

Cale Storyline 04 Stranger And Stranger

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Sequel to Relatively Dangerous. Emplate makes another attempt on Generation X, striking at the hometown of one of the student. Now the only question is, Will his trap succeed?

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1 - Decisions

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Stranger And Stranger

Decisions

Godiva walked to the door of her museum when the bell rang. She was not expecting anyone to enter yet, since the opening date was not for a month yet. When she opened the door, a large crate was there with an envelope on it. She grabbed the envelope and read its contents.

"Dear Miss Cale, I heard about your museum for the unusual and found something that might be of interest. This is a statue of a demon known as the Emplate. The creature fed off the living, making more like it. I figured it would be a great addition to your museum. Your contributor, -E" Godiva was excited at the prospect of this. Something to add to her gallery of demons and evils. She decided it was time to carry the crate over to the gallery. One thing she always prided herself on was her mutant ability. Her ability allowed her to use her hair as a weapon, to let it grow as short, or long, as needed. It was an extra limb, and with the strength to support a building. Her hair grabbed the crate and she carried it through the museum to the Gallery of Demons.

She placed the crate down and opened it up. She looked at the thing. It appeared that the demon had an elephant's nose, and mouths on its hands. "What a hideous creature. No wonder it's a demon. Looks like something Giger would have dreamed up. When the museum opens, I'll have to show this to Rich." She checked her watch and noticed that it was near lunch time. She decided to get the statue out of the crate after she got her lunch in. She and Kyuukai were having lunch together today.

Cartier St. Croix had to admit that Miss Cale had a unique idea for a museum, and her intentions were good. Ever since Onslaught, this town, the sole safe haven for mutants, was losing financially. Godiva Cale said that she was going to donate half the money the museum made to the town's defense fund. He was just heading to one of the exhibits, the one on Extraterrestrial Life, when Godiva ran up to him and said, "Mr. St. Croix, I would like to show you the recent addition I just received."

"I guess there is no harm in seeing it." He had to admit that his curiosity was peaked when he first found out about this museum. He had found out about it on the Internet, and decided to contribute to the building. He followed Godiva through the exhibits until they reached the Gallery of Demons. This was one of her favorite exhibits, due to the statues.

She opened the doors and said, "Are you sure you haven't seen it, because the crate has been removed." He noticed that she ran down the hall and stopped at a statue. When he finally saw what the statue was, his blood ran cold. It wasn't a statue, but all too real. She looked at him and said, "What do you think?"

He turned to her. He knew what this was. He said, "Godiva, I want you to make a call to Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. They have to get down here, and quickly."

She looked at him, puzzlingly, and said, "Why? And you know if they do come, I need to send pendants for their security in the area." He remembered that it had taken some time to receive his pendant. The town protected its people with the pendants. They allowed all mutants, and pro-mutant activists to have protection by the law. He hoped that it would not take too long, because he knew what

was wrong.

He looked at her and said, "Just call and tell them that I told you to call. Tell them there is a family problem down here. They will understand, and mention my name." She nodded and ran off, probably to a secret passage that led to her office. Cartier St. Croix looked at the statue and said, "Son, if you kill any mutant here, I will make sure that you can't feed off another mutant ever again." He turned and left the room. He could swear that he could hear Marius laughing at him.

Sean Cassidy was in his office at Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. He had asked Rich to help him with finding information of anything similar to Monet. "I hope you know what you are looking for?"

Richard Cale, the oldest student, when it came to age, was always willing to help. "No problem, Sean. It is rare, although, that I am in a neutral state like this."

Sean let a small laugh out and said, "Lad, you and Yvette have been inseparable. Rich, I was also wondering, do you have any other things you should tell us about your family. I mean, it has been a week since Aura attacked."

Rich replied, "I am on no ill terms with any of my cousins. There is only one other mutant cousin that I have and that is..." The ringing on Sean's vid phone cut the sentence short.

Sean walked over to his vid phone, and hit the receive button. On the screen appeared a brunette, about eighteen years of age. The girl said, "Excuse me, is this the Xavier School?" There was a look of concern in her eyes, but it had the look of confusion with it.

"Aye, this is the Xavier School. I'm Sean Cassidy, headmaster of the school."

"My name is Godiva Cale, and I was told to contact you."

Sean was about to say something, when he noticed Rich waving his arms. Sean realized that Godiva had no knowledge that Rich was at the school. He then said, "What do you need?"

"Mr. Cassidy, a recent arrival at my museum has caused one of my benefactors to urge me to call you. His name is Cartier St. Croix."

Sean realized that that must be where Monet's father had disappeared to, but why the call. Sean decided to ask why Godiva Cale was calling the school. "Miss Cale, why call for us?"

"Mr. St. Croix said it was a family problem."

Sean had an idea what was going on. "We'll be there immediately."

"I'm afraid that is not possible. Easton has some laws about mutants. To ensure the safety of mutants, all mutants, and pro-mutant supporters have to wear a pendant. Easton is the only mutant safe haven in the world, and we hate anyone who is anti-mutant. How many pendants will you need?"

Sean thought it out in his head, one for him and Emma. One for each student. He looked at Rich, and Rich shook his head. Of course Rich wouldn't need a pendant, he was a citizen of Easton. He then said, "Fourteen, but you might want to rush them here. We will get there as soon as we can."

"Thank you, sir. I shall send them out immediately." The line was disconnected, and Sean was looking at Rich.

Rich watched as the call ended. What has Godiva gotten herself into, but she didn't know about Emplate. His line of thought was cut short when Sean said, "Is Godiva a relation, or am I dreaming?"

Rich looked at Sean and said, "Godiva is my cousin. She is also Bastion's biological daughter, which means that Daria's past is hush hush."

"But lad, how could she afford a museum?"

Rich knew he had to explain that much. "The Cale family is a very well off family. When our grandfather passed away, each child and grandchild got a share of the inheritance. At the time, there

were only four benefactors, my father, myself, Godiva, and her brother. This was all after Bastion faked his death, so he cheated himself out of a nice amount of money. Godiva said she was going to build a museum of stuffs she loved in life."

"But what about her, in general. Is she a mutant?"

"Godiva is a mutant. Her ability is to manipulate her hair like Angel manipulates his skin. Since we are relatives, she cannot use her hair on me. I once put my hand near her hair, and it just formed a pocket around it. I could not touch her hair."

Sean then asked the question that Rich didn't want to hear. "Do you think that Emplate is at her museum?"

Rich knew the answer to that. "If Emplate is there, which I believe he is, he is trying to capture me, and where I go, he knows that Yvette will follow." Rich knew that the way he said it, it sounded like a death sentence.

Sean walked over to him, stopping just outside the radius that was the limits of Rich's powers. "What do you think will happen if we don't go?"

Rich looked at Sean and said, "We should talk with Emma. This is something we need to talk about with her." Rich then went out the door and headed to her office, with Sean following him.

Emma Frost had been in a mad search for a while. She was trying to locate Cartier St. Croix. She called his Algerian residence, but they said he wasn't there. She tried all her connections and still couldn't locate him. She called Monet in, in the hopes that Monet could enlighten her on the location of her father. She looked at her secretive student and said, "Now, Monet, could you give me any idea on the location of your father?"

Monet looked at her and said, "I don't know how to answer that, Ms. Frost. The truth is that when my father finds out about a project for a good cause, he tends to donate and help in person. I guess you want to ask him about the deal with 'us'." Monet was always a smart girl, but then, she had the minds of two girls.

"Monet, it was almost a week since we have found out about you and Claudia. You hid the fact that you and Emplate were related. I want to know if there are any more surprises that your family has?"

Emma knew Monet was about to continue when Sean and Rich entered the room. Rich walked over to the corner, but the way he carried himself suggested that something had happened in the family. She asked "Rich, what is wrong? Is something wrong in the family?"

Instead of Rich answering, Sean answered by saying, "We just got a call from Godiva Cale."

"Is that Rich's mother?"

Rich spoke up for the first time since he entered the room. "Godiva is my cousin. This appears to be a big family problem."

Emma was surprised by this, "Rich, did your parents tell her to call?"

The answer surprised her, as well as Monet. "No. Besides, the family problem isn't a Cale problem, it's a St. Croix problem."

Monet realized what Rich was talking about. Ever since Rich joined the school, and started to date Yvette, her brother has made it part of his mission to get Yvette back, and in the process, capture Rich. Her mind was thinking quick and she said, "He must be using this to lure you into a trap, Rich."

Rich glanced at her and said "I know. Emplate is trying to drag me off campus, away from the school grounds."

"Then, we should get to the museum right away."

She was surprised by what Rich said next. "Unfortunately, we can't go down to the museum until the pendants arrive." Why would Rich put his cousin at an unnecessary risk?

"Rich, we could save her life before Emplate can try anything."

Rich shook his head and said, "No, you don't understand the situation. If we left now, only I would be able to enter the town." He pulled out a pendant that she had never seen before. He then said, "You see this pendant. It is a pendant that every one in Easton wears. It is the symbol of the town, interlaced with the symbol of mutants. These pendants are worn to safeguard the good mutants of the town, as well as the people who support mutants. People who want to move there go through a screening process, to insure mutant safety. Tourists have to sign an agreement if they stay for longer than a day. That town is proud to be pro mutant, mainly because of its four founding families have mutants in them. Any one of them can obtain pendants for guests at any time. I, as well as Godiva, am part of those families. I don't have the sway, and I don't want my family to know about Emplate, so we have to wait."

Monet was totally appalled by the way he was thinking. He was willing to let his cousin become a meal for Emplate. She looked at him and said, "You can't be serious about that. He'll kill her, and you know that."

"Listen 'girls'," he shouted, and she shut up. "I don't care what you think we should do, but remember this, if your brother is after me, he knows that killing Godiva is one way to insure him his death." Rich walked out of the room, but he said, "I don't know how much he is willing to do, but he has a smorgishboard in Easton. I hope that she sends those pendants immediately."

As Rich left the room, Sean walked over to her and said, "If ye ask me lass, he treated ye a bit harshly." She knew what he was referring to, the girls comment.

"It's alright. I just hope that those pendants arrive soon." Deep in thought, she knew that Rich must have a reason for his choice. She knew he must be right about Emplate, but how could her brother survive so long without supping.

2 - Godiva's Museum

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Stranger and Stranger
Godiva's Museum

Yvette looked out the window of the plane. She marveled at the sight of flying above the world. The last time she was on a plane was when they went to Ireland, but this time was different. This time, she had Rich to keep her company. The two had sat together when they got on the plane. She knew that they were heading for Rich's hometown, but she was still unclear why. All she knew was that Rich had mentioned his cousin Godiva, and a possible threat of Emplate. This frightened her a bit, but she wasn't too scared. Rich had been staying close to her since they left the school. She looked at him, took his hand, and said, "Will we meet your family?"

Rich turned and looked her in her eyes. "Just Godiva. If Emplate is there, I don't want everyone finding out about him."

"You're concerned about your cousin. Were you that close?" She noticed the worry in his tone. She recognized the tone of concern, as that of a sibling.

Rich looked into her eyes and said, "Godiva was like a sibling to me. She was the one who fueled my interest in the paranormal, science fiction, and some of the artwork."

Yvette then saw something in his eyes she was well acquainted with. She decided to mentally ask this, for it was probably best. {Rich, what are you afraid of?}

He let a sad look cross his face. {Love, I'm afraid that Emplate is not alone in this. I'm afraid that he has Elane with him.}

She started to get scared. More than a week ago, she and Rich were almost captured by Aura. They thought that Emplate had been using her to capture them. If she was still around, they were in worse trouble than ever. {Rich, do you think that he has enthralled her?}

He tensed up when he said his next words. {I'm more scared than with the evil in her, that they fell in love.} She tensed up with that. Yvette thought of how nasty Emplate was before, but with Aura and Emplate together, were their days free numbered?

She hugged Rich and said, {Please, don't ever let me be captured by them.}

He returned the hug and said, {You promise the same.} They sat there, in the plane, scared that their days were numbered. Yvette looked over to her friends and realized how they must have appeared. It was known that they were in love, but sometimes it surprised everyone when they were like this.

