

# Profoundly POWERLESS

A Novel by Jenny Amara

## Profoundly Powerless

### Chapter 20 - Words Matter, Paula

"Oh, uhhh. No... not that different, I guess," Paul answered Blake's question as best he could without hurting Blake's feelings. On the inside, Paul was slightly alarmed that the absence of Blake's muscles and height had been enough to turn him into a virtual stranger at first glance. Lee immediately accentuated Paul's concerns.

"Holy shit! The Roman is at our house?!" Lee said in shock.

"You recognize him? Looking like this?" Paul asked, wondering how he could have mistaken Blake so much.

"No offense, Mr.... Err, The Roman. But you might want to work on your disguise more. I hear glasses go a long way in helping with anonymity," Lee's typical humor persisted in his response. It was supplemented by an old-fashioned formality that was very out of character. "I know my wife thinks your name is Blake, but I don't think we've had the pleasure of being formally introduced. I'm Lee Holly. It's a pleasure to meet \*the\* hero of Populous City," Lee said, extending his hand for a handshake.

Blake was still holding the vase, so he could only look at Lee's outstretched hand amidst the awkwardness that had amassed during Paul's greeting. "Sorry, Lee. My hands are a bit full at the moment. Is there somewhere I can—"

"Yes, of course. Please, let me take that from you," Lee said, grabbing the vase. The two men struggled a moment as they tried to exchange the vase. Blake was startled by Lee's rapid action and

held the vase tightly to avoid dropping his cargo. The vase slipped from either man's grasp and collided with the ground in this tussle.

Lee was the first to bend down to pick the vase up. To his surprise, both Blake and Paul had a look of complete terror on their faces. "Uh, it's okay, you two. Carpeted floors, you know?" Lee asked rhetorically, gesturing at the floor's soft surface. "Here, look, it's totally fine," Lee said, brushing the sides of the vase with his hand to knock off any residual dust.

"No, don't!" Blake said a second too late. The rubbing of the vase caused the familiar smoke to bellow out of the vase. A split second later, Ramnaghast was making his presence known.

"Ah! My former master and her concubine husband! It's always a pleasure to see my former customers living their best lives," Ramnaghast proclaimed triumphantly. His pride was apparent to all at seeing Paul in a dress and Lee in business attire.

"You think we wanted this? You need to put things back! With my second wish, I wish you would put us back where we were and how we were. Now!"

Ramnaghast clapped his hands together, and Paul closed his eyes, expecting the same brilliant light as before. Nothing happened. Ramnaghast wrung his hands back and forth and stifled a grin from forming on his face.

"Dearest former master, you can no longer place your remaining wishes. I have a new master now," Ramnaghast flew like a specter around the room, twirling around Blake and then Lee before coming to rest by Lee's side. "My new master has a total of three wishes for himself. So, Master, what will your first wish be? Riches? Fame? Ultimate Power? Your wish is my command."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. I'm the one that freed you," Paul challenged.

"That was in your former reality. In this reality, you've lived here with Lee since college," Ramnaghast confidently responded, crossing his arms.

"Bullshit! If this were all because of a reality change, then Blake wouldn't be here, and neither would you," Paul asserted with obvious contempt.

Ramnaghast looked over Paul briefly before relenting, "Fine, I see gaslighting won't suffice. Master, I'd be happy to assist if you'd like a more submissive wife. With a simple wish uttered in my ear, this whole situation will be a thing of the past." Lee stood frozen. After a few seconds of silence, he

stammered a stream of nonsensical blathering, confirming he was still somewhat coherent, though barely so.

"Lee, don't say anything!" Paul commanded his friend. Lee remained dumbfounded at the ever-escalating encounters he was experiencing.

"Perhaps my master needs a boost of courage to end this quagmire he finds himself in. We'll call this a freebie," Ramnaghast announced before snapping his fingers. A small bright light flashed once more.

Paul and Blake were once again flabbergasted by what they saw before them. Where Lee had been now stood a woman wearing a stunning dress. It was stunning because anyone willing to wear a dress as revealing as this would be one of the most courageous people on the planet. "What did you do with Lee? Bring him back!" Paul yelled at the djinn.

"I'm still here," the woman in the revealing dress answered before covering her mouth. "Is that my voice?" The woman continued before looking down at herself and increasingly freaking out in even increments as their eyes advanced down their body. "What did you do to me?"

"I gave you courage, Master. Do you not like it?"

"No! I don't like this!"

"Wait, you turned Lee into a woman? Why?" Paul asked, looking over at Blake, who seemed similarly confused.

"This was a way to give my master courage! Ask her yourself."

"What? No! Put her... I mean him, back!"

"Wait..." Lee interjected.

Blake, Paul, and Ramnaghast looked at the scantily clad woman. "He's not wrong. I do feel oddly confident and courageous. I'm still absolutely in disbelief over my wife knowing The Roman, and now there is an actual genie here using magic, but somehow being like this is actually... better... than how I felt a few minutes ago."

"So you don't want to change back?" Paul asked.

"No, I definitely want to change back. But for the minute, this is helping. I heard you say that you were owed two wishes. So, that means I have at least three wishes. So I can just use a wish later to return to being myself."

"But he changed you against your will!" Paul said before continuing, "He's not a fairytale genie; he's a trickster genie. Who's to say we will get a second wish? Plus, he's got some weird ways of granting wishes. First he twisted my wish into us becoming a married couple when all I wanted was to save you from Sorceress. Now, he gave you courage by making you a hussy."

