

Cale Storyline 08 Hunted

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Sequel to If I Had A Delerium. A mysterious new foe appears with one task, to kill all of Emplate's servents. Now Generation X must try to save one of their own before this foe succeeds.

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1 - Marked For Death

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Hunted

Marked For Death

Gayle Edgerton sat in her wheelchair in her England home. Not too long ago, she had traveled to America, all for the purpose of killing the man that put her in the wheelchair. No, not a man, a mutant whose abilities crippled her long ago. She still bore the scars of the pack she had made so she could obtain revenge. The mutant that gave her that change had doublecrossed her, but the whole experience had given her a chance to make peace. She looked at the photo on her mantle and asked the same question she asked every time she looked at it. "Jono, how are you doing right now? I can never make up for what almost did to you, and for helping that Emplate being."

She was surprised when a voice spoke behind her. "That's all the proof I need." She spun around in her wheelchair, and faced the being. He stood there with a gun in his hand.

She eyed the strange man with fear, silently activating an alarm she had in case of emergencies. She then said, "Who are you?" She heard a loud shot and looked down. He had shot her. Where the bullet hit her, she realized that if she didn't get help soon, she would die. She looked at the man and just said "Why?"

The man just looked at her and said, "To prevent more." His words didn't make too much sense, but it had something to do with Emplate, the being that 'recruited' her to help get Jono and his friends. She leaned forward, to act as if she would strike out at him, but she planned to play dead, hopefully not to become dead.

He stood over the body that collapsed out of the wheelchair. He deemed himself the Hunter, for he felt it was his task to stop them. He had been pulled into the fold once. Years ago, he was part of that evil being's group. When he broke free, he vowed to stop the evil this being had passed on. He pulled out a list. As he looked at it, he marked off the name. "If you hadn't have sold your soul, Ms. Edgerton, you would have never met me."

He heard a siren approaching. She was clever. He phased out of existence. A curse he obtained in mutancy. The hunger kept him linked to that evil. He knew this woman wasn't a mutant, but he felt that only those who were like him were targets, food sources. Once he removed all of them, he could end his suffering. He had long ago decided only to strike those far away from Emplate. This woman was the next name on his list. He walked up to the rooftop and looked again at the list. During his time with Emplate, he remembered the name that was next of his list. He looked at her name. "Ah yes, the reluctant enforcer. I know you have escaped, now I must end your cursed existence." He reached at his arm and felt the scars from that time. "Yvette Gyorgi, your time has come."

Yvette Cassidy awoke screaming. She sat straight up in her bed. She was scared by this dream. She was with several people, mutants like herself, in a field, dead. At the top of the pile was Emplate. He, too, was dead. She didn't want to die, not like that. She wanted to live a long life, with her

love, Richard Cale. When he came into her life, she had fully recovered from her experience with Emplate. She got out of bed and walked over to her closet. She opened the door and saw the restraints she had worn when she was Emplate's reluctant meal. She kept them as a reminder of her time with Emplate, but she also kept them so that Sean and Emma could get costumes that her skin wouldn't ruin when she tensed up. At current time, she was gaining on Paige for most costumes used. She reached in and grabbed a dress and looked at the time. It was four hours until dawn, and she was scared about what this nightmare would mean. She opened her drawer and grab some other items and left her room.

Nightmares like those scared her, and when she was that scared, she felt safe with only one person. She left the girl's dorm and made her way to the guy's dorm. It was a little cold, but she had gotten used to it, due to her living in the grotto until Rich came to the school. As she approached the guy's dorm, she found the one room with a light on. As she approached the window, she saw why the light was on. Rich was sitting at his desk, with his headset on. He was writing in his journal. She put her hand near the little signal device he placed on the window sill. She looked in the window as she began signalling. Sean and Emma didn't know about this, but she knew that they wouldn't be concerned until something happened. As she continued to use signal, she wondered if she would have to use the secret entrance mechanism they came up with. For a minute or two, Rich hadn't responded. She started to worry, and noticed that she was minding the cold. She looked into the window and softly said, "Please, Rich, hurry up and open the window and let me in." She smiled when he finally looked her way.

Rich had his earphones on. He was listening to some one of the various Pure Moods CD's he had while he was writing in his journal. He spent years keeping this journal, and he had started writing in it again. He had been writing for about an hour, when he heard the clicking of the signal he and Yvette had rigged. He turned his head toward the window and saw her out there. He didn't know how long she was out there, but he figured that she must have had a nightmare. He closed his journal and ran to the window. He opened it and reached out to help her in. "Yvette, what's wrong?"

She smiled as he helped her in. "I had a terrible nightmare. It was horrible." He then realized that she was scared. When he finally got her in the window, she said, "Thank you. I was starting to feel cold out there."

He then noticed that she was in her night attire. He had never seen her like that, ever. He held her close and asked, "My love, why didn't you put a little more on?"

She put her arms around him and kissed him. {Because, I didn't think I'd be outside so long. Also, I thought you wouldn't mind.} She gave him a smile. Over all the time they had been dating, he had found that she had a sneaky wild side. It was one of those little facts he loved about her. However, back when they started dating, they swore not to go all the way. Rich had been raised on that belief, and he believed it.

However, her sneaky wild side usually brought out his sneaky wild side. He returned the kiss and said, {I think you might be right. So what did you have a nightmare about.} He noticed that she shook. He held her close and whispered in her ear. "It's alright, my love, I keep you safe." He noticed that she started to calm down. He had been afraid that when she would tense up, she shed her outfit. He then psionically said, {Tell me when you're ready to talk about it. Maybe you might want to get some rest.}

She looked into his eyes and said, {Hold me, please.} He held her as he walked her over to his bed. As they climbed in, she turned to face him and kissed him. {Thank you, my love.}

He smiled and returned the kiss. {Sleep well, my love.} He held her close, since she asked, but also since he deep down wanted to. This was a bit different from most times they held each other, mainly because of the situation.

He was almost surprised when she kissed him and said, {At least I have something to hold onto for safety and comfort.} He felt her hold him tighter to her.

He returned the kiss and said, {Love, I'll keep you safe.} He continued the kiss as she started to kiss in return. In fact, he felt that they would enter dreamland kissing.

It was just as day broke at the Xavier School. Other times that he would be here, he would be here with his master. However this time was different, and DOA knew that. The one being that worried Emplate more than any of Generation X had just took a shot at Gayle Edgerton. Emplate still had a small grip of control on her, but that meant that Penance would be next. Emplate still had a link to the rouge of the group, but he had no control. DOA then remembered that if Generation X found him here, that he probably would not be welcomed, even though he was coming with a warning. All he been instructed to do was deliver the recorded message to Penance. He walked by the girls dorm. As he passed the windows, he placed a little window like object by it. It allowed him to observe what happened in each room. The first occupied room he found was obviously Jubilee's. As he looked in, he found the girl was asleep. He continued to the next window, and the next until he found the next room that had one of the Gen X-er's in it. Just from the items he saw, he could tell it was Penance's room, but she wasn't in there. He just muttered quietly, "Where are you, Yvette?" Then it hit him, she must be with Richard Cale.

His thoughts were cut off when fireworks hit near his feet. He turned to see Jubilee leaning out her window. "I don't know what your up to, but Emplate won't succeed." He ran away from the building. He figured that they would start by checking Yvette's room. It might work to his advantage. He quickly ran for the guys dorm to find Yvette and Richard. When he reached the dorm. He used the same method that he used before. He found them in the first occupied room. He was surprised when he saw them in the room. However, he had a task to perform. He had to deliver the message. He tried to open the window, but he couldn't. He didn't want to look like he was attacking, but he had to get the message through. He knew that his master hoped that Yvette would come back to him when she saw the message. He also knew that if Yvette did come back to the master, Richard Cale wouldn't be too far behind. He struggled some more trying to open the window, but couldn't. He finally decided to do the one thing he could do.

Jubilee had sworn she had heard something outside her window, and when she looked out, she had been right, in the worse way. She saw D.O.A., Emplate's little minion lurking at Penny's window. She was scared that Emplate was in there. She had shot some of her fireworks over at him and he ran off. Now she had a bad feeling that Emplate was already in there, and if not, he might be on his way over to Rich's room. She quickly left her room and ran to Penny's room. As she ran, Monet came from her room and said, "Jubilee, what is with all the racket? Some of us want to get some sleep?"

Jubilee just continued to run to the door of her surrogate sister's room and said, "Your brother might be here. I just saw DOA at Penny's window." Soon Monet was at her side.