Jubilee looked away from her friends for a moment. She had glanced over in Penny's direction, wondering if she was scared about Emplate. The fact that Penny had tensed up was not surprising, although she was less afraid of Emplate lately. She then noticed that both Rich and Penny were hugging, and tense. Rich was the major factor in her recovering from Emplate's control over her. Rich was also Penny's boyfriend, and it was obvious that Rich enjoyed her company. This time, however, Jubilee worried about her adopted sister, and for Rich. It was obvious that if Emplate was in Rich's hometown, and where his cousin resided, Emplate was planning to capture both Rich and Penny. Rich had shown

no fearin going, but now both he and Penny were scared. Jubilee turned back to her friends and said, "I think something has the happy couple spooked."

Everett, her boyfriend as of recently, glanced at them and said, "What do you think has scared them? The fact that Emplate is down there." She had to admit that had her abit spooked, but Everett had more to worry about. He had been like Emplate for a time.

Angelo then said, "You don't think that part of it might be related to Aura?" Jubilee thought in horror at that. Could that have been how Emplate found out about Rich's cousin Godiva.

Jubilee turned to the group and said, "If that is the case, do you think that they are afraid that their freedom is limited? I mean, if I knew that Sabertooth and Emplate teamed up, well.."

"I doubt that is the case," Monet interrupted. Jubilee was trying to cope with the fact Monet was not a sixteen years old girl, but two eight year olds. The girl, or girls, still had a lot to learn. "My brother never was the forgiving type."

It was then that Jono decided to speak. *"Maybe, but what if heread the information. He does have that knowledge on sight. Maybe he found out about Godiva from that."* Jono always had a troubled outlook on life, but this didn't have that tone to it.

Paige then said, "Jono's right. If you think about it, Emplate might have even found out about Godiva from Rich himself." Paige had gotten back together with Jono after Aura attacked. She was injured, but all of the injuries had healed.

Jubilee then said, "I don't know. Rich and Penny are scared of something. Besides, that is not the only problem." They all looked at her in puzzlement. She then continued, "If you all remember, Bastion was Rich's uncle, and apparently Godiva's father."

Jubilee noticed that Monet understood quicker than anyone else, for she was the one who said, "What do we say about Daria?" They all glanced over to the new student. Daria, who had only been at the school a week, had learned to use her abilities to create an appearance of hair. Jubilee had to wonder at how they were going to explain how Daria joined the school.

Mondo looked at Daria and wondered what was bothering her. Ever since Rich said that they were heading for his hometown, Daria had a look of worry on her face. He walked over to her and said, "What is wrong?" He always worried when someone was worried.

Daria looked at him in surprise. She then said, "I was just wondering about how Godiva will handle the deal with me. I mean, I am under the care of Rich, thanks to Bastion. Bastion was her father, and I don't think she will like that. Also, I'm part Sentinel. I might get a cold reception."

Mondo put an arm around her and said, "Don't worry. The world has a way of having things work out. Besides, you are not a machine once you have a heart."

Daria looked at him and smiled. "I guess your right about that, but that doesn't solve the problem of what to tell Godiva? Rich told me that he thought Bastion committed suicide, but he was shook up when he discovered the truth. How would Godiva react?"

Mondo thought about it and said, "I don't know. She might be happy to have a little sister. I also wonder if that was why Bastion took care of you. He had a daughter, and he might have thought of you as his daughter."

Mondo noticed that Daria then looked at him puzzlingly. "Mondo, can you read minds?"

"Not that I'm aware of, why?"

"Because, I was wondering if I should think of her as a sister of sorts." It was obvious that Daria was worried about this.

He decided to comfort her worries. "I think Rich knows what to do."

Sean looked out into the cabin of the plane. He noticed how Daria was worried about

something, possibly the fact that she was meeting Bastion's daughter. He saw how the little ones hadn't a care in the world. He notice the others talking, but his main concern was Yvette and Rich. He couldn't help but worry that he was delivering them into Emplate's clutches. He could tell they were scared. He was almost surprised when Emma walked up behind him and said, "Worried about Rich and Yvette?"

He didn't look back, but he said, "Were ye reading my mind?" He sometimes wondered if she still did use her mind reading abilities.

Emma put a hand on his shoulder and said, "No, because I'm worried about them, too. I can't help but think about that nightmare Yvette had. I hate to think that I would hand them over to Emplate, and here we are, possibly handing them to Emplate."

Sean didn't want to think of that. "Ye have a way of looking at the negative, don't ye? We are heading to Easton to save Rich's cousin from Emplate. We won't let them get injured or threatened at all."

"Then why are they so tense, Sean?" Sean knew that the two were scared of something, and since the past attack, he wondered if it had anything to do with Aura.

"Emma, do ye think that they are afraid that Aura might be around?" He had to admit that knowing that Rich's evil cousin was willing to kill him was unnerving. He thought of the times that Juggernaut had attack the X-Men. He wondered if Aura was that bad.

Emma looked at him and said, "If Aura is still around, the two of them are in worse trouble than we thought."

"Emma, I'm not going to let anything happen to either of them." He knew he was in charge of all the children's safety, some of which already had legal guardians, or of age.

"Rich is old enough to take care of himself, Sean."

"But Yvette isn't. I missed out on raising me daughter, and I got a second chance in Yvette. I think that when we get back to the school, I'm going to adopt the lass."

"Sean, I hope you get the chance." Emma then went to the cockpit. Deep inside, Sean hoped he would have the chance as well.

It had been shortly before the plane had landed that Rich had over come his fear. He looked at Yvette and then they headed for the terminal. They all wore the pendants. Rich never thought he would need to show the pendant after he joined the school. It was harder for him to walk around the area, because many people knew that he was part of one of the founding families of Easton. They left the airport and went to the car rental. Rich walked up to the person behind the counter and said, "I would like to rent a van." In his mind, he was hoping the person wouldn't recognize him.

The person smiled and said, "Anything, Mr. Cale. It is nice to see you back in the area." His family was one of the most famous in Easton. The people would know him. "Are you here to see the museum Lady Godiva's building?"

Rich rolled his eyes. He couldn't believe that she had done that. He nodded and said, "Yes, and please refrain from informing anyone of my visit here. It was unexpected."

The person looked at him, puzzled, and said, "I think I understand, but don't you want your parents, or Lady Godiva informed?"

"No. Now, could I have the keys to the van?" The person nodded and gave him the keys. They all left the place and went to the van. Rich checked it over and saw it had enough room for everyone. He unlocked all the doors, and then tossed the keys to Sean. "You better drive. I could never handle a van."

Sean looked at him and said, "She is known as Lady Godiva. The lass didn't do anything like the real Lady Godiva, did she?"

Rich noticed that Angelo stopped in his tracks when Sean said that. Rich sighed and said, "No." Angelo looked a bit disappointed at that, but Rich saw Angelo get re-interested at the next statement. "I called Godiva that when I caught her skinny-dipping."

Paige, who was getting in the van, was almost shocked at that and said, "I bet she was shocked at that."

"It was a shocker to both of us. I reacted by cracking a joke, to let her know that I saw her. She would have totally been shocked if it was someone else entirely."

Angelo let a smile cross his face and said, "I bet it was an interesting sight."

Rich just looked at Angelo and said, "If it were you, she might have something to worry about."

Angelo got a bit cocky and said, "I bet she might be interested in me."

Rich looked at Angelo and said, "I'll take that bet. If you fail, you stop smoking for a week."

Angelo grinned and said, "And if I succeed, I get a look at some of those videos in your collection." Rich shook Angelo's hand. Rich couldn't help but think of the easy bet he had just won.

Sean looked at them and said, "Alright you two, get in the van." Rich climbed into the van and noticed that Yvette had saved him a seat. He quickly scurried over to the seat and sat down next to the light of his life. He then opened a suitcase that he had with him.

Monet noticed that when the van was moving, Rich had opened a suitcase. In it was a black coat and hat. She watched as Rich started to put the hat and coat on. She wondered why Rich was doing this. Was this to hide from Emplate? She turned to Rich and said, "Why are you putting those on?"

Rich turned to face her as he was putting clip on sunglasses on his glasses. "I want to surprise Godiva. First of all, she doesn't know I go to the school. Second, she will know something is up when she sees fifteen people. Last, her attention will be drawn to something that would be in her range of interest, like a MIB."

Monet was a bit puzzled by this. She had never heard that term before, and she wanted to know what it meant. "What is an MIB?"

Rich sighed and said, "MIB stands for 'Men In Black'. Since the 1950's, anytime a UFO, or something strange happened, they would appear. Sometimes alone, sometimes in groups, but they would tell you what you saw. If you had evidence, they would confiscate it and you would never know. Godiva claims that she once encountered one long ago."

"I see." Monet thought that her family, as dysfunctional as it was, was not as strange as Rich's family.

"Well, we are approaching Easton. Rich, which exit do you suggest?" Sean said, as Rich placed the hat on his head. Monet had seen signs advertising the arrival of the museum, saying that it was in the center circle of Easton.

Rich said, "There is an exit for Downtown Easton, just past Cemetery Curve. Just take it slow around the curve. It didn't just get that for the fact that it is near a cemetery." Monet had to wonder about the town more and more. As they started to enter the city limits of the town, Monet saw a sign for another museum. This one really caught the heart of who she was, an eight-year-old girl.

She grabbed at Rich's coat and said, "Rich, I was just wondering about..." She didn't have to finish her sentence. Rich looked out the window and let out a laugh.

Rich then said, "Alright, before we leave Easton, maybe we might be able to check out the Crayola Factory."

Emma, who turned to face Rich, said, "Why would a big name like Crayola open a museum like that here?"

Rich laughed again and said, "Because, Binney and Smith, creator of Crayola, is based in Easton. Crayola is the one thing Easton has going in its favor to draw in tourist trade." Rich stopped

speaking as Sean pulled off into Easton. It didn't take long until they stopped in the Center Circle. They all got out of the van and walked over to the museum. Rich and Yvette stayed together. Rich didn't want to leave himself open for Emplate to force his ability on him, at least that's what she thought. Monet walked over to the group and Sean rang the doorbell.

In a matter of moments, the door opened and a brunette girl, about eighteen was standing there. She had a figure that would have made her a model. She then said, "I take it that you are all from the school." She looked over everyone and then had a puzzled look on her face. She noticed that there was an odd man out. Her attention immediately focused on Rich. She was going to get a surprise.

Godiva looked over the students and made the count a second time. There were fifteen people here, but she only sent fourteen pendants. She looked at the one person who drew her attention, a man in black. She walked over to the person and said, "I figure that you must be the odd man out, sir. Who are you?" She grabbed the hat and pulled it off. The person's head was down, so she couldn't see the face.

"Take a wild guess," said a familiar voice to her. The head lifted up and she was looking eye to eye of her cousin, Rich. He just smiled and said "Surprise."

She gave her cousin a big hug and said, "Did they get you from college to guide them around?" She looked at her older cousin and said, "I mean, a mutant like you would be perfect to call in to show them here."

Rich surprised her when he said, "Godiva, my cousin, I would like to introduce you to my classmates at Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters."

"When did you join the school? I mean, you never spoke of it before."

"After the whole deal with Onslaught, I thought it would be best to join the school. After what I have seen over the past months, I'm glad I did. Now, would you like me to introduce my school mates." She had been looking over some of them, and had to admit, if she didn't have Kyuukai, she would be after some of them.

"Alright, I want to know who everyone is?" Although she already had seen Sean Cassidy. "But first, let's all get inside." Rich nodded and she led everyone in.

When they all got in, Rich started out with Sean in the introductions. "This is Sean Cassidy, head of the school, and leader of Generation X. He is master of the sonic scream."

She remembered hearing his voice and said, "Let me guess, Codename Banshee." He nodded and she then said, "I remembered that you were Irish." She then looked at the woman next to him. Mid twenties, looked like she could have any guy at her side, especially with her outfit.

Rich then said, "This is Emma Frost, owner of the school grounds, and is a telepath."

Godiva looked at the woman and said, "Let me guess, she has an account at Fredrick's Of Hollywood."

The woman looked at her, obviously upset, and said, "Be careful child, I don't take insults kindly." This woman didn't scare her. But she decided to turn her attention to the first couple there. The boy appeared to have half his face covered, and the girl was about seven years behind him in age.

