



The Breakthrough

Jessica's Apartment - Evening

The three women sat together in the warm glow of the apartment, the joy of the twin revelation still fresh and overwhelming. Jessica had just set down her guitar when Jules's voice cut through the comfortable silence.

"Excuse me," the android said, its tone carrying an unusual urgency that made all three women look up. "A medical report has arrived. It's marked urgent."

Elara immediately pulled out her phone, her fingers swiping to access the secure medical portal. A holographic display materialized in the air before them, showing a dense document with the ASI's distinctive watermark—the mark of the Artificial Superintelligence that had revolutionized medicine and so much else.

Elara's eyes scanned the report, moving faster and faster as she read. Her hand flew to her mouth.

"Mira," she said, her voice shaking. "The ASI has corrected and formulated a new treatment for the BRCA-X."

Mira's head snapped up, her eyes wide with disbelief. "What—" Her voice broke. "We can conceive?"

The words hung in the air for a heartbeat. Then Mira's face crumpled, and she broke down into tears—deep, wrenching sobs that shook her entire body. Years of

grief, of loss, of believing she could never carry her own child, all came pouring out in that moment.

Jessica froze, her hand still on her belly where the twins were growing. "Oh my God, Mira," she whispered.

Elara was reading faster now, her own tears streaming down her face. "This changes everything," she said, her voice thick with emotion. "The procedure can be done tomorrow. Tomorrow, Mira. They can correct the mutation. You could carry a baby. We could both carry babies."

Mira choked out through her sobs, "Our family—anew—and with Jessica."

Jessica felt her world tilt. She was pregnant with twins—Mira's genetic children. And now Mira could potentially carry her own child? And Elara too? The family they'd imagined as four was suddenly expanding in ways none of them had anticipated.

"Jessica," Elara said urgently, turning to her with fierce intensity. "By no means does this change the us and now. This expands our future. You're carrying our babies—Mira's babies—and that's sacred. That doesn't change."

"I have my eggs and donor," Elara continued, her words tumbling out. "I can get pregnant now. My baby will survive. We could have—" She stopped, doing the math. "We could have five children. The twins you're carrying, plus one from Mira, plus one from me, plus—"

"Plus the fifty-eight eggs still in storage," Mira finished, wiping her eyes. "Oh God, Jessica. We could have a huge family. If we wanted. If you—" She stopped, looking at Jessica with sudden concern. "If you're okay with all of this."

Jessica sat very still, her hands pressed to her belly where two lives were growing. Her mind was racing, trying to process what this meant.

She'd signed up to carry one baby, maybe two. She was currently carrying twins—already more than expected. And now Mira and Elara could potentially carry their own children? The surrogacy arrangement she'd agreed to was suddenly becoming something much more complex.

"I need to understand," Jessica said slowly. "What does this mean for us? For the twins I'm carrying? For our relationship?"

Mira moved closer, taking Jessica's hands in hers. "It means that the twins you're carrying are even more precious than we thought. Because they're the children we never believed we could have. My genetic children, growing in your body because mine couldn't do it. That doesn't change just because the ASI found a cure."

"And it means," Elara added, "that our family could be bigger than we imagined. You're carrying two babies now. If Mira gets the treatment and conceives, that's three. If I use my eggs and get pregnant, that's four. And we still have all those frozen eggs if we want more in the future."

"But what about me?" Jessica asked, her voice small. "Where do I fit in all of this? I'm the surrogate for the twins, but if you can carry your own children now, what am I? What's my role?"

The question hung heavy in the air.

Mira squeezed Jessica's hands tighter. "You're family," she said fiercely. "You're not just a surrogate, Jessica. You never were. You're the woman carrying our first children. You're the person who made our family possible. And if we have more children—whether you carry them or we do—you're still part of this. If you want to be."

"We're not asking you to carry more babies," Elara clarified. "The twins are enough. More than enough. But we are asking—hoping—that you'll stay. That you'll be part of our lives, part of our children's lives. However that looks."

Jessica felt tears pricking her eyes. "I don't know what that looks like," she admitted. "I don't know how to be part of a family like this. I don't know what my role is if I'm not carrying your babies."

"Neither do we," Mira said honestly. "We're making this up as we go. But Jessica—" Her voice broke. "I don't want to do this without you. Any of this. The twins, the future children, building this family. I want you there."

"We both do," Elara confirmed. "This breakthrough doesn't diminish what you're doing for us. It expands the possibilities. But you're still central to everything."

