

# Cale Storyline 02 Truth Be Told

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*Sequel to Changes. A month has passed since changes, and the newest student has had a mental breakdown. Now the X-Men stop in to help the student recover.*

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# 1 - Tragedy

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Truth Be Told

Tragedy

Yvette stood at the door to Rich's dorm room. She could hardly believe that he had grown so cold in such short a time. He was depressed, and the events that led to them were extremely traumatic. They knew that Rich was having problems when she and Monet followed him the one day. Emma Frost, the headmistress of Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, asked them to watch him. As they quietly followed that day a week ago, she had realized what he was going to do. She saw the lighthouse in the distance, the place where Emplate lived. When she explained the situation to Monet, Monet grabbed her, then Rich, and flew them back to the school.

Yvette continued to watch Rich, as he sat on his bed, holding a picture she had seen many times before. Every once in a while, he broke into tears. When she tried to approach him, he gave her a glance that told her not to even come close to him. It was odd, because she and him had been inseparable after his recovery from Emplate's attack on the school. She was so deep in worry for Rich when she heard a voice behind her softly say, "Has there been any change, Yvette?" She turned to see Emma Frost standing behind her and watching Rich.

"No, Emma. I can't even begin to approach him. I've never seen him like this before."

"None of us has, Yvette." Emma Frost had started calling her by her first name since Rich recovered. "You must remember what Rich has been through. Part of him still feels remorse for the events. He feels responsible for the deaths that happened here."

Yvette understood that much. She still couldn't understand why Rich would want to turn himself over to Emplate. "That doesn't give him the excuse to turn himself over to Emplate. He knows how much I care for him. He knows I would not let him do that."

A calm voice startled both her and Emma. "That was why he tried to sneak away, Penny." It was Monet. Monet still called her Penny, a nickname that was given to her by her friend and "sister", Jubilee. Monet continued, "He didn't know we were following him, but with how his mind works, I think he was hoping we would. I think that something he said came up and hit him in the face."

Yvette heard both herself and Emma ask in unison, "What?"

"The truth can surface in ugly ways. What caused this was the ugliest truth in the Cale family."

Emma interjected, "That and he feels guilty over the death of Sean's cousin." Yvette remembered that. She still remembered what had happened. Yvette had remembered that, but she didn't know much about Sean's cousin.

"Emma, what happened between Sean and his cousin?" Yvette didn't truly understand it all, but she wanted to find out.

"There is a fierce hatred between Sean and his cousin, Tom. It is the same that is between Monet and Emplate." Yvette shuddered to think that someone else could be as evil as Emplate. She still had nightmares about her imprisonment. "Tom is the black sheep of the Cassidy Clan, but Tom became an international terrorist. From what Sean told us when we returned from Monet's place, Tom had done some experiments and learned to control plants. His next step was to probably capture all of you using

the fake Mondo he created."

Yvette was just about to ask more when Jubilee ran over, "Emma, Jean and Scott are here." Emma and Sean decided to see if they could get Rich to talk about what had happened. The two together figured that maybe Jean Summers could get Rich to talk about what had happened.

Yvette's more important concern was about Rich. She knew that Rich knew that she was there. She was afraid that he would try something rash if nobody was watching. "Should I keep an eye on Rich, Emma?"

Everett Thomas came walking over. He then said, "I'll keep an eye on Rich for a while. Besides, if he sneaks out, I can track him." She felt a little relieved when she heard that. After Everett took the post of watching Rich, Jubilee led them over to the main building to meet with Scott and Jean Summers.

Sean felt a bit of relief when Scott and Jean arrived. He hoped that they could help Rich break the emotional wall that forced everyone to avoid him, including Yvette. No matter what happened until that day over a week ago, Yvette was always welcome, mainly because the two were in love. Sean could swear that he was seeing another Scott and Jean in Rich and Yvette.

Jean finally spoke up, "What seems to be the problem?" Jean, who Xavier had taught before his rage turned him into Onslaught, never used her powers of telepathy unless as a last resort. Emma could take a lesson from that.

Sean waited until everyone, except for Everett and Rich entered the room. He had sent Everett to keep an eye on Rich so that Yvette could be here. He motioned for everyone to sit down and finally said, "It's about the new student."

Scott immediately said, "Was that the one you contacted us about a month ago, to find out if he had contacted us?"

"Aye. As of recently, he has closed himself off from everyone, even Yvette." A slight look of confusion crossed their faces and Sean motioned Yvette to stand. As she stood, Sean noticed that she was wearing the same dress that she wore when Rich had recovered after the attack by Emplate. Recently, she started putting her hair in a ponytail. He then said to Scott and Jean, "You might remember her being called Penance."

Jean looked a bit surprised. "What happened to cause this change?"

"Rich, the new student. His mutant ability allowed him to communicate with her. Over the past month, she has learned to control her ability, as well as speak with everyone. The two had been virtually inseparable, until recently."

"What happened?" Scott asked.

"Well, during Christmas, we found we had some unexpected company. Black Tom was on the school grounds. The only students on campus at the time were Yvette, Jono, Angelo, Mondo, and Rich. It was Rich who discovered Tom's presence."

Scott, looking a bit confused, asked, "How did he manage that?"

"Rich's mutant ability is to basically change into the mutant he is closest to. Some aspects of his ability allow the lad to use those abilities against that mutant."

Jubilee spoke up and said, "I can testify to that." Sean remembered what Jubilee had gone through the day Emplate had attacked. Rich, for a brief time, had been controlled by Emplate, and during that time, Emplate had somehow made Rich attack her.

