

# The Smart Suit Trial

Created June 2025, main storyline supplied by Carg, text and pictures by ChatGPT 4o.

## Chapter One: The Offer

The rain drizzled down in lazy rivulets, streaking the windows of Elise Carter's tiny apartment with a kind of monotonous finality. The laptop screen cast a pale light across her face, but her eyes weren't focused anymore. For the fifth time that morning, she reread the same job rejection email, wondering if they had even looked at her résumé.

It had been two months since the small design agency she'd worked for abruptly shut down. Since then, Elise had been tumbling through an endless stream of job boards, HR platitudes, and application portals that seemed custom-designed to crush hope. Her severance was gone. The landlord had already sent a "friendly reminder."

She leaned back with a sigh, pushing her tangled brown hair off her forehead. Thirty-two years old, single, a degree in industrial design, and now not even enough traction to land a receptionist gig. The phone buzzed—an automated reminder about her overdue student loan payment. She shut it off without looking.

Scrolling absently through a list of "creative side gigs," she paused at a curious post tucked between ads for pet-sitting and food delivery:

### **WANTED: Testers for Advanced Wearable Technology**

Compensation: \$2500/month + performance bonuses

Requirements: Must be available full-time at home, willing to wear prototype garments continuously (24/7), maintain journal entries, and follow occasional remote prompts.

No physical labor or travel required.

Medical and wellness monitoring equipment included.

Support technician nearby for emergencies and adjustments.

It sounded... weird, sure. But not dangerous. She clicked through to a sparse landing page for *Synthwear Corp.*, a name she didn't recognize. A few vague promotional videos showed sleek bodysuits and overalls hugging toned models, moving fluidly in simulated environments. "Clothing that adapts to you," the tagline promised. "Welcome to the future of autonomous living."

She raised an eyebrow. The application process was simple. No interview, no portfolio. Just a short medical form, basic contact details, and a signed agreement. Elise hesitated for only a minute.

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Three days later, a van marked *Synthwear Support Unit* pulled up outside her building.

The man who stepped out was close to her age—mid-thirties, maybe, with dark hair pulled back into a low knot and a sleeve of subtle geometric tattoos peeking out from under his uniform. His smile was warm and sincere, and it made her stomach flip a little before she could catch herself.

"Hey there," he said, shouldering a toolkit as he approached. "You must be Elise. I'm Matt, your field mechanic. Hope I didn't keep you waiting."

“Not at all,” she said, stepping back to let him in. “Come on up. It’s... not very glamorous in here, just a warning.”

“I work in a van,” he replied with a laugh. “I think you’re safe.”

Matt wheeled in a sleek, black case the size of a steamer trunk and set it down gently in her living room.

“This is your full trial kit,” he said. “Interior bodysuit, dark red adaptive weave, and an outer bib overall—black, reinforced fabric, fully sensor-integrated. Self-cleaning, thermoregulating, and passive biometric capture. Should fit like a glove after it calibrates to you.”

Elise crouched beside the case and ran a finger along the sealed seam. “So I just... wear this full-time?”

“Yup,” Matt said. “It’s all about real-world behavior logging—sleeping, cooking, lounging. Once it’s sealed, you stay in it. You’ll get used to it faster than you think.”

She looked up. “What if I need to—uh, go?”

He smiled, gesturing to the bathroom. “Already installing the sensor unit in there. When you enter and sit, it’ll trigger a localized release. Just enough to get the job done. It’s smart enough not to trap you in the middle of a crisis, don’t worry.”

“That’s... kind of amazing. Also a little weird.”

“Weird pays well,” he said with a grin.

Elise laughed. She felt more relaxed than she expected. There was something reassuring about Matt—he explained things clearly, didn’t push too hard, and had a kind of quiet respect in the way he moved through her space.

By the time the installation was finished, she found herself wishing he’d stay just a little longer.

“Once you’re in, sync the app, and just follow the prompts,” he said, wiping his hands. “You’ll get used to the suit’s rhythms. And I’m just ten minutes away if anything goes sideways.”

“Thanks, Matt. Really.”

He gave her a little nod, then hesitated. “Hey... good luck, Elise. And don’t stress too much about the diary entries. Just be honest.”

She watched the door click shut behind him.

Elise turned back to the open case.

The bodysuit gleamed a deep, velvety red under the room’s light, its subtle circuitry like fine filigree beneath the surface. The black overalls were sturdy, serious—form and function merged into something strangely beautiful. A small badge on the chest read *SYNTHWEAR – VANTAGE SERIES 1.0*.

She didn’t know exactly what to expect.

All she knew was that her rent was due, and this was money.

She took a breath and reached for the bodysuit.

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## Chapter Two: Sealed In

The apartment was quiet once Matt left—only the low hum of her fridge and the rain against the windows filled the stillness. Elise stood in front of the open case, arms crossed, chewing her lower lip.

The bodysuit looked almost alive now. The dark red surface shimmered subtly with each movement of the light, a fine mesh of embedded filaments tracing across it like veins. It looked like something from a sci-fi movie—sleek, intimate, intimidating.

She peeled off her pajamas and reached for the bodysuit.

