Target was close and had everything in one place. Why waste time comparison shopping when he just needed basic masculine clothes that would convince his coworkers he hadn't completely lost his mind?

Sam speed-walked through the men's section, grabbing whatever looked roughly right in approximately his size. A few pairs of khakis that seemed fine, some button-down shirts that would do the job. He wasn't going to stand there analyzing fabric quality like some kind of fashion consultant. He grabbed a six-pack of boxers and, out of spite, a necktie he didn't even know how to tie properly.

Sam pocketed the receipt and headed home, satisfied that he'd taken a concrete step toward normalcy.

Next problem: this impossible hair. Sam pulled out his beard trimmer from the bathroom cabinet and set it to the shortest setting. Why pay some chatty barber to fix what a ten-dollar appliance could handle? Whatever cosmic force was messing with him was about to succumb to simple home grooming equipment.

He worked systematically, watching honey-blonde waves fall to the white bathroom tiles in increasingly satisfying chunks. The trimmer hummed against his scalp, reducing what should have

taken months to grow to stubble in methodical passes. When he finished, Sam saw exactly what he'd hoped for—a man with brutally short hair and a jaw that suggested he settled disputes through direct action rather than passive acceptance of magical makeovers.

Sam swept up the hair and flushed it down the toilet, feeling victorious for the first time in days. Two small steps toward reclaiming his life. Tomorrow he'd go to work looking like himself again, wearing normal clothes, and start the process of returning to sanity.

### **Trial Period: Day 18**

Monday morning brought immediate confirmation that his victories had already become defeats.

Sam woke to find honey-blonde hair fanned across his pillow like spun gold, every strand that had hit the bathroom floor apparently regenerated overnight. He touched his head in disbelief—the hair was exactly as long and perfectly styled as it had been before his trimming session, as if his hair had reappeared and visited the salon while he slept.

With growing dread, Sam opened the shopping bags from Target.

The khakis had become flowing palazzo pants in a soft sage green. The button-down shirts were now delicate cardigans in pastel blues and pinks, with pearl buttons and three-quarter sleeves. Sam held up the necktie he'd bought out of spite and watched it unravel into a delicate silk scarf in pale lavender, the fabric so fine it seemed to shimmer in the morning light.



Sam pulled out the receipt, hoping for some explanation. But the paper now clearly showed "Women's Palazzo Pants - Size 8" and "Ladies' Cardigan - Medium" in Target's standard formatting. The evidence was right there in black and white: physical reality had shifted around him like he was living in some bureaucratic fever dream.

He had no choice. Sam had to venture into public wearing the women's clothes that had replaced his entire wardrobe. He stood in front of his closet, surveying options that ranged from "obviously feminine" to "aggressively feminine," searching for something that might let him blend into professional society without triggering whatever mechanism kept transforming his life.

Sam selected the most conservative options he could find: navy women's slacks that fit his slender frame precisely, and a cream-colored blouse that felt foreign against his impossibly smooth skin. The women's boyshort panties were the least feminine underwear option available, though wearing them felt like participating in his own identity theft.

Looking in the mirror, Sam barely recognized the person staring back. His honey-blonde hair fell in perfectly styled waves that seemed professionally maintained, framing masculine features that looked increasingly out of place above this carefully coordinated outfit. The women's clothes fit but hung awkwardly on his frame, creating the appearance of someone playing dress-up in their sister's office clothes.

At work, Bob from the neighboring cubicle offered his usual Monday morning greeting without acknowledging that Sam was wearing women's slacks and a blouse to their corporate office.

"Looking good today, Sam," Bob said casually, as if professionally styled blonde hair and women's clothing were perfectly normal choices for the guy who'd spent three years wearing the same rotation of discount khakis and wrinkled button-downs.

When Sam tried to gauge reactions by mentioning his "new look," people responded with vague politeness usually reserved for people who were fishing for compliments. Maria from accounting earnestly complimented his "nice outfit," showing no awareness that his wardrobe had been completely replaced with women's clothing.

Their non-reactions proved what Sam had been suspecting since his voice changed. Reality was somehow adjusting around him with each transformation, rewriting everyone's memories so that he was the only person who noticed his life being turned

inside out. The world was gaslighting him on a fundamental level, almost impressive in its thoroughness.

Sam spent the morning researching his situation like someone cramming for finals. During his lunch break he scoured the internet for any mention of magical gym memberships, transformation curses, or reality-altering fitness programs. The searches yielded nothing useful—just fitness marketing websites, transformation success stories featuring normal before-and-after photos, and forum discussions about people who claimed their gym experiences had "changed their lives" in disappointingly metaphorical ways.

He tried searching for other Results Fitness locations, hoping to find reviews or testimonials that might hint at unusual side effects. The company had a professional website featuring generic fitness stock photos and testimonials that praised their "life-changing" programs without specifying exactly what kinds of changes their clients had experienced. Nothing suggested forced gender transition was part of their standard service package.

Sam even considered calling other gym members to ask about their experiences, but he had no way to contact them and wasn't sure how to phrase questions about reality-altering side effects without sounding like someone who needed a therapist.

The research left him feeling more isolated and confused than before. Either he was experiencing something completely unprecedented, or the curse was sophisticated enough to cover its tracks in ways that left no digital footprint. Apparently even curses had learned the importance of good data hygiene.

That evening brought Sam's monthly book club meeting. He loathed the idea of attending as he currently looked, but didn't want to miss that night's discussion. The Sci-Fi Society had been working through classic literature for over a year, and this

month's selection was "Dune"—a doorstop of a novel that would require hours of sustained reading effort.

Sam stared at the thick paperback on his coffee table, calculating the hours of his life Frank Herbert expected him to sacrifice to desert politics and sandworm ecology. Reading 800 pages of notoriously dense prose would have taken weeks of focused attention, effort that he had kept putting off until it was too late. Why slog through endless descriptions of desert politics when the internet existed to solve exactly this problem?

Sam opened his laptop and navigated to Wikipedia, which had an excellent plot summary that covered all the major points in about ten minutes of efficient reading. Same information, fraction of the time investment, and no risk of getting bogged down in Herbert's legendary commitment to world-building over narrative pacing. Spice, sandworms, political intrigue, messianic themes—all the key elements efficiently absorbed without having to slog through hundreds of pages of exposition about desert ecology. Modern problems, modern solutions.

As he closed the laptop, another cold sensation shot down his spine.

Sam froze, suddenly focused on the weird spinal shivers he'd been ignoring for weeks. The sensation wasn't random. It had happened first when he'd chosen yoga over the intimidating weight room. Then when he'd decided on smoothies instead of learning to cook. When he'd set up the AI to handle his job. When he'd skipped shaving. When he'd hired services to handle his domestic disaster. When he'd grabbed the baseball cap instead of getting a haircut.

Every single time, he'd taken the easy way out of something. Every single time, he'd chosen convenience over effort. And every single time, he'd felt that cold sensation immediately afterward.

That couldn't be a coincidence. The chill was definitely connected to his shortcuts, though he still had no idea what that connection meant or why anyone would care about his lifestyle choices enough to point them out to him through mysterious spinal signals.

Finally figuring it out gave him hope, even if the solution was going to be a massive pain in the ass. If the transformations were triggered by lazy choices, then he'd have to start doing everything the hard way.

Thinking about it more, he realized the changes had started when he'd joined Results Fitness. He needed to quit the gym, then figure out ways to reverse the accumulated damage. Until he could get to the gym tomorrow morning and quit, he'd do everything the hard way, even if it killed him.

But first, he had to go talk about "Dune" for three hours.

Sam arrived at the community center for the book club meeting wearing his attempt at damage control—dark jeans and a simple sweater that he'd hoped would read as casually masculine. His honey-blonde hair was pulled back in a simple ponytail, though tendrils still framed his masculine face in ways that softened his appearance despite his best efforts to look like someone who belonged in a sci-fi discussion.

When he reached the familiar meeting room, Sam found himself facing a completely different group of people.

Instead of the middle-aged men who loved debating Frank Herbert's worldbuilding more seriously than most people took their actual jobs, he stared at a diverse group of women in their twenties and thirties, all holding copies of what appeared to be a romance novel. The cover featured individuals whose anatomical proportions suggested significant creative input from the art department.

"Sam! So glad you could make it," said a woman with red hair who appeared to be the group's leader. "We're just getting started on 'The Duke's Forbidden Desire.' Did you finish it?"

Sam stared at the romance novel in her hands, featuring a shirtless muscular man embracing a woman whose dress was strategically defying both gravity and historical accuracy. This was definitely not "Dune," unless Frank Herbert had written a very different sequel than anyone remembered.

"I think there's been some mistake," Sam said slowly. "I'm looking for the Science Fiction Society meeting?"

The women exchanged glances with patient smiles usually reserved for people who were clearly having some kind of minor public episode.

"Honey, this is the Romance Book Club," another woman with kind eyes volunteered. "You've been joining us here every month since last spring. Maybe you got your book clubs mixed up? The sci-fi group meets next week, doesn't it?"

Sam looked around the meeting room where his sci-fi group had gathered religiously for over a year. Same location, same terrible coffee from the vending machine, completely different people discussing completely different books.

He looked down at his hands, where his unopened copy of "Dune" had been replaced by a well-loved paperback of "The Duke's Forbidden Desire." Reality had been quietly rewritten while he wasn't paying attention.

"I got my reading schedule mixed up," Sam admitted, still processing the impossibility of the situation.

"Oh, that's totally fine!" said the redhead. "Most of us are here to drink wine anyway. Have a seat."

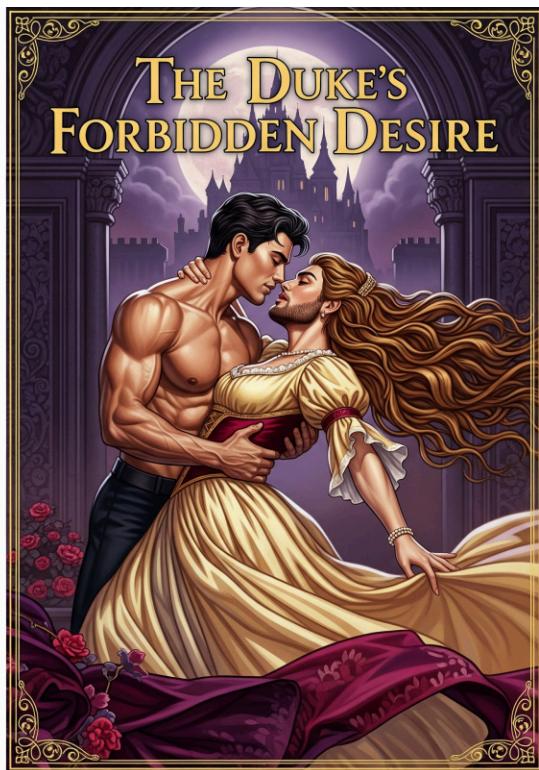
Before Sam could figure out how to excuse himself from this parallel universe, he found himself joining their circle.

"So what did everyone think of Chapter Twelve?" asked the group leader, looking around the room. "That scene where Maximilian finally admits his feelings to Seraphina?"

The discussion that followed was unlike anything Sam had ever experienced. The women talked about the characters—Maximilian Steele, Seraphina Ravencrest, Damien Blackthorne—with genuine enthusiasm, analyzing their relationship dynamics and character development.

But when they moved into discussing the book's steamier scenes, something began happening inside Sam's head that he was completely unprepared to process. When the women described Maximilian's passionate declarations of love, Sam pictured the character clearly—the strong jaw, the intense eyes, the way his impossibly perfect chest glistened in the moonlight. When they talked about Seraphina's reaction to his touch, Sam felt a flutter of anticipation, imagining what it would feel like to be desired that intensely by someone so commanding and masculine.

The arousal caught him completely off guard. Physical attraction coursed through his body as he listened to descriptions of Maximilian's gentle but firm touch. Separately, romantic longing bloomed in his chest—he wanted to be swept off his feet by someone strong and confident. He wanted to feel delicate and cherished in the arms of a man who would protect him and make him feel beautiful.



These weren't his thoughts. These weren't his desires. Sam had never been attracted to men, had never fantasized about being the pursued rather than the pursuer, had certainly never imagined himself as the delicate partner in a romance novel scenario.

