

Chapter Five

July 15th, 2020

Despite the fact that he'd had time to watch the changes, Joe absolutely couldn't believe the transformation he'd been witnessing for the last few days. The first day, he'd been down for his own regeneration, which had only been a few minor readjustments here and there, nothing had taken the sort of chunk of time that remodeling apparently took up.

He'd only slept for about a day, but he'd woken up almost violently hungry. His eyes had corrected while he'd slept, and so he'd thrown out his contacts and glasses. The little deadspot which he couldn't rotate his left leg into had been repaired, and that was a nice change. But everything that had happened to him felt like small potatoes.

By contrast, all three of his partners were going through dramatic changes, even more than he'd expected them to. The minute he woke up, he'd laid himself down next to Liv's sleeping form, and it was clear, she was *changing* and *fast*. She was going to be almost as tall as he was when she was done, he'd suspected, although the thick cocooning was more than a little disturbing. All three of his partners looked like they'd escaped from some David Cronenberg movie more than they did actual people. Their bodies were covered in a sort of offwhite shell, like some overgrown scabbing, but he knew that was to cover and protect the deep changes that the girls' bodies were going through.

Each of them was gaining several inches of height, somewhere between six and ten, depending on the person, and that kind of rapid growth involved a lot of physical rework. To do that, the nanobots were stripping out any excess they could, and it meant, in some ways, that all three of the women were going to wake up violently hungry when they did. To add in the extra inches to their bones, muscles and skin, all of the raw mass had to come from somewhere. In some cases, it meant thinning the bones to stretch them, or using up all stored fat.

Before they'd been injected, the Doctors Meyer had insisted each of them eat until they felt like they were so full they were going to burst. They'd also insisted none of them go to the bathroom. The scientists wanted them to have loads of material the nanobots could work with, especially since the girls were all athletes, none of whom had much in the way of excess fat on their bodies that could be commandeered. All that caloric intake could be used to aid in the regeneration process, as it was raw material which could be transformed into body modifications.

The other thing he could tell, even through the protective shell, was that the girls were getting bustier, at least Liv and Clara. Clara especially, as she wasn't just getting larger breasts – she was regrowing breast tissue that had been *removed* because of being cancerous, meaning there was a *lot* of tissue to be rebuilt.

The doctors had assured Clara that with the regeneration, she'd have breasts again, but they also warned her they might be of a different size than she was accustomed to. She insisted that any breasts at all would be a welcome change, something the doctors could understand.

When he'd been documenting the regeneration with photos and notes for the doctors on his cellphone, he couldn't help but poke at the protective tissue, finding it sticky and goeey, rather than hard and cartilaginous. He didn't let his touch linger, but when he pulled his finger back and brought it to his nose, it smelled sweet and sucrose-y.

He'd even set up a timelapse camera from the moment he woke up, filming all three of the girls, taking two seconds every ten minutes, and it was astonishing to actually *see* them growing inches in the footage.

It seemed like the only parts of their bodies that really didn't have any sort of carapace over them were the faces, although the eyes had small egg-like shells over them, something that was apparently very common amongst regenerations. He'd had them over his own eyes himself when he'd first awoken, the result of what little waste the nanobots produced.

His three partners woke up in relatively close succession, Liv first on day 3 in the late morning, with Tori midday and Clara in the early evening. The first thing Liv did was spend about twenty minutes relearning how to walk, because her brain took some serious time to relearn how long her legs were, and how to walk with them. Her mind wanted her to only have to move her leg so far, but it felt wrong, the step and stride not what she was accustomed to. The distance expected and the actual distance didn't line up and it would take time to get her body and mind on the same page. She hoped that things would come naturally to her after a bit more time, but she also knew that the body dysmorphia was real and shouldn't be ignored.

As soon as Tori was up and awake, she and Liv spent about an hour talking about how much they'd physically grown, even making a point to stand next to Joe, as if to experience him from an entirely new angle, basically able to look him almost evenly in the eyes for the first time. Tori's biggest concern was if she'd lost any of her flexibility during her regeneration, as it was something she'd always taken pride in, being able to bend and twist in unusual and exotic ways. To her great delight, not only had she not lost any flexibility, she'd actually *gained* some, able to bend her legs back further than she'd ever been able to before, able to get her ankles behind her neck. Liv had also gained some flexibility, but certainly not anywhere near as much as Tori had. Joe found it interesting that those who were in a mold still had a few pieces of unique physiology, even if it was beneath the surface.