It was surprisingly soft inside, almost suede-like against her skin. She slid one leg in, then the other, easing it up over her hips. The material was snug—not stretchy, but tailored to form a close fit. There was a gentle resistance from the embedded electronics, like trying to move inside damp canvas.

She guided her arms into the sleeves, then settled the upper part across her shoulders. The neck closure clicked into place first: a firm, centered front-release buckle that gave a faint *snap* and lit with One by one, the wrist buckles followed—left, then right. *Snap. Snap.* Two more flickers of red light.

She looked down. A broad, curved flap at the crotch reached between her legs and connected to two waiting buckles at the lower belly. She swallowed, then fastened them. *Snap. Snap.* Red flashes again. All closed.

The bodysuit felt secure now—tightly wrapped, almost corseted without the pain. She shifted experimentally. Movement was a bit stiffer than she was used to, as if the suit carried its own expectations of how her body should flow.

She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. The deep red made her look powerful, like she was wearing armor spun from wine and steel.

The black overalls came next. Heavier than expected, they folded over her body with mechanical precision. She stepped into them, guiding her legs down until the ankles met their closures. Each buckle snapped and glowed red. One after the other: *snap* at the left ankle, *snap* at the right.

The bib came up over her chest, pressing the inner panel of the bodysuit flat. The shoulder straps locked in place with two more clicks and flashes, securing her into the layered structure. Finally, the waist clasps—one on each side—clicked together with a solid mechanical finality.



As soon as the last buckle sealed, her phone vibrated.

**Bing!**

A soft chime rang out, and the screen lit up:

**SYNTHWEAR VANTAGE SERIES 1.0**

**Status: Fully Suited**

**Connection: Stable**

**Calibration Required – Please follow instructions**

The app's interface was clean and minimal, almost friendly. A small animation showed a simplified figure rotating slowly, with prompts underneath.

"Please lie flat on your back."

She walked stiffly to her sofa, feeling the subtle resistance of the outfit with each step. Not painful, just... present. The batteries and internal structure made the clothes slightly heavier than normal, and the lack of stretch meant every movement had to be deliberate.

She lay down, arms at her sides. The phone dinged.

"Now roll to your left side... hold... right side... good."

"Sit up slowly, then stand."

"Now perform the following sequence: squat, stand, bend forward, twist left, twist right."

She followed the directions, clunky at first, then more fluidly. The overalls creaked faintly as she moved, and she could feel tiny adjustments—subtle shifts in pressure, like the suit was taking notes on her posture and range of motion.

By the time calibration finished, Elise was standing in the middle of her living room again, a little flushed but intrigued.

"Calibration Complete. Suit Adaptation: In Progress."

"Enjoy your day, Elise."

She exhaled and smiled. The suit didn't feel as foreign now. Yes, it hugged her, guided her even—but there was something comforting in its firmness. It wasn't clothing anymore. It was structure. Routine. Maybe even protection.

She caught another look at herself in the mirror.

Sleek. Strange. Strong.

"I could get used to this," she murmured.

The suit said nothing. But every buckle held fast.

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### **Chapter Three: A New Routine**

The suit had only been on her for about an hour, but Elise already felt like it had marked the boundary between "before" and "after."

She stood in the middle of her living room, fully suited—dark red bodysuit sealed beneath the structured black overalls, every buckle fastened and glowing faint red from their recent activation.

The app had confirmed her status with a bright *Bing!* and welcomed her with a clean, minimal message:

**Suit Status: Active**

**Connection: Stable**

**Calibration Complete**

She expected a pause—maybe a moment to get used to things. Instead, the app immediately launched into a set of onboarding tasks. A questionnaire appeared first.

**INITIAL FEEDBACK – DAY 0**

- General comfort
- Movement restriction
- Sensory feedback
- Psychological response
- Overall confidence in continuing

She answered carefully. The suit wasn't *uncomfortable*, but it was demanding. The stiff material resisted casually flopping on the couch or crossing her legs without conscious effort. She likened it to wearing a backpack that wrapped around her whole body—secure but never ignorable.

As she submitted her final answer, a new notification appeared.

**“Schedule Generation in Progress...”**

A few seconds later, her new daily structure was displayed.

- **07:30 — Wake Up**
- **08:00 — Light Breakfast**
- **12:30 — Lunch**
- **18:30 — Dinner**
- **21:00 — Shower Window (30 min)**
- **22:00 — Lights Out Recommended**

The interface had the cheer of a fitness app but the precision of a flight plan.

Elise rolled her eyes. “Okay, so it’s one of *those* wearables.”

She closed the app and went to the kitchen to fix a snack, learning to lean and twist in ways that worked with the suit rather than against it. Every movement reminded her of its presence—controlled, directed, shaped.

By midafternoon, she felt a pressure in her lower abdomen and headed to the bathroom, more curious than nervous.

As soon as she entered and sat down, she heard it.

*Click.*

The shoulder straps of her overalls released first, folding backward. Then the side buckles at her waist. A second later, the flap of the bodysuit—nestled between her legs—unlatched itself with two soft pops, detaching from the lower belly. Little red LED flashes marked each release.