Jessica looked down at her belly, at the place where two lives were growing. Then she looked at Mira and Elara—these two women who had become so important to her so quickly, who were offering her something she'd never expected: a permanent place in their family.

"I need time to process this," Jessica said quietly. "This is a lot. The twins were already a lot. And now this—the possibility of more children, of you both being pregnant, of this family growing in ways we never discussed—"

"Take all the time you need," Elara said. "We're not making any decisions tonight. Mira will get the treatment tomorrow because it's time-sensitive. But everything else—how we move forward, what our family looks like, what your role is—we'll figure that out together."

"Together," Mira echoed. "Always together."

They sat in silence for a long moment, the weight of the revelation settling over them. The ASI had done what human science couldn't—found a way to correct the genetic mutation that had stolen Mira and Elara's ability to conceive naturally. It was a miracle, a breakthrough, a gift.

But it was also complicated. It changed the dynamics of their relationship, the structure of their family, the future they'd been building.

Jessica's hand remained on her belly, feeling the flatness that would soon swell with two lives. Mira's genetic children. The first of what might be many.

"Congratulations," Jessica finally said, looking at Mira. "This is what you've always wanted. To carry your own child. I'm happy for you. Truly."

"Thank you," Mira whispered. "But Jessica—you're still giving me something I can never repay. You're carrying my first children. The twins. That's forever. That's sacred."

"And we'll figure out the rest," Elara added. "One step at a time. One pregnancy at a time. One miracle at a time."

Jessica nodded, though her mind was still spinning. She was pregnant with twins. Mira would soon be able to conceive. Elara had eggs waiting. The family of four they'd imagined was becoming something much larger, much more complex.

And she was at the center of it all—the woman who had started this journey, who was carrying the first children, who had somehow become essential to these two women's lives.

The future was uncertain. The boundaries were unclear. But one thing was certain: their family was growing. In ways none of them had anticipated. In ways that would challenge every assumption they'd made.

And Jessica—tall, athletic, musical Jessica who had agreed to carry one baby and was now carrying two—was part of it all.

For better or worse. For as long as she chose to stay.

The twins kicked inside her—or at least, she imagined they did. Too early for real movement, but the thought was there. Two lives, growing. The first of many.

Their family was just beginning.

Jessica's voice trembled slightly as she spoke, trying to convey the whirlwind of emotions she'd been experiencing. "Kira, you won't believe what's happened. It's been a crazy few days, and I need to talk it out with someone who understands."

Kira, ever the supportive sister, settled in, her voice calm and attentive. "I'm here, Jess. Tell me everything."

Jessica took a deep breath, her mind racing with the events that had unfolded.

"Okay, so you know I was carrying Mira's baby, right? Well, it turns out I'm carrying twins. Mira's genetic twins. And then, just when I thought I couldn't handle any more surprises, an urgent medical report came through. The ASI has found a treatment for Mira and Elara's BRCA-X mutation. They can now conceive naturally."

Kira gasped, her shock echoing through the line. "That's incredible, Jess. How are they taking it?"

Jessica's voice caught in her throat as she recalled the scene. "Mira was in tears. Elara too. It's like a dream come true for them. But it's also... it's complicated. I'm pregnant with their twins, and now they can have more children. It's changing everything we planned."

Kira's voice was thoughtful. "That must be a lot to process. How are you feeling about it all?"

Jessica paused, her hand instinctively going to her belly. "I don't know, Kira. I'm happy for them, of course. Mira and Elara deserve this. But I'm also scared. I'm carrying twins, which was more than I signed up for. And now, with the possibility of more children, I'm not sure where I fit in. Am I still just a surrogate, or am I part of this family now?"

Kira's voice was firm and reassuring. "Jess, you're more than just a surrogate. You're their friend, their confidante, and now, the mother of their first children.

That's a huge role, and it's not one to be taken lightly. You're part of their family, whether you're carrying their babies or not."

Jessica felt a lump form in her throat. "I know, but it's all so overwhelming. I need to figure out what I want, what I can handle. I need to know if I'm strong enough for this."

Kira's voice softened. "You're stronger than you think, Jess. You've already done so much for them. And you're doing it with love. That's what matters. You'll figure it out, one step at a time. And I'll be here to support you, every step of the way."

Jessica felt a wave of gratitude. "Thanks, Kira. I don't know what I'd do without you. I just need to take some time to think. This is all so new, so unexpected."

