The Blood & Tears Progression

by Lex_Munro

Summary

Logan had something precious, and gave it up. Thanks to Stryker, he forgot all about it. Years later, someone jogs his memory, and he goes to get that precious something back. Little does he know, his long-lost lover is about to be recruited to save the multiverse...

Notes

Movieverse, not compliant with First Class. Crosses over into several AUs, including The Dreams of the Waking Man and my Avengers movieverse fics (I Don't Dance).
**Nemesis**

Chapter Summary

Wade, lots of sugar, a cramped chopper. Logan is not pleased.

Chapter Notes

god, don't kill me for this. XD

i actually liked the Wolverine movie. the CG was very mediocre in some places (mostly regarding Wolvie's claws) and, yes, they mangled the comicverse canon (come on, guys, that's totally the standard for comic-to-movie work), but there were far too many pretty people for me to be put off by either of those issues (Ryan Reynolds, David Henney, and Hugh Jackman should not be allowed to share a screen; my brain nearly exploded).

i totally point the finger at MerianMoriarty for this fic. she said (approximately): "LIEK OMG TTLY AWSUM MOOVEE, U NEEDS 2 RITE ABOUT WADE ON SUGAR HIGH." and at first i was like "no wai, i dun't wanna rite about teh x-men moovees." .......and then i couldn't stop thinking how frigging funny it would be for poor Logan (who never has liked flying) to be stuck in a chopper with Wade and candy.

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). Wade's slightly sociopathic sense of humor. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

**pairing:** none/general.

**timeline:** mid-seventies sometime?

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

**notes:** 1) "is wade a mutant?" good question. i don't think they ever made that clear in the movie. in the comics, wade is not a mutant, he was just really badass before the Weapon X thing and was really badass with an awesome stolen healing factor and a horrible physical disfigurement afterward. i'm just going to say, for the sake of the fic, that movieverse wade is a mutant badass (possessing the "side-effects" that comicverse wade got from wolvie's healing factor). i find this to be a convenient excuse for his natural hyperactivity. 2) "what's with the weird candy references?" orangeheads (orange lemonheads) are disgusting, and came out in the late seventies. (Everlasting) Gobstopppers and SweeTarts were among the first Wonka candies ever made (the chewy gobstoppers didn't come out for a long time). 3) "did wade just say something in internettish...in the seventies?" why yes. yes, he did. Wade doesn't believe in that pesky fourth wall, remember? i blame Loki for telling him about the whole comicbook character thing. 4) Nord. ugh. in the comicverse, his real name is Chris Nord, he went by the alias David North for a long time, and he's used the codenames Maverick and Agent Zero. apparently, in the movieverse his name is David Nord. well, it is in the
game, anyway, and the game is much closer to moviiverse than anything else.

Nemesis

Some people are just designed by nature to rub one another the wrong way, to be enemies in spirit if not in action, to be unscratchable itches, unconquerable challenges. Nemesis is the term coined by the Greeks for this, after their goddess of divine retribution.

Logan had thought it a bunch of bullshit until joining Team X.

They’d been given dossiers to review, when they’d first joined and each time Stryker added a new recruit to the team. Dossiers, unfortunately, neglect to mention that every ‘special gift’ has its fine print.

Take Logan’s own case for example—’heightened senses’ should have come with a warning like ‘household appliances will make you irritable, and the sound of a dog barking in the next county will set your teeth on edge.’ Wraith’s might have been something like ‘for five seconds before and after each jump, everyone will be able to see the results of years of bad posture.’ Nord’s would have been ‘you will feel the need to be an arrogant ass to everyone you don’t shoot on sight,’ Fred’s would have been ‘you will have all the intellectual prowess and emotional maturity of an eight-year-old,’ Bradley’s would have been ‘all electrical toys will fascinate you, especially state-of-the-art aircraft containing airsick teammates.’

They were all minor oddities and annoyances that Logan had to make himself adjust to, just like the personality quirks of ‘normal’ humans. Admittedly, Victor’s fine print probably would have filled a good-sized book…but if Logan hadn’t managed to adjust to it after almost a century, he never would.

Wade Wilson was a horse of an entirely different color, breed, and possibly species. ‘Enhanced strength, speed, endurance, agility, and reflexes’ had a deceptively modest footnote of ‘highly increased metabolism,’ apparently important enough to actually rate being typed out and printed on a page. It had only made Logan raise an eyebrow to read the three unassuming little words.

Those three words could not possibly have prepared Logan for the reality of being in close quarters with the man. His resting heartbeat sounded like a minigun to Logan’s sensitive ears; his natural body temperature made him radiate warmth like a space heater; he constantly craved high-calorie junk food; his scent was a rapidly shifting kaleidoscope of bloodlust, adrenaline, glee, and sugar; he hardly ever stopped moving; and he never shut up.

Apparently, nature and God had created Wade Wilson (and cramped choppers) to serve as Logan’s nemesis. There was simply no adjusting to Wade.

“SweeTart?” the merc said beside him, shaking a brightly colored cardboard box.

“What?” Logan muttered.

“Candy,” Wade clarified. “Want some?”

“No.”
Wade leaned closer, bringing uncomfortable heat and a strong scent of sugar. “You sure? They’re Wonkalicious.”

“I don’t eat sweets, kid,” he growled, shoving Wade out of his personal space.

“Right, gotta watch that girlish figure.” A few seats away, Victor snickered. “And cavities. Probably can’t get a dentist to risk life and limb checking those fangs of yours. I knew a guy once who had, like, this hardcore phobia of Wonka candy. I think he was maybe traumatized as a child: had a bad root canal, was raped by a Gene Wilder look-alike, something. Anyhoo, he’d run screaming at the sight of a Gobstopper. It was fucking hilarious. I snuck into his room one night while he was asleep and covered his floor with like three hundred Gobstoppers—the orange ones, ‘cause I don’t like ‘em.”

“What’d he do when he woke up?” Wraith asked.

“Pissed his pants and jumped out the window. Fourth floor, too—wheeeeeeepSPLAT! Broke both his legs. Like I said, fucking hilarious.”

“You have got some serious issues,” said Logan.

Wade flapped a hand dismissively, crunched a few more of the little candies. “Oh, hell yes. Mommy died when I was little, Daddy beat me every day, except when he forgot, I killed him with his own gun, et cetera, et cetera. By contrast, I’m sure you and Vicky had whatever the nineteenth century equivalent of Charles Manson woulda been, to end up with such an epic lack of humor. Y’know the guys who make Lemonheads are planning to do a new flavor soon? Orange—how weird is that?”

“Nobody cares, Wade,” Wraith sighed, tipping his hat down to shade his eyes and leaning back as though to nap.

“Why, thank you so much, John,” Wade retorted smoothly. “I care, and that makes me nobody, and nobody’s perfect, and nobody’s always right, so that just proves every point I’ve made today and in the past by extension of infallibility. I wonder if that makes me God… Seriously, Logan, these things are awesome, you should try a couple.”

Victor chuckled. “Might not be a bad idea, Jimmy; way he acts, you’d think they were laced with cocaine.”

“Do it, do it, do it!” Wade prodded, leaning close and rattling the box again. “C’mon, they’re, like, 120% of your daily value of sugar, guaranteed to make even a grump like you happy and hyper, not that there’s much that could possibly make you grouchier.”

Logan scowled. “We got three hours left to this trip, and I don’t like flyin’ to begin with. I swear t’ God, Wade, if you don’t shut up and leave me alone, I’ll knock you out.”

“Y’see, it’s impolite conversation like that that really motivates guys like me to be contrary,” Wade said loftily, tossing a SweeTart in the air and catching it in his mouth. “B’sides, this’d be a really boring story if you could actually manage to follow through. Only in your dreams. The fans would never let it happen. Ell-oh-ell, less-than-three.”

With a growl, Logan swung his fist, grunting when his knuckles cracked against the steel of the chopper’s hull.

Wade was casually picking up a dropped SweeTart from the floor. “Ten second rule!” he called triumphantly, and ate it. “Hey, you should be careful, old man. I hear choppers are dangerous.
Wouldn’t wantcha to fall and break a hip. I can ask Major Asshole to get a safety railing installed for ya.”

Thwarted, Logan muttered a string of curses and rubbed at the healing bones of his hand, trying his best to ignore Victor’s laughter from the other end of the passenger compartment.

For his part, Wade just crunched on another pair of button-shaped candies. “Shouldn’t scowl so much; you’ll get wrinkles. Wanna try again, slowpoke? Go on, take another swing. Call it a gift.”

Logan tried a feint, but Wade didn’t fall for it. In the space of a second, there was an effortless movement and a brief buzz of accelerated heart rate, and Logan’s fist missed its mark.

“Whoops! Not quite. But y’know what they say, third time’s the charm.”

After two more dodged swings, Wade was still yapping (“C’mon, best six out of eleven, you can do it!”) and Victor was in stitches from laughing so hard. Logan had well and truly had enough. At the end of his patience, he lunged. He paid for it—Wade was not a polite brawler by any definition, so he ended up with a lot of uncomfortable breaks and bruises that were already fading—but he finally leaned over with grim satisfaction and set the box of candies on the opposite bench while Wade, trussed up in a flight harness, struggled ineffectually.

“Okay, now that is just cruel,” Wade protested, stretching out a leg to see if there was any hope of somehow retrieving the candy that way.

“Tell it to yer momma, kid, ‘cause I don’t give a damn,” Logan snorted, settling back down in his seat. “We got anything around here to gag him with?”

Victor leered. “I got a few suggestions, but he’d probably bite ‘em off. How ‘bout a pair o’ socks?”

Wade paled. “You wouldn’t!”

Without tipping his hat back up, Wraith reached down and removed his boots and socks. “Here. Anything to shut him the hell up.”

Logan grinned.

Some nemeses, it seemed, could be (temporarily, at least) vanquished.

.End.
Chapter Summary

When you start to think the crazy chatterbox is sexy, you know you're going insane.

Chapter Notes

warnings:  Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse).  blood/violence.  some innuendo.  pre-slash.  language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing:  pre-Logan/Wade.

timeline:  mid-seventies.

disclaimer:  i doesn't owns the movies or the characters.  fo shizzle.

notes:  originally had a much shorter conversation at the end, but it was very awkward and abrupt, so i extended the Victor/Wade banter.

Stillness

There was an exact instant when Logan first feared he might be going insane.

It was not, as one might expect, at a time when Wraith was lamely attempting to play a badly tuned guitar, or when North was doing repetitive gun tricks, or when Wade was singing candy jingles.

No, it wasn’t even one of the times when Victor was idly carving tabletop masterpieces with his claws, or when Fred was once again insisting he was in love, or when Wade was asking for the millionth time, ‘Are we there yet?’ just to annoy everyone.

In fact, the moment that Logan felt his sanity slip was almost silent, and that was the most chilling part of all, because until then, he’d been sure that Wade only ever shut up when he was asleep (and even then, he sometimes mumbled nonsense).

For a long time after Stryker had paraded Wade Wilson before them, gloating of finding the perfect final member of the team, none of them had actually seen Wade do anything.  He got secretive little slips of paper, disappeared for a few days, and came back to be patted and praised like some kind of trained dog.  He had been a simple annoyance—a kid with a big mouth who never really seemed to do anything but talk and eat junk food.  Sure, he completed any task Stryker gave him, but Logan had never been there to see it get done, and Wade’s stories of ‘twenty guys with automatic weapons —no, seriously’ had sounded like bullshit bragging.
After the fifth such story and no sign of Wade truly pulling his own weight, they’d all been fed up and complained in their own subtle ways, but Stryker had sworn up and down that Wade hadn’t been put on a team op yet because there had been no need for Wade’s ‘unique talents.’

Then came the night they’d needed to bust through a lobby in a yakuza building. Fifty guys, half with assault rifles and half with assault rifles and swords. Stryker’s order: hold back, send Wade, wait until he called. North had bet Bradley and Fred fifty bucks each Wade would be calling for help in ten minutes or less.

Because they were sturdier than the rest, Logan and Victor were willing to venture up to the doorway and watch. Perhaps if Logan had just hung back with the others, he wouldn’t have started wondering whether he had a screw loose upstairs.

“All yours, sweetheart,” Victor jeered, as fifty guns cocked and aimed at Wade.

“Thanks, honey, but Logan’s more my type,” had been the snide rejoinder, and Logan had just rolled his eyes.

But ninety seconds later, lead and brass showered down in a jingling rain, and the five guys who’d been good enough to get in sword range were fountaining blood from the stumps of limbs and necks. And in the midst of the dying chaos stood Wade, panting only as heavily as a jogger after his morning run, other men’s blood dripping down his face, tongue darting out as a drop hit his lip. It was the first time any of them had seen Wade anything like out of breath. Amid the fading motor-buzz of Wade’s heartbeat, the sound of air passing those pretty lips was the sweetest sound Logan had ever heard, and the more civilized part of him rebelled at the thought.

Wade was nothing more than some idiotic, hyperactive, motormouth little boy, he told himself. Logan didn’t really have any particular aversion to homosexuality, but as a rule he wasn’t attracted to men, and there was really very little about Wade for any sane person to find attractive. Pretty smiles and firm bodies were transient things, compared to the special brand of bloodthirsty psychosis that bounced around inside Wade Wilson’s brain.

But death and danger and strength were the messages passed to the animal part of Logan through his sharpened senses, and it thrilled to be in the presence of someone who could cause such mayhem.

Such mayhem…and yet, such stillness.

By the time bullets and casings and bodies had finished falling, Wade had caught his breath and stood perfectly still and calm, like a beautiful, blood-spattered statue.

“Yum,” Victor purred, and Logan growled at him instinctively. The older feral raised an eyebrow in amusement, held his hands up and took a step back, mouth twisted in a smug, knowing smirk. Not so civilized after all, are you? that look seemed to say.

The air was heavy with the smells of gunpowder, metal, sweat, blood, fear… It muddled Logan’s thoughts, made him feel dizzy and sluggish and drunk and edgy all at the same time. He shook his head and made himself start walking for the elevator.

“Come on in, kids,” Wade called, pausing to lap blood from his wrist.

And as he strode past, Logan caught an unbelievably strong whiff of adrenaline and lust, and Wade gave him just the wickedest smirk as he licked blood from his lips again.

And that was the precise moment at which Logan thought to himself, My God, I’m losing my mind, because damned if Wade smirking and covered in blood wasn’t just about the sexiest thing he’d ever
seen. The very idea gave him a headache and made him want to hide up a tree somewhere until it went away. Maybe he could become a hermit...yes, he’d abandon all human contact for fifty years or so; Wade was bound to have gotten himself strangled by someone less tolerant than Logan and the others by then.

Somewhere near the building’s front doors, North bitched and forked over the money he’d lost to Bradley and Fred.

“I saw that,” Victor snickered as they stepped into the solitude of the elevator.

Logan didn’t deign to answer.

“Oh, play dumb all you like, Jimmy, but nothin’ gets a predator’s blood pumping like seein’ another predator making a kill.”

“You watch too much National Geographic,” Logan grunted.

“And don’t try to tell me you haven’t seen the way that mouthy brat eyes you all the time.”

“Why would anybody make a building this tall?” Logan wondered, watching the city swiftly shrink outside the glass back of the elevator.

Victor laughed. “Subtle, Jimmy. Real subtle. Nobody’d ever guess you were changing the subject. Fine, you don’t wanna discuss it. I can take a hint.”

Logan scoffed.

“But don’t think I’ll just leave you alone about the matter.”

Of course not. The day Victor let something like that lie would be the day Wade swore off sugar and sharp objects.

Somewhere outside the elevator, they heard a mechanical squeal of grinding metal approach from above, pass, and rapidly vanish below.

Logan and his brother locked gazes.

“What the hell was that?” muttered Victor.

When the elevator finally arrived at the penthouse, the doors opened on blood, broken furniture... ...and stillness.

“Huh,” Victor said, dumbfounded.

“How the hell did you get up here so fast?” Logan managed.

Wade blinked, sheathed his swords. “I kinda cheated,” he admitted. “Y’know the other elevator? I cut the cable.” Then he gave a winning smile, like a child who felt he’d been particularly clever.

It was oddly endearing, even with all the bloodstains.

Logan felt he’d like to have an aspirin and a long talk with a psychiatrist.

“Weren’t we s’posed to retrieve something from this guy?” Victor asked.
Wade shrugged. “I try not to worry about details like that when I’m having fun. But there is a promising little safe behind that ugly painting over there. Bet Fred could pop it open in a jiffy.”

“It’ll be a bit, since they’ll haveta wait for the only remaining elevator. Lack of foresight on your part, kid.”

“Oh, ouch! That’s harsh coming from somebody whose middle name is ‘Lack of Foresight.’”

“That’s not my middle name.”

“It’s not? Huh. Well, it should be, even if ‘Victor Lack of Foresight Creed’ doesn’t have a great ring to it. Maybe something like ‘Victor Rabid Squirrel Creed,’ or ‘Victor Bad Manicure Creed’…”

Logan went over to the hideous abstract painting Wade had indicated, doing his best to tune out the bickering pair. As Wade had said, there was a poorly concealed safe behind the framed monstrosity.

“Next time, kid, just clear out the first floor like you’re told and then piss off somewhere.”

“But that’d be boring.”

“So get a hobby.”

“I have a hobby: horribly maiming people.”

“That doesn’t count; it’s your job.”

“Yeah, but I love my job.”

Swinging the painting aside, Logan began to inspect the safe.

“Get a hobby that doesn’t make a lot o’ extra work for the rest of us while taking away our stress relief.”

“Oh, sure, take all the fun out of it… Anyway, I don’t see you getting a hobby.”

“Woodcarving ain’t a hobby?”

“…okay, so I don’t see you getting a hobby that isn’t lame.”

“You’re just sore ‘cause yer brain’s too defective to work out simple things like ‘let the guy who can pick up an APC one-handed use the elevator before ya break it.’”

“Aw, c’mon, it was an honest oversight! Anybody coulda made it.”

“Anybody with a defective brain.”

It was no good, Logan decided. The safe was too solid for him to even dent, and he was clueless when it came to cracking locks. They’d just have to wait for Fred to ride the lone elevator up sixty-some floors.

“Logan’s totally on my side,” Wade suddenly declared, draping himself over Logan’s shoulder. “He would’ve done the same thing.”

And then Logan knew he’d gone insane, because all he could think of was how nice it might be to shut Wade up with a kiss.
End.
Gravity

Chapter Summary

Madness is like gravity. Apparently, so is falling in love.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. slash. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus sexual references).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: mid-seventies. let's call it a week or so after Stillness.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) okay, so i could swear i’d heard that line before Dark Knight came out. i’m thinking there must be a very similar proverb. 2) at times, i worried Logan was waxing too philosophical (same way that Tony keeps getting way too sappy in my Avengers stuff...). then i figured it kinda worked for him.

Gravity

There was a saying appropriate to the exact instant in which Logan’s life went from surreal to perfect. He wasn’t sure where he’d first heard it, or who’d said it at the time.

*Madness is like gravity…all it takes is a little push.*

He’d decided he would ignore the fact that he’d gone insane. He’d decided he would pretend Wade Wilson was nothing more than a disturbed young man.

But Wade was nothing if not persistent, and could be almost impossible to ignore.

It was the madness of him…predictable chaos, laconic efficiency, casual slaughter.

Yes, gravity. Wade was like gravity.

Like a thirty-storey fall. Like the tides. Like the sunrise and the seasons. Never identical, but always the same. Teetering, but inevitable.

Watching Wade made something ache deep in his chest.

Stryker pointed Wade at things he wanted removed from the face of the planet, and Wade leveled
them with all the grace and thoroughness of a tsunami.

Or a meteor strike.

It was a real treat to see Wade sweet-talk an arms dealer one moment and slice him in half the next. The way his lips formed all the worst threats in any number of languages…the way he would lift an impatient eyebrow for Stryker’s go-ahead…the way cutting down a lowlife put a pretty smile of satisfaction on his face…

Fred elbowed Logan, rudely jarring him from his reverie. “You ‘wake in there?” the big man teased. “Might wanna pay ‘ttention. Looks like we’re headed back to base for a while.”

At least Victor was off somewhere else, helping Bradley and Nord do some other chore for Stryker. Logan had certainly had more than he could stomach of Victor’s smug ‘I told you so’s when it came to Wade’s enticing little smirks and their effect on Logan.

They flew back to the current base of operations. They showered (Wade treated them to a slightly off-tune rendition of ‘Put On Your Sunday Clothes’). Logan immediately fled to his cramped quarters and the safety of a dog-eared Ian Fleming novel.

Scaramanga was just saying his prayers when the door unceremoniously banged open and Wade leaned in, wearing nothing but his tags and a towel tied low around his hips.

He smelled like tapwater and sandalwood soap. With his damp hair dripping in his eyes, he looked far more boyish and innocent than a mercenary assassin had any right to; the phrase ‘cougar bait’ sprang to mind.

“So,” Wade said.

“So?” Logan replied, turning a page.

“Sooooo,” Wade repeated, drawing the word out and sauntering into the little room and kicking the door shut again. “Any idea how long it’s gonna be before we end up having sex? ‘Cause I got plans for the rest of the century, and I like to know which parts will be taken up by mind-blowing orgasms. For scheduling reasons.”

Logan arched an eyebrow. “And what makes you think anybody in his right mind would wanna sleep with you, Wade?”

Wade plucked the book from Logan’s hand just as Scaramanga was pulling the golden derringer on Bond. He tossed it over his shoulder with a saucy little grin. “And who ever said you were in your right mind, Logan?” he shot back.

“I was reading that,” Logan said flatly. Somehow, he managed to keep his eyes on Wade’s face. As always, Wade was undeterred. He just stood there, drumming his fingers on his hips and making thoughtful little frowns. Slowly, he started to smirk. “Saw you staring earlier,” he purred, putting a hand on Logan’s collarbone. He pushed, and Logan found himself flat on his back on the rickety cot with Wade smirking above him. “What were you starin’ for?”

Logan blinked.

Just a little push.

He was tired of pretending, and he’d run out of excuses. Fighting gravity only ended well if you had
something solid to stand on. And besides, falling only hurt when you stopped…

"'Cause you were beautiful,” he answered breathlessly, honestly.

Wade laughed and flung the towel somewhere.

.End.
Enjoy the Silence

Contrary to popular belief, Wade Wilson was perfectly capable of going without talking, singing, or even humming for several minutes on end while awake. If he was completely focused on something, he didn’t have the attention to spare on making extraneous noise. Of course, how long he was focused depended on a variety of factors, including the difficulty of the task at hand or the love of the television program.

Wade didn’t talk when he was shooting, when there were more than ten people to kill, when he was tailing someone.

Wade didn’t talk when he was watching the newest episodes of his favorite shows, when he was executing a prank, when he was counting the number of licks to the center of a tootsie pop (he was keeping an aggregated mean, something he considered a ‘sacred mission’).

And, much to Logan’s relief, Wade didn’t talk post-coitus for at least five minutes unless spoken to.

Wade was always at his most beautiful when he was being quiet—the lack of chatter made it easier to concentrate on dimples, puppy eyes, the perfect smile…a disarming, expressive face.

So Logan was going through the effort of training Wade to enjoy silence.

Negative reinforcement was a waste of time with Wade. Threats of indignity or bodily harm were ignored outright. Deprivation of toys, food, or television resulted in whining. Actual violence always ended badly for everyone but Wade.

Positive reinforcement, however, worked like a charm. Anything from the week’s preferred candy to kisses to a simple ‘yes, you can maim that guy now’ was seen as a reward; just like a particularly yappy canine, if Wade was quiet for two minutes or more, he got a treat. Logan didn’t push for much more than about seven, because the ten minute mark was the point at which everyone else got
antsy at the unusual lack of babble.

Precious moments of hush, slowly cropping up. A little here, a little there.

Moments.

All he needed.

There was a tiny scar on Wade’s upper lip, on the left side, near the crease of his cheek; it was hard to see when he was talking. Details like that, things Logan couldn’t inspect when Wade was in motion and gabbing, were adding to the mountain of reasons he was growing to adore the loudmouthed kid, and making him need those moments all the more.

Logan didn’t think much about love (tried not to, anyway), partly because of the line of work he always seemed to end up in, and partly because it looked like he’d probably outlive anyone he tried to court. Investing emotion seemed to be, as Victor had always insisted, an exercise in futility. But it was hard not to invest at least a little emotion in Wade, whether it was annoyance or humor or something deeper, because Wade had an uncanny knack for burrowing into people’s minds and making himself right at home in the center of their attention.

‘Love’ was just a word, full of vagaries and mixed connotations. What he was starting to feel for this punk kid who was barely a quarter his age…it couldn’t be pinned down with one word, and he kind of liked it that way. Too simple, too complex, too insignificant, and too profound for words, that’s what it was. Primal. Perfect.

A force of nature, just like Wade.

And in those almost-spiritual moments, those fragments of not-exactly-love, Logan was able to watch little nuances of behavior, as well.

If Wade wasn’t given an outlet for his excess energy, he had trouble sleeping. There were (as far as Logan knew) only two ways to cure this insomnia: let him burn off the energy somehow or sing him to sleep. Logan would never have admitted it, but there were times when the kid’s stamina far outlasted his own, and he’d stumbled upon the singing thing out of self-defense. Apparently, a few different songs would work, but Logan only knew the words to one of them. He would never understand why Wade thought ‘Suicide Is Painless’ was a happy song (the reasons couldn’t be good), but it put him to sleep with a smile.

If there was junk food nearby, Wade would stare at it and pout. More often than not, Stryker’s doctors had Wade on a strict diet. He ate junk food because it was comfort food; it apparently interfered with the cocktail of vitamins, minerals, and God-knew-what that he was supposed to take every day, so they had a tendency to ban him from the stuff. It was true that Wade was on a three-thousand-calorie diet that was meant to be high in proteins and saturated fats, but Wade was a worse nervous eater than Fred, and could put away five thousand calories in a day, if he could find them.

And if Wade went too long without talking, he started biting his nails.

“Stop that,” he chided, tugging Wade’s hand away from his mouth.

“Can’t help it,” Wade mumbled. “Absent oral fixation, quoth Major Asshole’s freaky quacks. If I’m not talking, I have to chew on somethin’. Usually works out, ‘cause o’ the candy ‘n stuff.”

“Do it too much and you’ll make yer fingers bleed.”

Wade shrugged.
Sighing, Logan pulled Wade into his lap. “I guess that’s another bad habit to train you out of.”

At that point, it seemed to occur to Wade that he’d broken a pretty lengthy silence. “You made me talk,” he accused with a pout. “I was up to, like, *eight minutes* or something.”

“Yes, you were doing very well,” Logan praised. “Whattaya want?”

A few more seconds of pouting, a slow, thoughtful grin, an energetic bounce. “Lemme see your tags.”

Logan arched an eyebrow. “Let you see somethin’ you coulda been staring at any time I take a nap?”

“Peeking is *cheating,*” Wade said philosophically. “It’s more fun if you let me.”

It perplexed Logan, but he gave in. “All right, darlin’. Have yerself a look.”

Hot, callused fingers touched his chest, picked up his dogtags, held one up for inspection, traced almost reverently over the stamped letters and numbers.

And a silence blossomed into existence.

Logan felt a sense of meditative calm while staring at that pretty, down-turned face with his hands on Wade’s thighs.

“Logan, James,” Wade said at last, and Logan watched the words forming on soft lips. “No middle initial? Name like that, you’d think it’d be something nice ‘n boring like…T. T for Thomas. T for Tiberius, heh.”

Logan rolled his eyes and snorted.

“What, not a Trek fan?” Wade looked up at him, grinning. “You know this means I’ve gotta come up with a pet name.”

“’Old man’ ain’t a pet name?” he said with mock-affront.

“How ‘bout Jimmy?”

He groaned. “No. God, no.”

“Too Vicky? Yeah, guess so… Jimbo?”

He gave Wade a stern look. “Kid, don’t make me regret lettin’ you see those tags.”

“Don’t be such a sourpuss,” Wade chided, charming him with a smile and a kiss. “Let’s see…Jim would be way too Star Trek. I’d always be wondering if you had a Kirk Effect. What about… Jamie?”

“Not where anybody can hear you,” he finally relented, knowing that if he didn’t grant permission for a nickname, Wade would start getting *really* creative, and churn out the same kind of nonsense that Victor had jokingly offered when naming the rats in their prison cell.


“Brat,” he chuckled, taking the joke with good humor out of sheer contentment.
“You’re being agreeable. I’m immediately suspicious. We’re half-naked and on a bed, is the agreeability a prelude to wild sex?”

Logan rolled his eyes again. “Kids…sex is th’only thing on yer mind, ain’t it?”

“I’ll have you know I think about food, sitcoms, and killing people, too. Like this one time in Malaysia, when—”

Logan stemmed the unnecessary chatter with a finger over Wade’s lips.

Brief silence. Then, “Totally five seconds from biting your finger.”

So Logan replaced the finger with his lips.

“I thought I only got treats for being quiet.”

“Consider that incentive to shut yer mouth and look pretty for a few minutes.”

Wade took up the challenge, slipping a tag between his teeth to chew on and going back to whatever bizarre contemplations he’d been entertaining earlier.

In turn, Logan went back to his new hobby of watching Wade.

Anything that could occupy Wade thoroughly enough to keep him quiet did not bear contemplating by the sane, but Logan couldn’t help being grateful for it. Whatever it was, it let him concentrate on the set of Wade’s brows, the exact length of his eyelashes, the way the day’s stubble couldn’t manage to make him look less boyish…the fact that Wade was possibly the most beautiful person he’d ever met.

“Penny f’ y’ foughts?” Wade offered around the piece of metal in his mouth.

Logan arched an eyebrow. “Wade, you already owe me twenty bucks from that hockey game.”

“And fifteen from poker, and fifty-somefin’ from the other day, when Fred lost that rock-paper-scissors tournament…” Wade added with a shrug. Then he dropped the tag and gave a wicked grin. “Ain’t like you want me to ever be out from under you.”

He had a point. “Was thinkin’ you’re beautiful,” Logan admitted.

Wade burst into giggles. “Okay, that was so Barry Manilow.”

“You listen t’ Barry Manilow?”

“Least I don’t talk like ‘im.”

“If you shut up for the next five minutes, I’ll look the other way the next time Victor passes out drunk and you happen to have a permanent marker.”

Wade pouted at him. “Three.”

“Four.”

“Three and a half?”

“Deal.”
.End.
Many Talents

Chapter Summary

Wade Wilson is a man of many talents.

Chapter Notes

....not convinced i’m happy with this one, but i figured if i’m going to post it, i should post it now, before i post Void.

i feel like it was all very cohesive when i started writing it, but the more i elaborated on certain parts, the more it kind of drifted into a disjointed mess. *sigh* but here it is, because ~MerianMoriarty and ~KageShin pout at me when i let fics rot and gather dust...

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). slash. innuendo. mild gambling. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: mid-seventies.

disclaimer: i doesn’t owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: none?

Many Talents

Wade Wilson was a man of many talents.

There were the obvious things—an encyclopedic knowledge of sitcoms, the ability to put a bullet between the eyes of a man standing behind a brick wall two hundred feet away without looking or slowing down, a limitless imagination for pranks…things he made plain every day.

And then there were the things you might miss even after knowing him for a year or three.

Wade could do certain kinds of fairly complex math quickly in his head. Rattle off twenty numbers and he could spit back the mean, the trendline, and the differential with barely a second’s pause. Show him a setup and he could name all the firing lines at any given point of time and give a lot of impressive probabilities to back them up, made all the more impressive because he’d never even finished high school. Needless to say, he was a crafty gambler, and none of them would play cards with him anymore.
Wade had an excellent singing voice, if he thought no one was listening. The moment he suspected he had an audience, he yowled like an amorous tomcat. The music selection tended to vary by audience as well—jingles for Nord, Broadway musicals for Fred, TV themes for Victor, dopey love songs for Logan.

Logan had heard Wade converse fluently or semi-fluently in at least half a dozen languages, including Spanish, German, and Japanese. He could swear in another dozen or so. It was entirely possible he could understand more than those, but he had a habit of looking completely disinterested when people around him weren’t speaking English. Okay, so Wade always looked like that when people weren’t talking about things he liked…but that didn’t eliminate the possibility that it was feigned.

Wade could move silently enough to sneak up on anyone. Nord still jumped and bitched every time, but Victor had reached the point of constantly expecting Wade to turn up at his elbow. When Stryker needed something or someone retrieved in utter secrecy with no body count, Wade was the man he sent.

Aside from Logan and Victor, Wade was the only member of the team who could see in the dark. In fact, he saw a lot of things nobody else did, Elvis and little green men notwithstanding. For example, there was an op in Laos where they had to retrieve some guy who could change the color of his skin. The weather had been suspiciously, unseasonably bad, which made it hard for Logan and Victor to track, Wraith’s hayfever had been making him sneeze himself backward a few feet every ten seconds, and there were some nasty little biting flies everywhere. Wade, who’d tagged along by virtue of being the only one who could speak Lao, managed to wander along happily without a single bug bite. After four hours of wading through swampy jungle muck and being bitten and sneezed on, Victor finally snapped and said, ‘Why the hell aren’t they biting Wade?’ to which Wade simply replied, ‘All the ones who tried croaked from diabetes. And by the way, the chameleon dude’s been following us for two hours.’ Victor had not been pleased.

Wade had the knack of walking between raindrops. No bullshit. As long as he didn’t want to get wet and the rain wasn’t an all-out monsoon-style deluge, Wade simply didn’t get rained on. Nord was fast, but even he got rained on…this added to the list of ‘Reasons Nord and Wade Did Not Get Along.’ Wraith postulated that it had to do with figuring trajectories and velocities, and that it was possible that anybody who could do that kind of mental math and move that fast could do it. Wade insisted that he did it ‘by not being where the raindrops are.’ Logan figured dodging raindrops must be pretty easy, compared to dodging bullets.

Wade was far more flexible than any man outside of gymnastics or circuses had any right to be. Once, in retaliation for a well-placed bucket of spoiled milk, Victor had literally tied Wade in knots, and the merc had still managed to bloody his nose and knock out a fang (which he’d kept, crowing that he could probably get a dollar out of the tooth fairy for it).

Wade could identify any gun by the sound it made when firing, and several by the sound they made when loading or cocking. He could take his pistol and his submachine guns apart and put them back together blindfolded and hanging by his ankles from the ceiling (Nord could, too, but Wade was faster). Wade could also accurately fire his guns with any of his fingers and either of his thumbs (in case he lost one, he said, but but it was more likely so that he could show off), which also meant that he could shoot while holding a gun upside-down or backward (or both).

And Wade had a talented enough tongue that he could probably tie a cherry stem into a knot.

“Twenty says he can,” Bradley proposed.

“No way,” Wraith scoffed with a shake of his head. “Thirty says he can’t.”
“Fifty says he can’t,” put in Nord.

“’Ey, Fred,” Bradley called. “You want a piece o’ this?”

“What’re we bettin’ on, now?” the big man asked, lumbering over.

Victor finally set his book down and stalked to the table. “Whether or not Wade can tie a knot in a cherry stem. With his tongue.”

“Is that even possible?” Fred wondered.

“Oh, it’s possible,” Victor assured him. “Knew a prostitute in Saigon who could do it.”

“No way…what’d John bet?”

“Thirty against,” Wraith replied.

“Okay. Me, too.”

“I’m likin’ these odds,” Wade commented. “Shall we make it more interesting? Who here thinks I could tie the knot with the cherry still attached?”

Everyone scoffed and jeered. Even Logan shook his head incredulously.

“Never happen,” Nord said flatly.

Wade grinned. “I think I can do it. In fact, I’ll lay a pair of crisp new Benjamins that I can.” And he pulled the bills out of his pocket, set them down on the table next to the bowl of cherries. “Wanna lay a little more against? Even odds, perhaps?”

Suddenly, he had four takers.

“If I was a bettin’ man, I’d be tempted,” Victor said. “As it is, I’ll pay twenty just to see him try.” And he fished out some beer money and slapped it down on top of the pile.

Six pairs of eyes watched intently as Wade tipped his head back, lowered a cherry into his mouth by the stem…and pulled it out five seconds later, knotted as promised, cherry intact, to a chorus of groans and complaints.

“Y’see, now, Jimmy didn’t take the bet ‘cause he knew better,” Victor declared, grinning. “Never take a bet against somebody’s tongue when the guy he’s sleepin’ with won’t take it.”

Logan choked on his beer.

.End.
Void

When a member of a close-knit group departs, an emotional void is left in the shape of the missing person.

Chris had told him that, once.

Wade hadn’t even really been paying attention, but as with most things, the information had wandered into his ears and gotten stuck somewhere among thoughts of junk food and sitcom synopses.

But when Logan left, Wade immediately noticed a Logan-shaped void in Team X.

Victor was constantly sulking, Fred had taken to binge-eating Wade’s favorite snacks, John didn’t
talk as much…

David had always been the aloof ‘ha ha, I’m so much cooler than all of you people who can’t shoot as fast as I can’ sort, and that didn’t really change just because one of the people who blatantly ignored it left.

And Chris—well, Chris was weird, so Wade couldn’t really tell if he was bothered by Logan’s absence.

As for Wade himself...he realized that he’d somehow let Logan—Jamie—become important to him, that he’d gotten used to Jamie, comfortable with him and reliant on him in obscure little ways he would never have expected, and that with Jamie gone, he was slowly coming apart at the seams. For four days straight, he’d been too restless to sleep a wink, which Stryker’s quack doctors were always telling him would eventually give him brain damage, but since not being able to sleep for days on end had never seemed to hurt him before, he figured he wouldn’t worry about it.

“Wilson, pay attention,” David snapped.

Wade blinked, glanced at his empty hand, which hadn’t been empty a moment earlier, and then at the knife buried in the wooden bench where David was sitting. “Oh,” Wade said, subjecting his hand to a moment of silent interrogation. It didn’t seem to know how the knife had gotten there, either. He shrugged, retrieved the knife from between David’s legs. “Sorry ‘bout that, Davey. My mind must’ve wandered.”

“How would you know the difference?” snorted Chris.

Wade thought about that. “Well…I guess the difference is that when my mind wanders, people tend to die. Like this one time, when I was taking a bus over the border to Niagara—”

“Nobody cares, Wade,” John drawled, rearranging the cards in his hand. “Sixes?”

“Go fish!” Fred said happily.

Wade tilted his head, idly flipping the knife in his hand. Jamie would’ve at least listened to the story. It was a good story, and Jamie had a tendency to humor him—one of the nicer benefits, he supposed, to being ‘friends with benefits’ (not as nice as some of the benefits, but still good).


“Shh!” Wade said, holding up a finger to his lips for silence.

The others tensed to listen, hands on weapons.

“You hear that?” he whispered. “That’s the sound of you guys being way too paranoid.”

This choice bit of information was received with a chorus of ungrateful jeers and complaints.

But nobody threw anything, and nobody tried to hit him. David had long since learned that he couldn’t even graze Wade, and the others accepted that they were a lot slower than David. Jamie had been the only one he could really rile up enough for a violent reaction, the only one sturdy enough to be persistent in the face of cuts, stabs, and impolite knees.

He pouted at the lack of response and looked expectantly at the lone chair in the corner, where Victor was working his way through a bottle of bourbon.
“What’s that look for, runt?” Victor grunted.

Wade meandered his way over, still absentmindedly flipping the knife in his hand. “You could try to hit me, you know.”

One fang was bared in a wry grin. “I’ve seen what comes o’ that. Every time Jimmy managed to catch you, he got beat to hell. You know all that weird ninja shit, and you got nothin’ against kicking a guy between the legs. It ain’t worth the trouble.”

“Oh, come on!” Wade cried, throwing his hands up. “You guys always want me to shut up—can’t any of you at least try to make me?!”

There was something like pity in Victor’s eyes, and he held out the bottle of alcohol. “Have a drink, kid, ’t/settle yer nerves.”

“My nerves? My nerves?!”

But it wasn’t his nerves that needed settling, it was all that excess energy that he hadn’t been able to use for stabbing people. Why the hell couldn’t anybody see that? He didn’t want a drink, he didn’t want to calm down, he didn’t want to sit in a corner somewhere and be quiet. He wanted to bounce off the walls and scream at the top of his lungs and run around in circles until he was finally tired enough to sleep again.

“Now, Wade,” came Stryker’s voice from the doorway. “Don’t be upsetting yourself unnecessarily.”

Wade liked Stryker…a little. Stryker was like a father who was perpetually proud of him. But because he was a male authority figure, Wade also hated him—that precious approval could be withdrawn at any time, for any reason, and replaced with violence. Still, it was a simple enough matter to just keep doing as he was told, and if Stryker happened to cluck his tongue disapprovingly one too many times, Wade could always gut him. After all, Stryker let him get away with murder, in so many senses of the phrase.

So Wade spun on his heel, bouncing with pent energy he longed to expend.

A girl. Stryker had brought a girl.

“This is Kayla Silverfox,” Stryker said. “We’ve decided to add her to Team X.”

“No,” Wade replied firmly.

Women ruined things. Women made men act all stupid. A woman would change everything. And they did not need anyone else on the team (unless it was Jamie coming back), no matter what Stryker’s nebulous ‘we’ decided.


And normally, that would have been the end of it. Normally, Wade would’ve given in, feigning disinterested obedience and flying the bird at Stryker’s back. Normally, Wade wouldn’t have used the weight of his status as Stryker’s favorite.

But he would put his foot down, he would be stubborn and spoiled about this. They didn’t need someone who would wander in and think that she had power over them, that she could fill that Jamie-shaped space by putting up curtains and baking cookies and saying things like ‘can’t we all just get along.’ He felt a tantrum coming on.
“No!” he insisted.

There was silence. Stryker’s eyes were wide (and maybe angry). In the wall behind him, just to one side of his head, Wade’s knife was buried several inches deep.

Wade looked at his hand, where the knife should’ve been, but it was empty again.

And in the split-second it took him to see that, Victor was already on him, twisting his arms around until he was trapped in a bear-hug and could only have fought back with his feet. “Easy, Wade,” the bigger man growled.

Suddenly, Wade felt calm again. It dawned on him that he didn’t know what had just happened—when he had thrown the knife, how he had decided where to throw it, whether he had meant to miss Stryker’s face. “Oh,” he said. “Wow, my mind was wandering again. You can lemme go now, Vicky.”

Slowly, Victor released him and stepped back.

“So what’s her…’gift’?” John said, with special bitterness on the last word, but Stryker didn’t answer.

The girl…Kayla…walked over to Wade, held out her hand to shake.

She was pretty, as girls went. Curvy in the right places, big soulful eyes, long dark hair, cute little smile. Jamie probably would’ve liked her, so Wade hated her on general principle. “Wade, was it? I’m Kayla. I hope we can learn to work together.”

He took her hand, shook it. “I hope you drop dead,” he said sweetly, with a smile of his own.

Her grip tightened for a moment. “You will not hurt me,” she told him, and he felt a nasty, oily feeling under his skin, like someone was trying to tie strings onto his bones and move him around like a puppet.

To prove her wrong (and because she creeped him out), Wade punched her squarely in the nose. She fell back, stunned and bleeding. Served her right for messing with him when he was in a fucking foul mood and hadn’t slept in for-fucking-ever and wanted a fucking cheesy puff but Fred had fucking eaten them all. “What was that? Didn’t quite catch that last part…”

Someone shouted something, but he couldn’t hear over the blood pounding in his ears.

How dare she try to…do whatever the hell she’d tried to do to him?

Shit, this was like that episode of MASH where Hot Lips went to Rosie’s and came back talking about some new guy she’d met…okay, so it wasn’t really like that, but the sense of indignation was there.

Pain in his wrist caught his attention, made him lash out instinctively with a foot to the arm that was holding it. There was a nice, satisfying crunch, but then he was grabbed and wrangled and held more securely.

“Easy,” Victor huffed, breath puffing in Wade’s hair.

There, on the ground at their feet, was Wade’s sidearm. Weird…how’d it get down there?

“B’lieve me, I’d love to let you loose on ‘er,” came Victor’s voice, just barely audible. “But
Stryker’s givin’ us a look like he’s an inch away from havin’ you locked up in a padded cell. Take a deep breath, Wade.”

He did. “Hello, gun,” he called. “What are you doing all the way down there?”

“You’ll have to forgive Wade, Miss Silverfox,” Stryker said. “He’s…been under an unusual amount of stress lately. But he’s our pride and joy—the perfect soldier. Wade, Miss Silverfox will be joining the team, and that’s final. I’m sure she’ll do her best to stay out of your way and let you work.”

Wade stared at his pistol, tilted his head, let Stryker’s words tumble around in his brain. “Y’know…I never really thought of it before, but guns are inherently violent. You can use a blade to cut all kinds of things besides people and animals, but guns are made for killing. Yo, Suzie Homewrecker, how do you feel about Orangeheads?”

“He means you,” Fred added helpfully to Kayla, who was wiping her nose on a handkerchief.

“They’re all right,” she replied.

That settled it. She was evil and needed to die.

“Hey, Fred, couldya hand me my gun? I can’t seem to reach it…”

“Wade, I shall be very disappointed if Miss Silverfox comes to harm while she’s here,” Stryker said.

Wade leaned his weight forward, straining against Victor’s hold. “But you heard her, she likes Orangeheads, she’s practically the spawn of Satan. I don’t like her. You can’t just send her marching in with her shiny hair and her bouncy boobs and her creepy ‘I can make you do stuff’ touch and expect me not to want to kill her when there’s nobody left for me to bother who won’t end up finely diced in a permanent and inconvenient kinda way and I can’t sleep and Fred ate all the goddamn cheesy puffs and I fucking well miss Jamie!”

