The Shot of Forever

B Alan Bourgeois · Opening excerpt · 1 of 2

The light over the bathroom mirror was a war crime.

Adrian squinted up at the LED strip he'd insisted on—"daylight balanced," the sales guy had said, like that was a good thing—and regretted everything. The harsh white glare showed every pore, every faint groove at the corners of his mouth, the slight creasing between his brows that no amount of Botox seemed to erase for more than a few months.

He leaned closer, pulling the skin at his temple back with two fingers. The motion smoothed the lines instantly. If only he could walk around all day like that, holding his face in place.

"Forty-three," he muttered. "And I look… fine."

Fine. The worst word.

In the gay bars he went to, the kids said "fine" as a step above "sir" and two steps below "invisible." Fine was for the guy you'd talk to while waiting for somebody hotter to finish their drink.

He dropped his hand and studied himself honestly. The jawline was still there—he worked his ass off in the gym for that—but the skin didn't bounce back quite the way it had at thirty. His dark hair was trimmed tight at the sides, a deliberate undercut to distract from the thinning near the crown. The faint shadow at his temples wasn't gray exactly, but it was thinking about it.

Reading sample — continued

The mirror did not lie. And Adrian hated it for that.

A wet nose bumped his calf.

He looked down. Daisy sat by his feet, tail thumping against the bathmat, ears perked. Twelve pounds of brown-and-white mutt with the soulful eyes of a saint and the attention span of a gnat.

“Oh, you think I’m perfect, don’t you?” he said.

Her tail thumped harder. She rose up on her hind legs, tiny paws smudging the lower cabinet door as she tried to climb him.

Adrian scooped her up and pressed his face into her fur. Daisy licked his cheek with unrestrained enthusiasm, then his nose, then his lips.

“Okay, okay, that’s enough Frenching for the morning,” he laughed, setting her back down.

She trotted out into the bedroom. He watched her go for a second, then turned back to the mirror and exhaled.

Today was the day.

He reached for the small glossy card on the counter, turning it over in his hands even though he had the copy practically memorized.