

Cale Storyline 01 Changes

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This story is the first in a series of stories I wrote based of Generation X. In changes, a new character joins the school, which leads to positive changes for Penance

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1 - Change

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Changes

Chapter 1 Change

The phone was ringing. Sean Cassidy, headmaster of Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, ran into his office and answered it. "Hello, Sean Cassidy speaking."

A young man's voice on the other end spoke, "Hello, Mr. Cassidy. Am I correct in assuming that I have reached the Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters?"

"Aye, that is correct. May I ask why?"

"Mr. Cassidy, I'm a mutant wondering about enrolling in the school."

"How do you know that you are a mutant, lad?"

"Let me put it this way. Have you ever heard about mutants that can mimic powers?"

"Aye, we have one like that here."

"I take it to the extreme. I can mimic abilities, as well as personalities."

"Are you saying that you can mimic a mutant you're near?"

"In simple terms, yes. Change is inevitable, doubly so for me. I have a relative that has the mutant ability to project future events. After some time with them, I mimicked that ability and their personality. It was a very strange experience. Although, the reason I called was because of the Onslaught ordeal.

"I see, but how did you avoid detection of Sentinels and other devices specified for detecting mutants?"

"Whenever my ability is neutral, I can avoid detection. One time, I stood about ten feet from a sentinel and it just avoided me."

"Well, but are you afraid of your ability. That is usually the reason some of my students have joined."

"Fact. My mutant ability causes me to mimic personalities, as I mentioned before. I'm afraid that I may lose my personality in the process. And in some cases, I almost do. Sir, I hate to cut this short, but I must get ready. My plane leaves in a while and it is quite a drive to get to the airport."

"Okay, lad. I shall pick you up at the airport, with a couple of my students."

"NO! I'm sorry sir, but I would be grateful if you wait for me, alone. I want the students to meet the real me first. I should be easy to identify, all in black, about 21, but could you describe yourself so I can find you with little trouble."

"Okay, I have orangish hair, a slight goatee and I'll be wearing a Celtics jacket."

"Alrighty then. I shall arrive at Logan Airport, on flight 341 from Newark. See you in a couple of hours."

He hung up. He didn't even say his name. He decided to call Scott and find out if the X-Men had contacted him or not.

Sean ran over to Emma's quarters as if there was no time left in the world. But the call he had just

received had struck him as odd. As he arrived, Emma opened the door and said, "Something wrong?" with a sly smile on her face. He couldn't tell if she had read his mind or not. Of course, if she did, he didn't have to remind her that she would regret it. He had already told 'er once back when Penance had arrived.

"Nae, just more of a shock. I just received a call from a lad, 'bout Jono's sage. He said that he is a mutant and wishes to join the school."

"This surprises you, Sean. Maybe the X-men contacted him."

"Nae, when I asked Scott about the lad. He said that for some reason, the lad could nae be detected. It was as he was nae a mutant, yet he was."

"That is indeed strange. Did you agree to let this boy enroll?"

"Emma, if he is a mutant, he is free to enroll. 'Tis odd tho, how he seems to dodge mutant detection devices. He even said that he stood about 10 feet from a Sentinel and wasn't even threatened by it."

"That is odd. But, how does he know he is a mutant?"

"He said, and I quote, 'Change is inevitable, doubly so for me.' Afterward, he told me about a mutant in his family. This mutant had the ability to project images of the future. He said that after a short time with them, he mimicked their ability, as well as his relative's personality."

"You mean to say that this boy may be able to mimic other mutants."

"Aye, and he said that he wants to help people, instead of letting his ability harm people, or other mutants."

"And if Apocalypse or even worse, Emplate, finds out about this mutant, everyone could suffer. How soon will he get here?"

"He said he would arrive at the airport in 10 hours. We should tell the students."

"Yes, especially if his ability is what we believe it is. I will contact them telepathically." Sean turned and ran for the assembly hall. He hoped that everybody would welcome him with open arms. But, the lad said he would try to avoid close proximity to the others for a while at least.

"Great, why is it just as we get settled into a routine, something happens." She understood most what change meant. She remembered that change lost her best bud, Wolverine. She knew enough about change. It was change that was affecting the world, since Onslaught. She even remembers the change that brought her to the X-Men. Change affected everything in life, and you can't just shove it in a corner and think that nothing is happening.

"Jubilee, please stop acting so juvenile."

Jubilee returned to Monet. She had been starting to get along with her since Ms. Frost tried to protect them from Onslaught. But, Monet didn't understand how much changes affected everything. "Listen, Monet, when I was with the X-Men..."

<Enough of the sermon, Jubilee> Jono said. He had gotten used to hating that as much as everyone else. About the only one who didn't say anything about it was Penance, and that was only because she didn't talk.

"Okay, I get the picture. I won't go into one of those stories. I mean, it's not like it's my life."

"Jubilee, you shouldn't lie like that," Everett said. Since the two had gotten closer in the past weeks, it was hard to lie in front of him.

Sean and Emma walked in and Sean tuned to Emma. "Aye, everybody is here except for Penance."

"I couldn't contact her. Jubilee, do you think you could tell Penance about this when we get finished. You two are almost like sisters."

"No problem, Emma. By the way, what is this all about?"

"Yes, what's going on?" Angelo asked, relaxing in a chair. The headphones to his walkman were resting around his neck. It was obvious that he didn't want another of Sean's sonic screams.

"Alright, I received a call today. A lad said that he would like to join the school," Sean said.

"I take it that this boy is a mutant like us," said the calm voice of Mondo. Mondo had to have been the most laid back mutant she had ever met. She remembered that he said that life just happens.

"Aye, that he is. But, his ability is very unusual. From what we can figure, 'e might have the ability to mimic any mutant, ability and personality."

"Like, that would be so happening. I mean he could hang with me and Synch and have a triple firework show."

Monet then said, "He wants to enroll so that his ability doesn't threaten people."

"That and he fears his ability, and he could be more dangerous if yur brother ever finds out about 'im."

Monet's eyes went wide at that. Jubilee understood what that could mean. A second Emplate would be twice the trouble that M's brother already was. "Let's hope we can get him here without Emplate finding out."

"Exactly. I will pick him up at the airport in a while. He asked that we keep a distance for a while. His mutant ability makes him vulnerable to mutants. He wants to let you meet the real him before he joins us. He doesn't want us to get too close, since that is what triggers his ability. And no tricks, Angelo and Everett."

"Who, us?" the two said in unison. "We are perfect angels."

"The tail and pitchforks give you away, guys," Paige said. She had been on the receiving end of a couple of their jokes. Jubilee could remember many times where they had cut off the hot water in the showers. Paige's shrieks were easy to notice, even when they woke her up in the morning.

"Alright, but don't forget, he can mimic both your abilities and personalities." The two looked at each other and realized that he could make them the victims of their own jokes. Jubilee couldn't help but laugh.

"Does that include memories as well?" Paige asked. She was a bit worried about something. Jubilee wondered if it was that romance between her and Jono. Jubilee suspected that the two might be an item, but they were acting strangely for a while.

"We aren't sure about that, lass. As far as we know, it might, and it might not."

"Great, he might mimic Monet and space out until his ability wears out," she blurted out.

"That's enough, lass. We hope that might not be an extreme to his ability. We each have our flaws. If he can also mimic those flaws, he might lose his identity all together." Losing one's identity sounds just like the Phalanx. He could virtually be a mutant Phalanx, but the likelihood of that was extreme. Jubilee still remembered the Phalanx and how dangerous they had been. They had tried to kidnap all of Gen X students at the time. It cost the life of Clarise as she destroyed the one Phalanx, that had kidnapped Paige, Angelo, Monet, and Clarise. Sean then said, "Kids, I just want ye to help settle in. I want each of ye to pick a job to do. He needs to get familiar with grounds. Also, keep yur distance for the first day or two. He wants us to get to know him before we see his power in full force."

With that, Sean dismissed everybody. She looked at everybody. They were already picking out jobs. All of sudden, Jono startled her by saying "*Do you want me to tell Penance about the boy?*"

"No, Jono. I think I can handle it. The trick is finding her. She acts as she's afraid to stay still, and if I don't find her before this new guy arrives, she will find him."

"*How do you figure that?*"

"I think that after being held captive by Emplate, she's going to check out any one who arrives."

"*In case 'e might be a bloody danger?*"

"Like, duh. She is still on her guard. It took us a couple months before she would let anyone of us

get near her." She then remembered that Jono was the only one who could stop her rampage on the night she was left here. "I'm sorry, Jono. I forgot your part in all that."

"It's okay. People usually remember action, not talk."

"What are you going to do when he arrives?"

"I've decided to show him the med center, just in case he mimics me"

Jubile thought about that for a moment. Then she realized that Jono meant the large hole in him that his psionic powers created. "I see. Who's going to show him the Grotto."

"Paige got that duty." There was a small pain of sadness in his voice, at the mention of Husk, but she decided not to pry.

"I better go hunt down Penny. She's gotta know about this before he arrives." She ran at full bolt to the only place she knew to look for Penance, the 'Danger Grotto'.

2 - First Impressions

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Changes

Chapter 2 First Impressions

It had taken a while to talk to the class, and a good amount of time to prepare a single room for the new lad. Sean had arrived at the airport with plenty of time. He noticed that a limo had arrived in the area. Probably somebody important was going to be picked up. He was just here to pick up the newest student at the school.

Attention, Flight 341 from Newark is arriving at gate 12." That was the lad's flight. He headed for the gate area and waited. The lad asked him to describe himself so he could identify Sean when he arrived.

He watched the people arriving. He eventually saw a lad, about 21, dressed all in black, exiting the gate. The lad looked at him and nodded and started in his direction. This lad was apparently the new student.

He walked off the plane and through the gate and looked around. He then saw the man, slight goatee, orangish hair, and a Celtics jacket. He headed for the man. That must have been Sean Cassidy, head of Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. He wondered what Cassidy's abilities were? It would be interesting to find out. He went to shift the weight of his carry-on bag when he glanced at his hand. A hole was starting to form on his hand. There must be another mutant in the area. He must be passing near this mutant. For some reason, he didn't like this. He broke into a fast paced walk. The hole quickly disappeared. As he approached Mr. Cassidy, he said, "Sir, as much I would like to spend some time chatting with you here, I would think it best that we hit the road."

Mr. Cassidy looked and said, "What about your luggage, lad?"

"All in hand. Now, let's get the lead out. Something is screwy in St. Louis."

"What's wrong, lad?" Mr. Cassidy asked keeping about 10 feet from him.

"I'll tell you when it's safe. I have a feeling that something is waiting for me there."

The two rushed for Mr. Cassidy's car and got in. They left the airport almost at breakneck speed. He had forgotten about his usual precautions and sat up front. This was when Mr. Cassidy said, "Now, lad could you tell me what that was 'bout?"

He returned to Mr. Cassidy and said, "That was about me mutant ability kicking in. I think there was another mutant there, with ill intent."

Mr. Cassidy had a shock on his face and said, "I take it your ability has kicked in on me."

"Aye, it has. If you need proof, find a clearing and I'll show you."

It was just a little while until they found a clearing. He got out of the car and walked to a distance and said, "Mr. Cassidy, I take that your power deals with sonic screams."

"Aye, it does." With that, he opened his mouth and screamed at such a pitch that he started to elevate in the air. "So that's what you mean by mimicking other mutants."

"Aye. But it does have a constraint to it. I have figured that the time I'm with a mutant, I hold there ability for the time I am with them, plus half of that time when out of proximity."

"Amazing,so you are able to mimic any mutant ability for as long as you want."

"Mr.Cassidy, after communicating with another mutant, I found out that if Iam in proximity of a mutant for more than 84 hours, I will keep those abilitiesforever." It was just then when Mr. Cassidy's ability left him and he dropped. Since he wasn't to far up, he landed with no injury.

"So,that's why ye want to avoid contact, or closeness."

"Yes. It's even more dangerous if I don't make the first step. I don'thold control and there is a personality struggle. In those forcedaltercations, I usually just get a brief headache, but the more traumaor pain that a mutant had suffered, I suffer and lose in the battle."

Mr.Cassidy headed back to his car and opened the back car door. "So, ye wantto be careful the first couple of days. But what about at the airport,what was that about?"

Hegot into the car and said, "A brief worry. I hope that I don't runinto that again, but I feel that will change."

"Bythe way lad, what is ye name? Ye didnae tell me over the phone."

"RichCale. My relatives came from England."

"Well,I hope you enjoy excitement. Ye will probably see a lot of it atthe school."

"Zalright. I just hope that time gives me some rest." He had a feeling aboutthat other presence. He thought he dodged it fast enough, but itwould return. His luck had been going good for too long. Itwas soon time for the bad luck to start. He just hoped that it wouldn'thurt any of the new friends he was going to make here.

Jubileewas waiting for Sean to get back with the new student. She wasn'texactly thrilled with what she had to tell Sean. After all that timeof searching, she still couldn't find Penny. She had to admit thatwhen Penny wanted to, Penny disappeared from sight all together. She saw Sean's jeep coming to a stop in the driveway. She watchedas Sean got out of the driver's side and from the back, appeared a guy,about Jono's age. He wore glasses and the first thought in her mindwas "Nerd." He was dressed all in black and carried a black carry-onbag, and a black backpack.

Helooked around at the school. "Haven't seen anything like it sincethe midnight movie."

Whoa. Midnight movie. Did this guy mean her favorite movie in the entireworld? Could he be a fan of the movie? This could change everything. She immediately forgot the problem about Penance and shouted, "Do you mean'Rocky Horror'?"

Seanlooked at the lad, "I guess you should be introduced. This is JubilationLee. I guess you hit a key point with the lass. Is yur abilitykicking in on her?"

Theguy shook his head and turned to her. He extended a hand and said,"Hi, I'm Brad Majors." She started to respond, but turned it intoa laugh. He looked at her and said, "I always knew how to make peoplelaugh."

Ittook her a while to calm down. Afterwhile, she said to Sean, "Sir,can I talk to you for a moment."

Seanwalked over to her and said, "What tis it, lass?"

"It'sabout Penance. I wasn't able to find her. She must be in the shadows somewhere."

"Ifshe was nearby, lass, Rich would have known it."

"Isthat his name, Rich?"

"Aye,lass. And his mutant ability is exactly what we figured it wouldbe. But, it might be more so. If he holds an ability for abouta week's time, he keeps that ability, and personality. Fact being,he mimicked me and even copied my speech pattern."

"Ihope that he doesn't physically change. That would be totally awkward." She thought about it for a moment, and mentally chuckled. It wouldhave been a funny sight as well.

"Idon't think that is a problem, but something worried him at the airport. 'E said that there was a

mutant in the area. He had us get out of there in a hurry, but he seems to forget his safeguards, so it must have worried him."

"That ain't good."

"Aye, who is going to show him the computer."

"Monet. Why?"

"I'll ask her to make him familiar with the files we have on our enemies. This way, he knows who to avoid."

"Well, shall I take him to his room?"

"Did you get that duty?"

"I requested it. I do have some questions for him."

"Alright, lass." He turned to Rich and said, "Jubilee is going to show you to the room. We will have a meeting to introduce you in a little bit."

He gave a salute of sorts and said, "Okay, boss." He seemed to be a perpetual source of one-liners.

"This way to the lovely accommodations of stately Xavier Manor. I hope you like action, you might see a lot." She turned and started walking to the guy's dorm. She turned her head and noticed that he was about five feet behind her. "What's with the distance?"

"Simple, my mutant ability. It is distance activated. If I get any closer, I will start mimicking you. Hell, I could know some private stuff about you. Your deepest fears, your deepest secrets, or, well I don't have to say any more."

She got the point. Imagine learning all that just by being near the person, and have their mutant ability as well. "So, you could use your ability to find out about people."

"That and I found out once that when I use one's mutant ability, I can use it against them, at least if my personality is in control."

"Wait a minute! What do you mean by that?"

"Can't explain that later? I do want to get a bit settled in."

"Okay." They had entered the guy's door and he was given a room on the main floor. She went to the door and checked it. "It's safe. Welcome to your room."

He went to the door. She was standing about four feet from the door. She didn't even realize that he mimicked her until he did the same thing and kicked the door open. When the door opened, he jumped away and a bucket of water tipped over and drenched the floor. He looked at her and said, "Let me guess. Practical jokers. That is totally bogus." After a couple of seconds, he said, "Let me guess, you suspected that might happen."

"Yeah, but..." He glanced at her with a wry smile and she stopped that thought. "Oh, I guess I was too close."

"Yea, but I made the first step." He walked into the room and shouted, "I love a single room, sometimes. Well, I guess we better head to that meeting. I am not getting any younger, and there are more mutants to meet." This guy seemed totally kewl. She thought, with him around, things might never be dull.

"Alright children, we must give our new student some kindness," Emma said. She had decided to mentally monitor Rich. Penance was still hiding, and they didn't know what would happen if she approached him. "Rich, why don't you tell the students about yourself and your abilities."

He nodded. He then turned to the class assembled in the hall and started to speak. "Well, my name is Richard Cale, but I prefer that you call me Rich. I discovered my mutant ability many years ago, but it has become a problem recently."

Paige had then asked, "How much of a mutant can you 'mimic'?"

"I can mimic their abilities, but I also mimic their personalities. I can learn things about them, including secrets, fears."

Monet decided to ask, "What about flaws?"

"If you're talking about personal flaws with abilities, only if I am not in control of my personality. Now your own private flaws, that is another story. Now let's say, if you have an emotional problem, it also appears in me when I mimic your personality."

"What about mental and psychological problems?"

"The only one I won't mimic is epilepsy."

"Why?" It was Everett who had asked that question.

"Because, I'm epileptic. I can tell you this, if I appear to have an epileptic attack, scan my mind. If there are thoughts in there, it means that a mutant has gotten too close to me, and I am unwillingly getting those thoughts and abilities."

"Sound painful, senior." Angelo had remarked.

"It is, but it is not as painful as what happens to practical jokers that pull jokes on me." He gave a devilish smile in Angelo and Everett's direction. Apparently the boys decided to try and pull a trick on him. "Besides, the bucket of water gag is a classic. I haven't heard of anyone being injured by being drenched. Internally, I was laughing at the reaction I would have given."

Franklin decided to ask, "What does it feel like when a mutant gets too close?"

"Well, it depends on the mutant. It can be a slight headache, or it could be...." He trailed off and collapsed. He started moving in spasms. She scanned his mind and found that there were conflicting thoughts in his head. She guessed what happened. Penance was near him.