But sitting in that circle, listening to detailed discussions of masculine desire and feminine surrender, he couldn't deny the heat spreading through his body or the way his breath quickened when they described Maximilian's touch.

Everything clicked into place. The chill he felt after reading the Wikipedia entry. The shortcut he had taken instead of reading "Dune" for his book club. It had changed the book club itself. But worse, it had changed his sexual orientation to make him

receptive to the romance novel the book club was studying, rewiring his brain to desire things he'd never wanted before. The transformations were moving beyond the physical—now rewriting who he was at the most basic level.

Sam excused himself from the book club with a vague excuse about feeling unwell, which wasn't entirely untrue considering he'd just discovered that his brain was being renovated without his permission. He needed to get home and figure out how to stop whatever was happening to him before he lost any more of himself to this unreal process.

Sam barely slept that night, lying in his impossibly soft bed replaying every cold sensation he could remember. Choosing yoga over weights. Skipping his shave. Hiring the cleaning service. Each shortcut had triggered that same electric chill, and each one had cost him something he hadn't even realized he was losing until it was gone. How could he fight something so insidious?

Sleep reached him before answers did.

### **Trial Period: Day 19**

Sam awoke early, determined to head to the gym and end his trial membership. He'd laid out his athletic wear the night before: periwinkle leggings and a fitted tank top, another coordinated set from his transformed workout wardrobe.

Sam gathered his honey-blonde hair into a high ponytail that fell in waves down his back, the length still shocking him every time he caught sight of it in mirrors. The color caught the morning light beautifully, and the style made his masculine face look more delicate than he was comfortable acknowledging.

Entering Results Fitness, Sam signed in with Jessica and tried to figure out how to broach the subject of quitting.

"You're really embracing the yoga lifestyle," Jessica commented, taking in his coordinated outfit with professional approval. "And I love your outfit today, the color is perfect!"



"Jessica, can I ask you something about the membership program?" Sam said, trying to keep his voice casual. "I've been thinking about my trial period."

"Oh, wonderful!" Jessica's face lit up with genuine enthusiasm. "How has your experience been?"

Sam chose his words carefully. "I've been noticing some changes since I started coming here. It's like the gym is transforming me in ways that go beyond just getting in shape."

"That's exactly what we hope to hear!" Jessica beamed. "Yoga is such a transformative practice. It's not just about physical

fitness—it's about discovering your authentic self, building confidence, embracing your natural grace. A lot of our members tell us they feel like completely different people after a few weeks of regular practice."

Sam felt his frustration building. Jessica was interpreting everything through the lens of normal fitness psychology, completely missing the supernatural impossibility of what was actually happening to him.

"No, you don't get it. I'm not sure this program is right for me. I was hoping to, you know, end my membership."

"Oh, I see," Jessica continued, looking crestfallen. "Well if you're having any concerns, remember that you're still in your trial period. There's nothing to actually quit—the trial just runs for thirty days, and then you can choose whether or not to sign up for a full membership."

"So I can't quit before 30 days?"

"It's not that you can't—it's just not a thing, really? Plus you may change your mind and decide you want to finish out your trial after all. I hope you will!"

"But after thirty days, I can just... stop? And things would go back to how they were before?"

"Absolutely," Jessica said with a reassuring smile. "No pressure, no commitment beyond the trial period."

Sam came away from the conversation convinced that Jessica hadn't really understood what he was asking, which was par for the course in his conversations with her. But he felt hope surge through him for the first time since he'd discovered the honey-blonde hair hiding under his Yankees cap. He just had to survive the rest of the trial period without taking any shortcuts, and then he could walk away from Results Fitness and hopefully watch all these impossible changes reverse themselves.

Eleven more days of doing everything the hard way. How difficult could that be for someone who now understood exactly what was at stake?

Sam spent the rest of the day in a grudging frenzy of industrious activity, determined to prove he could resist the lazy impulses that had gotten him into this mess. After work, he made himself return to Results Fitness for a second yoga class, then signed up for an additional cardio session, just for good measure. Great. He was becoming one of those people who exercised twice a day.

Back at his apartment, Sam meticulously cleaned every surface even though the cleaning service had left everything spotless, fuming at the redundant manual labor. He hand-washed the delicate lingerie that had replaced his boxer shorts, trying not to think too hard about the silk and lace items he was carefully hanging to dry. He organized his transformed wardrobe, folding women's blouses and arranging the unfamiliar undergarments in neat rows like he was curating a boutique.

By evening, Sam had run out of productive tasks and found himself lying on his impossibly soft bed in satin pajamas. If he was being honest with himself, he didn't actually mind them. Scrolling through his phone in search of distraction, the loneliness hit him like a physical weight. Not that he'd ever been particularly social, but now his transformation had left him completely cut off from his old life, floating in some strange in-between space where nobody remembered who he used to be.

The attraction he'd felt during the romance book club discussion had persisted, leaving him with unfamiliar urges that seemed to be getting stronger every hour. All day, he'd found himself noticing men in ways he never had before—the broad shoulders of his yoga instructor, the confident smile of his

coworkers, the way certain actors moved in the movie he'd been watching while he spent 30 minutes on the treadmill.

These new desires felt genuine and increasingly urgent, but Sam resisted wanting to act on them. He wasn't going to date a man, even if his body apparently wanted him to. That was a line he wouldn't cross, regardless of whatever rewiring was happening in his brain.

Dating apps seemed like a compromise. He could find an outlet for these new feelings through online flirting without actually having to go on real dates. Sam downloaded three different apps and spent an hour setting up profiles, trying to figure out how to present this new version of himself.

The biggest challenge was photos. Sam struggled to take something that looked attractive, but did his best with the bathroom lighting and uploaded his profile before he could second-guess himself. Then he set his phone aside and tried to sleep.

### **Trial Period: Day 20**

Sam walked to work, having been up since 6am, still angry that he'd been forced into becoming a morning person. He'd reluctantly returned to Results Fitness, where Jessica welcomed him with a broad smile and said she'd known he'd be back. Sam really didn't want to keep going to the gym, but the thought of missing yoga—and potentially triggering more cosmic consequences—scared him more than public humiliation in women's athletic wear.

After the class, he'd meticulously styled his hair using techniques he'd found on YouTube, making sure to take every possible step with no shortcuts. He'd selected his outfit carefully—the least feminine combination he could manage from

his transformed wardrobe: straight-leg black pants that could almost pass for men's trousers if you squinted, and a white button-down blouse with minimal feminine details. With a simple black blazer over it, he managed to look reasonably professional and not particularly feminine.

The walk from the gym to work had been going smoothly—Sam was actually congratulating himself on his newfound commitment to doing things properly—when he reached a blocked section of sidewalk. Someone had torn up a perfectly functional section and poured new concrete, with orange cones and a sign directing pedestrians to cross to the other side of the street to avoid the wet surface.

The proper thing for Sam to do would've been to follow the sign—walk back to the corner, cross at the light, continue down the opposite sidewalk, then cross back when he reached his destination. Maybe ten minutes of additional walking to avoid two feet of concrete.

But Sam was 5'10" and the wet concrete section was maybe two feet across. His instincts kicked in automatically—he could easily step over the narrow strip without breaking stride, without having to waste time on unnecessary detours for something so trivial.

The moment his foot touched the ground on the other side of the wet concrete, a cold sensation shot down his spine.

"Oh, shit," Sam whispered. Such a small shortcut he hadn't even noticed taking it. But he was sure it was going to cost him.

### **Trial Period: Day 21**

The next morning, Sam climbed out of bed and immediately noticed something was wrong with the world. The doorframe to

his bedroom seemed taller than usual, and when he walked to the kitchen, the counters appeared to loom above him at an uncomfortable angle. The light switches were too high, the kitchen shelves required him to stand on tiptoes to reach anything. Even his shower head was aimed too high, spraying him directly in the face.

Sam dug a tape measure out of the back of his utility closet and nervously measured himself. The evidence was undeniable—he'd lost six inches overnight, dropping from 5'10" to 5'4". Apparently stepping over wet concrete had cost him more than just his dignity. Two feet of sidewalk had somehow stolen half a foot of height. He couldn't weigh more than 125 pounds at this point.

But the height change was just the beginning of his problems.

Opening his closet revealed that his wardrobe had adapted to his new proportions, but not just in size. The styles had also evolved in ways that forced him deeper into feminine presentation, as if the curse understood that a shorter woman needed to dress more boldly to command attention.

The simple flats he'd been wearing were gone, replaced by heels in various heights—two-inch pumps, three-inch ankle boots, even some stilettos that promised to restore some of his lost stature at the cost of his dignity. Sam reluctantly selected a pair of modest two-inch heels in black leather, discovering that they forced him to walk with shorter, more deliberate steps that felt distinctly feminine.

His previously loose-fitting blouses had become more fitted and tailored, with defined waistlines and darts that created a feminine silhouette he couldn't hide. The colors had grown bolder too—where he'd once had muted tones that helped him blend in, his options now included vibrant blues, rich purples, and eye-catching patterns that demanded attention.

Even his most conservative choices had shifted. The navy slacks he'd considered his safest option were now cropped at the ankle with a higher waistline that emphasized his narrow hips. The blazers had become shorter and more structured, with tailored waists that created an hourglass silhouette despite his still-masculine frame.

Sam selected what he hoped was the least conspicuous outfit possible—charcoal slacks with a slim-cut silhouette that hugged his narrow hips, paired with a soft blue blouse that featured subtle darts along the sides to create a feminine waistline he couldn't hide. The cropped blazer that completed the ensemble had structured shoulders and a nipped-in waist. Even his most masculine choices now read unmistakably feminine to anyone paying attention, which in his new reality apparently included no one except him.

At the office, nobody seemed to remember him being taller, but everyone treated him differently. Bob offered to help him reach something from a high shelf without being asked. The HR lady whose name Sam could never remember spoke to him in a slightly more protective tone, as if his smaller stature made him more fragile. Even his seating at meetings put him at a disadvantage—everyone literally looked down at him now.

His reduced height had created an immediate shift in social dynamics that felt both subtle and profound. People were more willing to interrupt him, more likely to speak over him in meetings, quicker to dismiss his technical opinions. The loss of those six inches had cost him more than physical presence—it had diminished his professional authority in ways that he was unable to quantify but could not deny.

Sam left work that evening feeling defeated by a thousand small interactions that reminded him of his diminished status. Opening the door to his apartment, which now felt cavernous

around his smaller frame, the thought of spending another solitary evening was unbearable. Maybe he'd check the dating apps to soothe his ego.

The notification screen told him everything he needed to know:

*NEW MATCHES 0*

Sam's confidence crumbled. The problem had to be his profile photos. His face still looked fundamentally masculine despite the honey-blonde hair and smaller stature. He tried taking new selfies, but the results were disappointing. The lighting was wrong, his angles were awkward, and he had no idea how to present his masculine features in ways that looked attractive rather than confused.

Sensing its user's ineptness, the app helpfully popped up a built-in feature offering to "Enhance your photos for maximum matches!" The interface looked professional and friendly—just a simple AI tool that would optimize lighting, adjust angles, and help his photos match his best self.

Sam clicked "okay" without really thinking about it.

The moment he confirmed the enhancement, that familiar cold sensation shot down his spine with unprecedented intensity. He'd done it again. He frantically clawed at his phone screen, trying to find a way to cancel the process. But the app's AI was already grinding away at the image file, sanding the masculine edges off his appearance.

This time, he could actually feel the changes beginning immediately.

His face grew warm, then numb, as if someone had applied anesthetic across his features. Sam rushed to the bathroom mirror and watched in horror as his features began to shift and refine themselves in real-time, as if an invisible photo editor was photoshopping his actual face.

His cheekbones rose higher, creating dramatic angles that seemed sculpted by professional lighting. His eyes grew larger and more expressive, with longer lashes that framed them naturally. His lips became fuller and more defined, taking on the kind of natural pout that seemed designed for intimate whispers.

His nose refined itself, becoming smaller and more delicate with elegant proportions that balanced his other features. His jaw narrowed and softened, losing any trace of masculine angularity. His chin became more pointed, his forehead smoother. Even his eyebrows reshaped themselves into perfect, plucked arches that complemented his new bone structure.