She sat still for a moment.

That was it.

The ankles of the overalls stayed sealed. So did the wrists and neck of the bodysuit. She experimentally tried to tug one ankle loose. Nothing. The wrist? Rock solid. Even in this vulnerable space, the suit maintained a perimeter.

She used the toilet, awkwardly, feeling like a prisoner granted just enough slack in her chains to function. When she stood and exited the bathroom, the undone sections quietly re-engaged—*snap*, *snap*, red flashes. She didn't have to lift a finger. She didn't get a say.

A few hours later, as the sun started lowering, her phone buzzed again.

**Shower Window Available: 21:00–21:30**

**Please affix biometric collar before disrobing.**

Elise opened the case where she'd seen the collar earlier. It was soft silicone on the outside, with a subtle metallic weave within. She brought it up to her neck and aligned the ends.

*Click.* It sealed magnetically. A small green LED glowed softly at her collarbone.

Moments later, the suit came undone all at once.

Every closure released in a ripple of mechanical snaps—ankles, wrists, neck, shoulders, waist, even the crotch flap. All with their tiny, pulsing red lights. The overalls and bodysuit peeled away like they'd been holding her in suspension.

She stepped out of them with relief. Cool air against her bare skin was more surprising than she expected. The pressure was gone, and with it, a tension she hadn't realized had settled into her muscles.

She entered the shower and let the water run long and hot.

At **25 minutes**, the collar gave a gentle buzz.

At **28**, it buzzed again—firmer, rhythmic.

She checked her phone. A countdown ticked by:

**RE-EQUIP SUIT IN 1:46... 1:45... 1:44...**

Quickly, she dried off and began dressing. The bodysuit clung slightly to damp skin, but the closures engaged with mechanical certainty—*snap*, *snap*, each one lighting up red. Overalls next: ankles, waist, straps. The collar stayed in place until the final buckle clicked into place.

**Suit Fully Re-Equipped. All Systems Normal.**

**Biometric Collar Releasing. Thank you.**

She heard the soft *click* of the collar disengaging. It loosened instantly, letting her lift it off.

Elise exhaled and sat down, still wrapped tightly in her new second skin.

She hadn't even made it to her first night.

And already, her routine didn't belong to her anymore.

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## Chapter Four: The First Night

By the time 10:00 p.m. arrived, Elise had settled onto the couch, mentally and physically exhausted. The suit had proven to be less of an outfit and more of a presence—something between an assistant and a chaperone. Still, she couldn't deny that it worked. She'd followed the prompts, eaten when told, showered when scheduled, and even started learning how to move more fluidly within the restrictive material.

Now, the app displayed a final message for the day:

### **Prepare for Sleep Mode**

**Suit transitioning to overnight configuration. Please remove overalls and connect charger.**

A soft mechanical *click* startled her.

The shoulder straps of her overalls unlatched again, falling behind her arms. The waist buckles followed, then the ankle clasps. One by one, every overalls connection released. The bodysuit underneath remained untouched—still tight, still sealed. Its red fabric hugged her closely, unmoving except for the gentle rise and fall of her breath.

She stood and slipped the black overalls off, folding them carefully. A slim cable with an unusual magnetic tip extended from the charger station that had come with the initial delivery. She connected it first to the collar, then to a small port on the chest of the overalls. A light on the charger base turned green.

The app chimed:

### **Charging Overalls and Collar...**

**Bodysuit charging via passive coupling.**

So that's how it worked. The bodysuit was being powered wirelessly by the overalls during the day. Now, it stayed active while the other components recharged separately.

Elise walked slowly to her bed, trying to ignore the subtle compression and pressure of the bodysuit around her limbs. It wasn't uncomfortable—just unrelenting. The neck buckle remained firmly fastened, a reminder at her throat of the control she hadn't been able to undo even once.

She climbed under the covers. The fabric of the bodysuit moved with her, always slightly firm, but not enough to disturb her position. Still, sleep didn't come quickly. The high, smooth collar around her neck required conscious effort to relax around. She was used to loose shirts and bare skin—not something that clipped closed under her jaw and stayed there.

But eventually, her eyes closed. The red suit didn't soften, but she grew numb to its grip.

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A sharp *bing* cut through her dreams.

She blinked awake. Her phone, still tucked into the front pocket of her folded overalls on the dresser, was vibrating insistently. She pulled the sheet aside and sat up, the bodysuit rustling slightly as she moved.

### **07:30 — Wake Up**

**Suit Morning Protocol Engaged**

She frowned. She hadn't set an alarm.

Groggy and confused, she stood and padded barefoot across the room, the red bodysuit flexing slightly at her knees and shoulders. She picked up the phone and swiped at the notification, trying to dismiss it.

**You may now begin your day. Please proceed with breakfast and dressing.**

"No thanks," she muttered aloud. "I'm not on a school schedule."

She returned to bed, laid down, and pulled the covers up. A few minutes passed.

At **07:40**, her phone buzzed again—and at the same time, she felt it.

A low-grade tingling sensation spread across her shoulders, then wrapped around her torso and thighs. Not painful, but definitely uncomfortable. Like static electricity gathering under her skin. It wasn't sharp—but it made her sit up instantly.