3 - Fear of the Unknown

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Chapter 3 Fear of the Unknown

He couldn't believe it. The pain, the trauma, it was enough to almost defeat his own personality. He saw thoughts in his mind, a war torn country, the image of a man wearing a mask. He couldn't picture anything else. He started moving his arms as if to knock this man away, but it wasn't working. He heard then in his mind a voice. It was sounded in a strange dialect, and language. He could identify it. He knew it as Serbo-Croatian. It sounded female. The voice was almost psionic but it was not like Ms. Frost's voice. It was as if this voice was asking him to talk to her. He opened his eyes the people were shouting at someone. He could all of a sudden remember his personality and finally it stopped. The person must have stepped away. He tried to speak, but it was a great strain. He looked at his hands. They were red and claw like.

They all ran to the man. She couldn't believe it. As she approached him from the shadows, he had stopped talking and collapsed onto the floor. As she watched, he started turning into her. When everyone rushed to him, they seemed to realize something was happening and she was the cause. The girl that was related to Him, pointed in her direction and the man who was in charge started shouting something. It wasn't until Jubilee, the one that treated her like a sister motioned in a step back way. She stepped back and the man stopped thrashing.

The man started to get up and look around. He looked in her direction. His face and hair had taken on the same qualities as her. He looked like he was really concentrating and then said, "It's Okay. You didn't know about what would happen. I take it you can understand me now." It was in her native tongue. She was amazed. He was handsome in his way and she thought that he could truly understand. He then said, "We'll talk later, Ok." Upon which, he started to look normal again. Someone she could communicate with, someone who could talk with her. For the first time in her life since Him, she wasn't afraid at all.

The look of shock on his face as well as everyone else's were the same. To say that Angelo was shocked was understating the obvious. Not since his days in LA did he ever see something this shocking. The man spoke in a strange language and Penance understood every word. When he returned to a normal form, Sean said, "Lad, what the hell did you say, and in what language."

Rich looked at everyone, then looked at Penance. He then turned back to everyone and said, "I spoke to her in her native tongue. I take it you didn't know she was Yugoslavian."

"How in the world did you figure that one out?" Monet asked. She was a bit dumb struck by this turn of events.

Rich looked at her and said, "You're the smart one, aren't you?"

"Yes, why?"

"You lack common sense. I have a relative exactly like that."

"How can you say such a thing?"

"Did you listen to what I said?"

"Of course I did. I heard every word you said until.... Oh."

Jubilee smiled and said, "It's okay, Monet. He pulled the same thing on me."

Rich glanced in Penance's direction and she smiled. Rich returned the smile and said, "It appears I have made my first friend here."

"Lad, how did ye figured out she was from Yugoslavia?" Sean asked.

"Okay, I saw images of a war-torn country and I heard a language in my head. I somehow identified it as Serbo-Croatian. With recent history, I do believe Yugoslavia is a war-torn country, and as part of a report on the country, I found out its language."

"You have a good memory." Everett said, obviously impressed.

"I remember trivia. It comes in handy sometimes."

"Well now, lad. I think you need a quiet tour to show you around. Angelo, I think you have the first task."

"Si, if you will follow me, Rich, I shall show you around the grounds, and over to the computer center."

Angelo headed out of the hall. In a couple of seconds, Rich fell into step behind him and said, "Lead the way, senior. By the way, what's your full name?"

"Oh, Angelo Espinosa. I come from L.A."

"So, what's it like around here?"

"It's quiet, except when there is a problem. We usually have problems that happen once a week here."

"Hey, it's quieter than my home town. It was turning into the big city in leaps. I just had to get away."

"Well, it may seem you might be leaving one bad place for another." Angelo pulled out a cigarette and lit it up.

"What makes you say that, other than your impersonation of a smoke stack?"

Angelo stopped in his tracks and turned. Rich had a huge grin on his face, not showing any teeth though. "I take it you have been taking lessons on smart remarks."

"Yes, I use the classics as well as making up new material."

"Well as I was saying before, you might see some troubles here. I think Monet is going to tell you about them, but we have encountered many strange things."

Rich let a smile cross his face, revealing a reason why he kept a bit of a frown. His teeth appeared to be crooked. "I like the sound of that," he said with a slight accent.

"What happened with your teeth, Rich?"

"That's the way they came in. I know it looks strange. That's the reason that I don't smile too often."

They continued on and Angelo pointed out every place on the campus. Rich listened to everything and they eventually entered the main building. Angelo had led Rich to the computer room where Monet was waiting. It was time for Rich to get the run down on the computer setup. Angelo had left to smoke another cigarette.

Monet watched as Angelo left. She still felt a little upset when she found out that Angelo had seen her diary. She waited until he was gone and turned to Rich. "Hello, Richard. My name is Monet St. Croix, and I would like to personally welcome you to the school."

Rich bowed and said, "My pleasure to meet you. The way you act, you seem to come from a family of wealthy status. I hope I haven't jumped to any wrong conclusions."

"You seemed to be a nice person. Well, I have the duty of showing you the computer, as well as

some of the files."

"Let me guess, Mr. Cassidy, or should I call him Sean, is worried about how I acted at the airport, and has drafted you to find out."

"I guess the secrets out."

"The truth can surface in ugly ways, Monet." She knew how true that was, but she didn't want to say anything to Rich about her brother until he saw the file.

"Well," she stepped over to the computer system, "this is our version of the Cerebro computer and the main school. It has a file on every mutant, and a copy of every enemy that Generation X has ever faced."

"Let me guess, so I know who to avoid."

"In a way, let me get a picture of the first one." She punched up the file of the X-Cutioner. A figure appeared in front of Rich and he just looked at it.

"Let's see, he must have a Grim Reaper fixation."

"In the worse way, The X-Cutioner is fixated on the termination of mutants. He wanted to destroy any mutant that he thought had committed a crime. Angelo told us that he went after him."

"Does he have any mutant abilities?"

"No." She noticed that Rich made a motion as if he was thankful that this guy wasn't a mutant. "Let me show you the next enemy." She accessed the file on Omega Red. It could be a major problem if he turned in to him could be dangerous.

"He looks like one unhappy camper. Did he get in the extra ugly line when God handed out looks."

"No. Science made him that way. He has the mutant ability to create a death spore."

"Yeesh. I hope I never meet him."

"Actually, only Jonathon was able to defeat him. Jonathon can't die, as far as we know." Rich looked at the image as if he was wondering about what to do in case Omega Red did get near. "I think I should show you the file on one of our main problems." She brought up the file on her brother, Emplate. She knew that she could give them more information than what they had on Emplate, but, she still felt awkward about that knowledge. The image had came up and Rich screamed. She turned and saw him huddling in a corner, his face in his hands. "Did you see that in Penance's memories, the image of Emplate?"

He spoke in a shaky voice. "The hands. That is what Penance feared. He had seen me. I pray he didn't follow me. By the grace of God, may he not find me."

"Oh, dear. I'm going to get Sean. I think he might want to hear this." She left the room and ran to Sean's office.

When Monet told him that she discovered the reason for Rich's alarm, Sean was glad that they found the cause. He was not too happy with the state that Rich was in now. He followed Monet back to the computer room to see the one thing he hoped it wouldn't be. He saw Rich in the corner of the room, scared to move. What was in the center of the room was an image of Emplate. "Rich, are ye okay, lad?"

Rich was still curled in the corner and only muttered, "The hands. The hands."

He looked at the image of Emplate and then realized that must have tipped Rich off to Emplate's presence. He hadn't seen Emplate, maybe because he was not in synch with the dimension which they lived in. Maybe that couldn't be hidden from Rich. "Do you want to explain it, Rich?"

Rich's voice still shook in fear as he began, "When I left the plane and started in your direction, I had to shift the weight of my bags. When I did that, I notice holes were forming on my hands. I must have gotten close to him, but I couldn't see him. He could have attacked me without me realizing he

was there. At least, he didn't approach me. But I fear he knows, I can't help but fear that he knows."

He turned to Monet and said, "I think you better talk to him about this, lass. You know more about Emplate than any of us, except maybe for Penance."

"Yes, sir," she said. Sean then turned off the file on Emplate and left the room. He figured that he should talk to Emma about this.

Rich glanced up and noticed the image had disappeared. He watched Sean leave the room and Monet was standing with a worried look on her face. He started to stand, a bit leery about what he had seen when Monet said, "I guess I should tell you about Emplate."

He wondered what in the world she knew about this monster. "What do you know about it?"

"Emplate, I am sad to say, is my brother."

He almost returned to the huddled state that he was in before. "He is your brother. My god, are you anything like him?"

"No. He hates me to the core. One reason for that is that he cannot sup on me."

"Sup?"

"He eats mutant genetic marrow. He would do the same to you, unless she can turn you into one like him."

"You mean to say, that he is a mutant vampire, and that you are immune to this creature?"

"Yes, when he revealed the relation between us, relations between the individual members and myself became tougher."

"I guess that could be a problem, to find out one of the team is related to a murderous mutant who wouldn't give a second thought to killing all of us." He could help but to keep more of a distance from Monet now, but he felt sorry for her. All because of Emplate, some members were shunning her. He started to wonder if Penance shunned her as well. "Monet, how much about Emplate do you figure Penance knows?"

She almost stopped with that thought. She gave an appearance that she was almost deep in thought when she said, "She could probably give you a personal account on what it is like to be a prisoner of Emplate. It is unknown how long she was in my brother's grip."

"I hope she doesn't mind me asking about it. I mean, after what I saw, I think I need the advice of someone who survived being his victim."

"Everett could also tell you something about that. A while back, my brother possessed him."

"I wonder who took that the hardest. Everett, or Jubilee."

"What do you mean?"

"I got a bit close to Jubilee earlier. I found out that she likes Everett."

"Well, that is almost no secret, but you picked up on that before you were even told."

Rich felt a bit awkward about that. That was one aspect of his power that made him feel like he was losing control. It also made him feel like a voyeur. He then said to Monet, "I guess I should see the next item on the tour."

"*That would be the med center.*" He turned to see a guy, about his age, wrapped in black straps. He wondered about this.

"And you are?"

"*Jonathon Evans Starsmore.*"

"Oh, you are the one you defeated Omega Red? I must commend you. To defeat something like that, I must shake your hand." He started to walk over to Jonathon when all of a sudden, his mutant ability started to kick in. He felt a slight pain.

"*Gov, I wouldn't suggest that...*" An explosion knocked him away from Jono. He heard Monet yelling, but his ears were ringing from the explosion. He looked down and saw a flare of red right about

where his chest had been. His clothing had still been in shape, but it appeared his skin and all was gone.

"What the hell happened in..." He heard Sean yell and as the Irishman saw him on the floor.

"Let me guess, you got close to Jonathon, right?"

"I was going to congratulate him on his defeat of that Omega Red fellow. When I heard about it, I felt it was only right to congratulate him. This is odd though." He then watched as his chest started to reform.

"I guess that is what will happen when ever you get close to a mutant and don't know their abilities." Jono remarked. Rich gave him a look. This must have happened when Jono's ability first manifested.

Rich waited until his mouth had returned and said, "I think from now on, I should be informed upon everyone's abilities. If anything like this is the norm, I would like to be informed."

"Agreed, lad." Sean said with an approving look. "Of those you have met, Jono is psi-mutant. As you guessed with me, I have a sonic scream. Jubilee has the ability to produce explosive plasmoids. Angelo has the ability to control and extra six feet of skin that he has. Monet has super-strength, flight, night-vision and..."

Monet spoke up, "In other words, I'm perfect."

Rich turned to Monet and said, "Great, you don't exist. I hate figments of my imaginations."

Monet looked at him sternly and said, "What do you mean?"

"Monet, one of my hobbies is writing computer programs. In learning how to write them, I learned that nothing is perfect. Perfection is an illusion. If you were perfect, you would have to hide secrets."

Monet opened up her mouth and immediately stopped. She almost went into a talk and then said, "Mon Dieu, you're right."

Rich then turned to Jono and said, "Jono, I think you better show me the medical center again, just in case of another incident or I have a seizure."

4 - Understanding

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Changes

Chapter 4 Understanding

Paige walked into the med lab just as Jono had finished telling Rich about the features of the med lab. Sean had told her about his shake up and to be prepared. She knew that she was going to show him the Biosphere, and that Penance would probably be there as well. She hoped that there wouldn't be a repeat of the incident in the Assembly Hall, but there was no guarantee on that.

"I see that Paige is here," said Jono as Rich turned to see her standing at the door. She nodded and he smiled. *"I guess it is time that you see the Biosphere."*

Rich looked at him with a certain look that Paige couldn't identify. She knew that there was a bit of sadness in Jono's tone. Part of her was still hurt by his outburst back at her home, but part of her was upset. He jumped to a conclusion that was totally false. She turned to Richard and said, "Richard, I am Paige Guthrie and I will show you the Biosphere." She motioned for him to follow her and she left the med center.

Rich followed her at his usual pace and when they were outside of the building, he said, "So, who made the mistake? Who let their mind or heart take control?"

Paige stopped and turned in defense. She was shocked at what Rich had said. Did he learn that from Jono. Sean had told her that he had Jono's ability briefly and might have learned that. She decided to act as if she didn't know what he was talking about. She sternly said to Rich, "What do you mean by that?"

Rich stopped and said, "If you think that I learned that from Jono, I didn't. He hasn't had as traumatic a life as Penance had. I recognized the look of lost love. I have had that look. In most cases, it was my mind that took control when my heart said it wasn't right. But I think that it is the other way around in yours and Jono's case. I think that your hearts both know it's right, but somebody's mind did the thinking and said it wouldn't work. Am I right?"

Histone was almost stern, but he didn't shout it. She stood still. Paige felt a bit ashamed. She said, "You're right. Jono let his mind do the thinking, but you can't understand what it is to deal with?"

"I can't understand what it is to deal with a heart that says it will work, and a mind that says it won't? I can understand that. I was in a similar situation. My mind knew it wouldn't work between one girl and me, but my heart said it would. In some cases, the heart is right, while in others the mind is right. I think in your case, the heart is right. But, time will tell."

She let the words sink in. Rich seemed to know what he was talking about. She felt ashamed for thinking that he used his mutant ability to learn that information. She said to Rich, "Rich, Ahm sorry for accusing you of using your abilities to find out about that. It's just, I haven't told anyone about that. I feel the only person that knows about that is Ms. Frost. I just thought that, well.."

"I understand. Believe me, it's hard to keep things from me, especially if you are a mutant. I hate that part of my ability. It makes it hard to keep friends."

She smiled and said, "It's Okay. I think that your ability might make you more friends here than

you know. Now, come on. You must see the Biosphere." She ran in the direction of the round building marked Biosphere.

"Hey, Paige. I was just wondering," he yelled as he tried to stay at her pace, "what is your mutant ability?"

"Oh, Ah'm a metamorph. I have the ability to transform myself into different substances, just by shedding my skin."

"Weird! I like it," he yelled as they reached the Biosphere. She opened the door and let him enter first. He then shout as she entered the building, "Utopia."

"Begy pardon?"

"Utopia. Paradise. It appears to be a virtual paradise in here. Let me guess, Penance spends a lot of time here."

"Yes, she does. We might run into her while we're in here. I hope she doesn't cause you to, well, you know."

"You mean like back in the assembly hall. Don't worry. I think she would rather have me as a friend."

"You are the first person to ever communicate with her. I think you might be a gift to all of us. Well, let me tell you about the Biosphere." Paige prepped for her prepared lecture on the Biosphere when she realized that Rich had stopped moving. She turned and saw that he was starting to change, but this time it wasn't as painful as it had been earlier. She then noticed stand about four feet from him was Penance. Penance seemed to be happy. Paige walked over to the two and pulled out an apple.

Penance looked in her direction almost cautiously and then saw the apple. Paige handed the apple to Penance and said, "Here you go, Penance. I figured you would be here." The apple was instantaneously sliced, but Penance managed to hold onto the slices. She then took half the slices and handed them to Rich. He said something to her that Paige, herself, couldn't understand, but Penance understood as she smiled. The two just ate the apple and Paige decided that her lecture on the Biosphere wasn't as important as the possible chance at communicating with Penance was.

Rich could tell that Penance was happy to see him. After the first encounter, he guessed that she trusted him. When he realized she was nearby, he stopped and looked at her. She came out of hiding and smiled. When Paige came over to them both and gave her an apple, he watched as it was instantaneously sliced in her hands. Penance then held up some of the slices to him. It was then he realized she also had psionic abilities as she asked {Would you like some?}

He thanked her, aloud and watched as Paige just watched. He then said to Penance, {Penance, is that what everybody calls you?}

{No. Jubilee calls me Penny from time to time. She treats me like a sister.}

{Is that your real name, Penance?}

{No. My real first name is Yvette.}

{That is a lovely name. It seems to suit you.} She appeared to blush, but it was hard to tell because of how red her skin was. {Would it be Okay if I called you that?}

{I think that would be nice. You are the first person to ever communicate with me.}

{Didn't any one else talk with you.}

{Alright, the first person I feel totally safe with. The fiery one, he spoke with me a couple of times, although I didn't understand what he said. I got the impression that he and the others didn't want to hurt me, although I hurt her.}

Rich looked at Paige and said to Penance, {You mean Paige Guthrie.}

{If that is her name, I'm not sure. We are communicating in, I guess, my language. I'm surprised that you understand it, being American. When I first arrived, the only thought in my mind was to leave

and livefree. I had been a prisoner of Him for years. When the skin-ripper attacked me, I fought in defense.}

{Noteto myself: Do not get on your bad side.} He saw her act asif she was chuckling. He had made a friend for sure.

{Youare funny. I hope you never run into Him. You might lose thatand your life. I'm still recovering, which is why I very rarely trustany one. Jubilee, the one with sparks, is the only person I trulytrust, but I can't talk to her. When you arrive and could speak tome, I felt safe for the first time since Him.}

Richstarted to shudder. He started feeling the fear he felt earlier. He felt that he better try and ask now than later. {Yvette, my mutantability is allowing me to talk with you, and use your abilities. On my way here, I think He saw me. I sensed Him, and I am scaredby this. I'm afraid I might turn into Him. Can you tell mewhat it was like? I may need help.}

Yvette seem to shudder for a moment and finally, {I will tell you all I know. I lost my parents in the war. I lost most of myself to Him, I don'twant to lose someone like you to Him.}

Rich'seyes went wide. Did he just hear what he thought he heard. He said{Yvette, did you just say what I think I heard?}

Shelooked like she was almost embarrassed. She finally replied, {Yes. I think I might be falling in love with you.}

Whenhe heard that, he felt like he could have been knocked over with a feather. {Well, now. I haven't just made a friend. I just might havemade a girlfriend.} He let a small smile show and said, {Later on,I'll stop by and you can tell me about Him, or as they call Him, Emplate. I might even try to teach you some English.}

Yvettesmiled. {I think that would be terrific. I could talk to Jubilee,the noisemaker, His relation, the fiery one, the skin-ripper, the one thatextends his skin, the glowing man, the changer, or even the mind witch. I could also talk with the little boys or, most importantly, you.}

{Ok. See you here tonight, Okay} She nodded and bounded off. Heglanced at Paige and she seemed to wondering what in the world had justhappened. He then heard what sounded like some children coming theirway.