Rich walked over to them and said, "This happy couple is Paige Guthrie, or Husk, and Jonathan Evan Starsmore, a.k.a. Chamber." Each nodded and then Rich said, "Paige has the ability to rip off her skin, revealing a new form underneath, and Jono has a Bio-psionic blast that keeps him alive. The blast that formed that chamber took out half his face."

"Ouch. Well, I hope you are alright with it." When he nodded, she could tell that he was still upset about it. She then turned to the next couple. The boy looked like he was laid back in life, but the girl looked worried. She was worried about something. Her hair had a metallic color to it.

Godiva watched as Rich walked over to them and said, "This is Mondo and Daria. Mondo is

what is described as an omnimorph, and Daria can morph herself into anything, even to split apart into a swarm of bugs. Due to recent circumstances, she is Sean's adopted daughter." Rich wasn't facing her, but was facing Sean when he nodded.

Sean then said, "That is correct. Recent circumstances led me to adopt Daria. The lass had lost her family when Sentinels attacked her town."

"Well, that won't happen here. Easton has a defense system that takes out any sentinel in a 50 mile radius." She turned to the next couple. It was an African-American boy, and an Asian-American girl. They looked like they made a cute couple. She looked at them and said, "And who are these two?"

This time, the Asian spoke to reply. "My name is Jubilation Lee, Jubilee to my friends, and this is my boyfriend, Everett Thomas." The girl was certainly proud of the fact that she had a boyfriend.

Rich then said, "Jubilee generates fireworks, while Everett has an aura that can mimic mutant abilities, so they call him Synch."

"Does that work on your ability?" He nodded and she turned her attention to the next people in line. They were three little boys. One was green, one was pink, and the last looked like a normal boy. She could swear that the green and pink ones looked like something from her one exhibit, but the third looked familiar for a reason.

Rich then said, "The green one is Leech, and his name explains his ability. The pink one is Artie. He can't speak, but he can project images. The other is Franklin Richards." That's why he looked familiar. "He can alter reality."

"That explains why he looked familiar to me. I followed all of the happenings of the Fantastic Four, up to the Onslaught incident. I hope you have gotten over that." He nodded and then she faced the next person in the line-up. She automatically knew who she was. "You must be Monet, Cartier's daughter. He mentioned that you were at the school."

Monet nodded and said, "Yes. I was a little bit surprised that my father was here." Godiva looked at Monet and guessed that she was about sixteen. Rich must be in love with her. He also was concerned about age difference, and she was the oldest of all of the girls.

Godiva turned to face the last two in the group. The girl was a redhead, while the guy had a grayish color. Rich then said, "Last but not least, I would like to introduce you to Yvette, and Angelo. Yvette has the ability to tense her skin to a diamond sharpness, while Angelo has the ability to extend his skin."

"Well, I have met all of you, so allow me to tell you of my museum. This museum is a tribute to all things that are unusual in the world. I have a display for Extraterrestrials, Lost Civilizations, Ghosts, and Monsters. I even have an exhibit on things that do exist. For easy access, all rooms are attached by secret passages. The passages also lead to the rooms where you will be staying." She had watched as Rich had moved back over to where Yvette, Monet, and Angelo were standing.

Afterwards, she noticed Angelo looking at her. He then approached her and said, "Ms. Cale, I would have to say that you are a lovely sight." He was hitting on her. She then noticed Rich was trying to stifle a laugh. He had set the guy up. Nobody had known about that one little fact about her. She was going to show them the truth, freak out some people as well. She remembered an agreement she and Rich made long ago, so she decided to approach Yvette at the right time.

Emma watched as Angelo tried hitting on Godiva, and she noticed that Rich was getting a laugh out of it. She heard the bet those two had made, and now Rich was trying to keep himself from laughing. She then heard Godiva say to Angelo, "I'm sorry, but you're not my type."

Angelo, looking a bit embarrassed, said, "Then, what exactly is your type, Godiva?"

"Well," Godiva said, and she started to walk over in Rich and Yvette's general direction. Emma started to wonder if Godiva's ideal man was someone like Rich. It could be that, for she doubted that

Godiva was focusing on Yvette. As Godiva got closer, Rich walked right in front of her. Why would Rich do that?

Rich looked at her and said, "Remember our agreement?"

Godiva, looking puzzled, said, "I remembered. That is why I was walking over here."

"You are jumping to the wrong conclusion. I have a girlfriend, and guess who it is?" Emma watched as Rich tensed his skin. She then saw the shock on Godiva's face. This must have been a surprise to Godiva.

Godiva looked at him and said, "You and Yvette?" He nodded and untensed his skin. But what did Rich mean about their agreement.

Rich then said, "Besides, I haven't told them about that one little item about you." Emma had a feeling some sort of surprise was coming.

She turned to Rich and said, "Rich, I hope you know that I don't like surprises."

All Rich did was laugh, but it was Godiva who spoke up. "Maybe I should explain about the agreement. A couple of years ago, Rich was seeing a girl and I scared her off."

Emma looked at Godiva and said, "How did you do that?" Emma was starting to wonder if she knew what Godiva was going to say.

Godiva finished her statement. "I was hitting on her. You see, I'm gay." Almost everyone was shocked. Emma noticed that Angelo had let his jaw drop, literally. Rich had conned the con-man. Yvette was a bit in shock, and the kids were obviously bewildered.

Emma then realized what she was wearing. She then said to Godiva, "Miss Cale, I want you to realize that I am not of that walk in life." She thought that Godiva was sizing her up earlier.

Godiva looked at her and said, "Don't worry, Miss Frost, I prefer redheads. Besides, I prefer an all natural woman." The girl just made a mistake.

Emma looked at Godiva and said, "You have made a big mistake. Do not insult me, for I am a person who you shouldn't cross." She let a psi-bolt loose and hit Godiva. She then expected Sean to say something, but she then realized that she had to worry about Rich.

She was amazed at the speed that Rich knocked her down and had her pinned to the ground. She tried to stop him mentally, but remembered that Rich had Yvette's abilities, and their psionics were in Yvette's native language. Rich held her arms above her head, and with claw poised over her chest, he said, "Do that again, and we shall see how right she is?" Emma had forgotten that Rich was highly protective of his cousin. His biggest concern was to save her from Emplate, and now Emma had just put herself into a very dangerous situation.

Godiva ran over to Rich and grabbed his clawed hand, and did not get cut. She looked at him and said, "Rich, I'm alright. I deserved it. Just calm down. That Cale temper of ours can be a curse." Emma was still surprised that Godiva was not injured by the claw and then remembered one thing. It may have been Yvette's ability Rich had, but it was Rich's ability that he had been using, and Godiva was immune to it.

Emma got up and said, "I'm sorry about lashing out at you, and thank you for stopping Rich." She was amazed that Yvette didn't stop him. She turned quickly to Yvette and said, "Why didn't you stop him?"

Yvette just looked at her and said, "He said that he was just going to scare you. You know that he doesn't want to injure anyone since Black Tom attacked." Emma then thought about hitting herself for not remembering.

Godiva had a puzzled look on her face and asked, "Who is Black Tom?" Emma just looked at Rich and saw his face. She saw all the despair that hit him after that incident. Godiva didn't need to know what happened with Bastion.

It was Sean that said, "Black Tom was my evil cousin, until Rich killed him. It was in a fit of

anger when Black Tom attacked Yvette." Emma then wondered if Godiva had that same anger.

Godiva looked a bit disgusted when she heard that, but then Emma saw a smile cross her face. Godiva then said, "I think I should show you why I asked for you to come here, and my significant other, Kyuukai Hisui, has arrived to show the way." They all turned, and Emma saw a petite figure with red hair standing at the door. The woman was Asian-American. Godiva then said, "Kyuukai is also a mutant."

Emma wondered what this girl's ability was, but then she was distracted by something. She noticed that Paige had started to act rather passionately towards Jono. It appeared to be more than the usual that she had seen. Paige was whispering in Jono's ear and Jono appeared shocked. "Love, we can't do anything like that here."

Paige had a look in her eyes as if she didn't care. Paige then said, "Ah don't care." Something was going on, and this Kyuukai was the center of it. She then noticed that Rich was glaring at Godiva.

All of a sudden, a whip of brown hair lashed out and hit Kyuukai. She yelled and Godiva said, "Do you mind? We're supposed to be going together. Now apologize." This was going to be an odd visit.

Kyuukai had looked over the crowd when she entered the room. When she saw Godiva's cousin, she knew that it was going to be a strange visit. She had seen the young blond and started wondering about the girl. She realized that her ability had locked onto the girl when she started pawing over the man with her, but it was when Godiva whipped her and told her to apologize, that she was surprised. She just looked at her and said, "You didn't have to do that."

Godiva just looked at her and said, "If I didn't, Rich would have done something. At least they know our abilities."

Kyuukai then heard the girl say, "Did Ah just say all that in public?" She looked a bit embarrassed.

Kyuukai then said, "I'm sorry, but my ability is making one act on their desires. I basically remove their inhibitions. I don't know the limitations of my powers yet, but so far, I can only strip away the inhibitions. I have no idea what their desires are. By the way, my name is Kyuukai Hisui."

The girl then said, "Ah accept your apology. Ah guess Ah can't totally blame you for an accident." It was then that Godiva introduced her to everybody. The girl's name was Paige, from what she had learned.

After the introductions were done, Kyuukai said, "Well, follow me, and I shall explain the museum's exhibits." She led them all through a doorway, and they entered the presentation theater. "This room is the presentation theater. This is where visitors can learn about the museum and the exhibits. Just up there is the projection room, and in a secret passage, is the clock and security cameras."

Sean Cassidy looked up and said, "Is there cameras in every room?" She nodded and a look of relief crossed everyone's face. Ever since the statue arrived, strange things had started to happen.

Kyuukai led them to the next room and she saw the awe on Rich's face. It was no secret that Rich had loved mythology, of any culture. "This room is devoted to the myths and legends of many cultures."

Rich just looked around the room and said, "This is fantastic. How did you get some of these items."

Godiva just smiled and said, "I have my sources." She then let out a little laugh and they proceeded to the next room. Kyuukai took the lead again and led them all into the next room. It was a room lined with statues of animals.

Jubilee looked around the room and said, "What is this, a room for monsters?"

"In a way. This room is devoted to all the strange creatures in the world. Some real, some possibly fictional," Kyuukai said as she walked over to the large model of a sea-going dinosaur.

She noticed that the gentleman named Jono said *"That's Nessie, isn't it?"* She was amazed that the British native knew of the creature, but then everyone had heard of Nessie.

"That is the Loch Ness Monster, alright. Just one of the strange creatures in here. We have a model of Bigfoot, one of the Yeti, a stuffed version of the little know bird-eating spider." She looked at Rich, who she figured would freak. He was amazingly calm.

Godiva looked at him and said, "What happened to your arachnophobia, cousin?"

Rich looked at her and said, "I found something far worse to fear." Kyuukai watched the look on her lover's face. Nothing ever scared Godiva that much. She knew that something had to be that bad to make Rich forget his worse fear.

Kyuukai took a deep breath and said, "Maybe we should continue to the next room." She led them through the displays and into the next room. This room would be the favorite of many people who would visit the museum. She then said, "This room is dedicated to UFO's, and all related phenomena."

The boy known as Everett walked over to one of the displays and said, "What is Will Smith doing here?"

"Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones are working on a project right now. It is entitled 'Men In Black', and we even have a demo of a song that Willis is planning to sing. Godiva donated some money to the movie, in exchange for their likenesses in the museum." Everett appeared to be in awe, as was most of the others. Ms. Frost appeared to be a bit disgusted with what was said.

Ms. Frost looked at Godiva and said, "You mean to say that you donated money just for that." Godiva nodded and Emma replied, "She has the mind of a business owner."

Sean just rolled his eyes and said, "Let's just hope the Hellfire Club doesn't try to recruit her." Kyuukai watched as Emma shot him a glance. She couldn't tell if it was malicious or what.

Kyuukai then said, "Maybe we should head to the next room, it has an exhibit close to our town here." She noticed that Godiva nodded, and a glance at Rich led him to nod as well. The whole group proceeded to the next room, and as they entered, a loud noise hit everyone's eardrums.