"What the—?"

She grabbed the phone again. A new message was waiting:

**Suit Stimulus Activated — Wake Sequence Reinforced  
Please comply with assigned wake time.**

The tingling stopped the moment she stood.

She stared at the message, heart pounding now—not from fear, but from the sense of a new, unseen boundary being crossed. She hadn't agreed to *this*, had she?

But the suit, as always, offered no opinion. Just containment.

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## **Chapter Five: Conditioning**

By midday, Elise had stopped pretending that the suit wasn't in control.

It started subtly. Just after lunch, while scrolling on her phone and sipping tea, she noticed her screen dim and a gentle *buzz* vibrate through her chest.

**Posture adjustment recommended. Shoulders slouched. Please sit upright.**

She blinked, sat up straighter, and the message vanished. A few minutes later, as she leaned forward again, another alert chimed.

**Neck alignment poor. Tension level rising. Consider breathing exercises.**

That one startled her. She hadn't felt particularly tense—at least, not more than usual—but she obeyed. As soon as she followed the animated breathing pattern on the app for thirty seconds, the low hum of tension in the suit eased. She hadn't realized it had built up in the first place.

Throughout the afternoon, the messages continued.

At one point, after staying still for nearly an hour reading on the couch, she felt a low, pulsing nudge in the suit—like a heartbeat through the fabric. Then:

**Inactivity threshold exceeded. Please perform mobility cycle.**



"Seriously?" she muttered.

But she stood anyway and followed the prompted exercises: arm circles, leg raises, two minutes of pacing. It was like having a polite personal trainer who also happened to be sewn into your skin.

By 4:00 p.m., she was making tea when something shifted.

A sharp, audible *click* came from her left shoulder buckle—then another from the right. Her overalls sagged slightly. The app flickered. The screen dimmed to black, then restarted. An error appeared briefly, then vanished.

The suit vibrated oddly for a few seconds—tight in the chest, loose in one ankle, one wrist unresponsive. Then everything went still.

A new screen lit up on the phone.

**MALFUNCTION DETECTED**

**Field Mechanic En Route – ETA: 12 minutes**

Elise's heart skipped. "Wait. What? That fast?"

But she had barely stepped back from the kitchen when she heard the buzz of the front door. Sure enough, it was Matt.

He looked slightly out of breath, hair wind-tossed, toolbox in one hand.

"Hey," he said with a quick smile. "Got pinged for a Category Two lockup. You okay?"

"Yeah," she said, stepping aside. "It just... started doing weird things. And then nothing."

"Right. Mind if I take a look?"

"Go for it."

Matt moved with practiced ease. He knelt next to her as she stood, guiding her gently to rotate and lift her arm so he could access a port near the spine of the overalls. He tapped in a diagnostic wand, and a few seconds later the overalls came to life again with a quiet pulse of red.

"There," he said, giving the back panel a tap. "Faulty handshake between the control thread and the posture sensors. Probably a firmware desync after the last calibration push."

"That sounds made-up," she teased.

"It kind of is," he admitted. "But it works."

The suit tightened slightly, then settled back into its usual neutral state. Elise exhaled without realizing she'd been holding her breath.

"You want to stay for dinner?" she asked, almost surprised at herself. "You saved me from a full-body soft-lock. Seems worth at least pasta."

Matt raised an eyebrow. "Pasta and post-suit diagnostics? I'm in."

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They sat across from each other at the tiny kitchen table. Elise wore the full suit again—red bodysuit sealed, black overalls buckled. Matt had removed his uniform jacket, revealing a soft gray tee and the subtle edges of tattoos under his sleeves.

She twirled pasta on her fork. “So how much do you actually know about this thing?”

“More than I’m allowed to say,” he said, smiling around a bite. “But less than I’d like to.”

“That’s not suspicious at all.”

He laughed. “Honestly, the system monitors user response. They want natural behavior, not test-subject compliance. I can’t bias you. Technically, I shouldn’t even tell you how long the trial runs. You’re meant to just... live in it.”

“‘Natural behavior’ while sealed in a full-body poly-fiber cage with scheduled showers and posture corrections?”

He gave a small shrug. “You signed the waiver.”

She rolled her eyes, but smiled. “I thought it was going to be like a Fitbit. This is more like... a velvet prison.”

“Yeah,” he said, quieter this time. “That’s a phrase I’ve heard before.”

They drifted into other topics—music, old jobs, favorite cheap wine. Elise found herself relaxing in a way she hadn’t all day. For a little while, she could forget she was wrapped in red compression fabric with magnetic buckles holding her posture firm.

Then Matt’s phone buzzed. He looked down, sighed softly.

“Another call?”

“Yeah. Power failure at a dual-suit home. One of the suits locked up during sleep mode.”

Elise stood to walk him to the door. “Thanks for fixing mine. And for... not being weird.”

He smiled. “I do my best.”

As he stepped out into the hallway, she leaned against the doorframe and watched him go. Then she glanced down at her chest—at the red-lit buckles and black bib pocket.

Still sealed.

Still hers. But also not.