Franklinremembered seeing Mr. Cale back in the assembly hall, and knew that Paigewas going to bring him to see the Biosphere. He knew that Artie andLeech would like meeting him. He led them over to the area wherePaige was standing. He then saw Penance bound off and, he could onlyguess that it was Mr. Cale, but he must have been near Penance for a while.His normally white skin had turned red, and his hands were like claws. His hair had turned into a smaller version of Penance's hair.

Animage appear as Artie seemed to ask if Mr. Cale was a second version ofPenance. Paige noticed the image and turned to say, "No, Artie. Rich isnot a mutant like Penance. His ability allows him to mimic mutantabilities, personalities and even their knowledge."

Mr.Cale turned to face them and kneeled down to their level. He thenetched in the ground a small message. It read "Franklin, you don'thave to call me Mr. Cale. My name is Richard, and I prefer to becalled Rich."

"Ok. I want to introduce you to my friends." He motioned to boy with greenskin and big eyes. "This is Leech." He then motioned to Artieand said, "This is Artie." Rich nodded at both boys and then motionedas if he was wondering something.

Paigespoke up, "Franklin, Ah think Rich wants to know what your mutant abilitiesare?" Rich made a motion of putting his finger to his nose, and was nodding.

Leechspoke first, "Leech's ability is to suppress other mutant's abilities." Rich's eyes went wide as Leech then said, "Artie's ability is to projectimages. Leech and Artie are good friends."

Franklin noticed that Rich seemed to be a bit confused about how Leech talked. "Rich, Leech always talks like that. My ability is to alter reality. I hang out with Leech since his ability doesn't let mine go out of control. The last time I had used my ability was when I destroyed Onslaught." Franklin still remembered how Onslaught made his parents disappear. He started to feel said.

Paige realized what was happening. She went over to Franklin and said, "Don't worry. They are still in your heart." She turned to Rich and said, "You have to understand that Franklin lost his family to Onslaught." Franklin looked over at Rich and noticed that he had returned to the normal look he usually had.

Rich had a look of understanding and said, "I know what it's like to lose someone close to you, but I have never lost my entire family. I offer my sympathies."

Franklin looked at Rich and thanked Rich. "I guess I still can't forget what happened to them."

"Don't hold the pain in. I lost a loved one when I was a little bit older than you. I didn't cry about it until 9 years later. It's good to let go of the pain when it happens, not to hold it in."

Franklin thought about the advice and said, "I understand, sir. I hope you will be staying here for a while. I think you could be a good friend to have." He watched as Rich nodded and smiled. For all he could tell, Rich was happy with the statement. Franklin was about to say something when Mr. Cassidy walked over.

"Well now Rich, I take it that ye have met the we lads."

"Yes Sir. I always have a spot in my heart for kids. It comes from being the eldest child of sibling and or cousins."

"Well, I thought that we could all welcome you here by having a meal together. We usually welcome new students with a bit of a celebration."

"As long as we don't dance. I can't dance at all."

Franklin was puzzled at this remark, just a bit. "Rich, what did you mean by that?"

Rich took a look at him. He then said, "Franklin, have you ever heard of a group named Three Dog Night?"

Franklin knew that group. They were an old group, but they had terrific music. "There the group that do 'Joy to the World'. I like that song."

"That's right. They also did other songs, one being 'Celebrate' which the refrain goes 'Celebrate, Celebrate, Dance to the music.' Their songs seemed to have a message of peace in them."

Franklin understood now what Rich meant by what he said earlier. "I think we will get ready for dinner now. I hope you enjoy it here, Rich." With that he and Artie and Leech ran back to their tree house.

Mondo looked around the room. He wanted Rich to feel as welcome as he did. He had set up the room to look exactly how it looked when he joined. He had everything setup just the same. He watched as Sean had been working on a meal for everyone. Ms. Frost walked over to him and said, "Mondo, you have done a great job at decorating. I hope Rich likes it."

"I have done my best to make it cheerful. It is hard to understand why such a happy fellow like Rich, dresses in such gloomy colors. He seems to appear depressed." He had gotten that impression when he saw Rich for the first time, all dressed in black. He watched as Sean had brought Rich in the reception hall. He smiled at Rich and said, "How do you like it?"

Rich glanced around the room and said, "Cheerful, but if a purple dinosaur jumps out, I'm leaving." Mondo was a bit confused at this. Rich then said, "I guess it is like a party. Let's celebrate. Oh, is this formal, or informal?"

Mondo kept the smile on his face and said, "It is informal, just as mine was. Although everybody

came formally dressed. I think that a celebration should be informal. By the way, what did you mean by a purple dinosaur."

"Itake it you aren't American. Somebody developed a character that is a purple dinosaur. He has a perpetual smile on his face and is always singing. After about a minute of being exposed to this thing, you want to smash the television to pieces."

"Just for being cheerful. I don't think that is a crime."

"Mondo, I'm going to let you in on a trade secret to life. One must realize that life is not always cheerful, and if one always has a cheerful view on life, they will most likely be the first to go."

Mondo could not understand why Rich would say such a thing. It seemed totally unbelievable. "Is that what you believe. I am sadly sorry for you."

"Don't be, Mondo. I have heard all theories on life, from the Buddhist beliefs to one stated by Charles Manson."

Ms. Frost gave him a startled look and said, "You don't admire that murderer, do you?"

Rich put his hand against his forehead and nodded downward. He finally said, "That murderer once said in an interview that he only played the hand life dealt him. I know now that I was dealt the hand of a mutant. How I play my hand, only time will tell."

Ms. Frost gave him a stern look and said, "If you ever think about doing anything to hurt any of my students, I will make you regret it."

"Ms. Frost, if I did anything to hurt anybody here, I would not be able to live with my self. I don't lose my temper often, and when I do it is a scary sight. I hope you never see me angry, but I can tell you one thing. Since I am epileptic, and I take medication for it, it can cause drastic mood swings in me, such as a fit of anger could turn into a crying episode related to what I could have done." Rich almost tried to turn and leave.

Ms. Frost had a look of shock on her face and said, "You are a sensitive person, aren't you?"

Rich's head moved up and down. Mondo couldn't understand what such a person would wear such dismal colors. He decided to ask the question that was bothering him. "Rich, my friend, why do you wear such depressing colors?"

Rich turned and looked at Mondo with a look of calmness, "Mondo, my favorite color is black. I prefer black, not because it is a depressing color, but because it is a color of mystery. When one looks into a totally dark room, one knows not what to expect. Black represents a mystery, and I like to remain a mystery. At times, I am a mystery to myself. I say one thing and do another. I hope to find some sort of meaning to myself, as well as learn to use my ability to help everyone."

Mondo was almost ready to say something when the rest of the students started to come in. Maybe he could talk with Rich tomorrow. He was quite interested in hearing Rich's views on life.

5 - Breakthrough

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Changes

Chapter 5 Breakthrough

It was a short while after everybody entered the hall. Penance would have liked to join in the festivities, but she was more comfortable when everybody else wasn't around. She decided, although that she would add her own little touch to the celebration. She had searched around the school, and found a grove of red roses. She used her hands to cut some and placed them at the door. She figured that Rich would know why they were there. She turned and ran to the ground. As she jumped back into the greenery, she kicked a rock in the direction of the door. As the door opened, she smiled when Rich appeared and looked around. He looked down and saw the roses and looked around. She moved out of the greenery and waved. He smiled and bowed. She then went back to the Biosphere. She knew it would be a while until he returned to the Biosphere, but she would wait.

Jubilee watched as Rich opened the door. She noticed that he picked something up, but wasn't sure what. She walked over to the door and said, "So, what was at the door, Rich?"

She noticed that he started to blush as when he closed the door and turned to face her. She then saw about a dozen roses in his hands. She finally noticed that everything stopped when Rich had turned with the roses. "I can never say that nobody loves me. And to think, I had the worst luck when it came to love?"

Sean then said, "Ok, who set this one up? Everett, Angelo, is this a joke to welcome Rich in?"

The two looked at each other in amazement and said, "Sir, that's too heartless, even for us? Give us some credit, we wouldn't hurt someone's feelings."

"Then who did that?"

Rich only smiled and started to laugh. He knew who it was, and he was getting a laugh out of everybody trying to figure it out. Monet walked over to her and said, "Jubilee, I think I know who did it."

"Okay, Monet. Who do you think did that?"

"Who is the first person here that Rich has made contact with?"

Jubilee thought for a moment. Rich had met almost everybody, but due to Sean's scheduling, he was going to meet everybody individually tomorrow. Who did Rich make contact with?

Rich started humming. He was enjoying the chaos that was ensuing due to this turn of events. But there was something familiar in the hum. As everybody continued to talk, Rich hummed louder. Jubilee finally recognized it. It was the theme from Star Trek. She turned to Monet and said, "Monet, have you seen Star Trek?"

"I have never watched the show. I do know the series has some movies. I know one had first contact with an alien probe in it."

"That's it, Monet. I know who delivered the roses." The commotion around them stopped as everybody stared at her. She got the feeling that everybody was giving her a "you better fess up now" look.

Rich glanced at her and said, "And welcome to Final Jeopardy. The Category, Generation X. The Final Answer is 'The one who delivered the roses to the door.' You have 30 seconds. Remember to

phrase your answer in the form of a question." He started to hum the Jeopardy theme.

Jubilee felt like she was really on the spot. She decided that she was just going to say it. "It's Penance. She left the roses." Everyone just looked at her.

Emma gave her a stern look and said, "Jubilee, I think you're trying to hide your guilt." She was about to do a mind probe on her when Rich stopped humming.

Rich looked at Jubilee and Emma and said, "I'm sorry, you forgot to phrase it in the form of a question. If you would have, you could have won the grand prize. Try again, next time."

Jubilee decided to put a smirk on her face as Emma's eyes, as well as everybody else's, went wide in shock. The only people that didn't seem shocked were Monet and Paige. "I hate to say I told you so, but I told you so."

Rich spoke again, "I don't think she felt comfortable with a lot of people yet. She seems to like me, though." He smelled the roses and then decided that he would need to put the flowers in something. "Is there a vase available for some flowers?"

Paige walked over and stopped near him and said, "Ah, I'll take care of them, Rich. Something tells me that you are the best thing to happen to Penance in a long time." Rich handed them to her and Paige left the room to take care of the roses.

Jubilee looked at Rich and said, "I'm glad for Penny's sake that we found someone who can communicate with her. But, could this really be love?"

Rich looked at her and said, "I'm the first person who could truly communicate with her. When faced with trauma during one's life, one latches onto someone who can understand them. Penny feels that way about me, and the truth be told, she has a beauty all her own."

"Are you saying that you are falling in love with her?"

Rich smiled and said, "Only time will tell, only time will tell." He turned to the group and said, "Now, this is supposed to be a party. Do we have some music?"

Jon walked over to the stereo and said *<What do you prefer, gov? Green Day. REM. Rocky... Jubilee, did you sneak one of your CD's in here?>*

"And what's wrong with Rocky Horror? It is one of the best movies ever."

Rich then said, "Put that one in, Jono. I'm in a bit of a silly mood. I should have gotten my video out for later."

Jubilee was overjoyed. This guy was one of the coolest guys she ever met. "Alright. It's time to do the Time Warp."

Rich looked at her and said, "Has anybody else here seen the movie?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Well, the way Emma Frost dresses, it's hard to tell."

Emma gave him a look of disgust. "Richard, be careful what you say. I am not a person that you want to make mad."

"Emma, lighten up. It's my first day, and we are going to celebrate. If you can't take a joke, you need a sense of humor. Besides, I saw the people at the theater dress in costumes that makes some of your clothing look like overdressing." Emma started to chuckle, but quickly stopped herself.

The music started up and everything seemed to be going well. Rich felt comfortable, and everybody appeared to be accepting him with open arms. She thought that Rich would be one of the best things to happen to the school.

Rich felt almost tired when the party ended. When the Rocky Horror soundtrack started, it was

only he and Jubilee that were singing and dancing, but by the time the last song was playing, almost everybody was singing and dancing. He felt a little upset when the party ended, but he had other things to do before he hit the hay. Rich ran at breakneck speed to the Biosphere. Almost everybody was heading to bed, or talking a bit before they head to bed, and Rich had the same idea. He entered the Biosphere and started to walk around. He heard a rustling in the nearby shrubbery. He walked in the general direction and saw Penance. He had started to mimic her and she asked, {Did you like the roses?}

He smiled and said, {Yvette, I loved the roses. Although, I wished you could have been there to see how everybody reacted.}

{Did anyone figure out it was me that left the roses?}

{I think three people were not surprised by that. Jubilee, Monet and Paige. Jubilee caught on to my hints before anybody else did. I think Monet just thought about it. As for Paige, I think our talk earlier gave a hint.}

Penance again acted as if she was giggling. She looked cute when she did that. {I bet it was a madhouse in there. I wonder how everybody thinks of you now}

{It was a common thought that I was the best thing for you. Everyone is surprised at how well we are getting along.}

Penance gave a slight smile. {Especially with our start, I guess I totally overwhelmed you.}

With that, Rich started to chuckle. Even though it wasn't vocalized, Penance smiled and silently joined in. After they both stopped, Rich composed his thoughts and finally said, {I guess it's truth time. Yvette what can you tell me about Him.}

Penance sat down and said, {You might want to sit down for this, it is a long story.}

{Can you give me the Reader's Digest Version? Short and ... wrong phrase.}

{Reader's Digest. What's that?}

{It's a magazine that comes in the mail and shortens stories down to a couple of pages. From 10 pages to 4 pages. It just says, 'Good bye, junk'}

{OK. But what was wrong with the Short phrase?}

{That phrase is short and sweet. I don't think there is anything sweet about Him.}

Penance nodded and said {Alright. I told you I lost my folks in the war. As I had fled from my hometown, I lived by my wits for a while. Eventually He found me. He didn't look like He does now. He seemed to be very well off. He looked well-fed, but he was starving. I found out why days later. He had taken me to a place, a lighthouse I guess. The first few days were the only nice days. Then I found out about him. He came in and I saw the mouths on his hands. He grabbed me and I felt them bite into me. The pain was unbearable. As time passed, I tried to escape. I still had my own will, but I failed. That was when he restrained me, with what I'm wearing now.}

Rich looked at the black leatherish outfit she was wearing. {You mean this is still the same outfit.}

{No, his servant, Little Man, he changed the restraints from time to time. But I wash them, as best I can. Slowly, He started to control me, as He did the others. I didn't have a free thought, until the bearded man brought me here.}

Rich's eyes widened. {Penance, this bearded man, was he dark skinned and his beard whitish.}

{Yes. That was him. He was the one who brought me here. How did you know what he looked like.}

{I didn't tell Mr. Cassidy this, but that was the one who told me to come here. I wonder if this was what he had in mind.} Rich stewed the thought over in his mind. Maybe that man had a plan of some sorts. That man had brought Yvette to the school and maybe, informing him about the school was the man's way of helping the school communicate with her.

{It's hard to say. At times until recently, He still tried to control me. I lapsed into a coma, trying to

fight Him. When he attacked the school, I was almost under His control again, until I managed to break free and hurt Him.} She stopped and held his hand. {I'm glad to be free of Him, and I truly don't want to lose you to Him.}

Rich almost couldn't voice what he said next, but he did. {I don't want to lose you to Him, either. You know, this is awkward for me. I never had much luck with love, so it's strange to think that I have a girlfriend.}

{It's Ok. You're the first guy that I've been interested in.}

{Well, let's see how things go. Now, shall we start in on your English lessons.} Penance smiled and for the next two hours, Rich started to teach her the basics of English.

6 - Unwelcome Intrusions

Attention: Generation X and their villains, as well as any other mutant mentioned in this story, is property of Marvel Comics. The character Richard Cale is named after family relations. Any other reference to anything copyrighted is a chance happening.

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Changes

Chapter 6 Unwelcome Intrusions

He was running. Rich had a feeling he was being followed by someone. The school had been wrecked. Yvette wasn't in the Biosphere and everyone was missing. He ran in partial terror and fear. He couldn't find anyone. He turned down one hall and ran into a dead end. There was no one down here and he turned to back track. It was then he realized he was trapped. Standing at the junction he just left was Emplate. He heard the evil in the being's voice. "Mr. Cale, I have been waiting to meet you. Your own ability would be very valuable to me, and the defeat of these morsels." Emplate started to advance.

The fear was flowing through his veins. He was afraid, but he could not let it show. "I won't let you make me into a creature like you." Rich knew that his only hope was to find a way to get past Emplate, but he couldn't find any way other than to rush him. He was trapped. The only other way out was the unthinkable.

"You cannot avoid your destiny, Mr. Cale. You will be one of my group, be it your own doing, or totally unwilling. There is no need to hide your fear, I know that one more step gives me a new servant." Emplate made that step and Rich felt the pain. He collapsed on the floor in a fit. His struggle turned to an internal struggle as Emplate's personality started conflicting with his own. He couldn't fight it and slowly accepted the fate. A part of him hated giving up as Emplate took over. Then he had trouble breathing. He couldn't breathe. As he labored for his next breath, it all ended.

Rich jumped up and looked around. He was in his room. He looked at the clock and saw it was 4 AM. Only when he had disturbing sleeps, did he wake like that before. This dream, disturbed him so. His deepest fear was that it was an image of things to come. A future he did not want. Rich got out of bed, got dressed and looked through his bag. It was almost midnight when he got in. He spent most of the time before that teaching Penance. It would be a couple more days until she could say some words, but she started to understand some key words in English. He found a special flute he purchased a long time ago. He figured that he should head over to the main building, eat an early breakfast and maybe ease his worries with some soft music.

Monet looked around. She was scared, not because that Emplate was attacking the school. What scared her was that Rich had gone missing. She feared that her brother might have found Rich in his neutral state. If that was the case, she figured that Emplate would manipulate Rich into hurting everybody. She continued searching the campus when Penance jumped in front of her. She almost smiled when she saw Penance, at least until she noticed Penance's hands. She saw that she was one of Emplate's slaves now. She started to back away from Penance. She knew that Penance would now kill her. She moved backwards faster and faster until she backed into something. She turned, only to be knocked off her feet. She turned to see Rich standing there, with a grin on his face. "Rich, did you knock me down thinking I was Emplate. I hope you're Ok."