Sean continued, "There are some benefits to his ability. The communication with Penance, the lad can detect Emplate. Of course, with his ability, we run the risk of him becoming a second Emplate."

Jean appeared to come to the conclusion that was what happened. "I take it that Rich stumbled onto Tom's presence."

"Thathe did, and that was around when everything went crazy. I think thatit might be best if we all told you what happened." Sean began bytell them about how the events began.

## 2 - Sean's Story

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Truth Be Told  
Sean's Story

Sean had been talking to Mondo for a while. The lad was more interested in find out how some of the things work on campus, when before he just accepted that they worked. Mondo had become interested in learning how the security system worked. Not to stop an inquisitive student, he was about to tell Mondo about it when he was called. "Sean, can I speak with you for a moment." He recognized Rich's voice and turned to see the newest student of the school looking at him. His voice said there was no urgency in the matter, but Sean recognized a look of worry in Rich's eyes.

There must be something bothering the lad, and it must have happened recently. He turned to Mondo and said, "I'll be a moment, lad." Mondo had nodded and Sean walked over to the door where Rich was. Rich went in the door and Sean followed and said, "What's the..." His voice trailed off as he saw about ten feet from him, and eight feet from Rich was Mondo. It was the same lad he just left behind in the other room. What was going on? Sean lowered his voice and asked, "Rich, what is going on? You ask to talk to me, and when I come in the room, I see a second Mondo. Did ye find an imposter?"

Rich kept a calm look on his face and said, "No, sir. I found the real one. The imposter is in there."

Sean glanced out at the Mondo sitting in the room, waiting patiently for him. "That one is an imposter? How can ye tell, Rich?"

"Sean, I was on a walk on the grounds, when I sensed a mutant presence. I sense a mixture of things. I saw plans to capture everyone, a fake Mondo was just the first step in its plan. I sensed botanical control in the mutant. This is what confused me, although. The mutant is similar to you."

"What? Do you mean it has a sonic scream?"

"No sir. I mean it is like you as in, it is a Cassidy."

It hit Sean like a ton of bricks. He realized what was happening. He had to get all the students together, that were here. He then realized the first thing that they had to do was get rid of the fake Mondo. "Rich, is there anything that we might be able to do to stop the fake Mondo?"

He noticed that Rich looked in the room. "If it is botanical, it should catch fire easily." The way Rich had said it seemed so simple. Rich then looked back at him and said, "Sean, if we want the real Mondo to survive, we are probably going to have to get him over to the med unit." There was a look of worry in Rich's eyes. Rich, as far as Rich knew, lost a family member in his youth. He thought of Gen X as a new family. Sean nodded and Rich used a sonic scream to fly Mondo to the Med unit. He looked out on the fake Mondo and then saw the answer to their problem come walking into the room. Jono.

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Sean stopped Sean by saying, "So Rich discovered that Tom had made a copy of Mondo. How could that be traumatic." Jono knew what had happened, as well as Sean, Yvette, and Angelo. Jono still got chills when he thought about it.

"We could only wish it was that simple. I wish it could be like my problem." Sean nodded when

Jono made the statement. Jono continued by saying, "*We all found out that Rich has a unique temper. He holds his stress until it explodes in a fit of rage. Rich told us this the fifth day he was here.*"

Jono saw Scott's face turn to that of shock. "Even worse than Logan's" When Sean nodded, Scott said, "Well, what led to the breakdown?" Jono decided to take the story from that point.

### 3 - Jono's Story

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Truth Be Told

Jono's Story

When he walked into the room, Jono saw Mondo sitting in a chair. He noticed that Sean had re-entered the room and said, "Jono, I have a message for you." Sean walked over to him and said softly, "Jono, Rich has informed me of a problem. The Mondo over there is a fake."

Jono realized that with the tone that Sean was serious. *"How did Rich know?"*

"Rich had the good or bad luck to discover my cousin is here. He replaced Mondo with a plant-like copy."

Jono realized what was being said. *"I take it that I have the ability to remove the phony?"*

"That's the way Rich figured it." Jono nodded and looked at the fake Mondo. It was hard to believe that it was a fake. Then how long was this fake around. Inside, Jono didn't want to hurt his friend, but this wasn't his friend. He still blamed himself for what happened to Gayle, how he cost her the use of her legs, and the hatred in her that made her join Emplate. He vowed not to let his ability hurt anyone who was a friend. Now he was asked to use his ability in that way.

Jono, still having second doubts about what he must do, was startled by what started to happen. Rich, Yvette and Angelo were walking into the room, Rich with his back to the door. Rich had obviously thought the deed was done for he said, "And the Mondo that I found was the real one."

Yvette had looked at Rich and said, "And that's fake." Rich spun quickly and ducked the fist that came at him. A second later, Mondo handformed into tendrils and quickly ensnared Rich. Jono knew now that this was a fake and let loose with a blast of energy. Almost instantly, Yvette cut Rich free and pulled him to safety as the fake Mondo went up in flames.

As the fake disappeared in a puff of ash, Jono turned to Rich and said, *"I'm sorry about that. I still had doubts of my own."* Rich had some insight into what happened to Gayle, but he hoped that Rich understood why he had waited to be sure.

Rich, still struggling for his breath, said, "I understand. I just hope not to get another near death encounter like that again. That makes three."

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Yvette listened as Jean spoke again to stop what Jono was saying. "Do you believe that might have been part of his breakdown?" Yvette stared at both Jono and the red haired woman. This woman had been brought there to help find out why Rich had retreated into isolation. This woman, as Ms. Frost had said, was a telepath. Yvette knew that this woman had better training in her power than Ms. Frost had.