Kyuukai watched as Rich turned to Sean and said, "Your namesake is greeting us, Sean. You want to tell it to shut up." Sean must have seen Rich's humor for some time and just rolled his eyes, but Kyuukai wondered what Rich meant.

Godiva walked over to a switch, and killed the noise and said, "Kyuukai, Sean's mutant codename is Banshee. He's Irish, and has a sonic scream." She had not been told about all their abilities. She only knew of Rich's abilities.

Sean looked about and said, "What the blazes is this room, lass?"

Godiva answered the question for her. "This room is set aside for Ghosts and Hauntings. It is very dear to all people of this town, due to the hauntings of this town's buildings. In here, we have examples of ghosts, such as Banshees, Poltergeists, Doppelgangers, Wraiths, and such. We even have pictures and histories of famous haunted sites."

Kyuukai noticed that Jonathan looked at the one site. *"I knew the tower was haunted, but not this haunted."*

Jubilee, who was looking at another picture, said, "I can't believe that the house from 'The Amityville Horror' actually exists, and actually is haunted."

Rich, who was looking over the display for the interior rooms, said, "The first film is probably the only truthful one. It followed the life of the people who owned the house for only a month."

Godiva nodded and said, "That is not the only film that made it into here. There is even a picture from 'The Entity' here."

Rich turned and said, "No kidding. I remember that from 'Unsolved Mysteries'. Do you want to continue showing us the museum?"

Kyuukai watched as Godiva went to the door to the next room, and they moved to the next. In

the room were wax figures. Kyuukai then said, "This room is dedicated to those people who have mystery surrounding their names, such as John Kennedy, Jimmy Hoffa, and Billy the Kid."

She watched as the little ones ran over to the figure of Billy The Kid. Even after he had been dead for so many years, there was still the charisma of being like the famous outlaw. She then watched as Franklin walked over to Godiva and said, "Will my parents be featured here?" Godiva nodded and the boy seemed Okay. Kyuukai knew that Franklin was referring to his parents and family, The Fantastic Four. She decided that it might be best to move on to the next room.

She opened the door to the next exhibit. The recording hit their ears and Kyuukai figured that their skin was crawling in fright. "This room is dedicated to the Inhumanities that people devised to punish others, such as the Rack, Gallows, and other such devices." She turned and noticed something shocking.

The girl named Yvette had turned red, and her hands had turned into claws. Rich had done something similar, but was holding her, saying, "It's alright. These devices are non-functional. They can't hurt you."

Godiva then had to say the words they really didn't need to hear. "Actually, Rich, the devices are functional."

He turned to face her and said, "What?!"

"All the devices are functional. It was Kyuukai's idea."

Kyuukai realized what was going to happen. Off the top of her head, she said, "It's for display only. We show people how these devices work." Rich just eyed her suspiciously. She started praying that they bought the excuse.

She watched as Rich walked over to the replication of 'The Rack'. His claws went right for the chains. She hoped that he wouldn't ruin the display. The chains were made out of a special metal, strong enough that Godiva's hair couldn't break it. She sighed in relief as the claws didn't cut the chains. It was then that she realized the relief was the give away, as Sean said, "My God, how strong are those chains on there?"

Rich, who returned to Yvette's side, said, "Strong enough that Godiva can't break them. You two use this room for other reasons, I take it."

Godiva instantly spoke up, trying to appear innocent. "It was Kyuukai's idea. You have no idea what I go through." Kyuukai could tell Rich was not buying the story. She could also see that Angelo started to get a unique look on his face.

Rich looked at Yvette and somehow, Kyuukai thought, the two spoke. Rich then said, "Can we move to the next room? The room is making Yvette upset." She wondered what had happened to Yvette to make her scared of this.

They entered the next room. There was a warm reddish glow about the room and Godiva said, "This room is dedicated to the theories that the Earth is hollow. You will see references to the beliefs of beings in the Inner World. Also, there is a reference to Jules Verne in here."

They all looked through the room and headed over to the next door. Kyuukai decided to put in her part here. "This wall here is where guests can leave a marking like in 'Journey to the Center of the Earth.' Sign if you want." Nobody did, but it was worth a shot. They then entered the next room. In the room was the image of a ship, and many clocks, with time changing at different speeds. "This is devoted to the infamous Philadelphia Experiment. In many conspiracy theories, people believed that it worked. It was an attempt at time travel."

"Well, we know how it turns out," said Jubilee.

Godiva was a bit puzzled by that remark. "How is that?"

"Well, when I was with the X-Men." There was a joint groan from almost everyone, but Jubilee continued, "There was this guy from the future called Bishop. He came back in time to stop the traitor to

the X-Men."

"Oh," was all Godiva said. She then continued to the next door. Before she opened the door, she turned and said, "What you are about to enter is a recreation of history. You will see examples of some of the most unique civilizations, and lost, in the world." She flung open the doors.

Kyuukai noticed the awe on everyone's face as they gazed at the exhibits. Monet said, "Mon Dieu, Easter Island and Stonehenge are here."

Mondo then said, "Egypt and Maya, what do they have in common?"

It was Daria, the girl with the silver hair that answered the question. "It is believed that the two civilizations shared a lot in common." Kyuukai then watched as Daria walked over to the exhibit on Atlantis. "Is there any proof that Atlantis exists?"

Kyuukai replied, "There is none that says it doesn't, although there are two proposed sites. One is in the Bermuda Triangle, while the other is in the Mediterranean." She walked to the next door and continued, "And since we are talking about the famous Triangle, here it is." She opened the doors, and entered the room.

Filling the room were pictures of famous disappearances in the triangle. Some of the theories, and a working display of what probably happened in the Triangle. Standing at the display was Cartier St. Croix, one of the benefactors of the museum. He turned to face them all and immediately said, "I see that you got here alright. Hello, Monet." Monet nodded and Cartier said, "Maybe they should see why they were called here to help?"

Kyuukai was puzzled by Cartier's actions since the statue arrived, but he said he had reasons for them. She and Godiva went to the last door and opened it. They led the group into the room and Godiva said, "This room is dedicated to all the Demons that are in the legends. Cartier told us to call when the latest one arrived. It is called ..." Kyuukai noticed that Godiva trailed off in her sentence, but then she noticed that Rich and Yvette were still at the door to the room, same as back in the Inhumanities room, except the skin was a darker hue of red.

Sean just said, "It seems to be as we feared." Kyuukai had a bad feeling about how this day would go.

3 - Trapped

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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Stranger And Stranger
Trapped

Emplate stood there watching the whole scene unfold. He knew that he was safe, and the plan was working. Being in Godiva's museum did bring Rich down, and Penance was by his side. He saw how scared the two of them were. They were not ready for something like this. Although, it had helped his plans to know his father was here. He could hide better from his father, now. He needed to plan everything according to what they were going to do. He decided to listen to the conversation. He noticed that Jubilee motioned Rich and Penance to move forward, in a reassuring way. Godiva then said, "What is going on?"

His father then said, "Godiva, this statue you received is not a statue. It is a mutant that feeds off other mutants."

Godiva just looked at him and said, "How do you know this, Cartier?"

Emplate heard his own sister answer that. "Because, Emplate is our family."

Godiva was shocked. It took her a few minutes to recover from that. In the meantime, he noticed that Rich and Penance were constantly watching him. They were watching for movement. He wasn't going to move, due to the ace up his sleeve. He then heard Godiva say, "You mean that this is a vampire of sorts."

His father then said, "He probably came here due to the high number of mutants in the area."

He watched as Rich and Penance started to back away. Sean Cassidy then said, "Nae, he came here for a different reason." They all knew the reason he was there.

His father was confused by this, and Godiva then said, "If he's not here to feast, then why come here?"

Monet answered that question. "You are bait, Godiva."

"What?"

"My brother came down to your museum to lure Rich down here. After discovering Rich's ability, Emplate decided to use that ability to make Rich an Emplate. His interest in Rich increased as Rich and Yvette started falling in love. He was probably hoping that Rich and Yvette would come down alone. He plans on capturing Rich and Yvette." Emplate knew his sister was smart, but he was always surprised at how well she knew him.

He watched as Godiva turned to Rich and said, "You just seem to make enemies, don't you. First was Elane, then Davis, and now this monstrosity." He noticed that Rich flinched at the second name. Who was this person?

Apparently, the question was on everyone's mind. Rich appeared to tense even more, and Jubilee said to Penance, "Ask Rich who Davis is?"

Finally an answer arrived from Godiva, "Davis was Rich's best friend, until he revealed that he was a mutant criminal, and that is all I will say. Rich hates that and doesn't ever talk about it." He watched as Penance nodded. Apparently, Rich had told her most of his deep dark secrets.

Monet finally said, "Is he hunting you down? I mean we should be warned if he is going to

attack the school."

Rich finally untensed and shouted at the top of his lungs. "Shutup! At least Davis is imprisoned. You two never said anything about that smeghead of a brother that you have when you arrived at the school. Everyone has told me that." Emplate was both insulted and intrigued by the comment, as was his father. He then realized that Monet wasn't Monet, but both Monet and Claudia. This changed everything in his mind. Now, he couldn't kill Monet, at least not yet.

Cartier was shocked by what he had just heard. He knew the truth about Monet, but how did they find out. He told Monet never to mention that. He turned to Monet and said, "How did they find out about that?"

He saw that Monet felt ashamed. He had a feeling that she had been put in a situation where she had no choice but to tell. The fact that Richard Cale shouted it meant he must have found out. Monet confirmed his theory when she said, "Rich found out about the twins. After Elane attacked the school, I told about it and he told about her."

He watched as Godiva gasped. She then said, "Elane attacked the school, and you survived. Rich, you are lucky." Whoever this Elane was, she must be evil.

Monet then said, "We had thought that Emplate had enlisted her help to capture Rich and Yvette. She failed and believed dead." Cartier didn't think his son would forgive that failure.

He then went on to the more important question. "How much do they..." He couldn't get the rest out because he noticed that Godiva was starting to collapse. Kyuukai had caught her, but he had a bad idea of what was happening.

Kyuukai looked at everyone and said, "She's been feeling fatigued lately, but I don't know why?" He had an idea and it confirmed his suspicion about the statue. Before he could say anything, he saw Rich run toward the statue with claws ready.

Rich was upset. He ran straight for the statue with claws ready. He was going to rip Emplate to shreds. Emplate had been feasting on his younger cousin. Just as he was going to leap at Emplate, Monet jumped in his way. Whose side was she on? Monet then said, "Rich, you are just giving Emplate what he wants. He will grab you and disappear with you in tow." The rage died down and he nodded. He slowly stepped back and went over to Yvette. He was going to be sure that Emplate wouldn't catch him in a neutral state.

He then said to Godiva, "Can you get us to where the rooms are, without entering the passageways by this room?" He noticed that she was having trouble standing up under her own strength. Emplate would pay for this.

Godiva just looked at Kyuukai and said, "Lead the way." They all left the room, and in the Bermuda Triangle room, Kyuukai hit some button on the UFO replica. Soon a door opened and they stepped through it.

As they walked through the corridor, Sean said something that made Rich wonder. "Godiva, what is the security system like, I mean for the passages, and rooms."

Godiva replied in detail. "When museum doors close, the secret passages are sealed off, and the trigger to open them changes from one item to another in each room. To get into the sleeping area, one has to solve about three puzzles, without screwing them up. The doors are closed when we activate the switches up here. As for the one exhibit, we have passcodes on the doors, that only Kyuukai and myself know. That room is not connected to a secret passage."

Rich then said, "Perfect for you two." He smiled as she gave him a nasty look. Then he said, "What if a door is kept open?"

"Unlikely, at 5:00pm, the normal museum closing time, the camera's lock on the secret doors. If

it is ajar, it focuses and sees if anything is there. If nothing is there, then the door is malfunctioning. Also remember that these doors and wall were built to withstand the strength of my hair." Rich had a sinking feeling in his gut, but wouldn't admit it. They continued down the passages and up some steps. At the top of the steps was a landing, leading to another set of steps. They followed her up into a larger foyer. There were rooms all around the area. Godiva then said, "This is the main living area. It is off limits at all times, except right now. Once everyone is in here, Kyuukai and I activate the doors, and the doors at the bottom of the steps close." She then looked at him and said, "Now why did you lash out like that?"