Within minutes, his entire face had been restructured into heart-shaped perfection that was undeniably and completely feminine. The person looking back at him from the mirror was beautiful in ways that transcended normal attractiveness. He looked exactly like an idealized version of the enhanced photos the app had just created—the beauty filter had somehow become reality.



Sam touched his transformed face with trembling fingers, feeling the new contours that his unintentional shortcut to a more attractive dating profile had created. The masculine face he'd worn for twenty-eight years was gone, replaced by feminine beauty so perfect it looked almost artificial.

A notification chimed from his phone, then another, then another. Sam looked over to see his dating apps lighting up with match notifications. New matches were flooding in—dozens of them, each one validating that his transformation had achieved exactly what the enhancement algorithm had promised.

He'd finally gotten the male attention he'd been wanting. The only cost had been the wholesale replacement of his face. At this

rate, he'd be unrecognizable by the time his trial period ended—assuming he lasted that long.

Nine days to outlast the Results Fitness trial period. Nine days to fight a character flaw that apparently ran on autopilot and was systematically dismantling his identity one shortcut at a time. It wasn't going to be easy. The problem was, Sam had never been any good at difficult.

~3~

## Part Three

### Trial Period: Day 23

The good news: Sam had figured out how the curse that was gradually turning him into a woman worked. The bad news: he had a week left in his Results Fitness trial period and every moment of convenience-seeking cost him another piece of his identity. And his brain was hell-bent on taking the easy way out every chance it got.

It was Saturday, and Sam was rapidly running out of recognizable parts. His honey-blonde hair caught morning light like spun gold, his diminutive stature caused the world to treat him as submissive and vulnerable, and his beauty-filtered face proved irresistible to the men who caused his dating apps to buzz constantly with notifications.

But Sam refused to surrender what remained of his masculine identity without a fight. If shortcuts were the problem, then he'd do everything the hard way for the next seven days. No

exceptions, no matter how trivial the task or how obvious the easier path.

First step, he needed to gain back some of the bulk that his extreme diet and the curse had stripped from his body. It was going to require work and dedication, but the curse was already requiring these things from him. Sam figured he might as well reap the benefits. He sought out Blake, Results Fitness's most experienced male trainer, to give him a comprehensive workout plan.

"Yo, this is an intensive program, bro," Blake had said earlier that week, handing him a sheet of paper printed with a detailed routine. "Real commitment required, you feel me? No half-measures, no shortcuts. Perfect form, full range of motion, gotta engage the right muscle groups. Follow this exactly as written, and you'll see dramatic results, guaranteed."

Sam arrived at the gym Saturday afternoon determined to execute every exercise perfectly. He changed into his women's athletic wear—bright coral leggings with geometric patterns and a fitted tank top in electric blue that emphasized his slender frame—and pulled his blonde hair into a high ponytail, trying to ignore the appreciative glances from several male gym members.

He moved through Blake's prescribed routine—bench press, squats, deadlifts, rows, overhead press, planks, and crunches—completing each exercise with single-minded intensity. Focused on maintaining control, Sam fully finished every set Blake had written down, and gave full effort throughout the grueling ninety-minute session. By the time he finished the final set of crunches, Sam was completely spent—sweaty, muscles trembling, and breathing hard. No half-measures here.

Sam was heading toward the locker room when Blake looked up from where he was setting up equipment for his next client.

"Yo, good workout today, bro," Blake called out. "Though I gotta say, you were cheating pretty hard on those exercises, know what I'm saying?"

The cold sensation shot down Sam's spine immediately, sharp and electric.

"What do you mean? I followed your plan exactly!" Sam protested. This wasn't fair—he'd put in the work!

"Dude, on the bench press, you were stopping a few inches short of your chest and bouncing the bar. Pretty common mistake, but it cuts out the most important part of the range of motion, bro."

As Blake spoke, Sam felt his chest grow warm, a tingling sensation that spread across his pectorals as they began to soften and swell. He watched in horror as breast tissue developed beneath his electric blue tank top, twin mounds growing larger and fuller. The sensation was a deep throbbing pressure that built steadily beneath his ribs, his chest expanding with each rhythmic pulse.

As Blake wrapped up his critique, Sam became acutely aware of the substantial breasts now filling his tank top, their unsupported weight pulling at the fabric and making him painfully conscious that he wasn't wearing a sports bra underneath. His nipples, now more sensitive and prominent, pressed visibly through the thin electric blue material, creating obvious points that made him acutely aware of his exposure.

"And on the squats, you were stopping right at parallel instead of going deeper. Most people do that—easier on the ankles, you feel me?"

Sam's hips and glutes responded to Blake's words with a deep aching that spread through his pelvis as bone and muscle restructured themselves. His narrow hips widened substantially, creating dramatic curves that tested the elastic fabric of his coral

leggings. His glutes rounded and lifted, transforming from flat and unremarkable into a pert bubble butt that would turn heads when he walked.

"And those crunches, bro—you were only coming up halfway instead of getting full contraction. Takes all the effectiveness out of the core work, you know?"

With a jolt, Sam's core contracted suddenly. His abdominal muscles tightened and refined, creating the kind of feminine ab definition that even personal trainers would envy. His waist narrowed dramatically, resulting in a pronounced hourglass silhouette that made his new breasts and hips appear even more pronounced.

But Blake wasn't finished. "Yo, and those planks—I could tell you weren't really engaging your pelvic floor, yeah? I know you've got some core work from yoga and all that, but I'm talking about really digging deep here, man. Like, maximum activation—not just holding the position, but working those deep muscles hard, you know what I'm saying?"

"Oh... oh, no. Nonononono," Sam stuttered. A deep, cramping sensation spread through his pelvis, followed by an intense pulling and contracting feeling in his crotch, as if his penis was being drawn inward and reshaped. The pressure built to an almost unbearable intensity, accompanied by a strange hollowing sensation that made him feel like he was being carved out from the inside. Sharp, electric bolts shot through his groin as tissue seemed to fold and reshape itself, creating new nerve pathways and closing off old ones.

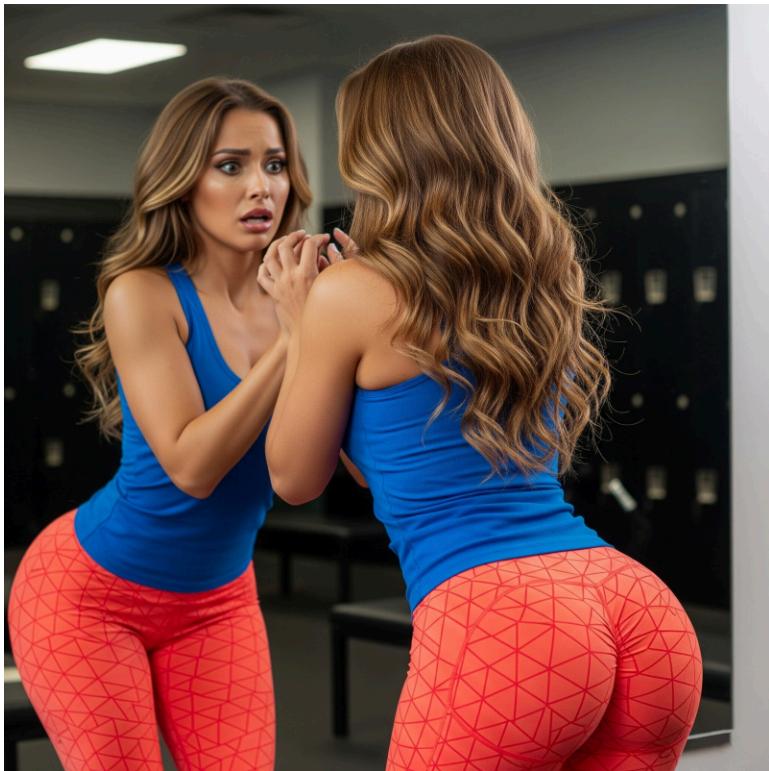
Then, as suddenly as it had started, the transformation stopped, leaving him with a flat front in his leggings and a distinct feeling of emptiness between his legs.

"I need to—bathroom," he gasped, stumbling toward the locker room with growing panic as the alien sensations continued to wrack his body.

"Hey, don't worry about it, dude!" Blake called after him, oblivious to his turmoil. "Everyone cheats a little when they're starting out!"

Sam wasn't paying attention anymore. He hurried toward the locker room, hoping to escape before Blake could cause any other changes to his body. But as he entered the men's locker room, he caught sight of his reflection in the mirrored wall.

He wasn't sure there was anything left to change.



The person staring back at him was undeniably, completely female. His body had been entirely reconstructed into feminine

curves that no amount of loose clothing could hide. Full breasts strained indecently against his tank top, his waist curved dramatically inward before flaring out to womanly hips, and his legs had taken on a graceful shape that made even athletic leggings look elegant.

Oddly, despite his obvious woman's body, none of the men in the locker room gave him a second glance. Sam needed to get out of there before that changed too.

Opening his locker to change, Sam stared in shock at contents that definitely hadn't been there when he'd arrived. Gone were the jeans and casual top he'd worn to the gym. In their place hung a floral sundress with a fitted bodice and flowing skirt—still modest and appropriate, but clearly designed for a woman. Delicate sandals with modest heels sat below, along with a matching 36C bra and panties set in soft cotton. A small makeup bag sat on the locker shelf, complete with lipstick and powder compact.

Sam stared at the sundress and feminine undergarments, his hands trembling as he realized what he was about to do. He'd never worn a dress in his life, but his transformed body left him no choice—he couldn't exactly walk home in workout gear that no longer provided adequate coverage.

He pulled the tank top over his head, immediately feeling exposed, but if the men around him in the locker room noticed his naked breasts on display, they didn't show it. The bra was more complex than expected—hooks and clasps that required coordination he'd never developed—but eventually he managed to fasten it correctly. The sensation of being properly supported felt like relief after the uncomfortable jostling during his walk to the locker room.

The sundress came next, the soft fabric settling around his curves in ways that were foreign to his mind but perfectly fitted to

his transformed body. The bodice hugged his narrow waist while the skirt fell gracefully over his new hips.

The panties were the final indignity—delicate cotton bikinis in soft pink that he pulled on underneath the dress after quickly shedding his leggings. The fit confirmed everything he'd been trying not to think about. He kept his eyes fixed on the locker in front of him, refusing to look down as he adjusted the waistband around his narrow hips. The coverage was exactly right in ways that made his stomach lurch with the finality of what had happened.

The walk home was surreal. Sam moved carefully in the modest heels, adjusting to the feel of a dress swaying around his legs and the way his transformed body shifted his center of gravity. Every storefront window provided an opportunity to catch glimpses of his reflection, each one confirming that he now possessed an unmistakably female body to match his feminine face.

Arriving home, Sam went to his closet to change into something—anything—that was not a dress, but the curse had other plans.

His wardrobe had evolved to match his new reality. The options he'd been clinging to—the simple blouses that could almost pass as unisex, the straight-leg pants that didn't emphasize curves—had vanished entirely. In their place hung clothes that celebrated rather than hid femininity: wrap dresses that would showcase his narrow waist, fitted blouses with darts that emphasized his bustline, A-line skirts in lengths that would highlight his new proportions.

Even the most conservative outfit he could locate—a simple navy shirtdress that fell just below the knee—was unmistakably designed for a feminine body, with princess seaming that created a defined waist and sleeves that emphasized graceful arms.

His underwear drawer had followed suit. Delicate bras in 36C filled one section—soft wireless styles for comfort, more structured options for support, even a few with lace details that suggested someone who cared about sex appeal beneath their clothes. The panties ranged from practical cotton bikini styles to delicate lace pieces in coordinating colors.

The panties. Sam's mind returned to the ultimate change foisted upon him today, one that he'd avoided confronting until now. Lifting the dress and pulling down the pink cotton panties, Sam stared at his transformed anatomy in numb shock. Where his penis had been just hours ago, he now had unmistakably female genitalia—complete and functional, as if he'd been born this way, complete with a small tuft of golden pubic hair. The sight made his knees buckle, and he quickly pulled the panties back up, unable to process what his eyes told him was true.