Just as soon as Jono was about to say something, Sean said, "That had been the first time that any of us knew about that, and those of us who weren't there at the school at the time just learned about it now." Yvette noticed the look of shock on Emma's face.

Yvette had to speak up, because she knew something they didn't. "That is not true. Rich told me before any of this had happened about what had happened." She noticed the look of shock on Sean's

face.

"Yvette, lass, ye mean to tell me that ye knew about that?"

"Rich told me many things about his life. The facing death deal he learned to deal with, even though it was at different times in his life." She hoped that would help clear things up.

Scott, the man who wore the red sunglasses asked, "Then could you help us clear this up?" He seemed very adamant about finding the answer.

"I think that part of it has to deal with facing death, but not in the sense you mean." With that, she continued the recount of the events that had passed.



## 4 - Yvette's Story

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Truth Be Told

Yvette's Story

Yvette helped Rich off the floor. She was a little upset with Jono for not doing what he had been told earlier. She still had some of her survival instincts in her about a threat. Act first. Question Later. She was about to say something to Jono when Rich said psionically {Now love, you must remember that he injured someone, and he didn't want to hurt another friend.}

Yvette remembered that Rich had used his mutant ability to mimic her. {But he let the fake Mondo almost kill you. I don't see how you can easily forgive that.}

{Simple. I had my own doubts as well. I started thinking, what if the one I told Sean about, was the real one? At least when that Mondo attacked me, I knew it was fake. There were no doubts.} He said all that in a calm voice that he used most of the time. She had never seen Rich upset, and Rich had told her that he had a nasty temper.

Sean, followed by Angelo and Jono, walked over and asked, "Rich, lad, are ye alright?" as he extended a hand to help Rich up. Over the time she had been at the school, Yvette had learned to trust Sean Cassidy enough to know that he cared for everyone. Regardless of her first day at the school, she realized that this man meant her no harm.

Rich took Sean's extended hand and she and Sean help Rich to his feet. "As best as can be expected from an experience similar to getting a hug from a boa?" Yvette wondered what Rich had meant by that statement. She went to ask him as he said, "It is a snake known for crushing its victims, Yvette." She understood what he meant then.

She then heard Angelo say, "So, we have an unconscious Mondo in the med unit, and a madman on the grounds?" She wondered what Angelo had meant by that. This was the first she had heard about this relative of Sean's.

Sean said to Angelo, "That is a nice way of terming it." He then motioned everyone to gather around and said, "We have a major problem, and we gotta stop it before everyone returns. Skitz, do ye remember when you had spotted me cousin?" Rich nodded and Sean continued, "Good, Chamber, I want you to start charging up for another blast. Skin, be ready to pull any of us out of harms way. Skitz, I hope you have mimicked Penance, because you might be the only weapons we have until Chamber is ready." This was big trouble, since Sean only used codenames when there was trouble.

Rich had tense to a point that he could still speak. "I'm ready, Banshee." Rich then turned to face her and said, "Are you ready, Penny?"

She did the same and said, "Let's save our school." She felt better about what they were getting into when Rich smiled. They all headed out of the building they were in, as Rich lead them to a small wooded area a short ways from the school. They had obviously passed the range of the alarms, because the alarms had never detected Sean's cousin.

When Rich stopped, she watched and listened as Sean yelled, "All right Tom, We know ye are here, so ye might as well show yerself." She watched and was ready to strike at anything. She noticed that Rich had moved over to her side. Angelo and Jono had stayed back just as Sean had instructed.

Shethen heard Rich speak to her, {I hope it doesn't come down to fighting.} She saw the worry in his eyes. Something was truly worrying him, something that he couldn't hide.

{What's wrong?}

{Remember what I said about my temper?}

A terrible realization hit her mind. {Don't lose control of your temper now? I don't know the extreme of my ability. I'd hate to find about it if you did something rash.}

Rich slowly said, trying to keep the calmness in his voice, {I'll try. For your sake, Yvette, I'll try.}

The two of them jumped to face movement Yvette seen appear in front of Sean. Then, an eerie voice said, "Well now cousin, I was hoping to meet later. How did ye discover I was here. Did my fake Mondo do something unexpected?" A chill ran up her spine. The man had looked partially like a plant.

Sean faced his cousin and said, "Why are ye here? What are ye planning to do here, Tom?" There was a look of anger on Sean's face.

The man that was Sean's cousin, Tom, said in a calm voice, "Ye are being replaced as teacher of this school. I'm taking over as of right now. Sooner than I had planned, but I can adapt." Yvette then notice two large tree roots come out of the ground. One wrapped itself around Sean and flung him to the ground near Jono and Angelo. The other came to hit her and Rich. As she jumped to the left, and Rich jumped right, the man said, "This is one ability you aren't immune to. I ambushed Mondo easily enough. I think that one of these two mutants alerted ye to my presence, cousin. I shall rectify that problem."

The one root came down at Rich, but he jumped out of the way again. Yvette realized she should have watched for her safety as the other root came straight at her and sent her flying. She saw that she was going to collide with a tree and she didn't have anyway to stop it. She then saw one of Angelo's fingers appear. He was going to pull her out of the way. She softened her body and allowed him to pull her away from a painful collision. The hit from the root was painful enough. As she was pulled from safety, she heard, in her mind, a scream of rage. She realized what it was, but before she could say anything, it was too late to stop it.

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Angelo, who was no stranger to painful memories, noticed that Yvette was having trouble continuing the account of what happened. In fact, he figured it would happen. He said, "Do you want me to continue for you?" He probably could tell this part better, after seeing something similar to it in the hood.

