

Profoundly POWERLESS

A Novel by Jenny Amara

Profoundly Powerless

Chapter 18 - Yeah, but can she walk, talk, and chew gum?

"I won't be talking. You can go ahead and send me to whatever holding cell you think can hold me. I'm no snitch, Darling."

"Don't call me that!"

"Oh? Do you still prefer C.K.? I didn't think you'd still be so attached to a life you can't even remember anymore."

"Don't be cruel!"

"Oh, touched a nerve, have I?"

"No! I'm through letting you have the power here."

"Hahahaha," Sorceress laughed at Helena, further frustrating the former hero. "You're too much, C.K. What "power" do you suppose you have to be able to subjugate me? As you can see, whatever power you once possessed now flows through my veins."

"What?"

"Yes, this body... it's not the product of me hitting the gym. Goddess, can you even imagine me... working out?"

"So you just thought you'd steal my power to grow those muscles?"

"Heavens no, Darling," Sorceress grinned mischievously as she poked at Helena's sore spots. "I think you can guess if you put that big brain of yours on it."

Helena paused momentarily, primarily out of anger at her longtime adversary, but ultimately suspected that she knew what Sorceress was alluding to.

"Devious Doctor did this to you."

"My lips are sealed, C.K."

"Typical."

"Oh? You expected a different answer?"

"No. You told me to send you back to your cell. I know you're only going to say things that you think will upset me."

"See, there's that big brain! It took you long enough to warm up those two brain cells you have left."

"Well, you know me so well; why don't we turn this around? If you can tell me what I was thinking, I'll have them let you go right now. We will never see each other again, and S.U.C.K.S. won't pursue you."

"Bullshit. You'll never let me go. You're still holding a grudge over a life you lost and can't even remember."

"Are you so sure? Having kids can change a person. I know you've met mine now. Do you think I would have agreed to be a mother if I hadn't moved on from my past?"

"Oh, ho ho ho! The mind games have begun!"

"Do you know many mothers that don't stand by their word? It's practically built into the role."

"You expect me to believe this?"

"Yes."

"Yes? That's all you have to say?"

"Yes, I won't repeat myself. Do you want to leave her a free woman or not? Tell me what you know about Devious Doctor. Or, tell me what I was thinking just now. Do either of those, and you can leave."

"Hmmm," Sorceress visually inspected Helena, standing there stoically. Her posture conveyed the confidence she recognized from the former superhero, but there was something more—a resolve that only a dedicated parent could convey. "I can tell you are serious. I guess you have changed more than I realized."

"I have."

"But, I can't tell you anything about Devious. I'd rather spend my life rotting in a cell than betray him."

"As I suspected. So, you just have to tell me what I figured out about you then. Get it right, and those cuffs will unlock, and I'll open the door for you personally."

Sorceress hesitated. She couldn't be sure she really knew Helena, but this deal was too good. It had to be a trap, but she couldn't figure out what the catch was. It appeared to be all upside, even if the odds were astronomically small.

"Well? Are we going to keep talking? Or should I have Daybreak bring you to your new home now?"

Sorceress felt forced to try. Her time was running out at this infinitely small chance of being released. "Fine, Darling. I'll give it a go. You were wondering how long you had to stop Devious from injecting himself with the formula he derived from your blood," Sorceress answered. Helena paused with a startle and remained eerily still. Sorceress watched uncomfortably while waiting for the woman to keep her end of the bargain. "I've won; time to release me now, C.K."

"Why would I do that?" Helena asked dryly in response.

"You promised!"

"I did," Helena answered slowly. "But... I said you had to tell me what I was thinking, not what you were thinking. So thank you for letting me know what Devious has been planning."

"What? I haven't told you anything!"

"But you have, Sorceress. You've told me everything and don't even realize it."

"Go ahead and believe what you want. I know what I said, and I told you nothing!"

"Daybreak, can you join us?" Helena asked. An orange mist began to fill the room. Within seconds, the mist became denser and coalesced slowly but surely into a

solid.

"Gnarly," Daybreak remarked as his body took shape before the two women.

"Go ahead and tell her, Daybreak."

"Totally. It's like a real crazy thing, but Helena and I figured this out years ago, right?"

"Figured what out, you oaf."

"Well, don't freak out, but it turns out that if other people inhale my atoms, it kind of works like a truth serum. The suspect just has to be willing to speak."

"But I've said nothing of any value. I just guessed what Darling here was thinking about."

"Should we show her?" Helena asked.

"Seems to work best that way. No one ever believes us," Daybreak answered.

A video of the interrogation room popped up on a screen. It showed Sorceress starting to answer the question to win her freedom, but the words uttered were unfamiliar to Sorceress. Instead of her hypothetical guess that she thought she had responded with, exacting details of Devious's plan to become the ultimate male spilled from her lips. Sorceress's face turned pale in disbelief.

"As we said, you've been very helpful, but as you are aware, I didn't know any of those details before, so I certainly wasn't thinking about them before. Daybreak, I think our prisoner would like to be brought to their holding cell now."

Sorceress looked catatonic. Her head hung low as Daybreak began to float the retraining unit from the room. As the device cleared the door's threshold, Sorceress's head bolted upright. "You've killed us all! He will kill me, and then you'll be next! Both of you have assured our collective deaths!"

"I think we can handle ourselves, and we won't let him hurt you either. We're the good guys, after all," Helena responded.

"Doomed! You're all doomed!" Sorceress screamed as she was moved toward the holding cells. Paul, Annie, and Blake rounded the corner to see Daybreak moving through the first layer of security to the penitentiary. Paul's eyes soon caught his mother's.

"How did it go? Did you find anything out?"

"More than we could have hoped," Helena was open with her thoughts.

"That's great! We need to get going on finding—" Paul said before his cell phone rang, interrupting his comment.

"Are you going to answer that?" Annie playfully ribbed her brother.

Paul scowled at his sister while placing his phone to his ear. "Hello?"

"Umm, okay."

"No, I'm not near my apartment at the moment."

"I guess about fifteen minutes. Why?"

"Uh-huh."

"No, no. Don't leave it outside. I'll be there as soon as possible."

"Okay, yes. I understand. I'll be there shortly."

"I'm leaving now."

"Okay, bye."

The others all looked at Paul quizzically. "What was that about?" Annie asked.

"I've got a package. I need to get back," Paul answered, turning around to leave.

"Hey! Wait! What's the rush?" Blake asked.

"Umm," Paul was hesitant to reply.

Helena wanted to help by offering a pragmatic solution to Paul's problem: "Roman, why don't you fly Paul home? It will be the quickest way."

"Sure—" Blake started before he was interrupted.

"No!" Paul responded.

"Why not?" Helena asked.

Paul visibly struggled to provide an answer and eventually relented. "Fine, let's go, Blake." With that, the two were gone. Blake utilized the speed of Hermes to whisk them off to their destination.

"What do you think that was about?" Annie asked her mother.

"The package must need a signature. Paul was never any good at picking up packages he missed."

"Sure... but that's not what I meant. Don't you think it's weird that Paul didn't want Blake's help?"

"Not really. Paul doesn't like Blake."

"That didn't seem to be the case when I showed up earlier. Plus, they obviously were willing to work together to do this whole mission thing."

"What are you saying, Annie?"

"I think Paul likes Blake. You know. He likes-likes him."

"Oh..."

"Yeah, my thoughts exactly."