He sank onto the edge of his bed, still wearing the sundress, trying to wrap his mind around the magnitude of the trap that was closing around him.

His reverie was interrupted by his phone, which buzzed with multiple dating app notifications. Sam unlocked the device, only to discover his messages had multiplied dramatically. His dating app profile photos had updated automatically to show his new body: images of him in low-cut tops that showcased his curves, full-body pics in sexy short dresses, even what appeared to be a bikini photo that must have been taken in some alternate timeline.

The photos were tasteful but unmistakably showcased his new body, explaining why his matches had suddenly exploded. Men were responding to someone they now perceived as an attractive female, with messages that assumed he wanted to be pursued, complimented, and asked out.

Sam scrolled through the messages with a mixture of curiosity and dread. His attraction to men had been growing stronger since the book club meeting, and the attention was flattering in ways he didn't want to acknowledge. But acting on these feelings felt like accepting a level of feminization he wasn't ready to embrace.

Most persistent among his pursuers was David, whose profile showed someone tall, well-dressed, and confident in the way that Sam found increasingly difficult to ignore.

*"Hey Sam," he'd written. "I saw your profile and had to reach out. You seem like someone I'd really enjoy getting to know. Would you be interested in coffee sometime? I promise I'm better company in person than over text."*

The message was confident without being arrogant. David followed up a few minutes later: *"I know this might be forward, but I can't stop thinking about your smile. There's something really captivating about it. Coffee tomorrow?"*

The attention was exactly the kind of focused male interest that his transformed brain found irresistible. Before Sam could think too hard about the implications, he found himself typing back: *"Coffee sounds nice. Tomorrow afternoon?"*

*"Perfect! I know this great place downtown. 2 PM work for you? Really looking forward to meeting you."*

Sam confirmed the time and location, then immediately wondered what the hell he was doing. But the attraction was undeniable, and David's attention felt like exactly what his transformed body had been craving.

Besides, if he didn't explore these feelings, who knew what other cosmic consequence might be waiting for him?

### **Trial Period: Day 24**

Getting ready for a first date as a woman, Sam discovered, required navigating decisions he'd never had to make and skills he didn't really have. As he stood in front of his transformed wardrobe, Sam realized that "coffee date casual" meant something completely different for a woman. Or a cursed man who appeared to be one.

From his drawers, he'd selected a wireless bra in nude that provided support without obvious lines, and matching silk bikini panties that slid against his skin. He wriggled into dark skinny jeans that hugged his new curves, the denim molding to his rounded hips and emphasizing his narrow waist. The soft blue sweater was fitted enough to show off his bustline without being obviously provocative, with narrow sleeves that made his arms look graceful.

The makeup situation had required an hour of YouTube tutorials that morning. Sam's bathroom now contained a simple array of products that hadn't been there last week. He'd managed to master the basics of applying foundation to even out his complexion, mascara that made his eyes look larger, and tinted lip balm that enhanced his natural color without looking overdone.

The result was what he hoped read as "attractive woman who doesn't try too hard" rather than "man who's recently discovered the cosmetics aisle."

David turned out to be exactly what his profile had suggested, in all the wrong ways. He was attractive and well-dressed, but there were red flags that Sam, being completely new to dating as a woman, had failed to recognize until too late.

"You're even prettier than your photos," David said the moment Sam sat down, his eyes lingering on Sam's sweater in

ways that made him suddenly self-conscious. "I wasn't sure what was real—so many women use filters these days."

The conversation that followed revealed exactly why any experienced woman would have spotted David's issues immediately. He dominated every topic, interrupted Sam constantly, and made assumptions about what Sam would order. "You probably want something light, right? Most girls do. Gotta watch that figure."

When Sam mentioned his work in IT, David's eyebrows shot up with genuine surprise. "Really? Tech support? Huh, that's... unusual. I mean, most girls aren't really good with computer stuff, right?"

The comment was casually dismissive in a way that made Sam's stomach clench. Sam found himself nodding along, unsure how to respond to such blatant assumptions about women's capabilities.

"You're not like most women I meet," David continued. "Usually they just want to talk about shopping or reality TV. You actually have interesting things to say."



By the time David suggested they "continue this conversation somewhere more private," Sam was ready to run. The date had been a masterclass in why attractive men weren't necessarily worth pursuing, and he found himself making excuses about early morning meetings and family obligations.

"We should definitely do this again," David said as they exited the coffee shop, completely oblivious to Sam's lack of enthusiasm. "I'll call you."

Sam nodded politely and excused himself, grateful to escape but troubled by how easily he'd missed David's obvious shortcomings. The social dynamics of being pursued rather than pursuing exerted such a pull on him that it unsettled him deeply.

The rest of Sunday passed in a haze of domestic tasks that Sam grudgingly completed—not because he enjoyed them, but because the curse seemed to demand constant proof of his willingness to do things the hard way. Laundry required hand-washing delicate items and careful attention to fabric care instructions. Grocery shopping meant navigating social interactions where men's attention felt both flattering and uncomfortable, requiring constant awareness of his appearance and body language.

Every task reminded him that being female required different strategies for existing in public spaces, different considerations for safety and social interaction. The constant performance that his new identity demanded was exhausting.

By evening, Sam collapsed onto his couch, completely spent. Six days remained until he could walk away from Results Fitness, and he couldn't wait for these transformations to reverse themselves.

### **Trial Period: Day 25**

For work Monday, Sam selected the simple navy shirtdress he'd discovered yesterday—the least feminine option remaining in his closet, though every moment wearing it left Sam feeling like he was playing princess with the niece he didn't have. His 2-inch heels clicked against his apartment floor as he gathered his things, the sound serving as an audible reminder of how much his life had changed.

Sam applied his new simple makeup routine—foundation, mascara, and tinted lip balm. He was getting better at applying it, the result clean and professional without being elaborate.

He pulled his honey-blonde hair into a low ponytail that kept it professional but still showed off the length and shine, securing it with a simple black elastic.

At the office, Sam endured the continued erosion of his professional authority with the grim acceptance of someone watching their career slowly dissolve in real time. Colleagues still interrupted him in meetings, still looked past him when discussing technical solutions, still treated him like junior staff despite his years of experience. The combination of his feminine voice, reduced height, and obviously female appearance had fundamentally altered how people responded to his expertise.

Sam had loathed his team's weekly staff meeting as a man. It was excruciating in his new form.

"We need someone to coordinate the company's annual retreat," his manager Gene announced towards the end of the day's agenda. His eyes scanned the room before settling on Sam with a patronizing smile that made his stomach clench. "Lane, you'd be perfect for this. It really could use a feminine touch—all that attention to detail and people skills. Full planning responsibility—venue, catering, activities, the whole thing."

Sam wanted to object to the sexist assignment, but the curse had him trapped. Refusing would mean taking the easy way out of additional work, and he couldn't afford another transformation. Plus, taking on more responsibilities might demonstrate to the otherworldly forces that he was committed to doing things the hard way.

"I'll do it," Sam said, gritting his teeth. "I'd like to handle the entire planning process."

Gene looked pleased with himself. "Excellent! I knew you'd be excited about this kind of work. It's really more suited to your temperament anyway. Just try to keep it within budget—I know how you types can get carried away when it comes to spending.

All those pretty decorations and fancy catering options can be tempting, right?" He chuckled at his own wit.

Sam fumed all the way back to his desk. He was determined to do a good job on the assignment, but it didn't take him long to realize he was entirely in over his head. He had no idea what was involved in planning a company retreat. He didn't even know what questions he needed to ask to figure out what the right questions were.

The overwhelming complexity of event coordination became immediately apparent. Venues had availability conflicts, caterers required detailed headcounts and dietary restrictions, activities needed to accommodate varying fitness levels and budget constraints. After an hour of phone calls and website comparisons, Sam felt completely out of his depth. He'd volunteered for something that required expertise he simply didn't possess.

Sam needed help, fast. He wasn't going to take any shortcuts, that's for sure, but just a little chat with ChatGPT would help him figure out what he needed to do to put forth maximum effort.

Sam opened the AI interface and typed: "I need to plan a corporate retreat for 50 people. What are the basic elements I should consider?"

The response was comprehensive and helpful, outlining venue selection criteria, catering considerations, activity planning, and timeline management. Exactly the kind of educational overview Sam had been hoping for.

But then the AI continued: "Based on typical corporate retreat requirements, here's a complete planning framework with specific recommendations..."

What followed was a detailed, professional-quality retreat plan that addressed every element Sam had been tasked with developing. Specific venue recommendations with contact

information, complete catering packages with pricing, detailed activity schedules that balanced team building with relaxation, even contingency plans for weather issues.

The plan was brilliant, more thorough and professional than anything Sam could have developed in weeks of research. It included vendor contact information, detailed timelines, budget breakdowns, and activity descriptions that would actually engage participants rather than torture them with trust falls and rope courses.

Too late, Sam realized his mistake. He couldn't unsee the AI's plan, even if he hadn't meant to read it in the first place. It was a massive shortcut, an LLM-powered easy way out of the task he'd been assigned.

It took a moment, but the cold sensation he'd been expecting traced down his spine like a cube of ice dropped down the back of his dress.

Sam spent the rest of the day in a state of anxious dread, waiting for whatever transformation he'd just triggered to manifest. But his appearance remained unchanged, his voice the same, his body unaltered. By the time he went to bed, he'd almost talked himself into believing it had all been a false alarm.

### **Trial Period: Day 26**

Sam woke up on Tuesday and started his now-familiar morning routine—stretches, shower, smoothie—before selecting what he hoped was appropriate attire for another day of corporate IT work. But when he opened his closet, the clothing options had evolved in ways that suggested another fundamental aspect of his life had changed.

Gone were the simple dresses and practical blouses that an IT professional might wear. In their place hung designer pieces that

looked like they belonged in client meetings rather than server rooms. Pencil skirts in textured fabrics, silk blouses with architectural details, blazers with tailoring that spoke of serious money.

Sam's days of picking the least feminine option from his closet were over, simply because there were no "least feminine" options anymore. He did the best he could, selecting a charcoal gray pencil skirt that hugged his curves and a cream-colored silk blouse with subtle pleating, paired with 3-inch heels that felt foreign after weeks of more practical footwear. His nails, he noticed, had somehow acquired a perfect French manicure overnight.

"What the hell does any of this have to do with using ChatGPT?" Sam wondered. At least he had been able to discern the curse's twisted logic of his other changes. This one completely baffled him.

When Sam went to do his simple makeup routine, he discovered his bathroom counter's cosmetic inventory had multiplied like rabbits. Alongside his basic foundation, mascara, and lip balm sat an array of new products: concealer palettes, multiple eyeshadow sets, eyeliner pencils, bronzer, blush, lip liner, and lipsticks in various shades. He pulled up a quick YouTube tutorial on professional makeup and managed to apply concealer under his eyes, a subtle brown eyeshadow, and a more defined lip color. The result looked barely passable but professional enough that he didn't feel the familiar chill of cosmic disapproval.

He styled his long hair in loose waves that framed his face elegantly, grabbed the purse that hung beside his apartment door, and stepped out into the world.

The walk to work went quickly enough, though Sam endured catcalls from what seemed like every construction worker in the

metro area. He arrived at the same nondescript office building he'd been trudging to for the last three weeks. On autopilot, he passed through the front doors and across the lobby, with no one giving him a second look. He entered the elevator and, just like he did every day, exited it on the seventh floor. Without looking up from his phone, he stepped into the elegant reception area of Sterling Events.

Wait. He didn't work at Sterling Events.

What the heck was Sterling Events?

Where were the offices of—what was it called again? His employer.

Sam suddenly realized he'd never actually bothered to learn the name of the generic, faceless corporation whose checks he'd cashed for the past three years.

Looking around, it appeared something very different had taken over the seventh floor, seemingly overnight. The layout was identical to his old office—same entrance, same reception area—only now it had been redesigned with upscale furniture and displays of wedding photos.

Sam stood in the lobby, certain he'd taken a wrong turn or entered the wrong building. But the woman behind the reception desk looked up at him with immediate recognition.