Everett answered the question for him. "Rich thinks that Emplate has been feeding of you. The thing is, there is usually a mark and I don't see any." Everett was right. Rich didn't see any either, and then he remembered something.

Rich looked at his cousin, and in his best monotone voice said, "Do you still use your favorite sleeping attire?" He could tell she understood that this was serious.

She looked at him and said, "Yes, and with the Ben Stein voice, I can tell that you don't mean it as a joke." Everyone looked puzzled by this, and she said, "Science teacher on 'The Wonder Years.'" They then understood what she meant. He could tell that she was worried as well. She looked at him and said, "You don't think that this Emplate might have..."

He knew she didn't want to say the rest. To her, it was a disgusting thought in the first place for a man to see her like that, more less touch her. Rich could only say one thing, and that might not be the best thing for her to hear. "The only way to tell is for you to be examined, and only a few of us here know what to look for."

Angelo had put two and two together when he heard all that, and the tone of Rich's voice. Now this would be perfect payback for the bet. He had a feeling that when Rich asked the question about sleep, that Godiva preferred to be au natural. This, of course, meant that Emplate could have put the bite on her anywhere. Angelo then said, "Well, if that's the case,"

Rich finished the sentence, "I will check her out." Angelo's was almost ready to shout when Rich said, "I'm the only one who can do it."

Emma asked, "Why?" Angelo wanted to ask the question as well, but then he would have received looks from everyone.

Rich, keeping a calm look on his face, said, "One, we need someone who knows the marks of Emplate's feedings, which narrows it down to most of us. Second, it cannot be a woman. Godiva would enjoy that a bit." Angelo noticed that she blushed a bit at that. He thought about it and if a woman was examining him, he would enjoy it to, no matter the reason. Rich then continued, "And it can't be any of the guys here, because they would enjoy it too much." Okay, Angelo knew he was in that boat.

He heard Cartier speak up. "Why not myself, Richard? I know what to look for."

Angelo then realized why Rich had singled himself out for that. Godiva would not be as uncomfortable around Rich in the situation. Rich had seen her like that before. Before Rich could answer the question, Angelo said, "Because, Rich has seen her like that. He mentioned that to us." He could sense that Godiva was amazed that they knew, but he figured that she knew that Rich had told them. "It is not as uncomfortable for him to check, as it would be for you to check her." He saw Cartier nod and then saw Rich and Godiva nod.

Godiva then looked at Rich and said, "Ok, let's get this over with." She was ready to find out the truth.

Paige then spoke up. "What about keeping this hidden? Ah mean.." He then noticed that she was motioning to Artie, Franklin, and Leech. That made sense to him. The little kids shouldn't see that. Instantly, Godiva's hair enveloped the two.

Everett walked over to his side and said, "You were hoping to be the one to check her out." His

friend knew him that well.

"Well, after that sucker bet, I deserve something."

"Well, maybe he might loan you some of his videos that you mentioned."

Right then, there was a loud scream coming from the envelope of hair. Angelo turned to face Everett and said, "If Rich even returns to the school with us, because I have a bad feeling that he won't return." He said it softly, because he didn't want to get Yvette too worked up.

Rich walked out of the hair mass and walked over to Cartier. He looked at the man and said, "Bad news. Your son isn't gay. From what I have just seen, he likes women."

Godiva returned her hair to a normal state and said, "That thing copped a feel and snacked at the same time. I think I need to use the ladies for a long while." Godiva ran into a door, and he heard a second door slam. Judging the actions of all concerned, things had just gotten worse.

Yvette realized what was going on. Emplate was here. He lured them here to capture both of them. It didn't take her long to realize that Emplate had survived the past few days by feasting on Rich's cousin. She then realized a more dangerous thing. She saw Godiva's power. Emplate could have just grabbed them with his dreadlocks and taken them away. For all she knew, they were right behind them now. She spun around real quick and saw nothing. Then, she felt a hand on her shoulder. She was ready to strike. She turned, tensed, and almost cut Jubilee. Jubilee looked at her concerned, and said, "Penny, what's wrong? Emplate can't get you here."

She labored for her words, for it was difficult to communicate when she was tense. "H-h-how d-d-do y-y-you kn-n-now? W-w-with G-g-godiva's p-p-power, h-h-his dr-dr-dreadlocks c-c-could h-h-have f-f-followed u-u-us."

"Emplate always tries to out number his foes, or out think them. Just reaching out and grabbing you is not his style." Jubilee was right.

She relaxed a bit more and said, "You're right, sis. I forgot about that." She then saw Rich was still upset. He was starting to tense up a bit. This worried her a bit. She walked over to him and said, "What's wrong?"

She knew it was related to Emplate, but this confused her when he said, "He should have moved. Nobody can stand perfectly still for half a day."

Jubilee then said, "What about those British Guards?" Jubilee was right. Those guys never move an inch.

Jono then said, *"I've seen one faint. So there must be a reason Rich had said that."*

Mondo then said, "Do you think Godiva's ability is long lasting?"

Sean then said, "Wouldn't explain how he managed to stay still when he arrived."

Cartier St. Croix then said, "Godiva had shown me that he was out of the box, but when she put him in the room, he was in the crate."

Monet looked at her father and said, "Is that important?"

Yvette thought for a moment. She then said "Emplate could have removed the box, stashed it in the secret passage, and returned to the spot he was in."

She saw Emma shake her head. "Security cameras would have recorded it."

Kyuukai then spoke up. "Ever since that statue arrived, the cameras in that room have malfunctioned at times, and the passageway door was jammed. Since we thought it was a statue, we had to work on more wiring for the room."

Daria then said something. "How far is it open?" Kyuukai held up her hand's and Daria said, "I think I know what it might be."

Kyuukai then said, "I went down the passage to the entrance. There is nothing there, and when I tried to move the door, it didn't move."

Yvette glanced at Rich and saw the distraught on his face. He knew what Daria was driving at. Rich then said to her, {Yvette, give me a little bit of time to think. If Daria is right, there is only one room that we can be safe in.} She then watched as he ran down the steps. She had an idea of where he was heading.

Godiva calmly left the bathroom and reentered the main hall. She was still disgusted at what had been happening to her over the past couple of days. She wondered if some greater force always picked on her, but she always put that aside. When she returned to the group, she noticed that Rich was gone. She started recalling everything that was mentioned about Emplate's possible plan. She said, "Where did Rich go?"

Yvette, Rich's girlfriend, answered the question. "He said he needed time to think." Godiva inwardly cursed when she heard that. Rich was always one to disappear, to be alone, when he needed to think. Right now, that could cause major trouble.

"What happened while I was gone?"

Daria then said, "We were talking about how Emplate was staying still, and he needed help to pull that off."

"So?"

Sean then said, "I think we were all coming to a conclusion that none of us wanted. That Emplate is not alone. I think that we all believe that Aura is here." Aura. That must be Elane.

"That would explain the malfunctions, but how could she hide?"

Monet started to speak at that question. "Maybe she can ..." She trailed off and appeared to be looking straight ahead. What had just happened to her?

Jubilee just looked at her and said, "Great, there she goes. Spaced out again."

Cartier then said, "Somebody get her attention, and hurry!" There was urgency in his voice.

Emma seemed to agree with his urgency. "We will need her help to stop Emplate."

Sean looked at Cartier and said, "Any suggestions on getting her attention?"

Cartier just said, "Try anything!" This was a different urgency than breaking her out of this state. He was afraid of something, but he didn't want to show it. She could read his actions since he had been spending time at the museum.

Jubilee walked over to Monet and yelled in her ear, "Hey M, your brother is coming to kill us. He said he was going to force you to watch." No movement from Monet.

Everett walked over to Jubilee and said, "I know she has a crush on me, and she considers herself a princess, so forgive me for this." Hethen kissed Monet.

Jubilee just said, "It would wake me up, but she is still out." It was obvious that Everett felt a bit guilty. He probably thought he had cheated on Jubilee.

For an hour, everyone kept trying different approaches to snap her out of her state. Some of Angelo's tactics were a little off the wall. Jubilee tried insulting her. Daria changed her arm to a steel pipe and hit Monet with it. All that happened there was a scream from Daria. It was at that moment that Godiva noticed a shadow in her peripheral vision. She turned to see a shadow moving down the stairs. She noticed the blue eyes of the shadow and realized that it must have been Yvette. She must be heading for Rich. Now was a time to get Monet out of this spell she was in. She went to Kyuukai and said, "I have an idea." She whispered her plan and they moved over to either side of Monet.

They whispered something into each ear and Monet blinked and jumped away from the two. Monet looked at them horrified. All she said was, "Mon Dieu."

When everybody looked at them, Godiva said, "What we said doesn't matter right now. Yvette has just left the area. She probably went to Rich. We have to find those two, or Emplate will have what he is looking for."

It was then that Sean took charge. "We will have to split into teams, just in case Emplate is moving about. Each team will search a room and let us know if they run into Emplate, or find Skitz and Penance."

Godiva didn't know how this was going to be taken care of, but she started to think about the tour. She remembered the reaction that Rich and Yvette had during the tour. She then said, "I think we can rule out two rooms. The Demon's room is the last place they would go near, and judging by Yvette's reactions, the Inhumanities room is out as well. Also, the presentation room has no place to hide, so that is out."

Sean just nodded and said, "Ye heard Godiva, so let's split up. We have nine rooms to search, and we don't know when Emplate is going to move." She carefully listened as Sean picked out the teams, and who was given each room.

Yvette slowly walked into the room. The room still scared her, but she thought out what Rich had said. This was the only place the two of them would be safe if Aura was with Emplate. She had heard Godiva say that the doors could only be open by passwords, and only Godiva and her lover knew the passwords. Also, there was no secret passage into the room. This room was the safest room in the whole museum. She slowly moved through the room and saw Rich sitting on a step. She saw what he was looking at. A model of a device called a Guillotine. She shuddered when she saw the blade. She decided to let him know she was there. She thought for a moment and said in his ear, "A penny for your thoughts."

He reached his arms around her waist and pulled her down, until she was lying across his lap. She looked her lover in his eyes and smiled. He just said, "'A penny for your thoughts.' Did you want me to take you up on that offer?" He gave her a quick kiss and then said, "You figured out that this was the place."

She sat up on the step and said, "Yes, but why are you looking at that device?"

He turned to face her and said, "Think of it as a symbol right now. The man who invented it, created it to give a painless execution to its victims. Some time later, that same man was executed by the machine. Ironic, isn't it?"

She didn't understand what he was driving at. "So.."

He then said, "Isn't it ironic that the place that you feared most, is the safest place in the whole museum?" She then realized it. He was right. This device could represent the situation they were in.

Then she thought about it more, "But, that means Emplate could capture us in here. It means that this place could be our doom." He then smiled and she realized that he had thought of that, and had a way around it. "What's the plan?" she asked.

He just said, "I'm going to make sure we aren't apart. We won't have to worry about that until later. Emplate won't move until the museum closes, and Aura won't look for us, because she has to keep Emplate still. But there is one problem."

She started to tense up. She then said, "What's that?"

"Can't communicate. All the metal in here is interfering with our communicators."

"So, we're all alone. And no one will look for us in here."

Rich then said, "The only way they can know we're in here is if we mess with the camera. Godiva said that one still works."

"I wonder if they are going to use it?"

"I don't know, but I bet that they might not. They know we can hide in shadows." He had a point.

Yvette then looked into his eyes and said, "You are always thinking about me, aren't you?"

He smiled and said, "I can't help it. I would risk my life for yours."

She smiled and leaned closer. "Kiss me," she whispered. He just nodded and they kissed. She put her arms around him and they started to french kiss.

Elane Bonstien watched the screen that was linked to the camera of the Inhumanities Room. It sickened her to see Rich happy, but at least now she could ruin his life. She turned around and faced her lover. "They're alone, and in the Inhumanities room."

Emplate, the main enemy of Gen X, walked over to her and said, "Then they know you are here. Too bad for them that I know one of the passwords in. You were right to suggest this plan, my love. Rich came when he heard that I was here. I just wish that he and Penance came here alone."