Kira's voice was gentle. "Take all the time you need, Jess. You're doing an incredible thing, and you deserve to feel good about it. You're not just carrying their babies; you're carrying their hopes and dreams. And that's something special."

Jessica nodded, her mind already racing with the possibilities. "You're right. I just need to focus on what's real and what's possible. And remember that whatever happens, I'm part of this family. And that's something I can hold onto."

Kira's voice was warm and encouraging. "Exactly, Jess. You're part of something amazing, and it's going to be okay. You'll see."

Jessica hung up the phone, feeling a sense of relief and resolve. She knew the road ahead was uncertain, but with Kira's support and the love of her chosen family, she was ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead. The future was uncertain, but one thing was clear: she was part of something beautiful, and she was ready to embrace it, whatever it might bring.

The call ended, leaving the apartment in a heavy, golden silence. Jessica set the phone down on the kitchen island, the screen going dark, but her mind was still lit up with Kira's reassuring words. *You're the person who made our family possible.*

She wandered out of the kitchen, the hardwood floor cool beneath her bare feet. The San Francisco sunset was ablaze outside the floor-to-ceiling windows, painting the bay in hues of bruised purple and burning orange. The light filtered into the room, catching the dust motes dancing in the air.

As she passed the hallway leading to the bedroom, she caught her reflection in the large, oval full-length mirror leaning against the wall. She stopped.

Jessica turned to face herself fully. She looked strong. The pink sports bra hugged her chest, and the matching leggings accentuated the long, powerful lines of her legs—legs built by years of running and hiking. But her eyes were drawn immediately to her midsection.

She placed her hands on her stomach, fingers splayed wide. It was flat. Taut. The muscles she had worked so hard to maintain were still visible under the skin, a testament to her athletic discipline. It was almost impossible to believe that two separate human lives were currently dividing and multiplying beneath that stillness.

I've done this before, she thought, the memory of her previous surrogacy surfacing—the stretching skin, the shift in her center of gravity, the way her body had surrendered to the process. *But not with twins.*

She turned to the side, examining her profile. *I'm gonna be huge.*

The thought wasn't vanity; it was a biological reality check. Two babies. Two placentas. Double the fluid. Her body, her temple of fitness, was about to be commandeered completely.

With a slow, deliberate breath, she hooked her thumbs into the waistband of her pink leggings. She pushed the fabric down, past her hips, lowering them even further until they rested low on her pelvis, exposing the entirety of her lower abdomen and the curve of her hips.

She stared at the exposed skin. It was pale in the dimming light, a blank canvas waiting to be painted with stretch marks and the distension of life. She traced the line of her hip bone, wondering how long it would be until she couldn't see it anymore.

"Okay," she whispered to the empty room. "Day one of the rest of it."

She reached back for her phone on the nearby table. Bringing it up, she opened the camera app and switched it to the front-facing lens. She looked at her digital reflection—the blonde hair cascading wildly over her pink strap, the serious set of her jaw, the exposed, flat belly.

She adjusted her angle, finding the light from the window to illuminate the contours of her stomach. This wasn't for social media. This was evidence. This was the 'Before.'

Click.

She turned slightly, capturing the profile view, the flatness that would soon be a memory.

Click.

She looked at the screen, zooming in on the image of her stomach. It felt like looking at a calm ocean just before a storm. She took one more, this time letting a small, tentative hand rest protectively over the invisible life within.

Click.

Documentation. Proof that she was here, that she was ready, and that this body—her body—was about to do something miraculous for the women she had come to love.

Jessica sat on the edge of her bed, the cool, fluid weight of the silk nightshirt settling against her skin—a stark contrast to the tight compression gear she usually wore. The room was dim, lit only by the clinical blue glow of her tablet. She wasn't just browsing; she was studying. If her body was going to be the vessel for this miracle, she needed to understand the mechanics of the payload.

She opened a fresh digital notebook, titling it *Project Twins*

Her fingers flew across the screen, pulling up medical journals and forums. She needed to know the upper limits. *How big?* The answers were sobering. She read that because the uterus has to accommodate two fetuses, the growth is rapid, often matching the size of a full-term singleton pregnancy weeks before the actual due date. She learned that while a singleton pregnancy usually goes to 40 weeks, the "finish line" for twins is often around 36 weeks, with many deliveries happening between 32 and 38 weeks.