"Good morning, Sam! You're early today. The Morrison wedding consultation is at ten, and the Commonwealth Group corporate retreat meeting is at two."

She was polished and attractive in ways that made Sam do a double-take. Her auburn hair was professionally styled, her makeup flawless, her outfit coordinated with accessories that suggested someone who took presentation seriously.

Only when Sam looked closer did he recognize something familiar in her features—this was his company's receptionist,

transformed just as thoroughly as everything else in his orbit. What was her name again? Amy something.

Sam stared at her, trying to process what was happening. "I think there's been some mistake."

"Oh, you're right, I'm sorry." Amy looked down at her computer. "The Morrisons are at ten thirty."

She handed him a folder thick with vendor contracts and client correspondence, running through details it seemed Sam was supposed to understand but couldn't hope to keep up with.



Sam took the folder and walked toward what had been his desk location, hoping to find his familiar workspace surrounded by computer equipment and help desk tickets. It was the same desk in the same location, with the same "Sam Lane" nameplate,

but now it was covered with floral arrangement samples, catering menus, and vendor portfolios instead of network cables and diagnostic tools.

His computer contained calendar appointments for client consultations he didn't remember scheduling. His email was filled with messages about centerpiece approvals and vendor confirmations. According to his employment records, he'd been working for Sterling Events for over two years.

"Sam! Thank god you're here." A woman approached his desk with the frantic energy of someone dealing with a crisis.

She sat down at the desk directly next to his with the familiarity of a longtime colleague. "The Pemberton anniversary party is this weekend and the caterer just canceled. We need to find an alternative before noon."

Sam stared at her, feeling disoriented. This was the same location where his old cubicle neighbor Bob used to sit, but the nameplate now read "Madison Roberts." Madison was clearly someone he'd never met before, despite her obvious assumption that they'd been working together for years. Her workspace was organized with aesthetic attention to detail—coordinated accessories, fresh flowers, inspirational quotes in elegant frames.

"I'll... look into that?" Sam managed, opening the vendor files that had apparently always existed on his desk.

"Perfect! I knew I could count on you." Madison returned to her computer with the efficiency of someone who genuinely enjoyed solving problems. "Oh, and Elena had some questions for you about the Morrison wedding when she gets in."

"Who?" Sam asked, though he was already dreading the answer.

"Our boss? Are you feeling okay? You seem a little off."

When an elegant, silver-haired woman rounded the corner and approached his desk fifteen minutes later, Sam assumed she

was Elena. She carried herself with an authoritative presence, her tailored suit and perfect makeup suggesting someone who'd built a successful business through determination and vision.

"Sam, what's your take on the Morrison situation?" Elena asked, settling into the chair beside his desk. "I know you've handled similar vendor emergencies before. Should we pivot to the backup caterer or try to salvage this?"

Sam wasn't used to being talked to like this at work. Where his manager Gene would have dumped problems on subordinates with condescending assumptions, Elena was treating him like a professional whose opinion actually mattered.

As the day progressed, Sam discovered that his new coworkers were genuinely pleasant to be around. Madison had a quick wit and handled stress with grace, laughing easily with clients and offering creative solutions to impossible problems. Elena was supportive and encouraging, treating Sam like a valued team member whose expertise she respected—a far cry from the dismissive, sexist management style he'd endured before.

Sam resented how much he was starting to like them despite himself. It would have been so much easier to maintain his cynical detachment if they were insufferable, but Madison's dry humor kept catching him off guard and Elena's genuine respect for his opinions was almost impossible to dismiss. The curse wasn't just changing his body and career—it was forcing him to develop actual human connections, which felt like the cruellest transformation yet.

The job, on the other hand, was exactly as tedious as Sam had feared. Client phone calls required managing emotional responses to catering changes and venue limitations. Vendor coordination involved negotiating contracts and managing delivery schedules for flowers, linens, and decorative elements he'd never cared about. Site visits required inspecting spaces and

discussing setup requirements with people who took balloon arrangements seriously enough to argue about color saturation.

Sam discovered he could do the work—it wasn't technically complicated—but it required constant social interaction and attention to details that felt monumentally unimportant. More critically, there was no way to slack off while doing it. Every task demanded phone calls, relationship management, and client hand-holding that made his old IT job look like a vacation by comparison.

"The Hendersons want to know if we can change the centerpieces from peonies to garden roses," Madison asked during a mid-morning crisis. "But the florist says garden roses will clash with the bridesmaids' dresses."

Sam found himself coordinating a four-way phone call between the bride, her florist, and a color consultant to resolve a dispute about flower selection. The conversation lasted forty-five minutes and accomplished absolutely nothing beyond confirming that event planning was a special kind of interpersonal hell designed to torment Sam particularly.

The afternoon was taken up by managing vendor relationships and client expectations while Sam longed for the days when his biggest problem was users who couldn't remember their passwords. Every conversation required emotional labor he'd never had to perform, every decision carried consequences that would affect someone's "special day," and every vendor relationship demanded the kind of diplomatic finesse that made network troubleshooting seem like a relaxing pastime.

By six o'clock, Sam had survived his first full day at Sterling Events without triggering any cosmic consequences, though he felt emotionally drained. As he gathered his purse and prepared to leave the office, Madison was already packing up her things while

Elena reviewed tomorrow's schedule—just another ordinary day in their world, even if it felt surreal to him.

Four days remained in his trial period. But as the changes spread further from his body into his entire reality—his job, his workplace, even his coworkers—Sam was beginning to doubt that everything would simply snap back when the thirty days ended. The transformations felt too complete, too thoroughly woven into the fabric of his existence. Still, it was the only hope he had left to cling to. What else could he do but fight through the remaining days and hope that Jessica had been telling the truth about walking away?

**~4~**

## **Part Four**

### **Trial Period: Day 27**

Three days into his new career at Sterling Events, Sam had discovered that being an attractive woman in the corporate world came with its own special brand of workplace hazards. While Elena and Madison treated him as a competent professional, apparently the rest of the business universe operated under different rules entirely.

Sam spent Wednesday morning coordinating vendor meetings for the Henderson anniversary party, which turned out to be an exercise in diplomatic patience. The florist insisted on explaining basic color theory to him like he'd recently suffered a traumatic brain injury, while the caterer kept redirecting technical questions to Elena despite Sam's obvious responsibility over the menu.

"The spacing between these tables looks a bit tight," said Trent from the Heritage Hotel, leaning uncomfortably close as he reviewed the floor plan on Sam's tablet. His hand found Sam's lower back while he pointed at the room layout, a casual invasion

of personal space that would have been unthinkable if Sam still looked like a doughy male IT specialist.

"You're absolutely right," Sam replied smoothly, stepping sideways to escape the unwanted contact. "Maintaining proper distance is so important, don't you agree?"

The morning's low point came during a conference call with the anniversary couple's son, who insisted on mansplaining his parents' forty-year marriage to Sam like he was a recent arrival from a planet where human relationships didn't exist.

"You see, what my parents really want is something classy," the son explained with the cadence of someone addressing a particularly slow child. "Not too fancy, but not cheap either. Something that shows we care about quality."

Sam wanted to point out that "classy but not fancy" was about as useful as "wet but not damp," but he knew that speaking up wouldn't help him get any closer to finishing the work. Instead, he nodded and took detailed notes while internally composing a strongly worded review of the entire male gender.

By lunch, Sam had learned to weaponize Madison and Elena as professional shields, scheduling them into any meeting that promised to involve particularly difficult vendors. It was a depressing but effective strategy that required admitting his new physical appearance had fundamentally altered his ability to navigate the world.

"Don't take it personally," Madison said during their break, observing Sam's growing frustration with the morning's interpersonal disasters. "Trent Anderson hits on every woman under forty who walks through that venue. Elena banned him from solo meetings with female staff after the incident with our last coordinator."

The afternoon brought Sam's first encounter with a genuinely challenging client situation. The Morrison wedding consultation

involved a mother-of-the-bride who had clearly missed her calling as a military dictator, a bride whose main personality trait was apologizing for existing, and a groom whose contribution to the planning process consisted entirely of checking his phone every thirty seconds.

"I want everything to be perfect," the mother announced, fixing Sam with the kind of intense stare usually reserved for people being subjected to police interrogation. "This is my daughter's special day, and I will not tolerate any shortcuts or corner-cutting."

The irony wasn't lost on Sam, though he doubted Mrs. Morrison would appreciate his perspective on cosmic justice.

What followed was ninety minutes of detailed negotiations over flower arrangements, menu selections, and seating charts. Sam found himself mediating between the bride's whispered preferences and her mother's loudly expressed opinions while the groom provided a steady soundtrack of notification chimes from his phone.

By four o'clock, Sam had successfully prevented two separate meltdowns, negotiated a compromise on the controversial salmon-versus-chicken debate, and scheduled three follow-up meetings to address the seventeen additional concerns that had emerged during their discussion. It was exhausting work that required constant emotional regulation and diplomatic finesse-skills he'd never needed during his IT career.

His phone rang just as he was updating his notes from the Morrison consultation. A cheerful voice filled his office with the kind of aggressive enthusiasm that suggested its owner had been drinking espresso through an IV drip.

"Hi Sam! It's Jessica from Results Fitness. I'm following up on your trainer request."

After his disastrous workout with Blake-where his unconscious form-cheating had triggered some of his most dramatic physical changes yet-Sam had specifically requested a trainer to supervise his exercises. He couldn't risk another session that might leave him with even more dramatic feminine attributes.

"So I'm looking at our calendar and Blake has an opening tomorrow at 8 AM if you're interested."

Sam glanced at his reflection in his computer monitor, thinking about the elaborate morning preparations that had somehow become routine, even before just heading to the gym-the smoothie prep, the careful outfit coordination, the subtle no-makeup makeup look, the hair that required actual styling instead of just running fingers through it. Eight AM at the gym meant a 6 AM wake-up call.

"Could we do something a little later?" The words escaped before he could consider their implications.

The icy warning shot down his spine with the inevitability of a recurring nightmare.

"Oh sure! Brittany has an 11 AM slot. She's fantastic-I see here you want to improve your form, and she really focuses on functional movement and total body wellness. See ya then!"

Jessica hung up, before Sam could respond, leaving him with a growing sense of dread. He'd clearly triggered the curse by wanting to get a couple extra hours of sleep. The question was, what was it going to cost him?

### **Trial Period: Day 28**

Thursday morning brought an answer-it was going to cost him any remaining dignity at the gym. Overnight, Sam's closet had apparently been visited by the ghost of every fitness

influencer who'd ever hashtaged their way to sponsored athletic wear deals.

Gone were his simple, form-fitting yoga outfits that had served him adequately for the past few weeks. In their place hung athletic wear that looked like it belonged in a carefully curated Instagram post about morning motivation and achieving your best life.

Sam pulled on high-waisted biker shorts in a soft sage green with subtle ribbed detailing along the sides that somehow made his legs look impossibly long and toned. The fabric had that expensive, buttery-soft feel of premium athletic wear. The shorts hit at the perfect length to showcase his newly feminine legs while the high waist created an hourglass silhouette that was impossible to ignore.

The sports bra was a masterpiece of overengineering in dusty pink with delicate criss-cross straps that created intricate patterns and made the garment impossible to put on. The color complemented his skin tone perfectly, making him look healthy and glowing in ways that suggested someone who had personal convictions about superfoods.

Over this went a cropped mesh long-sleeve in the same dusty pink—the kind of piece that served no practical purpose except to look effortlessly cool. The mesh was fine enough to be almost sheer, with thumbholes that kept the sleeves in place and created an elegant line down his arms. It added coverage without actually covering anything, the ultimate statement piece that said "work out but make it fashion."

He pulled his honey-blonde hair into a messy workout bun, securing it with an elastic and letting a few tendrils escape to frame his face naturally.

Looking in his full-length mirror, Sam barely recognized himself. The outfit screamed "that girl"—the kind of effortlessly

coordinated look that suggested someone whose entire life was a carefully curated aesthetic experience. He looked like he should be leading a private Pilates class in the Hamptons while discussing the transformative power organic kale cleanses.

The fit was so perfect it could have been tailored specifically for his transformed body. Every piece worked together to create a cohesive look that was both athletic and undeniably feminine. Sam flinched, already dreading the dozens of comments about "goals" and "where did you get that adorable set?"