"Don't worry. I plan to do something about it. I helped you feed off Godiva, didn't I?" He nodded. She knew it was awkward for what they did, but she enjoyed watching him feed off Godiva. She just wished that Godiva wasn't a sound sleeper. The screams would have been music to her ears.

Emplate then looked at the monitors and said, "Something is afoot." She glanced at the monitors and saw that almost every room had two people in it. In the Myths Room was Emplate's father and sister. The creatures room played host to Jubilee and Synch. In the Extraterrestrial room was Mondo and Daria. She hated Daria, due to her defeat back at the school at the hands of the girl. In the Ghosts exhibit was Emma Frost and Godiva, and in the exhibit next to it was Chamber and Husk. She wouldn't mind hurting that hick again. On the other side of the Inhumanities room was the Inner Earth room, with the two strange boys in. Then in the room on Ancient Civilizations was Banshee and Kyuukai, and in the last room before the Hall of Demons was Skin and Franklin Richards. She wouldn't mind beating up Skin again. She was thankful that Emplate had told her all their codenames.

"They must be looking for Rich and Penance. They might just find them before we can act."

"I doubt it," her lover said, "because of what I had put Penance through, the Inhumanities Room is being ignored. She must have shown fear about that room."

This puzzled her. "Why would they be in there then?"

"I've seen into Godiva's mind. That room has other purposes, and such, it is sound proof, communication proof, and private. There is no passageway into the room, and the doors have passwords on them."

It finally hit her. "They must have figured out that I'm here. No way in, and no way for me to attack them."

Emplate just chuckled and said, "But, I can get in. You will have to keep everyone else from getting in, and as luck would have it, both Godiva and Kyuukai are on the wrong sides."

"Run that past me again?"

"The door to the Inner Earth room is opened by Godiva's password, and Kyuukai is on that side, and vice versa for Godiva." Elane smiled at what that meant. She had seen Kyuukai put her code in and had memorized it.

"We could ambush the two lovers, but we better make sure that no one can help them."

"Do you have an idea?"

"There is an override control on this panel for the doors. I say we close the museum early. Then you enter the room, changing the password, and capture them. I will follow in the other door, doing the same, and we shall leave." He nodded and she threw the switch to shut down the museum.

Almost instantly, the lights dimmed and a display showed every door locking, and triggers being set for the passages. Then, something happened that she didn't expect. A voice spoke and said, "Museum has now been shut down due to an incident. All precautions of lockup initiated." She glanced at the screens and everyone was bewildered, except for one person. She saw Rich staring at the camera, and in movement so quick, she saw a blur of movement before the monitor turned blank.

Emplate just looked at her and said, "He knows." They then headed into the passages. Rich

was lucky last time, but his luck was about to run out.

4 - Backfire

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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Stranger And Stranger

Backfire

When he heard the warning, Rich stopped kissing Yvette and surveyed the room. Immediately he saw the camera. He stood and walked over to the camera and with a claw, disabled it beyond repair. Yvette walked over to him and said, "What's going on?"

Rich glanced at his watch and confirmed his suspicion. "Emplate must be at the security controls, and if Aura is here, that gives them an advantage. They know where we are, and they have isolated everyone else. I figure that Emplate knows Godiva's password, so now we have to pull a trump card to counter this."

He walked over to a table in the corner of the room. In his mind, Yvette said to him, {Rich, you know that the second Emplate grabs us, he is going to take us back to his lair. What could you have thought up that could stop that?} Rich found what he was looking for on the table. He opened the secret drawer and found a pair of wrist manacles.

He closed the drawer and walked over to Yvette. {I think this is one time that we can be thankful for these devices working.} He placed a cuff on Yvette's left wrist, and the other on his right wrist. {Try and break them.}

He knew that this probably reminded her of her life as Emplate's prisoner, and she would do almost anything to get free. She started slashing at the chain and the shackle, and she stopped and said, {I can't break them.} She was upset at this.

{Relax. They are made out of the same metal that 'The Rack' is made out of. This stuff has to be strong to stand up to Godiva's hair. I've seen her break a steel girder in half with it. When I ran a claw over the chains, it didn't cut them. The only way to separate us is to unlock the manacles. Now to add more difficulty to that task.} He led them over to a life-size electric chair. He threw the key so it fell behind the chair, in such a way that one had to lean on the chair just to see it. He then pulled the switch to the chair, jamming it to the on position. He figured that the museum had its own generator. He noticed a wall panel and went to it. He found a control that adjusted the voltage in the chair. He switched it to the maximum setting and destroyed the controls, keeping it set on that setting. He turned to Yvette and said, {What do you think will happen when either Emplate or Aura leans on that chair?}

She had a look of fear in her eyes when she responded. {They will die.}

{No, just get knocked unconscious, giving everyone some time to find us, and get in here. Now, we need a place to hide.}

Yvette pointed in a direction and said, {How about under there?} He looked and saw the Gallows. He nodded, and they ran over to it. They climbed to the top and opened the trapdoor in the floor. Quickly, they climbed into the structure and had very little view of the room. Rich closed the door. Yvette looked at him and said, {Now, what?}

Rich just said, {We wait, my love. We wait.} It was cramped in the hiding place. Even sitting was uncomfortable. Eventually, he started to lay down.

Yvette laid down right in front of him and said, {Hold me, please.}

Rich got a little closer and said, {Alright, but it might take a few seconds.} He worked his right arm around her and then placed his left arm under herside and took her hands. {Is that alright?}

Yvette just squeezed his hands and said, {Yes.} They just lay intheir hiding spot, waiting for what would happen. Rich felt himselfnodding off to dreamland, and he could tell that Yvette was in the samestate. He thought of all the precautions he had made. He figuredthat they would allow them both to be at ease. Rich then fell asleep.

Cartier was confused by what was going on, but he had no doubt that hisson was behind it. He knew that there was a trigger in the room somewhere,but the only trick was finding it. He started to examine the statuesin the room as he said, "Monet, help me find the trigger to the secretdoor. We have to stop Marius."

He was caught off guard by the answer he received. "Why should Istop the one I support?" He turned and saw Monet looking at him,with an evil smile on her face.

He knew who was talking instantly. "Claudia." He knew thatthe entity that Monet called Mentor was trying to help her repress Claudia,and that the 'autistic' attacks were struggles with Claudia. He hadalso figured that it was then that Claudia talked with Emplate.

"You're not as dumb as you look, Pop." He and Claudia never got along,but then, she always supported Marius' deeds. "I just wish that Mariushadn't left me out of his plans. I guess that's my fault for beingstuck with Little Goodie Two Shoes."

He looked her square in the eye and said, "I doubt he will help you now. He's probably hunting Rich down, and Monet's friends will stop him."

She laughed a menacing laugh and said, "I have helped him so many timesthat you have no idea of what happened. When I talk to Marius, Monettries to stop me. She has to mentally freeze 'our' body. Backin the center of the museum, I told him that Rich went into the museum."His fears were confirmed. "He was at the security console, and heknows where Rich is, as well as all of us."

Cartier wanted to strike his daughter, but he knew that he would hurt Monet. He also wondered what else Claudia had done. "I am beginning to wishthat I didn't have you as a daughter."

"Because I help Marius. I told him where Yvette was. I toldhim about Yvette in the first place. Remember our trip to Yugoslavia. I noticed Yvette and told Marius about her. I plan to do one lastthing and finally stay in control of this..." Her words trailed ofas Cartier heard her scream. When the screaming stopped, Monet lookedstunned and said, "I won't let you win Claudia. You have caused enoughdanger."

Cartier ran to his daughter's side. He saw that she was drained,due to her experience. He said, "Are you alright, Monet?"

His daughter hugged him and said, "Father. I don't know how I lostcontrol. She seemed to gain strength. I don't know if I canhold her back anymore."

Cartier just held her and said, "Remember what happened last time she tookcontrol and Marius was around." He felt her shudder. He hadto separate the three of them, and Marius was forced to wear a respiratorafter that day. He was about to continue when the communicator madea sound. Monet activated it and he then heard the boy named Leechtell some unsettling news.

Emplate had opened the door to the chamber on Inner Earth. He glancedaround the room, before closing the door behind him. If he guessedright, the two mutant children, Artie and Leech, would hide and contactthe others. This meant that everyone would find out where Rich andPenance were, and by the time they got in, it would be too late. He heard the faint beep of the communicator. The kids were smartenough not to challenge him. To him, they would be a mere snack. He thought about supping on them, but then thought it best to wait. He approached the door to the Inhumanities exhibit and typed in

the password.

Once inside, he shut the door and changed the password. When he changed it, he chose a random set of numbers and letters. This would keep everyone guessing. He smiled inwardly and looked at the room. He knew Rich and Penance were hiding in there. He just said, "I know you're in here, so make it easy on yourselves and give up." He reached into every shadow, hoping to grab them, only to find nothing. He heard a crackle, and spun to grab his prey. All he saw was the remnant of the camera.

He growled in frustration. He knew that those two were in here. He had the strength to hold out for a few days, after supping constantly on Godiva Cale. He then noticed something he hadn't seen before. He turned to one of the displays and saw the auras of Rich and Penance. "Found you. Now it's time to take you home." He moved to the top of the display and opened the trapdoor. He had to admit that Penance's attire was very appealing, but it would suit him better to have her in restraints, much stronger than he had on her before. And Rich would become a second Emplate, willing or not. The first thing was to separate the two. No problem, he thought as he climbed down into the little area.

He noticed that Rich was holding Penance in a tender, loving way. Emplate inwardly laughed as he thought that the next time that Rich would hold her was as a feast. He started to pull them out of the area when he noticed something. "No!!!" was all he shouted, but the two didn't wake up. What he saw ruined his plans for a quick escape. Rich and Penance were manacled together. He looked frantically for the key, but couldn't find it. This must have been Rich's idea. The key wouldn't be on them, so it must be somewhere in the room. The longer he searched for it, the more time he gave Gen X to find them. He knew that everything in this room was made to withstand Godiva's hair, and had figured that Rich and Penance put on the manacles because they couldn't cut them. He had to find out where the key was. He then noticed something in the room. He glanced at the happy couple and said, "You will tell me where the key is, and then we will leave here." He dragged the sleeping pair to the device he would use.

Emma Frost listened to the communication of Emplate's movement and wondered why he went into the Inhumanities room, until Godiva said, "Somebody hit me. I should have thought of that."

Emma shot a glare at Rich's cousin, who she got paired with in the search and said, "Thought of what?"

Godiva was blushing, due to embarrassment, when she said, "Since Kyuukai and I had that room isolated, and everything specially built."

Emma felt she could complete the thought and said, "Rich thought that room would be the safest." Godiva nodded. "But, if Emplate had fed off you, he knows your password for the room."

Godiva nodded and said, "Yes, but everything is built so my hair can't break it. You remember what Rich's claws couldn't do to the chains." Emma did remember that.

"So, that must mean that Rich must have figured a way to throw some trump cards to counter Emplate. I wonder if it was planned out when he went in there."

"Knowing Rich, it was. Emma?"

Emma turned to face Godiva, "Yes?"

"I was wondering. What happened when Elane attacked the school?"

Emma thought how to phrase it best, and then said, "All but Rich, Yvette, and Paige were away from the school. Rich was asleep, after having a nightmare."

"That's a bad sign."

"It was. That was how we knew that Elane was going to attack. She managed to crush Paige's waist, and almost had taken Rich and Yvette. They were unconscious when we got there, but we had stopped Elane from taking them." Emma started to feel a bit lightheaded.

"Who stopped Elane?"

Emma said, "I think it was a joint effort by Jubilee and Daria." All of a sudden, her mind was on

fire and all she heard were screams. She could tell there were two tones in the screams and realized what must be happening. She looked at Godiva and said, "I fear that Rich and Yvette are being tortured." She saw Godiva's eyes go wide, and then Godiva scurried around the room, looking for a trigger.

Emma moved over to a display and leaned on it. She bumped the item and a door opened. Godiva glanced over and said, "The door was triggered to the bear. Good going." Emma looked at the bear and saw what it was. She figured that she would rather not know what an old Teddy Ruxbin talking bear was doing in there. She entered the tunnel and almost ran into Jubilee and Everett.