"Hey!" Lee resented Paul's judgment.

"Sorry, I don't mean to judge you, Lee, but this genie is a total perv. Suppose we make another wish; who knows what will happen? He could turn us all into women's clothing or something worse!"

"I've done it before! It's a joyous existence; you would be wise to consider it for yourself. Perhaps I've misjudged you, Paula," Ramnaghast reveled in the thought.

"It's still Paul. Please, everyone. I get that I keep being turned into a woman, but I prefer Paul. Okay?" Paul scanned the room and got a nod from everyone, even the djinn, before continuing.

"Good. Now, we need to figure out exactly what Ramnaghast changed so we can undo it."

"Maybe we use Lee's first wish to make Ramnaghast tell us," Blake wondered aloud.

"Hmm, maybe," Paul pondered the idea. "I'm not sure he would actually tell us the truth, though."

"Yeah, he doesn't seem like the type," Lee agreed with Paul.

"Truth is a matter of perspective, indeed," Ramnaghast teased the trio.

"That's enough from you," Paul scolded the djinn. Ramnaghast grinned gleefully in response. "Oh? You like this?"

"I am enjoying myself tremendously. Seeing you attempt to outmaneuver me is comical and brings me great enjoyment."

"So we're just entertainment for you?" Paul asked, flummoxed by the genie's reaction.

"What else would you be? I'm a being of unfathomable power. I have lived a million of your human lives. I have seen everything, heard everything, tasted everything, and—"

"Don't finish that sentence. We get the point," Paul interrupted Ramnaghast with purpose. A glint of an idea sparkled in his eye as he looked over at the meagerly built version of his on-again, off-again friend, "Blake, you're the one who has dealt with god-like beings. What do you think of Ramnaghast's power?"

"It seems pretty absolute to me. Look at what he did to you," Blake said, looking Paul in the eyes. Paul gestured with his brows in response to Blake's earnest response. "And what else? Do you think he's a god himself?"

Blake was confused by Paul's statement. Paul's expression turned to exasperation, and he put his hands together, making a prayer gesture. With that, Blake finally got the message. "Oh, that is an interesting question, Paul. If he were a god, that would be pretty impressive. Though, he's never been mentioned by any of the gods I've talked to."

"And what gods have you spoken mortal? Do not mistake your powers for those of the likes of us," Ramnaghast's demeanor shifted from playful to deadly serious. "Perhaps I misspoke before. This is a new phenomenon. Now that humans have powers, you have become overly confident in yourselves. I encourage you to remember the fear that helped your species survive."

"What do you think, Blake? Maybe we should pray for forgiveness?" Paul said, bending down to his knees. Blake followed suit. Lee stood by, watching in disbelief.

"I beseech you, Ramnaghast, hear my prayer!" Blake said in an unnatural timber. The room vibrated with an unfamiliar power. Paul kept his head slightly bent forward but looked at Blake in awe. He knew that Blake's powers had been granted to him by the Greek gods. His mom had told him the more profound secret. Blake's true power was the ability to commune with the gods. Paul reasoned that this power might grant Blake an advantage over the genie.

"What are you doing? Why do I—" Ramnaghast was startled by Blake.

"Hear my prayer! Unmake this false reality. Return us to Populous city as we desire!" Blake's power reverberated through the house. The humans' bodies shook, causing them to lose their balance. Lee stumbled over to Paul's side and huddled with him for stability.

"Why do I feel like this?" Ramnaghast asked with genuine fear. The djinn felt his hand preparing to

snap his fingers. "I will not do this!" The djinn moved his other hand up to force his fingers apart. "Whatever power you exert will not be enough!"

"Our wish be made manifest! Grant us this boon!" Blake's words were simultaneously beautiful and terrifying. Ramnaghast struggled mightily trying to prevent his fingers from progressing but ultimately failed. With a snap, a bright light emerged from Ramnaghast's fingers, again enveloping the whole room. Paul felt a similar disorientation as the shining light subsided.

With his vision returning, Paul was elated to see his apartment. Standing next to him still was Lee, freshly male again, and off further to his other side was Blake, restored to his usual Roman-like state. Ramnaghast was nowhere to be seen.

"Did we do it? Is everything back to normal?" Lee asked with his typical vocal delivery—chill but with a lilting rise at the end.

Paul inspected himself and scanned the room. "I... I think so? Blake, you good?"

"Yeah, I think so. And you're alright, Paul?"

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure everything is back to how it was supposed to be. I think you did it!"

"Well, it was your idea to try my power like that. How did you come up with that? I don't advertise my real power. I didn't even know you knew about it.

"My mom told me."

"Of course she did. God, she always does that."

"Yeah, she has that way about her. She meddles. I'm sorry."

Lee looked at Blake and Paul curiously. "What's going on with you two?"

"What do you mean?" Paul asked.

"You seem awfully... comfortable... with each other all of a sudden."

"Huh, that's unusual. I don't think anything has changed," Blake answered. "Does anything seem off to you, Paul?"

"No, I can't say that anything is," Paul said while walking to be standing next to Blake. Blake stuck his hand out as he neared, and Paul reached out to meet it. Lee looked on, jaw agape, as Paul leaned in and placed a peck of a kiss squarely on Blake's lips.

Lee couldn't believe what he'd just seen. All he managed to muster was a three-word response that started, "What the..."