"Thirty-six weeks," she whispered, doing the mental math. Less time, but more intensity.

She moved on to the weight. It wasn't just the babies. She read that the extra weight comes from double the placentas, double the amniotic fluid, and increased maternal body fluid. She looked down at her lap. The articles warned that athletic

women like her might "show" earlier due to the tightness of the abdominal wall pushing the uterus outward.

Then came the part that made her athlete's heart skip a beat: the recovery.

She zoomed in on diagrams of the abdominal wall. *Diastasis recti*. The search results were blunt: the *linea alba*—the connective tissue keeping her six-pack together—would be overstretched, creating a gap between her abdominal muscles. This was common in twin pregnancies, where the distension was severe. One article mentioned that the "distinctive remnant" after delivering multiples is often loose skin and a "shelf" of tissue.

Jessica frowned, touching her stomach. *My core*.

But she also found hope. She read accounts of women who returned to fitness, noting that breastfeeding twins made them feel like they were "starving all the time" and helped shed the weight rapidly. She read that pelvic floor rehabilitation and patience were key to rebuilding strength. She wasn't going to "bounce back" instantly—the belly would remain distended for a while postpartum—but she could rebuild. She had delivered naturally before, and she read that vaginal delivery for twins is possible, though it often requires a "double setup" in the operating room as a safety precaution.

"Okay," she murmured, closing the browser tabs and opening her calendar. "We train for this."

She decided then and there to treat this pregnancy like an elite endurance event. Documentation was essential. She wouldn't hide the changes; she would catalog them.

She typed out a new protocol into her phone, sharing the note with Mira and Elara:

The Protocol:

1. **The Ritual:** Before every appointment, Jessica would take a specific set of photos.
 - *Phase 1:* Post-shower, towel-dried hair, completely nude. No hiding. She needed to see the skin stretching, the *linea alba* expanding, the raw reality of the biology.
 - *Phase 2:* Dressed in the same outfit every time—black leggings and a fitted tank—to track the silhouette changes against a constant variable.

2. The Team's Role:

- Mira and Elara were designated as the archivists. Jessica noted that she wanted them to take candid photos of her during the appointments—not just the happy smiles, but the exhaustion, the blood draws, the reality of it.
- **Video Evidence:** Every ultrasound was to be recorded. Every heartbeat.
- **Data:** She wanted a spreadsheet. Weight gain, blood pressure, fetal measurements. If the doctors were tracking it, she wanted a copy.

She set the tablet down and lay back against the pillows, her hand drifting to her lower abdomen. She was terrified of the *diastasis recti*, of the loose skin, of the potential C-section. But she was also fiercely competitive. She would carry these twins to term. She would deliver them safely. And then, she would rebuild her body, scar by scar, muscle by muscle.

"We're going to be huge," she whispered to the darkness, a smile touching her lips. "And we're going to be magnificent."

The next morning...

Checking her reflection one last time, she felt a surge of adrenaline. She looked soft, feminine, and ready. She grabbed her purse and headed for the door. Mira and Elara were waiting at the clinic. Today, the abstract concept of "twins" would become a grainy, black-and-white reality on a monitor, and then, over brunch, they would begin the work of building their expanded family. Jessica took a deep breath and stepped out into the morning light. Documentation complete. Mission start. The narrative continues. Jessica, Mira and Elara are at the clinic. The obstetrician, Dr. Aris Thorne, is a handsome, tall man with an athletic build. He has a warm smile and gentle demeanor. He's quite taken with the three women, and especially Jessica. He is very thorough in his examination. He performs a transvaginal ultrasound to get a better look at the embryos since they are still quite small. He confirms that they are indeed twins, and that they appear healthy. He points out the fluttering heartbeats on the monitor. The room is filled with the sound of the rapid, rhythmic wooshing of the tiny hearts. Tears flow freely among the women. Dr. Thorne prints out several strips of ultrasound images for them. He then asks Jessica to get dressed and meet him in his office for a consultation.

While Jessica is dressing, Mira and Elara are already in the office, looking at the ultrasound pictures. When Jessica enters, Dr. Thorne stands up and pulls out a chair for her. He then sits on the edge of his desk, crossing his arms and looking at them with a professional yet warm expression.

"Everything looks perfect," he says. "But I want to be clear about the risks. Twin pregnancies are high-risk by default. We need to monitor you closely, Jessica. I want to see you every two weeks for now, and then weekly as we get closer to the third trimester."