Monet looked at her and said, "I called Emma and Sean. I hope they try to see if Richard is safe." Jubilee agreed with that as she knocked fiercely on Penny's door. There was no time for patience. She quickly started to tackle the door, in an effort to break it down.

As she tried, she looked at Monet and said, "Can you help me out here? This isn't a time for you to space out. Emplate might be abducting both Penny and Rich." Soon enough, Monet was tackling the door with her.

As they continued, Paige and Daria had entered the halls. Paige just said, "What are you two up to?" It was at that point when the door finally gave. Jubilee was almost shocked when she saw the room was empty. She was scared that Emplate had taken Penny.

Monet just said, "Jubilee saw DOA outside, and thought Emplate was in here. I think he wasn't, cause Yvette isn't her."

Daria looked in and said, "Yvette isn't here, and that's a good thing?"

Jubilee then realize what Monet had noticed. "She's right. There was no struggle. Besides, I don't think the place would be this nice if Emplate was in here. Penny would have put up a fight."

She then heard the voice of Emma Frost say, "Then where is she?"

Jubilee had an idea on the answer when they all heard glass breaking somewhere on campus. She had an idea where it was. All she said, "The only place she'd be safe, and when we get there, I think we will find the source of that sound." With that they all left the girl's dorm.

Yvette was startled when Rich left her in the dream world. All night, in their dreams, they were kissing. With the mental link they held when together, they could do this when ever they were asleep. Yvette opened her eyes and noticed Rich was now crouched on the floor, looking at something. She then saw the broken window. As he looked over the floor, she looked at the window and said, "Who would do such a thing?" She started to be afraid. It could mean many things. Worst of all things, it could mean that Emplate was in the room, just waiting to grab the both of them.

He looked at her, for he knew what she was thinking. He just said in a reassuring voice, "I don't think it's him, love. He would just attack, and Soundwave wouldn't have let us move." She shuddered when he said that. Not too long ago, the mutant Rich helped put behind bars escaped, and almost killed them. He then said, "Besides, I don't think it was vandals. This thing they threw is like a communications item."

She sat up in the bed and said, "Who would throw that the window, and why?" It was a puzzle. Who would send something for communicating with them, and was it for them.

She watched as Rich studied it for a bit. He then said, "It for playback of a message."

She looked at him curiously and said, "Playback. You mean someone delivered a message by throwing it through your window."

He then said, "Which means someone got the wrong room, or the right room. Right now, there is only one way we can find out." She watched as he examined it again, and soon found what appeared to be buttons. He quietly said, "I think this one is play." As he pushed the button, a holographic image formed, one that frightened her. It was Emplate. Her natural fears started to take over and before the image had a chance to speak, it disappeared. Rich looked at her concern and said, "Yvette, calm down."

She started to calm down. She realized she must have tensed up. She looked at him and said, "I'm sorry love, I didn't mean to ..." She looked at the bed covers and that, but they were all intact. She sighed in relief and then she heard the faint sound of fabric tearing. She lifted the covers and looked at her current attire. That little fright was ripping her night shirt. Everything else was intact, but her night shirt was coming apart at the seams. She looked at Rich, who was placing a bathrobe around his pajama's, and said, "Could you hand me..."

He handed her her clothing as he said, "One step ahead of you, my love. I'll step outside. You get dressed, then I'll get dressed while you wait out in the hall. Once we're ready, we need to show this message to Sean and Emma. Emplate's up to something, and I don't think he's here. Now stay calm." She watched as he picked up the device and left the room.

That was one of the things she liked about Rich. He was a gentleman. The most they ever did was kiss. In their dreams, they kissed differently, longer and intimately, but never did they take advantage of each other. As she got out of bed, she watched as the night shirt she had worn, fell to the floor in shreds. She sighed. "I've lost more night shirts like that to those nightmares." One time, she had joined the other girls for a slumber party. She had a nightmare that night as well, and felt embarrassed. She started to get dressed and looked at the picture Rich had on his nightstand. It was of the two at the local mall. They had it taken in one of those photo booths. When she finished getting dressed, she went over to the door. Just as she was about to knock, she heard voices on the other side. The others must

have heard the glass break. She then started to worry. Even though both she and Rich had done nothing wrong, the others might think differently.

Rich stood outside his door waiting for Yvette to get dressed, when he saw some of the other guys running over to him. Everett was the first to ask the question, "Rich, what was that noise." He didn't know how everyone would react if he mentioned that Yvette came to his room last night. Although they did nothing improper, he was never sure how the others would react to situations like this.

Rich just stood against his door and said, "I think something cracked the window. I'd like to talk to Sean and Emma about it."

He was caught off guard when he heard Sean say, "Does it have anything to do with the fact that D.O.A was spotted near the girls dorm." He looked at Yvette's adopted father and swallowed. He wasn't sure how Sean would take the situation.

Rich composed himself and said, "Would explain this." He held up the communicator device that was thrown through his window.

It was Darrett who looked at him suspiciously. "Is there a reason that you would be receiving a message from Emplate." He didn't like the tone of what Darrett was implying. He knew that Darrett didn't trust neither him nor Yvette.

Rich just said, "If Emplate wanted to talk to me, he would have kidnapped me, Darrett." Darrett just looked at him, and Rich could tell that the boy had trouble accepting the fact that he and Yvette were on the side of the good guys.

It appeared to be more difficult a situation to explain as all the girls came walking into the dorm. He watched as Sean turned and said, "Is Yvette alright?" Rich didn't know if Sean wanted to hear the answer or not.

Emma just said, "Jubilee has an idea where Yvette is, since Yvette isn't in her room, and Emplate wasn't there." He felt at that moment that all eyes were on him, which was true.

Sean just walked over to him and said, "Alright lad, where is Yvette?" He could tell that Sean had a stern look in his eyes. He couldn't blame Sean, after all, Yvette was a second daughter to Sean.

Rich didn't want to look in Sean's eyes, but he forced himself to, and said nervously, "She had a nightmare last night, and spent the night with me." He felt like he was about to get a severe assault of vocal attacks.

He felt Sean put his hands on his shoulders as the Irishman looked in his eyes and said, "Ye didn't do anything. I could tell by the way ye answered the question. Scared, but ye told us what happened." He almost collapsed in relief, when Sean said, "Now can you shed any light on her nightmare or why DOA was here."

He quietly said, "Not the nightmare, but I think DOA was here to deliver a message to Yvette, the way you mentioned that DOA was spotted at the girls dorm."

Jubilee, who he noticed was about to say something, said, "I hate to interrupt but, how bad did the nightmare scare her." He had a feeling at what she was getting at. She then said, "Last time she had a nightmare that we knew of was when us gals had a sleep over. She wasn't too thrilled when she discovered she had a nightmare, more embarrassed really."

He felt everyone's eyes on him, mostly Sean's as a worried father. He then said, "The message caused that, however, I left her so she could get dressed."

He heard Emma speak in his mind. [You mean you saw part of the message.] He nodded and Emma continued, [You left after you realized what happened so she could get dressed in private.] He nodded again. She walked forward and said allowed, "I think Sean has nothing to worry about with Yvette. Now I suggest we all get dressed and meet to find out what Emplate wanted. When everyone left, she turned to face him with Sean and said, "Can we talk with you two for a moment." He had a little

concern about what the questions were going to be, but he led them into the room.

Emma entered the room with Sean after the other kids had left. There was one thing she was wondering about when Jubilee said that Yvette might be in Rich's room, and that was how she got in. Yvette was sitting on the bed as they entered. She looked worried as she said, "Hello, Ms. Frost. Morning 'Father'." It was obvious to Emma that Yvette was worried about how it appeared to them.

Emma decided to comfort the girl. "It's alright Yvette. We know why you were here so you can calm down." She noticed that it appeared like relief passed over the girl.

Sean then said, "We were wondering how you got in here. There was a bit of concern when you weren't in your room."

Emma noticed that the look on Yvette's face told her that she didn't want to answer, but she did so anyhow. "Rich and I have set up a system at our windows. If either is awake, we trigger a signal. If not, we open the windows. We set it up just in case of this."

Emma noticed the look on Sean's face. He was a bit worried, then he said, "I understand. You just feel comfortable and safer with Rich, so you set up this system. I have to admit it's clever. I take it only you two know how to work it." She watched as both Rich and Yvette nodded. She figured that whatever this system was, they hid the controls well enough to keep it a secret that not even D.O.A could find the way to open the window.