Daria was startled when Emma and Godiva came through the wall. She was half expecting Aura to attack. She slowly thought back to how much her life had changed since she was pulled into Zero Tolerance. Now, she was in a mission to stop Emplate and Aura. She saw Emma glance at all the people there, which had included herself and Mondo, Jubilee and Everett, and Monet and her father. Daria was impressed how Cartier got them out of the rooms. Emma then said, "Is everybody alright?"

Jubilee looked at her and said, "Just a bit shook up by events, but we can get through this and save Penny and Rich, right?"

Godiva spoke up and said, "If Rich is using that crazy mind of his, yes. Rich loved to think things out. He picked that room because of all the things in it."

It was Everett who then said, "But we all saw Yvette's reaction, and Rich wouldn't go there."

Godiva replied, "Exactly, the last place one would look. That's how he thinks, sometimes. Remember this, Rich loves to be unpredictable. He has scared me many a time like that. It's no wonder my little brother always adored him."

Emma said, "Because of your father's death."

Godiva looked stunned and said, "How did you know about that?"

Monet then said, "Rich's parents told us about that." She started walking toward the next room and got to the trapdoor. "Daria, do you think you can force the door open. I think Jono might be in trouble." She had an idea of what that might be. She walked over to the door and saw a box of pegs on the floor. At the door were ten holes, each with a different pattern in it. It was obvious that the holes changed form each night. Daria manipulated her fingers so that each was right in front of a hole. She then used her ability to form the pegs for each hole.

When the door opened, Daria saw a sight that scared her. Jono was on the ground, with the fire in his chest very dim. They all ran into the room and she asked Paige, "What happened?"

Paige just looked at them, with tears in her eyes, and said, "He just screamed in agony. He said he couldn't take their screams. What's happened to him?"

Emma then said, "Paige, Mondo, get Jono to the Mythology room. Rich and Yvette's psionic screams must have caused him severe injury." Daria watched as Paige and Mondo picked up Jono and carted him off to the passage. Once they cleared the door, Emma turned to Godiva and said, "Ok, Godiva, open the door."

Godiva just looked at her and said, "Sorry Ms. Frost, but this door has Kyuukai's password on it. Mine is on the door in the Inner Earth Room."

Daria watched as Emma started to say, "Then we...." She collapsed to the ground. Daria ran over and saw the look in her eyes. She was unconscious. The psionic scream must have knocked her out.

She stood up and said, "I have an idea. I can try to break this door down, while you get the others to the other door." She knew she was taking a risk, but it was worth it. Rich was her legal guardian.

Monet walked over to her and said, "You can't stand alone here."

"If your brother is in there, then the only problem is Aura. And Emma can't stop her, just try to get to the other door. I'll do my job by trying to get in, and keeping an eye on Emma." Her arms transformed into two metal sledgehammers. Monet led the others out and Daria started to force her way into the room.

Rich saw himself in a tuxedo. He hated the suit, but he swore that there would only be two times in his life that he would wear one, on his wedding day, and his funeral. He was in a church. He turned to face the back of the building. His family was on one side, and on the other side was all of Gen X. He then saw the bride coming down the aisle, escorted by Sean Cassidy. When the bride reached his side, he saw Yvette's face under the veil. She just looked at him and said, "Are we dreaming the same thing?"

He then realized that they were asleep. "We must be. But our subconscious must allow us to stay with each other in our dreams."

"I hope that this scene is in our future." He had to agree with her on that. For once, he hoped that a good dream would come true.

He was startled by the next voice heard, "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to see these two joined together in their destined path." They both turned and saw Emplate standing where the minister was. He felt a pain seize his body. Instantly, he collapsed to the floor.

He turned his head to see Yvette had done the same, but her black restraints were back, except they were different. She looked at him, scared and said, "What happened to the dream?"

He looked around and saw everyone was dead. He faced front, expecting Emplate to be gloating over them. He was shocked to see that even Emplate was dead. He stood up and looked at where the cross had been, but now a person that he didn't ever see before was there. He then looked at himself. The tux was replaced by a leather jacket and what he had been wearing. What had happened to this dream, and then it slowly hit him. He glanced at his hands. It confirmed his fears, this was the worse nightmare he could have. Slowly, he finally realized it and said, "It can't be."

He saw Yvette stand up and glance at her hands in fear as well. "No. It can't be, it can't be." He felt another bolt of pain seize his body. He closed his eyes as he and Yvette both screamed.

When he opened his eyes, he looked up at the ceiling in the Inhumanities room. He glanced to his right to see Yvette laying next to him, here eyes still closed with tears coming out. He then saw that they were lying on a table. It took him less than a second to realize that they were on the 'Rack'. Soon, Emplate walked into view. He knew what Emplate wanted right now, and Emplate just said, "The location of the key, Richard, and this pain will stop."

"I'd rather take this pain, then suffer the pain of being like you." He hoped that he put up enough bravado up to fool Emplate.

Emplate just looked at them and said, "And what about Penance? Do you care for her so much to end this pain she is suffering." Emplate was starting to make him want to tell him the key. He couldn't bare to see Yvette in pain.

"It's better than having you feed on me, Emplate." He felt proud knowing that Yvette would endure this. She knew that they had to hold out until help arrived. She then said to him {Listen in the background.}

He listened to the background noise and heard a steady metallic beat. {It must be Daria, trying to break one of the doors down. Why doesn't she get Kyuukai?}

He noticed that Emplate heard the sound as well and started to laugh. "You know, Richard, I doubt that Daria will break down the door. And since Kyuukai and Godiva are on the wrong sides of the building, we have some time to talk." Emplate turned a crank on the table and he and Yvette screamed in pain, this time verbally. "Where is the key to those manacles?"

"Up yours," he shouted at Emplate. Emplate stepped back from the device for a moment. He was sure that they could hold out until help arrived.

Emplate just walked over and looked at them. "Maybe a rest is in order. Maybe my beloved, Elane, can find a way to persuade you to talk. As for now..."

Yvette panickally said, {He going to grab us.} Rich then saw Emplate's hand coming straight for him, and he noticed one over Yvette's head. All of a sudden, there was a pain similar to many knives. He felt Emplate feeding off him. It was painful. It was an attempt to weaken his will. When Emplate stopped, Yvette said to him, {I managed to stay strong. I didn't give in.}

He glance over at Emplate, who had walked away from them. {But for how long until we tell him were the key is?} He felt her shudder through the manacles. He then said, {I'm afraid that we might not be leaving with Gen X.}

5 - Emplate Wins

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Stranger And Stranger
Emplate Wins

Angelo looked about the room. He was stuck in the one on the Bermuda Triangle with Franklin. He was half afraid that the boy's abilities might bring the displays to life. It had been a while since they heard that Emplate entered the Inhumanities room. Now all they had to do was find the trigger mechanism to open the door. He saw that the boy was scared. He wasn't too sure on how to comfort the boy, but he would need Franklin's help to get them out of the room. He returned to Franklin and said, "Are you alright?"

Franklin just looked at him and said, "I'm scared." Angelo didn't want to admit it, but he was scared as well.

He went over to Franklin and said, "Well, you have to put your fears aside. Rich and Yvette are depending on us. They are trapped by Emplate, and if we don't get to them soon, we may never see them again." Franklin shivered. It was obvious that the boy was scared.

"I don't want Penny to be taken, and neither Rich." Angelo knew that the couple always spent time with the kids, playing games and such. Angelo remembered one time that everyone there had a campout right at the treehouse. He remembered as Rich told them a tale about monsters, and heroes. Franklin broke his thought when he said, "Why don't we just use the trigger from before?"

"I don't think it would work. They were reset when the announcement went off." He then let a smile cross his face. He had thought of a way to get out of the room, and quickly. He faced Franklin and said, "Do you think you can alter reality in this room?"

Franklin looked a bit stunned at this request. "Why?"

"If you can alter reality so that it is like it was before the trigger was changed, we can open the door. Right now, this won't open the door." Angelo worked at the UFO display and noticed that no doors opened in the room. "Understand."

Franklin nodded and started to concentrate. Soon, everything was glowing and then, the glow subsided. Franklin looked drained as he said, "I think I did it."

Angelo worked the same combination as before and the door opened. "Great. Now we better get to the others." They entered the secret passage and went to the next door. Almost as he started to attempt to open it, the door opened and Sean started coming through.

"Angelo, lad, how did ye get out of the room ye were in." Obviously Sean was surprised by his presence.

Franklin answered the question quickly. "I change reality in the room so the trigger was in the UFO display."

Kyuukai, who was starting to head out the door said, "Brilliant move, but it must have been tiring."

The boy nodded and then Angelo said, "We should get to the Artie and Leech. Those two must be scared right now." Sean nodded and they headed for the room the boys were in.

Sean couldn't believe it. His worse thoughts were coming true. Both Rich and Yvette were in the clutches of Emplate. He hoped that Rich had thought of enough tricks to keep Emplate's plan from working. When he finally got to the room on the Inner Earth displays, Artie and Leech immediately came out of hiding. Leech looked at him and said, "They still in there?"

He didn't want to scare them, but he had to answer truthfully, "I hope so, lad. I hope so." He walked over to the door and looked at it. He then looked at Kyuukai and said, "Okay, lass, what's the password?"

He saw Kyuukai shrug and said, "Don't know. That's Godiva door. It's her password."

Sean didn't need to hear that, but at the time, all he could do was contact Emma. Emma had gone with Godiva on the search. He activated communicator and said, "Emma, are ye there?" He heard a metal clanging sound in the background. He called again, just a bit louder. "Emma, where are ye?"

He heard another voice on the communicator, shouting above the clanging. "She can't here you. She's out cold." It had sounded like Daria's voice.

"Daria, is that ye?"

"Yes sir. I'm trying to break through the door." He had to give the girl credit. She was going to try anything to save Rich and Yvette, but then he knew that Rich was her legal guardian.

"Is Godiva there?"

"You mean she isn't over at the other door." This had him worried.

He called everyone and said, "Where is Godiva, and does anybody know why Emma is out cold?"

The first voice to answer was Jono's. *"She went out when Rich and Yvette let out psionic screams. The blighter Emplate must be torturing them. They must have put a wrench in 'is plans. Had me incapacitated for awhile."* He realized that the screams must have played havoc with Jono's ability.

The second voice was that of Jubilee. "Godiva's with us. We are at the base of the stairway. We hit an obstacle."

Sean had an idea what it was. "It's Aura, isn't it."

Godiva then said, "Yea, it's the dog. She and Everett are having a bit of an aura stand off. Unfortunately, his force with two hands is doing nothing to move her force with one hand." The way that she said it showed her hatred of Aura.

"Godiva, can ye tell us your password for the door to the Inhumanities room."

Just then Kyuukai, who was looking at the door said to him, "It won't help." He was shocked and he faced her. She then said, "Emplate changed the password as soon as he entered the room. There are now two options. The first is to go in through my door."

Just then, a groggy voice spoke, "Then we need your password." It was Emma. Sean was relieved to hear her voice.

He said, "Emma, how are ye feelin."

"I'll be fine as long as Rich and Yvette don't yell anymore, and if Daria will stop hammering at the door." He heard the clanging stop as Emma continued. "Now, Kyuukai what is your password."

He noticed that Kyuukai was about to answer when he heard everyone yelling. He yelled into the communicator and said, "What's going on?"

The voice that responded was shouting something he didn't need to hear. "I'm beating you to the punch, loser." It was Aura, and she was headed for the door as well.

Elane realized what Gen X was going to do. They were going to use Kyuukai's password and rescue Rich and Penance. It was time for her to act. She placed a second hand forward and ran down the steps. The momentum of her moving aura pushed everyone down the corridor. She heard Banshee's

voice over the communicator and she told the loser off. They had cost her her revenge the first time, but not the second. She ran into the first door and closed it. Now that part of Gen X couldn't follow her. She turned and faced Emma Frost. The woman looked at her and said, "You're not going any farther, Aura." The woman's eyes started to glow and a bolt knocked her to the ground.

Elane just looked at Emma. She could tell that Emma Frost was proud of her looks, just by the way she dressed. Elane then noticed that another figure was running straight for her. It was Daria. Elane rolled out the way of the oncoming attack and got up. She noticed Daria still had sledgehammers for fists, and was preparing to strike. Elane just manipulated her aura again and said, "Emma, be a dear and stand here." She noticed the shocked look on Emma's face as her arms were straight out from her sides and she was pulled in front of Daria's attack.