He then brings up the topic of nutrition and exercise. "You're in excellent shape, Jessica, which is a huge advantage. But you need to eat enough to support two growing babies. And while I encourage you to stay active, you need to listen to your body. No pushing through pain. And as you get bigger, we'll need to modify your workouts."

He pauses, looking at each of them in turn. "I also want to discuss the birth plan. With twins, we have to be prepared for anything. A vaginal delivery is possible, especially since you've done it before, but we need to have a low threshold for a C-section if there are any complications."

Jessica nods, taking it all in. She's done her research, so none of this is a surprise. But hearing it from a doctor makes it real. She glances at Mira and Elara, who are listening intently, their hands clasped together.

"We're in this together," Elara says, squeezing Mira's hand. "Whatever Jessica needs, whatever the babies need, we'll do it."

Dr. Thorne smiles. "That's what I like to hear. You have a great support system, Jessica. That's half the battle."

He then hands Jessica a packet of information and a prescription for prenatal vitamins. "Take these, and I'll see you in two weeks. And call me if you have any concerns, day or night."

As they leave the clinic, the three women are buzzing with excitement and relief. They head to a nearby bistro for brunch, ready to celebrate the good news and plan for the future.

At brunch, over eggs Benedict and mimosas (virgin for Jessica), they discuss the doctor's advice and the reality of the twins. They also touch on the ASI treatment

for Mira, and the potential for future children. The conversation is easy and open, the bond between them strengthening with every shared moment.

The Next Morning.... Morning Sickness

The soft light of dawn filtered through the wide bay windows of Jessica's San Francisco apartment, casting a gentle glow over the living room where Mira and Elara had crashed on the oversized sectional sofa. It had been a few days since the first maternity appointment—the ultrasound strips now pinned proudly to the fridge like badges of honor—and the three women had fallen into a tentative rhythm of togetherness. Mira and Elara had insisted on staying over, turning Jessica's space into a shared sanctuary. No more talk of threats or shadows; whatever that ominous text had been, Elara's quick work with private security had traced it to a overzealous paparazzo sniffing around high-profile ASI beneficiaries. It was dismissed, deleted, forgotten. Today was about the quiet miracles unfolding within.

Elara stirred first, her internal clock wired for early mornings. She was midway through brewing coffee when a retching sound echoed from the bathroom down the hall—raw, urgent, unmistakable. Her heart clenched. "Jessica," she murmured, setting the pot down.

Mira bolted upright from the sofa, her dark hair tousled, eyes wide with maternal instinct overriding sleep. "Jess?" She was at the bathroom door in seconds, knocking softly before pushing it open.

Jessica was hunched over the sink, one hand gripping the porcelain edge like a lifeline, the other pressed to her mouth as another wave hit. Sweat beaded on her forehead, trickling down her temples, her long blonde hair sticking to her neck in damp strands. The silk nightshirt—pale lavender, flowing loosely the night before—now clung transparently to her athletic frame, outlining the subtle tension in her shoulders and the flat plane of her belly where the twins stirred their first chaotic protest.

Mira was there in an instant, kneeling beside her, one arm wrapping around Jessica's waist to steady her. "I've got you, love. Breathe through it. Just breathe." Her voice was a soothing anchor, free of panic, laced with the fierce tenderness of someone witnessing her dreams take physical form.

Jessica leaned into her, gasping as she straightened enough to stumble toward the toilet. "Wow," she managed between heaves, her voice hoarse and strained, "it is strong." Another retch, and she sank to her knees, Mira holding her hair back with practiced gentleness. This wasn't like her previous surrogacy; the nausea hit harder, fiercer—double the hCG hormones from two tiny hearts demanding fuel, her body already recalibrating to sustain the load.

Elara appeared in the doorway, assessing with calm efficiency. She didn't crowd them; instead, she crossed to the shower and cranked the faucet to hot. Steam billowed out immediately, filling the small space with warm, eucalyptus-scented mist from the body wash residue. The humidity softened the air, easing the sharp edge of Jessica's discomfort almost palpably—her breathing slowed, the sweat cooling into a less oppressive sheen.

"Better?" Elara asked softly, crouching to meet Jessica's eyes. She fetched a fresh towel and a clean nightshirt from the linen closet—a crisp white silk one, buttery soft and oversized for comfort.