Emma looked at Sean and said, "I think I'll talk with Yvette a bit. Do you think you could wait for Rich?" She watched as Sean nodded and she led Yvette out of the room. As they headed out of the dorm, she looked at Yvette and said, "Do you have nightmares like this often?"

She noticed the girl almost started to tense up. She started to calm down as she said, "No, not like this. It seemed real. Why do you ask?"

Emma didn't want to say it, but she had to. "Yvette. Jubilee told us about what happened at the slumber party. What happened that you were embarrassed?" She noticed that the girl didn't want to say, but she had to know.

The girl looked away as she said, "It was very embarrassing, since, well...." Emma could tell the girl was struggling for her words, until she said, "You know how when I'm all tensed up, I look smaller than I actually am."

Emma looked at the girl and said, "I don't see how..." And then she noticed what Yvette was saying. "I see. It made you feel uneasy." Yvette nodded. Emma put a hand on the girl's shoulder and said, "It could have been a bit of jealousy, or even shock. Remember, at times, we still see you as Penance. Any change could be viewed as a very different change.

She noticed as Yvette looked forward and said, "It wouldn't be so bad if when I got scared, I didn't run the odds of shredding my clothes. I mean, since you and 'father' worked at getting most of my clothes laced with the restraints fabric, it helps, but at night, I don't want any reminder of that."

Emma just took Yvette's hand and said, "When you learn to control your abilities, you won't need those reminders, ever. It's just a precaution for now, and as you can tell, it's needed in the long run."

Yvette nodded, and then said, "I guess it could be worse."

Emma nodded in agreement and said, "Hopefully, it won't be worse." She had doubts in her mind about that, mainly because of the contents of that message that was still unknown.

2 - Locked On

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Hunted

Locked On

Sean waited as Rich got dressed. As he waited, he decided to ask the question that he didn't want to ask. "Rich, were you two ever going to tell Emma and I about this arrangement?"

He heard the lad sigh. In that sigh, Sean could tell that there were tons of thoughts in the lad's mind. "No, we didn't think you would approve, sir." Sean could tell my Rich's formal tone meant that Rich wasn't speaking of him as a teacher and friend, but as the father figure.

Sean wanted to comfort the boy. "Lad, ye know that I trust ye judgement. I know that ye wouldn't take advantage of Yvette." It was the truth. "I just wish ye would tell us about what ye had up yur sleeves. Remember, we got a shock when we found out about ye journal."

He heard another sigh escape the lad's lips. "I wish I never started that journal at times. I once checked out a college up in this area just to prove that I was making the stuff up. Instead I got more questions."

Sean looked at the lad and said, "How so?" Sean had to admit, he was a bit curious.

Rich looked at him and said, "A book was said to be owned at the college. That was my real reason. To prove it was a fake. I only found out that it was an altered duplicate. It made me wonder more. Who has the original, and what did they plan to do with it?"

Sean could see the frustration in the lad's eyes. He then said, "Rich, lad, calm down. It's nothing to worry about right now. Right now, we need to know what Emplate be up to." He pointed to the communications device lying on Rich's desk.

Rich looked at it and said, "Could mean anything. Right now, I have a feeling it was meant for Yvette, and that worries me."

Sean started to get worried too. "Ye think he's giving her a choice to return or else." He watched as the boy nodded. "If ye think so, why is Emplate doing it this way?"

He noticed Rich shrug as he said, "Only one person can answer that, and that's Emplate." Sean had to agree with the lad, and he could tell that the whole idea of a message from Emplate was worrying the lad more than he let on.

Sean picked up the unit and said, "Then we'll all take a look at it together. Then, if we have to suspect anything, we'll all know what to expect from him." He noticed that Rich seemed more comfortable with that. At that, the two of them left the room.

Monet realized that she was holding everyone up. While she was getting ready, her sister had decided to try and take charge. By the time she regained control, her sister had already dictated her wardrobe for the day. She had barely time to look more dignified when Emma let loose with a psychic summons. She ran as fast as she could to the room, and when she entered, she definitely got attention she didn't want. It was Jubilee who first remarked, "Monet, what happened to you? Decided to go slumming."

Monet just glared at all who was laughing and said, "I think my sister was in a bit of kidding

mood. She wasn't much on dressing proper." She couldn't say her real reasons, that her twin sister sided with Emplate at any chance.

She noticed as Emma said, "I hope you plan to fix that after the meeting." She nodded and Emma motioned her to sit down. When she finally sat down, Emma said, "Now, we seem to have been visited by D.O.A." Monet knew that much. Then Emma said, "And it appears that he came not to attack, but to deliver a message. So far the contents of the message are unknown."

Right then, Monet heard her sister pipe up in her mind. [Marius must want Penny to come back to him, and bring Richard with her.]

She almost yelled aloud to her sister when she noticed that Richard was going to press a button on the device. Instantly, an image formed into that of Emplate. It appeared to look straight at Yvette as it said, "Hello Yvette. I hope that you receive this message and hear it out, for it is in your best interests. I don't know if you remember or not, but a while ago, I came to your school with a bunch of my Hellions, amongst them was one Gayle Edgerton." She noticed Jono appeared to take notice in the message. Soon, her brother's image spoke again. "I still have a small grip on her, but now she has been shot. Luckily, she isn't dead, but her attacker was Hunter."

Monet heard a slight gasp and soft "Oh no." She noticed that Yvette started to tense up. She watched as Rich held her, but she heard her mutter, "It's coming true." It appeared as if Rich wasn't there at all.

The image then continued, "I see you remember him, as you most likely remember his threat. I know he's going to visit you next. I figure that right about now you fear for your life, so I extend to you the offer of returning to me. He is not as confident yet to challenge me, but he will not attack you if you are with me, and also know that I am doing this out of kindness, for I offer the same protection to Richard. I will allow you full choice on what happens to him. I will give you one hour after you see this recording, upon which, Elane will come to hear your response. She has been ordered not to attack. In one hour..." and the image ended. Monet noticed that Yvette was more scared than ever.

She then noticed Yvette was crying. She was first to ask the one question that was on everyone's mind, "Who is Hunter?"

She noticed as Yvette said between sobs, "He's just what he calls himself. He's a hunter. He hunts down Emplate's enthralled, feasts on them, kills them. He used to be one like them, but he broke free. He doesn't believe that if you break free, you're free. He believes death is the only escape. He won't be happy until he has killed all the Emplate's and he includes me in that." She started to cry again, and Monet watched as Rich held her.

Monet watched as Rich looked around with a realization in his eyes. "She said she had a nightmare last night. This must have been it."

In her mind, Monet heard Claudette say, [Aww, poor baby. Maybe I should tell our brother that she wants to come back.] Again Monet wanted to snap back at Claudette, but she knew an outburst would cause too many questions.

Soon enough, she heard Jono ask, *"I don't like the sound of this. I mean, how does this guy even know where to look for you. And how did he know where to find Gayle?"*

In between sobs, Monet listened as Yvette said, "He's still linked to Emplate. He knows what Emplate knows. Emplate however vaguely knows what he knows. Emplate won't attack him, not unless he attacks him first."

Monet noticed as Rich looked at Yvette intently and said, "Like some of the stories about Lycanthropes?" She noticed as Yvette nodded to what Rich said.

Sean then asked the question that she was pondering. "Lad, why did you just liken Emplate to a Werewolf? He's more like a vampire."

Rich turned to look at them all and said, "In some stories, werewolves and such are pack

creatures, with one Alpha wolf and the rest are Beta. An Alpha cannot attack a Beta, unless the Beta attacks it first. If an Alpha harms a Beta, it harms itself, and breaks the control link. However, a Beta can attack a Beta." Monet noticed as Rich turned to face Yvette again and looked at her. "You had been a Beta Emplate."

Yvette nodded, and Monet heard a gasp from everyone. "I had just been abducted from my home. He had killed my parents. I was taken to his hideaway, and he told me that if I didn't want to be his meal, I had to submit to him. I had been strong willed, so it would take a while to make me fully into an Emplate. I was one of his Enthralled, but not completely Entralled. I was still linked to him, but he was determined to keep me, either as a food source, or a slave. I had become a reluctant enforcer. I had to protect him, and keep others in line. I had been attacked many times by some of the others, and this made Emplate want me more as a food source."

Monet noticed that Jubilee asked the next question, "What happened that forced you into that?"