She looked at him and said, "Please." She walked over to a corner and had almost started to cry. He could only imagine the fear she felt. He watched as Jubilee went over to comfort her. Jubilee always comforted Yvette during those times Rich wasn't around, and even after his unique attempt to take his life.

Jean looked at him and said, "So what happened?" Angelo decided to tell them exactly what he saw.

"Well, I can put it this way. You don't have to worry about Black Tom Cassidy anymore, chica."

A look of shock passed both Jean's and Scott's faces. Scott managed to say, "You mean he...?" Angelo decided then was the time to tell them what had happened after he caught Yvette.

## 5 - Angelo's Story

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Truth Be Told  
Angelo's Story

Angelo had just pulled Yvette to where he and Jono were standing, when he noticed that Rich had disappeared. He thought that Rich had been knocked out when all of a sudden as the tendrils were waving about, one fell to pieces. He heard Black Tom exclaim, "What in Sam Hein?" The other root fell to pieces, and then Angelo saw the movement of a black shadow in the darkness. It must have been Rich. He had made his skin so sharp that the light seemed to be reflected into him.

Sean had started to come to from what had happened. "What's going on? Where's Skitz?"

Angelo was about to answer when Yvette finally said, "His temper. He must have lost control when I was hit." She was rubbing her side, where the tendril had hit her.

Angelo then continued, "And I don't think he plans on letting your cousin succeed, judging by how then tendrils are being taken out." All of a sudden, it appeared that Black Tom had made himself fluorescent, and that a shadow appeared to be standing a few feet from him. That had to be Rich.

He saw the shadow had shielded its eyes, which appeared as a glowing bluish-brown. Black Tom reached for Rich and said, "So, there is the problem. I shall take care of you." A glow was forming from Black Tom's hand and Rich had finally adjusted to the light.

Sean yelled to Rich, "Watch out, lad." Angelo watched as Rich waved his hand and a scream of agony filled the air. The living shadow that Rich was could now be seen easier, due to the red outlined hand. He also saw Black Tom holding his arm in agony.

Angelo could only watch, as did the rest of them, at the sight they were witnessing. He had seen many scenes like this before, but this was totally unlike Rich to do that. He heard Yvette said, "My God."

Angelo saw Black Tom was about to try and strike Rich, when Rich swung his left hand, then his right, following with backwards somersault. "*Bloody hell!*" Jono exclaimed as the nearly shredded form of Black Tom fell to his knees.

Rich had just landed and lunged forward with a head butt. Angelo only winced, as everyone else averted their eyes. Finally, there was a thud as Angelo watched the two parts of Black Tom's body hit the ground. Just as quickly as the pieces hit the ground, Rich's claws went through them so quick that the pieces dissolved. The shadow that was Rich had finally stopped moving, covered almost head to toe in the blood of Black Tom Cassidy. They all watched as Rich returned to his normal look, as Yvette's ability had finally left him.

Angelo and everyone approached him slowly. Rich looked around, as if he was in a daze. Angelo knew the look on Rich's face. It was the face of a person whose loyalty was so strong to something that one would kill for it. He saw that look many times in L.A. He was about to say something when Rich's face changed and went from no remorse into a fit of sadness. They all heard in Rich's sobs, "What have I done?" Rich collapsed to the ground right near what was left of Tom Cassidy's face.

Sean looked at Rich and said, "You might have done the world a favor, and saved all of our lives."

Rich looked about and said, "But, I-I-I killed him. I didn't have to kill him, but I did. I didn't want to kill him, but I did."

Angelo looked at Rich and thought he understood why Rich acted the way he did. "He threatened your life. You fought in self-defense."

"No, I fought in rage. I lost control of my temper, and that man suffered for it. I didn't want to kill him." Rich almost broke into a fit again when Yvette walked over to him.

"You were worried about me. You were protecting me. When you thought that he injured me, you reacted just as I would have if he hurt you." She helped Rich up and he seemed to lean on her support. Angelo could tell that Rich was shaken up.

For the first time since they were all outside, Jono finally spoke up. "*I think you might want to get cleaned off. I don't think you want to be covered in Tom's blood for too long.*" Rich nodded and Yvette helped him to the dorms. Angelo always wondered how bad Rich's temper was, and now he had seen it.

As they headed back to main building, Sean asked him, "Angelo, you've seen that back in L.A., does the pain ever go away?" Angelo didn't know how to answer that. He had never taken anyone's life. He shrugged and continued back to the dorms.

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Jubilee was still comforting Penny when Angelo finished telling everyone what had happened. To hear about it once was bad enough, but to her about Rich's temper and rage taking control a second time made it more unpleasant. She wondered what would have happened if Rich had her abilities and personality at the time. He probably would have leveled the school in one pyrotechnic blast. She snapped out of that thought when Jean said, "If the act was in self-defense, it shouldn't plague him so."

Emma said to Jean, "Rich is a very emotional person, and the last thing he wants to do is harm, let alone kill. He was very upset when Emplate forced him to attack Jubilee." Jubilee remembered that day. She had been the med center for about a day. She was the first one who saw Rich awaken from the coma he had been in, when he used Emplate's own devices and weaknesses against him. She saw the look of regret in his eyes when he remembered what he had done.

Scott just said, "It can be very painful to do something that you don't want to do. Even more painful if you can't control what you're doing."

Emma then continued, "But he recovered from that, and during the days after the attack and when we returned from Monet's home, he was recovering mentally. He did his best to cope with the killing."