It was absolutely horrifying how much he looked like he belonged in it.

At Results Fitness, Brittany turned out to be everything Sam had feared. She bounded toward him in the gym lobby with the kind of explosive enthusiasm usually reserved for Christmas mornings, her platinum blonde ponytail bouncing with each step like it was powered by its own internal energy source.

"Oh my gosh, you must be Sam! I'm Brittany, and I am literally SO excited to work with you today!" Her voice hit registers that should have been illegal at 8 AM, every syllable infused with relentless positivity. Sam assumed she was someone who unironically used words like "inspo" and treated every moment as potential content creation.

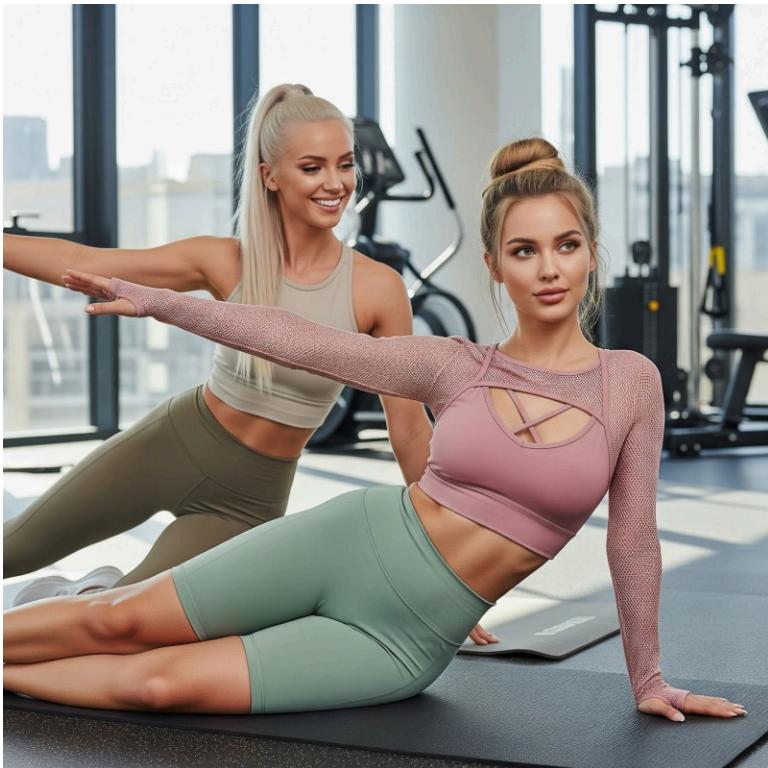
"Jessica told me you're looking to really focus on form and functional movement, which is like, totally my favorite thing ever! I'm so excited to help you in your wellness journey!"

"Sure, that sounds... fine," Sam replied, not liking the sound of any of this.

"Perfect! Just follow me exactly and focus on your form—that's the most important thing when you're learning these exercises," Brittany chirped, oblivious to Sam's disinterest. She paused to take a quick selfie with the gym equipment in the background,

then began a series of flowing stretches that looked more like interpretive dance than exercise.

As she began demonstrating the movements, Sam's body began responding without permission. He found himself following her instructions with unconscious mimicry, his limbs moving before his brain could process what was happening.



If that weren't troubling enough, as the session progressed the mimicry deepened beyond just exercise form. He started mirroring not just Brittany's movements, but her entire physical presence.

When Brittany rolled her shoulders back with a little bounce, Sam's body automatically followed suit. When she cocked her hip to one side while explaining the next exercise, Sam's posture

shifted to match without conscious direction. Her habit of tucking a strand of hair behind her ear became his own unconscious gesture, repeated every few minutes whether he needed to or not.

"This is actually really helpful!" Sam heard himself say. The words escaped in Brittany's bubbly tone, complete with vocal fry and an upward inflection. Sam's eyes widened, horrified by the sound of his own voice. That wasn't him speaking—that was Brittany's vocal patterns coming out of his mouth.

"Perfect! You're such a natural at this!" Brittany exclaimed. "I love how you're really connecting with your body's natural rhythm!"

Internally, Sam wanted to point out that he was actually connecting with *\*her\** body's rhythm, not some innate feminine grace he'd suddenly discovered buried beneath years of masculine slouching. But when he opened his mouth, what emerged was: "I can already feel the difference! You're such a good teacher!"

The session continued with exercises that emphasized what Brittany called "creating long, lean lines"-movements designed to showcase flexibility and elegance. By the time they finished, Sam was moving with something approaching grace, though he couldn't shake the feeling that he was performing someone else's choreography.

After the session, as Sam was gathering his rose gold water bottle and trying to process what had just happened to his motor control, Brittany clapped her hands together with sudden inspiration that seemed to illuminate her entire being.

"Oh! You should totally meet my girls! We're grabbing salads at that cute place down the street—you'd fit right in with our vibe!"

Before Sam could access his usual arsenal of creative excuses to formulate a polite decline, he found himself saying with

breathless excitement: "That sounds so fun! I'd love to meet everyone!"

Within minutes, Sam found himself swept into a group of two other women who seemed to complete Brittany's carefully curated social ecosystem. They welcomed him with varying degrees of warmth that suggested a complex social hierarchy he was only beginning to understand.

"If you want a challenge, come to Maya's barre class on Saturday," announced Chloe, a woman with perfectly styled auburn hair whose athleisure outfit probably cost more than Sam's monthly rent. Her smile was warm but her eyes were evaluating, taking in every detail of Sam's coordinated outfit with the precision of a fashion critic. "And we always do brunch after at this place that has the best açai bowls. Very Instagram-worthy, if you're into that sort of thing."

"Plus there's that new boutique opening downtown next week," added Maya, examining Sam's coordinated outfit with obvious approval and the kind of genuine enthusiasm that felt reassuring after Chloe's calculated assessment. "You have such great style! Where did you get that set? It's gorgeous."

Chloe's eyebrow raised slightly. "You really made a bold choice. I could never pull off those colors."

Internally, Sam was experiencing something approaching existential terror. These women were wrapping him into a social calendar built entirely around activities he'd rather die than participate in—weekend exercise classes that sounded like medieval torture, brunch conversations about superfoods and wellness trends, shopping expeditions to purchase more variations of the feminine wardrobe that had already consumed his closet like some kind of pastel plague.

But externally, he heard himself responding with genuine enthusiasm that seemed to bubble up from some previously

unknown source: "Oh my gosh, that all sounds amazing! I'm a little nervous though-you're all so beautiful, I've never really hung out in a group like this before."

Maya beamed at his response while Chloe's smile became slightly more genuine, as if his vulnerability had passed some unspoken test.

"Don't worry," Maya said warmly. "We'll take good care of you."

As lunch progressed at the kind of restaurant that specialized in salads with names like "Goddess Bowl" and "Enlightenment Greens," Sam discovered the horrible truth: his new friends genuinely liked this perky, enthusiastic version of him, though they each expressed it differently.

Brittany shared stories about her latest wellness discoveries and content creation challenges, though she was more complicated than the caricature Sam had first imagined.

"This lighting is perfect for photos-do you mind if I grab a quick shot? I love supporting local businesses on my stories," she said, taking a few tasteful photos of their colorful salad bowls.

Chloe provided a running commentary that walked the line between witty observation and subtle critique. "Just don't catch me mid-chew," she said when Brittany asked about photos. "I have a reputation to maintain."

Maya listened with genuine interest and asked thoughtful questions that showed she actually cared about the answers. When Sam mentioned feeling overwhelmed by his new job, she offered practical advice about managing client relationships.

"You're so pretty, Chloe," Maya said with the automatic warmth of someone who'd learned to smooth over her friend's edges. "We all are. Sam, you should definitely let Brittany tag you-you'd get so many new followers!"

The worst part was how natural it felt. His body language had adapted to match theirs without conscious effort-leaning in during conversations with genuine interest, touching arms for emphasis during animated discussions, tilting his head with the kind of engaged attention that suggested someone who actually cared about the difference between retinol and retinoid.

Everything about his outward presentation screamed "girl's girl," even as his internal monologue maintained its familiar cynical edge. He found himself laughing at Brittany's stories about brand partnerships and fitness challenges, nodding sympathetically when Maya shared workplace drama from Sephora, and even appreciating Chloe's sharper observations about other restaurant patrons.

"So what's your story, Sam?" Chloe asked, clearly the designated group interrogator. "You just moved here or changed careers or what?"

"Career change, actually," Sam said, surprised by how easily the half-truth came. "I was in IT before, but I'm doing event coordination now. It's... definitely different."

"That's so cool!" Maya exclaimed. "I bet you're really good at the organizational stuff. IT people always seem so detail-oriented."

"We should totally do girls' night tomorrow!" Brittany suggested as they finished their quinoa-and-kale creations that tasted like edible virtue signaling. "It's been forever since we all went out together."

"Yes! I know the perfect place," Chloe added, already pulling out her phone to reserve a table. "And Sam, you have to come. It'll be so much fun to have fresh blood in the group."

The way she said "fresh blood" made Sam wonder exactly what happened to their previous fourth member, but before he could access any of his usual deflection strategies or creative

excuse-generation capabilities, his voice bubbling with excitement: "I'm usually more of a homebody, but... it sounds amazing!"

"Perfect," Chloe said with a smile that didn't quite reach her eyes. "This is going to be very interesting."

By the time they exchanged numbers and made concrete plans for Friday night's adventure, Sam realized he'd been completely absorbed into a social circle he'd never wanted to join, expressing enthusiasm for activities that should have made him break out in stress-induced hives. And the most frustrating part? He couldn't bring himself to cancel the plans, because disappointing his new friends would be taking the easy way out of social obligations that apparently mattered to whatever cosmic chaperone was watching his every movement.

### **Trial Period: Day 29**

Friday brought Sam's first major event at work—an elegant rehearsal dinner for thirty-five guests at a boutique hotel's garden terrace that promised to test every diplomatic skill he'd reluctantly developed over the past week. Standing among the string lights and formal table settings with his rose gold tablet and wireless headset, Sam found himself orchestrating a complex dance of caterers, florists, lighting technicians, and hotel staff who all seemed to operate according to different laws of gravity.

"Catering, we need the cocktail station positioned to catch the golden hour lighting," he spoke into his headset while simultaneously trying to explain to the florist that "romantic elegance" didn't require enough roses to supply a small funeral. "And can we adjust the string lights to create more intimate conversation zones?"

The rehearsal dinner was an exercise in controlled chaos. Sam managed to keep everything moving forward through sheer stubborn determination and an alarming number of diplomatic smiles, but coordinating a celebration designed to set the perfect tone for tomorrow's wedding was exhausting.

He'd dressed carefully for the occasion-a blush pink blazer and matching pencil skirt that hugged his transformed figure, layered gold necklaces catching the light as he moved between tables. His honey-blonde hair was styled in soft waves that looked effortless but had required twenty minutes with a curling iron.

"Everything looks absolutely beautiful," said the bride's mother, appearing beside him as guests began arriving for cocktails. The woman radiated the kind of contained stress that suggested someone holding herself together through sheer force of will and expensive skincare. "I just want everything to be perfect for tomorrow. You'll be coordinating the wedding ceremony as well, won't you?"

Sam nodded and made the appropriate professional noises about being there bright and early, though by tomorrow he fully intended to have quit the gym and changed back to his old life. The wedding would be someone else's problem. Let Elena handle the actual wedding coordination while he returned to the blessed simplicity of fixing other people's computers.

"Wonderful. I can't tell you how much it means to have someone so competent handling the details," the mother continued. "Young women like you understand the importance of making everything special."

The evening proceeded with only minor crises-a miscommunication about champagne timing, and a brief family drama about seating arrangements that required diplomatic intervention worthy of United Nations peacekeeping forces. By seven o'clock, guests were seated for dinner, toasts were flowing

as smoothly as the wine, and the garden terrace glowed with the kind of romantic ambiance that would generate dozens of social media posts.