He eyed her with a look of what appeared to be hunger. She realized what was happening when he reached out to grab her. His hands had the mouths that her brother's had. Emplate must be

controlling him. She tried to attack, but he grabbed her so quickly that she was surprised. He finally spoke as she tried to break the death grip on her, with no hope of doing so. "You are probably thinking, who is in control. Rich, or Emplate. Well Monet, this should answer your question." All of a sudden, she felt a pain in each arm. She felt the stabbing continue as if she was losing a part of herself. All of a sudden, she felt as if she were dying. Her immunity to Emplate wasn't working. Rich must have been in control of his thoughts, even though, he had her brother's abilities. She felt as she was about to die when she shut her eyes and screamed.

She awoke in her own bed. She sat up and looked around. Everyone thought that Rich was a terrific person. She had just seen a possibility that Rich would be more dangerous than anyone imagined. She got up, and got dressed. She looked at the clock, it read 4:30 AM. She decided that she would quietly head over to the main building and read. She was dreading meeting with Rich later today. He could learn some things about her, that she never told anyone.

She moved quietly to the main building and entered it. She heard music, or more specifically, a flute. She followed the sound, until she entered the kitchen. She looked in the door and didn't see anyone. She figured that someone broke in and was hiding. She slowly advanced and said, "Ok, whoever you are. I'm not afraid to hurt you, so give up." The flute stopped and she turned to see someone sitting at the table. She jumped in fright when she saw who it was.

"It's just me, Rich. I woke up with a terrible nightmare. I take it that the same happened to you." His voice was almost calm. He almost returned to playing his odd flute when he stopped and looked back at her. "Do you mind talking about it?"

Monet hesitated in answering. How could she talk to him about her nightmare. He was at the very base of it. She then said, "I don't think you would like to hear about my nightmare. It might not be the best thing for you to hear."

He looked at her almost knowingly. "It was about me. Your reaction gave it away. I wonder if our nightmares are linked in some way. My nightmare's feature player was your brother. Now could we talk about these nightmares, or do I have to find out about it later. I hate learning stuff using my ability."

Monet was almost amazed at how quick he read her actions. She finally went to a seat a little ways from him. "Okay, Rich, let's talk about our nightmares. You tell me what yours was about."

He placed the odd flute down and looked at her. "Monet, I dreamed that something terrible happened to the school. I looked for everybody. I knew someone was following me, but when I made a wrong turn, I was trapped by your brother. He forced his ability onto me. I woke up just as I transformed into him."

She gasped and then said, "Rich, that was similar to my dream, except that you had control of your mutant abilities. You had his abilities and attacked me. You were... supping on me. My immunity didn't kick in. I figured something was wrong, when Penance was the same."

Rich's eyes went wide. She could tell that he was in love with Penance as she shook in anger. "No, I won't let him get control of her."

"Rich, I wonder if you were controlling her."

"How could you say such a thing, that I would do such a thing to her."

"If Emplate had controlled you at the time, it is possible. I just hope that this doesn't happen in real life."

Rich picked up the flute. He seemed a bit upset, by the way his hand shook. He seemed to almost be on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He looked at Monet and said, "I couldn't live with myself if I hurt Penance. I don't want to hurt her. I don't want to hurt anyone, unless I have to."

She wanted to comfort him, but she couldn't try to get near him. She noticed the flute again and decided to ask. "Rich, do you play music?" He looked like he almost forgot about the flute and then nodded. "Why don't you play a little bit of music on that flute. It is a flute, isn't it?"

He looked at it and said, "Yes, I had specially purchased. I have become quite a master at this instrument, as well as the violin." He put the flute to lips and started to play a tune. Monet recognized the piece as "In The Hall Of The Mountain King." She listened and clapped when he finished the piece. Rich then said, "It's amazing to learn tunes by ear." He then played an excerpt from Swan Lake. He was playing it perfectly until he hit a sour note. He was startled by the sound of someone running. Monet turned to see Paige run in, to get a water bottle for her morning jog.

"Good morning, all. Ah, I'm surprised to see that you are up so early Rich." Paige probably wasn't aware why Rich was up so early. It was obviously apparent that Paige was surprised by Rich's habits. It must have been obvious that Rich was not an early morning riser.

"Normally, Paige, I am in bed until around 7:30. This is an unusual case. I have only woken up this early about twice in my life. I would rather not mention it now." Monet wondered if Rich decided not to mention something about the nightmare he had. He then bowed to her and left the room.

"He does seem to be an odd one, doesn't he?" Paige asked.

"Yes, Paige. He can communicate with Penance. From what I can figure, he can detect Emplate before we would even know it. He seems to be a very unique mutant. Paige, do you think that he could be a bit of a problem, with his mutant ability?"

"I don't think he wants to be. I mean, he could be, but his own mind would allow it?"

Paige had made a good point. Monet decided to think about it for a while. She kept thinking about until the next voice she heard was Jubilee's.

Sean was not surprised at all, but his big question was what caused her to space out this time.

"Okay, what got her spaced out this time."

Paige, who had just gotten in from her morning jog, said, "She spaced out when we were talking about Rich. When I said something about him not hurting people, she just spaced out."

Jubilee, who had just walked in, said, "Do you want me to get Rich? I saw him over in the lounge, play a weird flute."

Sean thought it over and might be good to get Rich over here. Rich might have some insight to what led to Monet's recent spell. "Ye better go get the lad, Jubilee. If worse comes to worse, we might need Rich to pull her out."

Jubilee quickly left the room and then returned with Rich walking in after her. He had a calm look on his face, yet it was a look of little sleep. Rich looked straight at Sean and said, "What's up?"

Sean signed and said, "Rich, do you have any idea why Monet went into one of her spells?"

Rich looked at Monet and asked, "Is she cataleptic?"

"No, lad, she is autistic. Apparently, she started thinking about something, and since you talked to her before, and she asked about you, I can only assume that you might have an insight."

Rich let a look of regret cross his face, as if he knew something was going to happen. He then said, "Maybe I shouldn't mention my nightmare to her. I hate it when my mind does things like this. I wish I had a better idea why it happens." Rich started pacing.

"Well, what was this nightmare about, Richard." Sean turned to see Emma standing at the door to the kitchen. "I think you would want to consult me about it."

"Ms. Frost," Rich said almost calmly, "I would not like to subject anybody to my nightmares. I might have made a mistake telling Monet. If it would be OK with everybody, I like to get on with today, I think....." His words trailed off and Sean looked at Emma. Her eyes had a glow in them that signaled the use of her telepathic abilities. He collapsed on the floor as the glow disappeared from her eyes.

"Ms. Frost," Jubilee yelled, "how could you do that? Maybe there was a reason he didn't want to say anything."

Sean was almost ready to talk when he saw a look on Emma's face. "Emma, I take it you are regretting what you did?"

"Sean, he believes his nightmares are signals of the future. He's afraid his nightmare will come true, and since it is concealed in his mind very deeply, I hope it doesn't. It must be something he is greatly afraid of."

It was then Sean noticed that Monet had snapped out, for she had let out a gasp of surprise. "That's why he was afraid." She then looked down to the floor and saw Rich lying there. "Did Ms. Frost scan his mind?"

Sean spoke up, "Aye, she did that, lass. Now Monet, can ye tell us what Rich said about his nightmare." He hoped that Monet would say something about this instead of lapsing into one of her autistic spells.

Just as Monet was about to say something, Rich finally was gathering his wits about him. He abruptly shouted, "Monet, say one word and I will make our little talk earlier common knowledge." He started to get up and looked at Emma. It was obvious that he was not happy with her. "Ms. Frost, if I wanted everyone to know about those dreams that I occasionally have, I would have said something. Trust is an item I usually give to people. If you want to know about me, Ms. Frost, you must prove yourself worthy of my trust. So far, only one person here has earned that, and I take it that most of you have figured out who that is." He turned and went to leave the room. Sean probably could guess where he was going to go. He decided that there was only one way to calm Rich down.

"Everybody, could you please leave. I think the lad needs some time to be alone." He noticed that Rich stopped and turned. Sean looked at Rich, there was a look of knowledge on his face. Sean had a feeling that Rich knew what was going to happen. Sean gave a look at everyone and they all left the room. Emma stayed behind, a little shook up from what she had learned.

Rich still had a look of anger on his face and said, "If you want to talk, Mr. Cassidy, I will, but I would like an apology from Ms. Frost before I speak." It was obvious that Rich was angry, and he was going to live up to his heritage. British people could be stubborn, and Rich was definitely going to let that be true.

Emma had just gotten her wits together and said, "I'm sorry, Richard. I had thought that it would be best to see if you did know about what had caused Monet's spell. When you mentioned your nightmare, I thought I could understand better. It appears you have locked all those fears up. You only let those tales out when you want to tell them. I couldn't even get into them. Could you tell us what you fear will happen?"

Sean couldn't believe it, Emma Frost had been humbled. He also had to agree with Emma. This had shaken Rich up. The last time Rich was shaken up was when he saw the image of Emplate. "Lad, I know you told Monet, but why? And could you tell us? If you are going to be here as a student, you must trust us."

Rich sat down at the table and said, "I will say this, Monet and I both had nightmares. I do not want to say what it was about. If you want me to say anything, just ask her if it is alright first. Just let me calm down, I don't want anybody to worry more than they have to."

Sean turned to Emma and said, "Emma, I'm going to talk to Monet for a moment. Can you keep an eye on Rich for a moment." He noticed that Rich had started to play his flute. Emma had nodded and Sean went to talk to Monet. He found her and said, "Monet, I need to ask you something."

Monet turned from the window and said, "Is it about the nightmare Rich had?"

"That it is, lass. He doesn't want to tell us about the nightmare unless she has your consent." Sean had hopped that she would respond. He watched as Monet nodded, but it was apparent that she was upset about it.

He returned to head back to the kitchen when Monet said, "I would like to be there, with you, when

he talks about his nightmare."

"Alright." The two of them walked back to the kitchen. Sean still heard the flute and when they entered the kitchen he said to Rich, "Ok, lad. Monet said it was alright to tell us."

Sean noticed then that he had opened a Pandora's Box when Rich put down his flute. "Brace yourselves, because here comes the hurricane." He started retelling the two nightmares and Sean realized that Rich had a good reason to fear his nightmares, if they were predictions of things to come.

He had just finished his tale of what the nightmares had been. Monet had shuddered after hearing both nightmares, because of the fact that they might come true. They all had a look of shell shock on their faces. "Do you all understand why I didn't want everyone to hear this."

Sean Cassidy spoke up first. "It took some bravery on your part to tell us about this. I know that some people have difficulty telling their secrets and fears. I hope that that bravery rubs off on some of the other." He gave a look at Monet and she had a humbled look on her face.

"I guess no matter what, the truth will always be revealed. It makes me wonder how overwhelmed we will be when all the truths that Monet holds in her head, come rushing out." Monet had a bit of a scared look on her face when he said that. Rich knew that he wasn't on her favorites list, but it was obvious that she tolerated him. He figured it would be best to change the subject. "Mr. Cassidy, could you tell me what's on the schedule for me today?"

Sean must have noticed how uncomfortable Rich had been with formality. "Rich, it be alright with me if ye call me Sean. Now, I plan to have you meet with all the students today, excluding the wee lads, and Emma and myself. I am going to give you the option of how you want to go through the line-up."

Rich felt a little confused by this. "I am a little confused by what you said. Now what do you mean?"

"Well, I was thinking that you could meet everybody again, by codename, such as mine is Banshee, and Emma's is White Queen, or by last name."

"Who would be first if it was by codename?"

"That would be Jono."

"Considering what happened last time, I think it would be best if we went by last name."

"Alright, that means you'll be with Angelo Espinosa first."

"Let me see, he's the one with the extendable skin. I hope I don't get the craving for a cigarette." He thought about it for a while. Rich wondered if he made the wrong choice by making his choice that way. "I wonder if I made a mistake," he muttered under his breath.

Sean left the room. He was again alone in the room with Emma Frost. This was one person he would have a hard time trusting. He kept an eye on her at all times. He didn't want her invading his mind again. As he was waiting for Sean to come back with Angelo, Emma Frost broke the silence. "Richard, judging by the way you are watching me, I take it you don't trust me."

He couldn't hide the venom in his voice. "Really, how would you like it if I decided to take a trip into your mind and learn your deepest darkest secrets, with you knowing it. It like breaking into your house while you are there. That's what it feels like. I could compare it to something worse, but I think you get the picture."

"I'm sorry about what I did, but you have to understand that I was doing it to find out what happened to Monet. You have to admit that I had a good reason."

"If I didn't want to say anything, you could have respected my wishes. Under different circumstances, your little intrusion can be excused, but not then."

"Alright. Just remember that if you are not in control of what you are doing, I will try to stop you, using my abilities."

Rich thought about it. It might be a good idea to have her around, in case someone like Emplate

attacked and controlled him. "I think I understand what you mean, but if you want information about me, just ask me." She nodded and Sean walked in with Angelo following him.

"Well Rich, I was thinking that you can use your abilities and train in the Biosphere." Rich nodded and decided it was time he learned about Angelo and his abilities.

7 - Bonding

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Changes

Chapter 7 Bonding

Angelo was wondering what Sean had in mind. He figured that Emma might have had a hand in this as well, but with Rich's abilities, the Biosphere seemed the perfect place. He noticed that Jubilee had taken Penance out of the building. When they entered the Biosphere, Sean said to the two of them. "Angelo, Rich is going to have to learn more about everyone, especially if he doesn't want his ability going chaotic. He decided to go through everyone by their names."

Angelo finally realized that it was more so for Rich's sake. Angelo nodded and then turned to Rich. "So, Rich, how would you like to begin. Talking, or using mutant ability." Rich seemed to have an air of mystery about him.

Rich stepped forward and said, "We don't have much to talk about, unless I start to mimic you." Rich looked at his body and Angelo noticed the same thing that Rich did. His skin appeared to be melting. "Angelo, I hope your codename makes sense for this."

Angelo almost laughed and then remembered what he went through when his ability first appeared. He approached Rich and said, "It'll be Okay, amigo. Just concentrate. It takes some time, but it will work. It strains the mind, but it can be done." He watched as Rich slowly pulled his skin tight and looked like himself again. "Feeling better?"

You must have a sense of humor to cope with this. Is that why you are such a joker?"

"Sometimes, I couldn't pull this stuff back home. I suppose you probably now know about my life in the hood."

"I can only see glimpses of it. It appears that it wasn't as traumatic as other things."

"Oh, why do you say that?"

"You're leaving the hood, it was the biggest sacrifice you ever made, and you lived to regret it." Angelo realized that Rich must have latched onto his battle with the X-Cutioner. He had to admit, the only thing he thought was good in his life, he was regretting.

"You're right on that, there are sometimes that I wish I could go back home. But, I can't. I remember how much my 'death' changed things back home. I was there, in disguise, and saw what it had done."

Rich gave him a knowing glance. "You miss her, don't you?" Angelo knew who Rich was talking about. Angelo decided it was time to change the topic. He gave Rich a mean glance. Rich just said, "Oh Kay, Let's talk about your mutant ability. So, what can you do with this ability."

"Watch." Angelo distended his skin and grabbed a nearby tree. He used his skin to pull himself up into the tree. He turned around only to see that Rich was only a foot away from him, doing the same thing.

"I see, a living bungee cord. Oh joy. Tell me. Is this all that you can do?"

"As of right now, yes. That's why I got the code name Skin. I'm trying to learn to do more, mainly so I can live a normal life." Angelo spent the rest of the time he was with Rich showing other aspects, and flaws of having 6 ft of extra skin.

Paige looked around the Biosphere. She had seen Angelo, and Sean had told her that it was her turn to meet with Rich. She was a bit nervous, but she could handle it. She still had in her mind that she was going to be an X-Man just like her brother Sam. Paige almost jumped in fright when Rich stepped out in front of her. "Calm down, Paige. I was waiting for Angelo's ability to leave me."

"Ah, alright. You just startled me. I take it you are ready to learn about my mutant ability."

"Let's see. Find out what it's like to rip my skin off my body. Now's a good time as ever." He stepped forward and said, "Now, how do I control this, by the way, what is your code name?"

"Husk. Now first, you got to think you have to do is focus on what you want to take the form of. Then, it is just ripping your skin off." Paige decided to demonstrate by ripping her skin off and revealing a body of pure diamond.

Rich just looked at her and said, "It must play havoc with your wardrobe. Well, I must well try this ability." He started ripping at his skin and revealed a body of obsidian.

Paige thought that he must be stuck on the color black. He chose a black element and she said, "Ah, think that the color suits you, Rich."

"And I think that Penance might become jealous if she hears that. Besides, there is already someone who cares for you, he just is having trouble accepting the feeling back from you. Try to patch things up with him." Deep down, Paige knew that Rich was right, but she still could forgive Jono for what had happened at her home on Thanksgiving. She was almost lost in that painful memory when Rich finally said, "Paige, how long do these changes usually last?"

"What, Ah'm sorry, Ah was lost in thought. The phase changes usually last about as long as needed. Watch." She ripped off the diamond skin that she had and reverted back to a normal state.

"Ladies and gentleman, this is an interesting ability. I take it that sometimes you aren't really in descent wear for your ability to wear out."

Paige blushed and said, "That's true. Ah sometimes have to rip my uniform off. Ah must have had the most uniforms of the whole team."

"Since I am a gentleman, I will not look in your direction at those times."

Paige seemed to notice many times before that Rich was a gentleman. "Don't worry, Ah usually cover up before that happens. That has to be one of the drawbacks of my mutant ability. Rich, I know I mentioned this earlier, but you don't seem to be used to waking early."

"That's true, Paige, and don't try to hide your accent, it's who you are. One should never be ashamed of who they are. Now, why do you ask?"

"Ah was wondering if you would like to jog with me. It's one of the few times Ah can relax."

"Alright, I see you at 6AM or 6:30?"

"6:30. I do a workout every morning." She decided to leave after that. She figured that Rich knew enough about her, than she could ever tell him. She knew that the process of husking was time consuming, but Rich's own ability had to pull him out of it also. She decided she leave early, so Jubilee wouldn't see the sight. Jubilee still thought it was a disgusting ability.

Jubilee had entered the biosphere quietly. She had learned a few things in her days with Wolverine and the X-Men. She had talked briefly to Paige before she entered. Paige told her how Rich had surprised her. Jubilee was determined to surprise Rich. She knew that it might not be the best way for Rich to experience her abilities, but it might prepare Rich for something that he will encounter. She noticed Rich waiting by a small stream that was in the biosphere. As she approached him, she noticed that he put his hand to his head. He seemed to be in a bit of pain. She realized her mistake when she screamed. He jumped in fright and she saw a dozen pyrotechnic plasmoids knock her down. She was thankful that they were low level. She knew that she couldn't be hurt by her abilities, but Rich used them against her.

He looked in shock. "I'm sorry. I wasn't in control. It is your own gut instinct, ya know."