And he was a little dismayed to realize that it was true. He felt childish and frustrated and abandoned, and he wanted someone to blame. He couldn’t blame Jamie, because there were a million reasons for any sensible person to abandon Wade, and Jamie had seen most of them; and he didn’t like blaming himself, because that was just depressing. So it all became her fault, and if he hated her for it, then that was her fault, too.

“Nice run-on,” Chris praised.

“Thanks,” Wade muttered sullenly.

Stryker came closer, picked up Wade’s pistol by the slide. “Wade, I know you’re upset,” he began in a patient, fatherly tone, “and we all miss Logan. Miss Silverfox is going to help us convince Logan that he should come back. You’d like it if Logan came back, wouldn’t you?”

Wade noticed that he was getting hungry. A donut might be nice. Mm, jelly donuts… Iced? Glazed? Rainbow sprinkles? Decisions, decisions…

“Hear that?” Victor murmured in his ear. “We need ‘er for now. Once Jimmy comes back, you ‘n me can take turns rippin’ her pretty little limbs off. You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“Actually, I’d really like a jelly donut. With sprinkles.”

Victor snorted and let him go.
He straightened his shirt, took his pistol back from Stryker and holstered it. “She can stay,” he said charitably. “For now. But Miss Silverbitch better never touch me again, or she’ll be fox-kebab.”

“Of course,” Stryker said, and smiled that weird Ward Cleaver smile he used when he was patronizing Wade. One of these days, he would do it at the wrong time, and Wade’s mind would be wandering, and oops—no more Stryker.

“Seriously, though—who’s a guy gotta maim to get a jelly donut with sprinkles around here?”

What had he been thinking about before the jelly donut sidetrack? He couldn’t really remember, but it seemed like it was something important…something missing…

Aha!

Cheesy puffs. Yeah, he’d have to buy some more and hide them from Fred.

.End.
Chapter Summary

Kayla reminds herself to focus on the fact that Logan is a killer and her baby sister has never hurt anyone in her life.

Chapter Notes

as MerianMoriarty reminded me, movie!Kayla was a much more compelling character than comic!Kayla, in my opinion. other than the eye candy, i hated her on sight in the movie, but i really felt she redeemed herself by the end, after learning that her sister had been held for ransom. (that and it's pretty badass to be dying and look up at a bastard like Stryker and say "walk until your feed bleed. and then...keep walking.") so...a little exploration on her motivation was in order.

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). implied het. mild angst. allusions to horrible icky human experimentation. reference to slash. language: pg (primetime tv).

pairing: Logan/Kayla, post-Logan/Wade.

timeline: about four years after Logan's departure (two years before Alkali Lake).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) Carol. i find it interesting that Cornelius' assistant is named Carol Frost. it doesn't feel like a coincidence to me, so i'm kind of hinting here that she's in some way related to Kayla and Emma. 2) the fic is named for the Tracy Chapman song of the same name.

Telling Stories

Kayla learned what it was all about, before she left. She had to—she didn’t think she could stand to pretend to be in love with a man without knowing the real reason why. So she nosed around, picked through things that weren’t really any of her business, asked Carol, asked all those wonderfully obliging doctors.

It turned out that the Department’s scientists, especially the ones involved in the Program, were mostly very arrogant and self-absorbed. They liked to talk about themselves, about their work, about how brilliant they were.

She could get Dr. Cornelius to ramble for hours about the beauty of splicing bits of DNA together. Far more than his other projects, more than veiled references to bio-engineered super-soldiers and
berserker drugs, he was in love with the idea of the Deadpool Program. It was a culmination, he said, of all the Weapon Programs to-date (not that she knew much about any of those, but that wasn’t the point). He would babble endlessly about how perfect their subject’s genes were, how receptive to modification they’d shown to be, how the subject’s dependent personality made him easy to manipulate.

There were something like a dozen doctors carefully monitoring food, drugs, sleep, physical activity, psychological health…

Keynes crowed about chemical balances, about perfectly controlled diet and nutrition that could change anything from the subject’s field performance to his moods. Malcolm bragged that he could practically watch over his colleague’s shoulders by reading the subject’s sleep patterns. Varrick claimed his psychoanalysis was so complete that he could influence the subject’s thoughts and actions with something as simple as a word or a color.

‘The subject.’ They always called him ‘the subject,’ or ‘Weapon Eleven,’ never mentioned his name.

So she went back to Carol, asked pointed questions, dropped veiled accusations…and Carol reluctantly answered.

Wade Wilson.

The entire purpose of Team X was furthering a whole host of mutant control projects; and the ultimate weapon of mutant control was the Deadpool Program: a creature that could go anywhere without being seen or heard, win against almost any odds, kill without conscience or hesitation. The whole mutant world would be cowering from every shadow. He was meant to be a peace keeper, Carol said, but Kayla could see that even she was beginning to doubt the good intentions of her white-coated-vulture coworkers.

It was a shocking revelation. Everything—Team X, the mutant kidnappings, the retrieval of James Logan—was about Wade, about the search for a clean genetic slate with a programmable brain attached, so that Stryker and Cornelius could build some terrible anti-mutant super-weapon. Her sweet baby sister had been held for ransom so that a pair of bastards with God-complexes could turn some psychopathic murderer into a more efficient psychopathic murderer with a remote control.

Before that point, she had almost pitied Wade for the way he seemed to be slowly but surely going insane because of Logan’s departure. The other members of Team X had made no secret of the fact that Logan and Wade had been, at the very least, occasional bedmates; that ‘dependent personality’ that had Varrick and Cornelius so happy must have triggered some kind of psychotic break. He’d been used, had his mind and heart broken, would be cut up and rearranged to suit his puppeteers’ whims…but she couldn’t afford to feel sorry for him anymore, not when he was the reason Emma had been taken from her.

She set her mind to her work and pushed away all thoughts of how lost Wade had seemed just four days after Logan left, and how he’d only gotten worse after that.

It was a nothing town, the very definition of ‘middle of nowhere.’ Creed had said that was probably why Logan had picked the place. She settled in, kept away from him for a while before slowly letting their paths cross by coincidence, to let him get used to seeing her around town. He had to believe she wasn’t looking for him. When they met, he had to believe it was by chance. If he had any reason to suspect otherwise, he’d bolt, and her mission would be a failure. Just a bump of elbows in a bar, just ‘excuse me’ and ‘no, that’s all right’ and ‘let me buy you a drink.’ Casual, underhanded tricks like beeswax chapstick and sandalwood soap to smell like fond memories (like
Wade), the occasional bright smile or saucy grin (minus the manic edge Wade usually had).

It was far too easy to seduce a man without him ever noticing, all by using little bits of someone who’d already seduced him. Somewhere in his subconscious, he would be getting messages like familiar and comfortable, but his conscious mind would only register that she reminded him of someone else.

Sometimes, she felt a little guilty about it. Sometimes, she would catch him staring at her with a troubled and nostalgic look. Sometimes, he would wake crying in the night and sneak away from the bed to stare up at the moon.

At times like that, she started to think that if it hadn’t been for Stryker and Cornelius…if Wade and Logan had met under different circumstances, they might have been happy together. It was tragic, really. But she wouldn’t let a little thing like that endanger Emma’s life. She wouldn’t pity them.

She would do what needed to be done. She would stay in that little cabin and keep on lying until he was attached enough that he would chase her ‘killer’ to the ends of the earth. She was close now—a year ago, he’d told her almost his whole life story, with names left out.

“Haven’t you split enough wood yet?” she called out the side door. “Dinner’ll be frozen solid by the time you get in here.”

“Hush, you,” Logan chuckled, propping the ax next to the door. “Got a mouth on you almost as sassy as…”

She led the way back to the dining room, looked at him over her shoulder. “As who?” she asked blithely, even though she knew the answer.

“…just a war buddy of mine,” he evaded with a frown.

“I’m sorry,” she said, playing the part of the sympathetic lover. “Did he die in one of the wars?”

“No, nothin’ like that. We just…went our separate ways.”

It must be like moving away and being forced to leave a beloved pet behind, she thought. If he’d loved Wade—actually loved him—he wouldn’t have been able to leave in the first place, but it was plain that Wade was still very important to him.

She shrugged. “Well…don’t you ever talk to him now and then? Give him a call or something, catch up on old times?”

“Can’t,” Logan sighed, sitting down to the table. “He didn’t retire when I did. There’s no such thing as giving him a phone call or sending him a letter.”

“Do you miss him a lot?” she asked dutifully. “If you were comrades-in-arms, I’m sure you must have been close, what with the whole ‘man beside you’ military male bonding thing. I think getting shot at together would make me pretty close to someone.”

He lapsed into thoughtful silence while she served the food. “Y’know, I used to tell myself I didn’t, but I’m pretty sure I’ve missed him all along,” He shook his head. “No use cryin’ over spilled milk.”

“Especially with hardwood floors,” she quipped. “Better to run like hell for a sponge, before it soaks in and starts to smell.” She said it jokingly, but it was her philosophy about most things, really—don’t just sit there when it’s too late, get off your ass and start cleaning things up.
He almost smiled, but the expression was swallowed up by one of regret. “He probably woulda said something like that, just then,” he mumbled, picking up his fork. “Had a habit of makin’ light of depressing situations.”

“Well, you can’t change the past,” she told him. “You can only change the way you look at it. Instead of ‘if only we could go back,’ make it ‘God, we had a lot of fun back then.’ Don’t think about the fact that you lost something—focus on the fact that you managed to have it in the first place.”

That seemed to cheer him up, because he gave her a fond grin and actually started eating. “You’re right, darlin’.”

She smiled at him.

*Don’t think about the fact that you’re lying through your teeth to someone who is essentially a good man—focus on the fact that he’s a killer and your baby sister has never hurt anyone in her life.*

Besides, Stryker said he planned to erase Logan’s memory. He would never remember being lied to, falling in love with her, finding her ‘dead.’ No harm, no foul.

Maybe it wasn’t something to be proud of, but Emma was worth it.

That’s what Kayla told herself, anyway.

.End.
Mutatis Mutandis

Chapter Summary

Victor tries to take care of Jimmy's things while he's away. Because he's going to come back, and he'll want Wade to be more or less sane when he does.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Moviereverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) kinda mushed together with gameverse. angst. mild insanity. mild violence. some Silverfox-bashing. reference to slash. light reference to het. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: reference to Logan/Kayla, post-Logan/Wade.

timeline: almost (but not quite) six years after Logan's departure (a few months before Alkali Lake).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) ah, the downward mental spiral into fourth-wall-demolition. refreshing, no? 2) babysitter!Vicky is about the funniest mental image in the world to me right now. like, funnier than Kindergarten Cop (which wasn't as lame as everyone told me it was). 3) mutatis mutandis is latin for "change that which must be changed," and it's used in a few different ways depending on your academic discipline. generally, it's used to make comparisons (such as with the italian 'simile' or 'sim.'...): in the context "all boys should use the boys' restroom, and girls mutatis mutandis," the phrase would mean "and girls the same, but with the appropriate terminology substituted." it's the motto of Xavier's school, and he probably means that mutants should be treated in a manner similar to 'normal' humans. however, when seen in publishing, type-editing, and proofing, the phrase generally means that something was changed without the original author's notification or consent: a manuscript's review log could have an entry such as "May 3 returned mm," which means that on May third, the editor returned the manuscript to the author with all the errors fixed (whether they were really errors or not). i leave it to you, tender reader, to discern just how Stryker means it.

Mutatis Mutandis

Jimmy’s departure had been the beginning of the end. When he’d left, all the other fluffy, non-mercenary types had started to wander off.

Part of it was the loss of Jimmy as a balancing factor of the team, their voice of reason. Part of it was
the increasingly shady and amoral nature of the missions Stryker sent them on.

A large part of it was the way Wade was going to pieces, and the associated threat to life and limb. Nord was the only one of them fast enough to dodge most of Wade’s attacks, and Victor was the only one sturdy enough to survive them.

Bradley left first. Just vanished in the night. They woke to find Wade staring at Bradley’s empty bunk and chewing his nails until they bled.

Matters improved briefly when Silverfox went on her ‘long-term retrieval mission,’ as Stryker called it; the awkwardness of having an outsider in their midst went away, and Wade was a little less jittery.

And then there’d been the whole ‘incident’ with retrieving the little teleporting girl…

Dukes and Wraith seemed to find it a bit reprehensible that Victor would patiently stalk some ten-year-old kid until she finally fell down sobbing with fear and exhaustion.

When they left, Wade stopped sleeping again. He often forgot to eat, bathe, shave. He bit his nails past the quick, then bit his fingertips instead if no one stopped him. He talked to himself a lot more, reminiscing over events that never happened, musing over people and places that never existed…

But he could still kill anyone Stryker told him to, so he was still kept on the team, still given the same obsessive health check-ups Stryker had always insisted on.

Nord started ignoring Wade, possibly for the sake of his own sanity.

So Wade talked to Victor instead.

Much of what he said didn’t make sense, but Victor listened. In an oblique way, he felt he owed it to the kid—Wade had been able to make Jimmy happy for a little while, and that was worth everything to Victor. So he did little things like bringing food and blankets, keeping Wade from chewing his fingers off, listening to the pointless babble and half-hoping that there was something like Wade’s old wit buried among talk of action figures, celebrities as politicians, and magazine lists of beautiful people.

They’d had a pool going, once upon a time, about how long it would be before Wade ended up either dead or listens-to-the-voices-in-his-head crazy. Bradley’d put down five hundred on five years after joining Team X. Dukes and Wraith each had six-fifty on four. Nord had a fat grand on three. Hell, Wade had put money in…five hundred on an optimistic seven years. If Bradley had stuck around a little longer, he would have made himself a tidy sum, because even Victor (and probably Wade) would admit that Wade had lost almost all contact with reality by the five year mark.

Looking back, Jimmy probably would’ve strangled them all if he’d known about it.

“—but they have lousy taste,” Wade was complaining, eyes wide and bloodshot. “I mean, Hugh Jackman’s got a nice ass ‘n all, but he ain’t no Bea Arthur, y’know?” He pouted and stuck a scabbing finger in his mouth to gnaw on it.

Victor suppressed a sigh, reached out to tug Wade’s hand away from his mouth. “Stop that—where’d you put the tags?” Without waiting for an answer, he reached around to grab the paired chains around Wade’s neck, tugged both sets of tags out of his collar, handed him the ones covered in dings and dents and tooth-marks.

So Wade obediently chewed on Jimmy’s tags instead.

“You eat anything today?”
Wade shook his head. “Not hungry,” he said, dropping the tags. They gave a sad kind of muted clink against his own. “I mean, I’m hungry, but I’m not hungry. I mean, there’s stuff I wanna eat, but it ain’t on my ‘tailored nutrition plan,’ so Doc Keynes would have a fit. I’d friggin’ kill for some Fun Dip and a cherry Slurpee.”

“When was the last time you slept?”

“When was the last time you slept, Mom?”

“Last night. Answer the damn question.”

“Um…Thursday? Yeah, musta been Thursday. Magnum was on, and the episode’s Magnum-chick was only like a five-point-five, if you wanna be generous, so I just kinda zonked. Why, what day is it now?”

Victor gave a thin frown. “Sunday.”

“Aww, man! Did I miss Scooby Doo yesterday?”

For something to do, Victor stood and grabbed one of the blankets he’d stashed in various rooms around the base, shook it out and tucked it around Wade’s shoulders. “Here. You’re startin’ t’ feel cold again. Why’d you go so long? You’ve got those pills, right?”

Wade shrugged expressively. “I take, like, fifty-gazillion pills a day, Vicky. But if you mean the sedatives Doc Malcolm gave me, they don’t really do anything for me. Strawberry jelly-filled Krispy Kremes, that’s what I want…the ones that Fred liked.”

“Those things were disgusting.”

“Those things were nummy. How long has she been gone now?”

“Who?” Victor asked, wondering if this was another tangent related to some other plane of existence.

“Silverbitch.”

Victor froze for just an instant, came back around to reclaim his seat and the mug of black coffee he’d been nursing. “Comin’ on four…five years now, I guess.”

“Five years?” Wade repeated incredulously. “Five frickedy-frackin’ years? Really?”

“Deep cover’s considered a ‘long-term mission’ fer a reason. Has to have been in the area long enough not t’ raise alarms.”
Wade hunched up and started to jog his knees just out of synch from one another, practically vibrating with restless energy. “So…soon, then? She’ll bring him back soon?”

Slowly, Victor sipped his coffee. As a rule, he didn’t bother with white lies; he thought they were a waste of time. But the desperate gleam in Wade’s eye was a hard thing to deal with, even for a cold-hearted, antisocial old feral like himself. “Yeah,” he said lightly, forcing a confident smirk. “She’s gotta be just about done by now. And then we’ll have Jimmy back, and we can string her up like a punching bag, and you can go at her with all the sharp objects you want.”

A manic little grin danced at the edges of Wade’s mouth. “Hello, Kayla, this is Mina and this is Vera. We’re going to have such fun introducing them to your organs in order of ascending vitality, tee-hee, degree-lower-case-u-degree.”

Victor chuckled. The utterance was bizarre, but in Wade’s ‘normal’ way of rambling about candy and swords and spelled-out gibberish. It was a relief to get that glimpse of the energetic brat who’d wooed his little brother.

After a while, Wade’s grin faded, and he tried to bite his pinky.

Rolling his eyes, Victor grabbed Wade’s wrist and said, “How ‘bout you ignore yer diet and get something besides yer fingers to chew on?”

“Jeez, you’re as bad as Jamie…’don’t chew on yer fingers, you’ll make ’em bleed.’”

He held up Wade’s hand.

“Oh…yeah, okay, so it kinda looks like I’ve been sanding my fingerprints off…”

“I rest my case,” Victor said, and went back to his coffee.

“Think he thinks about us?”

Victor concentrated on swallowing his coffee.

Wade kicked him sharply in the knee. “Don’t go all Davey on me!”

“Ow,” Victor said pointedly, setting down his cup. “I think Jimmy tries not to think; always has. He’s got this problem with his conscience—it exists, and it yells at him a lot if he thinks about stuff.”

Wade went back to pouting. “What the hell was his issue, anyway? I mean, he didn’t even look at me. God, what’s the world comin’ to when you sleep with a guy for three and a half years and he just kinda walks off?”

“He was all bent outta shape over the villagers we offed. Righteous indignation makes people grouchy and inconsiderate.”

“It was that guy’s own fault—if he hadn’ta run, I wouldn’ta shot him.”

Victor waved a hand generously. “I woulda killed him anyway, but you’re nicer than I am.”

Wade was quiet again for a long time. “You miss him?”

“Nope,” Victor lied smoothly. “You?”

“Why would I miss some asshole who dropped me like a bad habit?”
“Probably the same reason you’ve been so hell-bent on eating yer fingers lately.”

Wade kicked him again, cracked his kneecap solidly.

“Wouldya stop that?” grunted Victor. “I said somethin’ so you wouldn’t kick me again. Whattaya want me to say? ‘Oh, Wade, you’re bein’ too hard on poor Jimmy, he loves you and misses you, blah, blah, blah’…”

“Hey, fuck you,” Wade said hoarsely. “Fuck you, ‘n fuck Jamie, ‘n fuck Silverbitch, ‘n fuck John ‘n the guys… And Stryker. ‘Specially that dick.” After a moment, he hunched up again. “Fine. I miss him…every stupid second of every stupid day…so that I can’t sleep and I can’t think and I just wanna fuckin’ break shit. I wanna fuckin’ scream and cry like a little kid, because it’s not fuckin’ fair. It’s somebody’s goddamn fault Jamie’s gone, and when I figure out just whose, I’m gonna get my hands around the bastard’s goddamn neck and fuckin’ squeeze until his head pops off.”

Victor could smell the growing urge for violence and decided he didn’t feel like bearing the brunt of one of Wade’s little ‘outbursts.’ Wade’s tantrums had a tendency to end with Wade in tears and rooms redecorated with the blood and guts of bystanders. “So, Wade,” he said nonchalantly. “Tell me about yer favorite episode of Charlie’s Angels.”

Wade brightened. “Ooh, there was this one really early on where Kim Basinger guest-starred, and the angels had to bust up this kidnapping-and-forced-prostitution ring…”

And just like that, tears and tantrum were averted.

Right about then, Stryker came marching in with an odd little gun in one hand. “Good morning, Wade,” he greeted briskly, coming right up beside the merc and firing a dart into his neck.

“Heyyyyy,” Wade whined, slumping back in the chair. His eyes lost focus, and he swayed a little, drunkenly. “Ninja sneak attack…totally not fair…”

Victor had Stryker by the wrist in an instant.


Masked men in labcoats crowded in, measuring vitals, making notes, attaching little sensor leads.

“Transit to where? To do what?” demanded Victor.

“The doctors will take him to the Alkali Lake facility, perform a few simple procedures, get him back on track for the Program,” Stryker replied, passing off the tranq gun to one of the creepy scientists. “That’s all. It’s for his own good, I assure you. And when Logan returns, we’ll be able to run some tests that will let us accomplish even more for Wade.”

Victor pointed one claw at Stryker. “When it’s done, I get him back, just like I get Jimmy back.”

A nasty, patronizing smile crept over Stryker’s face. “Mutatis mutandis,” he said, and spread his hands as if in submission.

“What the hell does that mean?” Victor growled.

“It means, Victor, that you’ll get Wade back in very much the same manner you’ll get Logan back. And I promise you his health will be greatly improved.”

Victor looked at Wade. That drawn face, with its sunken cheeks, bruised eye sockets, and week’s
worth of beard, was a far cry from the boyish looks that had won Jimmy over… “You’ll make it so he can sleep again?”

“Yes. Not all of the brain damage will be reparable, I fear, but we have remedies planned for the insomnia and the dementia.”

“You’ll fix him?” he pressed, growing impatient with Stryker’s evasive jargon. “He’ll be back to his old self?”

Stryker patted Wade’s shoulder. “As I said, Victor—mutatis mutandis.”

“I ffeel ffffunny,” Wade slurred.

“Wade?” Stryker called in a loud, clear voice. “These nice men are going to take you somewhere where you can get some sleep. They’re going to help you get better. You want to be all better when Logan comes back, don’t you?”

“Yeah, sssssure. C’n Vicky come, too?”

Stryker looked up at Victor with annoyance. “No, Wade. Victor has important work to do elsewhere. We need him to collect some more samples, so that we can help you.”

Wade blinked blearily. “Ooookay, sssssounds good,” he assented.

“Fine,” Victor muttered. “Tell me who. I’ll track ‘em myself if I have to.”

“Oh, it needn’t come to that, Victor,” Stryker told him with the same disgusting smile he always gave Wade when he probably thought he was being reassuring.

Victor got one last look at Wade before the men in labcoats had him trussed to a gurney and wheeled out of the room.

“We can all have what we want,” Stryker went on, and pulled a folded piece of paper from his blazer. “Logan will come back to a hale and healthy Wade, Miss Silverfox will vanish into obscurity, and everything will once again proceed as it was meant to. We’ll all be able to get back to the business at hand.” He held forth the paper.

Victor snatched it up, read a name and location. “Oh?” he asked sourly. “And what’s that?”

Stryker laid a finger beside his nose. “Saving the world, of course.” And he left.

Victor sneered. Stryker had always made his skin crawl, but if fetching this ‘Remy LeBeau’ from New Orleans would get Wade back to ‘normal,’ he’d do it. He paid his debts, after all, and Wade’s talent for making Jimmy smile meant that Victor had quite a lot to repay.

.End.
Chapter Summary

Victor doesn't want or need Xavier's help.

Chapter Notes

just a short piece to show that Victor knows he's lost, but he doesn't care.

warnings: Moviewerse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). mild angst. reference to violence. reference to slash. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: post-Logan/Wade.

timeline: almost (but not quite) six years after Logan's departure (a few months before Alkali Lake).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) the title is Latin, and means "the rest is/are missing." you usually see it in translations of historic texts and the like, when pages are damaged or lost, or in notes about sets of items that are clearly incomplete (like finding one glove and one boot of an obvious matched set of armor). 2) in comicverse, Xavier actually approached Sabretooth with an offer to join the X-Men *before* he offered Wolverine a spot. 3) i like the idea of Victor starting to be intentionally lazy at tracking people down, so i let Xavier tell him just how much Stryker's laughing at him. it gives him that much more motivation to screw Stryker over. 4) comicverse!Victor slowly lost his mind to bloodlust (more than once), and he didn't *like* not having full control of himself (not the least reason for which being, i suspect, that he couldn't properly enjoy his kills). this was poorly tied into the moviewerse with...i think it was a limited comic...to explain why the Sabretooth from X1 was a lumbering furball. i prefer to be neat and explicit with things like that, so here is your large, easy-to-read print announcement that Victor is going to eventually devolve into a grunting caveman because he doesn't want Xavier's help. do i need to put it in flashing lights, too? because i can totally do that, if it'll help. lots of non-comicverse x-men fans need flashing lights, explosions, and hot chicks in order to understand comicverse stuff. (sorry, one of my assistants loves the movies but wouldn't touch a comic book with a ten foot pole, and she drives me RETARDO-CRAZY [stole that word from Moriarty...] with questions to which she ignores the answers.)
Victor met Charles Xavier when he was looking for a little girl named Jean Grey.

It was an odd meeting, from Victor’s perspective. Odd in that he never once felt the urge to kill the bald guy, in spite of all his flowery pseudo-bohemian hippie-talk; didn’t get angry at the first inquiring probe against his mind; didn’t just walk right on into the house, grab the girl, and go on about his business.

“You’ve come for the girl,” the bald man said, unthreatening, unassuming. Just stating.

“If you mean the one who can throw cars with her brain,” drawled Victor, “then yeah. Creepy neighborhood, ain’t it? Kinda Maybury-meets-Mayfield. A little too Dick van Dyke for me.”

The man smiled. “I am Professor Charles Xavier.”

“Professor? Of what?”

“Genetics, mostly. The X-Gene in particular—that elusive thread which creates significant powered mutation, distinguishing homo sapiens superior from homo sapiens sapiens.”

Victor scoffed. “You’d fit right in with Stryker’s guys, then.”

“William was once a colleague of mine,” Xavier said, sounding rueful. “Alas, he and I do not share some important views on the appropriate treatment of mutants.”

~Such as forcing them to hunt their own, sampling them, cataloguing them, caging them like animals.~

Yeah, he’d hunted mutants. They’d been hunting mutants all along, and soon enough he’d probably have to hunt Bradley and Wraith and Dukes. A hunt was a hunt, whether he ended up killing, maiming, screwing, or releasing his quarry, so he didn’t give much of a shit what Stryker did with the people he caught.

“You might wanna stay outta my head, little man,” Victor warned mildly. “You wouldn’t like what you see.”

“Fair of you to say,” Xavier conceded. “I, too, came here for Jean Grey. But I also came for you, Victor. I’m forming a special team.”

“I’ve heard that before,” he snorted. Heard it and regretted hearing it, and wished every day that he could take back having heard it. Rotting in prison would’ve been preferable to having Jimmy walk away or watching Wade turn into a basket case.

“Yes. Working as you do for William, I’m sure you’ve heard nearly the same speech I would normally give, and so I shall spare you the similar and only pose to you the different. William Stryker would have offered you the chance to ‘serve your country.’”

Victor neither confirmed nor denied. Let the mind-reader guess or try to look. He figured he was screwed up enough by now that his psyche would send the guy running scared.

“What I offer is not patriotism, but peacekeeping. I believe that mutants and humans can coexist peacefully, in the same way that genders, religions, and races can. We are, all of us, trapped by the human condition, and can therefore be made to understand one another. To that end, I am bringing together talented individuals who can help me to protect the world from mutants who would seek to abuse their gifts, as a gesture both of good faith and of unbiased justice.”
Victor shook his head and laughed. “What a crock of shit.”

Xavier simply watched him.

“You’re operating on flawed assumptions, little man,” Victor clarified. “First, I ain’t the guy to come to with yer bleedin’ heart mission o’ peace. Second, we can’t all ‘coexist peacefully.’ Some o’ these kids blow shit up by thinkin’ too hard. Some o’ them have brains wired to go against society.”

“Like you?” Xavier asked.

Victor sneered. “Yeah. Like me. I’m an animal. I’m not built to be part of human society.”

“And yet, what is a human but an animal that wears clothing and walks upright?”

Whatever the guy was smoking, Victor wanted some of it. It might calm him down, might take away the sinking feeling that Stryker had been fooling them all along and he would never get Jimmy back.

“Even if you decline to join my team, Victor, I also offer a haven—a place without judgment, where mutants can learn to control their gifts.”

~Where you could learn to control the bloodlust.~

Oh, it was tempting…but he didn’t like the implication that there was something wrong with him, something that needed fixing; that his very nature was in error, and he should conform to the same sheep-shaped mold as everyone else. He looked at the stupid suburban home, at its white picket fence and its one-car garage and its flawlessly manicured lawn, and it made him sick to think that some little girl was in there right now with her grinning parents, taking it all for granted when Jimmy would’ve given an arm and a leg to take her place.

“Victor, I can tell you now that the darkness inside you will continue to grow,” Xavier said. “It will eat away at sane reason and intellect. Blood can only sate it for a short while. Left to itself, it will consume you, in time.”

He snorted. Like he cared…like it even mattered… “You professor-types know Latin, right?”

“I am very well versed indeed with Latin.”

“What’s ‘mutatis mutandis’ mean?”

“Literally, it means ‘change what must be changed,’ and it has many varied applications. In the field of publishing, it’s used to refer to edited documents—‘to return mutatis mutandis’ means ‘to return with necessary changes made.’”

A cold weight settled in the pit of Victor’s stomach. “I thought it was somethin’ like that,” he said.

“William has always planned to make the perfect soldier,” Xavier told him gently. “He has always meant to create something he could use to destroy mutants.”

Victor nodded absently. “Yeah, I kinda figured. Why else would he have had twenty doctors keepin’ track of every breath Wade took? Somehow…I knew he’d never give them back to me when he was done. Probably meant fer me t’ be the first test of his pet project. Turn the poor kid into the mutant-exterminating equivalent of a Swiss Army Knife, give him the right kinda brainwashing, sic ‘im on me t’ see how he does. Usin’ a shiny new rifle t’ put down a dog whose day is done. Two birds with one goddamn stone. Then the bastard’ll probably turn ‘im on Jimmy,
which is pretty twisted, even for Stryker.”

There was a thoughtful pause. “Even knowing that, you intend to return as planned?”

“Well…” Victor scratched at his chin. “I’ve learned from watchin’ Wade that the best way to fuck up Stryker’s day is to be right there with him, draggin’ my heels while I pretend to haul ass. The man needs t’ be reminded that I only work for him because I got nothin’ better t’ do. Can’t scare the shit outta the guy if I run off, can I? Maybe if I’m there, I can throw a wrench in the works. Maybe I can steal them back from that smarmy little prick.”

“If ever you reconsider, Victor…1407 Greymalkin, Salem Center, New York. The door of Xavier’s School for Gifted Youngsters will be open to you.”

“Do I need t’ tattoo it on my forehead?” Victor growled. “‘Does not play well with others.’ I tried and failed at being nice.”

“Nevertheless.”

Disgusted with the conversation, with the mission, with everything, Victor turned around and started walking.

He’d tell Stryker that ‘some creepy-looking bald guy’ got to the girl first.

With everyone else gone, it wasn’t like Stryker could get rid of him yet. He needed Nord—Agent Zero, he insisted on being called by his codename by everyone now—to play bodyguard, needed Silverfox to help convince Jimmy to play his part in whatever he had cooked up for Wade, and needed Victor to do all the other dirty work in the meantime. It was a lot faster and cheaper to send Victor out than to send a whole strike team.

Yeah, everyone else was gone…

FUCK ‘em. He’d get Jimmy back without their help.

.End.
**Chapter Summary**

Wade wakes up to find his thoughts transcribed in yellow text-boxes.

**Chapter Notes**

the beginning of the happy yellow box love affair, and the beginning of the not-as-happy command text.

**warnings**: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). reference to violence. reference to slash. reference to human experimentation. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

**pairing**: post-Logan/Wade.

**timeline**: almost (but not quite) six years after Logan's departure (about a month before Alkali Lake).

**disclaimer**: *i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.*

**notes**: 1) title from the 4 Non Blondes song "Drifting." 2) i actually...kinda can't remember what the command text looked like to Wade. i'm pretty sure it was white text. i think. maybe. like 95% sure. 3) i imagine that the command program wouldn't have been perfect at first, so it would take them time to tweak it around to full effectiveness. beta testing, if you will. XD

**Drifting**

*And there I was drifting way out into the sunshine*
*Expecting to crash, but I'm tied to a string*
*Look at me, I'm a tangled puppet*
*I might be a mess, but I sure can survive*

~ Drifting, by 4 Non Blondes

When Wade woke up at Alkali Lake for the first time, it was just a little disorienting.

The place had that nasty, chemical smell that hospitals get, but it was also dank and basement-like. There was a distinct Frankenstein’s-secret-lab vibe.

As soon as he had the thought, it appeared in his peripheral vision in a yellow-ish text box.

*Weird.*
Concrete room, mirrored windows, a thick-looking metal door. He was sitting on a metal chair that looked a lot like a dentist’s chair. He had on a pair of generic scrub pants in a nice shade of red, and there was a little white plastic medical bracelet on his left ankle—upon bringing his foot up to chest-level, he could see that it had a bunch of numbers and the words ‘Deadpool Program: Weapon XI’ on it.

*Why not put it on my wrist? Are they planning to cut off my hands or something?*

Someone’s voice came over an intercom. “Mr. Wilson, we’d like you to stand up, please.”

*Why?*

He liked sitting down, especially lately, when everything ached because he couldn’t sleep.

And who was asking him to stand, anyway? He didn’t think he recognized the voice, and the little yellow boxes said so. Maybe they were kind of like a voice-to-text thing for his thoughts…but if that was the case, then who was reading them?

White letters slowly appeared in his vision: *S-T-A-N-D*.

And he did.

He blinked, looked around, investigated his feet. There’d been no conscious thought involved; he’d just seen the letters, read the word, and his body had…just kind of done what it was told.

“Hello?” he called. He fidgeted a little with the bracelet, rubbing at the snap with his right foot. “Hey, who’s there? This is Alkali Lake, right? Is Major Asshole here? Well, I guess if he got that promotion he wanted, it’s Lieutenant Colonel Asshole…”

The intercom popped on again, gave him staticky silence for a moment. “Mr. Wilson, would you be so good as to sit back down now?”

“She’s covered in rust,” Wade muttered, taking a better look around now that he was standing. The floor was paneled with metal, with drains built in, and faint little rust-brown stains in the grooves.

*Kind of gives me the willies,* the yellow boxes said.

More white letters appeared: *S-I-T*.

He turned to the chair, put a hand on the arm.

“No,” he said, fighting an impulse to sit back down.

The static and the unfamiliar voice came again. “I’m sorry, Mr. Wilson, I’ve been rude, haven’t I? My name is Abraham Cornelius. Perhaps your other doctors have mentioned me.”

“You’re Frost’s boss,” Wade replied. “Yeah, she says you’re a real crackpot. Well, she doesn’t say it, but she talks about you, and the stuff she says makes it pretty obvious that even if she doesn’t think you are, you *must* be.”

“What kind of question was that? “Like what?”

“How do you feel?”
He blinked. “Well…my head kind of hurts a little.”

“Yes, that would be some lingering discomfort from the implants and the sutures at the base of your skull—don’t touch.”

Wade paused, hand an inch from the back of his neck.

“But other than that, how are you feeling? Tired?”

“I’m always tired lately,” he scoffed.

But then he realized that he wasn’t. His elbows and knees didn’t ache, his eyes weren’t dry and sore. He felt rested, alert, energized.

“Yes,” said Cornelius. “You’ve noticed it now, haven’t you? You slept.”

“What, from the white letters?”

“Yes.”

Okay, so that was kind of cool and impressive. They could type ‘sleep’ on some keyboard somewhere, and he could sleep. “Without pills?” he asked, just to make sure.

“Without the aid of any drugs at all. Perhaps you’ve also noticed that you’re finding it much easier to concentrate?”

He had noticed. “So you guys poked my brain, put some kinda computery thing in it, and now you can make me sleep?”

“We can strongly suggest it. We can’t make you do anything, Mr. Wilson.”

Wade snorted. He knew that patronizing tone… Not yet, it seemed to say. “Ah, whatever,” he dismissed with a shrug. “That’s what I get for signing that eight-page waiver in triplicate, right? Bet none o’ the others ever had to fill out one of those…pretty sure Davey’d be whining and griping if he had.”

“Oh, no, Mr. Wilson,” Cornelius assured him. “You’re a special case.”

Am I the only one who thinks that sounded really dirty? the little yellow boxes wondered. Kinda ‘creepy pedo,’ except I’m not a little kid.

Then he noticed something else.

Jamie’s tags.

He patted his chest, looked down to make sure, looked for pockets in his pants, but there weren’t any. “My tags,” he said, a little frantically. “Where are they?”

“With your other personal effects, Mr. Wilson. They had to be removed for surgery, after all.”

“Well I want ‘em back,” he grunted. “And Jamie’s, too.”

“You don’t need those anymore, Mr. Wilson; Mr. Logan will be back soon, after all, and he’ll want them returned.”

“Then give ‘em to me until he does,” Wade pressed.
It was stupid and childish, he knew, but the tags were the only proof he had left that Jamie had ever existed outside of his own considerably warped mind.

“When your surgery schedule is complete, you’ll get your things back.”

_Uh-huh. And how long is that gonna take?_

Cornelius cleared his throat over the intercom. “Once again, Mr. Wilson—if you would, please sit. You have a visitor.”

He hesitated. _A visitor? Somebody I like? Somebody I wanna kill? Ooh, please tell me it’s Silverbitch, and I get to break her pretty little nose…_

“No, Mr. Wilson, not Miss Silverfox.”

_Ah, so they can read my little yellow boxes._

“It’s Mr. Creed. He’s come a long way, but we can’t let him into the room until you sit down again.”

“Vicky?” he asked, brightening, and almost sat. Then he stopped. _Wait. Why do I have to sit down before they can let him in? What kinda sense does that make?_

“We need to be sure you won’t upset yourself unnecessarily.”

_There’s that phrase again. If you’re giving me Stryker’s Ward Cleaver smile, I’m gonna have to hurt you when I get outta here._

“If you won’t sit, then we’ll have to send Mr. Creed back into the field without letting him see you,” Cornelius taunted.

On the one hand, Victor was probably the closest thing Wade had to a friend ( _Ain’t that kind of a sad commentary on me as a person?_), but on the other, he didn’t like being told what to do. _Strongly suggested._ Whatever.

“How long has it been?” he asked carefully, staring at his hands and seeing that the scabs on his fingers had healed to ugly, jagged scars. _“How long have I been out of it, with you guys poking around in my brain ‘n stuff?”_

“You left the base approximately a month ago,” Cornelius replied. “We had to keep you heavily sedated for that time, to keep you from injuring yourself during and after surgery. Don’t you want to see Mr. Creed? He’s been working quite hard to bring us the materials we need to get you back into top condition.”

Wade was starting to feel an uncomfortable itching in his palms, a pins-and-needles sensation spreading up the backs of his arms—that same old livewire feeling of needing to move, talk, _kill_, that had kept him from sleeping properly for almost six years.

“Yes, you’re starting to feel it now, aren’t you,” came Cornelius’ voice again, sounding sinister over the distortion of the intercom. “We can only give suggestions, but the longer a suggestion goes unheeded, the more the old restlessness will start to creep in on you again.”

Once again, someone typed the word in. _S-I-T._
Gonna tie a fuckin’ leash around my neck while you’re at it? Glaring at the nearest mirrored window, he sat.

The restlessness faded.

“Thank you,” Cornelius said. “You’ll need to remain seated for the entire visit, but feel free to talk about anything you like.”

And, adding insult to injury, S-T-A-Y popped up.

Woof, woof. Prick.

“And Mr. Wilson…if you leave that chair while Mr. Creed is still in the room, I’m afraid we’ll have to revoke your right to have visitors.”

The door clanged open. A chick in a labcoat gestured. Victor strolled in, scowling at her, and she shut the door behind him.

“Hey, Vicky,” Wade greeted.

Victor hovered near the wall, eyed the stains on the floor.

Guess the smell would bother him more than it bothers me.

“Hey, runt,” Victor muttered. “What, not gonna bounce up and try to hug me?”

He wanted to, just to make Victor roll his eyes and growl if nothing else. But Cornelius had told him to stay put, and he didn’t like the prospect of having no visitors when he was cooped up in such a place. So he shrugged. “I like this chair,” he lied. “It’s all comfy. They tell me I’ve been out for a month. Whatcha been up to?”

Victor idly surveyed the room. “Classified.”

“Aw, don’t gimme that, Vicky,” he whined, and pouted.

“Don’t even,” Victor growled. “Don’t you dare make ‘the face’ at me.”

“Tell me what you were doing, and I won’t have to.”

“I toldya, it’s classified. Need-to-know. Stryker’d bitch my ear off if I told you.”

“You asked for it…” And Wade gave him the dreaded Sad Puppy Face.

If Wade was a master of anything (other than turning people into the fleshy equivalent of shoestring potatoes), it was the Sad Puppy Face. Most people tried too hard, exaggerated too much, ended up being comical instead of movingly pitiful. Wade could make hardened killers do his bidding with a subtle furrow of brows and a little frown with just the tiniest dash of pout to it. Victims who proved resistant got the next step up, which involved more crinkling of brows, moist eyes, and just a bit of tremble in the lower lip.

Wibble.

Victor muttered a string of curses under his breath, rubbed the back of his head with one hand. “This ‘n that,” he said. “Payin’ visits to old friends.”

“Paying visits as in ‘bringing over a sixer and some nachos’ or paying visits as in ‘sticking your
claws into their necks and ripping out their throats’?” Wade asked cheerfully.

“Which do you think?”

Wade shrugged again. “Well, you like beer, so I figured it might be a remote possibility. Old friends as in ‘people you’ve been meaning to kill’ or old friends as in ‘Davey and the guys’?”


“Awww, I kinda liked Chris,” Wade said. “He was funny sometimes. And we made a lot of money off Davey.”


“Good. Great. Peachy-keen. They put a thingy in my head that lets them type secret messages to me. Suggestions. Stuff like ‘shut up, Wade.’”

And one of the guys at the keyboard must have a sense of ironic timing, because there it was: Please do not divulge confidential details about the program.

“Ooh, there it is,” Wade said, pointing at where the white text showed up in his vision. He wasn’t particularly worried about obeying the words, since Cornelius had told him that he could talk about anything he wanted, but it wasn’t like there was much more of interest to say about the computer-stuff in his brain. “Anyhoo, they can put me to sleep with it. Pretty nifty, huh? I can sleep again! How cool is that?”

He caught Victor grinning, but didn’t mention it. Victor had gone very fuzzy and protective, once everyone else had left and Wade had started to come unglued. Probably some weird urge to take care of something that belonged to his brother… Whatever it was, he’d liked it. It was nice to know that someone was taking care of him during the less-than-lucid moments when his mind would wander for week-long and month-long stretches.

“Any news on Jamie?”

“Soon,” was all Victor said.

Wade thought he looked guilty about something, which was ridiculous. Vicky doesn’t have a sense of guilt. “Soon like ‘sometime tomorrow’ or soon like ‘in a few more years’?”

“Wade, just this once, be satisfied with a vague answer and shut the fuck up.”

He got the feeling that Victor didn’t want to talk about it. Maybe he knows something icky that I don’t?

“Look, Wade, I gotta go.”

Wade pouted. “Yeah. ‘Course ya do. Figures.”

Victor paused with his hand on the door. “Good to see ya all put back together, kid.”

He smiled brightly. “Was nice seein’ you, too, Vicky.”

When the door clanged shut, he hopped up and glared at the window.

“Sit? Stay? What am I, a friggin’ poodle? Gonna tell me to roll over next?”
“You did well, Mr. Wilson,” Cornelius told him. “If you’d left your seat at any point during that visit, you would have been given the order to terminate Mr. Creed. As a reward, I promise you that we’ll never give that order.”

He snorted. *Ooh, a promise! Like anybody’s ever kept a promise they made to me…* “You can’t honestly think I’d just kill Vicky, just like that, just because you told me to. B’sides, I dunno if I *can* kill him. He ‘n Jamie heal awfully fast. Like this one time, when the jeep hit a mine—I was thrown clear, but Vicky got smacked with a door, and it pretty much tore his arm off, but he kinda held the ends together and they went all *squish*, like magic. Or Play-Doh, which is pretty magical, except for the smell.”

There was a long pause from Cornelius. “I have faith in your abilities, Mr. Wilson,” he said darkly. “Now, I *strongly suggest* you sit back down, or you may hurt yourself by falling.”

Wade frowned. *Falling?*

*S-L-E-E-P.*

*Oh. Well, shit.*

He managed to stumble back to the chair and slump down without hitting his head.

*Looks like capital letters work better than full sentences.*

Everything went black.

*Damn, that’s a cool trick,* said a lone yellow box.

.End.
The Fear

Chapter Summary

Wade wakes up with nifty regenerative abilities. His doctors promptly tie him down so they can cut him open.

Chapter Notes

wow. mad scientists are surprisingly hard to write.