Jessica nodded weakly, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand as the nausea ebbed into exhaustion. Mira helped her stand, guiding her into the shower's embrace. The steam enveloped her like a hug, rinsing away the clamminess, soothing the rawness in her throat. She stood there under the warm cascade, hands instinctively cradling her belly, feeling the first emotional swell amid the physical trial. *This is them*, she thought, a quiet awe cutting through the fatigue. *My little fighters, saying good morning.*

Minutes later, dried and changed into the fresh nightshirt that draped loosely over her frame like a protective veil, Jessica emerged. Mira enveloped her in a hug, Elara pressing a cool glass of ginger tea into her hands. They settled her on the sofa amid pillows, the three of them close, sharing the space.

"That was intense," Jessica admitted, sipping slowly, color returning to her cheeks. "Twins don't mess around."

Mira brushed a strand of hair from her face, her eyes shining. "You're incredible. Handling this for us... It's the first mark of their fire."

Elara nodded, pulling out Jessica's tablet to log the episode in their shared "Project Twins" doc: *Week 6 - First MS episode. Severe, steam/shower mitigated.*

Hydration post: ginger tea. "We'll track it all," she said. "Patterns, triggers. You've got this—and us."

Jessica leaned back, the ache fading into a profound warmth. The physical toll was real—the damp cling of sickness, the sweat-slicked vulnerability—but so was the emotional anchor. These women, these lives growing inside her; they were weaving her deeper into something unbreakable. She snapped a quick selfie then—pale but peaceful, nightshirt soft, Mira and Elara flanking her—for the ritual archive. Not just documentation, but proof of their growing bond, one gentle morning at a time.

Jessica sat nestled into the plush corner of the sofa, her legs crossing elegantly at the ankles beneath the fresh white silk nightshirt, the fabric whispering softly against her skin. The ginger tea warmed her from within, chasing away the last echoes of nausea, leaving her with a quiet, resilient glow. She looked at Mira and Elara—their faces etched with concern turned to adoration—and felt the depth of their care settle over her like the morning light.

"Thank you," she said, her voice steadier now, a small smile breaking through. "No doubt, this will be one of many."

Elara leaned forward from her spot on the armrest, her hand resting lightly on Jessica's knee. "All the more for support and comfort," she replied, her tone firm yet tender, like a promise etched in stone.

Mira, curled close on Jessica's other side, nodded vigorously, her fingers tracing absent patterns on Jessica's arm. "Yes, we will," she affirmed, her eyes distant for a moment with wonder. "And this gives us insight for the day we bear children naturally and on our own."

The words hung in the air, painting visions of swollen bellies and shared labors yet to come—Mira post-treatment, Elara with her retrieved eggs. Jessica felt a flutter in her own core, not from sickness this time, but from the expanding tapestry of their family.

Elara's gaze sharpened with playful hope. "And, Jess, you'll be Auntie, right?"

Mira leaned in closer, her plea soft and earnest. "Please say yes."

Jessica paused, her crossed legs shifting slightly as she let the idea sink in. Auntie. It was a considerable leap into the future—years of milestones, of watching these women nurture their own miracles while she rebuilt her body,

reclaimed her athletic stride post-partum. But the word felt right, like a missing piece slotting into place. She met their eyes, her hand drifting to rest over her flat belly.

"Yes," she said simply, her voice warm with resolve. "I would be. And we'll take it one step at a time. We'll all get there, to some degree."

Mira's face lit up, relief and joy blooming like dawn. "Jess, not right now," she clarified gently, squeezing her hand. "After you have the twins, they're settled, and you've completely recovered past post-partum."

Jessica nodded, the reassurance easing a tension she hadn't fully acknowledged. Recovery first—her body, her strength, her autonomy. Then the auntie adventures, the family holidays, the endless photos of little ones tumbling through life. She imagined it: her toned frame back, racing along the bay trails, but with a new lightness, a chosen permanence in their circle.

The three women sat in companionable silence for a moment, the steam from the shower still faintly scenting the air, mingling with the aroma of fresh coffee. Elara pulled out the tablet, adding a note to Project Gemini: *MS Episode 1 resolved. Family roles affirmed. Bond strengthened.* Jessica snapped another photo—they together, legs crossed, hands linked—a quiet ritual capturing not just her body's early trials, but the emotional anchors holding her steady.

In that sunlit haven, the physical pangs of twin pregnancy felt less like burdens and more like badges, each one drawing them closer. Jessica uncrossed her legs, stretching contentedly. The day stretched ahead, full of promise—one gentle wave at a time.