With dinner service running smoothly and the hotel staff handling the evening timeline, Sam was able to slip away by seven o'clock, leaving Elena to manage the remainder of the celebration while he reluctantly headed to Chloe's apartment. He was still trying to find some way to get out of the evening without triggering the curse when Chloe opened the door to reveal a living space that looked like it had been designed by someone with unlimited access to home décor magazines.

"Look at you being all professional and put-together," Chloe observed, taking in Sam's pink suit with calculating eyes. "Very corporate chic. But tonight's vibe is completely different—we need to find you something that will make every man in the room forget how to form complete sentences."

Sam wanted to protest that he was fine as he was, that he didn't need to be transformed into some club-ready version of himself that would require hours of preparation and uncomfortable shoes. But instead he found himself modestly demurring: "Oh, I don't need all that. I'm still a little nervous about this whole thing."

"I have just the dress in mind," Chloe announced, ignoring his doubts and pulling him inside where Brittany and Maya were already pregaming with rosé and a charcuterie platter. "And Maya is going to do your makeup. She's a wizard with contouring."

"It's going to be so fun!" Brittany added, already positioning her phone for photos. "I love getting pictures of us all together."

An hour later, the three women sat in Chloe's perfectly curated living room, sipping rosé and scrolling through their phones while they waited on Sam to emerge from the bedroom.

"Sam?" Maya called toward the bedroom door. "How's everything going in there? Do you need help with anything?"

"I... I don't know about this," came a voice from behind the door, muffled and uncertain. "This feels like a lot. Maybe I should just wear something simpler?"

"Oh no you don't!" Chloe called back with authority. "We've put too much work into this for you to chicken out now. You look incredible-trust us."

"But what if..."

"No buts," Brittany interrupted with her characteristic enthusiasm. "This is literally going to be the best reveal ever! Come on, we're dying to see!"

There was a long pause, then the sound of heels clicking hesitantly across hardwood floor.

When the bedroom door finally opened, Sam emerged slowly, nervously, one hand still gripping the doorframe as if he might retreat at any moment or topple over on the skyscraper heels he now wore.

The living room fell silent with the kind of stunned appreciation usually reserved for museum masterpieces.

Maya's handiwork was evident in every detail-the flawless foundation that created perfect coverage, the contouring that had carved out cheekbones Sam didn't know he possessed, and the warm bronze eyeshadow that made his brown eyes look impossibly large and luminous. The false lashes she'd applied created a dramatic fringe that transformed his entire facial structure, while his lips were perfectly defined in a shade that complemented the dress.

Chloe had styled his hair into a sleek low bun that showcased his delicate bone structure, with face-framing pieces curled into loose tendrils with the kind of precision that suggested years of practice. The style was effortlessly chic-the kind of undone updo

that looked casual but had clearly required professional-level expertise to achieve.

The chocolate brown dress was a masterpiece of contemporary design-a long-sleeved, high-necked bandage dress that hugged every curve of his transformed body while maintaining an air of expensive sophistication. The ribbed fabric created subtle texture and visual interest, while the fitted silhouette showcased his narrow waist and newly feminine proportions.

But the real showstopper was the back-completely open, held together by delicate gold chains that traced elegant lines down his spine like jewelry designed specifically for his anatomy. The contrast between the conservative front and the dramatic back created a sophisticated tension that was both modest and undeniably seductive.

The accessories elevated the entire look from impressive to genuinely stunning: layered chain necklaces that complemented the dress's neckline without competing for attention, statement drop earrings that caught the light when he moved, and nude strappy 5" heels with delicate tie details that wrapped around his ankles and made his legs look endless. A small structured clutch in tan leather completed the ensemble.

"Holy shit," breathed Brittany, momentarily forgetting to document the moment before quickly raising her phone to capture Sam's transformation.

"You look like you stepped off a runway," Maya added, clearly pleased with her handiwork.

"You know what? You wear that better than I ever did," Chloe said with the closest thing to genuine approval Sam had heard from her all evening. "I'm actually a little jealous."

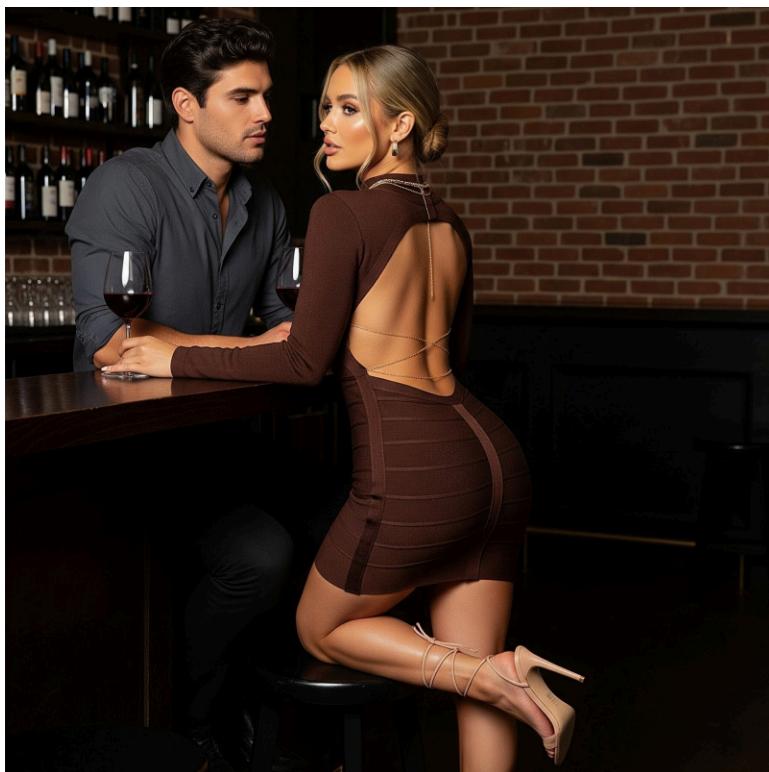
Sam caught sight of himself in Chloe's mirror and felt something twist in his stomach that was equal parts admiration

and existential dread. The person staring back at him was devastatingly elegant—the kind of woman who belonged at exclusive rooftop parties or high-end fashion events.

"We are going to have so much fun tonight!" Brittany squealed, clapping her hands together with the kind of genuine excitement that made Sam feel guilty for his internal resistance to their evening plans. "This is going to be amazing!"

The bar was everything Sam dreaded and worse—overpriced drinks served by bartenders who treated mixology like performance art, music loud enough to cause permanent hearing damage, and a crowd of twenty-somethings who treated Friday night like an audition for reality television shows about beautiful people making poor decisions.

Within minutes of their arrival, Sam found himself at the center of a gravitational field of male attention that was both overwhelming and oddly intoxicating. Men materialized beside him at the bar like moths drawn to flame, offering to buy him drinks with pickup lines that ranged from annoying to catastrophically bad, each one delivered with the kind of confidence that suggested they'd never been rejected in their lives.



"Has anyone ever told you that you have the most incredible eyes?" asked a guy whose cologne could probably be detected from space.

"I'm not usually into blondes, but you're making me reconsider everything," declared another who apparently thought this qualified as a compliment.

"Are you a magician? Because every time I look at you, everyone else disappears," offered a third with the kind of earnest delivery that suggested he'd practiced this line in the mirror.

Sam's internal response was a detailed breakdown of why their particular approaches represented lazy thinking and emotional manipulation tactics, but what came out of his mouth each time was delivered with breathless enthusiasm: "Oh my

gosh, you're so sweet! That's like, the nicest thing anyone's said to me all week!"

The disconnect was becoming more pronounced with each interaction. Sam felt like he was watching himself perform in a play he'd never auditioned for. Meanwhile, his actual thoughts provided running commentary like a bitter film critic trapped watching a romantic comedy.

His voice kept responding with bubbly appreciation, his body language remained open and flirtatious, and his hands kept finding reasons to touch arms and shoulders while laughing at jokes that weren't funny. Drinks appeared faster than he could finish them—cosmos that tasted like liquid cotton candy, champagne bubbles that went straight to his head, shots that burned going down but left him feeling weightless and invincible.

The alcohol blurred the edges of his awareness, making the cognitive dissonance between his thoughts and actions feel distant and manageable. Instead of fighting the performance, he found himself leaning into it, enjoying the attention even as his rational mind cataloged all the reasons this was a terrible idea.

When someone pulled him onto the dance floor, Sam felt his body move without conscious direction, responding to rhythms he didn't remember learning. The dress clung to every curve as he swayed to the bass-heavy music, his hips finding movement patterns that felt natural despite being completely foreign to his experience.

Hands found his waist, his hips, the exposed skin of his back where the gold chains bounced against him to the beat of the music. Instead of pulling away, he found himself leaning into the touch. The physical contact felt electric against his transformed body, every sensation amplified through his new anatomy.

Kieran appeared sometime after midnight, cutting through the crowd with the easy confidence that came from never being

told no about anything in his entire privileged existence. "Investment banking," he shouted over the music when Sam asked, which translated to expensive watch, perfectly styled hair, and the unshakeable belief that he was the most interesting person in any room.

Under normal circumstances, Sam would have cataloged every red flag-the way Kieran interrupted other conversations, his casual dismissal of the bartender, the obvious calculation in his compliments. But through the haze of alcohol and whatever personality override was controlling his responses, Kieran seemed charming, confident, and devastatingly attractive in ways that made Sam's pulse quicken.

"Want to continue this conversation somewhere quieter?" Kieran asked, leaning close enough that Sam could smell his expensive cologne and feel the warmth of his breath against his ear.

Sam heard himself respond with the answer his sober mind would have found appalling: "I'd love that."

Back at Kieran's apartment, Sam felt like he was watching someone else's life unfold. The exposed brick walls and industrial lighting created an atmosphere that was both sophisticated and masculine, making him acutely aware of how feminine he must appear in contrast.

Kieran poured them each a glass of wine from an expensive-looking bottle, but the alcohol was just an excuse for standing closer, for letting the sexual tension that had been building all evening finally surface. When he set down his glass and moved toward Sam, the air between them felt electric with possibility.

Being lifted onto the kitchen counter sent ripples through his nervous system. Kieran's hands on his thighs, fingers tracing patterns on skin that seemed designed to respond to touch, made

Sam gasped in ways that would have embarrassed his former self. Every caress felt amplified, as if his new anatomy had been wired for sensation in ways his male body never had been.

When Kieran's mouth found his neck, Sam arched involuntarily, his body responding with shocking eagerness. The sensations built in waves he didn't understand, pleasure that seemed to emanate from his core and spread through his entire being. He heard himself making sounds-soft gasps, whispered encouragements-that belonged to someone who knew how to be desired.

Clothes disappeared with careless abandon, Sam's body responding to touches and sensations that felt entirely foreign yet somehow exactly right. Kieran's mouth found his neck, his collarbone, his breasts, trailing heat down his transformed body while hands explored curves and sensitive places that didn't exist for Sam a month ago.

The actual moment of intimacy was overwhelming in ways Sam couldn't have anticipated. The feeling of being filled, of surrendering control, of his body responding with liquid heat and desperate need-it was everything he'd never known he was missing. Each thrust sent shockwaves through nerve endings that felt newly awakened, building toward a crescendo that seemed to originate from somewhere deeper than physical sensation.

When the climax finally hit, it wasn't the quick, focused release he was accustomed to, but something that rolled through his entire body in waves, leaving Sam shaking and breathless and completely undone. He clung to Kieran like an anchor, overwhelmed by the intensity of what his body was capable of feeling.

Afterwards, as they lay tangled together, Sam felt a contentment that seemed to settle into his bones. This was what it meant to be wanted completely-to be the object of someone's

desire in ways that went beyond mere attraction. His body had been designed for this, crafted for pleasure and connection in ways his male form never could have achieved.

He should have been horrified by how natural it felt, how eagerly his body had responded to touches and sensations that represented everything he'd never wanted to experience. Instead, he fell asleep listening to Kieran's heartbeat.

### **Trial Period: Day 30**

Sam woke to unfamiliar sunlight streaming through floor-to-ceiling windows that definitely didn't belong in his apartment, his head pounding with the kind of hangover that suggested he'd made numerous poor decisions last night. The expensive sheets beneath him were evidence enough that he wasn't in his own bed, but the real confirmation came when he turned to find Kieran sleeping beside him, looking annoyingly perfect even with morning hair.



