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1,320 words.

<The Gift>

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Chapter Two

The day went well, we had food, I played with Abigail most of the day, only stopping to help my parents with cooking or cleaning. It was a wonderful day. Abigail had long since crashed in her bed, Dad could barely keep his eyes open, and Mum was fighting too.

I decided to turn in.

Sitting in the guest room, I saw my watch, still sealed.

Opening it up, I quickly set it up, skimmed the T&Cs on the app and found that it was giving me lots more detail than I thought a watch could give.

It asked me for my goals, and I hadn't really thought about it until it had asked. I entered 130 lbs and saw a message pop up on screen.

“Please wear the watch at all times for the most accurate information, using this information our AI model will generate a perfect guide for you to reach your weight as quickly as possible.”

I thought nothing of it and fell asleep.

The next morning, I checked my watch and saw that it was able to tell me what food I had eaten yesterday, it was even able to tell me how full my stomach was and when I should next eat.

I didn't think a watch could do that.

There was a buff man on the screen now, he introduced himself.

“Hello, I am Oscar, I am here to help you reach your goals. You can change my appearance

in the settings menu on the app.”

I glanced over his toned body and felt a blush form on my cheeks. Shirtless he was on the display; his pecs were large, and his abs were visible on the screen. His lower half was cropped off.

Is he wearing pants...

“I am an AI generated model to personify the system that we use here at GD Inc. I am unique to you. This is your first day with the watch on and it was Christmas yesterday so I can see that you’ve eaten quite a lot. That is fine, the gym can wait. Before I set up a plan for you, when are you back into training mode?”

I sat there stunned at how fluid the AI’s conversation was, how human like it was. I didn’t even think to answer, I looked for an input but then I heard him speak again.

“You can just speak; I can hear you.”

“Oh... Umm... I leave my parents on the 3rd of January. So, I will be in the gym from the 4th at a consistent pace.”

“Ok great, I will set up a plan starting from the 4th of January.”

“But... I have been running when I have been here... That is what I was going to do now.”

I added.

“Right, let me just...” The app behind his body was starting to shift and change as tiles were moved about. “Are you sure? You’ve still got about 39 more minutes until you are in the optimum zone.” He told me.

“Optimum zone?”

“I use the “Optimum Zone” as a guiding principle for your workouts. When you are in the zone, you’ll be working out if our plans align.” He smiled at me.

I returned the smile, my eyes fluttering.

What am I doing? Smiling at a robot? It is so realistic though...

“Okay, so what do you suggest?”

“Have a banana and wait a few more minutes before you start your jog.”

“Alright.”

I had complete trust in this app, whether it was the exorbitant fee that the company charged, the highly personable AI or the celebrity endorsements. I felt compelled to just listen.

38 minutes later, I was starting to jog from my parents’ house. They hadn’t moved since I was a kid, the village was lovely and filled me with nostalgic feelings. I had my headphones in, and I was listening to my running playlist, when I heard a soft voice butt into the song.

“You didn’t check in with me before your run, understandable, I am new to you. How about we do 2k, based on the information you’ve told me, you should be good to get that distance done with ease.”

“O... Kay...” I gasped as I ran.

The sun hadn’t quite come up yet, this was my routine here at my parents. I would wake up early and jog around the village a few times. Without access to the gym, I realised that I needed to do something else, lest I go crazy.

The jog was going great, I turned a corner and bumped into a woman. My face collided with her chest, unfortunately for me she was rather flat chested, so I didn’t get a lot of cushion. I stumbled backwards; she didn’t move one inch. She stood there above me, her hands on her hips. She was easily six feet tall. My eyes scaled her form and my eyes landed on her well-defined face.

“Sam?” The woman said.

“Lauren?” I replied in shock.

Lauren was a girl from my school, we were in the same friendship group but as we grew older, we started to drift. After we left school, we had barely talked to each other, maybe some mild comments on social media to each other but I barely went on them anymore.

Lauren had changed, remarkably. She was much fitter; she had found her calling in the gym. She wasn’t a large girl before, but she sat in the plus size category for sure. Now she was thin, toned and very fit by the looks of it. She didn’t look to have lots of muscle, but she had very little fat on her body.

I don't quite remember her being quite so tall...

Her face was warm and inviting despite her looming size, I stared for a bit too long.

“Everything Ok?” She asked.

“Sorry... Just didn't expect to bump into anyone, let alone someone I know. You run too?”

I had noticed that she was in running gear, much like me. The temperature might be boarding frigid, the warmth I generated meant that I didn't quite have to cover up entirely, Lauren had taken this a step further. She was wearing a crop top and shorts.

It must be like 5°C.

Yet, I could see that she was warm, I could almost see the heat rising from her skin.

“Yeah, I've been a gym rat for a long time now...” She looked down at her abs and smiled.

“You look good too.”

“Not like you.” I quickly added.

She blushed. “Well... This is what five years of the gym looks like I guess... So... How are you and Jay?”

My face must've immediately given away that answer.

“I'm so sorry... I didn't know...”

“It's Ok. That is the reason I am running at the moment actually...”

“Sam. You never need to lose weight for some stupid boy.” Her voice was stern and serious, but her words were filled with care. “You should just be yourself.”

“I know... But I was getting a bit big...”

“How big?”

“180”

I couldn't quite gauge her reaction.

“Well, I am sure you wore it well, I best get a move on, my watch will shout at me soon.”

She lifted her wrist up to show the exact same brand of watch as me.

“I've got one of those! I got it yesterday.”

“They’re amazing. You want to meet for coffee soon? You’ve still got my number right?”

I nodded. “That sounds great.”

“Right, talk later sweetie.” And like that she was off, jogging off into the distance with a pace that I only could only dream about.

“Samantha. If you don’t run for another 28 seconds, it’ll be detrimental for you to continue.”

“Sorry Oscar.” I started to jog once more.

“You should just be yourself.”

Her words rang through my head for the rest of the day.

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