Nobody was quite ready for Clara's reaction when she woke up. She shook the slight shell of effluvium off her body and moved to stand up, placing her hands on her newly grown breasts, gasping a little at how tender they were, or maybe at how large they were. Probably both, Joe thought to himself as Liv walked over to inspect Clara's tits as Clara examined Liv's. Clara was both crying and giggling, an almost manic grin on her face. "Jesus, I didn't have tits this big *before* the operation," she said, her voice giddy and delirious. "I mean, I had a good pair of breasts, but these? These are *weapons-grade tits*. Hey! Easy, Liv, I guess yours aren't quite as overly sensitive as mine are."

"Oh, I definitely feel every touch on them, but I guess not," Liv said with a slight smile. "How's this feel?" She took and dragged one fingertip around one of Clara's tan areolae, watching Clara shiver hard, giggling as she pulled Liv's fingertip away.

"*Fuck* that's intense," Clara giggled. "I can't believe it. I'm really whole again. Better than whole! I'm a fucking giant! With great big giantess tits! It's awesome!"

Tori rolled her eyes a little bit with a smirk. "I've had boobs this size since I was sixteen, and I have to tell you, they're not always a benefit. You gotta strap 'em down for athletics, and it's a whole lot of extra weight to be lugging around, even if men do go fucking crazy over them." She glanced over at Joe, a wicked little grin on her lips. "It's okay to look, Joe," she said with a flip of her hair. "They're all yours to play with now whenever you want."

"Do I look better with bigger tits, Joe?" Liv asked him.

Joe blanched with a slight grin. “There’s no safe way out of this question, is there?”

“Sure there is,” Liv said, walking over towards him. “Just tell me the truth.”

“I think your boobs were the perfect size for you when you were like six inches shorter, but now that you’re a lot taller, I think the new boobs also look perfect,” he said, trying to narrowly walk that line.

Liv grabbed the back of his head and pulled him into a firm kiss before giggling. “Good answer. Wanna touch ‘em?”

“I mean, yes, but—”

“Stop being weird and touch ‘em!” Liv laughed, grabbing Joe’s wrists, pulling his hands up to make him squeeze her newly enlarged mammaries. “Pretty great, huh?”

“You can be damn sure of that,” he said, tweaking her nipples, just to watch her jump a little bit.

“Better hope so, ‘cause you got two more pairs just like ‘em.”

“Let’s see *how* just like them,” he said, gesturing for Liv, Tori and Clara to stand in a line next to each other, and sure enough, as expected, they were physically identical from the neck down, no hair besides what was on the top of their heads, and even that all seemed to be the same length. They all had the same heterochromia that Tom’s girls did, which was almost as jarring as the change in height. Joe had known to expect it, but seeing it was something else entirely. He was very glad the girls’ faces hadn’t changed, because without them, he’d have been hard pressed to tell them apart. They were even moving in similar gaits, which was odd, since they’d adjusted to the same height from various lower heights, differing by an inch or two here or there.

All their hair had turned to the same shade of jet black, and the length was universally just past the bottom of their tits, which was about as long as Liv had usually kept hers but had meant that Tori and Clara had gained a couple of inches in hair length, as both usually wore their hair shorter. Despite they were the same length, all three of them began to style it differently right away, Liv putting it up in her typical ponytail, Clara pulling hers into pigtails and Tori putting hers up in a bun.

They’d also seen their skin tones lighten just a little, not so much that their Asian heritage would be lost, but certainly not so much that they’d be mistaken for entirely Caucasian. They looked more like K-Pop stars who had a tendency to avoid over exposure to sunlight. They’d also gained a little bit more muscle, gotten stronger.

As soon as each of them had gotten up, they’d wolfed down whatever food had been around, each of them drinking a gallon of cold orange juice and snarfing down a bag of pretzels, trying to fuel up their bodies, feeling nearly starving. They’d been warned it would happen, but none of them had been quite prepared for just how hungry they actually felt.

They all got dressed in the paper hospital gowns that had been left for them, after having tested that they had the same clothing allergy that they’d been warned about, something Joe still felt sort of weird about. A few hours after Clara had woken up, Tom and his Team had come over to visit, along with the Meyers, who were checking up on everyone.

“Goddamn, Liv,” Tom said to them with a laugh, “you girls got a *lot* taller.”

“We’re all taller than you now,” she teased. “Remember how you used to joke about how little me and Tori were? Well, now you’re the shorter one, but don’t worry. I’m sure we won’t tease you *too* much about it.”

“Your mold template is clearly a lot taller than mine,” Tom chuckled. “How are the templates established, Doctors?”

“We put some parameters in when we’re cooking up the mix, but a good part of it is also based off the man who they’re imprinting on,” the male Dr. Meyer said. “That’s part of the reason we’ve been documenting this as much as we are. We’re fairly certain we’re only setting about 10-20% of the parameters, and the rest are based on something within the male imprinting target.”

“Something?” Joe asked.