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). reference to violence. reference to slash. human experimentation. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: post-Logan/Wade.

timeline: about six years after Logan’s departure (let's call it the day after Alkali Lake).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title from the TrustCompany song "The Fear." i'm not really sure why i felt like that should be the soundtrack for this fic, since it's so nice 'n soothing, but...*shrug*
2) okay, so i couldn't resist the crack about Nate at the end. and maybe i didn't try all that hard. if you don't get the joke about the 'super-jesus-wannabe,' then you've never read Cable & Deadpool, and you have lost all my respect as a Deadpool fan.

The Fear

The last time that Wade awoke in Alkali Lake, all he could process for a while was something just shy of pain. It felt like every cell in his body was freaking out for just a moment, like someone had hooked him up to a battery or stuck his finger in an electrical socket.

“Wade—Wade, just lie still,” someone said, and there were hands on his shoulders, even though he was strapped down to whatever he was lying on.

He couldn’t see right. The world was made up of unresolved blobs. And where the hell were his little yellow boxes? He’d started to like the damn things...

“Lie still, it’ll be all right.”

“What the hell?” he croaked out.

“Vitals are stabilizing,” someone called from a corner of the room. “Heart rate just over two-sixty, pressure good, oh-two levelling out.”

Frost put on an unhappy little frown, which pursed her pretty lips and made those fetching little crows’ feet appear at the corners of her eyes. “Wade, how do you feel?”

**Thirsty.**

Little yellow box!

**Yay!**

He swallowed; his throat and mouth were dry as the Gobi, and he’d know since he’d been there once or twice. “My little yellow boxes are back,” he replied.

Frost looked up at someone Wade couldn’t see. “Anything coherent?”

“He’s thirsty,” said the voice of Barder, his neurologist.

*Is this a convention of my mad scientist team or something?*

“He’s recognized most of us, it would seem,” Barder went on.

“Well, let’s see if it’s worked properly,” said Miller in a very disconcertingly businesslike tone for a guy brandishing a scalpel.

*Hey, what’s he gonna do with—*

“What the *fuck*?!” Wade yelped, staring at the gaping cut on his shoulder. “Miller, what the *fuck*?! Why would you—oh. Oh, hey, that’s…”

…*kinda cool.*

As he watched, the cut closed itself up, nice and neat.

“Did it hurt?” Cope asked him in a hungry tone.

Wade blinked, frowned up at him. “Well, *yeah*, a little. I mean, it’s a scalpel, so at least it’s sharp and doesn’t have any jaggedy-type edges or anything, but it still *stung*. And it was really rude, too, not even warning me like that.”

Cope snorted and wrote something on a clipboard. “Captain Logan must have a higher tolerance for pain.”

“He dealt with this healing ability all his life,” Frost pointed out, wiping the blood from Wade’s shoulder. “Pain is a signal to the brain that the body has sustained damage; only repeated injury can tell the brain how much pain signals non-critical damage.”

*All clean now. And not even a teensy scar. Scalpels are awesome. Wait, what was that about Jamie?*

“What was that about Jamie?” he asked them, trying to lift his head and get a better look at just who was in the room with him.
Jamie Jamie Jamie! Miss the dopey taunts, miss the smelly cigars, miss the manly manfur. And the sex. Yeah, definitely miss the sex thing, because that was kinda nice.

“I won’t bore you with details,” said Frost, “but we’ve basically grafted his DNA onto your own, just as we did with…other donors to the Deadpool. You now have his healing abilities, though we can’t be sure whether you have them to exactly the same degree. Dr. Cornelius has suggested that we put you through…practical testing, but I’ve managed to dissuade him.”

Wow. Still thirsty, y’know. Practical testing sounds not-so-great. In fact, it sounds kind of like blowing me up or cutting me in half or shooting at me a lot and seeing if I go back together.

“Practical testing like putting me in front of a firing squad?” he asked, a little concernedly.

She didn’t answer.

Totally a firing squad, then.

“Grafted his DNA, you say…” He looked down at himself, found he couldn’t hold up a hand far enough to see and settled for raising a foot into his field of vision and wiggling it. “So I’ve got a little bit of him in me, then? Stuck onto my DNA?”

I have Jamie cooties on the genetic level! Squee. Now we’ll always be together, or some other suitably stalker-like line. Funny, I don’t have any irrational urges to eat raw meat or claw the furniture…

She squeezed his hand. “Yes, Wade. But you still have a lot of surgeries left; it’s better not to think of Captain Logan.”

Why? I like Jamie. Lots. Thinking about Jamie makes me feel better. Sometimes. When it doesn’t make me feel like jumping off a bridge or shooting myself in the face.

“Varrick, why don’t you ever mention these things?” Barder complained. “This is a considerable risk factor. It’s lucky for you that the control chip and the chemical sequencer alleviated the situation.”

“Well, Malcolm said the sleep would mend all the imbalances,” Varrick retorted somewhere out of sight. “And the suicidal urges were always under my control, thank you.”

“Hey, I’m still here, you know,” Wade announced. “And it’s rude to read other people’s yellow boxes.”

Frost looked up again with her thin frown (maybe reading his little yellow boxes for herself), and then back down to Wade. “That’s why,” she told him gently. “We need you to concentrate on recovery, and on the mission. Depression and suicidal urges would not help that.”


“I’m afraid that’s impossible. Your surgery schedule wouldn’t allow it. Two more major surgeries here, the rest at the facility on the Island.”

Boo, that sucks ass. I don’t wanna go to the Island, I remember how that movie turned out.

He pouted. “So when’s the next cut-and-paste session?”

“Now.” She reached to one side, showed him a weird little hinged metal shaft a couple inches long.
“This is an articulation aid, meant to guide a surgically-implanted sword along a very specific course through the bones and musculature of your arm.”

“What, like a railroad track and a mining cart? Is this gonna get all Temple of Doom and needlessly complicated in a way that requires whips to avoid dead ends?”

She didn’t smile. Normally, Frost would’ve had at least a little grin for one of his bad jokes. “This piece is going into your wrist, through the bones. Another piece will go into your elbow. On each arm. The blades themselves will be installed later, after your bones have been reinforced. Each blade will be jointed in such a way as to lock into a single piece upon unsheathing but still give you full mobility of your arms while sheathed.”

He eyed the little piece of metal. “So…that thing and some other metal bits are going into my arms so you can put swords in me?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll have built-in swords?”

“Yes.”

*Okay, well that could be kinda badass. I mean, I’d never make it through airport customs again, but whatever.*

Miller picked up his scalpel again, leaned over to look Wade in the eyes. “Enough small talk. Are you going to be quiet while we work, or will we need to gag you?”


“Be quiet?” he echoed, grinning. “Wha—y—you guys are gonna put me *under* for this, aren’t you?”

“Oh, for the love of…” Miller grumbled, rolling his eyes.

“Think about it, Wilson,” Cope said, gesticulating with his pen. “Logically. I know it’s difficult for you, but do try. Even with our strongest sedatives, you would still be awake, and your body would break down the drugs so fast that we could only *dull* the pain, and only with ridiculously high doses—‘kill a herd of elephants’ high. It’s not cost effective to even make the attempt. We’ll make sure you don’t move and cause damage to yourself.”

*Not cost effective? Oh, FUCK YOU ALL. If I could give you the middle finger with my little yellow boxes, I so would.*


“No, Wade, he’s not,” she said. “Do you want a blindfold? We can give the sleep command, but the adrenaline naturally produced as a reaction to the incisions we’ll be making would wake you up anyway.”

He glanced frantically from one doctor to another. “Bu—w-will it *hurt*?” he stammered.

“I imagine so,” Cope answered with a shrug. “Each incision will have to be carefully kept stretched open so that it doesn’t close prematurely, we’ll have to move a lot of important muscles, tendons, and blood vessels around, we’ll need to drill space in the bones… Have you ever been shot?”
It hurt. You can just say that. Say it’s going to hurt like hell.

“Um. Yes?”

Just tell me. I can handle the truth. Honest.

“Imagine the feeling of digging through the wound track with your finger to remove a bullet fragment. Something like that.”

OH, ICK! Ow, ugh, nasty, I hate that feeling! Don’t sound so fucking casual—you might as well take a metal file to my friggin’ teeth, you asshole!

Wade jerked upward, thwarted by whatever restraints had him attached to their nasty metal table. “Holy Jesus, you mean this is what Jamie had to put up with when he volunteered for the shiny metal bones this week?”

Frost squeezed his hand again. “No, that’s tomorrow for you,” she whispered, and her voice sounded a little unsteady. “And it’s much worse.”

Someone put a padded leather strap across his forehead and tightened it so that he couldn’t move his head. If he looked down so far that his eyes ached, he could see those miscellaneous assistants cinching down his legs, hands, and forearms.

Okay, okay, starting to panic now. Shit. Fuck. Shit. Oh, God. Wait, scratch that, God’s definitely not listening by this point. Ohshitohshitohshit…

An annoying little alarm was beeping in the corner with the dude who’d read off his vitals to Frost and her posse. “We’re looking at three-eighty and rising, oh-two rocketing.”

“Yes, because he’s hyperventilating,” observed Miller. “We can see that, Mr. Finch. Sound an alarm at five hundred beats, if you would.”

“Can’t we talk about this?” Wade babbled desperately, blinking sweat out of his eyes and trying not to cry like a little girl.

Crying right now would be very not manly, but it’s starting to look really appealing.

“Is it too late to change my mind?”

“Oh, yes,” Barder called. “Much too late. Remember that eight-page waiver?”

Where’s Jamie when I really need him? Or Vicky? I could really use a knight in shining armor. Fur. Whatever. This isn’t happening, this isn’t happening, thisisn’thappening…

“Please don’t do this, please don’t do this,” Wade begged, but they all just went about their business. Frost was nice enough to put a blindfold on him.

Good. Great. Now I can’t see the icky-scary-ouchie except in my more-than-adequate imagination.

“Shut him up, please,” Miller muttered, firing up a bone saw.

Are you there, God? It’s me, Wade. Pretty please, can’t you get me out of this? I mean, first Mom, then the shit with Dad, then Dad getting shot and me almost getting carted off for it when it was so not my fault, then the whole Jamie leaving thing, and now this? Was I Hitler in my last life?! What’s next, I fall for some hot time-travelling super-Jesus-wannabe from the future who has all the self-preservation instinct of a depressed lemming staring over the edge of a cliff?
“I’m sorry, Wade,” Frost said, and slipped a gag into his mouth.

Which really only meant that when they started cutting, the screams were nice and muffled.

.End.
The Semiotic Ghost

Chapter Summary

In six years at the Island, Emma has never met anyone quite like Wade.

Chapter Notes

poor Emma, just a bystander...internet cookies to those who can guess the identities of her 'fellow original samples.'

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). violence. reference to slash. human experimentation. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

**pairing:** post-Logan/Wade.

**timeline:** about six years after Logan's departure (four days before the final showdown at the Island).

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

**notes:** 1) semiotics is the study of symbols. a 'semiotic ghost' is a representative element of culture that starts to take on a life of its own (such as certain artistic movements that wander away from their original intentions). 2) i have no excuse for this piece, except that i thought it would be interesting, and that it could leave me an opening later if i feel like writing post-X3 stuff where emma's working at the mansion and i want her to have already known wade.

The Semiotic Ghost

For the ‘samples’ at the Island, the passage of time was measured by surgeries and psych sessions—by how many knives and needles the masked, faceless labcoats had stuck into them, how many times they’d sat in a dark room at a cold table in an uncomfortable chair with a too-bright spotlight on them and some fussy shrink sitting in the shadows with a pen and paper asking questions, godawful questions that had no right answers. *How would you describe the sensation of having your skin peeled off? If you could be any insect, what would it be? What does the color red make you think of?*

Emma had been on the Island for ten exploratory surgeries, five genetic samplings, and ninety-three psych sessions (more than enough to drive *anyone* mad). Because she knew the day she’d been abducted, she could ask some of the more sociable guards what the current date was and do the math—it had been more than six years.
She’d been taken in one of the first sample cycles, had been there almost since the Island had been opened. Most samples didn’t last that long. As far as she could tell from shouting across to the nearest cells, only a handful of the originals remained. Pietro, Lorna, Lillian, Alex. The others were gone, and most of Emma’s fellow samples agreed that they were probably dead; the shady bastards who had brought them here only saw mutants as the genetic equivalent of funny-shaped Legos, new building blocks that they didn’t quite know how to use yet.

It was the day after her latest session that she’d first seen ‘Weapon Eleven.’ He’d escaped (he did that pretty much every day, and it made Emma wonder why they didn’t drug him stupid or tie him to a chair) and was skipping unconcernedly past the sample cells (humming a Bee Gees song), pausing now and then to glance at some of the more…unusual samples. Some tried pleading with him, seeing that he was wearing the same kind of scrubs that they were wearing. Others recognized him, screamed bloody murder, pressed themselves into the farthest corners of their cells.

When he passed Emma, she called out to him. “How did you get out?”

He paused, did a little pirouette on one foot to turn and face her. “Some dummy left the door locked, and it was just begging to be picked. I mean, what would you have done, Barbie?”

She frowned. “My name’s Emma. And how did you pick the lock? Everything’s electronic.”

“Please,” he scoffed, rolling his eyes. “I’m not a blonde like you, sweetheart. If they didn’t want me to escape, they would’ve wiped the hand-scanner when they were done using it. Y’know, it’s amazing what you can accomplish with random colored powder and a rubber glove. They use that trick in really smart spy flicks. When they start wiping the scanner, I’ll just corner one of the assistants I don’t like and hack off his hand. Then I can stick it in my pocket and go wherever I want.”

“And what about the retinal scanners?” she asked, raising her eyebrows and not pointing out the fact that his pants had no pockets.

That made him think. “Well…well, I guess…hm, I don’t really know how to get an eye out whole. I’d have to really work for it, I think. Mental note: ask Wesley Snipes about removing eyes for retinal scans.”

“How?”

“Nothin’, nevermind. Hey, what are these bug-boxes of yours made out of, anyway?” He stepped back and eyed her cell.

“I don’t know,” she told him honestly. “Maybe acrylic?”

He glanced at his hand for a moment, then at the wall of her cell, then back. “Well, I might as well give the thing a try, right?”

Emma jumped when the blade shot out from between his knuckles with a sound that could only be described as fwikt.

“Hey, cool, I get my own sound-effect!” he cheered, and slashed at her door. The sword made a cut half an inch into the surface of her cell with a loud screech and a resounding thunk of impact.

“They’re not gonna be happy about that,” she said.

“Yeah, I really give a shit how happy those dicks are after they pumped molten metal under my skin. That hurts a lot, in case you didn’t know, Smurfette.”
“Emma,” she growled.

“Hiya, Emma, I’m Wade!” he said, grinng and holding out his right hand. He stopped and looked down. “Oh. Yeah. Can’t exactly shake hands through I-don’t-know-maybe-acrylic. Could it be… transparent aluminum? Was Scotty here, and I missed it? Say it ain’t so, Ella!”

“EMMA.”

“That’s what I said. Oh, that sweet, fake Scottish brogue…way funnier than the way real Scottish people talk, by the way. Like Chris—aside from being a creepy little light-bulb-lovin’ circus freak, he was boring… Bet the locks are fancy-pants magneticky.” He poked idly at the lock with his finger, making up songs with the beeps of the buttons. “And probably adamantium-y. Y’know, I thought the stuff was s’posed to be super-rare…Stryker’s pals sure do make a lot o’ their cool toys out of it, so they musta been pickin’ up meteorites for a lot longer than they’ve had me around.”

She’d seen people go all varieties of kooky after the strain of the surgeries, but she didn’t think she’d ever met anybody so manic who could still use some approximation of logic. “Wade, what are you doing here? At the Island, I mean.”

He looked both ways down the row of cells, leaned in conspiratorially, and said, “Don’t tell anybody, but I used to be a comic book character, and this is all a bizarre plot device that was invented in a desperate bid to tie in my backstory with Jamie’s for an action movie where I totally steal the show. My spin-off senses are tingling already!”

“Comic book character?” she echoed incredulously. Okay, so maybe the guy was off his rocker.

“Oh, what is with you people and not seeing those guys out there watching?” he whined, jerking a thumb over his shoulder.

She looked where he pointed, but all she saw was the cell across from hers, which was currently unoccupied.

“Oh, forget it,” Wade muttered. “I ended up here with little yellow boxes in my head because I signed an eight-page waiver that says I get to kill whatever I want as long as I play the part of tinker-toy. I get new attachments almost every day, and I don’t even know what half of ‘em do. It’s like buying the power drill with fifty-zillion extras to do any job around the house, only you’re just a lame wannabe when it comes to DIY. They tell me I get to teleport next, and then I’ll be blasting stuff with my eyes.”

“They’re grafting other mutants’ abilities onto you?” Emma asked, horrified.

He blinked innocently. “Oh, sure. I’m thinking the yellow boxes and the magic white command text are from Remote Control Boy, I got some kinda funky luck thing from some goth-lookin’ chick with a permanent black eye, the healing thingy is from Jamie, and there’s this weird feeling I get whenever I jump like I could just kinda pick my feet up and float there…I dunno where the hell that came from. Bet if you looked at it under a microscope, my DNA would be S-shaped with one big arm and two flat feet and a wing. It’d breathe fire ‘n stuff. Thatch-roofed cottages stand no chance.”

Armed guards finally arrived at the end of the cell block.

“There he is!” one cried.

Another spoke into a walkie talkie. “Dr. Cornelius, this is security. We’ve located Weapon Eleven in sample block Alpha, ready for the takedown.”
“Takedown?” said Wade, turning to the guards. “That’s rich! You could turn me into a particularly sexy colander and I wouldn’t go down. Meanwhile, I could detach any number of fun limbs. You like your left leg much? It’s your favorite leg, isn’t it? I have a sense for these things.”

A man’s voice crackled back over the walkie. ~Security, you are formally authorized to engage in a field test of Weapon Eleven’s healing capabilities. Full fire, one clip from each of you should be sufficient.~

Emma couldn’t bear to look. She turned away and shaded her eyes with her hand.

When the roar of gunfire stopped, all she heard for a moment was the sound of spent shells hitting the metal flooring.

And then Wade laughed. “Hey, that wasn’t so bad!” he said. “I mean, it kinda burned, but the Jell-O-like closing-back-up is nifty-keen. My turn, right?”

She looked back, saw Wade bloody but whole and sprinting for the security guards with swords drawn.

“And field test successful, execute takedown immediately!” the guard with the walkie shrieked, falling back.

“Ooh, too late!” Wade called as he cut the man’s leg off at the knee. “Dis widdle piddy went to market…” He went for the arms next. “…dis widdle piddy stayed home…dis widdle piddy had roast beef—which is really perverse, when you think about pigs eating cows, but I guess even hogs can live a kosher lifestyle…”

Emma thought she might puke, especially when the guards started screaming and scrambling away.

But then Wade slowed and staggered. “Awwww, I was havin’ fun!” he complained. “Curse you…big white letters…for making me…talk like Kirk!” And then he passed out.

One of the other guards picked up the walkie, shook off the dismembered hand still gripping it (Emma gagged and covered her mouth). “Cornelius, this is security. Weapon Eleven is down.”

~Excellent. A new record time under adrenal response. Return him to the Weapon Eleven lab, and this time use the magnetic restraints.~

The next day, he was teleporting away from the guards, cackling and chanting the refrain from the story of the Gingerbread Man (with some truly odd things substituted for the little old woman and her farm hands).

The day after, his head was shaved so they could poke around in his brain some more, and he was experimenting with long-distance teleportation to find the edge of his range and what objects he could and couldn’t go through.

“Wade, do you know what day it is?” she asked him while he poofed back and forth down the corridor between the cells.

“Yes, Virginia,” he replied, coming to a stop in front of her door and pointing to some vague spot in front of him and to his right. “The timeclock iiiiiiight here says it’s Thursday. They’re doing icky, icky things to me today. Doc Frost said so, and she hasn’t lied to me yet, so I believe her.”

“I see,” she said, for lack of anything else to say. “I’m sorry.”
He fidgeted a little, rubbed at his medical anklet with his other foot. “Yeah, well…that’s how it is. It’s getting really hard to keep from doing the things they tell me to do. And if I ever wanna see Jamie again, I gotta be a good little guinea pig.”

“I can’t imagine volunteering for this,” she told him, rubbing at the scar left by her last surgery.

“He’s worth it,” Wade said blithely.

“Being cut open all the time, letting them ask all their stupid questions, having a computer chip in your head that can control you?”

He looked up at the distant ceiling, thought in silence for a long time. “Yeah,” he said eventually. “Yes. Definitely. Besides, guinea pigs are all cute ‘n fluffy, even if they are dumber than dirt.”

She didn’t know what to say to that. She’d never been in love. She tried to picture having to go through all the horrors of the Island for Kayla’s sake, but she was ashamed to find that even then she was squeamish of the idea.

Wade grinned at her. “You’d understand if you met him. He’s a really nice guy. Like, stupid nice, when it comes to some things. He’ll kill an armed guy without flinching, he’ll kill a woman if she tries to kill him, but you wave one crying little kid at him and he turns into a big ball of sap.” He looked away.

Emma pressed a hand against her door for balance as she leaned closer. “Wade? Are you crying?”

“No,” he lied, rubbing at his eye with the back of one hand. “Sorry. I haven’t seen him in six years, so I get kinda mushy and nostalgic.”

“Are you scared about your surgery today?” she asked gently. “I would be.”

He shook his head. “Nah. Frost said tomorrow would be worse, and she was right the last time she said it.”

“What about that?”

Wade looked at her like she’d asked whether water was wet. “Let’s see, they’re gonna pump more adamantium into me because they were worried I wouldn’t survive if they plated all my bones at once, then they’re gonna cut up the skin around my eyes, dig into my eye sockets, and start doing weird shit to my optic nerves, all while I’m awake. And I think they might’ve figured out how to permanently gag me, which would really suck, because then only the little yellow boxes would reveal my astonishing wit. Yes, Emmy, I’m fucking terrified.”

“Emma.”

“Whatever.”

She stared at him for a while. “And you still think he’s worth it?”

“Yes,” he replied, before she could even finish asking.

On Friday, he was looking unnaturally pale and had strange marks drawn on his body, like guidelines for something. He didn’t say anything about them.

In fact, all he said was, “Hi, Emma. Is it okay if I just rest here? Just for a little bit?” And he looked so tired and sick and sad that she didn’t have the heart to say no. He slumped down against the
outside of her door and started humming the theme song to MASH. When the guards came to get him, he went along quietly.

And that was the last she saw of Wade Wilson for many years.

.End.
Unwell

Chapter Summary

Wade's brain has been making side trips.

Chapter Notes

because things deserved to be tied together.

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). violence. yellow boxes. minor insanity. fourth wall puncturing. reference to slash. reference to 616 and other universes. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: post-Logan/Wade. implied Nate/Wade and Stryfe/Wade.

timeline: about six years after Logan's departure (the day Logan attacked the Island; the end of the movie).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title from the Matchbox 20 song "Unwell." 2) surely Wade, having broken the fourth wall, has some strange inklings of other versions of himself and his life.

Unwell

Wade Wilson had always thought he’d know when he went insane. It had always seemed to him that surely crazy people knew they were crazy.

Maybe he’d just missed the memo.

Maybe he’d been reading a particularly fascinating yellow box at the time.

When Command Program 2.5.0 was installed (he knew because it had shown him a version stamp and copyright info when it booted up), he started to experience life as a chain of little bubbles of clarity in a sea of floating weirdness. He dreamed whole lifetimes where the words Cornelius or whoever-it-was typed to him made perfect sense, and obeying the instructions was just what he happened to need to do at that exact instant.

He never really knew if he was dreaming or not, and he was pretty sure he didn’t actually sleep anymore. The dreaming-stuff-that-wasn’t-really-happening probably counted as sleep, as far as his brain was concerned.
There were dreams where he was a normal guy, hanging out with his fellow TV nerds and eating junkfood. There were dreams where he was a hero, saving the world with some big stick-in-the-mud for a best friend/boyfriend/whatever. There were dreams where he was hideous and hated and could screw up anything. There were dreams where he was a horseman of the apocalypse (or possibly a Horseman of Apocalypse, who sounded like a real jerk), or the world’s most feared assassin, or the pet killer of some creepy dude whose armor looked like it would probably skewer a dozen people if he tried to crowd-surf.

There were even dreams that might not actually be dreams, where he met a cute little blonde named Emma, who was nice to him.

And through it all, he could always sense the presence of them. Faces, millions of faces. Some of them laughed. Some of them cried. Some of them rolled their eyes and clicked away to Tweet about writers who took themselves way too seriously. But he always knew they were watching, and sometimes he found himself outside, watching with them. Some of them had popcorn.

The day that Control Program 2.5.0 experienced a catastrophic crash and shut down for the very last time, he woke with the sneaking suspicion that he was somewhere several feet from where he was supposed to be.

*I can’t feel my neck…*

He flexed his fingers, felt something touch his scalp.

*Oh.*

He had vague memories of fighting Jamie and Vicky (and having a three-way with the brothers was not as fun as he’d always hoped it would be), and of Jamie slicing his head off. Well, that explained why he felt like he wasn’t where he was supposed to be.

There was rubble, and lots of it. His timeclock was back, but he had no idea whether it was showing him the right date and time.

And *they* were there. Not as many as he’d expected, but they were all cheering hysterically, so that was okay. But he couldn’t have their cheering letting Stryker and Cornelius know where he was.

“Shh,” he told them, and concentrated on getting his hands to put his head back on his shoulders.

*So how does this work, anyhow? I mean, it’s not like my brain can possibly be physically sending messages to my nerves. Unless I have super-cool radio brainwaves. Maybe that’s a lesser-known side-effect of Chris’ mutation.*

Jamie’s healing factor took over and started closing up the wound. It felt *really* weird. Gingerly, he turned his head to look around.

The parts of the place that weren’t rubble looked like the Island.

*I can work with that.*

He still only had the red scrub pants and the anklet.

*Wonder if Cornelius has my tags around here somewhere…*

“I don’t suppose anybody here can tell me if this is real,” he said, without much hope.
Nothing.

Oh well…

Nate once told him that remembering things vividly didn’t make them more real than the things he remembered vaguely. Then again, Nate was one of the few people who would sometimes admit that it was possible Wade wasn’t as crazy as everyone seemed to think.

But maybe Nate wasn’t real.

Maybe Jamie wasn’t real.

Somebody swore behind him, so he turned.

It was a cop of some kind. “Sir, are you all right?”

He blinked.

The cop holstered his weapon and came closer.

That’s not very bright. If I were a mean person, I might stab you.

“We’ve found others wearing scrubs like those. What were they doing to you here?”

“Lotsa stuff,” Wade found himself saying. “I think there might be an Atari where some of my brain used to be.”

“Listen, all that’s over now. Let’s get you some real medical attention, from some doctors who don’t cut people up for fun.”

Not like I need it, but that sounds kind of nice.

“Um. Okay?” Wade tried with a shrug.

Right about then, the world went fuzzy and resolved itself into a place he’d thought wasn’t real.

Dammit.

“You’re not even pretending to listen,” Weasel admonished.

Wade made a face. “Well, it’s kinda hard to pretend to listen when I keep hallucinating. I mean, this seems real and that seems real, but it’s not like they could both be real at the same time, so…well…shit.”

“Could be, if it’s some kinda time-travel thing or inter-dimensional hopping.”

“Time-travelling. Right.”

“Well, what year is it, back there?”

“I didn’t think to ask. But if I’m remembering right, it was…I guess eighty-two.”

“And it’s already ninety-eight here. And last time, you kept babbling about some guy named Nate, and you said that was definitely in the twenty-first century, right?”

Wade wanted to hit his head against a wall. “I guess. I dunno. Weas, I don’t know what’s real and what’s not. Do you realize this could all just be my brain’s way of trying to cope with being hacked
up like a roast joint? You could be a figment of my imagination. I could be talking to myself and answering. Does the name Tyler Durden ring any bells?"

Weasel gave him a look.

“Okay, so I talk to myself and answer all the time anyway…”

“I wasn’t going to mention it.”

“Sweet of you. But it can’t be time-travelling, because only my brain ever goes anywhere. What were you saying before? Hell, what was I saying?”

But Weasel was gone. Instead, Wade was in the back of a slightly crumpled police car with a sword through the hapless driver.

“Uh…sorry,” he muttered, withdrawing the blade and opening the door.

People were starting to notice the crashed vehicle.

People were starting to point and scream.

*Well, that’s rude.*

He sighed heavily. “I miss Vicky.”

.End.
Chapter Summary

Years after the fight at the Island, Victor is beginning to forget things.

Chapter Notes

a little more Vicky/Wade interaction, for those of us who are Victor fans.

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse). mild violence. minor insanity. reference to slash and some slashy flirting. reference to 616 and other universes. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: post-Logan/Wade. implied Nate/Wade. slightly pre-Victor/Wade.


disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title is a reference to Phase Two: Stillness. 2) october 12 is Hugh Jackman's birthday, lol. 3) Oak Bay is a real (small) town in NB. i made the truck stop up, though. 4) Meddybemps is a real town in Maine.

Motion

As a general rule, Victor stayed away from cities. Small towns were a necessary evil, places where he could find indulgences like whiskey, steak sauce, and pretty people.

He’d been ranging the coast of Nova Scotia for the summer, fishing and poaching livestock and emptying the occasional rustic cottage. With winter coming on, he was heading south, to warmer climes.

When he traveled, he always tread softly—made it possible to establish little waypoints and oases, places that he knew would serve his food and drink the way he liked it, places that wouldn’t ask questions of a rough loner in a long coat.

The trouble with living wild was that he started to forget things.

It wasn’t surprising to lose little things like the details of those first few decades on the run, way-back-when; it wasn’t even that much of a surprise to lose parts of the interim days between wars.

But the longer Victor stayed away from people, the more he forgot important things like the exact
shade of Jimmy’s eyes…or those little faces he made when he was irritated.

And that brought him to one of his favorite little truck stops, just north of the border, washing down a very pink venison steak with a bottle of the local rotgut, when the vibe of the patrons started to feel off.

Truckers didn’t run from most things, but they knew to keep their heads down when it came to some things. The fact that the men sitting at the bar all quickly looked to their plates and glasses and the waitress scurried past like a woman on a mission…it all sent up a red flag the size of the truck stop.

Then, over the smells of stale sweat, pine resin, and old grease, came a scent of danger…of blood and steel and candy.

“Whatya mean ‘where are you’?” the newcomer grumbled into a cell phone. “I don’t know where I am, jackass. You send me up here on a wild goddamn goose chase with rumors about mysterious disappearances and shit, and you don’t even have the decency to print me out a Googlemap! Don’t take that tone with me, it’s not my fault you don’t know what the hell Google is! Next you’ll tell me you’ve never heard of Stan Lee…”

Victor set down the unmarked bottle of liquor and leaned back in his chair. “Fancy meetin’ you here, runt,” he called.

For a man who’d had his head cut off, Wade Wilson looked remarkably hale. He stood there in jeans and a tee-shirt, ruined face shaded by a red ball cap and the upturned collar of a heavy surplus jacket. “Y’know, I’ll call ya back once I figure out where the hell I am, and if it’s even in the right storyline,” he said, and flipped the phone closed.

“Have yerself a seat,” Victor invited with a gesture.

Wade hugged him instead, like they were old friends…like nothing had happened.

Close-up, he smelled like all his favorite convenience-store goodies, like Slurpees and cheap donuts and generic cheese puffs. He was warm and calm, heartbeat settled at a low, even patter that thudded against Victor’s collarbone. He smelled almost happy, and Victor didn’t quite know what to make of that.

Wade plopped down in the seat Victor had offered, put his feet up on the table, grinned at a woman who stared too long (which was just a bit perturbing from that scarred mouth). “Vicky. Vicky, Vicky. The years have not been kind, sugarplum. You look like you’re about five years overdue for a shave and a haircut.”

Annoyingly, it took some time for a retort to form in Victor’s brain. He’d been too long without a verbal sparring partner, too long without someone on whom to sharpen his wit. “And you look like you’re about ten years overdue for a pine box and a six foot drop.”

“I hope that was an expression of surprise over the fact that I’m walking around after Jamie hacked my head off, because I’m a little sensitive about the tragic death of my boyish good looks. The first few years of women and children running away screaming left me with a reflexive need to stab anybody who comments on my Dawn of the Dead face.”

And it took Victor longer than he would’ve liked to filter out the nonsense. “Huh. Well, I see gettin’ yer head cut off ain’t improved yer sanity.”

“Oh, Vicky, you say the sweetest things to me. What’s in the bottle?”
“Local stuff. Tastes like bad mead…or a bourbon that’s gone too sweet.”

Wade nodded slowly. “Does this podunk piece-of-shit part of the ass-end of New Brunswick have a name?”

He had to think.

That town I rest at before I skirt that city up from Meddybemps Lake. Somethin’ to do with trees and water.

“Nearest town’s Oak Bay,” he grunted.

Wade put his feet down and leaned forward, subjecting Victor to a long, measuring look. Steady, intelligent dark eyes. Eyes that had always seen too much for anyone’s convenience.

“What’s that look for, kid?” he growled, gulping from the bottle in his hand.

Wade reached out and poked him on the knee (the one he’d liked to break in fits of petulance, Victor suddenly recalled). “You’re gettin’ old on me, Vicky.”

“It’s only been ten years,” scoffed Victor.

What was one more decade on top of fifteen? No, it wasn’t just getting old. It was something else, and he was starting to think it was that thing the creepy bald guy had warned him about, a ‘darkness’ inside him that was driving him to hunt and wander, taking away memories and cleverness and giving back raw instinct and bloodlust.

But Wade shook his head, and his brow was wrinkled with something like concern under the shade of the red baseball cap. “It’s not the years,” he said shrewdly. “I talk to you and you’re like a senile old fart, but I bet you’d know what to do if I drew a blade on you or hopped into your lap ‘n kissed you.”

Victor shifted, not liking the direction of the conversation or the familiar electric thrill from Wade’s fingers on his knee. “Who cares? Not like truck-stop waitresses or wild animals ask for deep conversation.”

Those pesky fingers drummed out a fitful rhythm on his leg, dredging up old, buried urges and memories of glorious violence. Conflicting messages bounced through his brain. Want, and not mine, and Jimmy walked away.

Wade spared him by sitting back and spreading his hands, palms up, as though he’d made his point. “You’re right. You’re completely right, Vicky. Only one teeny-tiny, itty-bitty problem with that, and I hate to bring it up, you know I’m not normally a stickler for the details, but this one’s a speed bump even for you…what’s Jamie’s birthday?”

“What the hell does Jimmy’s birthday haveta do…with…” He stopped.

He couldn’t remember. His own baby brother’s birthday—the most important day in the world for him for a hundred and fifty-some years—and he couldn’t remember.

“Uh-huh,” Wade said. “Still think it ain’t a big deal, Vicky?”

Before he even knew what he was doing, he was on his feet and had a hand around Wade’s throat. “Tell me,” he hissed.
“Oh, please. What’re you gonna do? Forget shit at me? Did you really go to all that trouble babysitting me back then just so you could threaten me over this?”

Again, it took a while for the words to make sense. When they did, Victor felt an unexpected sting of something like shame, both at his loss of control and at his lack of power over the situation. He let go, sat back down.

Wade just regarded him placidly. “I could lie,” he said in a low tone, “and you’d never know the difference. Hell, in a year or two, you’ll have forgotten again anyway, won’t you?”

It was true, and it rankled. So he struck back. “And what about you?” Victor countered. “You must be livin’ the high life by now…got yerself set up nice ‘n cozy in a cabin in the mountains, just like Jimmy always wanted, right? Bet he’s ecstatic, after the touching reunion where you tried to kill us and he clawed yer skull off yer neck.”

Fwikt.

Oh.

He’d forgotten that there’d been a reason he never picked fights with Wade.

The blade through his thigh burned, and the cut bled like crazy. He’d never even seen it coming.

“Vicky, sweetie,” Wade purred, twisting his fist so that the blade protruding from between his knuckles turned and widened the wound. “That’s another sore spot, and I think you know it. One more mean remark like that…and we’ll see if your favorite parts grow back.”

He remembered fighting Wade a few times before Stryker’s goons had ‘fixed’ him. He remembered never winning.

Stronger predator, his instincts screamed at him.

He stayed as still as possible, head ducked slightly.

The blade retracted, and Wade patted the mending wound. “Ah, don’t worry about it, pumpkin. Does the date October twelfth mean anything to you?”

“Should it?”

There was a moment of silence while Wade seemed to consider something, finger doodling absent patterns in the blood on Victor’s thigh. “Nah,” he said with a careless half-shrug. “Just checkin’. Tellya what, Vicky—how’s about you stick with me for a few days, get your rusty memory jogged a bit, mutilate a few random people here and there? And if you’re real good, I might let you past second base like you’ve always wanted.”

Victor snorted in reflexive dismissal.

Wade stole the bottle of rotgut and took a long pull. “Y’know, I always thought I’d know when I finally went crazy,” he grumbled. “But I totally didn’t notice it at first. What’s up with that? I mean, you’d think the voices in my head woulda told me, but they must’ve been catching lunch someplace nice at the time. And they didn’t even invite me! How rude is that?”

“I always thought you were crazy enough that even you couldn’t refute it,” Victor said.

“Har-de-har. I’m not talking colorful, senile-old-lady, freely homicidal crazy. I’m talking about
seeing and hearing shit that feels as real as you ‘n me. I’m talking about remembering shit that happened but didn’t. Most nights, I dream about a city on the water, all steel and glass and trees… and there’s no war there, Vicky. There’s thousands of people from all over the world, and none of ‘em are starving, none of ‘em are tryin’ to kill each other.”

“So what happens in these Star Trek hippie dreams o’ yers? Any flyin’? Y’know, Freud said if you dream about flyin’, it really means you’re dreamin’ about sex.”

“Freud was a goddamn fruitcake, but if it gives you happy thoughts, I can lie and say I dream about flying. Nah, the city goes up in flames and falls into the ocean, and I always have this feeling like there’s someone important still trapped there and I should’ve saved him. I mean, it all makes sense and feels normal when I’m dreamin’ it, but when I wake up it’s like I’m a completely different person.”

When Wade finally passed the bottle back, it was depressingly light.

“Shit, I dunno what I’m saying,” Wade groaned, rubbing at his eyes. “Nevermind, Vicky. Crumple and discard. Or shred, if that’s what squeaks your duck. So, where are we off to after this?”

“Thought you were on a job.”

Wade waved a hand vaguely and went back to doodling in the blood on Victor’s leg. “Ah, it’s only money. You’re more fun.”

“You must be really bored.”

“Don’t be like that, pussycat. I don’t have any other friends but you ‘n Jamie, and I’m mad at Jamie right now for hacking my head off—I know it ain’t much anymore, but as far as I can tell it’s the only one I’ve got, and it took me six and a half minutes to make sure I didn’t put it back on crooked.”

Friends. Victor found it flattering (and a little silly).

All right, why not? As long as he watched what he said, it’d be smooth sailing. Wade would make sure he didn’t forget things, and Victor couldn’t pass up the possibility of a sturdy bedmate.

“Well, as long as you don’t get whiny and start bitchin’ about roughin’ it…” Victor conceded. “Right now I’m going south, past Meddybemps.”

Wade blinked. “Past what?”


“Where do they get these names?”

“By slaughtering other languages.”

“Oh. Well, that’s okay then. I’d probably do the same thing.”

There was a long silence, during which Wade just propped his elbow on the table and his cheek on his hand and looked at something over Victor’s shoulder that may or may not have existed.

Victor—oddly—felt the need to speak. “So, how you sleepin’ lately, runt?”

Wade’s attention stirred back to him. “Meh,” he mumbled with a half-shrug, and paused to put the finishing stroke on a very manic smiley-face in the drying blood on Victor’s thigh. “Better. Worse. Who knows? Sometimes I think all the freakiness in my head takes the place of sleep, or maybe it
mostly *happens* when I’m asleep, but there hasn’t been anybody else around to let me know if I’m awake or not, so…meh,“ he said again, looking away while he started to draw something else.

On a whim, Victor caught Wade’s hand. It startled him how different their hands had become. Oh, they were always different—his own big and clawed, Wade’s slender and calloused—but now his hand didn’t even look human, and Wade’s palms were smooth from using the retractable blades instead of his precious swords. Of all the things Stryker did to Wade, *that* was what Victor hated the most, because Wade just didn’t look *right* without those clever fingers curled around a hilt (and he knew it was at least half sexual, the same way he liked Wade’s mouth best when it was full; but even Wraith and the guys would’ve agreed that Wade couldn’t possibly be Wade without real swords).

Jimmy used to say that Wade was at his most beautiful when he was quiet and still.

Victor disagreed completely. He felt that Wade was at his most beautiful when he had swords in his hands and was in motion, quiet or not.

Wade smiled suddenly, looking every inch his youthful, charming self for a moment, and poked Victor’s nose. “Whatcha starin’ for?” he whispered.

He knew the answer Wade was fishing for, the one Jimmy would’ve given (*because you’re beautiful*). He wasn’t about to give it, because it would’ve been a lie. “Ya look funny without yer swords. Hands’re too smooth.”

And Wade’s smile became something bittersweet and broken, and Victor found he was much more comfortable with that. “Yeah. Guess so. Hey, Vicky?”

“Hm?”

“I’ve fallen apart a lot. Y’know, just from the usual end-of-the-world, lost-another-lover, somebody-blew-up-my-favorite-strip-joint stuff that happens when you go through about three or four lives in a week when you’re sleeping or whatever it is I do when my brain goes places. Is it weird that every time I fall apart, I think of you bringing me blankets?”

Weird, no. *Embarrassing*, maybe, but not weird. He shook his head. “Not so much.”

Wade sagged against the table like a man who hadn’t stopped to rest for months. “Okay,” he said, wiggling the hand that Victor still held captive. “I really missed you. Thought you should know that.”

Well, how about that…

Someone had missed him. He was an evil, bloodthirsty, antisocial bastard, but somebody had *missed him*.

Victor smirked, downed the last of the liquor, and stood. “C’mon, kid. Let’s see if we can’t find you a knife to fidget with.”

*End.*
chapter summary

mystique visits the x-mansion to give logan some tidbits of his past (in exchange for kisses, because she doesn't do anything for free).

chapter notes

i kept kicking this thing around, hoping it would get better, but this is what you're stuck with.

warnings: movieverse (as-yet unnumbered earth version; not earth-616/main comicverse) with bits of the wolverine gameverse and b&t ficverse mushed onto it. reference to slash. het flirting and minor kisses. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: post-logan/wade. reference to unrequited logan/jean. some mystique/logan smooches.

timeline: a few months after x3 (i'm thinking it's around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn't great).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title is a reference to t.h. white's book "the once and future king" (mystique explains the reference). 2) i'm too amused by the idea of wraith as mystique's baby-daddy to let it slip by...hence the mad-scientist amalgam of movieverse and gameverse. 3) terry is indeed theresa cassidy (siryn), who sort of saved the day in x2 when stryker's goons were raiding the mansion. 4) more of me trying feebly to explain the movies' lack of continuity. it may be a wasted effort. 5) anybody else laughing at the idea of the conversation between logan and storm after this? "ohai, g2g find bf, bbl." "orly? kby!" rofl

of ants and wild geese

logan liked being a teacher, all in all.

he’d tried to weasel out of it at first, tried to tell ororo (and it had taken a while before he was comfortable calling her ‘ororo’ instead of ‘storm’) that he was no good with kids, he was too short-tempered, he didn’t know anything they could use outside of pitched battle…

but she’d just smiled and gone about her business, registering something like a hundred new students, airing out wings of the mansion that had been closed for years, going over the curriculum
with Hank, welcoming new staff—most of whom were women and easy on the eyes, though that Emma Frost had a habit of looking at him like he should know her.

So, between teaching the kids how to tune motorcycles and showing them how to survive in the wild, he kept trying to tell her that, of all the X-Men, new and old, he was the least suited to teaching.

But then it turned out that the kids liked him.

He was honest, he let them get away with things like swearing and chewing their nails, he liked books but didn’t try to make them like books, and he felt safe. For whatever reason, all those scared little kids seemed to think he could protect them from anything.

And then it turned out that he liked them.

They were scrappy little brats, for the most part, come from places where they were hidden away or attacked. Kids from broken homes, trying to make something of themselves. Kids from homes that pretended they weren’t broken when they were even worse than the ones that didn’t pretend. Kids from no homes at all, who had heard fairytales of a place in Salem where they’d be safe.

They gave him something besides losses and world-changing political bullshit to focus on. They kept him from dwelling on the loneliness and the idea that he’d lost the two people who could have best looked into his clouded memory for him and drawn out answers.

In the end, he turned the wilderness survival part of his classes into a weekend thing and devoted his weekday classtime to self-defense training. He even taught the kids a range of techniques designed only to subdue rather than injure. And he made sure they realized that most of what he taught them was meant to cause devastating injury and great pain.

His days turned into boring routine. Tune bikes and cars in the morning, teach defense in the afternoon, get in the odd Danger Room session here and there for himself, go camping with the kids on the weekends…

Then one day, as he was leading the kids back toward the mansion after an hour of sparring on the soft grass, a woman sashayed onto the back patio. Her pretty face and dark hair were only vaguely familiar, but he wouldn’t forget her scent in a hurry: Mystique.

“Mr. Logan?” Terry asked meekly.

He looked down at her, patted her head. “Nothin’ to worry about, Squeaks, go on inside.”

The kids filed past, growing quiet around the stranger before ducking into the house and whispering furiously.

When they were gone and the doors were closed, Logan folded his arms and raised an eyebrow.

“Don’t you have somebody to worship? Or are you still doin’ the ‘woman scorned’ thing?”