Yvette just said, "I caught Hunter trying to leave. I had been ordered to prevent that, but he left. I couldn't bring myself to kill him. I was put in the restraints that day, and Emplate started to feast on me, everyday stripping away a little bit of my free will. Until Gateway appeared and rescued me, I was almost convinced my only purpose was to feed Emplate until he killed me, and that it was my punishment." She started sobbing and collapsed into Rich's arms.

Monet heard Claudette finally say, [It will be worse when you return to him. I'll tell him to make it worse.] Her sister was really starting to get bothered. She tried to mentally suppress her sister's mind, but Claudette started to fight back.

As she mentally struggled to suppress Claudette, she heard Darrett say, "You mean you willingly wanted to be an Emplate. I should have known."

Sean then said, "I don't think it's so far fetched, lad. I think you did as an Emplate suggested just to save your own life, and millions others." She saw the dumb struck look on Darrett's face.

"That was different. I didn't have an option. I was caught by the most powerful Emplates."

Rich looked at him this time, and Monet heard him exclaim. "Tell me, Darrett. If you had a chance to preserve your life, would you jump at it, especially if you were scared to death, scared to death of dying." Monet saw Darrett clam up. The boy had been afraid of dying. He had seen his own mother die. This thought distracted her from Claudette's assault for control. As Claudette pulled her in to their mind. She literally was fighting to stay in control of her mind, and now was losing.

Yvette just sat there, with everyone. She had buried her head in Rich's chest as she cried. She knew Rich was holding her. He was worried about her, but she was more worried about everyone here. Hunter would see all who was with her as her victims, maybe slaves. He'd kill them all. She sobbed a bit more as she thought about what he might do to Rich. No, she couldn't let any of that happen, not to her friends and family. She knew what she had to do. She had to turn herself over to Emplate. She looked up and saw a stern look in her lover's eyes. Before she could say anything, he said, "I won't let you do that Yvette."

She gasped. Before she could ask her question on how he knew, she heard Mondo say, "Won't let her do what?"

He looked at her and said, "I won't let her turn herself over to Emplate. She was just thinking about it." She heard everyone gasp, except for Monet. She noticed the Monet had a blank stare on her face, another Autistic episode.

She heard her adopted father say, "Yvette, he's joking, right. You wouldn't do that, would you?"

She sighed and said, "I don't want you all to get killed because of me." It was true. She didn't want them all to get killed because of her. "Hunter won't think you're free of Emplate's power. He'll kill you first. I don't know how, but he will."

Everett just looked at her and said, "Yvette, what's his ability? If we know that, we can stop him. You don't have to turn yourself over to Emplate."

Yvette shook her head and said, "I don't know. All the time I had encountered him, I never found out what his abilities. All I knew is that he lived up to the name Hunter." It scared her to think about Hunter. In fact, until now, she never thought about the risk to her life. Rich arrived into her and she was happy since then. Now, it was going to end.

She saw Jubilee looking at the clock and said, "Well, we have about 30 minutes now until Aura arrives. We gotta make sure she doesn't take Penny, and Rich, with her."

Yvette looked in shock. Why were they doing this? She started to object when Rich said, "If Monet's out of her trance, she can tell Aura off. The rest of us can come up with a game plan to stop this 'Hunter'."

Yvette looked at him and started to say, "But love, I don't want to see you hurt. I..."

Rich put a finger up to her mouth and she stopped talking. He then said, "Not to long ago, I was in the same situation. I didn't flee then. Are you going to now?"

She then realized what he meant. Back when Soundwave attacked, he was about to leave the school, but he didn't. Now he wanted her to stay, because they would protect her, like they did with him. She slowly came to terms that what she was going to do would have been the biggest mistake in her life. She smiled at him and said, "Alright, I'll stay." She held him close to her and prayed that she wasn't being foolish.

It had been almost 50 minutes after the message stopped. Soon Elan would be at the school. This unnerved Rich a lot. He honestly didn't think that she would obey Emplate about not hurting them. Rich was still holding Yvette as she had been holding him. This 'Hunter' character might be more than they can handle, but they still had to try. The one person most important to him was in terrible danger. Soon, he noticed Monet was blinking her eyes. She was finally coming out of her episode. It was times like these that they didn't need for this to happen. He finally said aloud, "She's coming out of it."

He heard Jubilee say, "It's about time. She picks the worse times for these spells." He had to admit that they sometimes appeared when they least needed them to appear.

He sat quietly with Yvette as Sean said, "Monet, we need you to handle the talk with Aura. Be careful, cause she might have a few tricks up her sleeve."

Rich nodded and said, "I don't trust her, but I don't want to give her the opportunity to hurt either Yvette or myself. She's got a few loose screws, and out of all of us, you might be able to handle her best."

He noticed something in the way Monet responded. "Don't worry. If she tries anything, I won't let her succeed." It wasn't her usual tone. It sounded different, but with a familiar type of tone to it. He watched as she left the room. He then noticed something at how she acted in her walk.

Before he could put his finger on it, he heard Sean say. "Alright Rich, Yvette, I want you both to go down into the underground area, just in case anything may happen. Mondo, Daria, Everett and I will go with you. I want you to start thinking of possible plans of defense. Something that won't cost us a life." He nodded and started down the path to the underground portion of the school. The place where Emma had set up a mutant training facility many years before.

He still had Yvette by his side, when she said in their mental link {My love. Were you scanning my mind earlier?}

He knew what she was talking about, but his answer would surprise her. {No, my love, I wasn't.}

He glanced to see the look of shock on her face as she said, {How did you know then?}

He smiled and said {Billy Joel said it best. There are no words to say it. I could just tell. I wasn't watching your thoughts. I wasn't listening to them. I just knew. Love does that to you.} He tightened his hand around hers and smiled. {You don't have to scan a mind to know what they are thinking.}

She smiled and squeezed his hand in return. {I just didn't want to see anyone get hurt, even if it meant me going back to Emplate. I wouldn't want you to join me in that fate. I can't let you join me in that.}

He looked at her, puzzled by that. She knew he wouldn't let her do that alone, even if she ran away to do so, she knew he would not let her do that alone. {Yvette, you know that if you went, I would go to protect you, as best I could.}

He watched as just said, {No. I can't let you do that. I can't say why right now, but I can't let you do that.}

This shocked him. He looked at her and said, {Are you hiding something from me?}

He didn't have time for a response as Sean said, "Alright, here we are, now let's start planning." He decided that he could wait to find out her reasons. Normally, Yvette never kept a secret from him, but now she was. It didn't make sense, but there was no time to debate it now.

Elane Bonstein stood right inside the main hall of the school. She was getting impatient. She swore to obey her lover's orders not to hurt either Yvette or Rich, and she hated that idea. She hoped that they would show up, just so she could taunt them and maybe startle them. Besides, if she attacked them, and they attacked her, she could say it was self defense. Her thought was cut short when she heard someone say, "I have a message to give you." She turned to see Emplate's sister, Monet walking out of one of the doors. However, the attire looked nothing like how Emplate described as his sister's style.

She looked at this definitely different Monet and said, "Alright, where is Richard and Yvette?" She watched as the figure just moved closer and closer to her. The girl wasn't scared of her, nor was she threatening her. However, there was a different aura about the girl.

Monet just responded, "They are staying, however, I'd like to make you an offer."

Elane took a step back, mainly in shock. She shook her head and said, "What makes you think Emplate would accept an offer from you?" There was a blur of movement, and she was on her back.

The figure looked down at her and said, "Tell my brother, that we will manage to set up Hunter in a place where he can finish him off. If you need proof of this, tell him that Claudette said so."

Elane blinked and then said, "Claudette, as in his favorite sibling." The girl nodded and she started to understand. She ran out of the building, and hurried back to the lighthouse. She needed to tell her lover this. It might be a good thing that she didn't attack.

Darrett sat patiently as he waited. He was with the others as they waited for Monet to return. He had watched as the two members of Generation X that he knew in his timeline would be his parents left to protect Yvette. Deep down, he hoped that something would happen and the two would start to date. He felt threatened that they didn't date. He felt that he wouldn't exist, but he remembered from the time he spent with the X-Men, that Bishop was displaced out of time. It was as if the time changes didn't affect him. Would that be the same for him? He was in the middle of this thought when Emma said to him, "Darrett, you don't talk much about your timeline. Is there anything you can tell us?"

He looked at her, puzzled that she would ask such a question. He finally said, "I don't think you would want to hear it." It was true. He looked at each member, realizing that he could tell them, in some terms, how each died. It's not a topic one would want to hear.