“We don’t know what it is based on within the men that sets their template versus what we contribute to them,” the female Dr. Meyer said. “With Tom’s template, we set the redheaded gene as the highest priority with muscularity as the second priority, whereas with Joe’s template, we set muscularity as the highest priority and the curvier aspect as the second priority. The height element came as a complete surprise to us.”

“So I’ve got you to thank for this incredible set of tits to replace the pair I lost?” Clara said with a grin, cupping them in her hands. “I didn’t think I was going to ever have breasts again, after the cancer, but these are bigger, nicer, and way more sensitive...”

“Well, we wanted to be sure they grew back,” said the male Dr. Meyer, “but it isn’t as though we had any sculpt or design. That’s all just part of Joe’s template.”

“I’m glad they’re not small, Joe, so thanks,” Clara said, hugging him firmly.

“I don’t think I *consciously* had anything to do with it, Clara, but I’m glad you’re happy and I’m glad you feel whole again.” He glanced over at Ainsley. “I see you sized up a little yourself, and it looks like your hair matches the others now. Feel a little weird being so physically similar to others?”

“Not at all,” Ainsley said. “There’s something... comforting about it. I feel a bit more like I’m part of a family now. Although I did spend a couple of hours having to relearn how to walk.”

“I know, right?” Clara added with a giggle. “Longer legs are so fucking weird.”

Joe glanced over and noticed that both Meg and Mel were still wearing paper gowns, like all of his partners were, even though they were supposed to be over the fabric allergy that they’d been told would only last a day or two after the regeneration. Then it dawned on him, “Oh, I get it,” Joe said. “I was going to ask why you two are still in paper gowns, but it’s a solidarity thing with Ainsley, isn’t it?”

“Sort of,” Mel said with a slight frown.

Meg offered a roll of her eyes and a laugh. “Nothing fucking *fits* anymore,” she said. “Our legs are too long, we only have one bra that fits between all of us...”

“Oh *shit*,” Liv giggled. “I didn’t even *think* about that. My favorite t-shirt’s barely going to be a crop top for me now. *Nothing* I own is going to fit me anymore. Any of us.”

“I *might* have one bra that would maybe fit, but I kinda doubt it,” Tori said, “‘cause I think I’m a bit bigger than I was before I went to sleep. I’m certainly taller.”

“We’ve got clothing being delivered for you,” the male Dr. Meyer said. “Sports bras, panties, boxers, leggings, exercise shirts, hoodies, sweatpants... We can’t replace your entire wardrobe, but we can’t exactly leave you dressed like this the entire time you’re here and under observation. We’ve got them all here for you now, and Joe, when your team is past the allergy, we’ll have outfits for them as well.”

Tom picked up one of the exercise shirts, clearly for him, and noticed they, and all the other clothes in the stack, were sort of generic, off-label clothing, each sporting a DARPA logo somewhere on the fabric. “Stuff for us in here too?”

“You’re going to be here a while, Tom, so we wanted to give you some new things, just to help you feel a bit more part of the group,” the female Dr. Meyer said.

“How long’s a while?”

“We’re not really sure, but you should have clothes before you have new partners moving forward. It seems like once we get a size for a team’s mold, ordering additional clothes will be relatively easy, and we can even have them here in advance for when we’re staffing up your Teams.”

“How much bigger are our Teams likely to get, Doctors?” Tom asked.

“Oh, by a significant amount, if current science is to be trusted. At least doubled from your current size. More than likely even tripled,” the female Meyer said. “We’re still studying the serum’s resistance to DuoHalo and what size of a Team it will require to be fully immune to it.”

“Ah! Another little present for all of you,” the male Meyer said, grabbing a large roadie crate, the kind usually reserved for moving large pieces of musical equipment, setting it in front of them, opening it. Within were a dozen tiny boxes, each with a sticker on it with one of their names on it. Inside of each box was a smartwatch and a charger. “We need you to start wearing these immediately, all the time, except for when you’re showering, and they should be charging during that time. Also, make sure they’re connected to the base WiFi network as soon as you put them on.”

“You’re monitoring our heartrates?” Tom asked as he removed his from the box and strapped it onto his wrist, as the watch’s face went through a welcome screen, cycling the information about what capabilities it normally had before the screen turned bright blue, some white text went scrolling rapidly by, as if installing some new software, then returning to its normal watch face.

“We’re monitoring a lot of things about your physicality,” the female Meyer said. “Heart rate, breathing, brainwaves... it’s astonishing how many attributes we can program one of these little devices to watch and report on for you. We figured ankle bracelets might get in the way of your activities around the base and felt this would be less... intrusive.”