Elane heard Emma scream in pain as Daria hit her straight in her chest. She heard Daria gasp and then exclaim, "I'll get you before you get in that door, Aura. I'll make you pay for that." The girl took flight and rammed straight into her, making her drop Emma.

Elane looked at Daria and said, "Wrong move." She held her hand in a grasping motion and twist it. She watched as Daria's legs bent back. She was amazed to see that miniature rockets were in the girl's shoes. Daria then went flying backwards, knocking down a now recovering Emma. When Daria finally stopped, Elane noticed that the two were on a pile on the floor. Elane used her aura to hold them down and said, "Nobody move." She moved over to the door and entered passcode. It opened and she sneaked in. She removed her aura and said to the two women, "How I wish I was into blackmail."

Elane closed the door and changed the password. She then turned and saw Emplate facing her. He looked like he was upset. Emplate just said, "I was hoping you would show up. Rich won't crack, even under my own personal assault."

Elane turned and saw Rich and Penance on the Rack. She noticed a trail of blood running down their foreheads. She smiled and said, "You were hungry. What needs to be done?"

"Rich has manacle himself to Penance, and neither will say where the keys are. Maybe you can persuade Rich to let us in on his secret."

Elane just smiled and walked over to the rack. She watched as both of the captive's stared in fear at her. She looked at them and said, "This will be my pleasure. I have an idea. I'll take turns crushing a part of your bodies. Penance first." She rammed her fist down in the air and heard Penance scream in pain.

She watched as tears came from her former cousin's eyes. This was more than he could take, for he finally broke down. "The key is under the last place to sit." She stopped and stood up. That was too easy. She would have figured that each would last through at least one attack.

Her lover just said, "What does that mean?" She was about to pressure Rich for more when she heard the answer. A constant electric hum. She left the rack and ran over to the Electric Chair.

"No wonder he gave in. He had this figured. Take a look." She waited until Emplate was by her side. "Rich must have jammed the chair into the max setting and one. He must have the key under the chair in such a way that we have to touch the chair just to see it."

She noticed a gleam in her lover's eye. "Barricade the doors. If you changed the password as well, Gen X will do the rest for us." She was puzzled by this, but she figured that he knew something.

"What's the plan now?"

"There is one way to open those doors, and that is to cut the power to this room." She heard movement and glanced back at the Rack. Now Rich was trying to break the chains, but she knew that he couldn't. She just laughed. All they had to do was wait.

Everett could not believe the force that he had been hit with. He truly understood how powerful Aura was now. He got up and then pulled everyone else up. As he helped Jubilee up, she said to him,

"I'm beginning to wish this was Sabertooth we were dealing with."

He was puzzled by this remark. She had told him about the time that the power went out at the X-Men's headquarters, before the Phalanx attacked, and when Sabertooth almost killed her. He just looked at her and said, "Why?"

"Because, we know Sabertooth. We know very little about Aura." He had to agree with her on that. He thought he could push Aura back, but her control over her power was much better than his control of those powers. He could handle Angelo's, Jubilee's, Sean's and some of the others fairly well, and even better, but he had never had to control a power he couldn't see.

His thoughts were cut short when Sean's voice came over the communicator. "Is everyone alright?"

"Just shaken up. We're heading back to the room. Why?"

"Emma and Daria aren't responding to my calls. I think that Aura might have injured them severely, or worse." He didn't like how that sounded, and by the look on everyone else's faces, neither did they.

He noticed that Godiva rushed ahead. She stopped at a spot and said, "Damn, she closed the door." He watched as Godiva started searching for the pegs to open the door.

Monet walked over to the door and said, "May I?" He watched as Monet just looked at the holes for the pegs and then placed the pegs in the corresponding holes.

Godiva turned and said, "Cartier, how smart is Monet?" Nobody wanted to answer the question, and then the door opened. Godiva glanced in the door and stepped back and said, "I wonder if Elaine placed them in that position. I don't think they did it themselves."

Everett looked in and saw what she meant. Daria and Emma were laying on top of each other. He and everyone else ran in and help get the two to their feet. They were just recovering from the attack when Cartier said, "What happened?"

Emma was the first to answer. "Aura had shut the door and I knocked her down with a psi-bolt. She dodged Daria's attack and then used me as a shield. I was just getting to my feet when Daria flew into me. She was acting as if she was out of control."

Daria then said, "That was when Aura grabbed hold of my legs and bent them back at the knees. I didn't know how that was affecting my flying, but it did." Everett was surprised by this, as was everybody else.

Monet just looked at her and said, "When could you fly?"

"I don't know. I just did." Everett then looked over at the door. He noticed something that nobody else had probably seen. There was a flashing sign on it. Daria noticed it and said, "I hope that's not a bad sign."

Everett just sighed and said, "I think the password is useless." He watched as Godiva walked over to the door and cursed. She motioned him to contact Sean. He did so and said, "Sean, I think we need something better than a password."

It was Kyuukai that replied, "Godiva, what about the generator? Do you think we could get in if we deactivate it?"

He heard Godiva say, "Yes, but some of us have to wait here, and the door might be barricaded."

Another voice came over the communicator, that of Paige. "We can deactivate the generator, if that's what it will take to free Rich and Yvette."

Sean replied, "Good. Godiva, Kyuukai, could you tell them where we are?" Everett then listened as Godiva recited the instructions. Then Sean said, "Daria, you might want to persuade the door to open. Everett, do your best to help her. I will try to knock the door open from my end." Everett then got in synch with Daria and the two got ready to open the door.

Paige had listen intently to what Godiva said. She then led Jono and Mondo to where the generator was. She knew the consequences if they failed. Emplate had attacked the school on a couple of occasions, and all had left a major impact, and all of those were when they won. She was almost started when she heard Jono said, *"Come on, luv. We have to stop Emplate."*

"Jono, Ah hope we manage to save them." She was worried for both Rich and Yvette, and she even heard the concern in her voice.

Mondo, who even had a worried look on his face, said, "I hope so too. Although I must admit I am concerned how it will effect Daria. She sees Rich as her guardian."

Paige just glanced at Mondo. The way Mondo was talking seemed to point toward one thing. "Mondo, do you have a crush on Daria?" She noticed that he nodded sheepishly.

She was about to say something when Jono said, {You know the look.}

She just looked at him and whispered, "I could swear that you had a crush on Penance when she first arrived."

"I thought of her as a kindred spirit. At the time, we would never have expected her to return to the state she is in now, but then." He had stopped speaking, and Paige saw why, but she also knew the end to his statement. They had reached the generator room. He then said, *"Ladies first."*

"Thank you, Jono" She opened the door and saw a generator and a smaller version of it connected to a computer. She walked over to the computer and looked over it. A screen showed that the entire lights, security and display set up. She noticed that the inhumanities had a large amount of electricity heading towards it and figured that it must have been the doors. She then looked at the generator display and saw it read:

MAIN GENERATOR: OPERATIVE
EMERGENCY GENERATOR: STAND BY
COMPUTER POWERED BY: MAIN
SECURITY POWER: FULL
LIGHTING POWER: FULL
DISPLAY POWER: FULL (STRAINED)

The last word was flashing. Jono looked at it and said, *"Something must be pulling a lot of power."*

Mondo then said, "Wouldn't that mean that the generator might explode if not shut off." Paige's eyes went wide. She knew what that meant. Whatever Emplate was doing to Rich and Yvette must be taking a lot of energy.

Paige replied, "Yeah, and if we don't stop it soon, we'll be at ground zero of the explosion." She raced over the controls and switched the computer over to the back-up generator and then shut off the main generator. She looked at the display which now read:

MAIN GENERATOR: OFF-LINE
EMERGENCY GENERATOR: OPERATIVE
COMPUTER POWERED BY: EMERGENCY
SECURITY POWER: OFF
LIGHTING POWER: MINIMUM
DISPLAY POWER: OFF

Jono, who had removed the bandages covering the hole in his chest, said, *"Paige, I'm beginning to have a bad feeling about this."*

Paige turned to her boyfriend, concerned, and said, "Why?" She was scared when he said that.

He just looked at her with tears in his eyes. She had never seen him cry, but he was as he said, *"They are screaming again. Screaming that Emplate has them."*

She quickly tapped the communicator and said, "Godiva, can you hear me?"

Godiva's voice answer the call. "Yes, but something is happening here, Emma just collapsed in pain. Daria and Everett are trying to hammer the door in, and I think Sean is trying it on the other side with his screams."

Paige a bit concerned about all said, "Is there anything in the Inhumanities room that would take a lot of power."

"Just the electric chair display, if it was jammed on the highest setting. Can knock a person unconscious, why?"

Paige put two and two together. Emplate wouldn't use the chair, but Rich and Yvette might have, as a defense measure. "We'll be right down, and get into the room, fast." She turned to Jono and Mondo and said, "We better hurry, or else Rich and Yvette won't be in the room any longer." With that, they headed off to the room.

Rich listened as Emplate and Elane were barricading the doors. He knew that they had everything running in their favor. Emplate had successfully capture them, but he now needed the key. Rich heard Yvette stir and she said, {What's happening?} He noticed that she had tensed up. He couldn't help but do the same.

{Emplate and Elane have barricaded the doors. They know where the key is. They figure that the only way that Gen X can get in is to shut off the power.}

{Will they shut off the power?} He knew what she was hinting at.

{They don't know the spot we are in, but the second the lights dim, and the electric hum stops, Emplate has us. I just have to wonder about one thing.}

{And that is?}

{How did he know when to leave the display room and attack early, unless..} His thought was cut short by the flicker of the lights. When the lights came back on, they were dim. He also didn't hear the electric hum. He turned to Yvette and said, {Psionically yell. If we get someone to understand us, we might be saved.} They both yelled about their impending doom.

Rich heard Elane go, "Yes. Time to get out of here." They had the key. It would be over in seconds. He also heard the doors starting to give. Would luck remain on their side?

He saw Emplate looking over them. Emplate had the key and unlocked the manacles. He felt himself lifting off the table. It was Elane. She had done the same to Yvette. Emplate just looked at him and said, "When you awake, you'll be at your new home." He felt the pressure push him into unconsciousness. Soon, darkness overcame him.

It wasn't too long after he started that he knocked through the door. Sean quickly ran into the room and saw the most horrible site he had ever seen. Then, everyone else came in the other door. Emma, who looked as if she was hit by a mack truck, said, "What happened?"

Everyone else just stood there. He heard the little one's crying, but he also heard Daria crying. He knew why. Godiva just looked at the room and was speechless. Sean decided to voice the answer, "I think that we were too late."

He then saw Paige, Jono and Mondo run in. Mondo ran to Daria's side, but Paige just said, "Did we save them?" When Sean shook his head, Paige just said, "I thought so."

He was wondering what the girl was thinking and said, "What is it, lass?"

Paige answered his question, "When we turned off the power, we just handed them over. Emplate must have wanted us to turn off the power. There was a lot of power going into this room, which meant that a display was taking it. Godiva said it was the Electric Chair display, and I figure that Rich

must have activated it, but why as a defense?"

He noticed that Kyuukai had walked over to the display of the Rack and held up a pair of manacles. She just said, "This is why. Rich must have manacled himself to Yvette and then put the key under the chair in such a way that the chair would have shocked anyone going for the key." Sean then realized that his worst fears had entirely come true.

Godiva looked at him and said, "What are you going to do now?"

Sean knew that Rich's family should never know about what problems he would encounter. He just replied, "Godiva, keep this a secret from his folks, alright. We know where Emplate's lair is. We will head back to the school and plan an attack from there. What we do know is that we have about a week to do it in." The girl just sighed and he led everyone out. They had to leave.

As they were leaving, Sean noticed Cartier walking to him. He stopped and told everyone else to continue. Sean noticed that Monet seemed nervous. It was after all had left that Cartier said, "Be careful if Monet enters one of her spells. Get her out of it as soon as you can, and make sure you get her out." Cartier walked away and Sean wondered what that meant as he went to the van. Gen X had to leave soon to rescue Rich and Yvette.