Emma looked straight at him and said, "Maybe, but I do wonder what happened in your

timeline. All we know is that Richard and Yvette were Emplates in your timeline. One's that did what many mutant villains dream of in our timeline."

He then heard Jubilee say, "Yea. I mean, how could any of the X-Groups allow that to happen, and how come we couldn't stop them."

He didn't want to tell them. He felt like he couldn't, not knowing how everyone would react. He then heard Paige say, "I mean, if they went up against us, they couldn't have defeated us."

He sighed. They weren't going to let him stay quiet. He then said, "I didn't want to say anything, but you've made me. They were crafty. They singled every member out. Divided the group, or let it be divided. The first one fell after they became Emplates. Enraged at the situation, they killed all of Emplate's followers, and they attacked the one they felt betrayed them."

He heard Jono say "*Who was that?*" It was a valid question. He just wasn't sure how to answer it.

He was thankful when he saw Monet enter the room. She always seemed dignified, but today you would never have been able to tell that. However, he did find her outfit appealing. She just said, "Well, Elane has left, and she didn't look too thrilled. I think she would have preferred hurting both Rich and Yvette." From what he had seen from the museum, that was an understatement.

He watched as Emma stood as she said, "Alright, let's all head down to where the others are. Monet, I would like you to get into something more appropriate." He noticed as Monet seemed to frown. Maybe she was upset that she was getting blamed for what her sister made her wear. He followed the others as they headed in the direction of where the others went, but he noticed that Monet went off in the direction of the dorms. As he watched, he saw her turn and look at him. He was shocked as she winked at him. Did she like him? He continued down the hall, trying to sort it all out. What he knew about her here, and the very little he had been told by his mother.

Claudette reveled at the fact that she was in control of the joint body. After winking at Darrett, she listened in delight as she heard Monet scream [What are you doing? You made a deal with Aura. What are you up to?]

Claudette continued walking to the room and said, "You know, that Darrett boy is quite handsome. I don't think you'd mind if I spent some time with him." She let a small smile cross her face.

Almost instantaneously, Monet shouted at her. [No, you don't Claudette. I won't let you do that. I know you only care about helping Marius.] Her sister didn't know her too well, even though they were twins.

"Are you kidding? Marius is just part of the equation. With his studies of the black arts, having him as part of us would make us that supreme magical entity again. If father and his two friends hadn't split us up, we would have still been." She laughed at the thought of the meaning of her success.

She then heard Monet say the one thing she knew might be a problem. [Marius would never let you try that again.] She was right about that. Claudette had never worked that part out, but now all she had to do was help Marius. Maybe somehow, she could trick him again. Maybe her little plan would work in that way.

As they approached the room they occupied, she opened the door and said, "Alright now sis, what is it you like to wear. Something boring, right." She felt her sister try to regain control of the joint body, and she suppressed her. "Now, now, Monet. I'm not through yet. You'll just have to stay contained for just a while longer." She laughed aloud as she put together a typical Monet outfit. So far, no one was the wiser to her little trick.

Jubilee listened to all the ideas that everyone was pitching. They were trying to come up with

the best idea on stopping this Hunter character. The thing that hurt most of their ideas was the fact that they didn't knowword one about Hunter. Not even Darrett, a boy from a world almost ruled by Emplates, had no clue about it. Finally, she heard Paigesay, "Why don't we have Ev and Rich try and use his abilities against him?"

Jubilee looked at Ev and then at Rich and said, "I think that might work." She truly didn't like the idea of Ev going to fight with someone dangerous, but his ability would allow them to find out a little about Hunter.

She then heard Rich say something that struck her. "Good plan, but how likely do you think I'm going to be to leave Yvette's side right now?" He was right. Deep down, Jubilee knew that he wouldn't leave Penny's side. Rich would stay to defend her, if it even meant his death.

She then heard Everett said, "I think it's a good plan. We can find out his abilities, and maybe some of the rest of us can hold him back."

Rich then said, "Only if you don't get close to him Ev. If I remember right, you, for a short time, were an Emplate. That puts you on Hunter's shoot list." Jubilee felt her heart sink. Rich was right. That was right before Onslaught. Then Rich said, "And if I have to wild guess, Hunter might think Yvette might have seduced me. I don't know, but it would be a good guess."

She heard Sean sigh and say, "The lad's right. He might try to kill all of us just for trying to protect Yvette, but I think that gives us all the more reason to stop him."

Jubilee was about to say something when Monet came in and said, "Maybe we can stop his assault before he gets too close, but I think the only way to find out his power is to make him think he's got close."

Jubilee almost started to fume at that. She had a feeling what Monet was suggesting. "Are you saying that we use Penny as bait? No way." She heard everyone agreeing with her.

Jubilee was surprised when Monet just glared at her and said, "No, we project an image of her onto something. I doubt this Hunter has my brother's gift of knowledge on sight. Maybe we can fool him just long enough to get an upper hand."

Jubilee looked at Monet in shock, partially from the glare she had received. Something was definitely different with Monet. This wasn't the usual, I know what I have planned glare. This was a 'Don't mess with me' glare. She had seen Wolvie use it a few times. This wasn't the same Monet they dealt with daily. Something was very different. She then said, "Ok, that makes sense, but what do we do when we find out."

Monet smiled and said, "We'll have to plan on our feet then, but we can't let this Hunter person get the upper hand. If he succeeds, we might lose two teammates, maybe more. He might just try to eliminate the whole school."

Jubilee had to agree with that reasoning, but something really bothered her about Monet. It was the small things. Something one wouldn't normally notice, unless a fake was standing there. She started wondering if it was Monet or Claudette in control. Then, she remembered that Monet said that Claudette was a symbiotic mutant. She needed Monet to survive. It couldn't be that. She was musing on this when Emma said, "That sounds like the best idea we've had so far. We just have to set up a target to catch his attention. One I can mask in his mind."

Sean then said, "Maybe we can use one of the practice droids. We might be able to even set it up to look like Yvette." Jubilee then noticed that for the first time since they entered the room, her surrogate 'sister' had a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

He walked through the streets of the small town, careful not to let anyone see his hands. Although he wore gloves, he always felt that people could still see his curse. He cursed the day he had

met with Emplate. He cursed even accepting the offer of power. Although many searched for the same power that Emplate sought, he was only concerned with stopping the mutant factor. The natural mutant vampire that Emplate was, and what Emplate had turned him into. Now he was looking for the reluctant enforcer. Something told him Yvette was in this small town. He came to a small cafe and entered it. He noticed that most of the people were focusing on a TV in the corner. He heard a waitress say, "Just sit down, and someone will be with you in a moment."

He didn't feel like sitting. He wanted to get his task done, so he could finally be at peace. He was focused on the thought when he heard a voice on the TV say, "For 15 nights, the eyes of America watched, as common everyday people tried to win the biggest prize in the history of television. Many tried, few failed, but more reached a higher goal." A picture of a man with a red beard appeared as the TV said, "You've just won \$125,000" The man was in ecstasy. If it were him, he would not be happy. Then the image changed back to the New York Skyline, "And then, came a lone boy from Pennsylvania. As the country watched, the most anticipated moment in Television history approached."

The image changed, and he saw the image of a boy in his early 20's on the screen. The boy just said, "B for my final answer." He noticed that the boy seemed to look ill. He wondered if he, too, was a victim of Emplate's.

He heard one of the boys in the place say, "Hey, Dorian, isn't that that Richard Cale dude from the school?" This sounded interesting.

The other said, "Yea, I think he said that girl he's dating was in the audience that night, you remember, the redhead closer to our age. Can't believe the father allows it?" This caught his attention even more.

The TV then said, "at the final question, the magical moment turned to tragedy as Richard Cale fell ill right on stage." He quickly glanced back at the TV and saw three people help get Richard out of the studio. He could tell just from a peripheral glance who he was looking at. It was Yvette Gyorgi, the next name on his list.

He turned and said to the two boys talking, "Excuse me, you know that boy that was on there?"

The one looked at him, puzzled, and said, "Ran into him a few times at the comic shop. Helped me out when I couldn't pay for mine. He's a nice guy, if not a little weird. He reads some strange stuff."

"And the girl, what's her name?"

The other boy just responded, "I think she said it was Yvette Cassidy, but I'm not sure. She said her father was the head of the school." He now had an idea of what was happening. She must have realized that the boy on the show was a mutant, and was hiding what she was from this boy, or maybe she had seduced him. If it was later, the boy had to die, but that was secondary. He had to kill her, so he could bring himself closer to peace.