“Oh, Logan, ever the charmer,” she said drily.

He gestured to her figure—pale skin, pinstrip suit, five inch designer heels. “Not going au naturelle today?”

She smiled coldly. “My natural face has a tendency to recall bad press lately,” she said. “I thought my human face would suffice as a cover; it often does. I’m sure you remember…at least a little.”

Logan waved a hand at her. “No bullshit, Mystique. What the hell do you want?”
Her lip curled in a sneer. “All right, no civilities, then. I don’t suppose you’ve read a book called ‘The Once and Future King,’ by T.H. White…?”

“Yeah, I think. And the Professor had a tendency to lecture about it a lot.”

“He would. It’s about King Arthur. And it’s about the wizard, Merlyn, teaching Arthur everything he needs to know to be a good king.” She strode toward the lawns, paused, turned. “And Merlyn taught Arthur about the difference between commoners and knights with an example of ants and wild geese.”

Logan nodded charitably. “I’m assuming this will get to the point soon—go on.”

“Ants, Logan, do what they’re told by their ruler and never question it. The only meaning their lives have is in accomplishing their petty day-to-day tasks in a droning, endless cycle until they fall down dead. But wild geese follow their instincts. They journey south every winter, because something deep inside them tells them that they must, and they turn north again every summer for that very same reason.”

There was a long, expectant pause, so Logan leaned forward a little. “And?”

She sighed and rolled her eyes at him. “The ants listen to another ant telling them what to do, but the geese listen to something higher, something other, something deep within themselves. And you, Logan, are a goose who thinks he’s an ant.”

“Look, lady, I don’t really go in for metaphors, and your talkin’ in riddles is wearin’ real thin, so I’ll just go back inside and you can join me when you feel like speaking English.” He turned, starting inside.

“James, I am trying to help you! Most people can’t hear that voice of instinct over the trappings of society, but you just aren’t listening to it.”

He stopped halfway over the threshold. When he looked back at her through the panes of the French door, her face was distorted, but her eyes were clear and hard and honest. *Almost familiar.* He stepped back onto the patio, closed the door again. “What’d you call me?”

She looked at him. “Your name is James Logan, or at least it was when I first met you.”

“Oh? And when was that?”

“When you were working for Stryker and I had to work with your team for a short time to do some…reconnaissance for Erik.”

Suddenly desperate, he rushed to her and grabbed her shoulders. “When? With who?”

But she just gave him a smug grin. “You don’t even remember that much. Not even your own brother.”

*Fanged grins, pictures carved on tabletops, blood and horror and death.*

Mystique eyed him. “Or maybe you do…a bit. He joined us after a while—the Brotherhood, I mean. You met him.” Her grin faded. “And you and your one-eyed friend killed him. Don’t shed too many tears over it; he’d already lost most of his sane faculties. Hardly any memory, barely able to talk and take orders…a dumb animal. Which is a true shame, because I remember Victor being a conniving bastard, once upon a time.”
Logan let go of her and staggered back a step, trying to remember.

*Running through the woods...his feet sting, and it's so cold out, but Victor has promised to protect him.*

“Has that jogged anything in that cobwebbed cavern you call memory?” she called flippantly. “Was it the name that did it? Victor Creed. I have a whole list of names I could say. The thrilling thing is that you’d never know if I’d made one up.”

“Thought you said you were tryin’ to help,” he groused.

“Not for free,” she scoffed. “Nobody does anything for free, James.” She started to pace around him.

He watched her. “And what exactly are you lookin’ to get outta this?”

A slow smile crossed her lips, and her eyes twinkled. “The same thing as always, tough guy.”

“And you’re sure you haven’t got me confused with someone else?”

She chuckled, that same mocking, conspiratorial sound she’d shared with Magneto any time they were quietly looking down on the X-Men. “Please. Do I look like the sort of person...” She shifted forms, copied him...but it wasn’t him, not quite; he looked different, was wearing fatigues and unfamiliar dogtags. “…who forgets a face?” she finished in his voice.

Would it be worth it? He didn’t know. There was such a blank in his memory, such a huge haze of things half-remembered...things he dreamed and then forgot again... He glared at her, but she just grinned back with his own face. Finally, he sighed. “Well, c’mon, let’s take this little ‘discussion’ someplace where the whole damn mansion ain’t glued to the windows watchin’.”

She reverted to her dark-haired human form, suit and all, and gestured for him to lead the way.

So he took her to the part of the grounds where he taught the kids wilderness survival—deep in the woods, where he’d hear anyone approaching long before they could see him. Then he turned to her. “All right. Let’s negotiate. Bare minimum, I want names and faces.”

Mystique seemed impressed. “Start small, so that you don’t get yourself roped into payment you’re not sure you want to give.”

“Pretty much. What’ll it take?”

“A kiss,” she said, with a mischievous grin. “One for each name, payment in advance. If you want, you can even pick who you’re kissing—I don’t mind, and I can, after all, be anyone for you. And bear in mind that if I don’t like my payment, I might just lie...so play nice.”

It irked him, but better a kiss than something more private. If that was all it took to get some answers, he’d do it. Testing the waters, he put a hand on her arm and leaned in. She smelled faintly of jasmine and cinnamon, and her lips were soft and cool. All right, so kissing her wouldn’t be horrible. Good.

When he pulled back, she smiled, took a step away, and shifted. The man was a little taller than Logan, and a little broader in frame, but there were some distinct similarities in the shape of nose and brows. A familial resemblance, like cousins or half-siblings. He was dressed in the same olive drab that the other version of Logan had worn.
“Victor Creed,” he said, and his voice was low and velvety, like a lion’s purr. “Before…”

Another shift. This man was a little bigger, but hunched at the shoulder, draped in hides and furs over his clothes, eyes gone dark and primitive, hair and beard grown long from disregard. The wild man, Sabretooth, whom Logan had fought on the Statue of Liberty.

“…and after,” the caveman-creature grunted. “Rejected, deceased.”

Mystique returned to her suited self. “Or so Stryker’s file said, and Stryker did keep oh-so-many files. His sample was probably rejected because of the innate risk of genetic regression.”

Logan worked through that with a frown. “The whole…devolving into a caveman thing?”

She nodded brightly. “Mm. Next?”

“Hold on a second—how many names have you got for me?”

“How many do you want?” she countered.

“I wanna know who was on that team with me.”

“I could give you more.”

He growled in warning.

“Fine,” she sighed. “Shrewd men can be so boring to bargain with… Team X had seven members including you and Victor. That’s five more names. I could be a model or an actress for you, you know. Old or young, living or dead. Just name the girl, and you can kiss her.” She raised her eyebrows expectantly.

Logan rolled his eyes. “Look, let’s just get it over with.”

“Just trying to set the mood,” she said with a shrug.

But he kissed her again, and she behaved herself, and then she stepped back again and turned into a black man with a cowboy hat.

A guitar that never seemed to hold its tune…dark sunglasses…easy laughter…

“John Wraith,” the man said. “Integrated, deceased.”

“Integrated?” Logan asked as Mystique changed back.

“I don’t think you want to pay for that answer,” she drawled with a wicked smirk.

He snorted. “Fine. Whatever. Y’know, I’ve always wanted to kiss Marilyn Monroe…”

Easy as that, Mystique was a buxom peroxide-blonde with a fetching little mole on her upper lip. She placed a daring hand over his heart and looked up at him coquettishly, playing the part well, so it was actually a little fun to kiss her, though Logan would never have admitted it.

This time when she stepped back, she changed into a very big man, much taller than Logan, and heavily muscled. He, too, was in olive drab, and Logan wondered where he could possibly find combat boots big enough to fit.
“Fred Dukes. Before…”

And he inflated like a balloon, going from big to huge, an impressive (if disturbing) ball of blubber.

“And after. Rejected, whereabouts unknown.”

~Th-the Island…Stryker’s taking ‘em to the Island…I heard him ‘n Victor talking…~

Logan tilted his head to one side, trying to remember why the Island was important, and why he imagined it with a capital letter.

And then the blob shrank back to the girl in the pinstripe suit. “Ah, that one’s got you thinking,” Mystique noted. “Three more; who would you like to kiss next? I do a marvelous Betty Paige, if I do say so myself.” Instead of waiting for his answer, she immediately turned into a curvy brunette in a yellow gingham swimsuit. She cocked a hip and winked with a saucy grin, and then she grabbed him by the ears and laid one on him. She pulled away before he had the chance to be annoyed, morphed into a small man with big blue eyes and ears that stuck out. Another one wearing drab fatigues and tags.

Vertigo…lurching aircraft…flickering lights and toy trains that worked without batteries…

“Christopher Bradley,” he said, and there was a hint of something like a Scottish accent. “Integrated, deceased.”

“Good,” Logan grunted. “I think we had a long-standing grudge because of some bad flying.”

Bradley became some green-eyed Ukrainian actress, a willowy girl with nice cheekbones and cover-model legs. Mystique must be bored, to randomly pick and choose like that…or maybe she was fishing for a face that would get her a more enthusiastic kiss.

Shrugging, he paid her without a fuss.

The Ukrainian girl became an Asian man, pretty and porcelain-skinned, dressed all in black. The dogtags around his neck said simply ‘Zero.’

Logan felt his hackles rise. This was someone he hadn’t liked or hadn’t trusted…

“David Nord,” the Asian said. “Redundant, deceased.”

Mystique returned to her human face and sneered slightly. “And his file doesn’t mention how much of an asshole he was. I don’t think he got along with anyone.”

“One left,” Logan said unnecessarily, pulling the names and faces together in his mind and trying to see if his memory could pick out the missing one.

“One left,” Mystique agreed with a sigh and a little pout. “Which would you prefer: Grace Kelly or Audrey Hepburn?”

He thought about it. “Audrey,” he decided.

And there she was, pixie face and waif body, in the red gown from Funny Face, and it struck him as odd that he could remember little things like that when he hadn’t even been able to remember his own name. He kissed her sweetly and she gave another little wistful sigh before she stepped back to change again.

All at once, Logan felt the breath rush out of his lungs.
The man standing before him was dressed like most of the others had been, but with the olive tee replaced by a red muscle shirt. Nondescript short brown hair, dark eyes, a slightly pointed nose. A boyish, elfin face.

*Fluid motion...glimting steel...blood and screaming and mayhem...breath softly rasping while metal jingled to the ground...the stillness of a predator at rest...*

“Wade Wilson,” said the red-shirted killer, in a voice that stirred an avalanche of fragmented memories.

*Hot skin under his fingers...laughter...the perfect smile...affection...loneliness...desperation...*

~Don’t ever leave me, Jamie. I’d go crazy if I didn’t have you.~

Reeling with old, too-intense emotion, hardly even realizing what he was doing, Logan seized the specter of his past and kissed him passionately, feeling like he’d misplaced something precious and found it again.

But no. Wade, the real Wade, smelled like sandalwood and blood and steel and candy. This fake Wade smelled of jasmine and cinnamon.

He pushed the imposter away and pressed a hand to his own mouth, trying to trap the sensation of kissing those familiar lips. He closed his eyes, bludgeoned and bullied his memory, but all he got was the half-remembered sensation of really kissing Wade, and the thought that Wade had a tendency to giggle while being kissed, as though enjoying some private joke. When he opened his eyes again, tears fell down his cheeks, startling him.

There was a burning guilt in the pit of his belly, a nagging feeling that he’d had this and let it go and something terrible had happened. Something had happened to Wade because Logan had left.

Mystique changed back again, looking wary and apologetic. “I didn’t realize you were that close.”

“Y’think I did?” he growled back, and gripped her arms again. “What happened to him? Something happened, tell me what happened.”

She shook her head slowly. “Stryker turned him into a mutant exterminating machine, a mindless drone that he could operate with a computer program. The files say his remains were never recovered, and—”

“Remains?” he choked out.

“Stryker gave him the kill order, so he attacked you. A few surveillance logs show you and Victor fighting him. The control program log shows his vitals flatlining just before the computer system itself was destroyed.” She went on quickly, “But in slightly less reputable sectors, there’s been talk of a mercenary of extreme skill who supposedly can’t be killed. He goes by the name of Deadpool, which is interesting in that the codename for Stryker’s mutation-gathering program was the ‘Deadpool Program.’ If Wade did survive, he probably would have had a dogtag or medical bracelet that said ‘Deadpool.’ Maybe, like you, he woke up and found that it was the only name he had.”

He let her go, breathed out slowly. “Well, where? How can I find him?”

But she shook her head and held up one slender finger. “One extra kiss, one extra answer.”

“Don’t gimme that!” he roared.
“I don’t know where he is, and as for how to find him, use your imagination. But before you do, you should ask yourself whether it’s worth combing the country or possibly the world for an ant who dreamed he was a goose.”

Yes. The answer came to him immediately, from the same part of him that told him breathing, eating, and sleeping were good ideas. Not only was this someone who could fill in gaps from his memory, it was someone he’d…yes, he must have loved Wade Wilson, whether he knew it at the time or not. The insistent ache in his chest was very much like the one he’d gotten when they’d found out Jean was alive.

“I’ll find him,” he said firmly, already starting toward the house. He paused, pointed at the shapeshifting woman. “Deadpool, mercenary. Right?”

She grinned. “Yes, James. Do try not to tear the seedy underworld inside-out on your search, hm? It’ll draw attention, and feds have an inconvenient habit of making people disappear.”

.End.
Chapter Summary

It takes a lot of looking, but Logan finds Wade.

Chapter Notes

almost the end! i have some random snippets that don't go anywhere, and i have something that's more-or-less complete that i think will make a decent epilogue/final chapter... (October 2010: notice i didn't actually stop...)

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. references to human experimentation. slash. minor angsting. minor kissing. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** & f***).

**pairing:** Logan/Wade. reference to Nate/Wade.

**timeline:** a few months after X3 (i’m thinking it's around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn't great); about a month after Of Ants & Wild Geese.

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

**notes:** 1) title comes from "Blue Beneath Your Skin" by Aphasia. i don't think it's even possible to find the CD that it was on anymore, but i know the song is on jonesmusic. 2) Weasel! because Weas is made of geek-win. 3) more of me being amused by the Wraith/Mystique interplay in the game. 4) it took me a long time to decide how permanent the disfigurement from the end of XMO:W would be and why, as well as whether there would be a side-effect similar to 616!Wade's disfigurement. i settled on most of it being permanent (or seeming that way; as Wade pointed out, it might be psychosomatic).

Down and Out

Lonely
And so alone
I'm down and out again
So I'm dying to know what I did wrong
To drag us down and out again
Down and out again

~ Blue Beneath Your Skin, by Aphasia
Logan peered through the smoky gloom of the hole-in-the-wall bar. He was out of real clues, down to the last trace of a rumor, almost ready to believe that Mystique had been full of shit, that Wade was long since dead and gone, that it had all been just another wild goose chase (and the irony of the phrasing after her flowery metaphors did not escape him).

Back at the mansion, Ororo was probably beside herself with worry by now.

This was it, he decided. This was where he would draw the line, where he would stop torturing himself with hopes and half-remembered happiness. If nothing came of this, he’d go home and tell himself that everything and everyone he’d known from then was gone and it was time he focused on now.

The place didn’t look like much, and that was saying something—Logan had seen a lot of crappy little bars. It was just some dingy little basement affair with a couple of pool tables in the back and depressing old blues tunes drifting out of bad speakers in the corners of the ceiling.

Logan went up to the bar, beckoned to the bartender. “Lookin’ for Wade Wilson,” he said.

The man’s expression stayed steady, but he suddenly smelled terrified. “Never heard of ‘im.”

Wincing, Logan passed a twenty over the counter. “How about Deadpool, then?”

More fear. The bartender’s gaze shifted around a bit, and he leaned closer so that he could lower his voice. “If you’re lookin’ for the merc with a mouth, you wanna talk to the pair of crazies over there—the pencil-neck and the guy playin’ with the knife.” And he made a small, veiled gesture with one hand.

So Logan looked. A skinny, nervous-looking kid with thick glasses was chomping down beer nuts and apparently explaining something to some bored-looking punk with a combat knife in one hand. The face was completely unfamiliar, but Logan recognized nimble fingers and the flash of tumbling steel. There was an exact pattern to the way Wade played with knives, and the unidentified guy was matching it perfectly, from the way that Logan’s memory nudged at him. Either the guy was Wade, or he’d spent a lot of time around him.

He walked right up to them, spared the skinny kid a quick glance before putting all his attention on the guy with the knife. Now that he was closer, he could hear a muted buzz of something sophisticated and electronic working nearby, and he could smell sugar, pizza, and sandalwood. “I’m looking for Wade Wilson. I hear you guys are the ones to ask.”

Dark eyes locked on him, and the knife stilled. There was something like a grin. “That what you hear?” came the familiar voice, a little rougher than he remembered, and Logan knew his search was over.

“Mind if I sit down?” Logan asked, gesturing to the empty chair beside him.

The skinny guy snorted, raised his eyebrows. “Oh, sure, get in easy knife’s reach,” he said. “Better you than me.”

So Logan sat, eyes still on the false-faced knife-wielder. “I’m told my name’s James Logan,” he said. “I lost my memory sometime in—I think—eighty-two, and Wade might be one of the last people on earth who can tell me who I am. I’m pretty sure I owe him an apology, too…”something bad happened to him because I left.”
The knife started flipping again, dancing between long fingers. “Lost your memory,” Wade scoffed. “You get shot in the head when I wasn’t lookin’?”

“Probably, knowing Stryker,” Logan admitted.

“So you remember Stryker,” Wade said, nodding slowly. “But you didn’t remember Wade for twenty-some years?”

Logan shrugged helplessly. “Everything I remember’s been practically handed to me. I only remember Stryker because he came lookin’ fer me.”

A familiar little pout. “Well, I can’t say if Wade would remember an asshole named James Logan who dumped him like yesterday’s garbage, but if he did, he’d probably shoot him in the face.”

And some little voice in Logan’s head said, *This is going to hurt*, and he grimaced. “Well, mind the ricochet, Wade, I bounce bullets these days.”

The shot came from Wade’s left hand (the right never stopped flipping the knife), bounced off Logan’s forehead and took out a light (someone swore about having glass rained down, but there was no other response from the bar’s patrons).

Could be worse. He seemed to recall Wade shooting much more uncomfortable places before. He seemed to recall Wade *kicking his ass* before.

“Y’know, that sure feels like you remember me just fine, darlin’,” Logan grunted through the ringing in his ears.

“Oh, I remember,” Wade snapped. “And you don’t get to call me that anymore.”

“How’d you know it was him?” the skinny kid asked.

“’Cause he can smell me, Weas,” Wade answered. “Can’tcha, Jamie?”

Logan rubbed at the lingering sore spot over his eyebrow. “That, and you’re not particularly subtle about bein’ sulky.”

“Vicky used t’ say that all the time,” Wade conceded. “Jamie, this is my best buddy, Weasel. Weas, this is my fuck-up-everyone’s-nice-happy-lives ex, James Logan. Last time I saw him, he was cutting my head off. Which stung, by the way, so I’m still kinda pissed about it.”

Logan winced again. “I don’t remember doing anything like that.”

“Oh, I’m sure you wouldn’t,” Wade retorted, “thanks to plot devices and dramatic irony. But in your defense, I was kinda supposed to be slicing you to itty-bitty pieces at the time. And I was trying, but Vicky can be annoyingly fast and smart when he wants to be.”

“Last I checked, he was dead,” Logan grunted.

“Please. All you did was drop him off the Statue of Liberty and onto a boat. It’ll take a lot more than that to kill Vicky.”

“You know about that?” Logan asked, feeling suddenly uncomfortable.

Wade waved a hand. “Sure, that was way back in the first movie, when Halle was still faking that bad accent. Was partly my fault, anyway. I was keeping an eye on him, makin’ sure he didn’t forget too much, but then my brain went away somewhere, and when it came back, he was gone.”
Confused, Logan just shook his head and ignored the reply. “Look, Wade…I’m sorry about whatever happened—”

“Don’t apologize if you don’t even know what you did, Jamie,” Wade growled. “Don’t make me shoot something that doesn’t bounce bullets. Some guys think it ain’t kosher to hit below the belt, but I ain’t particularly squeamish on the subject of damaging your ability to make little baby rabid squirrels. Hell, if you ever had kids, they’d probably be nasty little douchebags, and I’d probably hunt ’em down and beat their damn faces in, just for that extra little bit of revenge.”

“All right, I don’t know what I did,” Logan admitted. “But whatever it was, you ended up paying the price for it. I know that something happened to you, I can feel it.”

The knife hit the table, point buried between two of Logan’s fingers. “Yeah, Stryker turned me into a fucking glue-together circus freak,” Wade hissed. “After I went to pieces, he darted me like a fuckin’ zoo animal and dragged me off to Alkali Lake, where a whole host of crazy bastards like fuckin’ Abraham Cornelius got to shove a bunch of other people’s DNA into me before dragging me off to the Island, where they put even more of it in me and replaced half my brain with a Lite Brite kit. And the smug little prick had the nerve to feed me lines like ‘don’t you want to be all better when Logan gets back?’” Slowly, Wade leaned back in his chair. “And what the fuck do you care, anyway, Jamie? You walked away. You left and you didn’t look back. Not even with your own brother screamin’ after you to stop.”

In his mind, Logan heard the echoes of a familiar voice roaring in anger and desperation. “You didn’t call after me,” he realized.

“Would you have stopped if I had?” Wade asked snidely.

“Yes,” he said. And he would have. He knew it with the same certainty that he knew he loved the mercenary sitting across from him. Just one word, one pleading little call of his name, and he would never have been able to leave.

That seemed to derail Wade’s train of thought slightly. He pursed his lips, made thoughtful little faces like he was trying to come up with a suitable retort.

Logan blinked. “That’s it,” he murmured. “I walked away. And you didn’t say anything. So I thought…that was the end.”

Wade looked flustered. He took his knife back, gestured with it. “I sleep just fine lately, by the way,” he declared. “I don’t even need sedatives anymore. I don’t hear half as many voices. I can mostly keep my brain in the here ‘n now. And I eat all the junkfood I want, and nobody stops me. And I haven’t chewed my nails in years. So…ha! Ha, ha, ha. I’m over you.”

“You had trouble sleepin’ when I left?” Logan asked, feeling the guilt come back.

“Maybe. Sort of. Kind of. A lot. For something like six days the first time. Then Doc Malcolm gave me some pills, and I managed to get in a nap every three or four days.” Wade waved his left hand vaguely, pantomimed talking motions with it. “Between him ‘n Vicky, it was constant nag-nag-nag, twenty-four-seven, ‘when was the last time you slept, blah blah blah.’ And don’t make that face,” he growled darkly, pointing the knife at Logan. “Stop it. Don’t even think about it. You’re not allowed to cry!”

Surprised, Logan swallowed thickly and blinked away the moisture that he hadn’t noticed was gathering in his eyes.
Wade frowned fiercely, stabbed Logan idly just above his heart. “Hey! You shoulda thought about that before you abandoned me to that Nazi bastard and his fuckin’ cadre of Frankensteins. I’m the only one in this equation who deserves to sit down and bawl about it.”

“Wade, don’t put holes in my shirt, please,” Logan said gently. “I’m sorry. If I’d thought for just one second he’d do something to you, I woulda gutted him stem-to-stern and taken you away.”

“Yeah?” Wade countered. “How do you know? You don’t even remember me.”

He took a deep breath. “I remember the way you smell, and the way your hands move. I remember the sound of your voice, I remember the way you giggled so much whenever I kissed you, I remember that you can tie a cherry stem in a knot and walk between raindrops and count cards…” He shook his head, felt his eyes getting wet again. “I remember I loved you. Still love you, I think.”

Wade gave a grim laugh. “Ya wouldn’t say that if you saw what I look like these days. Cornelius’ goons managed to make me look like a zombie mime. I win contests on Halloween. Got five hundred bucks last year at this swingin’ little dance club in Chicago; beat out some little bitch dressed like Trinity for it. Doesn’t even make sense; you’d think the healing factor would fix it right up like it does everything else, but it only seems to make it worse and weirder. Maybe it’s some kinda mental block…”

But Logan shook his head again. “So show me your face, if that’s what it’s gonna take to convince you that I mean it.”

Wade subsided to a pout. After a moment, he pointed the slightly bloody knife at his friend, Weasel (who jumped and recoiled). “Weas, let’s finish going over the Bates job t’morrow.”

“But Wade, it’s a quarter mil for one dead civilian, and he wants it done before the weekend,” the skinny kid whined.

“Hey!” Wade snapped, scowling at Weasel and leaning closer with the knife. “Do you not see the walking Wrangler Jeans ad over there? I’m not exactly gay, but beggars can’t be choosers, and the chance to patch things up with an ex who may very well be willing to sleep with me without a paper bag over my head is not something I’m going to pass up, easy quarter mil or not. This has officially turned into a date—go rent yourself a hooker or somethin’, Mr. Third Wheel.” And he made shooing motions with his hands.

So Weasel made himself scarce, metaphorical tail tucked between his scrawny legs.

“Sweet kid, really,” Wade said, waving the knife after him. “Smart, crafty, knows a lot about classic sitcoms…not too terrified of me, compared to most people. He knows a lot of really cool science-y things. Kinda like an amoral poor man’s Reed Richards. Made this holo-projector for me, so that people don’t immediately run off screaming things like, ‘holy shit, it’s Deadpool, run for your lives!’ Y’know, being shot in the head never did a damn thing to my memory. Maybe your amnesia’s all psychosomatic.”

Logan patiently raised his eyebrows. “Psycho-what?”

Wade waved the knife around some more. “In your head. Caused by mental trauma. Whatever. Or maybe your mutant healing factor likes my genes better than it likes yours. You really need to read some more recent books, muffin. The dictionary can be a surprisingly exciting read.”

“Now, what could possibly be traumatic about having molten metal poured onto yer bones?” Logan drawled sarcastically.
“I had a Radio Shack’s worth of electronic doohickies shoved into my brain, my DNA fiddled with like it was a tinker-toy set, my mouth grafted shut, my eyes turned into zappy lasers, and molten metal poured onto my bones—mostly while I was awake, so don’t talk to me about trauma, sweetie.”

Logan nodded his concession of the point. “And yet you don’t seem any more unhinged than I remember.”

“I’ve gotten better,” Wade reminded him sharply. “Which took a lot of work, by the way, not that we’re likely to see my trials and tribulations before some other batch of goody-goodies get their own Samuel L. Jackson movie and try to steal my spotlight. I’m pretty sure I’m still crazy, though—I can tell, since I can read my own mind. It’s a good thing, too, or I’d get really bored. My internal monologues are literally golden. It’s awesome. Little yellow boxes floating all over the place, like lame narration.”

“All right. Other than bein’ crazy, how are ya, Wade?”

Wade made that funny little thoughtful face again. “Y’want a beer or somethin’, Jamie?”

Logan leaned his elbows on the table. “Not particularly, but we can change the subject if you want.”

“Yes, I want,” Wade said. “How’ve you been, pookie? Still babysitting every wide-eyed little girl you see? Still slicing people in half for lookin’ at you wrong?”

“I’m a teacher.”

There were several seconds of incredulous silence, and then, as Logan had known he would, Wade burst into laughter.

“Yeah, ha ha, what a laugh,” Logan sighed. “I’m serious, Wade. I teach mutant kids how not to end up dead in bar fights.”

“Really?” Wade asked, making a face. “Jesus, Jamie…teaching little baby mutants self-defense, really?”

“I know, I know. At first, I wasn’t crazy about the idea, either. But the kids like me. They trust me and look up t’me. It’s kinda nice.”

Wade leaned back in his chair, squinted at the ceiling as if it held answers to some inner question. “So…what kinda school is this, that you’re teaching at?”

“The Xavier Institute for Gifted Youngsters, soon to be the Xavier Institute for Higher Learning,” Logan recited. “Mutant boarding school.”

“I seeeeeee. Mental note. We’ll get back to that. I just remembered something else that’s been bugging me this whole time—if you lost your memory, who gave you my name?”

Logan reached for the bowl of nuts Weasel had abandoned, chewed on a couple just for something to do. “Raven Darkholme.”

Wade sat up, made an elaborately suggestive gesture with his knife. “The CIA spook? The foxy chick who kept whining that we weren’t allowed to kill civilians, and ended up being John’s baby-mama?”

None of that stirred recollection, so Logan arched an eyebrow and said, “The shapeshifter who was
working for Senator Kelly but was really working for Magneto?"

At that, Wade nodded. “Yeah, the one who has a grudge against military and politicians. Blue skin, between the fake faces. Gold eyes, like a cat. I hate that bitch just a little less than I hate most people from back then. Lot less than I hate Stryker and Cornelius.” He sat back in his chair again, crossed his legs like he meant to stay put for a while. “So, Jamie, tell me—you really came chasing me down just for some amnesiac identity crisis?”

Logan drew a deep breath. “When I first asked her for names and faces, that’s all it was. But when I heard your name and saw your face again, and she told me you might still be alive…I knew I had to find you and try to make things right.”

Wade consulted the ceiling again, or possibly some hallucination near it. Then he sighed and slipped his knife into his boot, leaned forward and propped his elbows on the table. “Okay,” he said.

Logan waited for more, for explanations or aired grievances, but none came. He arched an eyebrow. “Okay?” he echoed. “That’s it?”

“Pretty much,” Wade said with a nod and a shrug. “I promised myself a long time ago that I wouldn’t blame you if you left. Wade Wilson is monumentally damaged goods, with a lot of very unhealthy kinks; any remotely sane person would run the hell away. Three and a half years is a record, for me, so it keeps you all rose-tinted in my mind. I’m a little miffed about the thing with hacking my head off and not even bothering to check whether I was really dead, but since most people would have, I guess I can let it slide. What really had me pissed was the whole ‘twenty-odd years and no phone call’ schtick, but we’ve established that Stryker turned your memory into Swiss cheese. Besides, my usual boyfriend got written out of this storyline, unless some clones of his parents show up and get jiggy. Then again, his mom was a clone anyway, so we’re halfway there. This is Marvel we’re talking about. People don’t stay dead in Marvel, just ask Steve Rogers.”

Stunned, Logan just sat there and blinked through Wade’s rambling.

“What, you want me to make it all official-like?” Wade took an exaggerated breath, sat up straight, and waved a hand imperiously, like a king granting a royal pardon. “I forgive you, Jamie.”

Just like that, as sudden as a flash of lightning. It took his breath away, left him laughing incredulously with tears in his eyes.

“Don’t go all misty just yet, sweetheart,” Wade groused. “You wanted to see my face, right? Let’s take it outside, then. I gotta work with some o’ these people, after all, and I don’t need them tossing their cookies every time they see me.”

Logan followed him out a back door to a dank alley. They stood together under a light over the door, moths making flickering shadows and suicidal little tink-tink noises against the bulb.

Wade fidgeted with something on his belt for a moment. “If you scream or puke, I’m so punching you. Just so you know.”

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“Stop bein’ such a baby about it,” Logan sighed.

A click of a button, and the low background hum of the holo-projector vanished. There was a brief flicker before the jeans-and-tee-clad knife-guy from the bar vanished to show a masked man with a slightly heavier build dressed in a red-and-black suit of some kind with a gadget-laden belt and a pair of swords strapped to his back. Then Wade tugged off the mask.

Sickly, corpse-like pallor. Hair patchy, eyebrows and eyelashes burned away. Scarred eye sockets
and lips. *Zombie mime* had been an unfortunately accurate description, in spite of being a rather
tasteless joke.

Logan inhaled sharply, clenched his jaw, swallowed hard. “Stryker did that to you?” he asked, voice
strained.

Cornelius was usually the guy holdin’ the scalpel. But Stryker was definitely the prick signing all the
paperwork.”

“If he wasn’t feedin’ the fishes at the bottom of Alkali Lake right now, I’d hunt him down and rip his
skin off,” Logan growled.

“Aww, that’s *sweet*,” Wade said with a grin. “Y’know, in a bloodthirsty-psychopathic-squirrel kinda
way.”

Logan moved, and it must’ve been too fast, because Wade pulled a gun on him.

Wade gave a sheepish laugh and holstered the weapon. “Sorry, reflex…”

Slowly, Logan cupped pale cheeks in his hands, leaned in to lock gazes and breathe the familiar
scents of sandalwood, junk food, and death. He took a few seconds to organize his thoughts, to put
together what he hoped were the right words to express what he was feeling in that moment. “I
didn’t fall in love with you for yer good looks,” he said softly. “If a pretty face was all I wanted, I
woulda done the caveman routine, bashin’ the nearest good-lookin’ person upside the head and
draggin’ her back home, willin’ or no. You move like a dancer, joke like the devil, smile like an
angel, and fight like a demon. Strong enough to save my ass should the need arise, but fragile
enough that the wrong word could break yer heart. You were and *still are* everything I’ve ever
wanted.”

Wade’s heartbeat sped, sounding like a revved motorcycle engine, and he looked away with wide
eyes and shyly shrugging shoulders. “Um. Wow,” he said, and laughed nervously before settling
gloved hands on Logan’s wrists.

“I’ll understand if you blame *this* on me, too,” Logan offered, rubbing his thumb over the ridged
surface that must have marked the edge of a skin graft just below Wade’s lower lip. “You can shoot
me again, if ya want. I can take it.”

“I don’t wanna shoot you again, stupid,” Wade muttered with a roll of his eyes. Then he shrugged
again. “Okay, I kinda *do*, but…it’d be poor thanks to the only person on the planet who’s ever
spouted sappy Eric Clapton crap at me.”

“I may have lost my memory,” Logan scoffed, “but I’m pretty sure I woulda spouted sappy Elvis
Costello crap instead. Roy Orbison at the worst.”

Wade beamed. “And yet I remember you going all Barry Manilow on me at least once.”

“You’re makin’ that up,” Logan accused with a fond grin, and stole a kiss.

“It’s true!” Wade giggled. “Scout’s honor.”

“No way on God’s green earth did they let you be a Boy Scout.”

“Pfft, technicality… Now, about this mutant boarding school of yours—they got a Seven-Eleven
nearby? What’s Cocoa-Puff’s stance on junk food and classic television? And is she likely to take
away my toys when I move into your room?"

.End.
Remains the Same

Chapter Summary

Marie is waiting. Logan comes home with a hot-but-crazy boyfriend.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. references to human experimentation. slash. minor reference to het. minor angsting. minor kissing. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** & f***).

pairing: Logan/Wade. minor reference to Bobby/Marie.

timeline: a few months after X3 (i'm thinking it's around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn't great); the afternoon after Down and Out.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title is a reference to "Love Remains the Same" by Gavin Rossdale. 2) soooo too many geeky little name-only cameos. i toyed with having Rogue lament in passing that Mr. Beaubier was a "hat trick" (in hockey, this is when you get three goals to zero; in slang, it refers to a guy or girl who's very hot, very gay, and very taken). the reference may find its way into future b&t fics. 3) Wade and Marie are totally going to be partners in crime. i can sense it.

Remains the Same

Marie was glad to have a free hour between geology and history. Dr. Dane wasn’t bad outside of class, but she had a tendency to move the lectures a little too fast and get annoyed if her students didn’t seem to be keeping up. And while Ororo could usually make history fascinating for anyone, they were talking about the Holocaust, and Marie had more memories of that than she would ever have wanted, thanks to Magneto. She was a little less glad that Bobby had psychology with Miss Frost instead of having an overlapping free hour, but it was better than nothing.

She’d gotten interested in neo-classical English literature lately, was working her way through Frankenstein. She loved the turn-of-phrase in it, the way everything sounded so eloquent and poetic. Mostly, she was reading old English books to keep herself occupied…to keep from missing Logan too much this time around. It wasn’t proper for a young girl to be attached to someone so much older, she told herself; but he had been so kind to her when she’d been so lost, and he felt so safe and familiar and comfortable.
He was like the best big brother in the world, and with him gone, the only male authority figures in the house were Mr. Beaubier, who was teaching them about languages, and Mr. Cassidy, Terry’s dad, who was teaching them about law and government. The other teachers who’d joined up were women: Miss Frost, Dr. Maximoff, Dr. Dane, and Ms. Blair. Well, she didn’t know Mr. Beaubier or Mr. Cassidy very well, so she didn’t feel comfortable going to either of them when she felt she’d like a fatherly shoulder to lean on.

So when she heard the rumble of a motorcycle outside her window, she jumped up with a big smile and ran for the front door.

There he was, the same as always, but looking a lot happier for some reason. He seemed to be at peace, for once—maybe he’d found whatever he’d gone looking for.

“Logan!” she cried, hugging him tightly. “Only a month? That’s quick, for you. Welcome home.”

“Good t’be back, kid,” he replied, patting her back with the hand that wasn’t holding his bag. “You got yerself a better boyfriend yet?”

She rolled her eyes. “I like Bobby just fine, thanks.” Then she looked over his shoulder and saw that he’d brought someone back with him…someone really hot. The guy could have been a model or an actor, with looks like those: big brown eyes, a disarming grin, and a very well-maintained body. “Um. Who’s yer friend?”

Logan pulled away and gestured vaguely. “Uh, well…” he began, sounding like he didn’t know quite what to say. “This is, uh…”

But the other guy just sidled up into Logan’s personal space and held out his hand for her to shake. “His boyfriend, Wade. Nice to meetcha.”

She gaped for a moment, then recovered her manners with a smile. How ironic for Wade to introduce himself to her the same way that Bobby had introduced himself to Logan… “Marie,” she said, shaking his hand.

“I see Jamie’s still adopting every cute little wide-eyed kid he comes across,” Wade noted.

“You…don’t really look old enough to be…” she managed, wagging a finger from one of them to the other.

“Don’t let the looks fool ya,” Logan snorted. “It’s a holographic projection. He’s at least forty.”

Wade quickly slapped a hand over Logan’s mouth. “Bad! Bad Jamie! No telling the impressionable little children how old I am. I’m twenty-something.”

Logan batted Wade’s hand away. “I don’t see how that could hold up to any amount o’ logic, unless you plan to start rumors that I wandered into a bar somewhere and randomly decided to take you home with me.”

“Not bad, Jamie, but lacking a little in the imagination department. You can’t get teenage gossip-mongers really interested without something a little more sordid than that. There has to be scandal somewhere. Maybe blackmail, or long-lost bastard children.”

“It’s easy math, Wade. If we were together before I lost my memory, that’s more than twenty years ago. You say we were together four years. And I ain’t the sort to pick up someone who ain’t of legal majority, so you were at least eighteen when we got together.”
Wade nodded slowly. “Right. Cradle-robbing isn’t your gig. You’re more of a…walk off without a word so that the next time we see each other you end up cutting off my head and vanishing for twenty years kind of guy.”

Logan sighed and headed for his room. “You’re not gonna let that go, are ya?”

“Not as long as I can get away with holding it over your head,” Wade replied cheerfully. “There’s always the possibility that it’ll get me extra make-up cuddling.”

“Does Ororo know about this?” Marie tried, scampering after them. “I mean, bein’ as it’s technically her school now, ‘n all…I mean, she might get mad if you just bring somebody here without talkin’ to her about it first…”

“Ro’ll get over it,” Logan dismissed, tossing his bag onto the bed to start unpacking. “I told her what I thought I was after when I left. I just didn’t expect to bring him back with me, ‘s all. Wade, no playing with knives around the kids, okay? They’re skittish enough without you scarin’ the crap out of ‘em.”

“Awww,” Wade said with an adorable pout, and proceeded to shuck about half a dozen different knives hidden about his person. “Hey, little girl—do you like Orangeheads?”

Marie blinked. “It’s Marie. And no way, they’re gross.”

Wade turned and beamed at her.

She blushed.

“I like this kid, Jamie,” Wade decided, gesturing to her. “She understands how loathsome and evil Orangeheads are. Marie, you’n I’ll get along just fine, I think. Which is good, because otherwise I’d have to do terrible things to you every time you got within about four feet of my honey-pie.”

Logan gave him a stern look. “Wade, what’d I tell you about dumb names in front o’ other people?”

“That I should call you as many different ones as I can possibly think of, because it’s cute and you wuv me bunches?” Wade tried with a face of would-be-innocence.

“That if you did it, you’d be lucky that I love you bunches,” Logan growled in correction, and allowed a kiss on the tip of his nose. “Stash the swords and guns somewhere, if you wanna make a good impression on the headmistress.”

“Oh, please, she’ll adore me. Everybody does, because I’m cute, funny, and delightfully sociopathic.”

“Can we downplay the sociopath part?” Logan said with a grimace. “Otherwise, she ain’t likely to let me keep you.”

“I’ll be good, if it’s in aid of hot reunion sex,” Wade chirped.

“And leave the plastic explosives, too.”

“Awww, what’s a couple ounces of Semtex between friends?”

Logan shook his head as he finished unloading his bag and shucked his riding jacket.

“Ororo’s teaching right now,” Marie said. “But she should be done in about five minutes. I’ve got her class next, anyhow, so I’ll go get my books and show you the way.”
“She’s so cute and helpful,” Wade said. “I gotta get me a pet kid.”

Logan snagged him by the waist. “Hey. You already got yerself a pet wolverine, and I think you’ll have yer hands full. Ya don’t need any other pets. Come on.”

It was a little weird to see Logan putting up with that kind of mischievous behavior, and very weird to see him being affectionate with someone, but Marie supposed that if he and Wade had really been together before the amnesia thing, it must be nice for him to be able to recover a piece of his past. She gave a mental shrug and led the way to her room, where she gathered up her notebooks and her textbook.

“So, kid—sorry—Marie,” Wade said, and she turned in time to dodge a hand to her bare shoulder.

“So, sorry,” she excused, covering the place he’d almost touched with her opposite hand. “Forgot to mention that ya shouldn’t touch me. Skin-on-skin contact activates my mutation. I absorb life-force, powers, memories…”

He seemed to think about that for a moment. “Wonder how that would work, with all the computer-thingies in my brain. Think she’d get my little yellow boxes, Jamie?”

“I think she’d get a mess of psychoses and authority issues that don’t belong to her,” Logan snorted. “Just don’t touch the skin, okay?”

Wade waved his comments off. “Anyhoo, like I was saying—so, Marie, how long have you known my snuggle-bunny?”

She hitched up her stuff and carefully slipped past them to head for the study. “Well, I met Logan in a crappy little border town that I’d hitched to on the way to Alaska from Mississippi. There was a little bit o’ trouble, and I thought I’d saved him, so I hopped into his truck and wouldn’t let him kick me out. I guess that was…six years ago or so. This is my last year of general college courses. Haven’t really picked a major, so I haven’t really picked a school, either.”

“Well, college ain’t for everyone,” Wade said. “Hell, school ain’t for everyone. I dropped out, and I’m just fine.”

“You’re a mercenary assassin, that’s more of a trade-school thing than a high school and college thing,” Logan said.

Marie stopped next to the study door. “Well, good luck.”

Wade tried to stay in the hallway, but Logan put a firm hand on his back and steered him into the room before shutting the door behind them.

There was some muffled conversation inside for a little while, then the door opened and Wade ducked back out.

“They’re ‘speaking privately,’” he told her with a theatrical raise of his eyebrows. “Which is really a nice way of saying that she’s going to be yelling at him and calling him crazy while he tries to talk her into letting me stay.”

“So you…you and Logan were really…” she tried, but broke off before she said something dorky or unintentionally mean. After searching for a suitable word, she settled on, “…together?”

He glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. “Not that he remembers all that well, but yeah. It’s apparently a miraculous coincidence that he even found out I ever existed. Between the amnesia
thing, driving Jamie off in the first place, and turning me into the freakiest freak at the freak show, Stryker’s lucky I don’t know where his body is, because I’d definitely be down for some desecration. I spent twenty-seven years in my own personal hell, thanks to that sick, twisted mindfuck. Even my lousy drunk dad only gave me twelve years of hell after Mom died. Meeting Jamie was, needless to say, the high point of my lousy life, and I gotta tell ya, Marie, it’s not nice to look back on your whole life and realize you were only really happy for maybe a tenth of it.”

She thought about that. It made a lot of sense. “Stryker was a nasty piece o’ work all right,” she conceded. “He said some awful stuff when he was tryin’ to get Logan to work for him again. Did Logan really…was he really a killer?”

He looked her straight in the eye. “We were all killers. Hell, I’m still a killer, and I probably always will be, deep down. One hundred percent, dyed-in-the-wool killer—something of a murder prodigy, in fact. That’s what brought Jamie to me. The part of him that chases bunnies and likes very rare steaks decided that I was the only other predator around, besides his brother. Back when I still worked for Stryker, I’d kill anybody on orders, just ‘cause it was fun to let loose. These days I’ll only do it if I’m gettin’ paid or somebody tries too hard to kill me, ‘cause I’m trying to turn from villain to anti-hero, and alignment shifts require a fair bit of behavioral adjustment. What about orange gobstoppers?”

“The chewy kind or the regular ones?” she asked, worrying a little about the casual way he talked about killing for a living.

“Either.”

“They’re both a little icky. The chewy ones ‘cause there’s no other flavors mixed in, the regular ones ‘cause you have to taste it for so long before it changes. And I heard once that there was somethin’ funky in the orange dye that caused cancer in lab animals or somethin’.”

Wade had been looking at the opposite wall, where there were portraits of Jean, Scott, and Professor Xavier under a plaque that said In Loving Memory and talked about how they’d dedicated their lives to helping human-mutant relations. “Did he ever sleep with her?” he asked.

Marie looked up at Jean’s portrait. “Who, Jean? She’s dead, y’know.”

“That would be the reason for the words ‘in loving memory,’” he retorted snidely. “Lemme put this as clearly as possible for ya, short stuff… Did Logan ever do the horizontal mambo with the now-deceased redhead in the picture?”

