

# Profoundly POWERLESS

A Novel by Jenny Amara

## Profoundly Powerless

### Chapter 09 - There's No Stopping Family Dinner

Exciting as that was meeting Paul's antagonist, there was no stopping Paul's mother's questioning over his current state. From questions about where the chocolates came from to why Paul kept eating them, the questions continued unabated by Paul's strong desire for his family to let it go. His sister had only piled on even more when she arrived.

"Can we just eat our meal in peace? I'll be back to myself in a couple of weeks, tops. So, we can drop this whole thing preferably and talk about other things that are going on, please?"

"Paul, I understand why you'd be hesitant to discuss this. You look a bit like I did when I was pregnant with your sister. Oh God! You're not pregnant, are you?" Paul's mother asked, greatly alarmed at the possibility.

"What? No! How could I be? This has only been happening for a few days."

"Well, stranger things have happened, right Annie?"

"Oh, one hundred percent. You can just be working, and then some random person injects something into you, and who knows what happens from there? Strange times we live in for sure," Annie deadpanned while staring at Paul.

"Ha... Ha... Very funny, Annie. Please, any other topics? I am not pregnant. I'm not even going to look like this in a few days. I already used my power to change back once before."

"Your power?" Paul's mother asked quizzically.

"You didn't tell her?" Paul asked, looking at Annie, who replied with a shrug.

"Sorry, Mom. I thought Annie told you... Something similar happened a few weeks ago. I got turned into a girl and then—"

"Woman, you got turned into a woman. Unless you're saying, you got younger too?" Paul's mother interrupted him.

"Ahem... Woman, and then I used my power to change back into my usual self."

"Honey, that's incredible news! Your power isn't as useless as you thought!"

"Heh, yeah. I guess not. It worked out for me in this one instance. And, well, I guess I've already got my second shot at it."

"That's so wild that you'd spontaneously turn into a woman. I don't think I've ever heard of anything like that. Have you, Annie?" Paul's mother asked. Annie's eyes opened large, and she spooned a mouthful of food into her mouth and then averted her eyes. Paul sighed heavily in response to Annie's reaction before recounting the last several weeks to his mother. Fifteen minutes later, the story had been retold.

"So, how do we stop this gender-bender villain from doing this to you again?" Paul's mother asked.

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Well, she's obviously the one that's behind this second attack on you, too. Getting turned into a woman once would be a terrible case of collateral damage by a maniacal villain. Having it happen a second time so soon makes it pretty clear to me that she has an agenda, and you are a central part of it. So, I think it's best if we start to make a plan for how we deal with this! I'm not about to let some crazy woman torture my sweet baby boy."

"Moom, you are embarrassing me."

"Nonsense, parents are allowed to say these things about our children. Now, Annie, what can you tell me about the situation? Surely, you researched the suspects."

Annie turned her head to the side so she couldn't catch anyone's eye. "No, I didn't think I needed to..."

Their mother sighed and pulled out a notebook from her oversized purse. "It looks like I'll just have to do it myself. Paul, tell me every detail. Mom is on the case!"

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Thus began Paul's dual mission to kick his chocolate habit and help his mother discover the identity of his mysterious adversary.

Paul woke up the morning after his family dinner, relieved to have the day off to relax. This relief was short-lived. A knock followed by another at his front door jostled him out of bed. Walking to the front door, he opened it and saw his mother standing there with several bags in her hands.

"Paul! You're indecent, Sweetie. Get back inside quickly."

Paul stumbled back into his apartment as his mother pushed through the door. "Huh?" was all he managed to respond.

"Paul...ah, you can't open your front door with your robe open. It's indecent. Go get changed, young lady."

"Ma-oom, don't call me that. I'm not a girl!"

"Woman."

"Whatever," Paul said, stomping off. Five minutes later, he returned wearing his only female clothes. Upon seeing Paul, his mother was confused about why he chose to wear his work uniform.

"I thought you said you had the day off?"

"I do."

"Then why are you wearing your uniform?"

"This is the only outfit I have that fits this body."

"Mhmm, that's what I figured. Here," Paul's mother said, stretching her arms towards him. Both hands were holding a separate bag. Paul took the two bags and looked at them briefly, realizing what was happening.

"How many?"

"Just one or two. Three tops."

Paul turned back around to go to his room to change. His mother had a history of

requiring her children to model the clothes she had bought. The idea of modeling his outfits sent his brain straight back to his school years, buying clothes each summer for the upcoming year. The only thing missing was the public venue in which to be completely mortified. However, Paul ventured to guess that his mother would have some fresh new form of torture for him to suffer.

"I didn't know your sizes, so I had to guess. Try the bras on first. Start with the bigger sizes and work down. Not the other way, or you'll pinch those boobies."

"Mom! Please don't talk about boobies with me."

"Would you prefer I say breasts?"

"No!"

"Well, sorry to say it, honey, but you have a rather sizable pair. How should I refer to them?"

Paul responded, "Maybe we don't talk about them at all?" and walked out wearing the underwear his mother had purchased. "Oh, well, it looks like the largest size wins. I'm glad I bought that one. I almost didn't," Paul's mother clinically responded as she saw her son's full figure. She was astonished by the sight. She could see several resemblances to her own body in Paul, but also elements that remained of Paul's father. There was no mistaking that this woman was actually her son, despite how confusing that was.