"I know. The last time I had someone scare me like that was .."

He completed the sentence for her. "When Sabertooth broke free in the mansion. Jubilee, that scared you a lot and was traumatic for you."

Jubilee knew that he was right. She knew that he knew the reason by now and said, "It was the first time Wolvie wasn't there for me. I honestly thought that I was going to die." She almost broke into tears. She then noticed that Rich had walked over to her and sat down.

"I hope I never run into Sabertooth, if that is any consolation to you. And, I am sorry for plasma attack. Jubilee, what was it like, being an X-Man?"

Jubilee was surprised by what Rich said. "You want to hear about when I was with the X-Men! Nobody wants to hear those stories. Why do you want to hear them?"

He looked at her and said, "Jubilee, don't take any of this as an offense, Okay. What you lack in maturity, you make up for in experience and wisdom."

She was almost glowing when she heard that. "Wow, do you always say stuff like that or is it just who you are?"

He turned his head, acting as he was looking for someone else and said, "Alright, who told you I like to startle people. I can't believe someone started a rumor like that about me."

She started to laugh and he smiled. "Ok, I take it you like to startle people."

"Of course I do, I like to start that rumor. By the way, Jubilee, is that your codename?"

"Yea. It was my nickname in school, and it stuck when I joined the X-Men a long time ago. It doesn't truly relate to my abilities, as you have figured out is to shoot pyrotechnic plasmoids. I used to entertain kids in a mall back in So Cal with them."

"So, how did you get hooked up with the X-Men."

"Long story, which I can tell you later. Anything you want to know about my ability, a bit more maybe."

"How dangerous is your ability, Jubes?"

The way he said it was almost like how some of the X-Men had said it. She always thought of the X-Men as a family for her, and then Generation X, and now Rich seemed to be becoming the new member of the family. She thought about his question, though, because it was odd. "Why do you want to know, Rich?"

"Jubilee, when you snuck up on me, your own personality took over and merged with mine. I had a brief headache. The reactions, the actions, they are all you, including that you fear your ability. When you're mad, you can't control the sparks. I have a nasty temper, if I let it loose. I have controlled it for a long time. The last time I let it loose was, well I forget. It wasn't a pretty sight."

"You mean when you chewed out Emma?"

"No, that was just a fraction of the rage that I hold bottled up." Jubilee's eyes went wide at that. Could Rich hold so much anger in him that she wondered if he was more dangerous than all of the villains that Gen X and the X-Men faced.

She decided to answer his question. "Rich, I know that when I'm fuming, I don't have much control. I once leveled a house with my fireworks."

"Remind me to stay away from you when I'm mad," he said with a smile.

Jubilee decided to be a little bit devilish. She looked at him. "Rich."

"Yes."

"Stay away from me when you're mad."

"You have a little devilish streak in you, don't you." He started to laugh and then said, "How about telling me one story about you and the X-Men."

He seemed destined to hear her tell about her life with the X-Men. She decided to tell him about the time she saved Wolvie's life.

Mondo entered the Biosphere and walked in Rich's direction. Rich still had a bit of Jubilee's power and was shooting sparks from his fingers. Mondo thought that Rich's ability was similar to that of Everett's and his combined for some reason. He slowly approached Rich and said, "Olla, Rich, how are you."

Rich looked at Mondo and said, "Hello Mondo. I'm just waiting for Jubilee's power to leave so I can learn about your ability. Tell me Mondo, what exactly is your ability, and your codename."

Mondo just smiled. He looked at Rich and said, "My name is my codename. That is how life works. Life just does what it does."

Rich looked at him and said, "You have an interesting look on life, Mondo. But, what is your ability."

"Well, I have been called an omnimorph. Watch." Mondo placed his hand on the ground and looked at Rich. Rich had a look on his face that could only be amazement. Mondo was starting to absorb the ground and was transforming into it. Rich finally understood what was going on. Rich then stepped towards him and did the same.

"Looks simple. Let me try." Rich started to do the same and Mondo was simply amazed. Rich had copied his ability and was using it. Mondo watched as he turned into the same ground that he had absorbed. "Interesting ability, Mondo, what can you do with it?"

"It's simple my friend, come along." Mondo shifted into the ground and Rich followed. For about ten minutes, Rich and himself shifted all over the biosphere. Eventually Rich started to retake a human form. Mondo slowly reformed and said to Rich, "Is something wrong, my friend."

Rich looked a little flushed and said, "Could you help me get to some place with water, I need to take some medication."

Mondo started to worry. "Rich, are you Ok? Are you feeling well?"

"It's nothing to worry about Mondo. I take medication for my epilepsy. It's just that I'm feeling a little uneasy as well." Mondo helped Rich out of the Biosphere and back to the main building. They entered the kitchen only to run into Sean and the three boys, Artie, Leech and Franklin. Sean was fixing them a little lunch. Sean must have felt like a father to the kids.

Sean looked at Rich and said, "Is something wrong?"

"Nothing a little medication won't take care of, and a little lunch?" Mondo almost started to question what Rich said earlier, at least until Rich said, "The medication for my epilepsy requires food to be in my stomach." Rich managed to get some food together and took his medication. Mondo realized that Rich seemed to be dependant on it.

Mondo's own concern seemed to be shared by Sean. "Rich, isn't there another way to take care of your epilepsy?"

Rich looked at Sean and said, "Not without having my brain hacked up. I feel that the medication is the less dangerous option. I'll be on it for life, but it is better than living with half a mind." Mondo now thought he had a better understanding why Rich had such a view on life.

8 - Bonding II

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Changes

Chapter 8 Bonding, Part II

Penance looked out at the sky above her. It was a while after Jubilee had taken her from the Biosphere. It was just a couple of moments after the time when the shadows disappear. She had decided to go to the room that the food was kept. She entered the room to see the noisemaker was in the room. He had gotten an apple from the fruit basket. He must have been getting ready to find her. Jubilee had left her a while ago. He turned to her and said something. She remembered that Rich said his name was Sean. He said something to her as he handed her the apple. She could make out some of the words. One that she made out was Biosphere, the building where the outdoors was indoors. She then was overjoyed with another word he said. Rich. She was going to see Rich again. He must have been in the Biosphere. She ran out of the building and toward the Biosphere. She heard the noisemaker was following behind her. She wondered what he wanted.

Penance entered the building and started looking around. She looked around for Rich. The noisemaker yelled out his name. It wasn't long until she heard his voice. {Hi Yvette.} She turned to see him walk out into the open. He had transformed into her form again. She ran over and gave him a hug. The noisemaker started to say something and Rich held up his hand. Rich returned the hug and said, {He was about to warn me about how sharp your skin is. I guess he was afraid you would hurt me.}

Penance looked into his eyes. {I would never hurt you, Rich. I don't want to do anything to lose you. Now, what has been happening to you today?}

{I've been meeting everybody today, Yvette. I have met with Angelo, Paige, Jubilee and Mondo. After I spend some time with you, I get to meet Monet, Jono, and Everett. It's just been so eventful, but it has been a long day} He sat down and continued, {Yvette, I had a terrible dream last night. One I fear is a premonition. I'm afraid that He is coming, the one that everyone calls Emplate.}

Penance started to shudder, {Rich, He might try to take me again. He tried it before. I hope that we can avoid Him. If He gets control of you, I couldn't do anything to fight you. I couldn't even think of hurting you.}

Rich looked in her eyes and said, {Yvette, if He does control me, try to run. Knowing that you are free might give me a chance to escape. Even the smallest hope is all that is needed.}

{Wouldn't it be a lost cause?}

{A famous person once said, "Lost causes are the only causes worth fighting for."} Rich stopped talking and looked at the noisemaker. He seemed to be saying something. She could only make out one word "Name". Rich nodded and said, {Sean is wondering what your name is. Should I tell him?}

She thought about it for a while. She had gotten used to everyone saying Penance or Penny. She heard the words often enough and was used to them. She got used to trusting everybody here and felt that she could let them know her name. {You can tell him, but I do like the nickname Penny.}

{Penance could be your codename.} He smiled when he said it. She felt like that she would faint. She was truly in love with him. He then started drawing some symbols in the ground. He had done that last night, when he was teaching her English. She started to recognize the symbols. The first

six were her name. Some of the others formed Penny and Penance. She noticed the world name had appeared twice. The rest of the time they were together, she let Rich know what was okay to tell, and what she didn't want to tell, just yet. Some thing had to be voiced. Towards the end, Rich finally said, {Shall we meet tonight, to learn more about the English language.}

{I'll be waiting.} She then decided to do something a little bit bold. She went up to Rich and kissed him. She then ran out of the building, past the man named Sean. She had noticed that Sean had a look of amazement on his face.

Rich felt like he was on cloud nine. If he had a flying ability right now, he would be soaring. Rich also noticed the amazement on Sean's face. It was then when the Headmaster of the school said, "I cannae believe what I saw. Penance kissed ye. I still cannae believe that you can touch her without being shredded." Rich started to laugh and thereaction that Sean was giving. He knew that his laugh wouldn't be vocalized since he still had Yvette's ability, but he was happy, and relaxed. He started to laugh and Sean went, "You think this is funny. You're laughing at this because of me reaction."

Rich couldn't believe it. Sean had heard his laugh. Rich decided to try and speak. It was easier this time when he said, "You can hear me? Maybe I have can tell her what to do to talk."

Sean smiled. "Rich, getting Penance to tell us a little more about herself, even if it is through ye, is a remarkable feat. If ye can get her to talk, that you mean many changes for us all. We might be able to even find a way to stop Emplate."

Rich was listening to all this as he climbed into a tree. It was hard to stay still, probably because of Yvette's life in the clutches of that monster. Rich perched in the tree and said, "I know that Emplate is evil, but how bad can he make things."

Sean had a solemn look on his face. "Rich, one of the members of the X-Men is a mutant named Bishop. He comes from about 80 years in the future. We know that he came back in time to stop the traitor of the X-Men, which he believes he did to a degree. He also told Monet how hundreds of beings like Emplate live and hunt mutants."

Rich thought about it for a moment. "Sean, I hope that if I get stuck in a particular mutant ability, I don't want it to be Emplate."

"Rich, lad, how long will you have Penance's ability. I want you to meet with Monet next."

"I think it will be about a while yet, Sean, but when you send Monet in, make sure she is alone. I don't think she wants anybody knowing about her secrets yet. She must reveal them to you as she wants to, not be forced into it." Sean nodded and left the Biosphere to get Monet St. Croix. Rich hopped that this might change her mind about him. She, in her nightmare, saw a side of him that he didn't think existed, but what if it did exist. May it not be the true, may he not have an evil bone in his body.

Monet entered the Biosphere cautiously. Sean had told her that Rich might still have Penance's abilities. Even after the talk she had with Rich earlier, she didn't want to meet him. His ability could allow him to find out some things she didn't want to know. She then realized that he could find out everything about her brother, and maybe.. no he could find out about that. She never wanted to tell anyone how she discovered her abilities, or what had happened that led to that discovery. She almost jumped when she heard movement to her left. She turned to see Rich walking out of the trees, brushing the leaves off his shirt and pants. He looked at her and said, "Hello Monet, I guess it's time to face the music. Monet, I want to let you know that whatever I find out about you, I will not tell a single soul unless you wish me to tell."

Monet felt very relieved at that. "Rich, I thank you for that. I want you to be careful, although. I have not had a happy family life."

Rich started to step toward her and said, "I can imagine. Now, Monet, what is your codename, and your abilities."

Monet turned and started to levitate and said, "Well, Richard, my codename is M. My abilities are flying, super-strength, super-speed. I also have night vision" She looked over in the trees and said, "In the darkness of those trees, I can see evidence that Penance perched in the tree over there, or maybe they were places when you landed while you had..."

"Monet!!" The sound of Rich's yell had stopped her talking. She looked at Richard and noticed that he was clutching his arms. "Monet, why are my arms bleeding?"

"Mon Dieu, if I knew that this was going to happen, I wouldn't have agreed to this. This is how my ability first appeared." She grabbed him and flew him over to the control room of the Biosphere where the robots were controlled for training. She found the first-aid kit and bandaged his arms. She decided to explain to Rich how her ability first appeared, the truth of how her ability appeared, not the story she would tell others. "Rich, my ability first appeared when I was in my early teens. My brother, Emplate, had left the house a while before, but my father always said he would return. The one time he returned, I was reading a book. He had snuck up behind me and grabbed me by the arms. He had bit into my arms and started to consume my abilities. The first ability was to see mutagenic auras. To identify mutants by their auras, I used to have that ability as well as he did. I felt I could warn mutant of my brother, but I lost that ability, at least I think it's gone. It was then I discovered my immunity as a psionic explosion knocked him away. But my arms were bleeding for a while afterwards."

"Well, my wounds will heal when your abilities leave me. I don't want this to affect any chances and a friendship."

For the first time since Rich had arrived, Monet honestly felt comfortable around him. Monet then decided, "Rich, I think I should show you about my ability." With that, she started to show Rich all the things she could do. The two of them flew, and tested all the other aspects of her ability.

When Jono had entered the Biosphere, he noticed that Monet was still there, standing about 10 feet from Rich. He wondered why Monet was still here. He started to approach Rich and said, "*Ello Rich, do you mind me asking why Monet is still here?*"

Rich just looked at him calmly and said, "Jono, after the incident yesterday, I thought it would be best if something, or someone kept me from flying when I get your ability. I asked Monet to catch me if I go flying again."

"I understand, I know I wounded someone the first time my ability appeared. Be careful although, you might wound Monet."

"I don't think he will, Jono. He told me to stand behind him, and catch him if he went flying." Monet said as she moved directly behind him.

"Well, Jono, let's get this over with." He approached Jono rather quickly and stopped just as an explosion knocked Rich backwards. Monet caught him and dropped back where he was standing when the explosion started. He nodded at Monet as she left the Biosphere. He then turned to Jono and said "*Well, Jono, what codename did you get stuck with?*"

Jono was a bit surprised at how comfortable Rich had seemed with his ability. "*Well, Rich, my codename is Chamber. I guess you had an interesting first couple of days here so far.*"

"Well, yes. Communicating with Penance, the party, getting to know everybody, part of me wishes it would never end. How about your first day, gov?"

Jono thought back on the day he joined Generation X. He didn't know how much Rich knew about that. "*Rich, can I ask you what you can sense as traumatic in my life?*"

"Let's see, your powers manifestation, the two ladies, Paige and someone else, that's what is

almost predominant. After a while, I might see your first day here as well."

"Ok, well I will tell you now. The first day I was in America, Emplate attacked me, tried to kill me, and Penance ran amok." Rich's eyes went wide and Rich just stood in one spot. Jono thought something was wrong with him and said, "Rich, what's wrong?"

"Emplate attacked on your first day. I hope he does attack until I've been here for a while. Actually I hope he doesn't attack at all, ever."

"I was able to overcome his attack, Rich, I think you could do it."

"Jono, I would transform into him. The only way I could overcome an attack would be in control of myself. It is a far cry different than him chowing down on you."

"Maybe you're right, gov, but anything can be overcome. I mean look at me. I survived what happened to me."

"No, you haven't, Jono. You are a very angry person, because you are a mutant. You helped Penance because you saw her as a kindred spirit. A mutant who couldn't be accepted into society, no matter how hard they try."

Jono thought that Rich knew how to point out a character. Rich was in his persona, he knew the truth. Jono then said, *"Rich, you have no idea what I have gone through in my life. The one that I love does return the feelings, because I blew it. I thought she wanted a normal life."*

"Jono, there is the problem. You have this preconceived notion of normal. Normal does not exist in nature. Normal is not the course of nature, it is not the course of the universe. Time judges what happens. Let time take its course and you will be in the world that you are destined for. Apologize for the mistake and try to correct them. Now can you show me some of the aspects of your ability."

Jono had listened to Rich's view on the world and decided he would think about it. He then decided that Rich should learn all about the psionic abilities that he had.

"Like, I don't see why I should come along, Ev."

Everett looked at Jubilee with caring eyes. *"Jubes, Rich is going to mimic my abilities. The only way that I can show him how to use them is to have another mutant around, and I figured that your ability would be the best for him to get in synch with." He took her hand and said, "Besides, I think it might be a change of pace. He probably had a hard time mimicking Jono, and from what you told me, he seems to be the only person who wants to hear your stories."*

Everett enjoyed seeing Jubilee smile. *"Thanks, Ev, I hope you're not going to be jealous." He knew that he and Jubilee had been through a lot together. They had survived the Phalanx, they had been through a lot together, and she did her best to comfort him after Emplate enthralled him. He then noticed that Rich was just sitting in the field. He watched Rich in amazement as his face reformed from the flare that was Chambers' ability.*

Rich looked in his direction and said, *"You must be Everett Thomas. I do believe I already know the Jubster. Why is she here?"* Everett was caught off guard at what Rich said. It was obvious Rich noticed as he said, *"I will probably come up with a nickname for everybody, Ev-man. You like that one."*

Everett thought that Rich was almost like him, and then he said, *"Rich, are you mimicking my abilities."*

Rich stood up and walked over to Everett. He looked him square in the eye and said, *"Now, I have your abilities. It seems the worse event in your life was that deal with Emplate." He noticed Rich shudder when he mentioned Emplate. He can understand that.*

"Okay Rich, let me make this simple. My codename is Synch."

Rich looked at him and said, *"Why?"* Rich jumped back when Everett's Technicolor aura appeared. *"What the hell is that?"*

"Rich, that is my aura. It gets in synch with any mutant's abilities. That is why I had Jubilee come

in." He turned to Jubilee and said, "Jubilee, how about you go hide somewhere. I want to show Rich some of the aspects of my ability."

"Okay. Let me guess, I'm the prey in a hunt."

Rich just looked at her and shook his head. As she ran off into the Biosphere, Everett looked at him and said, "What did you do that for?"

Rich just looked at him and said, "She was referring to a time when Sabertooth almost killed her. She is still shaky about anything like that."

"I see. Rich, does that insight into people always happen when your ability kicks in."

"Each and every time. It's lousy, but it's life."

"Alright, now Rich, I want you to focus on Jubilee's mutant ability for now, Okay." He watched as the aura appeared around Rich.

"Well, that's different," Rich exclaimed as he shot out sparks from his hand. "Is that what your codename means, Ev, this aura gets in synch with a mutant in the area."

"You have that correct. I'm just wondering what it will do if I get in synch with you?"

"Maybe you might get part of my ability, maybe accepting personalities. My mimicking ability might not appear on you."

"I understand. Now, I think Jubilee has hidden herself in the biosphere. We are going to track her down. Just launch your aura after her. It will track her down." With one thought, Everett's own aura flew. One second, the aura around Rich flew out and Everett said, "We have to stay close to them, Rich."