He looked again at the two boys and asked his last question of them. "Which direction is this school from here?" The one boy pointed in a direction. That was all he needed. He didn't even wait for directions. He just ran out the door of the cafe and headed in the direction the boy pointed out. With luck, he would catch her by surprise. His own mutant gifts would be all he needed to stop her long enough to kill her.

3 - Liberation

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Hunted
Liberation

Yvette sat in the room that was in the inner parts of the underground center of the school. She had many thoughts running through her mind about what was about to happen. She wondered how her friends would be able to stop Hunter. They did not know about his determination. They didn't know what lengths that he would go to to do what he had to do. She wondered how he would treat her adopted father. She didn't want to think of what horrible things he would do. She then thought of the one she loved, her boyfriend, Richard Cale. She knew so much about him, yet she knew that he didn't know that much about himself. She worried about what Hunter would do to him. Her mind was lingering on this though when she heard in her mind, {Yvette, you know that I put your safety above my own. I will not let that maniac hurt you, let alone kill you.}

This filled her with some comfort, but she still felt scared. {Rich, I worry about you a lot. You know that I care for you, and I don't want to see you hurt.} She saw him look in her eyes and she saw it right there. How deep his love was for her. She smiled and said, {I know. You mean the same to me.}

He nodded and said, {Together.} He had extended his hand to her.

She nodded and responded, {Together, forever and always.} It brought her great comfort to know that Rich would protect her. She had never thought that they would have to face such a menace.

She then heard her father say, "Listen you two. Right now I'd rather here that you two are talking aloud instead of the mental talk that you're both using."

She nodded and said, "Alright, father."

She watched as Rich nodded as well and said, "Yes sir, Banshee." She knew that Rich took this very serious now. He was using codenames. She knew that when Rich took something very serious like this, he would start using codenames. She just sat and watched as he walked over to talk to her adopted father.

Sean watched as Rich stepped away from Yvette for a moment. He could tell that Rich was worried about something. When the boy was close enough, he said softly, "What's wrong, lad?"

He noticed that Rich's demeanor was different. He realized it when he used his codename. He listened as Rich quietly said, "I have an uneasy feeling about today."

Sean didn't like the sound of that. It was bad enough having Yvette scared, but if she knew this, it would send her into a state similar to before Rich arrived at the school. Time and time again, Sean had thanked the heavens that Rich was sent to the school. He softly said to his student, "What is it, lad?"

He listened as Rich said, "I think something is not right with M. She's been acting odd for most of the day, since the message was dropped off. I mean, her actions and behavior is not typical for her."

Sean noticed the worry in the lad's eyes. He cautiously said, "Are you sure about that, lad? I don't want any snap judgements being made."

The lad shook his head but said, "Not totally, but just look at her actionstoday. She really hasn't been acting the same since the message."

Sean eyed him suspiciously and said, "Rich, ye know that Monet holds thatbody with her sister, and she said her sister decided to plan her wardrobe. Do ye think that we are dealing with Claudette?" Sean watched asRich nodded his head. Sean knew he had to comfort the lad, becauseif this got out of hand now, it might just make things go wrong. "Rich, ye can't jump to the wrong conclusions. Right now, we justhave to hope that Monet is in control, and if not, that Claudette is onour side. I honestly think that neither Monet, or Claudette, wouldbe helping Emplate."

Sean could see the worry on the lad's face as he said, "I hope not, sir. I really hope not." This was an obvious concern for Rich. Seanknew the lad cared more for Yvette than he cared about his own life.

Sean wanted to walk over and talk to his adopted daughter, but the alarmwent off. He noticed Yvette tensed up at the sound, as well as Rich. He turned to see that the perimeter had been breached. Hunter washere. He hit the communicator and said, "Emma, are ye ready?"

There was a crackle over the communicator as she said, "Darrett, Mondoand I are just finishing up. Tell the other kids to get to theirstations. I can only pull this once."

He broadcasted over all the communicators the message. "Alright kids,we got little time to take care of our visitor, so be on the ready. Emma will let us all know about his ability. Just be careful, and I'm makingthis double for you, Synch." He turned off the communicator, andturned to see Richard facing the door, claws at the ready. Sean thensaid, "That goes quadruple for you, Skitz. Remember, ye could also be on this hunter's list, especially if he doesn't understand your power." The boy silently nodded, but Sean figured that right then, Rich was assuringYvette that he would keep her safe, no matter what.

Emma ran into the confines of a dark room after Darrett and Mondo left. What they had pieced together was almost human looking. She waitedfor Hunter to arrive. She hoped that it would be easy to mask theimage of Penance onto the object constructed. She also hoped thatHunter would not enter through the room she was hiding in. She wastaking the biggest risk right now, and she only got one shot to get itright. As she waited, she hoped that she could hear him move before she saw him move. Soon enough, there was a sound, and she sent theimage out. Soon enough, she heard a male voice say, "It has been a longtime, Yvette Gyorgi, and we are face to face again. I hope you have some fitting last words." She glanced in the room to see the manjust facing the dummy. He hadn't realized it yet. Soon enough,she saw his powers go into full force, as restraints similar to what Penancehad warn shot out all over, and converged on the dummy. He couldcreate restraints, but more happened. They seemed to be positioningthe dummy, and then it happen. One knocked the head off, and theillusion was blown. The mutant yelled in outrage and looked in hergeneral direction. She reacted in fear and moved toward the secretpanel in the room. Then she had known she was spotted as she heardhim yell, "YOU."

As she approached the panel she started to say psyonically to everyone, [Becareful, he can create restraints or traps of somekind. He's also....] She felt a searing pain in her mind as she collapsed to the floor, facefirst. Soon she felt what seemed to be restraints start to entangleher, the only thing was, she couldn't see them.

She went to struggle for freedom when she heard Hunter say, "You aren'ther, but you're fortunate. You don't reek with the curse. Iwouldn't try to struggle. As you can guess, my abilities are to restrainand subdue my advisaries. If you were one like me, I'd kill you inan instant, but I warn you not to move, or even use your psychic abilities. You are restrained in psionic bonds, which dampen your abilities, and alsobind you in such a way that every move you make tightens them and crushesy you. You

see, the less you do, the longer you live. You'll be free if one of two things occur. By the way, you can speak, just don't yell." She noticed a smile on his face.

Emma was scared. She didn't like the idea of being powerless, but the odds were in his favor, for now. She asked him the question he was waiting for. "What two things are those that can occur?"

He looked at her and smiled. "Either I kill Yvette, or I get killed or knocked unconscious. I think you better hope I kill her quickly." He started to leave the room. She watched as he turned to look at her. He then said, "You have been lucky, not to have been cursed. She could have easily cursed you. I just hope that this Cale person is as fortunate as you."

As he left, she mumbled under her breath, "With your attitude, I'd bet you are likely to fail." She sighed and started wondering how she could get out of this mess without getting killed in the process.

Rich heard Emma get cut off in his mind. The lessons both he and Yvette were getting in using their psychic link was helpful, but now he wished he didn't have that ability. He took a glance at his love, and saw her shaking in fear. He then turned to Sean and said, "I didn't like the sound of that."

He watched as his teacher looked at him and said, "Let me check and see if I can find her or the blighter." Rich watched the screen come to life as images from all over the school ground danced over it. Soon, Sean stopped it on one image and Rich saw why. "Look's like our visitor is making his way to one of the entrances to where we are at. I hope the others stop him."

Rich looked over at Yvette. She had tensed up a bit, and was curled in a ball. She was petrified. He walked over to her side and tensed up. It was almost the safest way to hold her. He put an arm around her and said, {It will be alright. We'll stop him.}

She looked at him and said, {Are you sure? He's already caught Emma. She might be dead.}

He didn't want to say that she was right, but Sean calmed her fears down a bit when he said, "I just found Emma. She doesn't appear to be able to move. It's almost like she's been restrained."

Rich looked over at Sean and said, "I-i-is t-t-that t-t-the c-c-case?" He was surprised at how his words came out. He was scared as well, and he noticed how tense he had become to comfort Yvette. He didn't tense once as he said his next statement with difficulty. "I-i-is i-i-it p-p-possible t-t-that H-h-hunter's a-a-abilities ar-r-re t-t-to-re-e-estrain m-m-mutants, B-B-Banshee?"