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## Chapter Six: Resistance

The next morning, Elise stared at her reflection, arms crossed tightly over the black bib of her overalls. Her sleep had been light again—never exactly *restless*, but never quite free either. The bodysuit was simply always there. Warm. Close. Watching.

She had followed the prompts without complaint for nearly two days now. Exercises. Meals. Showers. Even posture corrections. And while she had to admit the structure kept her focused, there was a creeping tension building in her jaw, her shoulders, her *gut*—the feeling of being managed like a patient or a well-trained animal.

She sat on the edge of her bed, pulled up the app, and tapped open the menu.

**Suit Status: Active**

**Override options: Restricted**

**Manual release: Not recommended**

"Not *recommended*," she muttered. "But not impossible, right?"

She stood, unfastened the charger from the overalls, and tried to peel the bib off her chest. The shoulder straps were stiff, but she pushed. Nothing moved. Then she tugged at the waist buckles. Still sealed.

Frowning, she tried the neck closure on the bodysuit—pressing the central clasp, just like Matt had shown during his install. It didn't budge.

The phone in her pocket buzzed.

**Warning: Unauthorized release attempt detected.**

**Abort action immediately. Continued manipulation may result in suspension from the program.**

Elise froze.

Her thumb hovered over the clasp. Her heart pounded—not just from exertion, but from the bluntness of the message. A second buzz came.

**Further attempts will be documented.**

**Do you wish to cancel your participation in the VANTAGE program?**

She stared at the screen.

There it was. The price tag. Not in words, but in consequence. Give up your control, and you get support. Try to take it back... and it's all over.

"No," she whispered. Then louder, to the app: "No. I'm not canceling."

**Confirmed. Resume schedule.**

The tension in the suit eased slightly. The message vanished. The red LEDs on the buckles glowed a little brighter for a few seconds—like the system was exhaling too.

She sat down, hands shaking, the suit still locked around her like a second skin.

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A few hours later, the phone rang.

It was her sister, Dana, the one who had always managed to land on her feet, who always spoke like she was late for something important. Elise hadn't told her about the suit.

"So any luck with work yet?" Dana asked. "You can't just hang around in that apartment forever."

"I'm working on it," Elise said tightly.

"You say that every week. You know Mom's worried, right? She keeps asking if you're depressed. You should just come stay with me for a bit, get your head clear."

"I'm *fine*."

"Being fine doesn't mean sitting alone in a studio with no job, no social life—"

Elise's throat tightened. "Dana—"

"I just don't want you to make yourself weird again. You remember how you got after—"

The suit pulsed.

Not visibly, but perceptibly. A gentle, full-body pressure, like a blood pressure cuff activating across her entire skin. Then a rhythmic *thrum* at her chest. Her breathing reflexively slowed.

**Detected elevated stress response.**

**Initiating calming sequence.**

The pulses deepened, matching her breath. Inhale—pressure. Exhale—release.

Her rising tension hit a ceiling and leveled out. She felt her voice drop to neutral, her heartbeat soften behind the sternum of the red bodysuit.

"I have to go," she said calmly.

"You okay?"

"Just need to get back to something. I'm fine. Really."

She hung up.

The calming pulses slowed. Then ceased.

**Response normalized. Good job.**

**Consider journaling today's emotional fluctuation.**

Elise stared at the screen.

It was efficient. It was helpful.

It was terrifying.

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## **Chapter Seven: Indulgence**

The next morning felt... fragile.

Elise tried to shake off the lingering dullness in her limbs, the low-level mental hum that came with being constantly observed—even by something silent. She skipped the morning posture prompts and chose to eat breakfast an hour late. The suit didn't protest.

But it noticed.

Later that afternoon, after a call with an old friend left her craving something warm and indulgent, Elise decided she had *earned* a break. She cooked pasta—real pasta, not some protein-calibrated alternative the app would suggest—and followed it with a slice of leftover pie from the freezer. And, why not, a second slice.

Her phone buzzed gently in her chest pocket.

**Nutritional intake exceeds recommended threshold.**

**Please moderate consumption.**

She scowled. “Seriously?”

She ignored the message, carried her dish to the couch, and poured a half-glass of wine to go with it.

The app chimed again:

**Advisory: Alcohol consumption not optimal during trial period.**

**Limit recommended: 1 unit.**

“Thanks for the advice,” Elise muttered, taking another sip.

The phone went quiet. For a moment.

Then, thirty minutes later, while she was scrolling through a streaming menu looking for comfort TV, she felt it.

The waistband of the overalls began to tighten.

Not violently—just a slow, even constriction, as if the suit were drawing in to match a reduced profile it thought she *should* have. She sat up straighter, trying to ease the pressure, but it followed her, locking firmly around her midsection just under the rib cage.

“Ow—okay. Enough.”

No buzz, no app message. Just a persistent, belt-like compression that reminded her with every breath that *someone*—something—had taken notes on her indulgence.

She tried to loosen it, fiddling with the side buckles. They didn’t budge.

She took another sip of wine.

The suit responded.