"I know, you're still not sure on the range." With that, the two rushed off after the auras. They stopped when they almost fell over Jubilee. Rich knelt down to where she was hiding and said "Tag, you're it." He returned back to Everett and said, "Ev, are you confident with your ability."

Everett could hide his pride on that fact. "Rich, I have gotten used to my ability and feel confident when using it. I take it you don't feel confident with yours."

"Only when I am in control of it. My confidence comes from who I am mimicking." Everett was not surprised by this. What that meant was that Rich would only be as comfortable as whoever he was near. Everett decided that maybe he could help that confidence.

9 - Calm Before The Storm

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Changes

Chapter 9 Calm Before the Storm

When the day was starting to end, Rich finally left the Biosphere. He felt a little washed out, with all the changing and abilities. Rich walked back into the main building of the school and almost knocked over Emma Frost. He looked up at her and thought about her for a moment. She supposedly owned this school ground, but it was run in the dream that Charles Xavier had, before his rage created Onslaught. He wondered if she was similar to Xavier, and why she ran the school. He sensed a bit of unrest in her, about some students of hers. Is that why she was so protective about Generation X?

"So, Richard, how has your first day here?" she asked in a calm voice. He looked at her suspiciously. He didn't really trust her, but she gave the effort to try to get on his good side.

"It has been going well, Ms. Frost. I take it there is a reason you stopped me."

"Yes, Richard, there is. I want to talk to you about condition."

"I take it you're not referring to my mutant ability, but to the medical condition."

"Indeed. Richard, is there any chance that you might have a seizure at a critical time?"

Rich could see what was coming. It was her concern for the kids. He looked at her and said, "Ms. Frost, I have been on medication for epilepsy since I was in my early childhood. You don't have to worry about it. I haven't had a seizure since my childhood and my sleep."

"I just hope you don't put us all in jeopardy in case someone attacks us. I honestly don't need you to go into a seizure at the worst time." There was a concern in her voice that Rich could only associate with one other thought. He easily placed it because he had seen it in one of his family.

"You don't want to lose us like you lost the others, do you Emma?" It was the first time he saw Emma Frost as a mother type figure instead of someone else entirely different. She only turned and didn't face him. It was obvious that she must have forgotten his ability. She looked upset when he finally decided to say, "I know it's not in my power to promise this, but I have a good feeling that what happened to them, won't happen to us, no matter what is thrown at us."

Emma only looked at him. It was obvious that he must have reached her, in some way. She then spoke, "That was the first time you called me Emma. Over the time you have been here, you have been cold and formal with me. For the first time, you have reached a kindness with me. Richard, you have been a bit of a blessing to the school. I think that the student, as well as myself and Sean, will benefit from you being here."

Rich, for the first time while here at the school, felt comfortable around Emma Frost. She went back into her office and closed the door. He then continued to the foyer. He heard everybody's voices there. He walked into a very nasty argument.

"I say that we go eat at McDonald's." There was no mistaking the hypervoice of Jubilee. She was obviously arguing with Monet.

Rich observed the situation and thought back to his years in college. He saw this at his college before the Onslaught threat. That was obviously like his years in college, except everybody was younger. He walked in the room and went to say something when he saw in his peripheral vision that

Sean was standing at the side of the door. Rich let a small grin cross his face. Paige looked in his direction and said to the others, "Listen, there's Rich. Let's ask him. He might want to eat out as well."

Everybody turned and started yelling out suggestions. Monet mentioned the Olive Garden. Angelo and Everett mentioned Taco Bell. Mondo, obviously, didn't care where they went. Franklin and Jubilee both felt like McDonald's. Artie and Leech weren't around, but then, they stuck out like sore thumbs, due to skin color. Penance would be safest there at the school. Chamber didn't eat. Paige was suggesting Wendy's. He was almost sick of hearing everybody yelling out suggestions. He said calmly, "Enough, I made a choice." It was apparent that no one listened to him. He decided to give everybody a shock. He then yelled, "I said, enough." Jubilee had a look of shock because she realized what was happening. She jumped down and everybody got knocked down by a sonic scream.

Sean looked at him and said, "That wasn't need, lad. I didnae even know ye had my abilities. I just wished ye didnae do that."

Rich turned to Sean, "Sorry 'bout that, sir. I just had to stop them, besides they didn't seem to listen. Are you driving, Sean?"

"Yes, but the kids can't decide where to go. They want you to make the decision."

"Well I have. I wouldn't mind a meal at McDonald's."

Jubilee jumped up and yelled, "Yes. McDonald's. I can't wait." She ran out the door and towards Sean's jeep. Everybody started to follow, complaining about the choice and cautious about making Rich upset. Rich started heading toward the door.

Paige, who was the last person to exit waited for him. She looked at him and said, "Ah take it you have been in that situation."

He looked at her. "Paige, I was a college student before coming here. That happened a lot."

Rich then ran out the door for the jeep. He grabbed a seat right near Everett and in back of Monet. He then relaxed as Sean started the jeep up and drove for McDonald's.

D.O.A. stood near the limo he usually drove. The master had been a bit upset about missing that mutant at the airport. What had disturbed the master most was that the mutant couldn't be seen. He had seen Banshee leaving with a young man following him. The master spent most of the hours during the drive back to the lighthouse. The master had his Hellion's to feed him for a time, but he missed his favorite meal ticket. The fact that the master missed his favorite meal ticket had him think that eventually that he would have to drive him to the Xavier school. Any mutant he caught for the master understood what his name was.

D heard a familiar voice from a month back. He turned in the direction of the McDonald's that was near him. He saw the mutants that the master went after. He noticed Monet, the master's sister. He then saw Synch, the one that the master sent away. He watched as each mutant got out of the car. He let a very nasty thought cross his mind when Jubilee left the car. The master had a score to settle with her. He then saw the young man. The young man must be the mutant that the master mentioned. How could that be? The master would have attacked in an instant. He said that the mutant seemed to pass by him. He watched as the group entered the McDonald's. He would drive back to the lighthouse and tell the master.

D.O.A. started the limo and drove back to the lighthouse. The lighthouse was not far from where the McDonald's was, and the master liked the privacy and decor of the lighthouse. He arrived at the lighthouse, he ran for the top floor of the lighthouse, passing the cell that used to hold the master's favorite meal. He entered the room at the top and exclaimed "Sir, I have good news for you."

His master turned and stared at him with the yellowish-red eyes. Echoing through the respirator he wore, he said, "This had better be important, D. I am still very upset about the mutant from yesterday. I think he is at the school, but I can't be sure what type a mutant he is. I couldn't see an aura

around him!"

Let his smile get wider than it already was. "Well, he must be a student where your sister is, for I saw him with the mutants as they went to the local McDonald's. Should I round the Hellions together for an attack on the McDonald's."

He watched the master and he finally said, "D. Get the Hellions together, we will attack the school in the morning. But, first I will check things out. I need to find out about that mutant. Then I shall capture and feast on all, and eliminate my sister." D. smiled as he left the room. The master was finally in a better mood.

When they arrived back at the school, Jubilee watched as Rich ran for the Biosphere. She noticed that everyone was also watching. Sean only said, "I'm beginning to think that Rich is the best thing that has happened to Penance."

Jubilee thought for a moment and said, "Sean, you mean to say that Rich is going to see Penny? Those two must have really hit it off." She then thought that with Rich's ability, he was the only one who could communicate with her, and from the roses yesterday, maybe there was a relationship starting between the two. She couldn't help but giggle when she thought of how they first met.

Paige overheard her giggling and said, "What so funny about that, Jubilee. Penance finally has someone she trusts enough to relax, and Rich seems to trust her and is in love."

"I'm thinking of how those two met. Remember, back in the assembly hall."

Monette then started to giggle. She thought then said, "I see what you mean, Jubilee. It is almost ironic. He is more afraid to move towards Jono, and if you ask me, Jono's life is less traumatic than Penance's life has been."

"And when she first approached him, that must have scared him more than it did her. But he sees her as an object of beauty. I wonder what the future holds for those two."

Everett said, "I guess only time will answer that question. Hey, Jubilee, do you want to go for a walk."

Jubilee didn't take a moment to think about it. She knew her answer right away. She looked him straight in the eyes and said, "Alright." And with that, she went with Everett as the happiest girl in the world.

Penance watched with joy when Rich finally entered the Biosphere. She jumped down from the tree she was in and he approached her. As he morphed into her form, she ran and embraced him. {I so happy to see you, Rich.}

He smiled at her and said, {I know, Yvette, but right now I must tell you something. I think I know how we can get you to speak out loud. Can you relax a little bit, I think that also will allow your skin to become softer.}

She thought about it for a moment. In most of her life, she had been very tense and never relaxed much. She felt she could do it. She relaxed and felt her body slowly soften. It was difficult because of the restraints that He put on her. They were put on when her skin was diamond sharp, and the restraints were pulled tight around it. She finally relaxed to a pain where there was little pain from the tight restraints. {Alright, now what should I do.}

Rich appeared to do the same thing and finally he spoke aloud. "You should be able to talk aloud now, Yvette. Remember most of what I taught you mentally."

Penance thought about what he said, she understood it better now. She then said slowly, "I-I-I-th-th-think s-s-so." She was surprised and how quiet her voice was. She then looked at Rich as he smiled.

"You have a lovely voice, Yvette. It matches your psionic voice and your beauty. We should find a better outfit for you though. Your current outfit just doesn't seem right."

Penance could feel herself blushing, but she didn't know if Rich could tell. She wondered what he thought she looked best in and decided to ask. "R-r-rich, wh-wh-what d-d-do y-y-you th-think I-I w-would I-look-g-good i-in?"

He looked at her and she then noticed he was gazing into her eyes. "I think that you would look lovely in a blue dress, blue to match your eyes." She then smiled and kissed him. She was truly in love with him. After they finished kissing, Rich then said, "I think it might be best if you learn to talk better. I think it might be a surprise to everyone if they hear you speaking out loud."

"I-I-th-think y-you a-are r-right, R-Rich." She smiled and they sat down as Rich continued her lessons in English. She enjoyed how Rich pronounced his words, and she tried to copy that down to the way he even pronounced some of the simple words. After a couple of hours, Rich started to get up. "Is that going to be all for tonight?"

"Yes. I'm going to start to get into a new daily routine. Exercise in the morning. I have to be in shape if I want to stay ahead of Emplate. And your English and speaking has improved remarkably from yesterday. I'll see you tomorrow." He left the biosphere and she decided to find a nice spot to curl up and sleep. She felt a lot more comfortable with Rich around. She felt as if she didn't have anything to fear at all.

10 - Enter: Emplate

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Changes

Chapter 10 Enter: Emplate

Penance looked around the Biosphere. She felt as if something was wrong. She moved slowly and cautiously around the biosphere. She heard a snap and she turned in the direction of the sound. She saw His sister collapse onto the ground, dead. She saw everyone else lying near her, dying. Her only concern was that Rich was not dead. She started looking for Rich when she heard Jubilee speak. She watched her friend take a final breath and say, "Emplate." He was here. He killed all of them. He must have gotten Rich. She started to run, in search of Rich, and then to escape. She ran through the Biosphere, avoiding every shadow and movement she saw. She moved so quickly and fast that she ran into and knocked over Rich. He was injured and almost collapsed to the ground. She caught him before he hit the ground. He appeared bruised and beaten.

Rich spoke slowly to her, "Emplate captured all. I had someone else's ability. He killed everyone. Everett was the first to go. I don't know what he did, but somehow, he made Monet feel every blow. I escaped, but I couldn't fight. I was alone. I would latch onto to him."

She held him and said, "I'll stay with you, Rich. You won't ever have to worry about him again. I won't let him hurt you again."

She felt his hands go to her arms. "I'll never lose you again, Yvette." She felt a stabbing pain go through her arms. She knew what it was and when she looked at Rich again, he had transformed into Him.

"No," she yelled as loud as she could. He must have gotten to Rich. As she struggled in his grip, she saw in His eyes a very scary sight. In His eyes, she saw Rich's soul trying to break out. She slowly felt closer to Rich as she felt her life draining from her. She cried over the thought of dying in that monster's grip. She had closed her eyes and opened them expecting to see the evil creature finishing her off. Instead, she saw the roof of the Biosphere. It was morning about a while after sunrise.

Penance was concerned for Rich. She was afraid that He was here and that He would capture Rich. She decided to find Mr. Cassidy and find out where Rich was.

Emplate watched the grounds carefully. He stayed out of synch with reality, but not far enough to be pulled into the Beyond. He hated being in the beyond. His body tortured every moment by the cold hands of the dead. He felt the pull when he didn't have the energy to stay in the reality that all the other mutants lived in. The energy he got from feeding off the other mutants. When he lost Penance, he was pulled back to the Beyond on a regular basis. He was determined to get her back, as well as claiming the young morsels here as his next meal. He had a score to settle with Jubilation Lee. She had tricked him, and in so freed them all from his grasp the last time he was at the school.

He heard a sound. He glanced in the direction of the Biosphere and saw Penance run out. He noticed something in her aura. It was concern, but for what. Did she sense his presence. The fact that she broke his will, his influence, hurt most than the lack of descent food. She had spent so much time as his victim that he was sure she knew that he was here.

His thoughts were broken when he heard a voice. He glanced down the path and saw Paige Guthrie running up the path. She must have been outjogging. How easy it would be for him to ambush her as she passed, but now was not the time to strike. He was determined to find out about the mutant that dodged him at the airport. He heard her yell behind her, "You have to move faster than that."

The young man ran into sight. It was the same one that was at the airport. He was dressed the same, and as before, no mutant aura. He wondered how the mutant could dodge his sight. The man yelled at Paige, "I'm moving as fast as I can. You must also remember my ability." He must have been a mutant, but where was the aura.

Emplate continued to listen as Paige passed him. "I know, I know. But you can move faster than that. I know, think that Emplate is behind you." He hated hearing that. He thought about jumping out and attacking then. They must have told this new mutant about him. But how did they know he was a mutant.

The young man started to pass him. He finally saw the answer. The aura around the young man suddenly appeared, but how. He saw a name to the man, Richard Cale. The ability this mutant had was in some way like him. He then listened to Richard yelling to Paige. "That is not even funny. That was scary back at the airport. When I looked at my hand and....." He noticed that Rich did the same thing he had just said. Rich, all of a sudden, ran very fast. The mutant aura disappeared and briefly appeared as he passed Paige.

He listened as she yelled, "What's the matter, Rich" and she took off after him, trying to catch up to him. He knew what happened. He slowly made his way back to the limo that he had. The Hellions had been assembled and it was soon time to attack.

D.O.A. stepped from the car and said, "I take it we attack sir."

If his minions could see his face, they would see the smile on his face. "Yes, D. Make sure the gear is ready. I can't chance another occurrence of what happened last time. The mutant is not one I would choose to sup on. I can change him into one like me." He started to laugh and he gathered the Hellions together to catch the students off guard.

Most of the students were in the kitchen when Sean entered. He noticed that the only ones that weren't there were Monet, Jubilee, Paige, Rich, and as usual, Penance. He noticed that most of them had gotten their own breakfast. Emma was looking out the window. She had a worried look on her face. Sean walked over to her and asked, "Something wrong, Emma."

She turned from the window and said, "Something doesn't seem right this morning, Sean. I think there is something wrong. I just hope it has nothing to do with Rich's dream from two nights ago."

He was about to comfort her when Jono spoke up. "*Well, there is a sight one never sees in here.*" He turned to see that Penance had just walked into the room. Jono was right on that it was a rare sight. Penance had rarely left the biosphere in the morning.

Sean figured that Penance must have been hungry and went to fetch her an apple. He was taken by surprise when he heard a voice he did not recognize, but he came to the immediate conclusion. Penance had finally spoke. He looked at her as she repeated what she had said, "Where's Rich?" He noticed a worried look on her face.

Angel had dropped what he had been eating and said, "Even in the hood, I have never been that surprised. I can't believe that she finally spoke." Sean had to agree with him. It even appeared that her skin appeared softer.

Sean decided to answer Penance's question. He didn't want her to get upset, and something was bothering her. "I haven't seen him, Penance. I don't know where he is. I think he must be on his way here. I'll go see if he's on his way." Penance still was worried and it was evident. He turned to go leave the door, when Rich came running in and knocked Penance over. "Well, I guess we now know where

Richis."

Sean then saw Paige walk in. "Something's wrong. Rich, all of a sudden, took off like a bat out of hell and ran for the building. He kept saying, 'You had to say that. You had to say that.' Ah think something is wrong, because Ah couldn't even keep up with him."

Sean turned to Rich who had fully mimicked Penance's ability. He appeared to be in the a very tense form as he brushed against table, and sliced the leg into pieces. "What's wrong, lad?"

Penance looked at Rich and calmly said, "Rich, what happened?" Sean watched as she gasped and said, "No, it can't be." He nodded and she started to do exactly the same Rich had done.

Sean figured that the two had a psionic connection that no one else could communicate on. They most likely spoke in her native language, one he didn't even know from his years with Interpol. He decide to speak now, in hope that Penance would answer. "Penny, what is wrong? What has you and Rich spooked." Penance started to relax again. He turned to see that Monet and Jubilee had entered.

Jubilee looked in Penance's direction and was surprised to see her standing there. "Hi, Penny. This is strange to see you here." Sean noticed that Penance had relaxed more when Jubilee spoke.

Penance finally spoke, although it was not the answer to his question. She looked at Jubilee and said, "Hello, sister." He watched a look of shock cross Monet and Jubilee's faces.

"Mon Dieu, Penance has finally spoke." The shock was still on Jubilee's face, but Monet recovered quickly. "She must see Jubilee as an adopted sister."

Sean finally walked over to Jubilee and said, "Jubilee, I need ye to find out what has both Rich and Penny spooked. Yur appearance caused her to relax again. I need ye to find out what spooked the two of them."

He watched Jubilee nod and then she walked over to Penance. She knelt down to her and said, "Penny, what's wrong? We'll protect you here. Your safe here with us. We can handle any problem."

Penance spoke very softly and then tensed up again. He didn't know what she said but Jubilee also tensed up. Jubilee got up and started back over to Monet. Sean was worried. Now he had three student tensing up. "Jubilee, what did Penny say was wrong."

Jubilee seemed to act as if she didn't hear him. She just walked over to Monet. She seemed a bit in shock. She then said something that nobody, not even who she said it to, wanted to hear. Sean and everyone else listened as she said to Monet, "Prepare for a family reunion." Sean realized that meant only one thing. He didn't need to hear that, especially with Rich's ability. That must have what freaked Rich out. The reason he ran so fast to get to the building, to get away from Emplate. The reason that he and Penance were tense.