“Jean and Scott were an item for as long as anybody can remember,” she told him, indicating Scott’s portrait on the wall. “Why’re ya askin’?”

“Because I’m possessive and she’s Jamie’s type, that’s why. Supermodel looks, cute little smile.” He sneered, started chewing on a fingernail. “There are, quite frankly, a lot of things wrong with me, and I don’t like him having a basis for comparison. Tempts me to do things like terminate the competition with extreme—and possibly unwarranted—prejudice.”

Marie scrutinized Jean’s portrait. “Logan liked her a lot…maybe loved her…but he respected that she didn’t love him the same way. I’m about ninety-nine-point-nine percent sure that the farthest they ever got was maybe a kiss.”

“Oh, good. That’s one less corpse to desecrate, then.”

Okay, so the guy was apparently a little loonier than she’d first suspected. “You were all set to be
jealous of a dead woman you never met?"

He glared up at poor Jean, and if she weren’t dead and looks could kill… There was a muffled little clack of teeth meeting, and he spat out a sliver of fingernail onto the floor. “Little girl, you gotta understand my position: the love of my life is a straight man who walked away without so much as a backward glance. When he left, I pretty much flipped my friggin’ lid, and it’s a miracle I managed to survive the six years between then and Stryker turning me into a zombie mutant-exterminator. James Logan is the only man who’s ever said he loved me, the only person on the planet who’s called me beautiful, and probably the only person in the history of the universe who would kiss me knowing what I really look like with Cornelius’ makeover. I let him slip through my fingers once; I’ll kill us both before I let it happen again.”

She shivered a little at the desperation in his voice and his gaze, was relieved when Logan came back out of the study.

“Hey, don’t chew yer fingers,” he chided, pulling Wade’s hand away from his mouth.

“Well, Cornelius stole your tags when he started sticking computer chips in my brain, so either he threw ‘em out with the garbage up at Alkali Lake or they’re under the wreckage of the Island with all my other personal effects.”

“So chew on a straw or somethin’.”

Wade was still eyeing Jean’s portrait. “So what’s the verdict? Is Uhura cool to let me stay aboard?”

“On a trial-basis, for now,” Logan admitted. “Even if she decides not to let you stay, it doesn’t matter. We’ll go somewhere else. I was stupid once, a long time ago…I had you and I let you go. I don’t plan on making the same mistake twice.”

“And we all know how well your plans go, don’t we, snookums?” Wade snickered.

“As much as you make fun o’ me, I’m starting to wonder if my feelings aren’t unrequited,” Logan teased with a grin and a playful nudge.

Marie watched them, too frightened by the intensity of their relationship to be envious of how comfortable and together they seemed. It was there in every movement, every little touch, every seemingly careless word: You’re mine now, and you’re going to stay with me even if I have to destroy heaven and earth to keep you from leaving. She wondered how it could be possible for both of them to have such obvious feelings and never notice that they wanted the same thing. She thought it must be unbearable to be so in love with a man and not trust him.

“What a pair o’ fools,” she said, and shook her head at them. “Men are such idiots.”

.End.
Strange Bedfellows

Chapter Summary

Ororo introduces the Institute's staff to their new houseguest. Some of them recognize Weapon Eleven.

Chapter Notes

because ~MerianMoriarty wanted to see the reactions of the staff. the title has no cosmic metaphorical meaning, it just sounds more fun than something like "odd couple."

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. references to human experimentation. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** & f***).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: a few months after X3 (i’m thinking it's around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn't great); the evening of Remains the Same.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) oh, the staff. oh, the epic catfights waiting to erupt. between Alison, who has a media empire in multiple Marvel universes, Wanda, who is a psycho bitch, Emma, who is an evil mastermind waiting to happen, and Lorna, who probably thinks they're all on crack... and let's not get started on JP’s presence and the likelihood of fights over hot guys........... 2) idk if you guys noticed, but i did -- when Logan and Kayla go to the cells, one of the captive mutants is a redhead with his mouth sealed shut. totally Sean.

Strange Bedfellows

Ororo’s first impression of Wade Wilson was good. He was cute and funny, and the positive effect he had on Logan’s peace of mind was only slightly less obvious than the nose on her face.

Then again, the first time she met Wade Wilson, she had about five minutes before students would start pouring into the study for college-level world history, and all Wade had the time to do before she asked him to wait in the hall was smile, wave, and say, “”Sup, Cocoa Pebbles?” (immediately followed by Logan putting a hand over Wade’s mouth).

Logan warned her about their shared para-military past, and about Wade’s shaky grasp on concepts like nonviolence, sharing, and consequences. Treat him like a four-year-old who never shuts up and always manages to get his paws on sharp, dangerous objects, Logan had said. A little worrying, but
they’d dealt with all manner of mental instability, including things like regression, autism, and post-traumatic stress.

Her second impression of Wade Wilson was that he had issues with punctuality.

Of all the senior staff, only Alison and Logan were likely to excuse tardiness, and Logan was probably in the process of dragging Wade to the briefing room for the meeting.

“Why exactly are we here?” Emma drawled, crossing her legs and raising her eyebrows.

“We’re here, Miss Frost, because the headmistress called a meeting of the senior staff,” Wanda replied smoothly.

Emma glared. “Thank you, Dr. Maximoff.”

Sometimes, Ororo wished for fewer women in the house, since men were generally easier to pacify or manipulate. She took a deep breath and smiled at the X-Men (‘and X-Women,’ Wanda would have made her add, if she’d said it aloud) seated around the briefing table. “Well, I’ve been hoping to introduce you to a temporary houseguest Logan brought to the mansion today. I thought I’d made it clear to Logan how crucial it was that we all agree to let this guest stay, but it looks like he’ll be here in his own time, as usual.”

There was some muttering, some eye-rolling, some good-humored chuckling.

“Under most circumstances,” she went on with a half-shrug, “it wouldn’t be a problem to allow someone new to stay with us—Charles always stressed that the mansion was an open sanctuary—but this…person…is not a child and is not helpless, and I know Scott would have agreed that we have a responsibility to make sure the students are safe. I’d like you all to judge for yourselves whether you feel we should let him stay or not. And Hank, I’m glad you happened to be visiting, because I want your opinion, too, both as mutant ambassador and as a doctor.”

“Well, they’re only four minutes late,” Alison said with a glance at her watch. “When I was in school, we gave the teachers ten.”

“My dear Alison,” said Hank, “I hardly think some extenuating circumstance has arisen since Logan’s return to the mansion earlier, barring calamity or unexpected inj—” He trailed off, looked toward the door, adjusted his spectacles.

“Hank?” Ororo asked, following his gaze.

“Ye gods and beasts,” Hank yelped, just as they heard voices approach in the hall.

By the time the door slid open, Hank was downright gaping.

Logan steered Wade in with a hand on the back of his neck.

Ororo saw Sean flinch as though in recognition, but he didn’t say anything.

“Good t’ seeya again, Furball,” Logan said, and nodded to Hank.

“Is he okay?” Wade asked, pointing. “His eyes are really big. Maybe he has too much caffeine in his diet. And is he supposed to be blue, or did somebody spill the raspberry Kool-Aid?”

“Wade, shut up,” Logan muttered. “Stop talking. That horrified look on his face is from hearin’ your babblin’ from the minute we stepped off the elevator.”
“Ooh, right, ix-nay on the ociopathy-say.” Wade made a zipping motion across his mouth.

“Ociopathy-say?” Lorna murmured to Alison with a meaningful look.

Emma stood. “Wade?”

Wade immediately scampered around the table to her and hugged her off her feet. “Ella!”

“Emma,” she coughed in correction. “Wade, please put me down before I have to hurt you.”

He obeyed, but made some very inappropriate gestures at chest-height. “Lookit you, you got taller! You got boobs! Wow, twenty years was a good investment for you…what are those, like a double-D?”

“Yes. And you don’t look the way I remember you at all, even considering that we were both lab rats at the time.”

“This is all very touching,” Jean-Paul interrupted. “I believe we were called together for a reason. Ororo?”

She smiled at Wade and gestured. “Well, I see you know Emma. Would you care to introduce yourself to the rest of the senior staff, Wade?”

“I’m Wade Wilson, and I’m an alc—wait, wrong speech…”

Near the door, Logan just shook his head and pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Wade, please don’t waste our time,” Emma said primly, taking her seat again.

Ororo gestured around the table. “Jean-Paul Beaubier, Sean Cassidy, Dr. Lorna Dane, Alison Blaire…Emma Frost, of course…Dr. Henry McCoy, and Dr. Wanda Maximoff. Ladies, gentlemen—do you have any questions you’d like to ask Wade before we agree to let him stay at the mansion?”

“Yes,” Hank said dryly. “Perhaps Mr. Wilson would care to explain earlier comments on the subjects of sociopathy and disposing of gophers with plastic explosives while simultaneously excavating for an outdoor women’s mud-wrestling arena.”

Alison stifled a snicker.

“I don’t remember saying anything about sociopathy,” Wade said innocently.

“What was your last occupation, Mr. Wilson?” Lorna asked him.

He blinked at her. “Is that your natural color?”

“Yes. Answer the question.”

“Okay, okay, sheesh. Wow, you X-types are so high-strung… Let’s call it…freelance high-risk extraction, retrieval, and disposal.”

“In other words, a mercenary,” Hank explained.

“No, only if the word ‘mercenary’ doesn’t have particularly negative connotations in this room,” was Wade’s answer.
“At least it means he probably knows how to safely excavate with plastic explosives,” Alison said brightly.

Wade pointed to her. “Yes! Listen to the nice lady over here who reminds me of a rock star.”

“Do you have any…talents?” Jean-Paul asked delicately.

“Oh, sure, lots. You should see what I can do with a cherry stem, elf-boy.”

Alison was snickering again, and doing a poor job of hiding it.

“The word ‘talents’ was a polite euphemism,” grunted Sean. “He means ‘do ye have any mutant powers?’”

“Do you?” Wade returned in a tone of offense, as if the very question were a violation of his privacy.

Sean stood and scowled, hands braced on the tabletop. “Yes.”

“Please, don’t demonstrate,” Ororo cut in.

Hank eyed Wade. “At the very least, a highly accelerated metabolism, from the sound of that heartbeat.”

“He’s good!” Wade cheered. “Can I be on his team for charades?”

“And why not mention the other interesting mutant gifts, Mr. Wilson?” Wanda drawled.

Wade made a blank face for a moment, as though caught at lying and trying to quickly think his way out. “Oh. Well, yeah, I mean, I heal kinda fast, too, and maybe I can sorta end up not-dead when I shouldn’t…”

“Come now, you’re being modest,” Wanda said darkly. “You see, Emma isn’t the only one who recognizes your name and face, Weapon Eleven.”

Hank, having worked with the government, inhaled sharply and turned to stare.

Wade made a show of looking around and pointing to himself. “Weapon Ele—what, me? Ah, c’mon, lady… Look at me, I’m a nobody, a mook. Do I look like some kinda highly trained, computer-programmed, genetically altered mutant-hunting machine to you? Wow, even I’m not convinced by that.” He looked distinctly guilty and uncomfortable. “Don’t worry, Stryker lost the remote somewhere under a few tons of rubble. I haven’t seen big, stern white letters in twenty-some years; the only voices I have in my head belong to me, although there are admittedly still a lot of those—but the number’s going down! Also admittedly, I’ve killed a whole lot of people, but I was always well paid for it, and I’m really not helping my case, am I? Jamie, Emma, you guys maybe wanna chime in, here? A timely ‘shut the hell up, Wade,’ would not go amiss.”

“Weapon Eleven?” said Ororo. “What is that? Hank?”

Hank took his spectacles off. “Weapon Eleven was the last iteration of the Weapon Projects, which were part of the Deadpool Program. The driving concept was that mutations, being genetic in origin, could be spliced onto an appropriately receptive DNA strand, effectively giving a person, even a non-mutant, someone else’s mutant abilities. There were theories that only some parts of the body required this modification, depending on the mutant power, others that every strand had to be altered with a cascading serum…it was never clear which theory won out, though I personally suspect that it would depend upon the mutation. Originally, the complete weapon would undergo strenuous
behavioral conditioning, but a computerized control chip, with the right software, could, in theory, suffice. With access to Logan’s nigh-unstoppable healing abilities, the idea of the Deadpool Program becomes a truly frightening possibility.”

Wade was edging toward the door. “Okay, wow, that sounded like one of Cornelius’ speeches. Remind me not to let the blue dude near me with needles or knives. Really, what’s so frightening about little ol’ me? It can’t be the voice—everybody loves my voice. I’m dead-on for a slightly manlier Demi Moore, and who doesn’t like Demi Moore’s voice, right? It’s not my ass—people are constantly telling me I have a nice ass, and that’s not scary at all, although some of the things Inez says she’d like to do with my ass are a little scary. I’m only a little above average height, I don’t run around threatening people very much, I don’t have fangs or claws…”

“The swords, Wade?” Emma prompted.

He froze, slowly grinning. “Uh, what swords?”

“The ones in your arms.”

It was like dealing with a twelve-year-old. Ororo heaved a thick sigh. “Wade, please be honest with us.”

“Are you kidding? If I’m honest with you, you won’t lemme stay, and Jamie likes it here.”

Emma stood again. “Wait. Wait a minute. Jamie? The one you went through all that awful shit for?” She pointed to Logan. “He’s Jamie?”

Wade looked at Logan and then back at Emma. “Did I forget to mention that?”

Slowly, Emma sat. “Well, that changes the shape of the landscape significantly.”

“Is that good or bad?” Wade asked her with a suspicious frown.

Emma turned to Ororo. “I think Wade would behave himself quite well, if the alternative is that we turn the two of them out on the front step.”

“Yes, I’ll behave!” Wade agreed quickly, nodding. “I’ll be good. I don’t bark at night, I’m housebroken, I don’t chew the furniture, I’ll sleep at the foot of my master’s bed, I only hump people’s legs when I’m asked to—”

“Wade, shut up,” Logan growled.

Wade flapped a hand at him. “Hush, muffin, I’m busy being ingratiating. Would it help if I pouted? What about Sad Puppy Face? I have the world’s best Sad Puppy Face; it even works on killer mercenary cat-mutants and supervillains. I’m cute. I’m funny. I’m a veritable potpourri of pop-culture knowledge—I never lose at Trivial Pursuit, ask anybody. I make a great bodyguard for defenseless little baby mutants. I can teach a sixty-pound girl to disable a three-hundred-pound man. I can speak more than ten languages. My mental math skills could make Tony Stark wanna marry me, if it weren’t for the fixation on Captain America. Really, I could go on forever, so stop me when I’ve sold you.”

Ororo sighed again. “Logan? You trust him?”

“With my life,” Logan said promptly.

For her, that was enough—Logan didn’t trust anyone—but she was a leader now, and couldn’t
“What about the children’s lives?” Sean countered, turning in his chair to stare sharply at Logan. “What about my daughter’s life?”

Logan met his stare. “Yes, I would. Wade’s a lot of things, including a little bit nuts, but he ain’t a baby-killer.”

“Oh, hell no!” Wade laughed nervously. “No way. Except maybe by accident, if a building I was in were to, hypothetically, come crashing down as a result of unforeseen circumstances that would in no way implicate me. Uh, I mean—could you repeat the question, Your Honor? I plead the fifth!”

“Oh, you guys, he’s kidding,” Alison tutted. “He doesn’t seem like the kind of person who would knowingly endanger the students.”

Wade grimaced and made some vaguely placating gesticulations. “Sorry, I’m trying to concentrate, but it’s hard sometimes. I have legitimate brain damage to explain that, I can get a doctor’s note and everything. Okay, yeah, I’m a little messed up, but what uber-secret government science project isn’t, right? I mean, I’m the genetic equivalent of a fruit cocktail, thanks to Stryker’s goons. It’s not like I did it to myself—okay, so I kinda did do it to myself…there was a waiver and it was eight pages long and there was all this fine print and I woulda told ‘em to go screw themselves and to hell with not having a legal leg to stand on, but then Colonel Asshole said I could see Jamie again if I was good and I hadn’t seen him in like six years and it was really messing me up like to the point that people were turning up dead around me for no reason that I could remember and I should really shut up now.” And he closed his mouth with a click of his teeth.

“Not that it’s any o’ yer goddamn business, Irish,” Logan hissed, unsheathing the claws of his right hand. “Ex-lover that I’m workin’ to make a little less ‘ex.’ And if ya care t’ repeat the phrase ‘murderous idiot’ in that tone, we’ll see whether those pipes o’ yers can knock me cold before I rip ‘em out.”

Wade slowly reached out and patted Logan’s shoulder. “Jamie, honey, you’re not helping. We’re trying to convince them it’s a good idea to leave us on the loose with a bunch of bouncy little brats, not that you’d roast the little bastards on a spit if they mouthed off.”

Sean snorted and finally sat back down. “He can stay, for now. But only because Wanda’s right, and we can always kick his arse all the way down the road, if needs be.”
“Don’t say it, Wade,” Logan muttered.

“Not saying it,” Wade obediently answered.

“Jean-Paul?” Ororo finished, looking at the French-Canadian.

He shrugged. “For now, I see no reason why he shouldn’t stay. If he happens to prove otherwise, well…” He waved a hand. “…forcible ejection seems to be the favored solution.”

“All right,” Ororo said. “Wade, there’ll need to be some ground rules set. First and foremost, those children had better not ever have access to any weapons or munitions, the only exception being kitchen knives—and you will not give them any ideas about being irresponsible with those. Clear?”

“Clear,” Wade chirped with a salute.

“Second, during the bulk of the year, this is a school, and you will respect it as such. Also clear?”

“Ummm, I take it you mean that I should lay off swearing, smoking, drinking, and other adult pursuits in plain view of the impressionable youths? Because I kinda didn’t finish school, so it’s not like I respected it as an institution, overall.”

Cute he may be, but the persistent ‘I’m so dumb and harmless’ act was wearing on her patience. She stared at him coldly (and dropped the room’s temperature a few degrees for emphasis).

“Right. Yes. Clear.”

“And third, if you ever willfully endanger the life of a student, I will personally barbecue you before I have Peter throw you as hard as he can toward the lake. He’s got a good arm, so you might even make it to the other side.”

Whether from the threat or from her tone of voice, Wade was cowed, and meekly took cover behind Logan. “Yes. Gotcha. Totally, one hundred and ten percent crystal clear,” Wade said. “Like, Blu-Ray clear. Transparent aluminum clear? Have I got the right crowd for that?”

Ororo relaxed. “You’ll have to go with Hank to the infirmary for a checkup. After that, feel free to make use of the mansion and its grounds—within respectful and reasonable limits.”

“Do I have to get a checkup?” Wade whined with a childish pout. “I hate checkups. I hate doctors, no offense to the smokin’ hot green-haired chick. Can we just agree that I’m physically healthy and mentally not?”

“I’m sorry, Wade, but I think it’ll be best if Hank looks you over.”

“Perhaps I should go with them,” Emma suggested. “He knows me, and I have a better idea of what he’s been through than anyone here.”

“And Alison, please,” Hank put in. “I have a feeling I won’t be able to sedate Mr. Wilson by chemical means.”

“Got it,” said Alison.

Ororo nodded. “All right. Thanks for your time, everyone. See you at dinner.”

“Can we not use the word ‘sedate’?” Wade asked as Logan dragged him out of the briefing room and down the hall in the direction of the infirmary.
“I’d skip the labcoat, Hank,” Emma called.

“Might want to start the lightshow, Al,” grunted Logan. “He’s not nearly as calm as he looks.”

“Yes I am, I’m totally calm, perfectly calm, the very picture of calm, if you looked up ‘calm’ in the dictionary, it’d say see Wade Wilson, so obviously we don’t need to give me a checkup of any kind, especially involving doctors or a need to be sedated,” Wade babbled, digging his heels in so that the soles of his boots squealed against the floor.

“Like taking a cat to the vet,” Ororo mused with raised eyebrows, and followed Sean and the others to the elevator while some very childish and insistent shrieks echoed through the sub-levels.

.End.
Get a Hobby

Chapter Summary

Terry Cassidy meets Wade Wilson, and they bond over the subject of dead mothers.

Chapter Notes

the first meeting between Wade and moviiverse!Terry.

**warnings**: Moviereverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. references to physical abuse (you guys know by now how i feel about parents who beat their kids). language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** & f***).

**pairing**: Logan/Wade.

**timeline**: a few months after X3 (i'm thinking it's around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn't great); probably Wade's second day at the mansion.

**disclaimer**: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

**notes**: 1) Terry's a hip kid, i'm sure. she's no Hope, but then she didn't grow up in the flying-roach-people-infested-Stryfe-and-Bishop's-happy-fun-land future. 2) movie Terry never speaks, so we never hear whether she has her accent--but i love her accent, so i wrote her with it. 3) who knows what world had a Nate croak? maybe it was just a flashback to future-trekking!Nate. 4) the drowning in schmoop is probably from the [Dreams of the Waking Man](http://example.com) somewhere.

Get a Hobby

There was something in the air…a smell that was almost a taste. Tangy. Metallic.

Terry rolled the flavor around on her tongue. Ah, that was it. Blood. She’d just grown in one of her permanent eyeteeth, and her mouth had tasted like blood for half an hour after the baby tooth finally came out.

The smell was too strong for a scraped knee on the basketball court or a bloody nose from a fistfight. Maybe somebody had gotten hit on the head. Maybe somebody was hurt and needed help.

So Terry followed the smell of blood to a bench on the edge of the lawns.

A man was sitting there, shirtless, slumped like he’d given up on life. His shirt was sitting to one side of him, and a big, bloody knife was on the other. She could see blood pooling at his feet; he
wasn’t moving.

Slowly, she reached for the knife.

“Don’t touch that,” he said, startling her. “Catwoman says you kids aren’t s’posed to have
weapons. ‘Sides, it was a present, and it’s pretty important to me.”

Terry took a slow breath. “A present? Who from?”

“Vicky, and I’m pretty sure that’s actually a ‘whom’ thing. From whom? From him?” He repeated
the two questions over a few times. “Yeah, that’s a whom.”

She stared at the blade. “What were ye doin’ with it? The knife, I mean.”

He half-turned, held up a hand. There was a bleeding heart in his palm.

She was too scared to scream.

“Don’t make that face, kid, it’s mine,” he snorted, turning the thing to look at it. “Kept beating for a
while, too, which makes sense in a weird way, considering how my head still worked when it was
cut off. Grew a new one about a minute ago. Heart, that is. Never grew a new head, though that
might be an interesting experiment.”

“W-why would ye…” She hesitated, swallowed.

“Cut out my heart?”

She nodded.

“Thought it might hurt less,” he told her.

What a juvenile idea… But she supposed if she could cut out her heart, she might try it, too. And at
least it wasn’t somebody else’s heart. “What’s yer name?”

He looked at her. He was very handsome—movie-star handsome. “Wade. What’s yours?”

“Theresa Cassidy,” she said. “Me dad teaches social studies here.”

He made a face. “Oh, yeah, the prick who kept asking rude questions. Guess he’s a little
overprotective of his precious widdle girl. Or his ‘wee Irish lass,’ whatever.”

She blushed, mortified. “Oh…sorry. Yeah, he can be a bit…abrasive. It isn’t his fault. It’s been
hard since me mam died.” After a moment, she stepped forward and sat on the very end of the
bench. “Did someone you love die? Is that why yer heart hurts so much ye cut it out?”

He stared at his heart for a while in silence. “You’re a very smart little girl, Theresa Cassidy.”

She rolled her eyes. Grown-ups never did understand the vital difference between ‘little kids’ and
‘big kids.’ Sure, she was a kid, she’d admit to that. But she wasn’t a ‘little kid.’ “I’m almost
thirteen,” she muttered.

“Oh, ‘scuse me. A very smart big girl.”

Much better. “Ye’re excused,” she said graciously. “Who was it? Was it Vicky?”

He laughed. “No. Vicky’s still alive ‘n kickin’. He ain’t the type to die without having a mountain
dropped on his head. Nah, *this* guy runs around trying to get himself killed.”

“I thought ye said he died.”

“He did. In some worlds. Not this one, obviously, since he doesn’t even exist here.”

She wasn’t quite confused, because Mr. Beaubier had lectured about alternate-reality fiction the month before.

“How old were you when your mom died?” he asked.

“Six,” she said.

He looked at her and smiled.

She blushed.

“I was six when my mom died,” he told her.

“D’ye miss her?” she asked in a tiny voice.

His smile faded a little. “Yeah.”

“Does it ever stop hurting?”

“…kinda. You don’t think about it so much after a while.”

She shifted and looked out at the lake. “It’s been seven years. I still think about her every day.”

“You need a hobby,” Wade said firmly. “Or a boyfriend. Or a mental defect that interferes with a coherent train of thought—that one works out pretty well for me, on the whole.”

“Did you get a hobby?” she challenged, considering the other two options to be things she neither wanted nor needed at the moment.

He scoffed, tossed his heart from hand to hand (it made a nasty squidgy noise). “You kiddin’? My dad was a drunk. When I hit twelve, I decided my hobby was to get good enough at fighting that I didn’t get the shit kicked outta me by grown men. By the time I was thirteen, I knew my way around a knife. By the time I was fifteen, I could hit anything I aimed at with any gun I picked up. By the time I was seventeen, I could take out any number of interesting organs with a sword.” He looked at his heart again. “Inflicting grievous bodily injury on others for fun and profit. That, dear Freckles, is what I do, and it’s not just a job—it’s an *adventure*.” He waggled his eyebrows at her, making her giggle.

“Wade?” someone called from the direction of the mansion.

Terry turned. It sounded like Mister Logan, and he sounded worried.

“Busted,” Wade drawled. “Wanna help me hide incriminating evidence?” He held the heart toward her. The smell reminded her a lot of raw hamburger. She didn’t think she’d be able to eat another burger for *months*.

“Ew!” she squeaked. “No. No, I don’t.”

He wrinkled his nose at her, stood up, and threw the thing as hard as he could toward the lake (it made a gentle splash a few yards in, no mean feat from where they sat at the top of the ridge). Then
he turned around (there was a line of blood just under his ribs on the left side, but no sign of a wound), wiped his hands on a hanky (which he shoved into his pocket), and yanked his shirt back on. He grabbed the knife, flipped it in his hand, pointed it at her. “I trust I don’t need to tell you that bad things happen to people who snitch on me?”

She arched an eyebrow. “Ye don’t really think ye can fool him, do ye? Mister Logan isn’t stupid, and he has a very good sense of smell.”

Wade stuck his tongue out at her and shoved the knife into his boot just as Mister Logan jogged around the hedge toward them. “Hi, honey,” Wade chirped.

Mister Logan hugged him tightly, the way Terry had seen Bobby and Marie hug after the X-Men had been in a battle. “Thought somebody mighta kidnapped you.”

“Dork,” Wade laughed. “People don’t kidnap me, Jamie. There’s nobody to pay the ransom, for one thing. For another, I’m a lot more trouble than I’m worth—ask Stryker.”

“Oh, god,” said Wade, rolling his eyes and making a gagging motion. “Jamie, you’re drowning me in schmoop, babe. I just woke up from having Priscilla schmoop me to the brink of death, and I was kinda hoping to feel a little less sniffy-weepy and a bit more manly when I got back here.”

“Who’s Priscilla?” Terry asked.

Wade held a hand up horizontally over his head. “Big ol’ Dolph-Lundgren-lookin’ guy, metal on one half, weighs about a ton between the metal and his ego, wears this ‘grr’ face that he inherited from his dad. If he had a slogan, it would probably be ‘Because I’m From the Future And I Said So.’ Or maybe ‘Pseudo-Utopian Dictatorship Is Next to Godliness’…did you read that fic? Are you old enough for cheesy fanfiction, Lucky Charms?”

She decided to ignore the parts that made no sense. “Tall, big ego, ‘grr’ face…sounds a bit like Scott.”

Wade pointed to her in confirmation. “Ah, yes, Scotty McBoyScout…”

She had to put her hand over her mouth to stifle sudden laughter.
“Y’know, he was never very nice to me. Bit of advice, Squeaker-Toy: don’t go falling in love with guys who have loose ideas about the free will of others. And stay away from guys who are out to save the world, because anybody who really thinks he can save the whole world is off his fucking rocker, no matter how sexy the blindingly idiotic self-confidence is. And you should probably just shoot anybody with the last name Summers, because they’re all a bunch of self-righteous dicks.”

“Language?” Mister Logan said mildly.

Wade gave him a half-offended look that said ‘coming from you?’ (and Terry had to agree, because Mister Logan’s language on a good day still had him owing several dollars to the swear jar). “Oh. Right. Impressionable youth, ex-frigging-scuse me. Off his fracking rocker. And self-righteous tools. You know, it’s still not as satisfying as swearing, now that I’m in a medium where the naughty words don’t come out as gobbledegook that some dork came up with by holding the shift key and mashing numbers. Monkeys with typewriters do not em-effing Shakespeare make, Jamie—probabilistically, maybe, statistically no way in aych-three-one-one. Is it still swearing if they say it in the Bible? Can I say ‘cock’ and ‘ass’? If not, that’s about ninety percent of my pickup lines gone. If I can use one or the other, I can save another twenty percent.”

By that point, Terry was pretty sure that Wade was at least a little bit insane and really had something against some guy whose name may or may not have been Priscilla Summers; but he was also cute and funny and nice, and knew what it was like to lose a mother. He’d make a good friend, she decided. And she’d think about getting a hobby. For now, it was time to get her Algebra book and pretend she’d done her homework. She gestured vaguely to the mansion. “Well, it was nice to have met ye, Wade. I’m, uh…I should go get ready for me next class now. Bye.”

“Bubbye,” said Wade.

“Seeya later, Squeaks,” said Mister Logan.

“She is so cute at that age,” she heard Wade say as she walked away. “Mind you, she grows some killer bazooms in about two years…”

.End.
Chapter Summary

Wade explains to Lorna one of the peculiarities of being hideously tortured.

Chapter Notes

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. bloooooood. references to nasty human experimentation. language: pg (primetime tv).

**pairing:** Logan/Wade.

**timeline:** a few months after X3 (i’m thinking it’s around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn’t great); maybe Wade's third day at the mansion?

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

**notes:** 1) foley is the technical term for sound effects on stage or film. so when you see the credit for "foley artist," you know he's the dude playing with springs and pine cones. 2) oh, Lorna...she's just this side of Mary Sue (probably because she dated a Summers). man, Magneto's kids are so effed up. i was tempted to use Terry for this fic (sound, after all), but i needed someone who was a patient, 'reasonable' adult. 3) the teleporty sound-effect in XMO:W is totally 'fwump.' possibly 'fwoop.' 4) who remembers Weasel's cat? *raises hand* who remembers the panel in C&DP where it snuck a drink of the coffee Weasel made? *raises other hand*

Foley

Lorna jumped when she heard the first glass break in the kitchen.

It was a complex, thorough sound—the dull thud as the lowest part of the glass first hit the floor, the instantaneous crackle as the surface started to fracture, the chorus of discordant chimes as Newton’s first law explained itself to the shattered remnants.

She closed her lesson planner and got up to see if anyone was hurt or needed help cleaning up. Then she heard the second glass and frowned with worry.

When she heard the third and fourth and fifth, she ran the last few feet and threw open the door.

She had expected one of the boys trying to show off, or maybe one of the younger kids climbing to reach the top row of cabinets.
“Wade?” she managed, not quite understanding what she was seeing.

He looked over his shoulder at her and wiggled his feet as unconcernedly as if he were standing on sand instead of glass shards (crunch crunchety-crunch crunch went the glass as his feet moved). “Good Luck Bear, you’re here to save the day!” he said brightly, and gave an experimental hop (squish crunch squish).

The sounds made Lorna cringe. “It’s Lorna, and what exactly are you doing?”

“That’s right. Dr. Lorna Dane. Geeeee…ology, wasn’t it? The one about rocks.”

“Geophysics, actually, but I teach geology.”

He ignored her. “You’re a bright gal—seriously, I bet your hair glows in blacklight—what’s it look like I’m doing?”

“It looks like you’re standing on broken glass.”

He threw his hands in the air. “She scooooooores! And the crowd goes wild, woohoo, go green-haired chick, all right, yeah, she got those brains from her daddy, and probably a healthy dose of megalomania, too!”

The wet grit of glass on tile drew her gaze down to his flexing toes (squeak squish crunch). When she saw how much blood there was, she grimaced and quickly looked up again. “Ah. And…why?”

“I wanted to?” he said, arching an eyebrow. “I’ll pay for ‘em.”

As if money could be a concern when someone was bleeding all over the floor… She shook her head. “Why would you want to stand on broken glass?” she asked patiently. “Doesn’t it hurt?”

He shrugged, and turned to face her (crunch skid crunch crackle). “Yeah.”

“So you are a masochist?”

Lifting one foot, he considered the bleeding sole for a few seconds. “Not really. I don’t enjoy pain, I just like inflicting it on myself. More of a sadism thing than a masochism thing. And before you ask, I’m pretty sure I’m a sadist. I like slicing bad people to bits. And sometimes good people or in-between people, because the distinction gets a little fuzzy for me. Don’t worry, I don’t do kids, I try not to do pro bono, and I’m under strict ‘no killing people’ orders while I’m here.”

“All right,” she said, because it was the only calm and reasonable way to respond. “Back to my other question—why are you standing on broken glass?”

He did a few absent little soft-shoe steps that made ghastly noises on the floor (squish crunch slide crunchety-crunch skid tink). “It’s weird, Care Bear. If you experience an intense enough pain for a long enough time, it throws you all outta whack. This?” He pointed to his feet. “This should probably be fairly excruciating, and twenty or thirty years ago I’d been sobbing like a five-year-old at the dentist. But all I can think is ‘hey, this is actually pretty tame compared to the bone-saw-with-no-analgesia thing, and that one was miles nicer than the molten-metal-on-my-bones-with-no-anaesthesia thing.’ So I guess the answer to ‘why’ is… I’m trying to figure out where the line is. Y’know, where ‘okay, I don’t really like this’ becomes ‘omigod, make it stop.’ It’s an ongoing project. It’s what I do when I’m not working, and “not working” is implicit in ‘no killing.'”

Lorna cleared her throat. “Well. Will you need someone to help you pick the glass out?”
“Nah. When they heal, the glass’ll pop right out. Would be cool if it didn’t, though—then I could kick somebody in the face and it’d be like smackin’ ’em with a broken bottle. Badass. Handy in barefoot-ninja barfights.”

She was about to ask him to help her clean up the mess (before one of the kids could wander in and be traumatized) when Logan shouldered her out of the doorway.

“Jamie. Wow,” Wade said, looking suddenly sheepish (skitter squish crunch squish). “You’re really not gonna understand if I explain this, are you? That said, I’m pretty sure I know exactly what you want to say right now, verbatim, and I can assure you that I’ve heard the speech at least two hundred and forty-three times—though not always from you—and it really won’t help anybody if you make it two hundred and forty-four.”

For a while, it looked like Logan might go ahead and make the speech anyway, but he just walked over, grabbed Wade by the hips, and lifted him up onto the countertop.

“Thank you, everybody,” Wade said, mock-bowing. “We hope you enjoyed the show. If you come back for the evening showing, he’ll bench-press me. Be sure to tip your waiter.”

“You, shut up,” Logan grunted. “Paper bag, Lorna? I’ll sweep if you’ll hold it.”

She nodded, reached into the pantry to fetch a brown paper bag, the broom, and the dustpan.

Wade kicked his feet idly. “Do I get to help by flicking teeny little splinters into the farthest corners of the floor?”

“No. Now hold still until it’s all out.” That said, Logan started collecting the larger pieces of glass and dropping them in the bag (ink clank), ignoring any number of quickly-healed little cuts.

“I wonder,” Wade announced, and Lorna glanced up with mild dread. He had on the sort of thoughtful-but-puzzled face she associated with thirteen-year-old boys slowly beginning to grasp the idea that fossils used to be bones and are therefore cool. “Wanna know what I wonder, Jamie?”

Logan shook his head and started sweeping up the rest of the glass (scraaaaape scrape scrape). “Not really, darlin’.”

Wade went on as if Logan had raptly said ‘yes, please, tell us more!’ “I wooooonder…if the glass would come with me if I bamfed.”

“Bamf?” Lorna echoed.

“Well, I don’t so much bamf as fwup, but bamf is more fun to say and various conjugations of fwup sound a lot dirtier than I’m going for just now. So. I, with my magical brainy bits, wonder if bamfing would remove the glass. Real noggin-scratcher, huh? I’ve never accidentally left my clothes behind. But I’ve accidentally dropped things like Weasel’s cat—who I’m pretty sure is poison-proof, by the way, fun but unrelated fact. Experiment time!”

“No, wait, Wade—” Logan yelped, but it was too late.

In a puff of reddish smoke and a flash of metallic bones, he was gone (with a sound very much like fwup).

Lorna fell back with a surprised and undignified noise. “Ugh,” she groaned. “I really should be used to things like that.”
Logan heaved a sigh and kept sweeping (*scrape skreeee scrape tinkle*). “I’m pretty sure there’s no gettin’ used to Wade.”

Out on the lawn, someone screamed.

In another puff, Wade was back on the counter, pouting at his still-glass-studded feet. “Bah. Maybe it just takes pract—”

“Don’t even!” Logan said sharply. “Now, sit still like a good boy.”

Wade perked up. “Good boys get kisses, right?”

“Assuming you can actually sit there without talking, making dirty gestures, or kicking more glass all over the place, *maybe.*”

“It was a yes or no question, and ‘maybe’s not ‘no,’ so I win, yay,” Wade announced, and obediently subsided.

Logan rolled his eyes and went back to sweeping.

The sound of the glass being cleaned up was a complex one as well—the hollow bump as the dustpan touched the floor, the muted scrape as the broom dragged the pieces onto it, the almost musical jingle of tiny fragments falling together into the paper bag.

.End.
Dirty Thief

Chapter Summary

Wade steals Bobby's ice cream and blackmails him for more.

Chapter Notes

IDEKM. XD

just some more zany hijinks from Wade's pov. he meets movieverse!Bobby and gets the good news from Hank that his brain-vacations may be fixable. and he shares a fun fact about spoons.

warnings: Moviewerse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mashed onto it. dimension-hopping. dorky 616 references. brief threat of fairly graphic violence. rampant bad euphemisms. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: Logan/Wade. implied Marie/Bobby and Bobby/Jean-Paul. jokingly implied John/Erik (Pyro/Magneto).

timeline: a few months after X3 (i'm thinking it's around 2006, but my sense of timeline for the movies isn't great); the afternoon of Foley.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) most guys (and some girls i've met) will do the fridge/freezer/pantry thing when they're bored and get the munchies. it's because we don't really know what we want to snack on, and we're waiting for something to jump out and scream 'eat me!' 2) Wade's love of strawberry dairy items managed not to make it into the parts of the Team-X-era stuff that i posted, but it was kinda a running gag that any time Logan managed to piss Wade off, Wade ran off to eat all the strawberry ice cream packs from the base's supply of MREs. 3) BTW = by the way. 4) i've been told (by a Parisienne) that street-Quebecois is only a little more intelligible than Creole to the French, in much the same way that a New Yorker can barely understand surf-lingo (or the way Toukyou boys can barely understand an Oosaka accent ^_^;). 5) FYI = for your information, BF = boyfriend. 6) i heard about the pierogi place from one of my editors. there was talk of sending me to a premiere in Warsaw at one point, and she told me to check out the pierogi a couple of blocks from the American Embassy. 7) Q is short for Quartermaster, and is important in Hypnic Twitches. 8) monsieur = mister. 9) smoking somebody's cigar is a euphemism for giving him a blowjob. 10) having a drawn bow-string is a french euphemism for having an erection. 11) tante = aunt, french slang for a queen or a fairy (and it used to be the slang for a rentboy's sugar daddy XD). 12) in point of fact, "table tennis" is slang for sex (usually gay sex).
Wade opened the freezer.

_Y’know, nobody’s come and put new stuff in during the five seconds since the last time you looked._

“I was hoping to see something I’d missed before—it’s a guy thing.”

_Ooh, right, sure. Hey, ice cream._

He grabbed the big tub of Häagen Dasz. It felt like it was about half full.

_Could be half empty._

Wade snorted. His life wasn’t quite shit anymore, so he was a ‘glass half full’ guy these days.

_Ice cream tub._

Right. ‘Ice cream tub half full’ guy.

There was a note attached to the tub: ‘Property of Bobby Drake, do not touch, this means you Kitty.’

_He missed a comma._

“How?”

_Direct address. Should have a comma._

“Oh. Hey, you’re right. ‘This means you, Kitty.’ With a comma. Prolly oughtta have an em-dash before that, too.”

_Your name’s not Kitty. And it’s Chocolate Chocolate Chip._

“Right again, little yellow boxes.” Satisfied, Wade shut the freezer and grabbed a spoon out of the drawer.

_You know what would be great?_

“What?” Wade asked the yellow boxes, between spoonfuls of stolen—

_Creatively acquired._

—right, creatively acquired Häagen Dasz.

_Strawberry ice cream. Remember the freeze-dried stuff in the MREs?_

Wade did remember. “Oh, man, that stuff was awesome. And it lasted for, like, _ever_. I think I read somewhere that MREs would last for a century or somethin’.”

_The turkey roast sure tasted like it, blech._

“Blech,” he agreed. “Y’know, I think I like the brownie fudge chunk better.”

“Then maybe you should get some and stop eating other people’s chocolate chocolate chip,”
someone complained.

Wade looked around.

There was a kid standing in the doorway with his arms crossed. He was blondish, but had highlights anyway, like some lame after-school-special hunk.

“Bobby Drake, I presume,” Wade said, pointing with his spoon.

_Duh._

Shut up.

“Yeah,” said the kid. “I take it you read the note and ignored it?”

Wade took another bite of ice cream and tapped the note with a finger. “Says ‘this means you Kitty.’ Bad punctuation, bee-tee-double-you. Since I’m not Kitty, the note doesn’t apply to me. Knowing your opinion on yellow panties and guys who wear them, I really have to ask—why the hell didn’t you boink the firebug while you had the chance? By now, he’s probably rubbing lotion on Magneto’s back in Bermuda or something. And am I the only one who’s noticed that guy’s creepy complex for young men? I can appreciate a fine ass as much as the next guy who’s not ridiculously insecure, but he’s gone past cradle-robbing into near-pedophilia.”

_Hasn’t he, though? Maybe it’s some weird Freudian thing to do with his kids…_

“His kids are bafflingly abnormal. Good call, yellow boxes.”

Bobby looked lost. “Good ca—wha? Who are you talking to?”

Wade raised an eyebrow. “Myself. I answer back, too. ‘S how I know I’m crazy.”

Bobby shook his head. “Look, I don’t know who you are, but—”

“Wade Wilson, pleased t’meetcha,” Wade chirped, saluting with the spoon.

“Will you _stop eating_ for a minute?!”

_Heh, it’s so funny to make people aggravated. That little vein starts to bulge, and they go red in the face, and then they start to threaten you…_

Wade grinned. “Gonna make me, kid?” he taunted, and went back to eating between sentences. “Gonna tell on me to somebody? How about ‘Mister Beaubier’? Elf-boy would come flying to your rescue, if the inappropriate lingering gazes I’ve seen while lurking outside the windows are any clue. Not that there’s anything wrong with that, you being a big boy and him being a perfectly pretty little fairy princess. Really, I have a lotta love for my countrymen, even the ones who are prissy and whiny and speak the worst dialects of French and have no business teaching a French language class.”

The kid went pale in the face.

_Oh, you got him with that one. Nice shot._

“Now, let me see…if you’re Bobby Drake, that makes you ‘that damn Ice Cube Boy,’ which means you’re Marie’s squeeze,” Wade said, frowning a little as he hit the bottom of the ice cream tub. “Eff-why-eye, she was completely not cool with you comforting the Pussycat in her Hour of Grief, and Jamie has that on his list of ‘reasons to want to gut the mouthy brat.’ Does Marie know her French
teacher’s been frenching her bee-eff?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” the kid said woodenly.

*That’s rich!*

Wade laughed, scraping out the corners to get the last of the ice cream. “The way you just said that tells me you know exactly what I’m talking about. In fact, it screams ‘third base.’ You really need to learn to lie better. Are you gettin’ good grades?”

“It’s not like that.”

*It’s not? Wow, what a ripoff. Never sleep with the teacher without getting good grades outta the deal.*

“Jeez, I woulda at least leveraged a B,” Wade tsked, and went to toss the empty ice cream container in the trash. “Free advice, kid—if you have something somebody else wants, there’s no sense in just giving it away. Also, fun fact: I know how to use this spoon to cleanly remove your eyes, even if you struggle. But it’ll hurt more if you struggle. So don’t struggle.”

*Careful, don’t want him running off to the Weathergirl. Pfft…raining men…*

Now, now…sharing fun facts never hurt anyone.

*True. But they do seem to panic people. Now, what were you saying?*

Wade frowned. “I dunno, what *was* I saying?” The base of his skull was starting to ache.

The big blue-furred doctor-dude with the fangs leaned in. “Ah, Mr. Wilson,” he said, and loped past the mute Backstreet Boys reject who was standing there looking like somebody’d threatened to blackmail him. “I have some good news.”

*Hank. Yeah, that’s what Uhura called him. Dr. McCoy. Heh. He’s dead, Jim!*

Wade discovered that he was holding a spoon.

*Weird.*

He threw it at the sink. “Uh-huh? Good news?”