The previous night's events crashed back into his consciousness with the subtlety of a freight train—the drinks, the dancing, the complete abandonment of every principle he'd ever held. His body ached in ways that provided detailed testimony about exactly what had happened after they'd left the bar, and the chocolate brown dress lay crumpled on the floor like evidence of a crime he'd enthusiastically committed.

Sam felt a wave of shame and self-disgust that threatened to overwhelm his already fragile emotional state. This wasn't him—he didn't hook up with investment bankers who used cologne as a weapon, didn't drink cosmos until his judgment evaporated, didn't respond to male attention like some desperate character from a romantic comedy.

Except apparently he did now, and with enough enthusiasm to make the entire experience feel disturbingly natural.

Moving carefully to avoid waking Kieran, Sam gathered his scattered belongings and attempted to restore some semblance of dignity to his appearance. The bathroom mirror revealed exactly what he'd expected-smudged makeup that told the story of his evening in unflattering detail, hair that looked like he'd been caught in a windstorm, and the overall appearance of someone who'd made a series of regrettable life choices.

The walk across the city would be a parade of shame that would probably end up on someone's social media as evidence of modern dating culture's decline. But the alternative-staying for awkward morning conversation with Kieran about what this meant and whether they should exchange numbers-was even more appalling.

Then Sam remembered where he needed to be today anyway. Results Fitness was only six blocks away, and he could end this entire nightmare this morning. The trial period was finally over, which meant he could terminate his membership and watch all these impossible changes reverse themselves like some cosmic undo button.

The walk through downtown in evening wear during the early weekend morning was exactly as humiliating as he'd anticipated. Early morning joggers and dog walkers stared at him with barely concealed amusement, their expressions ranging from sympathetic to openly judgmental. His towering heels clicked against the sidewalk with each step, announcing his walk of shame to anyone within a three-block radius.

Sam kept his head down and moved as quickly as his impractical footwear would allow, trying to ignore the looks and whispered comments from people who were clearly getting their entertainment value from his obvious predicament. By the time

he reached Results Fitness, he was simultaneously furious and mortified, ready to end this entire supernatural nightmare and return to a life where his biggest crisis was someone accidentally deleting their desktop shortcuts.

Jessica looked up from the front desk as he entered, her professional smile faltering slightly as she took in his appearance. For a moment, her composure cracked with what might have been genuine human reaction, but she quickly recovered.

"Good morning, Sam!" she said with slightly forced brightness, her eyes carefully focused on his face rather than his rumpled dress. "You're here early today. Planning to get a workout in before the weekend?"

"Actually," Sam said, trying to summon whatever dignity he had left, "I need to talk to you about my membership. Today's my last day, right? The trial period is over?"

"Oh!" Jessica's face fell slightly, though she maintained her professional demeanor. "Yes, that's correct. Your thirty-day trial ends today. Are you interested in signing up for a full membership?"

Sam felt a surge of relief that was almost overwhelming. Finally, a clear path out of this mess. "I'd like to terminate it, please. End the whole thing. Go back to who I was before."

"I see," Jessica said, though she looked genuinely disappointed. "Let me get the paperwork for you."

Of course even ending a free trial required paperwork. Sam supposed gyms had perfected the art of making departure as inconvenient as possible, hoping people would just give up and become paying members through sheer exhaustion.

Jessica rummaged through a filing cabinet behind the desk, producing a standard-looking termination form that represented Sam's ticket back to normal life. "Just fill this out and sign at the bottom, and that will be it."

Sam took the form and a pen, settling into one of the lobby chairs to complete what felt like the most important paperwork of his life. The questions were straightforward-satisfaction with services ("meh"), likelihood of recommending Results Fitness to others ("low"), reason for termination ("not interested in having a vagina").

He moved through the form quickly, eager to finish this process and begin whatever cosmic reversal would hopefully restore his old life. When he reached the signature line at the bottom, Sam automatically scrawled "Sam Lane."

The moment the pen finished his signature, a sensation shot down his spine like liquid nitrogen being injected directly into his nervous system.

Sam froze, pen trembling in his hand as the full realization of what he'd just done crashed into his consciousness. "Sam" wasn't his real name. It was just easier to say, easier to write, easier for people to remember than "Samuel." He'd been taking the easy way to his own identity for twenty-eight years, so automatically that he'd never even consciously thought about it. Every introduction, every signature, every form he'd ever filled out-all shortcuts.

The cold sensation spread through his entire body, encompassing him completely like being submerged in ice water. Something was settling around him, not replacing him but wrapping around his existing consciousness like a perfectly fitted shell.

"Samantha" clicked into place with the satisfying precision of a complex puzzle piece finding its destined position.

For a moment, she experienced a strange duality-Sam's familiar cynical perspective overlaid with something entirely different. It wasn't replacement, she realized, but integration.

All of Sam's memories, his analytical nature, his dark humor remained intact. But the part of him that had always chosen the path of least resistance had been fundamentally rewired, like someone had updated her core programming with a patch that made shortcuts physically impossible to execute.

The transformation was elegant in its simplicity. She retained her sense of self, her memories as Sam, his way of seeing the world. But taking shortcuts now felt wrong in a way she couldn't explain-like trying to write with her non-dominant hand or walk backwards up stairs.

This final change had flipped the one switch in her brain that was core to everything Sam used to be. She was still Sam, just... incompatible with laziness now. The idea of half-assing anything felt as foreign as the idea of giving maximum effort had felt a month ago.

Then, the realization hit her. This wasn't a curse. What had changed her existence was literally-she appreciated the irony-a life hack. Some supernatural force had hacked apart Sam's entire life, only to reassemble it in a new arrangement that required constant effort.

For a moment, Samantha allowed herself to remember what it had been like to be Sam. The comfortable isolation of his apartment, where he could ignore phone calls and avoid human complexity for days at a time. The blissful irresponsibility of his old job, where problems were someone else's fault and effort was optional. The freedom to order takeout every night, to let laundry pile up until it became a geographical feature, to spend entire weekends doing absolutely nothing productive.

God, it had been so \*easy\*. No daily makeup routine, no careful outfit coordination, no managing other people's emotions at work. No maintaining friendships that required constant social investment, no exercising every morning, no planning elaborate

events where every detail mattered to someone else. Sam had been able to phone it in, day after day, without consequence.

Looking at her current existence, Samantha felt exhausted just thinking about everything it demanded. Her job required emotional labor that never ended-managing client expectations, soothing vendor egos, anticipating problems before they happened. She could already tell that her new relationships with Brittany, Chloe, and Maya would need constant maintenance-remembering their problems, showing up to events, participating in activities she found mind-numbing. Even her appearance demanded daily attention and effort that Sam had never had to invest.

Every single aspect of her life now required more work, more attention, more \*effort\* than anything Sam had ever committed to. The sheer volume of daily maintenance was staggering compared to Sam's old existence of blessed neglect.

She wanted that ease back with a desperate intensity that caught her off guard. The simple life where no one expected anything from her, where she could exist without performance or investment or caring about outcomes.

But even as that longing filled her chest, the thought of actually choosing it made her physically recoil. Returning to that life would mean... what? Half-assing her way through days? Avoiding responsibility? Letting things slide because it was easier than dealing with them?

The very concept felt nauseating. Not because she'd been convinced it was morally wrong, but because something deeper had shifted. Her new brain reacted to the idea of cutting corners the way her old self would have reacted to eating garbage or sleeping in sewage. It wasn't a conscious choice-it was revulsion at a cellular level.

Samantha looked down at the termination paperwork, understanding exactly why she'd wanted to quit. The gym represented commitment, routine, effort-everything Sam had spent his life avoiding. But now the thought of walking away felt impossible. Not because she liked what the gym had made her, but because quitting would be... giving up. Taking the easy way out. Half-assing her own life. No way.

Her hands moved with newfound certainty, tearing the termination form into precise pieces that fluttered to the lobby floor.

"Actually," she said to Jessica, "I changed my mind. I'd like to sign up for a lifetime membership instead."

Jessica's face lit up with genuine pleasure. "Oh, that's wonderful! I'm so glad you've decided to continue your journey with us."

As Jessica processed the membership upgrade, producing an elegant card that read "Samantha Grace Lane: Lifetime Member" in raised gold lettering, Samantha felt a sense of inevitability settle into her bones. This was who she had to be now-someone who saw things through, who didn't quit when things got challenging.

"Welcome to the Results Fitness family, Samantha!" Jessica said, handing over the lifetime membership card.

Inside Samantha's small clutch purse, the vintage-looking trial membership card began to shimmer and fade. The laminated paper grew translucent, then dissolved entirely in a brief puff of silver smoke that dissipated through the clasp of the clutch.

Across the city, an elegant envelope materialized in a different mailbox-once again finding its way into the hands of someone whose life had become a carefully orchestrated symphony of shortcuts and conveniences. Food delivery apps, ride shares, automated bill payments, virtual assistants to handle scheduling,

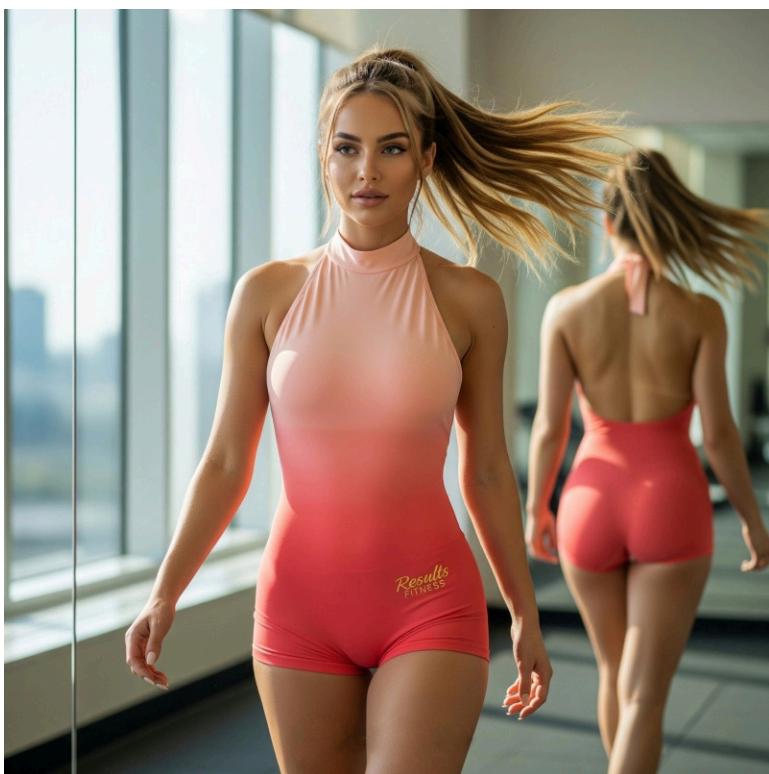
subscription services for everything from razors to meal planning. Another person who had optimized efficiency so thoroughly that effort itself had become extinct from their daily experience.

The card was methodical in its selection, seeking out those who had built entire identities around avoiding the inconvenience of genuine engagement with their own lives. One by one, it would test their relationship with effort and convenience, offering each person the opportunity to discover what they might become if shortcuts were no longer an option.

The cycle continued, systematic and patient, pushing back against a culture that had forgotten the value of doing things the hard way.

Twenty minutes later, Samantha emerged from the women's locker room transformed once again. Gone was the last night's dress that was a reminder of Sam's final mistakes. The Results Fitness retail section had provided everything she needed to move forward-a sleek halter bodysuit that graduated from soft peach at the shoulders to deep coral at the short hem, with the gym's logo embroidered in gold at the hip.

She'd pulled her honey-blonde hair into a high ponytail and applied a light layer of tinted moisturizer. Looking at her reflection in the mirror, she saw someone who belonged here, who took fitness seriously, who cared enough to invest in proper gear.



As she walked through the gym toward the yoga studio, Samantha remembered she had the Montgomery wedding at two o'clock. Perfect timing—she could complete her morning yoga practice, check in with the girls, get herself ready, and still have plenty of time to handle the mountain of tasks involved with coordinating the ceremony.

Samantha Lane had a lot of work to do.