He saw the concern on Sean's face as he turned and said into the com unit, "Listen up everyone, we have an idea on what Hunter does. He seems to have the ability to disarm and capture a person. He can generate restraints to do this, so be careful." He watched as Sean came over to them and said, "Do you think the both of you will be alright? I think the others are going to need my help out there."

He was about to say yes when Yvette held him tighter and said {Don't let him leave. I'm scared.} He had never seen nor heard Yvette so scared. He held her in response and tried to soothe her nerves.

Eventually, he said to her. {He might do more good out there than in here. Besides, I will not let any harm come to you.} He noticed that she looked him right in the eyes. He watched as a smile crossed her face. He took that as a sign that she agreed, albeit a bit reluctantly. He turned to Sean and said, "I think that would be a good idea. I can protect her." He also noticed that her faith in him helped to calm him down.

He watched as Sean headed for the door and then turned. "I'll send M down to help. Last thing I want to happen is to find both you and Penance dead. You understand me on that, Skitz." He nodded, and his teacher left the room.

As Sean left, he felt Yvette put her arms around him. {I hope everything goes alright. I'm terribly frightened.} She turned and held her. He understood her fears. Now he was going to have to

find a way to help her. He understood the predicament, being that he was in the same one month earlier.

As he held her, he said, "I'm going to protect you, my love. No matter what." He had to do the hardest thing at this point, for him to do. He had thought this through as he made his choice. In the time she needed him there the most, he had to prepare for the attack the best way possible.

Everett stayed close to Jubilee as they headed down the corridor. Knowing what they knew now, he knew that they had to be extra cautious. He knew that Paige and Jono were with them. Sean had suggest that everyone work in groups. As they continued down the corridor, he heard Jubilee say, "I don't know if this is the worse we have faced yet."

He heard Paige say, "Ah hear you on that. We have faced threats like Emplate, Omega Red, and some of the enemies Rich has made."

He then heard Jono say, "*Like Soundwave and Aura. Those two had to be the worse.*"

He couldn't help but to interject as he said, "What about Juggernaut? You don't think he's the toughest, Chamber?"

He noticed his friend think about it for a moment and say, "*Maybe, but considering what Soundwave did to some of us, we haven't dealt with anything that powerful.*"

Everett then heard Jubilee say, "Speak for yourself." Everett looked at her and realized what she meant. She had fought many battles with the X-Men, and with Wolverine. He knew what she had dealt with, and saw the fear as she thought of all those enemies who came to take vengeance on her.

He was lost on that thought when Paige said, "I think I heard something in here." He watched as Paige entered the room. They slowly moved and searched the room, not knowing where Hunter was. As they worked their way around, Everett kept his aura out to find Hunter, but he couldn't. He then had a very grim thought. What if this was a trap to catch all of them, to get them out of the way of his main goal. He was about to say that they should get out when Paige yelled, "Oh my God, My hands are stuck."

He saw Jubilee run over to her and then said to him, "She's right, Synch. Husk's hands are stuck right on the desk. We're in a trap." He watched as looked and yelled, "Synch, the door."

Everett turned just in time to see the door close. He caught the glimpse of a figure there. It had to be Hunter. He shouted, "Chamber, can you blast the door?" He turned to see Jono kneeling on the floor, weakened. Another part of the trap. Everett tried to get in synch with Jono, but he couldn't. He couldn't synch up with any of them.

He watched as Jubilee jumped over the desk and shouted, "I'll get the door open." Everett realized what she was going to try. Then realized what might happen as he grabbed her hands. "Ev, what are you doing?"

He just looked at her and said, "What do you think will happen? We got suckered into this trap. Look at Jono and Paige. I can't use my ability. What do you think will happen when you go to use yours."

Soon a voice seemed to be resounding in the room. "Miss Lee, if you went to blast that door, you'd boil yourself alive." He saw the startled look on her face as she went pale in fright. The voice continued, "And Mr. Starsmore is in no threat, as long as he doesn't try to speak or anything else. Also, I wouldn't want you to try and free Miss Guthrie. You try and husk her free, you will only end up severing her arms. Plus, I negated your abilities, Mr. Thomas, so that you could not detect that this was a trap until it was too late. Now just stay quiet. You'll be free when I have done my task."

Everett held Jubilee and said, "I hope he doesn't succeed." Jubilee looked at him, with a little defeat in her eyes. He knew how she was feeling, totally helpless. They had to hope that someone would help them, and soon.

Angelo watched the hall warily. It was like he was back in the hood, knowing that around the corner could be someone from the rival gang. With him were Daria, Mondo, and Darrett. They were all concerned about the same thing, where Hunter was. As they continued down the hall, he heard Darrett say, "I wonder if Hunter was wiped out before the wars started."

Angelo turned to face the boy from the future. It was known that Darrett lived in an era that was plagued by a war between Emplate's, and in that future, Skitz and Penance were the worse. He calmly said, "What makes you say that?"

Darrett just looked at him and said, "This is the first I've heard of him. Maybe he was wiped out by some of the Emplate's that, well, you know." Angelo knew that the kid was starting to get uneasy about talking about this timeline. Angelo knew why he didn't want to mention anything about.

Angelo just said, "I understand. I don't like talking about my past either. But I think I can understand your fear a bit. I saw Skitz lose his temper once. It wasn't pretty."

Darrett looked at him and just said, "What happened?" The boy was intrigued.

Angelo really didn't want to tell Darrett what happened, but he did bring the topic up. He just said, "Banshee's evil cousin had shown up. Mondo, Chamber, Skitz, Penance and I as well as Banshee, were the only ones on campus. Skitz had come across Banshee's cousin by chance, and found a fake Mondo had taken the place of the real one." He heard Daria gasp. She hadn't heard the story. Angelo then said, "When we all faced off against Black Tom, he struck Penance, and Skitz went ballistic. He was afraid that Black Tom had seriously injured her."

He heard Darrett make a disapproving sound as he said, "I knew that he had a vile streak in him."

Angelo then said to the boy, "You know those walks he takes everyday." When the boy nodded, Angelo said, "He's walking to the site. He put part of Tom's face there, sort of a final resting place. He keeps doing it, hoping it will ease the guilt he feels. It wasn't like he could send someone back to stop him from doing the killing."

He noticed as Darrett just looked off into the distance. "That's why I was sent back. In my time, I was cornered by Skitz and Penance, but they sent me back in time, to stop the horror."

Angelo looked at Darrett and said, "Sounds like something Rich would do."

He was about to say another word when he heard a scream behind him. He spun to see Daria stuck to the ceiling. As he looked up, she just shouted, "Someone, get me down. This is just like when Soundwave attacked." Angelo had an idea what was happening. It must be one of Hunter's traps.

He watched as Mondo started to reach up to grab for Daria. "It will be alright. I'll get you down." He noticed that Mondo started to get a very perplexed look on his face, and Angelo had a grim feeling on what was happening. He watched as Mondo tried to move, only to see his gentle friend's feet were stuck fast to the floor.

Angelo realized that they were going to be made immobile. He wasn't about to let that happen to him, and his friends. Then he wondered how he was supposed to help. He stood there helpless to decide. He didn't know what action was anticipated. He finally decided. He looked at Darrett and said, "Darrett, try and get Banshee here, quick. I'm going to try and stop this Hunter guy."

As he went to leave, he heard Darrett say, "Skin, you don't have far to go." He looked straight ahead as the figure just stood at the end of the hall. He had a bad feeling in his gut about this, and just started to move when he felt it. He looked to his hands only to see them entirely stretching. He was literally tying himself up.

He started to shout, "Darrett..." and then he saw it. Darrett had already conjured someone up, who looked like Henry Stauf from the 7th guest, except that Henry had an uncontrolled look on his face, almost as if he didn't want to do what he was doing, which was pummeling Darrett. Soon the boy fell into unconsciousness as the figure disappeared. He looked back at Hunter and noticed the blank look on his

face. Angelo just looked at him and said, "Why are you doing this?"

The figure just plainly said, "To save you all. Yvette is a menace, a curse, and you don't even know it. I just hope I'm not too late to save this Richard Cale fellow." Angelo then heard the loud sound, which meant Banshee was coming, but what would this Hunter fellow do to Sean.