"Alright, everybody, we have a major problem. Emplate is somewhere on the campus. Monet, I want you to take Penance, Rich and the wee lads to the Biosphere. It might be the safest place since the last attack. Everyone else, we have to try and locate Emplate and force him to retreat." Deep down, Sean knew that Rich wasn't ready to fight Emplate. Rich wasn't even ready to fight a mutant. Rich seemed to have a fear of losing his personality, and if Emplate's took over, they would be in deep trouble.

Rich looked around as he heard Sean tell everybody what to do. He looked then at Yvette as she took his hand. {I think that we will defeat Him. They know about the attack now.} she said to calm him down.

{Yvette, do you truly believe that? I been having too much good luck lately. I don't mean to doubt you, but it is one of those lessons I have learned about life. For all good luck, there is an equal amount of bad luck, the time it last varies.} He didn't want to doubt her. It gave him some hope, but not enough.

He watched Yvette as she thought about it. She then looked at him and said {Rich, I'm scared.}

{So am I, love. So am I.} He then notice Monet walk over with Artie, Leech and Franklin. He looked at her she crouched down to the level that Yvette and he was at.

"Rich, Penance, we should get to the Biosphere. It will be safest for you there. Okay." He nodded and Yvette did the same. She understood what Monet said and with that Monet led them all to the Biosphere.

Rich looked at Yvette as she slowly made her way to Biosphere. Rich said to Yvette, {Yvette, is Monet always this nice to you?}

{I have never seen her much. I tend to avoid her most times, mainly because of Him. In truth, I always feared her because of her connection to Him. Once, when He last attacked, part of me, controlled by Him, wanted to kill her. The other half saw her as a kindred spirit. It was as if I could see my pain in her.}

{Well, let's hope we don't run into Him. Do you think we'll be safe in the biosphere?}

{Unless He is waiting for us there, we will be safe.}

{I'm praying He isn't in there.}

{So am I, Rich.} Rich then noticed that Yvette looked at him with a reassuring smile. He felt better. He was still the new guy around here and wasn't used to all the excitement, but it had to be better than having the possible mutant vampire attacking you at his own home. He noticed they were at the Biosphere and that Monet had opened doors. They all went inside and she led them carefully through the Biosphere.

"I am going to get you all to the tree house. It will probably be the safe place for all of you. Then I shall make sure that Emplate can't get in here. Franklin, here is a communicator, call in case Emplate does make it through after I leave." She handed Franklin the communicator and then turned to lead them to the tree house. Rich, even in his sheltered life, had seen what was unfolding then. Right in front of all of them, Emplate appeared right in front of them, giving Monet a right hook capable of knocking out Mike Tyson, George Forman, Mohammed Ali, Larry Holmes, or any great boxer. Monet fell to the ground, unconscious.

Emplate turned his attention to him and Yvette. "Hello, Penance and Mr. Cale," he said through his respirator. Emplate started moving towards them.

{Yvette, follow me.} He then looked at Franklin, quickly motioning his head to the left. He then rushed to the right. Yvette followed him. He looked back to see Franklin, Artie and Leech run off to the left. He also saw Emplate following them. He and Yvette were keeping a good lead on him. It was as if he was letting them take their escape. {Yvette, I have a bad feeling about this.}

{Why, Rich?}

{He's letting us escape. He can move faster than he is. He's trapping us.}

{He must have the others here. Be careful, it might be the misty one.}

{One that can turn into a mist.}

{Yes. Or the wrapped one.}

{What can that one do?}

{Teleport.}

{Yvette, that's just as bad as turning into a mist. Could anything be worse?}

{Yes.}

He sighed. If anybody heard it, he didn't know. He then asked {Well, with my luck right now, what could it be, so I can try and prepare.}

He noticed she was about to answer when a loud voice said, "Guten Tag."

Rich said to Yvette, with worry in his voice, {What was that?}

He noticed a quiver in her voice. {It was the strong one, in front of us.}

He looked ahead to see a big man, obvious from the accent and language, German, step out and prepare to take the two a clothesline. He was covered in straps, and it was an odds-on bet that he wanted to harm them. At the speed they were moving, and the fact they were running side by side, he was going to

knock them unconscious. Rich let instinct take over on his part as he jump right in front of Yvette. He hoped that this move would allow her to escape. He was not going to let Emplate hurt her, not while he was alive and breathing. Seconds later, everything for Rich went black.

11 - Under the Influence

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Changes

Chapter 11 Under the Influence

Penance was shocked when Rich jumped in front of her when the strong guy jumped out in front of them. He was setting up to knock them out. Rich took the blunt of the attack. He must have hoped that she would be able to escape. She thought about it for a moment, but she couldn't leave him behind. It was even more difficult because the way he got knocked out, he fell right on top of her. She was knocked to the ground as he fell. Rich was unconscious. The way he fell on top of her, she had to roll him off. Just as she went to do that, a familiar voice from behind her said, "Now Penance, don't try to run." She glanced in the direction and saw Him. He reached down for her. She saw the mouth on His hand open wider, but as He grabbed her, she didn't feel the pain. He had grabbed her hair. She decided to fight back. She took a swing at Him. As her hand swung toward His face, she heard a metallic click. Her right hand was in a metallic glove. Just as she tried to do the same with her left, another glove was on that hand.

Her only weapons left were her feet. She went to kick him with her left foot. The razor sharp toes would surely slice him. But as she started to kick, she heard one, then another click. She looked at her feet to see them in metallic boots. She tried to slice them, but she couldn't. He then said, "Now to do something so you don't try to stab me with your hair." He put a metallic helmet, covering her hair, on her head. Her most effective weapons had been stopped by mechanical devices. She then watched as the strong one pulled a large metal box over. There were holes in it. She realized that this was her prison. She tried to fight, but with all the metal shackles, it was impossible. He threw her in the box and the strong one closed it. She looked out the hole as He knelt down and looked in. "Don't worry, Yvette. I won't hurt you, yet. I'm going to let the next one go first." She realized what He meant. He was going to use Rich's ability to turn Rich into a creature like Him. She was going to lose Rich. She started to cry silently. She felt the box lift up as He said to the strong one. "Bulwark, take Yvette and Mr. Cale to the place where I have my sister restrained. Place him in the other chair. The others will be brought here soon."

"Ya, Heir Emplate," said the strong man. The strong man's name must be Bulwark. His name must be Emplate. At least that was their codename. She started to cry. She was scared, but did Emplate realize the truth of Rich's ability. Did he know it was distance activated.

She heard Emplate speak again. "Bulwark, make sure he is not next to Monet or Yvette. His ability is distance activated and I want to be the one his ability latches onto me when Yvette's wears out." She sunk deeper into despair. Emplate did know about his ability. Now, he was going to kill all of them, except for Rich. Emplate had a worse fate in store for Rich.

"Ok, listen up, you three. Stay in hiding, we'll be over there in a moment. I doubt Emplate can handle all of us at once." Jubilee had heard the communicator signal. She figured Emplate got into the Biosphere, but she didn't know what had happened, but when Sean had heard, he was upset.

"What happened, Banshee?" It was only at these moments, when an attack happened, did they

used codenames. In its own way, it seemed informal.

"Everybody, things just got worse." The way he said it made every look at him with worry. She was worried, too, if what she thought had happened was right. "That was Franklin. Emplate was waiting in the Biosphere. He knocked out Monet, and had Bulwark help him capture Penance and Rich. We have to be careful getting over there, because Murmur, Vincente and D.O.A. might be waiting to ambush us."

She looked at Synch with concern. She remembered what Emplate did to him last time. "We better be careful. If Emplate gets hold of you again, I"

Synch put a finger to her lips. She had seen it done in some films. He was trying to calm her down. "I know. But, I don't think he'll try that again. If Emplate is planning something, he is planning to limit my power."

"I don't know if that's worse or better." Her statement was cut short when a flash appeared.

"Lookout." Banshee yelled just as Murmur appeared and gave Synch a flying kick. She jumped out of the way and only got the wind knocked out of her. Synch was knocked unconscious. As she started to recover, Banshee let out with one of his sonic screams. Murmur teleported out the way just as quickly as he appeared. Paige ran over to her side and started to pick her up.

"Come on, Jubilee. We got to get out of here." She looked at Skinsaid, "Skin, get Synch."

"Okay, chica." He started extending his finger and pulled Synch over to him. He took a whiff of the air and said, "Is it just me or is the air getting thick in here." Jubilee realized what was happening. It was Vincente. He was going to try and knock them all out.

"We better get out of here, now!" It was the first and last thing he said as he got knocked out by D.O.A. who jumped him from behind. That was the last thing at least she saw as Vincente knocked them all out. In her mind, she thought that Emplate had caught them too easily.

Rich woke to a sound that gave him hope. It was Yvette's psionic voice. {Rich, please be awake!} It worried him about the urgency in her voice made him worry.

He answered as calmly as he could. {Yvette, where are you?}

{Open your left eye a little, love. I hope you can figure something out, and quick.} He didn't like the sound of that. He did as she said. He was careful not to open his eye fully. He noticed a silverish box about six feet from him. From one of the holes he saw the bluish eyes that belong to Yvette.

He was worried now. She hadn't escaped, and he saw that he was securely fastened down in a chair. He tried to move his left arm just a little bit, hopefully not enough to be noticed. He couldn't move his arm. He had been fastened down and positive he couldn't move. He then said to Yvette, {How did he catch you?}

{Remember when you tried to save me from getting knocked out by Bulwark?}

{Yes.}

{The way he hit you, it knocked your unconscious body onto me, knocking me down.}

{I take it you didn't have the time to get me out of the way and escape.}

{Yes. Then Emplate put mechanical gloves, boots and a helmet on me. I can't even cut through them. I watched as he put you in that chair. Monet is in a chair about six feet to your right. He placed a collar on her, and one on every body else when he hung them in the trees. I think he has something in store for the glowing man. He put some sort of device on him.}

{Maybe he wants to force my ability on to Everett. I think last time, Everett was sent away, enthralled by Emplate, from what I was told. Everett's ability because he accepted Emplate's personality and abilities.} He saw a little man walk into his view. He could see the letters "D.O.A." on his hat.

"Master, I think Mr. Cale is awake." The man left his view and Rich started to worry. Emplate must have been waiting for him to awaken. He closed his eyes and started to pray. He prayed that all this

was a nightmare, that he would awaken in his own bed, back home.

His prayer was cut short when his head was knocked into the back of the seat. He heard a woman scream, and a raspy laugh. Then came a voice he heard before. He opened his eyes and saw Emplate standing right in front of him. "Welcome back to reality, Richard. If you're wondering, I see everything about you, including your love for Penance." Emplate walked over to his sister. He watched Emplate look at her and say, "I take it you felt that, little sister. See that collar on everybody's neck. It was built to transfer all their pains to you, so you could suffer at my hands as well.

She looked and snapped, "You have gotten worse, brother. You have become demoted with that hunger."

He backed her and said, "At least you cannot stop me. These chairs were constructed to hold you and Penance, little sister. When I discovered Mr. Cale, I changed my mind." Rich watched as Emplate walked back over to him. "You know, Mr. Cale, when you passed me at the airport, I didn't notice you, not until you called to Banshee. I can't believe that your power could detect me. Any more, you won't be a threat to me, as you could be. I know what you fear, and I will make that fear come true."

Rich physically shuddered at that. He did not want that. Slowly relaxed his body to the point he could speak. It was hard to do because of the situation. He finally spoke to the demon that held him prisoner. "And what do you in store for Yvette?"

He watched as Emplate focused his yellowish eyes on him. "I want that to be a surprise, Richard." He was worried, and he noticed when he tensed up, he was not as rigid as he was before. He was losing Yvette's ability. Straight across from him, he saw Jubilee. She was the only one who was not upside. It was as if Emplate seemed to have something special in store for her. He gave her a look that begged for help.

Jubilee seemed to understand. She yelled, "Hey, ugly. What are you planning to do to me?"

He returned his attention to Jubilee. "Oh, I plan to take care of you, Ms. Lee. I plan to make you pay for the humiliation you put me through. I plan to suck on you until your life is almost gone. Then, I will have Everett finish you off." Rich could see Jubilee shudder from there. "Judging by the time Ms. Lee, I think I will have some help in that." Emplate turned and walked toward him. He knew that Penance's ability had left him, and Emplate was walking closer.

He heard Everett yell. "I don't think so. I'm not hurting anybody for you, Emplate."

Emplate turned his attention to Everett. Rich prayed that this would last a while until he could think of a way out. Emplate spoke to Everett, "See that device that I put on you. It hinders your ability just like the Psionic Dampener hinders Jonathon's. If you try to focus on anyone but Rich when I want you to, it will give you a very painful shock. And, Monet will get that same shock." Rich noticed that a look of defeat crossed Everett's face. Everett didn't want to hurt anybody. Rich finally thought that no matter what, Monet was going to be hurt, but maybe he could find a way to protect him and save everyone else. It all depended if he could tip the chair in Monet's direction.

He started to rock to the chair. He had to work fast and link into Monet's abilities before Emplate realized what was happening. He was sure it would have worked. Only if it weren't for D. O. A. Just as he had the chair beginning to tip, D.O.A. said, "Master, I think Mr. Cale is trying to avoid what you have in store for him."

Rich tried to tip the chair as quick as he could until Emplate approached. "I don't think your plan will work, Richard, but I don't think you'll argue anymore." Rich felt the pain that he knew was the struggle in him. He knew how it appeared on the outside. He physically was transforming into Emplate. He could feel the struggle for breath, but that was the last thing on his mind.

In his mind, he was fighting Emplate. Emplate's personality appeared as Emplate did, not as the images that were in Yvette's mind. Rich was fighting Emplate for full control. Emplate was more powerful and Rich could force Emplate back. He still had a hope in the back of his mind. He could win,

but not alone. He needed help. As he was fighting, he heard a voice [Richard, let me help you.] It was Emma Frost's voice. She was entering his mind to help him win. He felt her strengthen his personality, to fight off Emplate and keep in control. Just as he almost had the upper hand, he felt Emma's help disappear very suddenly. She must have gotten caught. He then lost to the power of Emplate, but he still existed as Emplate imprisoned him in his mind. It was as if Emplate couldn't destroy him. This gave him hope for escaping, but how. He could only watch as the Emplate personality took control of his body.

12 - Triumph

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Changes

Chapter 12 Triumph

Emplate was almost shocked at how Richard collapsed. It was as if he was in a seizure of sorts, but then he noticed the change in Richard's skin and hands that made him realize that Richard had grabbed his personality. Emplate looked at his servant and said with a sort of happiness, "D. bring the spare respirator. Mr. Cale will need it." Emplate laughed as he watched Richard transform into another Emplate. He then noticed that the struggle had calmed down and it appeared that Richard was regaining control. He looked around and saw Emma Frost's eyes were glowing. He yelled to all of his Hellions, "Stop her. She is ruining everything." As he spoke the command, Murmur gave her a swift kick in the midsection, causing her to lose her concentration. He took pleasure in the scream of pain that came from his sister's lips. He looked at her and said, "This is for everything, little sister."

Emplate noticed that Richard Cale had completely transformed. With Monet partially out of it, he deactivated the chairs and pulled Richard out of the chair and reactivated the chairs. Richard looked at him and said, "Master Emplate, how may I serve you." Emplate was pleased at hearing this. He was in control and part of Richard's personality made him realize that he needed to stay near him.

Emplate decided to test his new servant and said, "Do you hunger, my servant?" He watched in pleasure as Richard nodded. It was somewhat reluctant, but that would be overtaken. He had managed to overcome the reluctance, but survival meant everything. He looked in Jubilee's direction. That girl had caused a great deal of problems his last time here. "As a beginning, I want you to sup just a little bit on Ms. Lee." He watched as Richard started to advance towards Jubilee.

She started to panic. He took pleasure in the fact that she was scared. Her bravado last time had tricked him. He watched as Jubilee started to plea with Richard. He listened as she said, "Rich, stop. You don't want to hurt me. You are one of the few people who tolerate me. You are my friend."

Emplate laughed as Jubilee's eyes went wide as Richard grabbed her arms and said, "The law of life states 'Survival is everything.' There is only one other law that supercedes it." Emplate could tell that Richard started to sup on Jubilee as both she and his sister screamed from the same agony. Emplate let Richard sup for a few moments and then decided that Richard had supped enough on Jubilee. Besides, he had to save some of her genetic marrow for himself, and eventually Everett.

"Richard, I think you should test that ability on Ms. Lee." Richard then stepped back and shot sparks at Jubilee. He delighted in her pain as each spark burned her. He also delighted in Monet's screams as similar burns were showing up on her. He stopped Richard and then decided it was time for the ultimate test.

Yvette had watched everything from the box she was locked in. The scream echoed through the box as Rich had injured two of her classmates. She knew that he couldn't help it, that his own mind was entrapped by Emplate's, except that it took less effort for Emplate to control him. She had been in that state before, and she broke free. She had watched as Emplate had stopped Rich from using Jubilee's ability on her. She then heard Emplate say, "Richard, it is time for the ultimate test. Do you think you can

pass it?"

Sheshuddered as she heard a raspy voice come from Rich. "Yes, Master." There was some reluctance in his voice and some sorrow over what he had done to Jubilee. Yvette had an idea of what was coming. Emplate was going to make Rich feed on her. She watched as the two approached the box. She knew it was coming, but she was not going to break as easily as she did last time. It would be hard to fight Rich, but she had to try.

Shethen saw daylight as Emplate opened the box. She saw Rich look into the box with Emplate. Finally Emplate said, "Sup on her. Enthrall her and make her your eternal feast." She looked at Rich with loving eyes, mentally begging that he wouldn't sup on her. She was not the only one surprised at what happened next.

Rich could not believe all the pain he put both Jubilee and Monet through. He was still trying to fight Emplate, but he was weakening. He knew that Emplate was leading him to the box Yvette was in. He had a feeling what was coming, but couldn't fight it. He was too weak. As Emplate opened the box and then gave the order, he was about ready to do it. His heart stopped him, but Emplate's persuasion was growing strong. He didn't want to hurt his love, but he didn't have the strength.

"Let me help you." Rich then noticed a man of African descent coming to help him.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Marius. I was the first victim of Emplate, but I still reside in him. My guess is that you brought me into your mind when your abilities allowed you to mimic him. Maybe together we can break his control over you." Rich allowed the man to help him. He felt the man's strength merge with his own and for the time being he regained control of his body.

He looked down at Yvette and said, "It is said that survival is a powerful emotion, but there is one more powerful." He then backhanded Emplate, sending the monster flying into some of his Hellions. He picked up the device that Emplate had dropped, as well as Yvette and said, "That's love." He ran off into the Biosphere.

As he continued into the Biosphere, he mentally heard the voice of Marius. "Good job. I believe you'll get through this. I need you to tell my family not to give up hope." Rich wondered what that meant as the man left him. He ran until he could stop.