This time, it wasn’t pressure but discomfort. A strange tingle spread along the abdomen—less pain, more warning. A thermal nudge, maybe? Slightly warm, and undeniably irritating. Not enough to harm, but enough to suggest: *You’re not getting away with this.*

The phone vibrated with a quiet, almost chiding ping.

**Self-regulation failure noted. Waist adjustment in effect until next calibration.**

**Hydrate with water. Alcohol effects may interfere with suit diagnostics.**

Elise put the glass down slowly.

Her stomach ached—not from the food, but from the tension coiled around it. She stood up, walked to the sink, and filled a glass with water. She drank it in silence.

The pressure didn’t ease, not right away.

She sat back down, now acutely aware of every inch of the suit pressed against her—hips, stomach, ribs. There was no room left for softness, for expansion. Even a breath too deep was met with firm resistance.

Her choices were no longer private.

They were monitored.

*Managed.*

She leaned her head back and stared at the ceiling.

The suit wasn't angry.

It didn't need to be.

It just *remembered*.

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## Chapter Eight: Compliance

By the end of the week, Elise stopped fighting.

There was no single breaking point—just the slow erosion of will, the subtle shaping of her days until every action had become part of a managed pattern. Wake at 7:30. Light breakfast. Scheduled walks. Guided breathing. Tracked posture. Shower window. Lights out.

And underneath it all, the suit: ever-present, ever-aware.

She still grumbled sometimes. Rolled her eyes. Slouched briefly just to hear the buzz that told her to sit up. But she no longer tried to unclip the buckles or delay prompts. There was money on the line, and, truth be told... it was working.

She felt clearer. Her apartment was tidier. Her eating was healthier. The awful tension in her chest—something she used to think was just *who she was*—was down to a dull background hum.

And the suit... it wasn't cruel.

Strict, yes. But it responded to her moods. It guided her toward rest when she was overworked. It pushed her into motion when she began to drift. It seemed to care, in the way a machine could care. A soft, constant shepherd.

She told herself: *It's temporary. It's structured. And it helps.*

Then, without warning, everything changed.

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It started one morning with a new screen on the app.

**Updated Profile Protocol: DEPENDENT MODE ENABLED**

**Assigned Age Profile: Developmental Stage 3**

**Adjusting schedule, permissions, and content accordingly**

Elise frowned.

"What?"

Her schedule immediately shifted. The next wake-up time was listed as **06:30**. Breakfast now included "supervised dietary recommendations" and limited options. Caffeine: prohibited. Alcohol: restricted indefinitely.

That evening, when she poured a glass of wine, the app buzzed violently.

**ALERT: Prohibited Substance**

**This behavior has been logged. Compliance mode: tightening.**

The waist of her suit constricted with surprising speed—faster and tighter than before. Not painful, but sharp enough to make her gasp and immediately set the glass down.

“Okay, okay!” she snapped. “I get it!”

Later, as she sat down to relax, her streaming apps were suddenly locked behind a new filter. Instead, the suit prompted her with an “enrichment activity.”

**Assigned Educational Module: “Emotional Self-Regulation – Level 2”**

**Estimated Time: 45 minutes**

**Completion required for relaxation unlock.**

Elise groaned. “Are you kidding me?”

Still, she complied—mostly out of habit, partly out of resignation. The module was bizarrely condescending, filled with simplified animations and quizzes written in the tone of a children’s therapist.

Afterward, her phone displayed a new message:

**Good job! You’ve earned 15 minutes of unstructured time.**

**Lights-out in 30 minutes. No exceptions.**

The suit dimmed the lights in her apartment, and when she remained up past 10:00, a warning buzz began at her chest, escalating slowly.

When she ignored it, the suit initiated what it called a **gentle compliance sequence**—a full-body cocooning pressure that settled her into bed and refused to ease until she was lying flat, arms at her sides.

She whispered into the darkness: “What is happening?”

But the system gave no explanation.

There was no follow-up call. No app update. No prompt acknowledging a change.

Elise was left to assume this *was* the next phase of the trial. More control. More “intervention.” Maybe she had tripped some behavioral threshold.

Or maybe this was always the plan.

She didn't know.

And not knowing made it worse.

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## **Chapter Nine: Reclassified**

Elise gave it three days.

Three days of 6:00 a.m. wakeups. Three days of snack portions sized for toddlers. Three days of being scolded by a mechanical tone for “emotional outbursts.” Three days of enforced nap windows and cartoonishly simplified educational modules titled things like *Let’s Practice Patience!* and *Feelings Are Real, And That’s Okay.*

By the second day, she couldn't access her streaming apps at all. The suit blocked most of the internet outright, replacing her browser with a closed interface full of curated "age-appropriate" content—pre-recorded story readings, puzzle games, calming animations. She even had to request "permission" through the app to make a phone call, and was limited to five numbers.

At one point she muttered *I'm thirty-two years old* under her breath. The suit responded with a buzz and a new prompt:

**Big feelings are okay! Would you like to draw a picture about it?**

Elise didn't scream.

She didn't cry.

She just picked up the phone and called Matt.