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July 17th, 2020

A few days later, everyone was past their cloth allergies and wearing their new clothes and Meg and Mel had taken on a new set of responsibilities. Much of the base personnel had been commandeered to help with the vaccination work across the country, so that left very few people to help them around the base in their day-to-day adjustments to their new bodies. Thankfully, Meg and Mel had been in school for

physical therapy, and as such saw this as a chance to apply their learning into practical experience. It would be like a less guided lab class, they decided.

It also didn't hurt that neither of them had changed quite as much as the girls in Joe's team, who were still having complications walking and running, mainly because while nothing hurt, nothing was where it was *supposed* to be. The new girls all felt like their legs were too long, and just as bad, when they turned to throw or catch something, they kept hitting themselves in the boob.

As such, Meg and Mel were now essentially retraining the girls in Joe's team how to move, getting their muscle memories to line up with how their bodies now functioned. They were never in pain – they just looked incredibly uncoordinated and clumsy, and so even things like playing catch were more complicated than they used to be. They threw too far, they overcorrected when trying to raise their arms to snatch a ball from its flightpath, they didn't lift their knees enough for each step.

It wasn't hard work – it was just a lot of repetition.

The doctors had left a long list of things that the newly remodeled members of their Teams should be doing, and Meg and Mel had found the whole list a lot like doing clinic hours, just without as much supervision. They might have been more nervous about that, but it seemed like their new bodies were much harder to injure or sprain, recovering from what might have been more serious injuries in their old bodies with relative ease. A scrape that had happened in the morning had been fully healed just a few hours later. While the Meyers had said they would naturally heal a little faster than they'd used to, that much of a change was going to take some time to comprehend.

Meanwhile, Ainsley had taken to her new body like a duck to water, the adjustments mostly minor and easy for her to wrap her head around and incorporate into her natural movements. While the other girls were still working getting used to catching a volleyball they were throwing around the recovery room, Ainsley was snapping off roundhouse kicks that made everyone else turn and stare in awe.

"Girl, you are the literal definition of that old meme – looks like a cinnamon roll, could kill you," Meg said to her. "How the hell did you learn how to do that?"

"Don't be so impressed," Ainsley grumbled. "If I'd have been striking an opponent, I'd have been off my target by like a foot. The move itself is there, but nothing's quite where it's supposed to be. I can move just fine, but precision work? I feel like a lot of my reflexes still don't feel like I'm responding correctly."

"I couldn't have done a kick like that before the regeneration," Mel replied.

Tom was amused but unsurprised. "Ainsley has a black belt in Tae Kwan Do, and she was on the short list for people trying out for Olympic air rifle. The only reason she wasn't in consideration for the biathlon was that she was too short for the cross-country skiing."

"Not much of a problem now," Ainsley said with a laugh.

"Ha! I wonder if a mold regeneration's going to be something banned by the Olympics," Ainsley said with a giggle. "If you want, I can teach you girls some fighting moves."

"Definitely," Liv said. "I don't want to have a body like this and not know how to use it a bit."

Just as Ainsley was starting to organize the girls into groups she could teach, a couple of airmen entered the room quickly before spotting Tom. "Mr. Holt-Hodge, we need you to come with us, please."

“What’s going on?” Tom asked as he moved over to join the two airmen.

“There’s a video conference that we’ve been told you’re needed for, sir. If you could follow us?”

Tom grabbed a towel, dried himself off very quickly, then moved with the two men out of the building and over to another building in the complex, towards the back, away from the doctor’s labs and from the dormitories. Tom thought it was a little odd how the two airmen leading him seemed to be taking the back path towards wherever they were going, avoiding the main thoroughfare of the complex in favor of walking along the backsides of buildings. The path probably made the trip take twice as long, even though it felt like they were walking twice as fast.

They brought him into a conference room, clicked a few buttons on the laptop, and when the screen was humming to life, the two airmen were stepping outside, closing the door behind themselves, clearly having been ordered not to wait inside of the room, as they didn’t have clearance to discuss whatever was about to transpire.

One by one, faces popped into the video conferencing call. Tom’s face appeared first and a minute or so later, the extremely familiar face of his brother, Dr. Timothy Holt-Hodge Jr., joined the call. Junior, Tom’s older brother, was a researcher specializing in virology over at John Hopkins. The next to pop into the call was their father, Major Timothy Holt-Hodge, who looked like he’d been called back into active duty, as he was in uniform once again, despite having retired nearly half a decade ago. And then the final person joined in and Tom had to hold back his surprise. It was General Ashley Erickson, Ainsley’s father and Tom’s godfather.

“Gentlemen,” General Erickson said, speaking first, a slight smile on the older man’s lips, “you’re probably wondering why I’ve gathered you all here today.”

“No shit,” Tom muttered.