"Am I all right to go now? Two more outfits, right?" Paul asked impatiently. He stood there anxiously for several minutes while his mother stared in disbelief.

"Oh, uhh, yes. Try the dress on first. It will be easiest to get on."

"A dress? Do I have to?" Paul whined.

"Yes, I think you'll find it more comfortable than trousers and a shirt."

"Ugh, fine..." Paul said, stomping off. He knew better than to debate the finer points with his mother. He would always lose that debate. Returning several minutes later, Paul's mother stood up to see him and put her hand over her mouth in shock.

"It's that bad?" Paul asked, worried that he looked like a freak.

"No, Paula. It's... it just reminded me of something from a long time ago, is all. I think you look very pretty."

"I don't want to look pretty, though," Paul responded, choosing that offense as the hill he would defend over the other offense of using a feminine name to refer to him.

"Well, I can't help it. You are pretty. It's just good genes. Now, go try on the capris and tank top. Hopefully, it's not too small. I may have underestimated your size—"

As Paul's mother was speaking, another knock came on the door. Paul was closest, so he answered it out of instinct.

"Delivery, Ma'am. Sign here, please."

Upon hearing the salutation, Paul grumbled but signed for the package silently and returned to his mother.

"Who was it?" she asked, knowing very well that it had been a delivery.

"Looks like someone sent me more chocolates. It was another delivery man."

"Another? Not the same one who has delivered you chocolates these last few days?"

"Well, I didn't see the first box get delivered. But I don't recall any similarities between people who recently delivered things to me. Do you think the Global Delivery Service is 'in' on the old lady's scheme? Maybe they don't ship enough, and turning me and the rest of the world into women will increase online shopping, making GDS the top logistics company in the world and raising shareholders' portfolios to all-time highs!"

"Joke all you want, Paula, but this is serious business. It's very concerning that someone is targeting you like this. There are people out there with powers you can barely even comprehend. Most people are using their powers for good, but villains are also out there. So, excuse me if I worry about my child," Paul's mother said, wiping a freshly forming tear from her eye.

"Sorry, Mom. I didn't mean to upset you. I know it's weird to be targeted like this. I will try to take it more seriously."

"Thank you. Now let's look at these chocolates," Paul's mother said, reaching out to take the box from Paul. Paul had a little hesitancy in giving the box over; his 'addiction' to the confectionery was already strong. Paul's mother's face became very focused as she inspected the package, turning it over and examining each side. She frowned as she finished her visual inspection. "This seems like a

completely ordinary off-the-shelf box of big-brand chocolates."

"Yeah, and?"

"I thought they would be custom or fancy in some way. It looks like they haven't been tampered with at all."

"Here, let me see them," Paul said, taking the package. Yeah, they are sealed like they would be from the factory. Let's open it to see if that reveals anything," Paul continued, opening the package. "It looks pretty normal to me," he said, placing the open box on the coffee table between him and his mother.

"Yeah, I'd say you're right. Dang, I was hoping we'd have our first clue."

"Mom, I really think we should just hand this off to S.U.C.K.S. They know all the background. They even assigned this beefcake bozo superhero to my case. I think his name was... Rome? Something like that, at least."

"The Roman? He's a very high-level hero for something like this? Don't you think?"

"How should I know? I avoid superhero antics as much as possible," Paul said, turning away out of an evident sadness he held inside.

"Honey, I know you were disappointed by your power evaluation. I know you wanted to fight crime and be like your hero, Captain Kimper. But we don't always get what we want in life. That doesn't mean we should hide from the realities of the world. Being informed about superheroes is an important part of staying safe."

"Yes, Mom. I've heard the speech before. We don't need to go through it again."

"Fine, at least let me take these in for—" Paul's mother stopped in her tracks as she saw Paul swiftly grab a chocolate and down it in one bite.

"Paula! No!"

"What? You came to the same conclusion I did. They are ordinary chocolates."

"No, I did not come to that same conclusion! I said they look ordinary, but look what they've done to you!" as Paul's mother said this, her eyes grew wide, catching Paul's attention.

"What? You look like you've seen a ghost."

"No, but I did just see your boobs grow. Look."

Paul looked down and saw that his chest was now overflowing out of the top of his dress and bra, "Well, I guess seeing is believing, right?"

"I always believed you, Paula, but seeing it is more alarming. Even if this was supposed to all be from weight gain from too many sugary treats, the effect wouldn't be this fast. I'm worried that this might be magic."

"Magic? Only a few confirmed cases of magic have ever been documented. It's extremely rare, and I doubt these are enchanted chocolates."

"No! It's more common than you think! Have you heard of Ramnaghast? He's supposed to be able to grant wishes with his magic. He's an evil djinn searching for people to corrupt by granting crooked versions of their greatest desires. It's super scary."

"Mom, that's all tabloid stories. You know those are fake. Please tell me you know they are fake," Paul said, looking at his mother with concern.

"Only the celebrity ones! The Daily Telegram is the real deal!"

Paul sighed heavily but relented. This wasn't a fight he was interested in having right now. "Okay, Mom. So maybe magic is more common than I know. What do we do about it?"

"S.U.C.K.S. can look at the chocolates. They will be able to help."

"I know they have magic-detecting abilities there, but would that work on an enchanted food item? Usually, they scan people, not possessions."

"We will just have to see. Won't we?" Paul's mother asked, emphasizing her last word.

"You don't mean..."

"Get your shoes on! We're going to meet with some superheroes!"