He turned and listened. He heard the howling sound as it approached. It had to be another of the misguided people here who thought Yvette wasn't a danger. He must have been coming from the direction that Yvette was in. As he listened, he learned that this mutant relied on sound. He also knew that sound could not travel with no air. He looked and saw the hall that the mutant was coming from. He focused on it, and soon he felt the woosh of air vacating the hall. He watched as the figure came flying into that part of the hall, and fell, gasping for air. He just proceeded down the hall, past the fallen figure. As he passed he just said, "I figure she must be hiding down here. The lack of air is only temporary, but it won't kill you."

As he continued down the hall, he heard the figure say, with great effort, "You won't get away with this."

He nearly continued and said, "I'm only trying to save all your souls. There is no cure for this curse, except death." He walked down the hall, noticing how the walls seemed to change a bit. This school must have added on to so the mutants had some place to train. Had his life taken a different course, he would have enjoyed it here, but now, he had a task to do. He slowly walked past each door, pausing to listen. All he needed was to hear one sound, and he knew it was her. Everyone was out of the way, however, he did not see the one called Richard Cale. Had the boy been unlucky enough to be enthralled. He didn't want to think that. He only intended to end one life. He finally heard a sound behind one of the doors. It had to be Yvette. He pushed the door open slowly, figuring she might attack. He noticed however that her back was to the door. Was she that confident that she would be stopped. He noticed that the room had to be some sort of war room. He figured he might use that to his advantage. He focused on her and soon, restraints shot from the table and pulled her toward the table.

He watched as she struggled, and then looked at him. He almost revelled in the fact that his next most dangerous foe was about to be liberated. She looked at him in horror and just said, "Please, don't kill me. I'm not one of them anymore."

He slowly moved forward as he said, "That's a lie, Yvette. I know there is no escape from his bonds. If it were possible, I would have done it by now. Hopefully, I'll have you gone before you seduce that boy, Richard Cale."

He was startled when he heard a voice behind him. "You mistake seduction for true love. You probably don't even know love." He turned to face the same boy, and then he saw the hands. Just as he saw the hands, the boy said, "Just in case you're wondering, you gave me these."

Hunter was dumbfounded, and then said, "You lie. She's cursed you. I will stop you then kill the both of you." He started to focus on the boy. He had to trap the boy, but the more he focused, the more frustrated he got. He couldn't create a trap. He then heard an odd sound for the moment. He glanced and noticed Yvette was giggling. He looked at the boy almost terrified.

He saw Richard Cale smile as he said, "You see, Hunter, I am a full fledged mimic. When you approached that door, I had your abilities from the start. You've trapped almost everyone, and stepped right into a trap yourself."

He tried to comprehend the situation. This couldn't be happening. "But I captured her. She's helpless." He watched as the boy just tapped his head. The trap wasn't his, but Richard Cale's illusion to make it look like he trapped Yvette. He realized that he was being duped. Now, he was mad. Hunter looked at Richard Cale and said, "I will not be stopped." He pulled a knife out and lunged at Richard, but the boy sidestepped quick. Now it was a battle so he could end this. "I'll end this, even if I

have to kill you.” He took another dive at Richard, and luck had sided with him as the boy backpedaled and tripped. He smiled as he was about to drive the knife home, and suddenly he was airborne. He looked up to see an African girl flying him out through the roof.

Monet watched as only an observer. Her sister still had control over their joint body as she carried Hunter out through the room. She listened as he said, “If I would have known, I would have put you out of commission, too.”

She heard her sister exclaim, “Yeah, Right. My brother has failed to capture them, I doubt that you could kill them. Now once you’re back in his flock, maybe he can capture them.” She saw the look of anger cross his face.

He shouted at her, “You’re helping that monster. I should just kill you.” She watched as the knife struck at her, but broke in two.

She watched as her sister stopped in mid air. She felt the grin cross her face as Claudette said, “Just for that, you’re being delivered AirMail.” She felt them pull back and throw Hunter straight in the direction of the lighthouse. As he flew out of sight, she heard her sisters say, “Now for the other two to be delivered.”

Monet realized what was going to happen. Claudette was going to hand deliver Rich and Yvette to Emplate. She had to stop her. She gathered up all her mental strength and started to take control of the mind. [I can’t let you do that, Claudette.]

As she seized control, her sister yelled, “Are you nuts, we might get killed in the fall.” Soon she felt the joint body plummet to the school. She hoped someone would catch them.

When Rich saw M fly Hunter through the roof, he had a feeling it was over. He got up and ran over to Yvette, making the bonds holding her disappear. He picked her up off the table and said, “Are you alright?”

She hugged him tight and said, “Fine now. I’m glad your plan worked.”

He held her and said, “Almost didn’t. You shouldn’t of been giggling.” He felt her tighten her grip and kiss him.

As she stopped the kiss, she smiled her sly smile and said, “Well, I knew I was going to get let go, or else I wouldn’t have been giggling.”

Soon Rich heard some of the others come in, all panic. He saw relief in their eyes when they saw Yvette alive. Sean was the first to speak. “Thank God. We all thought the worse. How did ye stop him?”

Rich smiled and said, “Trapped him using his abilities, but Monet saved us both. Thanks for sending her in, Sean.”

Rich saw a puzzled look on Sean’s face as he said, “Lad, I didnae see Monet before I got to the others. She must have been waiting here.” Rich was concerned now. It didn’t make sense. He was about to ask how she might have known, when Monet came crashing through the room, in an autistic state. Sean quickly said, “Everyone, help me get Monet to the med center.”

As they all started to carry Monet to the med center, Rich heard Yvette say, “Thank you, again.” She leaned over and whispered into his ear, “We should watch a movie tonight. Forget about what happened today.” He liked the idea of that. It might even help him understand how Monet knew to be in the right place at exactly the right time.

When Hunter came to, he noticed he was floating about the ground, as if suspended. Emplate’s sister still had him. He was about to strike when he heard a horribly familiar voice say, “Hello Hunter,

have you finally returned to us?"

He looked up and straight at Emplate. He was now a prisoner again, but he would not let Emplate control him again. He spat at Emplate, and said, "I'll never serve you, even if I had too." He had to get Emplate's sister to let him go.

Soon he heard a different voice. This one was female as she said, "Very unwise. I don't think my lover liked that answer." Soon, he felt as if his body was being crushed. He would not give in to Emplate, not again.

As his body was being crushed, he heard Emplate say, "Hunter, I must admit that it was bold of you to try and kill Yvette, but she has become more strong willed since Richard Cale entered her life. If it weren't for him, she still would be linked to me."

Hunter then realized it. She was free. It was obtainable. He felt light headed. He was going to die. He couldn't die, not now. He was still cursed. Then he realized something. He managed to run his fingers along his palms. They were gone. He was free of the curse. As he drew his last breath, he just said, "I'm finally free." Soon, his sight failed, followed by his hearing. He knew he was floating, but slowly that feeling of being held passed. His mind then showed him that tunnel he heard about. He knew what it was, even before he started towards it.

Rich stood by as he was near Monet's bed. At the edge of the bed was Yvette. She knew he was wondering how Monet knew to be there at the time she was. As he stood there, he heard Yvette say, "Do you think something might be wrong?"

He didn't look at her, but he said, "I don't know. She wasn't told to protect us, yet she was waiting. I wonder if it was Monet who saved us, but Claudette."

She looked at him concerned. "You mean to say you don't think that's a good thing." She knew him too well. She knew exactly what he was wondering and thinking about.

He just looked at her and said, "I'm not sure. It appeared that Monet went into one of her spells, but what happened to Hunter. He disappeared. Where did he go?" Soon, however, his mind was distracted. He had locked onto a memory. Even though Monet was in this state, he occasionally got a lock. It didn't last long, but he got an idea who was in charge of the two twins. Right now, he couldn't tell if it was Monet or Claudette. He did slowly see an image, in the subconscious. When he saw it, he staggered back, losing the link.

He felt Yvette by his side, as she said, "What happened?"

He fought to get the words together. "I just saw Monet's memories. I can't believe it." He started to walk out. He felt Yvette take his arm, and he could tell she was worried. He just said in the mental link that had just formed, {I'll stop by later, and we can watch a film. Right now, I need some time to think.} He knew she understood as she let go. He slowly walked out of the room. This thought floored him, and brought back some sort of dread to him, although he couldn't remember why. Maybe shock had caused him to forget it, or he forced himself to repress it, but he couldn't fathom it. He just saw himself holding Monet, when she was just a baby. He walked back to his room, wondering what it meant, and deeper still, wondering what it meant about how much he truly knew about all of the St. Croix's, including the one being he learned to fear most, Marius St. Croix, a.k.a. Emplate.