He put Yvette down and said, "Are you okay, love?" He hoped that she would still respond to him, although he now looked like her worst nightmare.

Her deep blue eyes looked straight at him as she said, "Now that you are coming back. Can you do something about these metal things, I can't help if I'm defenseless."

Emplate was furious. Not only had Richard regain control of his body and mind, but he took the unit that controlled everything keeping Generation X at bay. From what Emplate had seen, Richard's mind worked quickly. He hoped to find him before Richard could free everybody. He knew that he had to search for Richard and Yvette. That was the only way to regain control of that mutant. He was just about to do so when he heard a click. He didn't like the sound of that. He looked over each of the captured lot. He had turned his attention quickly when he heard Jubilee say, "I guess it's going to be a repeat of last time." He glanced at the chair Monet had been placed to see that his sister was free. He noticed that all of the students were wearing the collars still. Richard hadn't found that control. He must be trying to free Yvette. He would catch his sister, Richard and Yvette. The collar was the key.

He turned his attention to Jubilee and said, "Don't worry, Ms. Lee. I don't let the same thing happen twice." He turned to Vincente and said, "I think Ms. Lee is having trouble breathing. Help her out." Vincente nodded and turned into a purple mist. The mist entered Jubilee's mouth and she started to cough and gag. Emplate looked in the sky to see a form fall to the ground, not too far away from where

he was standing. He decided to head that way. If she was that close, it meant that she found Richard and Yvette.

Monet had realized that she could leave the chair when she heard the click. She flew off in search of Rich. It was obvious he was in control of himself, and he had the master control for the collars that transmitted all the pain to her. As long as she had the collar on, her brother could catch her at any time. She saw Penance and Rich down below. She started fly towards them when she couldn't breathe. Vincent must be choking someone. She fell to the ground with almost a heavy thud. She was a bit sore, but not as sore as the choking made her. She then heard Rich's voice call to her. "Monet, how did you get free." She saw him and Penance run over to her. He was carrying metal gloves, boots and a helmet. It must have been the restraint that Emplate had put on her.

"The chair I was in was deactivated. You must have deactivated it with the master control. We need to get this collar off me, and everyone else."

From what she saw in Rich's eyes, he was thinking. She then listened as he said, "I think I have a way we can make Emplate's ingenuity work against him. Monet can you figure out how to get the collar off you?" He handed her the control with the question.

She looked at it and realized how simple it was for her to do that. "Yes. But why just me?" The thought had confused her.

"Do it quickly. I believe that Emplate might be approaching soon." She did as he said and removed the collar around her neck. He then said to both of them, "Yvette, take the collar and hide in the bushes over there. When Emplate gets close, put the collar around his leg. Monet, your nightmare just may help us. I'm going to have to act it out for a moment until he gets close. Remember what you told me earlier." She then realized what he was going to do. He was going to use her immunity and Emplate's inability to sup on her against him.

"I get it. When he sees you supping on me and not in pain, he will approach for a ring side seat. Penance puts the collar around his leg, and when he gets close, his flaws will appear in you. You know, although, that you will be knocked out, or in a coma."

"I'm aware of that. When the collar kicks in, Emplate gets the same pain. You have the master control and Generation X will be able to fight him off, for if any of us gets hurt, he gets hurt." He turned to Penance and said, "Yvette, I will probably need medical attention once I'm free. I'll need you to rush me to medical center, so you will have to soften your body so you can carry me."

"I understand, Rich," Penance replied with concern in her voice. Monet could only feel that Penance was getting the hardest job of all. Trying to help a loved one, and not being able to do much.

"Monet, tell her what to do before she leaves to take me there. Then use the device to allow Jono and Synch to use their abilities." She nodded and heard Emplate coming towards them.

Rich heard the sound of Emplate approaching. He knew that they had one shot. He said, "Get ready." He watched as Penance hid and then grabbed Monet at the arms. He looked at her and said, "I hope you are a good actress, because I hate what I'm about to do, but it is the only way out."

He noticed as she braced herself and finally said, "I'm ready." He grabbed her by the arms and started to sup on her. It was disgusting, but it was the only way for escape. She then screamed, meaning that Emplate was approaching. "Stop, you're killing me."

He listened and heard the quiet click of the collar. Yvette had gotten it on Emplate. He then said, "The master has always wanted you dead. I shall now sup on you until you die." He hoped he was convincing.

He heard the voice of Emplate say, "Well, Richard, it appears that you have returned to my control, but I better make sure that you don't escape again. Besides, I want a good view of my sister's

death." He felt Emplate approach as Emplate personality returned to him. All of a sudden, a psionic explosion knocked Rich right off his feet. He was almost unconscious when he saw Emplate flying as well.

"I got you, Emplate. And now we are going to win." He said as he heard Emplate screaming in pain. He was blacking out when he heard Monet yell something to Yvette. In his lack of mind, he would have thought that an angel was carrying him to Heaven. Finally, he was unconscious.

Yvette let a smile cross her face as she saw Emplate go flying in pain. Rich's plan was working. She let her body relax as she ran over to Rich. Rich's eyes were closed and she felt better knowing that Emplate's influence was soon gone. She was about to pick him up when Monet called her.

"Penance, take Rich to the med unit and stabilize him. Just do this." Monet told her what to do and she understood. She was not going to lose Rich now. He meant too much to her to allow him to die. She picked Rich up and then ran off for the building where the Medical Center was. As she ran, she heard two explosions echo in the Biosphere. She had an idea of what was happening.

Yvette ran into the Med center and placed Rich on the one bed that she had been placed many times. When Emplate still had partial control of her, the battles usually put her in a coma. She always awoke here, on that bed. She set up everything as Monet said, remembering every detail. She then pulled a chair over and kept watch over the one person she truly loved. "I'm going to stay by your side, Rich, so Emplate doesn't get another chance to control you." She then waited for the fighting to stop.

Jonah had realized that something had changed. He seemed to be able to use his ability again. He then noticed that most of Emplate's Hellions were in pain as well. Emplate must have gotten injured in some way that was affecting his minions. He noticed that Monet had gotten free, and Rich seemed to break free of Emplate's grip, carrying Penance with him. He then noticed that Everett's aura was glowing. Monet and Rich must have schemed a way to get them all free. He decided to take charge of the situation. He glanced up at Everett and said, *"Are you getting in synch with my ability?"*

Everett spoke quietly as he responded. "Yeah. Do you think we can break all the bonds with the combined power?"

"Exactly what I was thinking. You first, then I will follow up with a second blast." He noticed Everett nodded and a psionic blast shook the area. He followed it up with one of his own. In a matter of seconds, everyone in Generation X was standing and Emplate's Hellions were on the ground. He noticed that Monet had flown in, and that all the collars were still on everyone, except for Monet. He looked at her and asked, *"What happened?"*

She looked back quickly and then said, "Rich developed a plan to stop Emplate. I'm leaving all the collars on right now because Emplate has the one I wore on."

Jonah would have smiled, if he still had a mouth. Rich had managed to break free of Emplate, and then use his ability against Emplate somehow. He didn't want to ask how, but now he was concerned. He noticed that Everett ran over to Jubilee, trying to comfort her. She was wounded from what had happened to her. He wanted to check on Paige, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. It was almost a second later that Emplate appeared out of the forest.

"I am not going to lose this time. Monet, I shall be sure that everyone suffers, and you will die first." He started to advance in the direction of Monet. Jonah needed to recharge his abilities, but decided to try and knock Emplate down. Emplate backhanded him, and just as Jonah fell, Emplate also fell. Jonah could tell that Emplate was stunned.

Sean soon spoke up. "Jonah, are you alright?" No sooner had the Irishman asked the question when Bulwark punched him in the stomach. Emplate had just gotten up when he collapsed to the ground, out of breath. Jonah wondered if Emplate had figured it out yet. Bulwark was about to hit Sean again when

a pyrotechnic attack knock the German twit off his feet. He saw Everett had gotten in sync with Jubilee's ability.

Some of Emplate's Hellions realized what had happened, as Jono noticed that they started to escape. Vincente flew off, and Murmur teleported away. D.O.A had run out of the Biosphere. Bulwark slowly got up and prepared to attack him. Jono was ready to release a psionic blast when Emplate finally spoke, "I guess I will have to retreat. Bulwark, leave." The German left the area and Emplate continued, "You have won again, because I made one mistake. I won't let it happen again." As Emplate spoke, he faded from sight.

Jono wondered if Emplate was planning something, "*Do you think he's gone?*"

Monet finally spoke up, "I don't think he will be returning. I think we should get Jubilee to the med unit." He had to agree. While Rich had been controlled by Emplate, he really injured her. He, Everett and Sean helped get her over to the med unit.

13 - Skitz

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Changes

Chapter 13 Skitz

Sean thought it was best to have some of the students search and find the kids, as well as double check for Emplate's Hellions, just in case. With Jono and Everett, who was worried to death, they took Jubilee to the medcenter. Monet came with them, mainly because she wanted to see that Penance did everything correctly. When they arrived at the med center, Sean was surprised, not to see Rich still looking a bit like Emplate, but to see Penance looking more like a woman than she ever had. Rich must have had a remarkable affect on her, to make her talk and to cause her to relax. He walked over to her, carefully, and said, "Is he alright?"

Penance turned to face them, her long red hair flowing in the movement, and said, "I think he's going to be alright. I want to stay here with him, if that's alright, sir." Sean saw the worry in her blue eyes, the worry for someone you love.

"I think that would be alright, but I think you might need to make some changes."

"I know. I was wondering if there might be a way to get these restraints off me."

"I'll have Monet and Emma help you with that, lass."

He noticed that Penance then turned her eyes to Jubilee. "Is sister Jubilee going to be Okay? I know that Rich didn't want to hurt her, but he..."

Everett spoke up. "I understand, Penance. I was in the same situation as Rich was. I think that Jubilee will understand that." Sean noticed Everett stopped when he noticed Rich's body started to convulse as if Rich was having a seizure.

Sean saw the problem immediately. "Monet, help me get that respirator off him. It's suffocating him." In his mind, Sean saw a vision of Blink. He remembered how she had sacrificed her life, and how he was too late to save her. He was not going to let that happen to him. Rich had risked his life to save all of them, and now Sean was not going to lose this student. Monet and he managed to get the respirator off Rich, and he listened for Rich's breath. He was relieved when he heard Rich breathing. "He's still with us." He heard Penance sigh in relief. Apparently, she was concerned about him.

Emma walked in with a gentleman. Sean wondered who this man was, until Emma said, "Sean, this is Richard's father. He has brought some of Richard's possessions. He was wondering where Rich was."

The man looked at Rich and asked, "What happened that my son is unconscious?"

"Well, Mr. Cale,..."

"Richard. My name is Richard Cale Sr."

"Rich never said he was Jr."

"My son is a little ashamed of some of the family. For most of his life, he had no regrets. Then his life came tumbling down when we had to tell him that my brother died. He started trying to live life according to every known belief and theory there was."

"I take it he developed a belief in luck as well."

"Yes, he believes that he always had good luck and bad luck. I think he believes that his worse

luck started by my brother. I never felt like telling Rich the truth about his uncle, so I told him that he committed suicide."

"Rich's uncle didn't die at his own hand. It must have been gruesome to tell him that."

"No, my brother joined an anti-mutant force. It was just the day after my son's abilities manifested. My son always saw my brother as a second father. I guess it was our way of protecting Rich from the truth. I hope Rich will be safe here. If his life has taken a turn for the better. I see no problem with him staying here."

Sean decided to tell Rich's father about everything. "I can say this, Mr. Cale, Rich has had a very interesting first 3 days here. Unfortunately, today we had a mutant named Emplate attack us. He tried to use your son's ability to turn your son into a creature like him. It was your son's quick thinking that saved us."

"My son's mind was always quick. I'm still not sure how he found out about this place. But if my wife heard that, she would worry to death, and my son would not want that."

"Well, your son has done a remarkable feat." He beckoned Penance to come over. "Penance, this is Rich's father."

Sean nodded and said, "Hello, sir."

Sean continued with his account of Rich's days here. "Rich was able to communicate with Penance. Due to that, he taught Penance to speak to us. Also, Penance and your son has fallen in love."

Rich's father looked at Penance and said, "I think my son will be fine here. I will need help getting everything in."

Sean turned to students in the room and said, "Help get Rich's stuff in. I don't think Rich will be in any shape to help with that. And Everett, we will take care of Jubilee." The kids left with Mr. Cale and Sean turned to Emma. "Emma, when Mr. Cale leaves, I want you and Monetto help Penance get those restraints off. I think she wants to look like a woman for when Rich awakes."

"I think I can help with that. I sure we can find some clothing to fit her." She turned to Penance as he placed Jubilee on the second table. As he set up the equipment to monitor and take care of her, Emma asked Penance, "Is there any color you would prefer?"

Penance smiled and said, "Rich said blue would look good on me, to match my eyes." Sean had to smile when he heard her say that. The two were in love and Penance appeared to be the best reason that Rich was staying. Monetto returned a short while later and she and Emma took Penance to take care of her.

Rich awoke in the med center. His mind was a mess. He remembered going unconscious. He guessed that everything worked out. He wondered if he was alone in the med unit. He moved to set up and found something right by his side. He looked to his right and found a stuffed bear. He was never fond of stuffed bears. "What the..?" he asked aloud.

A familiar voice answered his question. "I thought you might need it more than I did." Rich turned to his left and saw Jubilee sitting in the next bed.

He thought back to what Emplate had made him do. "Oh God, I'm sorry Jubilee. I didn't mean to hurt you." He started to cry over it.

"It's alright. I've had worse done to me. Sabertooth has almost killed me once. And I also don't blame you. Emplate was controlling you. You had no choice in what you did. Everett was in the same situation. I don't blame you. When Penny bought my bear, I told her to give it to you. I thought you might have needed it more than I did."

Rich calmed down as he heard Yvette's nickname. "Where is Yvette?" He started to panic, wondering if she was Okay.

"I think she said something about getting ready for when you awoke. I was partially with it when we saw her sitting by your side. You've had quite an effect on her. Also, I think she convinced your father that you were alright here."

Rich's eyes went wide. "I forgot my father was dropping off my stuff. He likes to know if my life has gotten better, since my uncle committed suicide. He and my mother are always afraid if I have made a mistake. I guess he heard that Yvette and I were in love."

Jubilee smiled and said, "I was half with it, but he seemed to agree that this was best for you. Sean told him how you were the only one able to talk to Penny. He did sound a little upset when he heard about Emplate."

Rich looked around and said, "And the building is in one piece. He's the one I got my temper from." Rich saw the look on Jubilee's face. She was shocked. He remembered telling her about his temper, and it was apparent that she didn't believe what he just said. "I take it my father was very calm."

He was startled by the fact Emma Frost answered him. "Your father was extremely calm. I think everyone will be glad to see that the two of you are feeling better. Penance has been waiting for you to wake up since the attack yesterday."

He had been out for a day. The psionic blast must have taken a toll on him. "Is Yvette here?"

"I thought you might ask that. She is waiting to come in. I send her in and go get the others." Emma Frost went to leave the room.

Rich had to say this before he forgot to say it. "Emma, thank you for the help when I needed it."

Emma turned, smiled and said, "I only wish that you had control before attacking Jubilee."

"The feeling is mutual, Emma. I regretted being forced to watch as Emplate made me hurt her." Emma left the med unit, and just a moment later, Yvette walked in. He smiled when he saw how she looked. She was wearing a blue dress that accented her beauty. Her red hair was combed back, over her shoulders. "You look lovely, Yvette."

She rushed over and hugged him. "I'm glad to see you feeling better." He had a brief headache when she did so. Since she was more relaxed now, her approach didn't cause an attack. "I'm so happy that you are staying here."

He had to agree with her. They both knew how each felt. "I'm glad that I am staying, too. Yvette, I hope nothing ever separates us." He went to give her a kiss, and then saw Jubilee watching. He looked at Jubilee and said, "This is a private moment here." Jubilee easily got the picture and turned away from them. He then went to kiss Yvette.

As the two were kissing, Rich heard Sean say, "Well, I see you two are happy to see each other." Rich and Yvette were startled by his voice and stopped kissing.

"I guess that sort of thing happens when people care about each other. I apologize for not informing you about my father bringing my stuff up."

"It's alright, lad. Don't worry yourself about that. Everyone right now would like to know what your codename will be."

Rich had to think about that for a moment. "Is there a mutant named Mimic?"

"Yes, lad. He is not someone you want to meet."

Rich thought some more on the name and finally said, "Skitz. I'll make that my nickname."

Paige said, "Is that short for Schizophrenia?" She knew what he was saying, and Rich nodded.

Angelosaid, "That's multiple personalities, isn't it."

Before Rich could answer, Monet said, "No, Schizophrenia is something completely different." Rich smiled as Monet noticed the misconception associated with Schizophrenia.

"Rich, Monet, and it fits me due to the fact that it doesn't describe my ability in the least." Yvette had started to giggle, as well as Jubilee. Soon, the laughter was going over everybody.

Sean finally settled everyone and said, "Since we got that settled, Rich, I think you can spend the

rest of the day resting. Tomorrow, you begin classes here."

"Okay, teach." Everyone left and Rich called to Monet. "Monet, can I ask you to check on something for me." As Monet walked over, he returned to Yvette and said, "I need to talk to Monet about something, about Emplate." Yvette nodded and left. Jubilee had left with others, as she appeared to not be held back by anything.

"Something bothering you, Rich."

"Monet, when I had your brother's abilities, there was, as best as I can describe, the remnants of a victim in his mind. They helped me at that critical moment I broke free. They told me to tell their family there was still hope. His name was Marius. Did you know someone by that name, a possible friend of your brothers."

Monet sat down in shock. "Rich, Marius is my brother's first name. There must still be a part of him fighting for control. We might be able to save my brother from being Emplate forever."

Rich looked at her and said, "I see. Well, now you have the message. Monet, I won't tell anyone about his name, if that's what you wish." Rich watched as he nodded slowly and left the med unit. Rich was still exhausted and fell asleep until nightfall. He left the med lab and headed towards his room. He figured that he would see Yvette in classes tomorrow. His life had taken a turn for the best since he came to the school. As he walked to the guy's dorm, he saw the bearded man who told him to come here.

The man looked at him and smiled a bit. Rich heard the man speak in his mind before, but now the man was silent. Rich asked the man, "Did you want me to come here, to help Yvette?"

The man uttered a word vocally. Rich finally understood what the man had done. The man had said, "Contact." Rich had made the first contact with Yvette that got a vocal response. He was sent here, by this man, to help them communicate with Yvette. From these events, life was getting more interesting, and would continue to do so.