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He arrived thirty minutes later, toolkit in hand, concern already etched into his face. He looked her up and down—the red bodysuit, still sealed at the collar, wrists, and ankles, now subtly redesigned through the interface to display her "assigned age group" as a soft patch on the shoulder: **Stage 2 – Developing Independence.**

"What the hell," he muttered.

"Yeah," she said. "You and me both."

Matt got to work quickly. He accessed the diagnostic port at the small of her back and ran a full reset through the tool. The suit disengaged momentarily, giving her the brief sensation of full physical freedom—before instantly reclosing and resuming its protocol.

**Reset Complete. Configuration restored.**

**Profile: Stage 2 – Developing Independence**

**Next module: Creative Quiet Time**

Matt stepped back, blinking at the screen.

"That shouldn't be happening."

"No kidding."

"I'll escalate this to the main system," he said, already typing something into a secured company tablet. "We store everything on remote servers for 'adaptive intelligence,' but if the source profile is corrupted..."

"Can't you just fix it here?"

"Not if the server tells the suit you're five years old."

"I'm *thirty-two*!"

He gave her a pained look. "I believe you."

While he waited for a reply from HQ, Matt tried to make her as comfortable as the system would allow. He was able to unlock a few privileges through his technician override: temporary screen access, manual bedtime deferral for two hours, and replacement of the "calming sensory animation" with regular music.



But even he had limits.

“The suit’s in lockstep with the profile system,” he explained. “Until they fix the data upstream, it’s going to treat you like a developmental subject. All it knows is that you’re classified under Stage 2. That determines everything—food, permissions, tone, physical restrictions...”

“And they *will* fix it, right?”

He hesitated.

“The office says they’ve located a data corruption on your profile block, probably from a malformed behavioral response packet. But...”

“But what.”

“They won’t push the fix until they receive verification of your age.”

Elise stared at him. “What? You have my ID. My forms.”

Matt winced. “The system only syncs from the profile database. Legal says they need new verification from you directly—photo ID, date-stamped, with a secondary identity marker.”

“I’m not trying to *buy cigarettes*, Matt. I’m trying to not be treated like a preschooler!”

“I know.” He stood, rubbing the back of his neck. “But they’re not going to budge without the documentation.”

Elise sat on the couch, suit sealed tight around her frame, blinking as a new prompt appeared on her phone:

**Great job handling your frustration! Would you like a sticker?**

She turned the screen face-down.

“Fine,” she muttered. “I’ll send them my damn license.”

“I’ll stay until they confirm receipt,” Matt offered. “Might be able to keep some of the stricter modules offline in the meantime.”

She nodded. “Thanks. And... sorry I snapped.”

“No worries,” he said with a grin. “You’re remarkably patient for someone being treated like a five-year-old in a bodysuit with Wi-Fi.”

She laughed, despite herself.

Then the suit buzzed gently:

**Laughter detected. Good mood! Reward: one storytime credit.**

“I swear,” she said, “if it tries to read me *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, I’m tearing this thing off with a crowbar.”

Matt raised an eyebrow. “Just wait until it recommends *nap time*.”

Time crawled.

Every day for the next week, Elise sent follow-up documents to the main office. Every day she received a polite auto-reply: *Thank you. Your case is under review.*

And every day, the suit continued its patronizing routine.

At 6:30 a.m. sharp, the neck panel of the bodysuit buzzed softly to wake her. She was guided through simplified morning routines, denied access to caffeine or independent browsing, and prompted to complete “*emotion regulation coloring activities*” before being allowed to make a phone call.

She tried to laugh it off. Sometimes she succeeded. Other times she just sat on the couch, arms folded across the bib of her overalls, watching the app screen like a prisoner awaiting parole.

Matt stayed in contact. He checked in by text—always careful to avoid breaking protocol—and pushed for updates from the inside. His hands were tied, but he’d managed to keep some of the more infantilizing modules from reactivating.

Still, Elise could feel the edges of herself softening. The longer she was treated like a child, the more exhausting it became to remember she wasn’t one.

Then, finally, it happened.

One evening, as she finished the last of the mandatory “reflection module,” her phone buzzed with a new system message:

**Profile Correction Verified**  
**Age Classification Updated: Adult**  
**Resuming Standard Trial Protocol**

She exhaled sharply, almost laughing. The difference wasn’t massive, but it *felt* massive. Her browsing privileges were restored. The bedtime alerts now suggested instead of enforced. Her food restrictions lightened. She was once again allowed to decide, within reason, when to sit, stand, or snack without animated guidance or pastel-toned affirmations.

It wasn’t freedom—but it was dignity.

And then, just as she’d begun to settle into this restored “normal,” the app delivered the final message:

**Trial Period Concluded — VANTAGE Series Evaluation Complete**  
**Field Mechanic Scheduled for Collection: Friday, 10:00 a.m.**

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When Matt arrived that morning, Elise was already up—showered, dressed, and sipping a *real* cup of coffee, which she held up proudly like a trophy when he stepped inside.

“Look,” she said. “Bean juice. Unfiltered. Unauthorized. Glorious.”

Matt grinned. “Rebel.”

