

SHORT STORY: PRACTICE

"Please let me practice on you - what harm could it do?"

"Well, you could have me mooing like a chicken whenever I hear a phone ring."

Lorna giggled. "I promise on my future career as a world-renowned therapist never to make you or anyone moo like a chicken, ever. Moo like a cow, I make no such promise."

Kara grimaced at her mistake. "You know what I mean."

"Seriously, friend, best friend, best friend since we moved into this lovely dorm, I need to practice. Hypnosis is an important skill for me and I need to learn it."

"If I did agree, what suggestions would you give me? I don't smoke, I'm not overweight and I love flying."

"No secret phobias?"

"Not a one."

"Didn't you tell me how terrified you used to be of thunder and lightening?"

"Not since I was nine years old."

"Well, how about how depressed you've been since Mike dumped you?"

"He didn't dump me. We decided to see other people."

"After you caught him with Jessica."

"Look, I don't blame him, all right? Drop it."

"Sorry. Let me just try to put you under. We did it in class today, practicing on each other, and I think I've almost got it down. I'll suggest something completely harmless, like you'll wear red nail polish next week."

"It can't be that, 'cause now I know."

"Duh."

"Okay, let's try it. But don't suggest anything weird."

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"Ooh, thank you, thank you, thank you."

Lorna got her dorm room ready. She closed the blinds, fluffed up the pillows on her bed and had Kara make herself comfortable. Kara reclined on the bed, closed her eyes, crossed her legs at the ankles and rested her hands on her stomach. Lorna quickly reviewed her notes.

In soft, calm tones, Lorna began to talk to Kara about relaxation and deep sleep and about listening to the sound of her voice. Kara's breathing deepened and Lorna was confident she was under. Lorna kept talking, asking simple questions and Kara responded with low murmurs.

"Today is Tuesday," she told her friend. "Starting tomorrow, you will draw little pictures on my white board every day. Draw flowers, or stars or stick figures, whatever you want. But draw something every day. Do you understand?"

Kara whispered that she did.

Lorna was silent for a moment. "Also, I want you to stop thinking so little of yourself. You don't deserve to have guys treat you badly. You deserve to be happy."

A few more moments of talking and Lorna brought Kara out of her hypnotic state.

"How'd I do? Was I under? What did you tell me?"

Lorna smiled. "You did great; it was perfect. Thank you so much! I'm feeling great about acing this class!"

The next day, and the days that followed small drawings appeared on Lorna's white board. Three weeks later, Lorna drew a big A on the board, with a smiley face, and the words "thanks to you!" to let Kara know she did well in her class.

Kara went to find her. "I'm so glad you did well in your class. But I had nothing to do with it; it was all you. I've enjoyed drawing on your board, but I wasn't really under that day."

"What? Are you sure? Why didn't you tell me?"

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"Don't be mad. I felt myself going under, I honestly did, but I fought it. I was going to tell you, but when you said that stuff about me, I felt embarrassed."

Lorna didn't reply.

"Anyway, thanks. I might not have been hypnotized but I took what you said to heart. I don't think I'll make the same mistake again."

"Really? 'Cause I meant it - you deserve someone who treats you right."

"I know. Well, I think I know. I hope so. Anyway, you are going to make an awesome therapist."