“The synaptic scans I did helped me isolate a frequency with a static response ping,” Hank explained. “I believe it is the frequency on which your control implants operate. Now, I’m a doctor, not a computer programmer, but I have called in a favor from a well qualified colleague-of-a-colleague, and he’ll see what can be done to clear up the malfunctions that have been sending surges through your brain’s reality matrix and triggering your little…side-trips.”

“Oh,” said Wade. “Cool, I guess. Anybody I know? Come to think of it, my buddy Weasel could probably hack my cranium without much trouble, if you’ve found the frequency. I know a guy named Gareb who could do some pretty cool stuff with a computer, assuming he exists in this dimension. Who’s Stark Industries’ latest go-to guy? He’d rock my control chip pretty hard, right? It was the eighties, though, so my control program was probably written in some horrible, gank-ass, ghetto-stylin’, old-timer programming language. Maybe Basic. Or C.”

Hank gave a fangy grin. “Indeed. I’ve left all the relevant reports with Ororo. Your case is quite fascinating, and I would love to stay to see it resolved, but I have a summit to attend in Warsaw.”
Wade paused in picking dirt from under his nails. “Warsaw like Truman Dam Warsaw, or Warsaw like the capital of Poland Warsaw?” he asked.

“Poland.”

“Oh. Hey, make sure you try the pierogi place across the street from the Methodist church on Mokotowska—like ten minutes’ walk from the embassy. Totally rocked when I went there to off a French dignitary in oh-four.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wilson, I shall keep that in mind. Good luck.” And away went the furry guy.

Wade frowned at the kid who was doing a statue-impersonation next to the door. “Do I know you?”

The kid looked around. “Uh. We just met. Bobby Drake?”

*Marie’s guy.*

“Marie?”

*The skunk-haired girl?*

“Oh. Yeah. Jamie’s pet soul-sucker. Right, so you’re her boyfriend—the one who’s probably sleeping with elf-boy.”

“I think there’s something wrong with your memory,” Drake said.

Wade scoffed. “My memory’s just fine. Jamie’s the one who went all amnesiac. Let’s see you try and keep track of a couple dozen different alternate dimensions. There’s one where Bobby Drake was one of the original X-Men, y’know. Older than you. Pals with Warren Worthington the Third. Zooms around through the air on an ice slide, which is a neat but physically improbable trick. My memory’s great, I just need to remind it what world I’m in sometimes. Get somebody to explain about diverging realities and timeline collision and all that, it’ll make a lot more sense then.”

*It really doesn’t make that much more sense.*

“Sure it does. Q told me all about it, and Nate gave me the lecture in two separate worlds, and it completely makes sense now. It’s a resonant-reality-matrixy-thingy, something to do with string theory and time travel and slide tech and what-have-you. You heard the blue furry dude, my control chip’s been picking up weird radio frequencies and sending my brain off on tangents. Instead of bodysliding, I brainslide.”

“Hey,” called the Drake kid.

“Oh, sorry, got distracted. What were we talking about? I think it was how dumb you were for not getting Monsieur Beaubier to give you a good grade. You gotta learn to take better advantage of sugar daddies.”

“First of all, you’re delusional—”

“Ohoho, denial, thy name is Robert Drake. We both know you’ve been doing untoward things with the pointy-eared gay-male-model-wannabe, and your playing dumb is starting to bore me. Now, let’s get down to the price of silence.”

Bobby eyed him skeptically. “I’m beginning to think there’s no such thing as ‘silence’ with you.”

Wade waved a hand. “Technicality! The price of me not blabbing to everyone I may or may not
know that you smoke the French teacher’s cigar. Or did he teach you what to do with a drawn bow? Sorry, I’ve got a long list of multicultural euphemisms, and I had to squeeze in at least a couple…”

Bobby just rolled his eyes.

“I’m waffling between wanting to know the particulars of the pervy tante and not wanting to know anything about the sex-life of the snowflake-making boy-band reject. But I digress.”

“Again.”

As usual.

“Shut up, both of you,” Wade muttered. “Now. I expect to be paid in ice cream. At least a pint a week. I’m not too picky about flavor, just nothing weird like pistachio or mint chip. And if somebody finds out on his own and blabs, it’s totally not my problem. Deal?” He held out his hand to shake.

“Yeah, okay, fine. Deal.” And Bobby shook his hand.

“Great timing—my Jamie alarm is going off.”

Liar. You just heard him blustering down the hall.

“Shush, yellow boxes,” Wade said, leaning out the kitchen door. “Jamie? Pookie?”

Jamie stopped tripping over kids and pointed at him. “You better not be gettin’ into trouble again. Between your telltale-heart stunt yesterday and the thing with Lorna and the glasses this mornin’…”

Wade gestured to the floor. “Uh, hello? Do you see any bloodstains, cuddlekins? One Lysol wipe and it was like it never happened. Anyhoo, I was just thinkin’—I want some strawberry milk.”

“Whataya need with strawberry milk?” Jamie asked, arching an eyebrow.

“Said want, not need,” Wade pointed out. “Strawberry-flavored dairy products are the bomb.”

Jamie seemed to notice the blue-eyed blackmail victim in the room. “Wade, you ain’t been bullyin’ the kid, have ya? He’s Marie’s, and she gets a bit particular.”

She does, does she?

Wade sidled up to Bobby and put an arm around his shoulders. “Nah, we’re buddies. Ain’t we, Bobby-boy? He likes ice cream, I like ice cream…we’re practically blood-brothers. I was just giving him a little advice when it comes to gettin’ along with his teachers.”

Jamie didn’t look impressed. “Y’mean like the way he’s sleepin’ with the Frenchie?”

Bobby sputtered and tried to make denials.

Wade just laughed and patted the poor kid on the back. “Yeah. You know he isn’t even getting a good grade outta the deal? So I told him—you got something somebody else wants, don’t give it away for free. I mean, it’s not like he’s gonna go pick out china patterns with the guy, right? It’s just an unresolved sexual tension thing, because poor Marie can’t resolve his sexual tension for him.”

“Would ya get off the poor kid and stop makin’ faces like you’re about to slice his head off?” Jamie sighed.
“How can he think such a thing of you?”

“Us,” Wade corrected.

Me. Whatever. After all, if I sliced the kid’s head off, I wouldn’t be able to blackmail him.

“My point exactly, little yellow boxes.”

But Jamie crooked a finger and made that lopsided ‘you’re crazy and that’s cute’ grin, so Wade abandoned Bobby.

“So you…strawberry milk?”

“I’ll make sure it gets put on the list,” Jamie promised.

“And the wanting-to-slice-his-head-off thing? I’m sure you’ve forgotten, but that’s just the way I look when I’m bored, fuzzums. Cocoa-Puff won’t let me mutilate the kiddies, you seem to have a thing against my self-mutilating…how can I not be bored?”

TV?

“TV gets old.”

Video games?

“People make me share video games.”

You’re being too picky.

Jamie hooked him by the hips before he could tell his little yellow boxes to do something anatomically improbable. “I’m done teachin’ for the day,” he said.

I think that’s a hint.

“Shush, I know it’s a hint,” Wade told the yellow boxes, and put his arms around Jamie’s neck. “I suppose this means you have some ideas on how I can occupy my time? And I mean that in as suggestive a way as possible.”

The kid’s trying to escape.

He tipped his head back, stared at Bobby upside-down. “Don’t forget our little talk, Bobby-wobby. Especially that fun fact about spoons. I said that part out loud, right?”

“Uh,” said Bobby. “Yeah, you did. I really need to get ready for calculus.”

“Okay, bubbbye,” Wade called, and tipped his head right-side-up again. The rush of blood made him a little dizzy, so he leaned on Jamie.

Jamie rubbed the small of his back. “You all right, darlin’?”

He shrugged a little. “Sure. I had ice cream. Ice cream is a decent substitute for wanton violence. Buuuuuut…I think you can think of a better one.”

“Table tennis?” Jamie said innocently.

Clearly, he’s been stealing pages out of Nate’s playbook.
Wade rolled his eyes. “Only if ‘table tennis’ is some new slang term for kinky sex.”

.End.
Chapter Summary

Wade's faulty brainware takes him to a world on the verge of destruction.

Chapter Notes

666 words about the death of a world, and our introduction to Fate Node 098: Ragnarok. this is the end of the world where the Savant took over the body of General Blackblade (Lighting Fires).

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. hints of het inclinations. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: some Wade/Nessa (Deadpool/Copycat).

timeline: a few days after Logan brings Wade to the X-Mansion (maybe the day after Dirty Thief?).

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) ladies and gents, meet Ragnarok, the world-ender. this Fate Node is named after Norse mythology's armageddon event. in mythology, Jormungandr (one of Loki's kids, lol) is a giant-ass serpent that encircles the world and chews on the roots of Yggdrasil, the World-Tree. the world is supposed to end in an Epic Battle (Ragnarok) with Jormungandr and its allies on one side and the hosts of Valhalla on the other (the whole point of a warrior being cool enough to go to Valhalla when he dies is that he's waiting for the end of the world). 2) Nessa is Vanessa Carlyle (Copycat), who was Wade's squeeze pre-cancer in Earth-616 (and probably a bunch of other universes). the other members of the demolition squad are Inez Temple (Outlaw), Elektra Natchios (Elektra), Theresa "Terry" Cassidy (Siryn), and Neena Thurman (Domino). all members of the demo squad come from one universe, Earth-3838 (DR primary timestream bundle). 3) as far as i can remember, there is no occurrence of Deadpool timesliding. he has done the dimension-hopping thing, however. for the sake of narrative convenience, i will say that some quirk keeps Wades from timesliding, but they can do non-timeslide-based dimensional travel. unfortunately, the Fate Network uses slide tech. 4) i've committed to an exact date for Blood & Tears. oh, god, the world will now implode. XD
The night sky glows golden with smoke and fire. It smells like the world’s biggest barbecue.

Wade stands there and blinks, experiencing a disjointed moment where his mind pokes through the assorted random shit it calls a memory and tries to figure out what life he’s living. It’s like waking from a particularly vivid dream, edges slowly matching themselves up until he finally falls back into place.

Black gloves. An obsidian sphere the size of a grapefruit.

Ragnarok.

He frowns at it.

“Hey, earth to Wade.”

He turns. “Nessa,” he says, surprised. He shouldn’t be—the only lifetime he remembers featuring a black Fate Node is also the only one he knows of that still has a live-and-kicking Copycat. She’s giving him an impatient look, and she’s beautiful, in that vague and misty way that pretty women are through the eyes of lovesick morons.

Inez and Elektra are there, too, all three of them dressed like they’ve been raiding Yelena’s closet (or maybe there’s some inter-dimensional outlet mall for black leather catsuits and nobody told him).

“So,” Wade says, trying to make the leap from the last thing he remembers here to standing on a hill watching the world burn. “Uh. So. Need me for somethin’?”

Elektra gives him a funny look. “Theresa sent word that the White Queen’s ready to launch her little counterattack. Neena confirmed that the Red Queen plans to press her advantage.”

Nessa puts her hands on her hips. “They’ll be sliding in, ninety seconds from now; but none of us will be leaving this timeline without a telemetry from Ragnarok.”

“Waitin’ on you, handsome,” Inez adds.

“Yeah,” he mumbles, still a bit disoriented and trying to make the leap from the last thing he remembers here to standing on a hill watching the world burn. “Uh. So. Need me for somethin’?”

Elektra gives him a funny look. “Theresa sent word that the White Queen’s ready to launch her little counterattack. Neena confirmed that the Red Queen plans to press her advantage.”

Nessa puts her hands on her hips. “They’ll be sliding in, ninety seconds from now; but none of us will be leaving this timeline without a telemetry from Ragnarok.”

“Waitin’ on you, handsome,” Inez adds.

“Oh,” he says. He looks down at the black Node, sees ruddy reflections flickering along its side. “Report status.”

~Phase-leveling imminent,~ it says, and its voice is low and cold—almost human, unlike some of the Fate Nodes, but with a perturbing chill. ~Manual re-tuning successful.~

Wade shudders. “Yay, we blew up the world.”

“It wasn’t a good world,” Elektra assures him. “And they’re the ones blowing it up.”

“And anyhow, it’s our job,” Inez points out. “Timeline demolition’s messy, but if we didn’t do it, the whole damn multiverse would de-stabilize.”

Nessa shrugs and flips her hair over her shoulder. “Like pruning a tree so it doesn’t fall over. Don’t go guilt-tripping again, Wade. It was bad enough the first dozen or so times.”

Terry and Neena appear, similarly dressed to the other three, and Wade spares a moment to consider himself ridiculously lucky to be surfing the timestream with five hot chicks in form-fitting black leather. And then he realizes that Wades don’t timeslide, and wonders how the hell that works with this situation.
It doesn’t, something tells him. Oddly, it doesn’t cause him much concern.

“Get us a telemetry out,” he says, without understanding why.


He hands Ragnarok to Nessa, again without understanding why.

She winks at him. “Seeya there, handsome.”

They vanish, leaving him on the hill.


A low rumbling in the distance makes him turn, and he sees the ground yawning open, spitting molten rock into the air. From another direction, a wall of fire comes rushing toward him.

“Oh,” he says in a small voice. “Y’know, Fate, you need to just cut-and-paste instead of copy-and-pasting. This is the kinda thing that really fucks up my day.”

The ground falls out from under him, and he snaps awake.

Late morning sunlight. A room at an X-Mansion.

He blinks slowly.

There, in the corner of his periphery, unobtrusive text announcing that it is 10:34:56, Tue, Oct 7, 2006.

Well, that was special, says a little yellow textbox.

“I overslept,” Wade says.

Yeah, end o’ the world will do that to ya.

He pouts. “Stupid brain-bouncing…I missed the morning cartoons.”

.End.
Insect Icarus

Chapter Summary

Beware of Falling Mercs.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main
Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it.
dorky 616 references. some slashy fluff. reference to self-harm. language: pg-13
(primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: do i even care anymore? XD okay, okay, let's call it October 9th.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title is a reference to the myth of Icarus, who (long story short) used wax
wings to try and fly away from an island prison and ended up getting a little too
enthusiastic for his own good—he flew too close to the sun, melted his wings, and fell to
his horrible icky doom. yes, i know there are ants that can fly, but they don't fly as high
or far as geese. 2) don't try leaping from any buildings, kids; even relaxed, landing face-
down on stone will mess you up. now, face-up you could probably get away with a
concussion from about 50 feet or less, as long as you landed almost perfectly flat
(otherwise you'd break your back). it does end up to be about 3 gees (depending on
your weight), which is close to being hit by a (~35mph) car, but i don't recommend that,
either, because it kind of sucks.

Insect Icarus

For the most part, Logan tried not to think about what Wade got up to during classes, when
babysitting him wasn’t an option.

Worrying about it really only served to tire him out, after all, since Wade pretty blatantly didn’t stay
out of trouble even when childishly strenuous promises were involved. Lorna had very calmly and
seriously taken Logan aside to talk with her and Frost about some complicated psychological bullshit
that boiled down to Wade having an essentially harmless compulsion for all manner of self-injury.
Frost had been pretty clear that scolding Wade for it would only make things worse.

So, as long as he didn’t make too big a mess (he tended to clean up after himself, anyway) and he
followed the rules Storm had set, Wade had free rein.
…which led to things like at least half a dozen of the younger students using much meaner moves during sparring than Logan could remember ever teaching them.

“She keeps cheating!” Warren whined after the third time Terry had thrown him (and it was admittedly funny to see such a little girl tossing a tall guy like Warren around like a sack of meal). “I mean, that’s cheating, isn’t it, if she does stuff you never showed us?”

“It’s not a game,” Terry pointed out. “We’re supposed t’be preparin’ ourselves for the possibility of a combat situation. Last time it happened, all I could do was sit ‘n scream. Next time, I’m gonna be ready to fight back.”

Logan grinned. “Ah, ease up on him a little, Squeaks. Rich kid like him’s prob’ly never been in a fight in his life.”

“Wade said goin’ easy on people keeps ‘em from learnin’.”

“Oh, ‘Wade said,’” Logan repeated with a smirk. “Y’want Wade teachin’ this class? You’d all be hospitalized within a week. There’s a subtle difference between learnin’ how to defend yourself and beatin’ people up. This is supposed to be practice, not a duel to the death. Got it?”

Terry nodded, and picked a feather out of her hair.

“There’s your lesson for today, kids—save deadly force for the imaginary opponents in the Danger Room. Let’s head back inside.”

And just as he turned he heard someone mutter, “Hey who’s that? We’re not allowed up there.”

Amid a chorus of startled yells, a figure fell from the highest parapet of the mansion and pancaked on the patio with a muffled clank of padded metal on stone. “S’okay, kids, I’m a pr’fession’l,” the person said, raising a hand.

Logan sighed. “Calm down, guys, it’s just Wade.”

The kids quieted a bit, but started murmuring among themselves.

“Why does he do things like that?”

“Wouldn’t you, if you fixed right back up?”

“Dr. Maximoff says he’s ‘seriously disturbed.’”

“Ms. Frost says it’s some form of obsessive-compulsive masochism. How weird is that?”

“I know!”

“Wade?” Logan said, as he walked up the steps to the patio.

The mercenary hopped to his feet, wiping a little blood from a split lip. “Didja see that? That was awesome!”

Logan raised his eyebrows. “Ah, well, I saw you fall flat on yer face, darlin’. If that’s what you were goin’ for, congratulations.”

But Wade was gesturing animatedly to the parapet high above. “No, no, see, it’s cool because the metal plating ‘n stuff altered my terminal velocity, so I didn’t experience weightlessness until right before the splat, so it was almost like hovering for a split second. You gotta try it, Jamie, it’s
“badass.”

“I think I’ll pass,” Logan grunted.

“Don’t be a wuss—it’s like three gees of impact, no worse than getting hit by a car.”

“Oh, you do that for fun, too, huh? Come inside and have some ice cream.”

Wade vanished in a puff of reddish smoke.

Rolling his eyes, Logan headed for the kitchen. “And what exactly was the goal of jumping off the roof?” he called as he walked through the door.

“Waffyin’ fuffee ffayffuffy,” Wade mumbled around a spoon.

“Spoon out of mouth, swallow ice cream, *then* answer,” Logan patiently said. “And close the freezer.”

Wade did as he was told (for once). Then he waved the empty spoon upward. “*I said* I was tryin’ to see if I could fly. I mean, it’s not like I really know what it feels like for people who *can* fly. I guess I could ask elf-boy. What Lorna does is actually levitating, and Wanda’s thing is magic-related, and I wouldn’t ask Sean to piss on me if I was on fire.”

“Ororo flies,” Logan said.

“That’s more *gliding* than actual flying, since she does it by controlling the wind. The fabulous Canadian Queen actually flies under his own power. And I keep thinkin’ that *must* be what it is, that feeling where it’s like I could pick my feet up and float.”

“Or it could just be you losin’ yer mind.”

“Naysayer,” Wade snorted, turning his attention back to his ice cream. “I’m not gonna give up that easily. If there’s a chance that I could be a *flying* metal-plated mercenary, I’ve gotta know. It’ll look great on my resumé, for one thing.”

“In other words, you’re gonna be jumping off the roof for the rest of the week?”

“Should we put up signs? ‘Beware of falling mercs’?”

Logan opened his mouth to say something, but gave up and just shook his head. “Try not to land on anybody.”

Wade stuck his tongue out. “You’re gonna be *so* jealous when I learn to fly.”

“Yeah,” scoffed Logan. “Cause we *all* know how much I *love* flyin’.”

“Maybe not just for flying’s sake…” Wade conceded with a wave of a hand. “But as far as coolest super-powers ever, flying is the one that makes you into Mr. Popularity. Just look at Superman.”

“Explain Captain America, then.”

“His boyfriend has a flying suit of armor.”

Logan snorted and rolled his eyes again.

“Yeah,” Wade said decisively. “I’m *so* gonna fly.”
And for a moment, Logan remembered Mystique’s words and was stunned.

...an ant who dreamed he was a goose...

He fetched a soda from the fridge (wondered how long it would be before Wade started smuggling beer) and stole a kiss while he popped the cap. “Flap a little harder next time, darlin’.”

.End.
Relative Good

Chapter Summary

Wade skips through more alternate worlds.

Chapter Notes

**warnings:**  Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it.  dimension-hopping.  dorky 616 references.  some slashy implications.  language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

**pairing:**  a little Nate/Wade.

**timeline:**  mmmmmmaybe October 10th?

**disclaimer:**  i doesn't owns the movies or the characters.  fo shizzle.

**notes:**  1) a teen!Hope!  she probably loves guns.  2) chai is great with steamed milk or whipped cream.  the rest of the time i'm kinda "meh" about it.  3) if there's not a List of Things Not to Let Various Reed Richardses Build, there should be--for the safety of the entire multiverse.  4) Node 218: Kali.  she's named after the Hindu goddess of death, who has an undeservedly bad reputation.  she was as fearsome a warrior as her consort, Shiva.  she is an entity of change and eternity (among other things).  the Fate Node's job is to pinpoint individuals who require chronometric re-tuning (i.e. destruction), so that the rest of that individual's timeline can be salvaged.  5) a Skorpion is a machine pistol (well, technically it's a compact SMG) of...i thiiiiiink Czech manufacture.  sounds right.  *shrug* so my gun knowledge is rusty.  6) i toyed with what to do about Hope's powers--in current canon, we've got no explanation of them, but we've seen her deflect bullets (edit 2011: canon!Hope 'borrows' other mutants' powers).  i liked the idea of her being able to sense and manipulate resonance (all kinds of resonance), so that she could fit in tidily with all the photonic and chronometric tech flying around.  focused resonance can do all kinds of interesting things, including making force fields.  i imagine things like empathy and intuition could be thought of as a kind of thought-resonance (edit 2011: or resonance in the unified field).  7) Jubilee was totally rocking out to "No Heaven" on her iPhone when she passed the kitchen.  brainsliding ensued.  8) there's an alternate universe for everything, right?  so i'm sure there's a universe where Deadpool leads the Avengers and is the #1 superhero, etc.

you can see pics of the teenage Hope (Hope Summers AR553) in Parallels I and the little hacker-Hope (Hope Summers SR055) in Parallels III, both by ~MerianMoriarty.
“I’ve been thinking about the multiverse.”

Wade jerks to awareness. He has a coffee mug full of something creamy and sweet-smelling. Tea?

Hope tucks her long red hair behind her ears. “Jeez, what was that?” she asks with a lopsided grin. “Did you fall asleep or something? I knew Uncle Logan could do the sleeping-standing-up thing, but Dad always said you can’t.”

He tries the stuff in the mug—chai. “Yeah, well, Priscilla don’t know everything about me. What were you saying before?”

The teenage girl picks up one of the wire brushes set out on a rag in front of her and runs it through the barrel of a dismantled machine pistol, one of his standbys. “Ugh, what’d you do to this thing, drop it in a sewer? I said I’ve been thinking about the multiverse.”

“Oh, honey, don’t do that. You’ll rot your brain.”

“You’re really one to talk, ‘Keeper 077.’”

He arches an eyebrow at her.

She just placidly switches to a smaller brush and scrubs at the firing assembly.

He rolls his eyes. “Okay, I’ll bite. You’ve been thinking about the multiverse?”

“There’s literally hundreds of me out there. Old and young and the same age. Maybe some with different hair colors, different heights and weights…even different genders. D’you think all the mutant ones have the same powers I do?”

Wade thinks about that and drinks his tea. All the versions of her that he’s met (the ones old enough to have powers, at least) have had the same mutant powers. Some were better at controlling different aspects of them. Some understood them better. Some knew enough to be terrified of them. Some even used them to rule the world.

Slowly, Hope sets gun and brush aside, fidgets her hair behind her ears again. “Wade? You’re making some pretty scary faces over there…what would Dad say?”

He gulps his tea. “Generally, or about me making faces? Because just generally, he’d say something about being from the future and knowing everything. About making faces, he’d say I’ll freeze that way and he’ll use me for a conversation starter. ‘Have you met Wade? My daughter asked him too many weird questions about the space-time continuum.’”

“Stop changing the subject. Have you met very many of me? Y’know…when you’re doing work for the Network, using Dr. Richards’ gateway device.”

Wade adds ‘gateway devices’ to the list of ‘Things to Not Let Various Reed Richardses Build.’

“Yes and no,” he says, frowning at the dregs of his tea. “Lots and lots that really seem like the same three or four girls.”

She pouts. “Am I your favorite?”

“Do you ask your dork father this many questions?”
“No, because my dork father has a know-it-all answer to every question. You are not the right Wade.”

“Oh? How would we know?”

She pulls something out of his pocket and puts it in his hand.

A Fate Node.

“Smartass,” Wade mutters.

Hope gives a smug smirk to rival any of Nate’s. “Kali, identify the Keeper currently holding you.”

~Subject designate Wade Wilson BT562-Omega, direct resonant precursor to Keeper 188.~

“How would we know?”

“Busted,” Wade sighs, setting his mug aside.

Hope nods. “Yeah, our Wade would’ve said ‘yes’ without even thinking about it. I’m pretty sure you’ve been here more than once; don’t worry, I don’t think Dad’s ever noticed it was you instead of our Wade.”

“Now, that either says a lot about how similar we are, or about how bad a boyfriend Nate is.”

“Husband.”

“Really? Very bad, then.”

She stares at him. “You must have a really good memory. You brainslide, right? Like some of the other Wades who work for the Network. So you probably only see each time branch in, like, ten minute chunks. Our Wade actually goes to other branches and spends days, sometimes weeks making sure certain people get relocated or re-tuned, and he hardly remembers a thing about them a month later.”

Wade shrugs and shoves the Fate Node back in his pocket. “Don’t leave that gun half-cleaned, princess.”

“You don’t have a Hope where you come from, do you?” she guesses. “In your home timeline, I mean.”

“The timestream’s got a lot of branches to it, a lot of them are missing people,” he replies.

“Do you like us? Generally speaking, I mean. Are we a good person?”

“Good is relative. Your dad thinks he’s a ‘good person,’ and I’ve met a lot of versions that are basically the same guy…but they do shit like conquer the world. Can you really say that somebody who’d conquer the world is ‘good’? Then again, if he’s doing it to put an end to war, suffering, and hunger, is he ‘bad’?”

Unimpressed, Hope snorts and goes back to the Skorpion. “Nice ‘deep bullshit’ answer, Yoda. And I’m pretty sure that any version of Dad that’s anything like this one is going to be pretty much a well-meaning megalomaniacal idiot.”

“You have no idea.”

“I have some idea. Mutant powers?”
He concedes the point with a wave of his hand. “Yeah, yeah, resonance perception. You’re still not cool enough to see the future with it.”

“No, but I get leet intuition, so eat it. I was wondering about other versions of me because I was wondering if they had any cool tricks I hadn’t thought of. ‘Cause the precognition thing would be cool, but it just isn’t working out at the mo’.”

“Hm. Know the bullet-bouncing thing?”

“What about it?”

“Ever try shoving something with it? Like the ground, or the air?”

She practically pounces on him. “You met a flying me?!”

He points to the gun again. “Honey, I’ve met an evil version of you that pouts when she’s not allowed to level cities. Stop getting distracted.”

“Aww, c’mon! You met a Hope who can fly, and you expect me not to get distracted? Okay, so how did she do it…just a constant resonant shockwave against the air molecules or something?”

Wade shrugs eloquently. “Don’t ask me, princess.”

“Don’t ask you what?” says a much younger voice.

Wade blinks.

A ten-year-old Hope is perched on a stool in one of Weasel’s workshops.


She makes a skeptical face she must have learned from Neena. “Are you feeling okay? We can make Weasel scan your hardware again, make sure you don’t have any weird leaks like the other day.”


“Enhance your calm, drama queen. It was only a little leak, and it was your own fault for catching a sub-orbital with cheap generic chips. You worried Sandi half to death, acting like some brain-dead crazy until Weas swapped out the bad mem sticks and squeegeed the yucky stuff out.”

“I get that a lot,” Wade mutters. “I have this weird craving for chai with cream.”

“We can do that,” says Alison. “But it’ll have to be half-and-half.”

Wade finds himself in the kitchen of the X-Mansion (an X-Mansion, technically, but his timeclock in the corner means it’s the one with a furry six-clawed boyfriend in it, so it’s the closest thing he’s got to ‘home’). “Did somebody just come through with a radio or an iPhone or something?”

Alison peeks over the fridge door at him. “Um…maybe Jubilee? I think I heard some Champion on somebody’s headphones just now.”

Make a memo: break all iPods and smart-phones.

“Or confiscate them,” Wade muses. “See if there’s a way to dial up some of the nicer lives. Like the
‘Wade Wilson is the savior of the planet and runs the Avengers’ universe. That one was awesome.”

“You need a screen-reader for your brain,” says Alison. “That way, the rest of us can hear the whole conversation.”

“Aw, that’s sweet. Most people who do hear the whole conversation tell me they wish they hadn’t.”

“They must be very boring people.”

.End.
Learn to Fly

Chapter Summary

Wade likes to play with electronics, including expensive computer-controlled jets.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. slash. pranks and the misappropriation of vehicles. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: October 11th. i guess. strike that, i like the 15th better, and the day of the week is consistent with the one from World in Flames.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title is a reference to the Foo Fighters song "Learn to Fly." 2) before you kill yourself trying to remember, Margot is not a reference to a real Marvel character. 3) a nap-of-the-earth maneuver (or NOE run) is an extremely-low-altitude flyby, intended to keep the aircraft below enemy radar. this is much easier for a helicopter, and can in fact be very difficult and dangerous for a jet. 4) Arclight was the chick in X3 who could do the nifty earthquake-clap. she had other cool powers in the comics. 5) haha, "Jeebus H. Cripes" is something that Moriarty says a lot. obviously, it's a substitute for "Jesus H. Christ." 6) i loved Buckaroo Banzai. one of my favorite movies. 7) sensei is Japanese for teacher.

Learn to Fly

Logan was not happy when Wade started pulling pranks with the electronics.

At first it had been harmless. Easy things like keeping a light off when the switch was flipped, so that Ororo went mad wondering what was burning the bulbs out so fast. None of that could be pinned on Wade, per se, but there were only three people in the house who could do something like play with the lightbulbs (and the Kaplan kid was too busy trying not to zap the shit out of his friends any time he touched them).

Then had come the still-harmless-but-far-more-annoying phase. Remotes and game controllers malfunctioned or stopped working. Lights switched on and off on their own. Clocks reset themselves (including the timer on the coffeemaker, which had nearly led to a riot from the girls). It
was like Margot all over again, but Wade didn’t have the excuse of being a frustrated pre-menstrual girl trying to figure out how her powers worked.

And then had come the far-less-harmless phase. Vehicles stopped obeying their drivers, or went joyriding without a driver. Laptops and fancy cell phones had their screens displayed on televisions (admittedly, the kids should know better than to surf porn or send dirty text messages in class, but the invasion of privacy was still a big deal).

That kind of shit was bad enough, but Logan damn well drew the line when the X-Jet pulled a panic-inducing nap-of-the-earth run over Wednesday’s self defense group (at a speed high enough to knock even Logan off his feet).

“Somebody’s in deep shit,” Jubilee happily announces.

“Couldya see who was flying it?” asks another student.

“Nobody was flying it,” replies a third.

Logan stands up and dusts grass and dirt off his jeans. “Oh, somebody was flyin’ it all right, just not from inside the jet. You kids stay put—I’d hate for you to haveta see me beat the stupid outta Wade.”

“That would be domestic abuse,” Marie helpfully puts in.

“I’m pretty sure it don’t count as domestic abuse if he beats me up worse than I ever beat him up,” snorts Logan, stalking his way up the lawn.

He finds Wade stretched out unassumingly on the floor of the front hall, eyes closed and hands folded in a morbidly funereal fashion.

“Wade.”

“Shush,” Wade replies without opening his eyes. “It may not look like it, but flying takes a lot of concentration. There’s a lot of blinky bits and a lot of numbers to balance. It’s kinda Zen, once you get into it. Kinda Matrix. Y’know…blonde, brunette, redhead.”

“You just knocked thirty kids on their asses in the grass. Using an expensive piece of machinery that happens to be pretty vital to the X-Men as a team.”

Wade gives a disdainful snort. “I’m being careful. Just getting a feel for her, ‘s all. Never know, could be a day nobody on board can fly but me. Or somebody might end up stranded and need a ride. Or Arclight’s hair could get weirder—how did she rate screen time before I did, anyhow? I am so hotter and cooler at the same time. Her name is pretty boss, though, I’ll admit to that.”

“Just land the damn thing.”

“Yeah, about that…”

“Wade!”

“Kidding. Jeepers creepers. Landing’s a liiiiiittle harder, for real…and that hangar door is kinda narrow…”

“Flip on the goddamn autopilot.”

Wade abruptly sits up, both hands in the air. “Oh-fucking-kay! It’s on, it’s landed, are you fuckin’
happy now? Jeebus H. Cripes, I have nothing to do in Weathergirl’s happy mutant finishing school for maladjusted-but-basically-okay youths.” Instead of even putting forth the effort to stand, he just teleports upward and lands on his feet. “I can’t break shit, I can’t kill shit, I can’t hurt myself. Every time I watch TV my mind gets commandeered by fuckin’ Buckaroo Banzai and friends. Nobody’ll play video games with me anymore because they say it’s cheating not to use the controller. Whattaya want me to do, go out and start a buncha barfights?”

“Do whatever the hell you want that doesn’t involve any possibility of you ever piloting that jet again,” Logan growls. “I have a hard enough time with Storm’s flyin’, and she’s a pretty damn good pilot.”

Wade flails at the back door. “And that—what the fuck was that, fucking lousy flying that some crop-dusting alcoholic has-been coulda pulled?! Everywhere I go, I’m getting this shit—I’m a good driver, too, I can fuckin’ power park in a hail of bullets while dodging ordnance, but nobody’ll let me drive. I can thread a decent sport bike across Manhattan the long way in rush in under half an hour, but I get relegated to the back seat. I can fly a prop plane with my feet, I could set a full-sized medevac chopper down on that patio, I can make a Harrier do frigging cartwheels, but am I allowed to fly the jet a panicky teenage girl managed not to crash?!”

Wade has made several good points, but it all gets hung up on the fact that he’s been steadily turning most of the household against him. Sean hates him, Lorna is probably a little scared of him, Wanda and JP don’t trust him, and now most of the student population loathes him for a million day-to-day practical jokes.

All at once, Wade calms down. “I miss Vicky,” he says in an odd voice. “I don’t guess you’d be willing to get me a blanket and a mug of chicken soup?”

“If you’re feelin’ sick, go to bed,” Logan says, and immediately understands that he’s said something wrong.

Wade’s scent slides from petulant and wistful to desolate. He tips his chin up and stares fixedly at the front door, hands fisting in the hem of his T-shirt. “You didn’t have to bring me here,” he points out in a low, menacing sneer. “I told you what I’m like. You were all, ‘Oh, I love you no matter what,’ and I was all, ‘Naw, I’m ugly and crazy and I think I even kill people in my sleep,’ but you were like, ‘Don’t worry about it.’”

Logan makes himself move slowly, cups Wade’s elbows gently in his palms. “If you’re really that miserable here, I need you to tell me, darlin’. Say the word, and we’re gone. Shit packed, on the bike, and headed for anywhere at all you wanna go.”

But Wade quickly shakes his head. “You like it here. I can deal. I might go a little stir-crazy and start randomly patrolling the grounds or somethin’…but if it means I can sleep next to you every night and get yelled at by you every day, I can deal.”

It’s deeply flattering, and Logan counts himself lucky (incredibly, insanely lucky) to have such a sincerely self-sacrificing lover. The odds of finding Wade again and having him be so forgiving of everything and so willing to conform to the situation have to have been a million to one. If there’s one thing Logan has learned from losing his memory, it’s that you can never know for sure that you’ll get another chance to tell someone what they mean to you.

“You’re all I need in the world to be happy,” Logan says firmly. “Sure, I like it here, but I’ll like it a helluva lot less if you spend all your time bored and lonely just so I can play sensei to a bunch of brats who wanna know how to beat people up.”
Wade still stares at the front door (still smells hurt and depressed), but the tension has drained from his stance. “Subject change, please. Before I go all weepy and girly.”

So Logan clears his throat and slides his grip to Wade’s hands. “How’s the ‘flyin’ without wings’ thing coming? Elf-boy have any good advice?”

“Sort of,” Wade gratefully replies, looking at his feet. “I can float, if I concentrate real hard. He said floating’s harder than flying, but it’s a lot safer to start with. Less cracking of skulls into breakables.”

“Look at you, a whole inch off the floor,” Logan praises. “Pretty soon you won’t have to worry about whether you’re allowed to fly that fancy hunk o’ junk out back.”

“Ya don’t have to sound that happy about it.”

“Oh, I do. I can barely keep from clawing the seat with a pilot who goes in slow, straight lines. My stomach would get up and run away if I was along for the kinda stunts you pulled five minutes ago.”

“Spoilsport.”

.End.
Into the Dark

Chapter Summary

Logan and Wade go back to Alkali Lake in search of memories.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. slash. semi-angst. reference to human experimentation/torture. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: call it October 20th? i dunno.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) title is a reference to the Melissa Etheridge song "Into the Dark." 2) i believe it was ~Tabitha-Kittywitch who suggested a jaunt back to Alkali Lake. so credit for the idea goes that-a-way. 3) i'm assuming Alkali Lake is somewhere near the US border with Canada. the state of the Alkali Lake facility is from X-2 (surface facility gone, underground facility flooded), but the layout i'm envisioning is much closer to Origins: Wolverine (and the game). 4) Josef Mengele was a Nazi crackpot mad scientist who did some pretty nasty things to prisoners in Auschwitz. among his claims to fame (infamy) are such things as performing amputations without anesthesia, artificially conjoining twins, and transplanting parts from one twin into/onto the other.

Into the Dark

The aboveground remains of the Alkali Lake facility are surprisingly underwhelming, even with the autumn leaves making a riot of color all around grey pebbles and dark water.

In the valley carved by the river in ages past, Wade’s mind is refreshingly quiet. There’s not much in the way of cell reception out here in the first place, and the surrounding mountains erase what little there might have been. The usual barrage of television and radio broadcasts has become a low buzz of static.

“It’s gone down a lot,” Jamie comments.

Duh. That’d be the reason for the obvious floodline.

From the shape of the barren bowl below the vestiges of the ruptured dam, the water level has
dropped almost a hundred feet from its initial surge—from an artificial lake to the river’s natural state. In the distance are the flooded skeletons of several buildings.

“There’s a hidden entrance somewhere?” Wade asks, feeling like ghostly voices are calling to him. Probably just a faint QVC signal…

*Go away, I don’t want buy a shaping undergarment! Although…hmm…*

Jamie raises an eyebrow at him. “Don’t you know?”

He shakes his head. “I wasn’t awake when they brought me in. And when they shipped me back out, it was through the spillway.”

Jamie points to the mountainside on the near shore. “Over here, there’s one. Drowned bodies bother ya?”

“Not if I didn’t know ‘em,” Wade replies easily.

“Just checking. The drowned ones smell a bit more, and they’re more likely to have things eatin’ on ‘em for longer.”

They walk in silence for a while, leaving the Harley parked by the treeline. Jamie’s boots make gentle crunching noises as the river gravel shifts under him, and Wade suddenly realizes he only notices it because he’s not making any noise himself. He takes a heavier step, just to hear the patter of stones, and Jamie actually startles and whips around.

“Boo?” Wade tries, with his most innocent face.


Wade shakes his head. “Just wanted to hear myself walk, for once. Took the quiet for granted for a long time, because I was alone for so long. C’mon, slowpoke, let’s go tour Mengele’s sunken lab.”

“I doubt this Cornelius character was as bad as Mengele,” Jamie says firmly, and starts walking again.

“No,” Wade concedes. “But he coulda been. The guy grafted other people’s DNA onto mine. He cut open my brain. He injected molten metal onto my skeleton.”

The metal service door is rusted and falling from its hinges. Water drips in the darkness beyond, which smells of mildew and algae and death.

*Yum.*

“Well, age before beauty,” Wade quips, gesturing.

“Scared?” Jamie teases.

“Of what?”

“Ghosts.”

*Damn right, we are.*

Wade laughs. “Ghosts, right. You actually believe in ghosts?”
Jamie just smirks and wrangles the corrosion-crusted door aside.

The way is blanketed in blackness for a while, too dark for Wade to see; but he trails his hand against the wall, feels for the way the air moves around him, listens for the steady squish of damp footsteps in front of him.

Twists, turns, forks.

A body, heavy with the scents of rot and sewage.

Some toads.

“Big room up ahead,” Jamie says softly. “Had windows with metal shutters, high up—could be bright.”

“Go,” Wade answers just as quietly.

Why are we whispering?

When the door opens, he understands.

This must be what being born feels like. Shock, and open air, and blinding brightness, and strangeness.

Memories shock through him. Frost’s worried frowns, Miller’s sneers, Cope’s hungry little smirks, Cornelius talking through the intercom. His elbows and wrists ache.

“Still with me, darlin’?” Jamie asks, but seems to know not to touch.

Dirty daylight from high, grimed windows, a foot of stale water on the floor (something plops and swims away). Cracked monitors, upset chairs and trays, a glass tank with a glittering corpse inside.

A quick thought, a few teleports, and Wade has looked at the room from most angles. He stands above, on a raised walkway where Stryker and the doctors and the military bigwigs must’ve stood. The view is commanding, and a bit sinister.

Jamie waits patiently by the way they came in.

Turn around.

“Why?” he mumbles.

…I don’t know…

So he turns.


There!

Pale metal, speckled faintly with rust.

Wade is flat on his stomach before he even knows why, fingers stretching into the narrow space between some piece of machinery and the wall. Just beyond reach, a set of dogtags balances precariously on the grated surface of the catwalk.
“Wade?” Jamie calls. “What is it?”

This is dumb. Go under.

“Shut up,” hisses Wade, teleporting backward to swing himself under the edge of the catwalk. He spots the chain and jumps for it, hooks it in one hand and catches himself with a blade in the wall to keep from snapping the fragile beaded links. Just a flick of his wrist, and the little plates drop through into his palm. He doesn’t even have to read them—the shape is enough, more familiar than the heft of a sword or the kick of a pistol.

All the same, he teleports to a place where the light is better and turns the stamped metal over.

Logan, James, no middle initial.

And yeah, he feels kinda like a creepy cave-dweller with a jewelry fetish, but he rubs a thumb over the letters and laughs.

Yesss, our Precious has returned to us!

“Shut up, yellow boxes. Some people have security blankets, some people have battered, irrelevant scraps of metal.”

“Find something good?” Jamie asks, coming over.

Wade holds out the tags. “Look familiar?”

“No.” Flat, honest, vaguely disinterested.

Ooh, ouch.

Never one to be easily disheartened, Wade makes sure the tags are the right way up. “Read the name,” he presses, pointing.

After a moment, Jamie shrugs. “I guess that’s me.”

What were you expecting? Instant memories, just add dogtags?

Wade doesn’t know.

But it’s uncomfortable, to have something in his hand that meant so much to him, something he’s been missing for more than twenty years, and have Jamie just dismiss it like that.

They stand there for a long time, eyes meeting uncertainly over the distance, tags held out between them.

“When you left, you threw them away,” Wade says, awkwardly. “I kept them six years…y’know, to give them to you when you came back. Cornelius took ‘em when he took mine, and I guess Stryker must’ve had them here when they did the adamantium thing.”

Jamie shakes his head. “I guess. I still got a lotta blank spots.”

Slowly, Wade lowers his hand and looks away, out over the murky water and the mold-spotted walls. “Yeah. Well…if you don’t want them, can I have ‘em?”

“Don’t see why you’d want ‘em. It’s just a thing, Wade. I’m right here, flesh ‘n blood.”
Hey, I like things. Don’t you know we’re living in a material world? Madonna said that, and she’s filthy rich, so she’d know.

“Why do people keep photo albums and scrapbooks?” Wade retorts snippishly. “If I keep these… then at least I’ve got something the next time you go.”

“If you keep those, it’s the same as saying you don’t believe me when I tell you I’m never leavin’ again.”

Good, because I—we—don’t. Believe you, that is.

Wade tightens a hand around the tags. “And if I don’t, and then you do, what will I have left?”

Vicky’s knife?

He puts his hands over his ears. “Shut up!”

“I didn’t say anyth—”

“Not you!”

The room is tense and silent.

Guiltily, he glances at Jamie. “What if I only keep them for a little while? Kinda like training-wheels. Trust-training-wheels.”

With a sigh, Jamie shrugs. “I guess I got no room to talk, when it comes to not trustin’. And I know I’ve got a bad record when it comes to you trustin’ me.”

“Just for a little while,” Wade says again, and lifts the chain over his head. The tags settle into the hollow of his sternum, chilly and slightly damp through his shirt. “I don’t think we’re gonna find anything else. The computers are all junked, and anything paper is gone.”

“Oh kay,” says Jamie, holding out a hand. “Let’s go home. Maybe that thing with Hank’s friend-of-a-friend-of-a-whatever will pan out.”

Home?

Home.

Wade takes the hand Jamie’s offered, and allows himself to be led back into the dark.