She noticed Sean sighing as he said, "He went to same spot every day and put a flower there, as if he was trying to make peace with me cousin." Jubilee had wondered what that was about on the day of the attack, and now she knew.

"But something happened before he had fully recovered, correct?" Jean said as if knowing. Jubilee remembered what happened during the second attack. She felt it was time to speak up.

"From what we all discovered, Rich's family had a skeleton in their closet that they were hiding from him. I found out about it when Rich confronted it," Jubilee stated. She still remembered that day.

"Aye," Sean said, "the scary thing is that we all knew about it, because Rich's father informed us about it." Jubilee was amazed, but then the day Rich's father was here, she was half with it.

"Was this the relative that he thought was dead?" Scott asked.

"Yes, and I remember the look on Rich's face that day." Jubilee finally said as she started telling everyone of the second attack, and how Rich's breakdown had started.

## 6 - Jubilee's Story

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Truth Be Told  
Jubilee's Story

Jubilee walked with Rich and Penny as they headed to the place where the confrontation with Black Tom happened just a couple of days earlier. She, as well as Paige and Emma, had gone with Monet to her family's house for Christmas. It was during that time that Black Tom was discovered at the school. It was that time that Rich killed Black Tom. With what Black Tom had become, it was probably for the best, but Rich was still getting over it. It wasn't until Rich came to a stop that she said, "Is this where it happened?"

Rich removed his glasses and wiped some tears from his eyes. She already knew the answer, but he answered "Yes." He placed a flower on the ground and stayed there, kneeling.

Penny, or as almost everyone called her 'Yvette', walked over and said, "He has done this everyday since the attack. I think he is recovering from the attack. I don't understand why he does this ritual."

"Maybe he's just trying to ease his conscience. I think I know how something like that could feel." The truth was she didn't. She had been faced with the choice to kill someone before, but she didn't because she didn't want to be haunted by the ghosts. She noticed that Rich finally stood up.

Penny looked at him and said, "Do you need some time alone?" Jubilee could tell that Penny really cared for Rich. She worried for days about Rich as he slowly became more stable. Penny was the first one to tell her what had happened. Jubilee was glad that she had not witnessed it.

"No, Yvette, I don't need anytime alone. I think I need to find a way to relax. Care to go for a walk with me?" Jubilee could tell that Rich was hoping for the answer to be yes.

Penny looked into his eyes and said, "I'd love to." Both smiled as Jubilee watched them walk off. Jubilee was not going to intrude on those two. Actually, nobody ever seemed to worry about them, mainly because Rich was a gentleman.

Jubilee started looking at the site. It was eerie to think that Black Tom Cassidy had managed to replace Mondo, and even planned on taking control of the school. Jubilee then saw what was left of Black Tom's face. She could have sworn that it was still alive, just waiting for her to get too close, and then she would be a prisoner. She wondered why Rich kept that at the site. She said to herself, aloud, "Maybe it's there as a reminder. That's it, a reminder."

She heard movement in the forest. It could have been Rich and Penny coming back from their walk. She then noticed the sound came from the opposite direction that they had gone in. She decided to investigate it. Sean had always told them to contact him if something strange was happening, but when did she ever follow the rules. She walked over to the area she heard the sound in and looked around. Nothing. She started to think that she was spooked by the site when someone grabbed her from behind. "Strange. I did my best to hide, and still you found me, Ms. Lee," said a strange voice.

She screamed in reaction. She didn't have a chance to fire her sparks at her attacker, due to how quickly he caught her. She was turned to face the man. He had short white hair and his eyes appeared to have a glow in them. How did this man know her name, but she decided to voice the more important

question. "Who are you?"

The man looked at her with his cold eyes and held her with a superhuman grip. He said, "You may call me.."

"Bastion." She was taken back by what was just said, as was the man, for the one who said the name was Rich. He appeared to have tears in his eyes, as if he was seeing a ghost. It was just then everyone else had arrived.

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"Bastion, head of Zero Tolerance, had attacked the school," Scott shouted. Emma understood his reaction. Two of the X-Men had managed to infiltrate Bastion's Organization. She only found out recently how dangerous this group was.

Jean then said, "Scott, I don't know, but I think that events here lead to the stop of Zero Tolerance." This was news to Emma, to hear that the group had been stopped. She knew that Bastion was no longer a problem, but that Zero Tolerance was gone. Jean then said, "But, how did Rich know who Bastion was?"

Sean then said, "Remember how I had said that Rich believed he lost a member of his family." It was then Emma realized and understood everything that Rich had said at that confrontation. She had figured out the biggest secret in Rich's family, and finally saw how much protection that Rich's family tried to give him from the truth.

"You mean to say that Rich is related to Bastion. That's impossible. Zero Tolerance was shown to be an advanced form of Sentinels." Scott said.

Emma finally said, "With human minds. Apparently Bastion joined the project and became what he was."

Jean looked at her and in a questioning tone, said, "Was?"

"Bastion, previously before joining Zero Tolerance, was named Bastion Cale. This was Rich's uncle. Since Rich's ability manifested, Rich was told his uncle committed suicide. Until that day that Bastion attacked, Rich believed it." She then told them what had happened that day.

## 7 - Emma's Story

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Truth Be Told

Emma's Story

Emma and the others arrived on the scene to see that the man holding Jubilee and Rich were motionless, as if the two had been frozen in time. Emma said to Sean, "What is happening?"

Sean was watching and said, "I don't know. Rich said he heard Jubilee scream, and he and Yvette were going to check it out. He called us to head out and when we all get here, Rich and that man seem to appear as if they are frozen in time."