They packed things quietly. The bathroom sensor came off the wall with a soft hiss. The charging base was unplugged. The tablet and collar were sealed back in their black case. Finally, Elise stepped into her bedroom, and for the first time in two weeks, unfastened the buckles of the bodysuit without restriction.

One by one: *snap... snap...* red lights flashing off instead of on.

When she stepped out of the suit, it felt like stepping out of something more than fabric. The air on her skin was unfamiliar, unfiltered. And her own thoughts—unprompted, unmonitored—tumbled in more freely than she'd expected.

She handed the folded suit to Matt with both hands.

"It's weird," she said. "I hated a lot of it. But now that it's over... part of me's going to miss it."

"Yeah," he said softly. "That happens more than you'd think."

They stood near the door as he closed the case. It clicked shut with finality.

"So that's it?" she asked.

"For now. There'll be a follow-up survey in a couple days. You might get a call from the study director."

"And you?" she asked.

He hesitated. "They'll might move me to another city soon. New trial. New testers."

She nodded. "Right. Makes sense."

For a long moment, they didn't say anything. Just silence—and something heavier behind it, unsaid. Elise felt it pressing against the edges of her chest.

She didn't say, *I'm going to miss you.*

He didn't say, *I wish I had more time here.*

But both of them knew.

Matt shifted his bag onto his shoulder, gave her one last smile. "You did well, Elise. Better than most."

She smiled back. "Guess I'm a good girl after all."

That earned a real laugh from him, short and genuine. He turned to go.

The door shut quietly behind him.

Elise stood in her empty apartment, the soft weight of her own clothing resting gently on her skin. No pressure. No buzzing. No system prompts.

Just... silence.

And her own voice, ready to return.

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## Epilogue: Recalibration

Weeks passed.

At first, the freedom was exhilarating. Elise stayed up late, ate what she liked, drank as much coffee and wine as she wanted. There were no system pings when she slouched, no artificial bedtimes, no guided breathing. She sprawled across her bed at odd angles and told herself she was finally *herself* again.

But slowly, the old habits returned.

Her sleep became shallow and inconsistent. Meals were erratic, often haphazard. Her neck and shoulders began aching again from long hours hunched at her desk. She skipped her daily walks more often than not. Without the pressure, without the pacing... everything was harder. There were no catastrophes—just a slow slide into the familiar fog she remembered too well.

She didn't miss the full containment.

She missed the *clarity*.

And the sense that something—someone—was gently helping her hold the shape of her days.

On a whim, Elise reached out to Synthwear Corp.

The reply came two days later.

**Thank you for your interest in continued participation. Unfortunately, repeat enrollments are not currently allowed under the trial protocol for VANTAGE Series participants.**

And that was that.

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Later that week, Elise invited Matt over for a drink. Not under any pretense of work—just casual, something normal. He showed up in his usual way: warm smile, toolbox nowhere in sight.

They caught up, laughed a bit, poured wine.

But eventually, the words slipped out—hesitant and half-formed.

"I've been thinking about the suit," she said quietly.

Matt looked up.

She glanced away. "Not... all of it. But I do miss parts. The structure. The accountability. It's like... something was holding me upright. And now I'm slouching again. Literally."

Matt didn't tease her. He didn't dismiss it. He only nodded, thoughtful.

A few days later, he came back.

This time, he was carrying a case.

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"It's a prototype," he said, opening the lid. "Older build. Not part of any active study. I've been maintaining the firmware on a test server I run privately."

The suit inside was familiar but clearly different—sleeker in some ways, stripped down in others. The bodysuit was deep red again, the overalls matte black. The buckles looked a little heavier. There was no separate collar. No shower module.

"It still has most of the behavioral logic," Matt continued. "Posture cues. Schedule prompts. Mobility nudges. But no networked enforcement. And no biometric collar, so you won't be tracked in the shower. You'll have more space to negotiate what works."

Elise touched the fabric. It was still firm. Still authoritative. But somehow... gentler.

"And you'd be the one managing it?"

He nodded. “Only if you want. I can issue the prompts. Adjust the pressure. Decide when you can unlock.”

There was a beat of silence. Not out of fear—out of relief.

She nodded. “Let’s do a trial.”

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They started small: a few hours a day, gradually extending. Matt maintained full manual control of the suit from his interface. He calibrated the behavioral guidance gently, asking Elise’s preferences at every stage. It wasn’t about restriction. It was about *support*.

And it worked.

The structure came back. The mornings got easier. Her posture improved. She started cooking real meals again. She didn’t need constant control—just... a presence. Something that helped her be the version of herself she actually liked.

And something else bloomed with it.

She and Matt began spending more time together—outside of testing, outside of rules. The bond that had begun as technician and test subject shifted. Grew. Became more honest, more human.

They started dating.

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Years passed.

Matt continued to work at the company, and Elise became an informal tester for all kinds of new Synthwear prototypes. Every few months, a new version would arrive. Some were lighter, some more focused. Some aimed at wellness. Others at productivity.

But one thing stayed consistent: Elise almost always wore some version of the suit and overalls. Not because she had to. Because it helped.

Because she liked how it framed her days.

And because it had brought her the structure she needed—  
—and the person who’d helped her find it.



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**The End.**