.End.
Chemistry

Chapter Summary

Wanda thought she'd left this kind of annoyance behind when she retired from the Avengers. Turns out that Wade Wilson is more annoying (and persistent) than Tony Stark.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. dorky 616 references. reference to explosives and the building thereof. language: pg (for use of the word damn).

pairing: arc contains Logan/Wade.

timeline: maybe the beginning of November.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. fo shizzle.

notes: 1) so i'd been somewhat agonizing over who to picture in my head as a movieverse Wanda...and MerianMoriarty suggests Rachel Weisz. so now i keep picturing her character from Constantine. XD 2) i don't even know who teaches what anymore, lol. i'll just go with "Lorna will teach materials sciences like geology and physics, Wanda can teach the kids biology, chemistry, and math." sound good? great. because i hate ret-conning. i'll do it, but i hate it. the Prince of Persia movie killed me a little inside with the epic ret-con. 3) Billy & Teddy are win. dorky lovable avenger-wannabes... 4) Mg2Si is indeed called magnesium silicide. everything Wade and Wanda say about it is true. 5) slipping in the reference to M-Day and House of M was completely ~Tabitha-Kittywitch's idea.

Chemistry or The Fine Art of Blowing Stuff Up

“And so, when sand and magnesium are combined and heated, the product—” Wanda paused to let a rubber band fly over her head, and carefully refrained from hexing its launcher across the room. She ignored the collected snickers from the back of the room while she drew an arrow at the end of the chemical equation on the board. “—the product is what, Mister Kaplan?”

“Ah, uh…”

Wanda turned with a smile, watching the skinny boy flip frantically through textbook pages while his friends stifled laughter at his expense.
“Um…em-ggee two ess-eye?” Billy ventured, hair starting to stand up from the nervous aura of static around him.

“Very good,” she replied, writing his answer on the board to finish the equation. “Which is called **what**, Mister Altman?”

The blond promptly stopped laughing and consulted his own book. “Uh…”

Another rubber band flew over Wanda’s head. It was the seventeenth such projectile to disrupt the serenity of her classroom, and her patience had worn through. She clenched her fist around the piece of chalk in her hand, snapping it in half. “**Mister Wilson,**” she bit out, whirling so fast that her hair caught in her reading glasses.

Behind the boys (and undoubtedly egging them on for the whole lecture), Wade hopped to his feet and saluted. “Yes, miss doctor-teacher-lady?”

“Why are you here?”

“I’m enriching myself,” he said innocently. “My shrink told me to, and I listen to stacked blonde chicks. Pretty well. I listen to them pretty well. I think it’s some kinda hypnosis.”

“Admirable,” she said tersely and carefully untangled her hair from her glasses. “Then you won’t mind participating. Please answer the question for the class.”

Wade folded his hands behind his back, like a little boy half-heartedly apologizing on command. “It’s called magnesium silicide, and it’s wicked awesome for making aluminum alloys. Also, you can toss sulfuric acid on it to make silane, which goes boom when it meets oxygen. Betcha didn’t think I knew that one, crazy-pink-magic-chick.”

Setting the pieces of chalk in the tray, she dusted off her hands. “Well, a broken clock is right twice a day, after all.”

“Ah, but a clock that runs **backward** is right **four** times a day, and the answer to ‘how does he know that cool thing I thought he wouldn’t know’ is that I know how to make more than three hundred different explosive devices and chemistry is really all about blowing stuff up. By the way, do you have any plans to remake creation as you see fit? Because, I gotta tellya, that really does nothing good for your chronometric entropy score, and it’d be a shame if somebody showed up to off you for the good of the multiverse. Just a little heads-up.”

As usual, Wanda had very little idea what Wade was talking about (she understood the concept of stopping someone from remaking the world, but the phrase ‘chronometric entropy score’ was nonsensically sci-fi, and she was pretty damn sure she wasn’t able to remake the world), so she just pointed to a corner of the chalkboard. “Work the assigned odd-numbered problems as homework. If you find you have extra time and need more practice, you can do the even-numbered ones for extra credit.” The students gathered up their things and chattered their way out the door. “Mister Wilson, kindly take yourself out of my classroom before my pre-calculus students arrive—and leave the ball of rubber bands that you stole from my desk.”

“You saw that?”

“You are very fast and very skilled,” Wanda conceded. “But you are not invisible.”

He pointed a finger at her. “You are absolutely right. I gotta work on that. In the meantime, I can pull a sweet disappearing act.”
And he teleported away to bother someone else.

“Ugh. Thank god,” she muttered, bending down to pick up a rubber band that had been flung. Groaning, she hung her head. “That obnoxious, chattering little head-case ran away with the rest of my rubber bands!”

.End.
Forecast

Chapter Summary

Logan and Wade embark on a mission to save the multiverse. What could possibly go wrong?

Chapter Notes

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mashed onto it. Incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. Dorky 616 references. innuendo. Violence. Rampant pop culture references. Language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

**pairing:** Logan/Wade.

**timeline:** maybe the beginning of November.

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the many tv shows and games mentioned.

**notes:** 1) i love the Red Alert series. 3 was a complete nerdgasm for me. there really aren't very many things in this world as awesome as George Takei doing the evil laugh. 2) Alice Eve would have been a smokin' hot Emma. i already mentioned Rachel Weisz commandeered Wanda's place in my brain...and i'm thinking Perrey Reeves would be a good Lorna. 3) and now you've met Forecaster. he's a well-meaning little drip who thinks he's got the best sense of humor in the multiverse, which should really tell you all you need to know about him.

Visit [The Fateverse Glossary](#) for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

**edit 11/1:** fixed some typos caused by HTML tags/formatting errors.

Forecast

Wade is immensely disappointed to find out that time travel does not involve flaming DeLoreans, reversing the Earth’s rotation, or burning spheres with sexy naked people inside.

In fact, aside from a Star-Trekkish swirl of light and a bunch of screaming from the kids at seeing a stranger appear out of thin air, time travel doesn’t seem to involve anything fun or interesting. The guy is clearly from the future; he has a metal arm, a giant gun, and a look on his face like he’s never even heard of a sense of humor. That, to Wade, is pretty much the essence of ‘from the future’ (a belief colored by heavy exposure to various Nates).
The kids have fled the room by now, no doubt off seeking assistance of the Responsible Adult variety.

Wade leans to one side and gestures impatiently for the guy to move. “Hey, Scarface, I appreciate the scenery, but your mama wasn’t a glassmaker, and I haven’t seen this episode.”

Nice gun. And the plasma-rifle-thing ain’t bad, neither. Pervy snicker.

“Stop emoting,” he tells his yellow boxes.

Tall-Dark-and-Disgruntled unhitches the BFG from his back. “Wade Wilson?”

“For the love of Abby, yes, now wait until the frigging ad to tell me you’ve come from the future to kill me.”

The guy narrows his eyes and shoots the TV.

Noooo—space-time continuum!

“My NCIS!” Wade wails. “And you just had to go there…I thought you—”

We.

“I would have the decency to wait a full minute before making a Red Alert joke in a time-travel fic.”

The joke was in-evilable.

“I need you to pay attention, Wilson,” the big guy growls.

“Which I would have, if you’d just waited for the damn ad.” Wade stands in a huff and finally diverts his attention.

Gosh, they grow ‘em big in the future.

Big ‘n strapping ‘n manly.

Y’know, if you’re into that.

Pfft. So gay.

Not that there’s anything wrong with that.

Wade waves a finger vaguely up and down. “Wow, you’re a pretty big guy, Mr. Chocolate Assassin From the Future. You did come to kill me, right? And you are from the future, you’re not just some super-advanced alien coming to tell me that I’m the only hope for your race or something? Because I got that sob story three lives ago, and it did not go well for me, if you know what I’m sayin’, so I’ll pass on it this ti—”

“Wilson, shut the fuck up before I blow a hole through your lungs so you can’t talk.”

Well! Is he allowed to talk to us like that on the first date?

Taken aback, Wade puts his hands on his hips. “Rude much? You haven’t even told me your name yet, man.”
The huge future gun makes a loud *clang* on impact with Wade’s cheekbone.

*What was that, G-flat?*

“Ow. Are you tone-deaf? It was A-flat.”

Future Guy sighs like he’s used to dealing with Wade. “I realize it’s difficult for you, but *shut up*. My name is Bishop. I come from a future, though not your own. I require your cooperation to save mutantkind.”

*Ooh, I know what comes next!*

Wade raises his hand and bounces, like a little kid in a classroom.

Bishop heaves another long-suffering sigh. “Yes?”

“And you’re gonna kill me if I don’t?”

“If you’re anything like the other Wade Wilsons I’ve met, I could kill you all day and all I’d get out of it would be a few minutes of peace and quiet. It takes a lot of persistence, thoroughness, and ingenuity to make you stay dead.”

*Heh. True dat.*

“But I have managed it, so keep that in mind.” Bishop reaches into a nifty Future-Tech Utility Belt and pulls out a glass sphere the size of an orange. Letters and numbers dance on its surface.

*Hey, a Fate Node.*

Wade keeps his face carefully blank. “Are you gonna turn it into something cool, like David Bowie did in Labyrinth? I always wanted a pet goblin.”

Bishop calmly blasts a hole through Wade’s middle.

*Ow. Apparently the future lacks in anger management classes.*

“Ow,” Wade wheezes, staggering slightly while the gaping wound fixes itself.

Most inconvenient thing about gaping wounds to the abdomen? Damage to the diaphragm makes it hard to be witty.

He looks behind him. “Aw man, not the couch!” he gargles. “I loved the couch, it was broken in *just right* for marathon gaming…”

“Adamantium,” Bishop notes. “That’s new.”

*Actually, it’s been here for twenty-plus years now. Oh, new to him, okay.*

“I’m a special kind of Wade,” Wade mutters. “This was my favorite Blade Trinity shirt, by the way.”

Bishop points the huge gun at Wade’s face. “Pay attention, Wilson.”

“Yeah, cuz melting my face off will help me pay attention.”

*That really is a nice gun.*
Wade waves a hand at the yellow boxes. “God, you’re like a spoiled girlfriend—I’ll get you one later.”

“This is an F-473 Timestream Maintenance Node,” Bishop goes on, ignoring Wade’s tangent.

*Don’t you find it a little patronizing that he assumes we don’t know what it is?*

Wade holds up his hand again, but doesn’t wait to be called on. “Should I take notes? Is there gonna be a quiz?”

“There’s gonna be another hole in you, if you keep at it. *Shut up.* All of the nodes are user-locked. Most of them are keyed genetically, some of them are voice-keyed, and at least one that I’ve found was actually *chronometrically* keyed, so it was completely useless to me after I killed its Keeper. All of them have a sleep-mode that keeps them from being activated except by their Keepers, and this is the first one I’ve managed to get before its Keeper could shut it down.”

“Right, okay, and my cooperation comes in where?”

*Does the phrase ‘red branches’ ring a bell?*

“Wasn’t asking *you,*” Wade mutters.

*Us.*

Bishop holds out the sphere. “Say your name.”

“Hah. Yeah. *No.* You pop in here, shoot my as-yet-unseen NCIS episode, put a hole in my cool shirt *and* in the awesome couch, and want me to help you? You’re not *that* hot, pal.”

“If you don’t, then you’re no good to me,” Bishop says, raising the gun again.

*Okay, done playing nice now.*

Wade grabs the barrel of the rifle, kicks Bishop’s wrist, *twists,* catches the trigger with his other hand, and fires a shot.

*Elapsed time: 0.8 seconds. Getting rusty.*

Shutup.

Bishop, however, doesn’t end up with a nice new hole in him the way Wade did. In fact, he barely flinches. Aiming his fist at Wade, he says, “Shouldn’ta done that.”

*Oh.*

“Oh,” Wade says, and teleports just as Bishop fires off a blast of energy from his hand. “Okay, now, that was pretty badass, I’ll admit,” he says from behind the bulky guy.

A bolt of pink light hits Bishop’s mechanical arm, and it starts to come apart—the Node falls, bounces and rolls across the room. “Damn!”

Wade pouts. “Awwww. I was *so* gonna get in some good fight time. Waaaaanda, you spoiled all my fun!”

Wanda and Emma are standing just inside the doorway, the former with one high-heeled boot on the node. They’re looking mighty fine, in a Charlie’s Angels, ‘we know eighty-seven ways to kill you
without messing up our hair’ kinda way, and it creepily reminds him of the Demo Squad.

“You’d better start explaining,” says Emma.

“Before we let Wade do something we’ll all regret,” adds Wanda.

“What does that even mean?” Wade asks his yellow boxes.

*In Martha Stewart terms? Your sword meets his face. It’s a good thing.*

Brilliant idea, creepy explanation.

Wade shudders and swears off HGTV.

“Let’s not have any misunderstandings, now,” says Bishop. “After all, I’m here for the sake of the future of all mutantkind.”

Wanda scoffs. “I have a feeling this will be a good story. Right out of Star Trek.”

“Can I cut off his robo-arm?” Wade asks. “He blew up the TV and the couch and put a hole in my favorite Blade Trinity shirt. And I already made one Star Trek reference in this fic; you should have gone for Red Dwarf or Dr. Who.”

“Give him a chance to talk before you start severing limbs,” Emma replies. “Interrogations work better when you establish positive and negative reinforcements.”

“Not to my experience,” Wade says, extending the blade in his right arm. “I find it works best if the guy knows I’m willing to cut something off of him before we start. Then he’ll believe me when I tell him I’m going to cut something else off every time he gives me an answer I don’t like.”


“So nice to be recognized.”

“All the same,” Wanda says firmly. “Not before we get at least some answers.”

*I got this one—42. Say 42.*

Wade starts to slowly circle Bishop. “His name’s Bishop, he’s from some alternate future, and he’s been looking for little glass gizmos like the one under your shoe. They’re called Fate Nodes. He wanted me to talk to that one. There, some answers.” He makes to slice off the metal limb, but finds himself pulled back by an inexorable force. He sighs.

*Stupid care bear, always ruining our fun…*

Sure enough, Lorna has joined Wanda and Emma at the door.

“What’s a…‘Fate Node’?” Emma asks.

Bishop looks at Wade with narrowed eyes. “I’m surprised you don’t know more about them, given who you are. The reason I ended up here was that I told it to take me to a Keeper designation who could unlock it for me.”

Wade wriggles to see if Lorna plans to let him free any time soon—it doesn’t seem like it. “I know a little bit about Fate Nodes and how to use ‘em. I sure as hell remember what you can do with one, and I know that it shouldn’t end up in the hands of a whack-job who shoots people’s TVs and says
he’s here to save the future of mutantkind. Might as well give it to Nate. On the up-side, this is a no-Nate universe, and aside from a freak accident with a magic spear and a giant-ass monster-alien-thing, he doesn’t dimension-hop, so we don’t have to worry about that.”

Bishop slowly grins. “Ma’am, if you would just pick that up for a moment? I swear on my sister’s soul, it won’t hurt you.”

“Wade?” Wanda asks.

Wade shrugs (as well as he can, suspended magnetically in mid-air). “Go ahead. It’s a computer, not a weapon.”

_Uh…that’s a little misleading._ Whatever.

So she bends and picks it up. It’s still glittering.

“Auxiliary query,” Bishop calls out to the thing. “Identify subject designations in this room.”

~Scanning,~ says the disembodied voice, startling Emma.

“God,” Wanda snorts. “It’s like something Tony would make…at least it isn’t British.”


“Oh,” says Bishop, nodding as if something has just been confirmed. “An Omega. That certainly explains a lot.”

“Ah, an Omega, that thertainwy exthpwainth a wot,” Wade mimicks snidely.

“Omega iterations are Keepers of Fate. I’ve met eighteen of them. All but two were Wade Wilsons.”

“Yay me?” Wade says without much enthusiasm. “What the spork is a ‘Keeper of Fate’?”

“Someone entrusted with a Fate Node and charged with using it to help maintain the overall resonant stability of the timestream.”

_Oh, that’s what ‘Keepers’ are. So it really does explain a lot._

Wade blinks. “Is it odd that I almost completely understood that?”

_Nah._

“Yes,” Emma says flatly.

Bishop shrugs. “None of those eighteen Keepers was willing to cooperate as much as I needed them to, no matter how I pleaded.”

“So you killed them,” Wade guesses. “Awesome. You are _such_ a nice guy, I can’t imagine why anybody would _not_ want to cooperate with you.”

“Your sarcasm was tiresome after the third kill.”
“Sticks ‘n stones, ya Machiavellian crackpot.”

“This is getting nowhere fast,” sighs Emma.

Lorna waves a finger, and Wade suddenly can’t move his jaw.

_Cheater!

“Oh, dat’sh jusht _mean_,” he manages through his clenched teeth.

“Where’s Logan?” Wanda asks Emma. “He can always make Wade shut up.”

And because Wade is trying to burn a whole in the side of Bishop’s head by will alone (not using his eye-beam-things, because they kinda hurt to use, and he’s pretty sure Bishop would do the neat absorb-n-zap thing again), he sees Bishop flinch.

“Ohoho, he doesn’t like dat idea,” Wade says. “Emmy, you should _totally_ go find Jamie.”

She rolls her eyes at the nickname, but leaves the room.


~Wade Wilson BT562-Omega. Precursor locus to approximately thirty-six timestream branches. Direct resonant precursor to Keeper 188. Also Deadpool. Also Weapon Eleven. Also The Traveler.~

“The Traveler,” Bishop says in sudden understanding.

“Yeah, can you knock it off wiff da Shinishter Capitalizhation of Ovverwishe Innocuoush Wordsh?” Wade grumbles. “And da dorky shpeesh impediment?”

Lorna rolls her eyes. “Since you’re not going to be quiet _anyway_…” And with a wave of her finger, Wade can talk properly again.

“Thanks, Good Luck Bear. Musta been _killing_ the typist. Seriously, Grumpy Assassin Man, what is up with all the random capital letters?”

“People who do a lot of bouncing between times and worlds have a tendency to collect monikers both obscure and mundane,” Bishop says. “In your case, since you’ve _traveled_ to over three hundred and twenty-two separate timestream bundles, you’re The Traveler.”

“Yeah, well…I’ve got a great short-term memory, too. I can spit back strings of letters and numbers with the best of ‘em. Yo, crystal ball thingy! Clarify Lucas Bishop MP618-Delta.”

~Lucas Bishop MP618-Delta. Secondary precursor locus. Instigator of Lucas Bishop Zeta schism. Responsible for the re-tuning of fifteen timestream branches. Responsible for the loss of eighteen Keepers. Also The Hunter. Warning: subject is a significant source of chronometric entropy. Immediate phasic re-tuning is advised.~

“I knew it!” Wade cries. “You’re _definitely_ the bad guy! You were all, ‘Oh, I’m out for the future of mutantkind,’ but you’re really trying to destroy the world.”

Right about then, Emma gets back with Jamie.

“Were you napping, sweetums?” Wade asks archly. “If this had been a _real_ emergency, all your asses would be _dead_. Seriously, people, does it take you this long to get out of a burning building,
“Bishop. He wants me to make his crystal ball cooler so he can go destroy the universe.”

“Okay. So why aren’t we killing him?”

“Logan,” Lorna chides. “We’re the good guys, remember? We don’t solve our problems with murder.”

Sure we do.

“I do,” Wade says.

“Zip it,” Jamie grunts. “Can we send him back to wherever he came from?”

“How?” asks Wanda. “It’s not like we know how he got here in the first place.”

“I know, I know!” Wade calls. “Pick me! Mememememe!”

Everybody looks annoyed and tries to ignore him.

“Think we should get the others for a quick conference?” Lorna wonders.

Wade teleports out of Lorna’s grasp and bounces. “I totally know how he got here, and I can probably put him back.”

They all sigh.

Wanda gestures for him to go on. “We’re aquiver with anticipation, I assure you,” she says drily.

He takes the Fate Node from her. “Hey. Which one are you, and are you smart or dumb?”

~Biological signals verified. I’m Node 119: Forecaster. And ‘dumb’ is a very mean word, Wade.~

“Nice to see you again, Effcee. And by ‘nice,’ I mean really inconvenient. First things first, cancel whatever primary query he had you set for.”

~Done. With immense satisfaction.~

“Good. Can you send dork-boy over there to his home timeline?”

~I can do one better. I’ll program his timeslide module to surge itself afterward. Have fun fixing that, you Keeper-killing jerk.~

“Why you little—” Bishop growls, reaching for another gun with his remaining arm. He vanishes in a swirl of light.

~I’m inconvenient, Wade? You’re going to hurt my feelings if you keep saying things like that. You realize that you’re my Keeper now, don’t you?~

“What?” Wanda says flatly.

“Am I the only one worried about Wade having some kind of glorified space-time cell phone?” Lorna asks.
“Not by a longshot,” snorts Emma.

Wade pouts at them. “Effcee, did you really bring him here so that I could unlock your red branches for him?”

~Please, give me more credit than that. I only have to obey unauthorized physical-contact users within a certain set of parameters. I needed to get to my next Keeper, but you know that Nodes can’t independently timeslide—so I ‘creatively interpreted’ his command. I mean, sure, I brought him to a Keeper capable of unlocking my user restrictions, but I didn’t bother telling him he should ask nicely. I consider it fairly sneaky; I thought you’d approve. I still recommend killing his sorry ass ASAP, because it’s only a matter of time before he starts hunting Nodes again.~

“Can’t you…I dunno, send some kinda message to all the other Nodes?”

~And what exactly would a ‘dumb’ Node be able to do about it? They couldn’t warn their Keepers; they weren’t designed for that kind of proactive interaction. Anyway, not all of the Nodes matter. It’s more important right now to get to any of the Nodes present at critical resonance loci.~

Ha, yeah, great idea. One little problem there.

“Shush, yellow boxes. You can be so pessimistic.”

~Yeah. Real downer.~

“You shush, too—they had a point. Wades don’t timeslide.”

“First good news we’ve had all day,” says Emma.

Wade scowls at her. “We’d have to get somebody creepy like Stretch da Vinci to build us a time-space-jumpy-thingy that doesn’t work on slide tech.”

~Actually, the defects in your brainware that let you brainslide make it possible for me to alter your resonance phase just enough for timesliding. Congratulations! You’re the first and only timesliding Wade Wilson. Johnny, tell him what he’s won…~

Wade considers dropping the thing into the lake.

It just had to be one of the Nodes that thinks it has a sense of humor.

“How would you like to be ground into a fine powder and snorted, you smart-aleck?” Wade growls. “So I’m defective enough for you to make me more defective so that I can timeslide. Why in the name of Stan Lee’s sacred shades would I volunteer to leave this nice shiny timeline of yay-ness to go play hero somewhere else?”

~Because I’m going to timeslide you anyway, and you might as well get something out of it?~

“What?! What the hell would I get out of it?”

~A sense of accomplishment and moral righteousness?~

“Hah, try again.”

~An opportunity to play good guy and lord it over any Nates you find?~

Ooh, good one…
“Tempting, but strike two.”

~You drive a hard bargain, Wade. All right...if you help me secure the critical loci and neutralize the threat posed by the Hunter, I'll take you to meet Bea Arthur.~

“Sold. Let’s go, Jamie,” Wade says, and grabs Jamie’s arm.

“Wait, what—”

~Rebooting world, please wait...~

And the world vanishes.

.End.
No Heaven

Chapter Summary

Logan meets the Timeline Demolition Squad. Apparently, "I come in peace" isn't very convincing when you bring Wolverine along.

Chapter Notes

first stop on the journey to save the multiverse: the Demo Squad (as featured in A World in Flames).

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble, plus shameless expository dialogue. dorky 616 references. innuendo. rampant pop culture references. gentle violence. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f*** and g**damn).

pairing: Logan/Wade (with a fluffy little hint of Wade/Nessa).

timeline: other than "right after Forecast," doesn't matter.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

notes: 1) and now you have a better idea (or not?) of how the Network works, and how it's possible for them to chase Bishop without having to go back in time and retcon his ass. 2) the title comes from the Champion song "No Heaven." i have no excuse for this, other than liking the song. 3) notes? i have notes? i really don't know if there's anything else to say. it's really just a big fat chapter of exposition. if you start to go cross-eyed from the technobabble like poor Logan, just skip down until the part where he says "um, WTF?" and they put it in layman's terms. or have ~MerianMoriarty explain it, since most of the Network tech is based on her physics-y theorizations.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

No Heaven

The actual process of timesliding turned out to be a lot less fun than Wade expected. He was hoping for some kind of cool wormhole-ish tunnel, something kinda Sliders with a touch of Stargate. And, yeah, okay, it was basically like that.

Buuuuut it was a lot faster. In fact, there was a definite sensation of being dragged behind a roller coaster on skates with a rope around his waist.
Somehow, it all managed to take maybe five seconds while feeling like it went on for quite a while.

When they landed, the sense of way-too-fast directionless motion stopped, and Jamie let go of his arm to hurl.

And now three hot agents of Fate are pointing nifty future-guns at them, so Jamie being busy losing his lunch is just a little embarrassing.

“‘We come in peace,’” Wade says, holding a hand up in the Vulcan sign for ‘live long and prosper.’

“Right,” snorts Neena. “‘Timesliding from a Trek convention?’”

“Somebody hasn’t taken today’s chill pill. Life is more fun if you relax a little, Neena.”

At Wade’s side, Jamie has finally finished saying hello to his breakfast. He extends both sets of claws. “Should we start phonin’ ahead to cut down on gunpoint greetings?”

Nessa waves a hand. “So you come in peace…and brought Wolverine along? Those are just about mutually exclusive, you know.”

“You hear that, honeybunch?” Wade gasps in mock-affront. “Base slander. All the same, put the claws away, tough guy, we’re here to play nice. Anybody up for five-way Jell-O wrestling? Seven way, if the other gals get back. Okay, okay, I can’t be cruel—if the other me gets back, he can join in. To deny any Wade Wilson a dogpile of pretty people would be an act of supervillainy. Or, y’know, unethical treatment of an animal. Whatever.”

~Can we focus, please?~ says Forecaster, drawing the girls’ attention. ~This is important enough that we’re sort of in a hurry.~

Wade points to the Fate Node. “Like he said. Okay, I’m sure you ladies take excellent care of a nasty little doohicky like Ragnarok, but you should know that there’s somebody out there who’s been offing Keepers to steal their Nodes. Effcee, do we know how many?”

~Well, like the asshole said himself, he’s killed eighteen Keepers. He’s only gotten his hands on fifteen Nodes, though—Steve Rogers HG552 chased him off Freyr, and when he found out that Oracle was chronometrically keyed, he chucked her into the ocean.~

“That’s good,” snorts Inez. “Oracle’s got a big mouth. Who’s this ‘asshole’ you’re gabbin’ about?”

~Lucas Bishop MP618-Delta, the Hunter.~

“Never heard of ‘im,” Nessa says disinterestedly. “I’d like to remind everybody here that we kill whole timelines as a profession, and the Wades are completely backed up on the Network.”

“That’s an ambiguous and misleading assertion,” snorts Wade. “Even if you consider each major branch to only have one Wade, that’s just over two thousand Wades, and I will bet my shiny bones that people like Pizza Boy Wade do not have full redundant backups that will let them be replaced good-as-new if they get nerfed.”

Neena gives a sheepish little shrug. “Well, no, only high-entropy deaths get undone, because of the energy required to either convert tuneable mass or grow a clone, but…I mean, we’ve got at least time branch bookmarks for all the Keeper designations, and they’re the only ones that matter.”

“Oh?” says Wade, sidling up to her and putting an arm around her shoulder. “So…what you’re saying is that normal people aren’t important? Those happy-go-lucky Wades that actually give me
some mental vacation time *don’t matter?*” He headbutts her (gently enough that he doesn’t crack her skull).

“Ow! Dammit!”

“How’d you like it if I went and blew up your favorite vacation spot, huh? ‘Oh, gosh, Nate, I’d just love to go back to that little bar in Tijuana, but Wade *blew it up!*’ Goddamn inconsiderate world-killing little bitches. It’s not cool to off people who haven’t *done* anything.”

Nessa makes a face. “God, do all Wades have burning consciences, or just the ones we meet?”

“Naw, I met an evil one once,” Inez says. “Right before he got brain-wiped so ours could move in.”

~Hey, ‘scuse me, matter of multiverse security!~ grumbles FC. ~Things would be very un-good if the Hunter got his filthy mitts on Ragnarok. In fact, I’m thinking of recommending that we shut off all transmissions and lock the Network down until he’s been waxed. Uh, waxed as in ‘made dead,’ not waxed as in ‘made less hairy.’ Because. Y’know. Awkward.~

“Ew, clamped transmission would make our job way harder,” says Nessa. “I dunno about you gals, but I don’t feel like sliding all the way back to the Core for each new mission.”

“I don’t feel like relying on that nasty little black ball t’be Wade’s only backup,” adds Inez. “If we lockdown and somethin’ happens to it, we can’t finish.”

Neena shrugs, rubbing at the bump Wade put on her forehead. “Well, we could.”

Nessa hits her shoulder. “Bite your tongue! You’d be fine with a, a *reset Wade*? We’d mention something that happened after his last backup and he wouldn’t know what we were talking about, and he’d make that *face*…”

“Just saying…y’know. We technically could. It’s not like he’d die or something. Not permanently.”

Nessa pokes Wade aggressively in the chest with one (neatly manicured) finger. “As you can see, sweetheart, we’re not keen on the idea of locking the Network.”

Wade looks at her (and he’s not going to get over looking at her any time soon, no matter how hooked he is on Jamie). “This guy’s been using unlocked or partially-locked Nodes to hitch rides to more Nodes. But because of the way the things are built, they don’t *actually* exist in multiple timeframes—they resonate across neighboring branches and only *seem* to be in several places at once. The only way to find a Node except by accident is to query the Network. If the Network’s in lockdown, the Nodes can’t find each other.”

“I’m not *ignorant*, Wade, I know how the damn things work.”

“I know you know, that was expository dialogue. Got all that, readers?”

“Oh. Well, carry on.” She waves generously, then mutters, “Fucking lunatic.”

“Where were we?”

“We know how they work.”

“Thanks. Then you know why Ragnarok is one of the Nodes that chocolate psycho *cannot be allowed to find.*”
She pouts a little, just because she hates admitting he’s right (she always has). “Yeah, okay. We don’t need somebody running around re-tuning things willy-nilly. Since we leave Rag unlocked in case we need it before we get to our target zones, he’d just have to wait until we split and he only had to fight one of us. When we hook back up with Wade, we’ll have him lock it in receive-only, and then we’ll wait for the Network itself to tell us this Hunter guy’s been taken care of.”

Jamie waves a hand to get their attention. “And how the hell does that work, anyhow? Guy can travel between dimensions and times, what’s to stop him just going back to a point before the thing was locked?”

The girls look at Jamie like he’s the slow kid in the class.

Wade pats him on the shoulder. “It’s all down to resonant signatures again, pookie. The Nodes exist on the same timescale as the Network Core, they only appear to exist in other times. Say I take a Node to prehistory and ask it questions about cave men—it picks up the resonance from that point, queries the Network, and projects the response backward in time. Which you can only do because of weird photonic vibration stuff, resonance crap again.”

“If ya think about it,” says Inez, “it knew what you were gonna ask before you did.”

“Nevermind all that!” Neena puts in. “What it comes down to, Wolverine, is that without an exact time and place, he can only timeslide to wherever and whenever the Node actually exists. I guess if he found some whack-job who could throw together a time-machine that used curved-space tech, he could go backward and look for the Node before it was locked, but none of the smart Nodes would respond if he asked where it was once he got the when right.”

Jamie throws both hands in the air. “Ah, fuck it. You coulda said he just can’t.”

“He just can’t,” Wade and the girls all chorus.

“Where you headed next, hun?” Inez asks.

“Good question,” says Wade. “Well, Effcee, where to?”

~The other two re-tuning Nodes will certainly have to be locked down, and the central database Node, too.~

Neena makes a face. “Yuck. Have fun with Atropos. That should be the most epic ‘I told you so’ bitchfest in about a century. And I haven’t even met the guy who’s been taking care of Node 250.”

~That’s…complicated.~ Forecaster says evasively. ~I think we’ll go there last. All-righty, let’s truck on over to bundle 056-1181.~

“But what did you mean by—” Nessa tries to say.

~Nope, no time, gotta go, seeya, bubbeye, call’s dropping out, no reception!~

“Love ya, Nessa!” Wade calls, and grabs Jamie just before the world vanishes again.

.End.
The (Wo)Man Behind the Curtain

Chapter Summary

Wade and Logan meet the Fate Network's Database Administrator.

Chapter Notes

second stop on the journey to save the multiverse: the Central Database.

**warnings:** Moviewerse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mashed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. innuendo. pop culture references. language: g.

**pairing:** Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade).

**timeline:** other than "right after No Heaven," doesn't matter.

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

**notes:** 1) the title comes from a phrase that was popularized by 'the Wizard of Oz.' the phrase 'the man behind the curtain' has come to refer to an unseen individual who is responsible for maintaining something that appears to be very grand and impressive (like the wire team in a stage production of Peter Pan). 2) i imagine that the Database's guardian uses flatspace tech (from UltraViolet) to store his weapons. mostly because flatspace is a really effing cool idea and i'm a big fat sci-fi nerd. 3) the late, great Majel Barrett-Roddenberry is famous for four things: playing Nurse Chapel in the original Star Trek, playing Lwaxana Troi (Counselor Troi's mother) in TNG/DS9, being the voice of The Computer in pretty much every version of Star Trek, and marrying Gene Roddenberry (creator of Star Trek). she had just finished recording her lines for the Abrams reboot of Star Trek when she died. 4) the idea of organic and semi-organic quantum computing and data storage is not original. i forget where i first read it...but basically, if you have some way of reading the information, you could use atoms and molecules (or DNA) instead of electronic bits. 5) billions of exabytes is a LOT of data. 1 exabyte = 1 million terabytes = 1 billion gigabytes. you'd absolutely have to have that amount of data storage (at the very least) to keep track of an entire multiverse. and she's probably talking about quantum vibrational data storage, so each of their bits is worth four of ours.

visit [The Fateverse Glossary](#) for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

you can see a pic of the Database Administrator (Hope Dayspring DB088) in [Parallels III](#) by MerianMoriarty.
When they land again, Jamie manages not to puke, but his grip on Wade’s arm is bruising.

“Um. Wow,” Wade says, staring up (and up, and up) at the towering structure before them. It’s completely white, in a somewhat oppressive way, stark and luminous. There are distant claws of terrain fading away into a starry sky, as though the ground they’re standing on is shaped like a partly-opened flower.

A black-swathed shape lands quietly beside them. Nearly every inch of the man-shaped thing is covered, and the only indication that the thing inside the ninja getup is a person (and not, for instance, a robot) is a lone eye the color of polished oak.

~Unscheduled timeslide event,~ he says in a synthesized voice.

“We come in peace?” Wade tries, holding out Forecaster.

~We require an audience with the Database Administrator,~ the Node says politely.

The single dark eye moves quickly over them, giving an impression of rapid threat assessment.

~Identity verification required,~ says the ninja. With a flicker of light, a blade appears in his hand.

~I am authorized to re-tune at will any subject designation attempting to access the Database Administrator without permission.~

Wade takes a step away from the guy, flexing his forearm under Jamie’s grip in warning. “Ookay. Let’s all play nice—none of us wanna get ‘re-tuned’ today, since I’m pretty sure ‘re-tuning’ is the same thing as ‘turning into a smear on the metaphorical pavement of the multiverse.’”

Lights twinkle within Forecaster, looking almost anxious.

~I am Node 119: Forecaster. This is my Keeper, Wade Wilson BT562-Omega. His companion is Logan BT511.~

The ninja-dude relaxes, and the blade in his hand vanishes.

~Traveler. She is expecting you.~

Wade can’t suppress a shiver. “Expecting me. Um. Okay. Good?”

~Follow,~ says the ninja, and walks up to the face of the white tower. He puts his hand against it—the surface ripples out to a rectangle, then disappears (or simply goes transparent?).

~Agent wavelength verified,~ says a disembodied feminine voice.

“Majel Barrett?” Wade laughs incredulously.

The ninja glares over his shoulder. ~Most elements of this structure were designed with my prolonged comfort in mind.~

“Oh, she’s great,” Wade says quickly, nodding. “Very soothing. I think I would’ve picked Bea Arthur, but Majel’s good.”

~My request for Bea Arthur was overruled,~ the ninja grumbles, walking through the doorway, and Wade suddenly understands.

“That sucks,” he comiserates as he steps up to the door with a hand out. His fingers hit a barrier with elastic resistance, like a thin sheet of latex. “So, uh, just how much of you is ‘Cyber-Wade’?”
~None of your business,~ ninja-Wade replies firmly.

“Fair enough.”

~Agent wavelength verified,~ the door says, and Wade’s hand suddenly passes through.

He looks back at Jamie, tugs his arm free, steps through the door.

Jamie follows, eying the edges of the portal like it might snap shut.

~One moment, please…~ says the door. ~Chronometric entropy levels acceptably low. Access granted.~

And Jamie hurries through, watching the wall turn solid white again.

The place’s interior is like the negative of an abyss. An abyss of whiteness. Wade can’t even make out the corners where the walls meet ceiling and floor. Against the whiteness, ninja-Wade looks like a hole in the world.

“That’s what this place reminds me of—the labs on Kamino, transplanted onto something from Halo.”

Ninja-Wade cocks his head. ~Perhaps. The Kaminoans had black floors, though. And the Ark had eight arms, while the Database has sixteen.~

“Can we just get on with this?” mutters Jamie, crowding close to Wade.

Any visual sense of distance is swallowed up by the all-encompassing luminous white, but ninja-Wade walks forward several meters before waving a hand and walking through the wall. When they follow him, the door closes behind them.

Wade can just make out the sensation of rising.

A few seconds later, the door opens again, onto a much darker room, and shuts again when they step out.

Once his eyes adjust, he can see a figure floating in the darkness, glowing faintly golden. Hands twist gracefully, as if playing some huge musical instrument. Little ripples of golden light respond from hundreds of shards of glass (crystal?) gently rotating in midair all around the figure, like someone blew up a tube of glass and froze it in the act of shattering.

The person’s back is to them, but Wade suddenly knows who it is with the kind of certainty that only comes from raising someone about a dozen times.

“Hope,” Wade says. He probably shouldn’t be surprised.

I should really just stop being surprised, period. Especially if I’m gonna be timesliding a lot.

She turns her head a little, and he realizes that she’s been floating upside-down.

What is it with Hope ’n Nate and the floating-upside-down thing?

Slowly, she turns right-side-up and faces them. She looks twenty-something, but her eyes are much older. “Wade, your left knee is creaking—I keep telling you not to sit still for so long. It’s hard as hell to get people in to fix you if you freeze up out on the veldt.”
Ninja-Wade shifts a little, and Wade can barely make out the sound of stiff hydraulics. ~The lakes remind me of Providence,~ he mumbles.

“I’m sorry about him, Traveler,” Hope says. “He isn’t exactly used to having visitors.”

“He said you were expectin’ us,” Jamie grunts.

Hope’s eyes move to Jamie and stay there for several seconds. Her hands are still moving while the suspended shards spark with light. “This construct is a quantum database, storing billions of exabytes of information in a dynamic system—the molecules of every single plant, mineral, and drop of water outside this tower. That database is being constantly queried and updated by the Network. My job is to organize those updates and respond to those queries—or not, according to my judgment. The very moment that there was a possibility of a Wade Wilson intending to come here, Atropos knew. Since then, other Nodes have given enough information for the shape of the timestream to become quite clear. Within a five minute window, a Node would bring a Wade Wilson here to me. Ninety-nine point nine percent certain. From my point of view, I have known for two-hundred and thirty years.”

Jamie shuts up and sidles a little farther into Wade’s personal space.

“So you know why we’re here?” Wade guesses.

“Motivation is harder to discern,” Hope says, waving a hand. The twinkling pieces of glass draw a strange shape in golden light. “But if I had to hazard a guess, I’d say the Hunter is getting out of hand.”

“So, what are we gonna do about it? What can we do about it? We just came from talking the girls into locking Ragnarok into receive-only.”

“Yes,” she says, and when her hand moves again, a single fragment glows red. Her other hand rises, and several more pieces light red. “The situation is most definitely getting out of hand. Ragnarok and the sixteen newly lost or displaced Nodes raise the tally to twenty-three Nodes no longer providing timestream data to the Network. Unacceptable.”

Wade waves a hand expectantly. “Soooo… once more, what’re we gonna do about it?”

Hope’s hands fall, and the glass curtain goes dark. In the dimness, her face looks young and eerie. “You are going to continue the task set out for you. I can’t create information—I can’t send a message to the Network, for example—I can only transfer data between the Database and the Nodes, and attach certain standard errors and alerts to that data. I can refuse to respond to queries regarding the timestream coordinates of Nodes…but that could alert the Hunter to my actions and bring him here. I prefer that the situation not come to that. Combat on the Database causes widespread loss of data.”

~We’ll need to query two more sets of coordinates,~ Forecaster says, almost meekly.

A flick of nimble fingers sends a bolt of golden light up the glass shards. “Ah,” Hope says. “218 and 250. You’ll want to take care of 250 last—it’s repairing a huge resonant discrepency caused by subject designations of Lucas Bishop, and it probably hasn’t told its Keeper that.”

“Great, a Smart Node that wants to be an evil genius,” Wade mutters.

She tilts her head a little. “Perhaps; it was designed to emulate a particular designation of Wade Wilson. More importantly, the Auditor has not reported on the success or failure of his last re-tuning assignment—it’s possible that the Hunter or his allies have already attacked. The potential for
chronometric entropy is extremely high if they get Kali, as she has stored the chronometric signatures of over two hundred subjects slated for re-tuning or lateral relocation. Eight-ball currently only possesses fourteen such chronometric signatures.”

“Yeahyeahyeah,” Wade says. “Kali’s important. We got it. Effcee already knew that. If Bishop could be layin’ the smackdown as we speak, then we’re really in a hurry.”

The corner of her mouth quirks up. “I’d forgotten what it was like to deal with an impatient Wade.” A shimmer of light moves over the curtain, and an answering light sparks up inside FC. “And before you ask, my last name is Dayspring, and he died sixteen hundred years ago. Peacefully.”

“I wasn’t gonna ask,” Wade lies, embarrassed. He leans back just a little—an inch, maybe less—until he can feel Jamie’s bodyheat.

She smiles in the dim light of information dancing across the floating crystalline fragments.

Hope’s smile is the last thing he sees before Forecaster yanks them into the timestream.

.End.
The Auditor

Chapter Summary

Logan and Wade arrive in another universe in search of the Auditor, but they're a little late.

Chapter Notes

i will freely admit that this is pretty much just setup for the next chapter.

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. innuendo. violence. gore. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f*** and g**damn).

**pairing:** Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade).

**timeline:** other than "right after The (Wo)Man Behind the Curtain," doesn't matter.

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

**notes:** 1) Clint Barton and his ronin outfit are made of smex. 2) the M9 is a Beretta 9mm pistol that's probably the most widely-used by military and police worldwide. it's extremely lightweight and reliable. 3) Wade met this Hope back in Relative Good. 4) a "pop quiz" is a surprise test in school; i didn't hear that phrase until i got to the US, because my high school pretty much gave quizzes every week...so there's really no way we would have been surprised to have a test.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

The Auditor

Finely-honed reflexes have Wade teleporting almost the instant that they exit the timeslide.

While their attacker’s sword lodges in Jamie’s ribs, Wade kicks the guy’s hand to disarm him, has a blade extended and poised just under his chin.

*Yeah, definitely gotta stop being surprised.*

“Well, if it isn’t the Green-Arrow-wannabe,” he snorts.

Barton arches an eyebrow, but carefully steps away from Jamie (who’s muttering and pulling the
sword out of his side). “I’m way better-looking than Green Arrow.”

_In that futuristic fetish-wear he’s got on right now, he’s kinda right…_ 

“That’s debatable,” Wade says. “Y’know, with that dashing Errol Flynn/Cary Elwes look he’s got going. Either way, we didn’t come here to fight. And you’re incredibly outclassed.”

The blond sneers. “Aside from Network Agents, all our allies use curved-space tech. We take unexpected timeslides as a bad indication around here.”

Wade tosses FC into the air and catches it. “Have they attacked, then?”

“They?”

“Bishop and whatever kooky evil playmates he’s found in the weird paradoxical ten-minutes-that-was-probably-years-for-him since Effcee punted him back to his home timeline.”

After a moment, Barton snorts. “Okay. Sorry for jumping you guys, but it was a healthy level of paranoia. Can you move the sword, please?”

Wade carefully retracts the blade. “I’m Wade, this is Forecaster. That’s Jamie.”

“Logan,” Jamie corrects grumpily.

“The first part, I coulda guessed,” Barton says. “The last part, I knew. It’s pretty hard to mistake a Logan, no matter what timeline he’s from—or she, and that was a pretty weird day, believe you me. I’m Clint. A group of sliders attacked about three hours ago, while the Auditor was on a job. As far as I know, nobody’s seen him, Hope, or Kali since.”

Wade grabs the guy by the collar without any conscious thought. “What do you mean, nobody’s seen Hope?”

Hope is the only person (people?) who has shown Wade unconditional affection (well, aside from his dogs in one of the universes where he’s Wade Wilson, Normal Guy). After all the brain-bouncing he’s done, various versions of Hope have come to be almost as precious to him as Jamie, Vicky, and Nessa.

“Hey, easy,” Barton grumbles. “The sliders attacked, and nobody’s been able to find her.”

~Kali has to be close,~ Forecaster asserts. ~The Database Administrator doesn’t give inaccurate coordinates. Kali’s within a five meter radius of our exit point.~

Barton winces. “Okay, _that_…that’s not good. Kali should’ve been with—”

“Shh!” Jamie hisses, staring fixedly at a nearby door.

Wade moves forward, presses an ear to the metal panel. Under the low boom of his own pulse, he hears a sniffle. “Hope,” he whispers, fumbling at the control panel—it doesn’t respond. “Hope?”