Finally the man spoke, "Richard, what are you doing here? Did these mutants kidnap you?" The man must have known Rich, but how did he know Rich. Emma tried to telepathically tell him to release Jubilee only to see a bigger problem.

She returned to Sean and said, "He's a Sentinel. He must be a new form of Sentinel. But I don't know how he knows Rich." She saw a look in Sean's eyes as if he knew the answer.

Just as Sean was about to say something, Rich finally spoke to the man, "How can you say that. You always told me all people were created equal and should be treated that way. I came here by choice, but why are you here? I thought you were dead."

"Mutants are not people, Richard, they are freaks of nature that should be eliminated." Emma saw Jubilee tremble in fear. Rich still had his calm demeanor on, although it was becoming evident that he was struggling. The man continued, "Apparently your parents were trying to protect you from the harsh truth of the world with lies. The world needs to be cleansed of mutants. Now you can't be here by choice, Richard, because you are not a mutant."

Emma could tell Rich was almost upset at this. Rich approached the man and said, "I am a mutant, Bastion. It was a few days after my ability appeared that I was told you killed yourself, and now I find that was lies to protect me from the worse thing of all. You always told me to treat people as equals, regardless of what they were. Now I find out that you are the biggest hypocrite in the world. I now wish you were dead. The man I saw as a second father, would rather see me dead. If you are going to do anything to them, you will have to kill me first." With that, Rich closed his eyes and stood at attention.

Nobody moved, in fear that one wrong move would cost Rich's, or Jubilee's life. Emma was frightened, because Rich appeared to know Bastion on a first name basis, and Sean knew the connection. Emma tried again to scan Bastion's mind. This time, she saw what appeared to be a conflict. She finally detected a human part to Bastion. The human half seemed to be fighting against the Sentinel part. Eventually, the human part of Bastion said to her mind, as if it knew she was there, [Ms. Frost, I don't want to kill my nephew. I never knew he was a mutant. I always told him to treat people with kindness. I always told him to strive for a better world, and now, the computerized part of me says I must kill him, for he is a plague to mankind.]

She mentally spoke back to Bastion. [He came here to do just that. All of these children came to do exactly that. To learn to use their abilities to help humanity.] She had hoped that those words might prevent a catastrophe.

Mentally again, the human Bastion said, [I'm sorry, for what I have done. Please make my

apologies to my nephew, I just hope he will listen. Tell Ms. Lee to move away.] Emma was confused by the nephew statement, but she didn't have time to think about it. Upon hearing that, she opened her eyes and saw Bastion release Jubilee. He made a couple of motions, pressing what appeared to be buttons. Emma realized what Bastion was doing. The Sentinel, formerly a human being, was going to take his own life.

"Jubilee, get away fast. Nobody move." She yelled to everyone, just as Monet started to fly towards Rich. Emma quickly went into Monet's mind and said, [Child, get back or else you will get injured.]

Monet answered back in an upset psionic tone, [But, Rich..]

[Rich will be fine. He will not get injured.] Just then, an explosion happened right where Bastion was standing. There was a red spray that lashed out everywhere, and the metal that was in him had atomized. Emma noticed that Rich had finally moved. She watched as Rich opened his eyes and looked around. He saw the blood and noticed that Bastion had died. Instead of getting upset, Rich's face became stone cold. He appeared as if nothing in the world would phase him. It was then Emma realized how bad he had been affected by Bastion's death.

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Monet watched as Jean Summers gasped and said, "That must have been terrible for him, to watch a family member kill themselves."

Emma said, "That was what led to the breakdown, but we didn't know how severe it was until recently. We figured that we needed to keep an eye on Rich. He was upset, but he didn't want to show it, mainly because of what he had found out that day."

"I understand, but how serious had it become?"

Monet answered Jean's question, for she felt she had to tell all this. "Rich tried to take his own life."

Scott Summers asked the question, "How did he try and do this?"

"I don't think he truly wanted to go through with taking his life. He said that drugs would kill him, due to the medication he takes, but if he wanted to face death, he wanted it to be on his terms." She then told them of that terrible day that Rich tried to take his life.



## 8 - Monet's Story

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Truth Be Told

Monet's Story

Monet didn't know what to say. When Penny had asked for her help in keeping an eye on Rich, it hit her as a shock. Penny always wanted to spend time alone with Rich, but since everything that had happened, with Sean's cousin, and with Bastion, Rich just avoided everyone. Emma wanted people to watch Rich, just in case he tried something foolish, like taking his own life. Penny was almost always watching Rich, but today Penny seemed more worried than usual. They had seen Rich leave the guys dorm and start walking into the woods when they started to follow, far enough not to be detected, yet close enough to watch him. Penny broke the silence by saying, "Monet, I've been worried about Rich lately. He has been keeping his distance from me. After what happened with Sean's cousin, I was the only person he wanted to be near, and now."

Monet could see the worry in Penny's eyes. Rich meant a lot to her, and Rich was the one that got her to talk to them. Now Rich seemed to be isolating himself from everyone. "We are all worried about Rich, but he is doing his best to isolate himself. That is why Emma wants us to keep an eye on him at all times, to keep him from doing something foolish. I don't think that he is going to try something here, but we will watch him just in case."

Penny seemed relieved to hear that. After a while, Monet noticed that Rich had been walking in the same direction and that the school was no longer in sight. She wondered if Rich had gotten lost. If he had, then they would help him back, and all attempts at keeping an eye on Rich would be ruined. She saw a building in the distance, a lighthouse. She thought that Rich was going to ask about where he was there. It was then that Monet noticed that Penny was tensing up as her skin tensed up. Monet turned to Penny and said, "What's wrong?"

There was a worry in Penny's eyes as she spoke, "Rich is going to kill himself. He's.. He's.."

"He's going to what, Penny?"

"He's going to hand himself over to Emplate." Monet was shocked to hear this. Rich must have found out where Emplate's lair was from either Penny, or from Emplate when he attacked. Penny then said, "That's Emplate's lair. We have to stop Rich." Monet didn't need to hear any more. She flew up into the air and grabbed Penny in her left hand. She flew up behind Rich and grabbed him with her right hand and flew them back to the school.

As she flew, Rich yelled, "Why didn't you just let me go. Nothing but disaster follows me. I can't have a nice life. If I try, something happens to ruin it. Why didn't you let me end it all then?" Rich went silent then. Penny looked hurt, and Monet was puzzled. Sean and Emma had met up with them when she landed. She told Sean what had happened, as Emma took Rich back to his dorm room.

Sean had a solemn look on his face. "Aye, this is serious. I'm going to give Scott and Jean a call and see if they can sort this out. In the meantime, I want all the students to take turns watching Rich in case he tries something like that again." He went to his office and Monet relayed the message. When she got done, she went to Rich's dorm room as Emma stood there.

"Rich has not had the best days of his life lately," Emma had said as she started to leave.

"I wish we knew what was truly bothering him." Monet started to think about it and stopped herself. She didn't need to go into an autistic spell now, not when it came down to a case of Rich's life. Every moment she wasn't watching was a moment that he could do something rash.

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Monet started to think again on what had Rich upset. After hearing everything, she realized that the death of Black Tom had little to do with it. She started considering the facts in her mind, doing her best to stay aware of what was happening.

Jean said to Sean, "Is that everything that has happened?" Monet could tell that she wanted to be sure that nothing was left out. She wanted all the information. She wanted all the truthful information.

"Aye. We've had a close watch on him every day. But we don't know how long he is going to continue being like this. We can't talk to him, because we don't truly know the problem." Monet watched the calmness of how Sean answered the question. Some of the worlds repeated themselves in her mind. Truly know the problem, that was part of the answer, but how did it fit in.

Jean finally said, "I hope he can recover. I still wonder how Professor Xavier is dealing with what he had done." Monet noticed a look of anguish on her face, as well as everyone else's. It finally hit her. What had been bothering Rich, what had driven him into the state he was in.

"That's it," she yelled. "That's the problem." Everyone was looking at her, and she then said calmly, "I have figured out what is wrong with Rich."

Sean glanced at her and said, "What is it, lass?"

"Betrayal. When he found out about Bastion, he felt betrayed. And then when Bastion killed himself, Rich didn't want to care about what Bastion did to save him."

Scott looked as if he was in shock. "You mean he destroyed himself, and all of Zero Tolerance, to possibly renew his nephew's belief." Monet noticed that the words had hit everyone.

Emma Frost looked at them in shock. "You mean that Bastion destroyed all of Zero Tolerance to save his nephew's faith. If Rich knew that, he might just snap out of it." Monet understood that much, but she figured that the best people to talk to Rich would be those who had suffered in the same way.

"Emma, I think it would be best if Penny, Jean, Scott and myself went to see Rich. We all know what betrayal is like." Emma nodded, as did everyone else. With that, Monet went with the others off to Rich's dorm room.

## 9 - Recovery

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Truth Be Told

Recovery

Everett had kept an eye on Rich since everyone left. He understood to a point what Rich was going through, but still didn't understand why Rich had cheered up. He had to admit that after being controlled by Emplate, that he didn't want company. It was a terrible struggle for him to keep control, and still he couldn't keep control. Emplate had manipulated him like a puppet. Those few times he broke free, he tried to stop Emplate by sacrificing his own life. When Monet helped him break free, he was totally depressed, much like how Rich was. It was that Jubilee that helped him cope with it.

The time had passed when everyone left. He kept a careful eye on Rich, knowing that if Rich did something rash, Penny might blame him. Everyone had been told about what Rich did to Black Tom while upset and having Penny's abilities. After a while, he heard music playing in Rich's room. Rich's taste in music was varied from New Age to Oldies. It was hard to tell what mood he was in when he put on music, because the music rarely reflected his mood. Everett was trying to figure out if the music reflected Rich's mood, when he heard a voice behind him ask, "How is Rich?" He spun around and saw Penny standing there with Monet, Scott and Jean.

He told her the truth. "I don't know if it's a good sign or a bad sign. He put on some music, and I have never heard it before." He watched as Penny walked to the door and listened to the music. He felt relieved when she smiled.

"It's a soundtrack. I think it is from a movie he showed me once. It is probably a good sign." She then faced him and said, "Monet thinks she has figured out what is wrong with Rich."

Now that was a good sign, because maybe they could snap him out of it. "So what is the problem, Monet?"

"Rich feels like he was betrayed by Bastion. Bastion was Rich's uncle who Rich thought was dead." Everett remembered hearing that when Rich's father had stopped by to drop off his stuff. He was about to ask about why only those four were there when he noticed something. The music was gone.

He looked in the door, and didn't see Rich. He used his aura to get in synch with Rich. He was still in the room, but he could figure out where. Penny rushed in the room, shouting his name. He had stayed focused on Rich's ability, when all of a sudden, he heard Penny shouting something he couldn't understand. It was in his mind. He yelled to Penny, "You must be near him, because my aura has somehow picked up your psionic call." He then saw Monet levitate just a bit and point Rich out.

Rich heard everyone outside the door. He didn't want company. He didn't even feel alone with everyone constantly keeping an eye on him. He just wanted to escape, his entire problem, all of his life. He put the music on to see if he could do that, but when he heard everybody at the door, he put his earphones on and sat on the floor, out of sight of the door. He listened to the song that was playing.

"Don't tell me truth hurts," the song sang as Rich thought, I know it hurts. He never had a problem with what was true before, but that was all lies. As he listened, he thought to himself that he would love to be someplace where nothing ever hurt again, as the song said it. His thoughts were

interrupted by Yvette yelling his name, vocally psionically. It was then he realized that she was close enough that he latched onto her abilities.

In a few seconds, he saw Monet hovering in the room and looking straight at him. The music in his earphone was soft enough for him to hear her say to Yvette, "He's over her, Penny." The last thing he wanted was company. After all that happened, he still wanted to end it all. No one left him alone, no one gave him peace, and no one could understand what he was dealing with.

Yvette, the one girl who ever had feelings for him, looked at him and said, "Rich, there are people here who can help you." She motioned to a red-haired woman and a man with red sunglasses.

He didn't care. They couldn't understand what he was dealing with. {I don't want any company. The only help I need is in leaving the life.} He didn't want to say that to Yvette, but nothing was going right. He didn't even know what was true anymore. He turned and reached for his CD Player.

Yvette looked at him with concern in her eyes. "Rich, we know what is bothering you." How could they know what was bothering him. No one could understand what was plaguing him. His hand was almost to the volume control of the CD Player when he felt someone holding his hand in a restraining grip.

Rich turned to face Monet. Apparently, she was part of this group that thought they figured out what was bothering him. He knew that she could understand how Yvette and he spoke psionic, so he vocally said, "Let go."

Monet responded to what he said totally differently than what he expected. "The only way you're going to do anything to prevent us from helping you, is to kill us." He didn't want to do that. He already taken one life, and he didn't want to take any more. He looked in Yvette's direction and she nodded in agreement. He didn't want to take her life. She meant too much to him. She comforted him when he went to kill Black Tom Cassidy.

He started to cry, something he didn't do often. "You can't possibly understand what I'm going through."

The red-haired woman walked over to him and said, "I think we can. Let me introduce myself and my husband." He noticed that the man in the red sunglasses walked over to her side. "This is Scott Summers, and I am his wife Jean. We are members of the X-Men, and former students of Charles Xavier." He realized something at that moment. These two had suffered the same pain he was dealing with now. They had been betrayed, but it wasn't the same, or was it?

Rich looked up at them and said, "What was Professor Xavier like before Onslaught?"

Scott Summers said, "He was always working on peace between humans and mutants. He always believed it was possible."

Jean continued by saying, "And he still does. He hoped that by serving time for what Onslaught did, he can rebuild that dream." It wasn't totally the same, at least Xavier still cared for his students.

"But, that's not my problem. The one that I trusted was family and went against everything he said."

It was Monet who then said, "Like I used to trust my brother." He looked over at Monet, a bit shocked. He knew that those two never got along, at least right now. "Rich, when I was younger, I trusted my brother to help me, protect me, and he did, until his abilities manifested. I tried to help in finding a cure, but it all changed that day." He knew what she was talking about when she said that day, the day he first attacked her. It still wasn't the same, though.

Yvette then said, "Rich, when I lost my family and I was without a home, Emplate took me, saying he would take care of me." Between the four of them, Rich realized that they did understand what he was going through.

Rich finally started to get out of his depression, "If Bastion killed himself to try and protect me, it was probably useless. There is probably another of those Sentinels coming to attack the school."

Jean looked at him and said, "Do you know what Bastion did when he killed himself?" He shook his

head, because when it happened, he had his eyes closed. "Bastion sent a signal that destroyed every Sentinel and all existence of Zero Tolerance." He looked up at her in shock. "A group of Sentinels were about to attack our plane, when the robots self destructed. A government official, who is good friends of the X-Men, told us of what had happened."

Rich realized what she was saying. Bastion didn't just kill himself. Bastion destroyed all of Zero Tolerance to protect him. It was Bastion's last attempt to renew the faith Rich had place in him. Rich now understood that his uncle, the former leader of Zero Tolerance, still cared for him. "I still wished that he hadn't killed himself, but you can't change the past." He looked at all of them and said, "Thank you. I guess I was just hit too hard in the emotion department."

Yvette just hugged him and said, "At least you are feeling better." It wasn't going to take long, but he would return to his 'normal' life. He just wondered if Bastion's last attempt to make peace would have lasting affects.

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"January 31"

"Dear Diary,"

"It has been two weeks since Rich had started to recover from all the events of his first month here. He and Penny have returned to their normal lives, as well as everyone else had. I know that Rich told me that Marius is still fighting to stop the madness and hunger that controls him, and that there is still hope to rescue him. As for Bastion, Rich still hopes that all that Bastion did was not for nothing. If Bastion had any reason for what he did, Rich said that anything left would appear soon. Rich doesn't sound pessimistic, but I hope he doesn't regret what he..."

There was a knocking at Monet's door. She replied, "Yes."

The voice from outside the door was that of Rich. "Monet, I think something is up."

Sheran opened the door, "What is, Rich?" He handed her a piece of paper and she read it. She was amazed at what was on it.

"I should have known. Regardless of what he said, Bastion considered mutants as equals. He said he protected that girl. His last wish is that Ms. Frost makes her a member of the school."

"I hope this works out." He nodded and left to tell everyone else. He had probably already told Penny, but she knew that she still had doubt of his belief. Monet returned to her diary.

"said. I hope more that we all benefit by it."

"Monet."