“Won’t open,” says Barton. “Sliders borked a bunch of power couplings. We’re on emergency power only in this block. Plot-devicey, I know, but that’s life.”

“Move,” says Jamie. He slices the control panel clean off the wall (and it would have served him right if that locked the door instead of unlocking it).

The door slides open with a hiss, and Wade teleports in time to watch Jamie go flying across the
corridor (he leaves a pretty big dent in the wall).

“It’s okay, princess!” Wade calls, keeping clear of the door. “We’re friends. Cross my heart ‘n hope to cry.”

When the teenage girl staggers into the light, Barton makes a faintly queasy noise. She’s covered in blood and gore, with tear trails on her angry face. Her lip trembles, but her hand (and the M9 in it) is rock steady. “Fuck you, mister,” she spits. “I don’t know who my friends are right now. Someone who looked just like Cap bashed in the skull of my best friend in the whole world, and then someone who looked just like my dad blew him up and dissolved him.”

Wade swallows thickly. “Him who? Blew Nate up?”

Her eyes light with recognition. “No. Sorry, bad antecedent arrangement. I meant that the guy who looked like my dad blew up my best friend. Dad wasn’t there. I don’t know where he is. Oh, God—Wade, is it really you?”

He holds up FC. “Fate Nodes can’t lie, right? Forecaster, identify me for the young lady.”

~Keeper 188, Wade Wilson BT562-Omega.~

She slips the pistol into a holster on her hip. “Um. I’d hug you, but I’m kinda gross right now.”

“In a way, it’s all mine,” Wade says, and she nods and throws herself into his arms.

Barton edges forward and peers into the darkened room. “So,” he says. “Uh. That, uh…the red rorschach in there’s the Auditor?”

Hope wipes her face and sniffs, nodding. “Yeah. The guy who looked like Dad seriously blew him up and then turned him into a fine mist. I don’t think he’s gonna go back together. Before that, he gave me Kali—reset her to key to me. I’m the Auditor now. Clint, do you know where Dad is? Is he okay?”

Barton gratefully looks away from the mess. “Yeah. Nate was talking with Reed when the first attack hit. He’s holed up with Tony and the other ‘important people,’ talking strategy. I was one of the guys who volunteered to go looking for you. Can somebody who isn’t me break the bad news to him? I don’t deal well with having my limbs ripped off in a Hulk-style rage.”

“I’ll do it,” Wade says. “I’m used to giving Nate bad news, and my limbs reattach.”

Barton makes elaborate gestures with his hands. “Well—okay, yeah, but—I mean, what are you gonna say? ‘Hi, Nate, I’m an alternate version of your husband, who, by the way, is about as dead as it gets without the use of fire and/or nuclear weapons’?”

Wade shrugs. “Pretty much.”

“We’re all gonna die,” the blond sighs with a dazed shake of the head. “Cable is going to go full-on, all-out, Cobra-Commander evil and destroy the world.”

More likely to go Apocalypse evil and rule the world.


Just like that, she’s fine, she’s pulled back together. There was probably a long time alone in that
dark room where she cried her eyes out, but she’s ready to go get things done now, and that strength makes Wade a little jealous.

*She doesn’t even need Vicky bringing blankets.*

“Sorry about chucking you into the wall, Unc—Mister Logan.”

“S’okay,” Jamie says, a little uncomfortably. Probably his crying-little-kid complex kicking in again. “We haven’t exactly been gettin’ warm welcomes, trying to warn people about the Hunter. Three hot broads in leather pointed guns at us while I was busy puking my guts up.”

“You get sick from timesliding too, huh?” Hope says with a wry grin. “I remember hating timesliding so much…ugh. I *love* curved-space tech.”

Wade gently jostles Hope’s shoulder. “C’mon, precious, let’s get you back to your daddy.”

“Wish I could’ve gotten Wade’s ring for Dad,” she sighs. “I fucked that imposter up, though—bounced the bastard through a wall and dropped some of the ceiling on him, that’s why the power’s out.”

With a grin, Wade ruffles her hair. “That’s my girl.”

“Waaade,” she whines, carefully combing her hair back into place with the few clean fingers she has. “I’m gonna miss you when you leave, y’know. You’re so much like him.”

“Enough like him to fool your dork father,” he snickers, following as Barton leads the way through the corridors in his nifty Ronin getup.

*Great view, eh?*

Quiet, the hot blond guy is walking.

*Way better than the Hawkeye outfit.*

Totally. Now get your stupid text-boxes out of the way.

*Sorry.*

~*Um, Wade?*~ FC says timidly.

“More bad news?” Jamie guesses.

~*Uh…yeah. You could kinda say that. So, uh, I had this idea, y’know, like I’d scan the nearby chronometric wavelength. Check out the opposition ’n all that.*~

“Ugh, get on with it,” says Hope. “You’re worse than Mister Parker.”

~*Aaanyway, uh, good news and bad news.*~

“Good news?” laughs Barton. “We haven’t had any of that all day.”

~*Oh?*~ it asks brightly. ~*Well. Congratulations, there are only five foreign signatures besides ours! Yayyyyy!*~

“I can think of people I’d never want to see one-on-one, let alone in a creepy five-man rebel retuning squad put together by a pissed off Node-thief,” Wade points out. “Most versions of Stryfe or
Evil Nate, for example, and we know we’ve got one of those.”

~Which would you consider worse?~

“Tough call. Stryfe, I guess.”

~Ooh, more good news, then!~

Wade sighs. “I can’t take any more of your goddamn good news. If that’s the good news, what’s the bad news? We all have ten minutes before the entire multiverse destabilizes?”

~Wow, looks like the yellow boxes and their pessimism are starting to rub off on you. Sheesh.~

“Get to the bad news, ya friggin’ paperweight,” growls Jamie.

~Well, in a way, it could actually be good news. The Hunter’s not present in this timeline.~

“So we get to wrap up this lockdown stuff and then go chase his ass.”

~Yep. I can tell you’re excited.~

It is a nice ass.

Hope fishes Kali out of a cargo pocket in her pants (and now that he sees them side-by-side, it looks like Forecaster is a little bigger). “Kali, identify the remaining foreign subject designations.”

Colored lights flicker in the globe, throwing shapes against the walls and ceiling. ~Subject designations Nathan Dayspring EB221-Beta, Steve Rogers EB087, Natasha Stark SS909-Lambda, Peter Parker AP601, and Logan AP511. Subjects are in possession of Node 082: Archimedes.~

Wade scowls at Forecaster. “Oh, Archie, that’s great. And how the hippity-hop did that not qualify as ‘bad news,’ Effcee?”

~Ummmmm,~ the Node hems, symbols blinking sluggishly over its surface.

“Archimedes?” Logan prompts. “Some of us here are new to dimension-hopping and talking crystal balls.”

“Archimedes is the smartest Dumb Node in the Network,” Wade mutters sourly.

~Aaactually, Hawking is the smartest Dumb Node.~

“We have a Node named Hawking?” Wade says flatly, before his yellow boxes can remind him that he really, really shouldn’t be surprised by things like this anymore.

~It’s reeeeally good at math.~

“It was based off a really sophisticated metaprogram,” Hope adds helpfully. “For the dumb blond and the old man new to dimension-hopping, a metaprogram is a computer program that was written by another computer program.”

Wade makes a face. “That has Tony Stark’s name all over it.”

“Not our Tony Stark,” Hope says. “He took one look at the thing and declared it too dangerous to exist. But he says that about most of the cool gizmos that Doctor Richards churns out, so we tend to take his doomsaying with a grain of salt.”
“Just sayin’. About half of the multiverse’s Tony Starks or female equivalents like to make the most deadly technology they possibly can in the quest for a better way to mix a martini.”

“Well, just between us, Wade re-tuned something like a dozen Tonys. But don’t say that around our Tony, or he’ll start slitting his wrists to make the world a better place.”

They reach a sector of the compound that has power, and it becomes almost impossible to make out the flicker of lights in Forecaster.

“Anyway,” Hope goes on with a wave of her hand. “A Dumb Node is just a non-sentient Node.”

“Yeah, because some genius actually thought it would be a good idea to make sentient ones,” Barton drawls. “Kinda makes ya wonder who wrote F-473 in the first place. Maybe Hope’s new boss is an interstellar squid-monster.”

“Clint, the Fate Network is not run by space-Cthulhu.”

“Pop quiz, princess,” Wade says suddenly. “Who are our baddies?”

“Team ‘Evil Versions of the Most Popular People in the Multiverse,’” Hope snorts. “Seriously, all they’re missing is a Thor. I guess he doesn’t come in Evil flavor. Evil Dad, Evil Cap, Evil Chick Tony, Evil Mister Parker, and Evil Uncle Logan. Plus a really cool pimped-out calculator that an Evil Tony would totally be able to figure out how to use. I don’t even need to ask Kali the odds of us getting out of this in one piece.”

“Three-thousand, seven-hundred and twenty to one?”

She punches his shoulder. “Bad Wade, this is no time for Star Wars jokes.”

“Pfft, we’re going against Team Good-Guys-Gone-Bad and I’m the Han Solo of mutant mercenary assassins—this is the perfect time for a Star Wars joke.”

.End.
Going to War

Chapter Summary

Logan meets a Nate, Hope gives her people the sit-rep.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. innuendo. mild violence. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***, f***, and g***damn).
pairing: Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade).
timeline: other than "right after The Auditor," doesn't matter.
disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

notes: 1) unmmmmmmmm idk? XD;; i just realized i hadn't posted it this morning, so i'm kinda rushing it out before bed. lemme know if you need something explained.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

Going to War

It was weird enough to find out that Wade’s brain really did wander through several dimensions every week, but being dragged along for the ride is taxing Logan’s patience. The timesliding process is unpleasant, the constant overload of technobabble makes his head hurt, and people keep pointing guns and swords at them (he’s got a hole and a bloodstain in his shirt, thanks to the blond guy that Wade’s ogled about a dozen times now).

Apparently, this Hope kid is a common factor in a lot of dimensions, because Wade seems to know her well (knew the older one at the Database, too). For the whole walk from where they slid in, they chum around like old friends. Logan tells himself it’s silly to be jealous of a teenage girl when Wade is so clearly smitten with him, but he can’t help himself. Hope has an easy way with Wade, knows how to make him laugh, understands all the nonsense about the Network. So Logan trails along in the back of the group, berating himself and listening for anyone likely to try to blow them up.

Occasionally, they pass people in futuristic white uniforms who pause to salute before hurrying on their way.

There are armed (and armored) guards flanking an important-looking door. Questions are asked,
DNA and chronometric signatures are scanned.

“We don’t have the BT bundle logged in our secondary database,” one of the guards says. “So I’m afraid they’ll have to wait here until proper clearance can—”

Hope jabs a finger at the guy’s chest. “Listen, jackass, there’s five guys out there somewhere trying to re-tune each and every one of us and get their hands on Kali. Two of them are from the AP bundle, and I know we have that in the database. I’m the goddamn Auditor now, so you just let me and my friends pass before I shoot you in the foot. And I’m in a bad mood, so if you hold me up after that, it’ll be the knee next.”

“I’d listen to the gal,” Clint advises. “Her dad could snap you in half with his mind.”

Logan can smell misgiving on the guard, but he’s clearly afraid of Hope.

Slowly, Wade reaches out and claps a hand on the nervous guard’s shoulder. “I’ve got some bad news to deliver to Nate. If you’d like to deliver it yourself, I can stay out here.”

Without another word, the guard steps aside and opens the door (card, hand-scan, retina-scan).

The room on the other side of the door is big, filled with monitors and uniformed nobodies and important-looking people in suits or labcoats or regular clothes. In the middle is some kind of conference table with a big holographic projector built into it, showing what looks like a readout of the compound with the extent of power loss marked.

“Hey, look who I found!” Clint says loudly to the room at large.

A big guy breaks away from the knot of people strategizing at the table.

“Oh, joy,” Wade mutters drily. “Jamie, I think I mentioned that my usual boyfriend is seven feet tall and half metal.”

Logan grunts. “I think I remember something about a gigantic ego.”

The big guy is some indeterminate age between thirty and seventy, with white hair and pale eyes. He smells like steel and worry, and he folds Hope up in a hug that practically screams ‘concerned parent.’

Wade smells hostile; it makes Logan tense and wary.

“If you’re gonna worry that much,” Wade drawls, “you should probably keep a better eye on her. Maybe try a leash.”

The big guy glares at Wade (Logan shifts his weight at the sudden reciprocation of hostility). “Who the hell do you think you are?” he demands, moving between Wade and Hope.

Wade tilts his head and throws Forecaster from one hand to the other. “Oh, honeybear, how many of the people you know hate you almost as much as they love you?”

“We haven’t met,” the guy bites out.

“We haven’t met,” Wade Wilson BT562-Omega, the Traveler. And we have met several times, via brainslide. You didn’t even notice the difference, by the way, which may make you eligible for the title of Multiverse’s Worst Husband.” Wade chuckles, but Logan doesn’t smell anything like amusement in his scent. “And your awesome hubby has recently taken on a distinct
Logan picks up the speeding heartbeat, the drawn breath, the tensing of muscles—the guy is fucking fast, for being so big, but Logan is probably faster.

But before he can stick a claw in the guy’s arm (and before the guy can plant a fist in Wade’s jaw), there’s a flurry of even faster movement, the hummingbird-rev of Wade’s heart, and Wade’s there, blocking Logan like the idea of fighting back is foreign. His face shows something like anger, and his scent reveals startled fear.

“Jesus, Jamie!” Wade hisses. “If he’d wanted to hurt me, you never would’ve seen it coming.”

“He sure as hell wasn’t gonna hug ya,” Logan spits back in confusion.

“We were expecting him to react badly to the news.” Wade reaches back, touches the big guy’s metal arm like he’s making sure the guy’s still there and in one piece. He takes a shaky breath, but doesn’t turn around. “Nate, you moron, I didn’t mean I did that shit. You’ve got yourself to blame for that. EB221-Beta. Now, you two haven’t met—Jamie, this is Nathan plus-a-few-hundred-names Summers; Nate, that’s my extremely overprotective boyfriend, James Logan.”


Summers has the grace to look sheepish. He slowly holds out his hand to shake. “AR091-Eta.”

“BT-something-I-don’tremember,” Logan replies, grudgingly shaking Summers’ hand.

“BT511,” Wade puts in.

Summers gives Wade a long look. “I’m sorry, Wade. It was wrong of me to jump to conclusions.”

Wade looks back at the guy. “Good God, Nathan Christopher Etcetera is apologizing. This must be a warning sign that the universe is about to phase-level.”


“This?” says Wade, pointing to his face. “Nah, this is a projection. But I’m not decomposing, and I’m not riddled with sores, so I guess that’s a step up from most universes. And you’re looking gracefully aged, Priscilla.”

Summers offers a thin smile. “Those were my husband’s exact words on the matter. I’m beginning to see why I didn’t notice your little ‘visits’ to our timeline.”

“Hope could tell the difference,” Wade says.

Logan can smell shame and pain from Summers now, and shifts a step closer to Wade.

“To be fair, I’ve known Wade more than half my life,” Hope tries, patting her father on the arm. “And I’ve got the mutant powers doing the intuition thing.”

“Well,” Summers says, and swallows thickly. “You came all the way to our branch of the timestream, which certainly doesn’t neighbor yours. Most Wades wouldn’t have a plan, but I know ours would, and I have a feeling you do. Before you walked in, all we knew was that there was an unauthorized lateral slide, some things exploded, and then there was a sudden loss of power in D Block.”
Wade smells uneasy, off-balance. He shifts his weight and takes a step closer to Logan (their knuckles brush). “I’m not usually a Wade prone to planning,” he mutters. “Until Effcee fiddled with my hardware, I did a lot of unpredictable brainsliding, so I guess I didn’t see much point to assuming I’d have more than five minutes in any given life. But…yeah, I kinda have a plan this time. It’s really weird trying to do the planning thing again after twenty-some years. And it’s really, really weird for you to talk to me like I’m a sane grown-up, Nate.”

Summers looks perplexed. “How else would I talk to you, Wade?”

“Like I’m a retarded funny-farm escapee?” Wade tries, shifting closer to Logan again (their shoulders bump, and Logan settles his hand at the small of Wade’s back in reassurance).

“I must have an awful lot of very asinine counterparts elsewhere in the timestream,” Summers declares with an unhappy frown.

“Honey, you have no idea. Anyway, I’ve met some of the baddies attacking us. I kicked Evil Spidey’s ass once, so I’m pretty sure I can do it again. Evil Nate and Evil Cap killed me dead, but now that all of me is here—y’know, instead of just my brain—they’re in for a nasty surprise.”

Logan notices a group of people approaching from the table: a skinny man in a labcoat, a tired-looking brunet with a goatee, a muscular blond who has to be Captain America, and a young woman with a long fluffy tail (and who smells like nuts).

“Oh, God, keep her away!” Wade yelps, hiding behind Logan. “I’m not evil! I’m so not evil! Okay, questionably semi-amoral and lovably sociopathic, yes, but not evil!”

“Problem, darlin’?” Logan asks bemusedly.

“I have a phobia of squirrels,” Wade says. “And Squirrel Girls and their sharp little claws. Almost as bad as the phobias of clowns and cows.”

“Um, Wade?” Hope ventures, arching an eyebrow at him. “Doreen’s a senior member of the Avengers, and she actually started a Wade Wilson fanclub. She probably won’t hurt you.”

“The word ‘probably’ is not very reassuring. D’you have any idea how much those claws sting?”

The skinny guy waves a hand. “At any rate…the Auditor was, unfortunately, our official leader. I’m sorry to say that we don’t really handle combat situations well without him, and we haven’t had a slide-based breach since I recalibrated our phasic shielding almost five years ago. If you’ve got a plan, we’re all ears. What can we do to help?”

Wade points. “You must be Richards. Go sit quietly in a corner and don’t invent things.”

“That’s a little harsh,” says Captain America.

“It’s not,” retorts the goateed man next to him. “Aside from keeping Reed from ripping dimensional holes or turning us all dayglo orange, what can we do to help?”

“We need you to imagine you’re evil, bitter, undersexed, and female. And then think of how you’d go about attacking this place. Because Evil-Chick-Tony is lurking, and thanks to Bishop, she’s got her hot little hands on Archimedes. While you’re at it, see if you have any weapons for disabling and/or killing Cap and Wolvie.”
The guy heaves a sigh. “Let me guess, the sliders are a team of evil versions of the Avengers.”

“Mostly right,” Wade says. “Five baddies. Nate, Cap, you, Spidey, Wolverine. Nate’s gonna be the sticking point, I think. It might be easier to try and distract them long enough to steal Archie and timeslide them somewhere. Not that I won’t completely enjoy trying my level best to utterly annihilate Evil Nate. I have a lot of pent-up anti-Nate sentiment in the first place, and he made my precious princess cry.”

Hope clears her throat, and smells distinctly sheepish. “Yeah. Well. Can somebody get me a wet-nap or something? I seem to be covered in the atomized remains of one of my parents. Let’s see you not cry. Everybody settle in, get snacks, do some tech show-and-tell, and I’ll have Kali pull as much information as possible on our enemies.”

Logan’s stomach growls at the mention of food. “Snacks. Definitely. This dimension-hopping thing happened before I could grab lunch, and I didn’t exactly get a chance to order a sandwich when people were pointing guns and knives and swords at me.”

“I did say sorry about the sword,” Clint reminds him. “In my defense, it wasn’t aimed at you and I’m not used to missing my targets.”

.End.
On Attack

Chapter Summary

Hope and the gang get a call from the Network Core, and Hope tells Wade that even without the Auditor, they have people capable of holding their own against the invaders.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Moviverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. some more shameless exposition, lol. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s*** and f***).

pairing: Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade and Nat/Wade).

timeline: other than "right after Going to War," doesn't matter.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

notes: 1) Tony's one of those characters that either worries about everything while pretending not to worry about anything, or worries about everything and doesn't bother to pretend otherwise. you have now met a Tony who doesn't bother to pretend. 2) i think the conversation with Natalie makes it clear what her priorities are: she wants the thief stopped first, and then they can worry about cleaning up after him. needs of the many, etc. 3) and the other secretly awesome part about Earth-505 -- it's got itself a giant cold-storage facility of high-entropy subjects who volunteered to be imprisoned rather than erased. more details on that will be in the Fateverse Glossary.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

On Attack

Hope pulled a clean shirt on and sighed. Part of her wanted to quit, wanted to curl up in a corner and hide, wanted to cry like a baby… But she’d already wasted too much time. She’d sat alone in the dark for three hours while her father worried and everyone in the compound was left ignorant and panicking.

Three hours. She was honestly a little surprised they hadn’t done something desperate like turning off the limiters on various high-entropy operatives at the compound. There was a lot to be said for the ability to detonate matter at will or remake existence…but most of it was pretty negative, and the twins tended to get a little over-excited without their limiters.
She looked at herself in the mirror—her face was pale, and her eyes were still puffy from all the crying she’d already done.

No. She didn’t have time to shed any more tears.

On the bathroom counter, Kali beeped and flashed blue.  ~Full dataread from Central Database complete.~

So Hope shook her head at herself and grabbed the Node. “Transmit it to the base computer. Tony and Dr. Richards need that info.” With one last deep, cleansing breath, she opened the door and strode back out into the war room.

Their visitors were still eating, talking to Tony between bites.

The Traveler looked so steady and in-control…just like Wade always had. And now she was the Auditor, and she had to learn to be the same. Everyone would be counting on her. Whole timelines would be counting on her. Wade had never failed an auditing assignment.

“I meant for you to take a bit of a break, Tony,” she said pointedly, hands on her hips. “You’re looking especially neurotic today. Take a deep breath, go get some coffee.”

Tony gestured between a clipboard and the Traveler. “You—but they—the Auditor’s dead and we’re in the middle of an invasion—we haven’t had word one from the Network—of course I’m looking especially neurotic!”

She took him by the shoulders and half-shoved, half-dragged him to Steve. “Cap, take this. Feed it some coffee and make it relax for five minutes.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Steve replied bemusedly.

Just as she was going to sit with the Traveler and ask him about his first-hand experience with their enemies, the central computer beeped.

~Incoming transmission from Network Core.~

Dr. Richards bustled to the table console. “Verify user identity of sender.”

~Sender verified: Data Analyst 109.~

Hope waved the Traveler over. “Punch it up, Dr. Richards.”

The mad scientist pressed a button, and the projection of the compound became an image of a woman in an Analyst’s uniform. She had brown hair with a white streak through it, and a certain expression of well-meaning pomposity that Hope associated with her father.

“Okay, that is not fair,” the Traveler complained. “You’re even hot as a chick. Bet I’m not hot as a chick…”

The Analyst pursed her lips. ~You must be the Traveler. I’m glad you’re already on the scene, but I need to speak with the Auditor.~

Hope nodded. “Hope Summers AR553-Omega,” she said.

The Analyst returned her polite nod. ~Natalie Summers NC288. Auditor, we received data to the effect that custody of Node 218 Kali had transferred due to phase-leveling. Please give your father my condolences.~
“Thank you, Natalie,” Hope’s father said, stepping up to the table.

For a moment, the Analyst simply looked at him and blinked. Hope wondered what was going through her mind. It seemed like…jealousy? Then she looked at Hope again. ~Auditor, according to the DBA, someone has stolen sixteen Nodes and is probably after more. Is Kali secure?~

“Fifteen, actually,” said the Traveler. “And he’s only got fourteen now. Oracle’s at the bottom of an ocean somewhere, and he left Archimedes with the team that attacked here.”

“And yes, Kali is right here,” Hope finished.

~You’re still engaged with the enemy?~

The Traveler wiggled a hand. “Sort of. The Hunter’s MIA, but his buddies are trying very hard to get Kali.”

The Analyst’s eyes widened. ~The Node-thief is unaccounted for?~

“That’s what I just said Nate—Nat, sorry. But don’t start with the lecture on irresponsibility and ‘you should be out doing blah-blah-blah,’ because one of your manlier counterparts offed the Auditor and made my princess cry. This is a matter of horrible vengeful pride.”

“Wade, stop mentioning that part,” Hope hissed in mortification.

The Analyst frowned. ~Make it quick, Traveler. Some of the primary bundles are still at risk—and several of them haven’t made first contact with the Network yet. When Anthony made the last Node, he modeled it off one of our Keepers. We haven’t put it through any exhaustive testing, and I’m sure it was thoroughly user-locked, but this Hunter guy cannot get that Node.~

“Okay, which Node?” Hope prompted.

~Node 250 Eight-ball. It’s a Priority Alpha, Auditor—that Node was modeled on the Savant, and I’m not actually sure it’s bound by the Smart Node Laws.~

Hope frowned. “You don’t know? How can a Smart Node not be bound by the Laws?”

The Analyst flushed. ~Well, Auditor, to be quite frank, all data on Eight-ball is top-classified, and I don’t have the clearance for it. All my information beyond name and number is hearsay from the Node’s designer. Anthony regards the thing as the most brilliant toy he’s ever built, which is slightly worrying.~

“Enthusiastic Tony Starks have that effect on people,” Dr. Richards admitted.

A top-classified Smart Node modeled after Keeper 056. Hope had to agree that this ‘Hunter’ could not be allowed to capture the Node. “All right. My clearance should let me query the DB for more info on that Node. We’ll take care of that as soon as we get rid of our unwelcome guests.”

The Analyst slowly nodded. ~All right,~ she said. ~Good luck, Auditor.~

And the transmission cut out.

“God,” muttered the Traveler. “Fucking pompous know-it-alls.”

“I apologize for my multiple existence,” her father said drily.

“Liar; you like being pompous. Who the hell is ‘the Savant’?”
Sighing, Hope took a seat at the table. “Keeper 056, a mind-only Keeper who traces timelines better than Nodes do. He leads the Timeline Demolition Squad, and he’s never had to spend more than two months local time on a collapse.”

“Oh, *them,*” muttered the visiting Logan. “Not sure how reassuring that is: ‘your timeline destroyed in under two months or your money back.’”

“Mr. Logan, if that Node has *intuition,* and this Node-thief gets it, the entire multiverse is screwed.”

“Nice, a little crystal ball with a personality and a sense of intuition, that’s brilliant. Does this super-technology-stuff kill all common sense?”

Hope scowled and gripped Kali. “Kali, query the Database again. I want the full Node ident for Node 250.”

~Query acknowledged,~ the Node said.

“In the meantime,” said Dr. Richards, pressing more buttons on the table console, “I believe we received the dossiers on the five invaders.”

Five files appeared over the table—vital stats, abilities, immunities, notable timeline events.

“Who got all this info?” the Traveler asked, propping his feet up on the table (and disrupting a few lines of text at the bottom of Evil-Nathan’s file).

Hope subsided into a thoughtful squint while the text scrolled. “Um. We have Keepers whose job is strictly recon. Mostly, it’s done by a particular Steve Rogers, the Cartographer. When we need info on a branch and we don’t have it, he moves several Nodes to neighboring branches for the preliminary scans; if it’s safe enough, he goes in with his primary Node, Magellan, and does a scan of the resonance phase and any electronic data the branch keeps.”

“Never heard of the guy.”

“I’m not surprised; we keep him away from Wades, because his signature does weird things to their minds.”

“A mind-bending Cap with a Node named Magellan. You seriously cannot make this shit up.”

She rolled her eyes and looked at him, but he was already distracted with twining his fingers through Logan’s. It hit her then, that no matter how much he might think and talk like her father’s husband, he was a very different Wade. She still didn’t know why he called his Logan ‘Jamie.’

She could cheat. She could borrow her father’s powers and sneak a peek.

Hope shook her head at herself. She didn’t like borrowing other people’s powers, because it was an awkward and finicky process, like suddenly growing an extra limb that she didn’t really know how to use—Wade once said that most Hopes had a better grasp on that aspect of their powers than the pure resonance, but she really couldn’t imagine ever finding it easy. The first time she had accidentally borrowed from a high-entropy subject had scared her to her bones, and she had never again questioned their use of limiters.

“Anyway,” she went on, turning her eyes back to the files, “the Auditor used to have the job of filling in blanks. If a timeline wasn’t safe for the Cartographer, they sent the Auditor. He was considered to be the single most capable agent of the entire Network.”
“Well, we see how that went,” drawled Logan.

The words stung, but she mutely acknowledged that he had a point.

“You guys have anybody likely to be helpful in a fight against this kind of firepower?” the Traveler asked after a while. “And the last time I was here, there was chai. Very good chai. And I want one now.”

She blinked at him, vaguely realizing that he didn’t know he’d said anything wrong. “Uh. Yes. Right. Doreen, could you?”

Doreen looked at her, motioned toward Hope’s father with her tail.

Hope nodded.

Quickly, Doreen hooked Nathan’s arm and tugged him toward the door. “Commander, you look like you could use some of that coffee Tony went to get.”

When the door hissed closed, everyone in the room breathed a sigh of relief. Hope found a pen and threw it at the Traveler. “Dad’s the one who always made Wade’s chai. But thanks for reminding him that his husband is a spatter on the wall of a dark room.”

“Too soon?” he asked with careless would-be innocence. “Returning to my question, and the fact that we’re facing down nasty, hard-to-kill people.”

“Yes, a few. Our timeline is very, very stable, so we have a null-res containment facility where we store certain powerful high-entropy subjects on a strictly voluntary basis. The ones whose powers we have the tech to reliably limit have some degree of freedom, and if we happen to need some backup on a tough re-tuning, we can turn off their limiters and let them have full use of their abilities.”

He tilted his head as he watched the files scroll for a bit. “Got a Wanda?”

“Got a set of her twins,” Hope replied.

“Close enough. Them, plus me ‘n Jamie, plus your molecule-dissolving dad… That oughtta do the trick.”

She sat up a little straighter. “If you want, I could…I mean, I can use other people’s powers a little…”

“But you don’t like it,” he said, as if he’d been reading her mind. “And the twins scare you.”

“That’s—no—Will’s a really nice guy.”

“Who can unmake the world.”

She sagged in her chair again. “…okay, yeah, Will and Tom kinda scare the crap out of me.”

“Good. Means you’re not an idiot like your father.”

.End.
Delimit

Chapter Summary

Logan meets the 'big guns' -- a pair of super-powerful super-mutants who look like string-beans and bicker like little kids. Appearances can be very deceiving.

Chapter Notes

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. some flangsting. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade, hints of past Billy/Teddy, and reference to Tommy/Kate).

timeline: other than "right after On Attack," doesn't matter.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

notes: 1) the title is a reference both to the act of outlining a geometric shape and the act of removing the power-suppression devices called Limiters. 2) i'm thinking that even at 26, the twins would not look very imposing, especially to Logan, who could probably nom them for breakfast and lunch. 3) ahhh, magic. now you know that it screws up the Space-Time Continuum. isn't that comforting? 4) in metaphor, a chimera is something made out of a bunch of incongruous, mis-matched components. 5) there is, in fact, a TV trope about resurrection attempts leading to amnesiac versions of people. 6) there's another TV trope about continuity glitches being the fault of a wizard changing things between scenes/shots.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

Delimit

Logan was Not Impressed.

Few people could be as completely Not Impressed as Logan; his talent came partly from abundance of experience and partly from lack of tact. He knew this very well, had long ago come to terms with it, and in fact frequently made use of it.

The two young men Hope had called 'the big guns' were lean and rather lethargic things, smelling like soap and metal, like they'd been locked up somewhere. They looked like they'd fall over in a
stiff breeze.

“Well, they’re too skinny for human shields. We gonna use ‘em for javelins?”

The dark-haired twin jerked a thumb at his brother. “You can use him for a javelin, I wouldn’t mind. Thow him head-first, since it’s not like there’s anything in his skull he’d miss.”

The pale-haired twin scoffed. “Please, I could run faster than he could throw me.”

“Self-propelled javelins, then,” Logan amended.

Hope huffed and put her hands on her hips. “Mister Logan, you of all people should know that looks can be deceiving. Tom and Will are extremely powerful mutants—so powerful that we have them wear special devices to suppress their abilities, keeping their damage to the timestream at a minimum.”

‘Extremely powerful mutant’ never boded well, in Logan’s experience. Magneto had been an extremely powerful mutant. Jean had been an extremely powerful mutant.

“There you go with the misleading generalizations again,” said Wade. “Super-powerful mutants don’t damage the timestream just by existing. It’s what they tend to do with those powers that screws things up.”

A flicker of blue light sparked up when the techs finished removing the twins’ collars.

“Well, since I ‘screw things up’ by wanting stuff…” the dark-haired one said with a shrug.

The other twin vanished in a blur and a gust of disturbed air, reappearing a second later and jogging on the spot like a little kid at the fair. “Ohmigod, it’s been so long since I had that thing off, I’ve been slow for ages! Who’s my favorite Auditor? Hope’s my favorite Auditor! We should get attacked by evil Avengers every day!”

“Oh, god, it starts,” groaned the other one. “Are you sure we can’t leave Tom here? Do we have a treadmill we can use to power the compound, or a giant hamster ball or something?”

Logan shrugged. “Okay, so if we gag him, we’ve got a fast runner. That could be helpful.”

“I don’t just run fast,” blurted the speedster. “I blow shit up!”

“Oh,” Logan said, which seemed to cover it. “Okay, then. And you?”

“My name is Will, not ‘you.’”

“Kid, your name is Toothpick as far as I care. What can you do?”

“Anything,” said Wade.

Logan frowned and looked at his companion.

Wade shrugged. “Pretty much. If he wants it enough, it happens. Magic. Big-time magic. If he really wanted to, he could blow up the world. Or, y’know, just rearrange it. Weird thing about him and his mom—they don’t make new branches when they change stuff, they actually alter the timestream. So, y’know, keep that in mind when we get back, and try not to give Wanda any reason to try to remake the universe, lest five hot chicks in leather show up to destroy it. In the meantime, you might wanna stop making fun of the kid.”
“I’m twenty-six, and I’m right here,” muttered the subject of their conversation. “My name is not ‘you,’ my name is not ‘kid,’ my name is Will. Now, can we please all proceed like grown-ups? What’s our attack strategy?”

Wade pointed. “You get to hide in the back and keep Evil-Nate’s powers from turning us all into our component elements.”

Will sagged. “Great. Collar off for the first time in two years, and I’m reduced to playing shield generator. That’s not demeaning at all.”

“You got a way to kill him without just unmaking him?” Wade countered.

“…no…”

“Then shut up and be a good shield generator. I don’t feel like seeing if I can survive that nasty case of dissolution that took out the last Auditor. Tommy—where the hell did he go?”

The white-haired twin appeared in a blur, hands full with a burger and a huge soda.

“Yeah, sorry, got hungry. So what are we doing?”

“You’re going to blow up Evil-Spidey. If anybody can catch that leapy-crawly bastard, it’s you.”

“Damn right,” Tom said with a smug grin.

“Jamie, you get to fight yourself, because I’ll be busy kicking ass against Evil-Cap and Evil-Nate.”

Logan frowned. “How come you get two and I only get one?”

“’Cause I’m better’n you. Now, if anybody gets a good chance at it, try to steal their Node—but don’t end up dead in the process, please, or Hope will never let me borrow her toys again.”

“Hey, waitasecond,” Hope said with a scowl. “Where the hell do I fit into this attack plan? I know we talked about the power-borrowing thing, but I have other powers of my own. Does everybody get to do something except me? Because that’s not only unfair, it’s ageist and sexist. I really am qualified to be the Auditor, you know.”

“No good,” Wade replied, shaking his head. “You’re not set up to fight in a group in tight quarters—your fighting style causes too much collateral damage. Just you versus them, you’d be fine. You and one person versus them, okay. You and the five of us? We’d end up flung into walls.”

The redhead subsided to a pout. “Well…what if I borrowed—”

“Like you said, we covered that. Who would you borrow from? Jamie heals good, but that’s a little less than helpful without the fun claws. Nate ’n the twins are too powerful, and we’d end up surrounded by uncontrollable magic, splosions, or a vortex of matter disassembly. And me…let’s just not even go there.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m a hideous fricking chimera. I have no clue what would happen if you tried to borrow from me. Maybe you’d get one power. Maybe you’d get all of them. You don’t want the semi-controllable eye-lasers, and the teleportation is hard to get used to.”

She pouted. “Aw, but the teleporting looked so cool. Fine. I know a way to program the Nodes to perform a slide as soon as one of you has Archimedes, and I’m pretty sure that Tony has some
helpful scan-blocking tech.”

Summers and the squirrel-tailed girl came back into the room with a steaming mug that smelled pleasantly of cream and spices, and Wade practically pounced on it before he and Hope went over their loose approximation of a ‘plan’ with the big man.

“The place where they keep you guys,” Logan said, looking back at the twins. “It’s basically a prison, right?”

“No,” said Will.

“Yes,” said Tom, at the same time.

They glared at each other.

“We’re kept there on a strictly voluntary basis,” Will went on.

His brother snorted. “Yeah, but when they say ‘okay, we can erase your entire existence or you can come live in a metal box for the rest of your life,’ only a certain kind of whacko would not volunteer.”

Logan had to concede the point, despite knowing he was one of that ‘certain kind of whacko.’ “So what’d you do to end up here?”

“Accidentally blew up a Keeper about eight years ago,” Tom said nonchalantly, slurping at his soda. “Well, I meant to blow him up, but I didn’t know he was a Keeper at the time. His own fault, really, because I’m not sure what kind of reaction he expected me to have when I showed up and saw my brother being held at gunpoint.”

“What’d you do to end up at gunpoint with a Keeper?” Logan asked Will.


Logan blinked. “Remade? As in…?”

Will shrugged again, but he smelled distinctly of fear. “As in he died and I made a new one of him. I didn’t mean to make a separate one, I actually meant for the original to be okay, but wording in magic gets tricky. And I can tell you, it’s pretty depressing to have a carbon-copy of your boyfriend who doesn’t remember you. It’s like some bad TV trope.”

Uneasily, Logan cast a glance at Wade, who was making distinctly annoyed faces at Summers.

“Anyway…he was supposed to die, and when I tried to undo that, it screwed up the shape of the timestream. An important neighboring branch almost collapsed.” Will shifted his weight with a soft squeak of rubber soles on metal flooring. “So a Keeper dropped in, gave me the low-down. When Tom blew him up, I put him back, and he decided I wasn’t such a bad guy. So. Here we are, instead of being erased.”

“Would you have kept him, if ya could?” Logan found himself asking. He didn’t know why he wanted to know; it wasn’t like Will and Wade were anything alike.

The scent of fear had faded, and the kid’s heartbeat was slow and steady. “Of course I would’ve. I’ll always love him, even if he couldn’t remember me. But when they fixed what I did, the timestream sprang back into place, and fifty-thousand people who would have died didn’t. And I know that he wouldn’t have been able to stand it if those people had died because of him.”
A gagging sound drew Logan’s gaze back to Tom, who was miming choking on his burger. “Oh, god, the saccharine… I think my teeth all fell out from spontaneous cavities.”

“Shove it, Tom,” Will muttered.

“Hey, I’d like to point out that my girlfriend is still completely, legitimately alive, and I’ll never get to see her again because you had to try your little Snow White stunt. Congratulations, the princess woke up, wasn’t who you were looking for, and was ‘summarily disposed of.’ Meanwhile, my sweet Katie is probably fighting off perverts as we speak.”

“The only pervert she ever had to fight off was you, and you never took the hint.”

“Screw you and your dippy little fairytale!”

“Screw you and your juvenile envy!”

They both huffed and turned to sulk back-to-back.

Logan blinked at them in mild disbelief. “What are you, twelve?” he grunted.

“Jamie, are you making people sulk again?” Wade asked, startling him.

“Hey, they did it on their own,” he said, gesturing to the twins. “Some old argument about girlfriends and boyfriends past, and ill-advised resurrection attempts leading to permanent exile.”

“Ah. That’d do it. Let’s set aside the sibling bickering for now, guys. As soon as Stark and the mad scientist figure out exactly where our special friends have gone, we’re heading out.”

“Goodie,” said Will. “And then I can get back to my day job of helping Dr. Strange insert random continuity glitches into Star Trek episodes.”

Wade paused. “…seriously?”

“No, not seriously,” Will said with a scowl. “God.”

“Just checking. ‘Cause, I mean, somebody’s gotta be doing it.”

.End.
Detonate

Chapter Summary

Logan and Wade team up with Nate and the twins to take down the invaders.

Chapter Notes

no, as a matter of fact, i can't write good fight scenes to save my life.

**warnings:** Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. angsty bits and off-screen AU character deaths. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f***, s*** and g**damn).

**pairing:** Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade and Toni/Steve).

**timeline:** other than "right after Delimit," doesn't matter.

**disclaimer:** i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

**notes:** 1) after i read through again, it wasn't immediately obvious when Nate was experiencing someone else's memories/subconscious thoughts, so i set those sections off with .: and ::. 2) sentient Nodes can be sensed by telepaths. now you know. 3) Evil Nate and Evil Cap are Horsemen of Apocalypse in their home universe (Death and War, respectively). more on that later, and internet cookies if you can guess who ended up as Famine in their universe. 4) i may or may not revisit Evil Natasha's world and her messed up resolution to CW.

visit [The Fateverse Glossary](#) for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

Detonate

Nathan didn’t often use his telepathy anymore; he’d spent so much time around Nodes and various regenerating mutants that he’d walled that part of his mind off.

The current situation was dire, however, and only a telepath could reliably track their enemy without giving away their own position. And so he tore down a little section of that wall, just enough to let him reach beyond it.

Hovering behind him, the twins. The usual, ‘normal’ progression of thoughts and feelings. Excited. Anxious. *Feels good to be out again*, and *I think my left foot just fell asleep*, and *Okay, we can do this*, and *God, that burger was good*. 
To his right, Logan. A dull flit of basic emotions. Annoyance. Impatience.

Ahead, the Traveler. A deafening roar of rapid-fire impressions, nonsense and laughter and blood.

In the Traveler’s hand, Forecaster. An endless stream of calculation, even in its ‘sleep.’ Numbers, bad jokes, fractal probability collisions… The unrelenting blink of a pre-programmed timeslide waiting to execute.

He was going to have a headache after this.

“Focus, pookie,” the Traveler grunted. “I wanna know that we’re taking them by surprise.”

Slowly, carefully, Nathan probed forward through the compound, trying to verify the coordinates Kali had given them. He was looking for two Horsemen, a tyrant, an animal, and a madman. Such minds wouldn’t exactly blend in.

There.

The five intruding minds were a dark, cool blob, and he hesitated to go deeper—but he had to read them to know for sure. One heavily shielded, clearly his counterpart. One a feral mass of bloodlust. The other three…

\[ \text{can’t just get it over with} \]

\[ \text{died and put her in charge} \]

\[ \text{wait. wait. wait. almost.} \]

“She’s waiting for something,” Nathan said aloud, slipping as stealthily as possible into the woman’s mind.

\[ \text{fix this. i can fix this. just need a sentient one, so i can find the right timeline. get him back. fix everything. just wait for me.} \]

.: Steve Rogers. One of the bundles that manifested the Civil War event. Public executions. He meets her eyes at the last moment. She shatters with a straight face. :

Nathan pulled away quickly, pressing a knuckle between his eyebrows, where the pain had started already. “Not us. She’s not waiting for us.”

The messy tumble of the Traveler’s consciousness briefly resolved to an image of a sword and a blond man in shackles.

“Ah,” said the Traveler. “She’s that one. Shit. Well, she ain’t gonna be happy to see me.”

“You were the executioner,” Nathan realized.

“Not one of my finer moments. But it was a job—a career, in fact, with a yearly salary and benefits. She told me to do it. Nobody else had the stomach to kill ex-Avenger vigilantes on national television. And then she flipped her fucking lid and tried to have me hunted down.”

Nathan glanced up. “And then what?”

The Traveler looked at him, face expressionless. “And then I killed them, too. That’s the tough thing about equipping a guy to assassinate metas: who the hell can you send to take him out, right? She apologized, which was nice, and I agreed to go mind my own beeswax on a tropical island
somewhere, and I haven’t been back since…which makes me wonder if she managed to have me killed. That would be a complete crying shame, too, because I had this sweet little twenty-something cabana boy who couldn’t speak a word of English. Abs you could crack a coconut on.”

Shaking his head, Nathan backed toward the wall and leaned against it while he tried to clear stray traces from his mind. “The Node-lock was accurate; they’re exactly where they should be, and they’re all together.”

“Good. Speed, can you drop this floor without killing us?”

“I could—” Will started to say, but the Traveler cut him off with a sharp gesture.

“You just do your job. I ain’t explaining to the Auditor how I managed to let her other dad end up just like the first one, so you keep your damn concentration on one thing.”

Tom looked around, paced the perimeter of the room. “Yeah. If everybody stands in the middle, I can blow the edges and drop us right in. Might even land on Iron Bitch.”

“Let’s not count on that,” Will suggested.

The Traveler beckoned. “Everybody form up and shut up; Miss Stark can’t scan us, thanks to the worry-wart’s lifesign scrambler, but I guarantee our pal Wolverine will hear us yakking.” He stood in the very center of the room and flexed his arms—two gleaming blades slid out from between his knuckles.

Nathan stared without meaning to.

Like most Wades, the Traveler was a lithe creature, poised and cat-like and full of deadly speed and strength. He looked beautiful and statuesque as he waited. Calm face, deep breathing, intent eyes.

Logan stepped between them with a warning scowl, and Nathan moved to follow the twins into the middle of the room.

Tom couldn’t keep from fidgeting, but he wisely refrained from tapping his feet.

Carefully, Nathan stretched his powers out again, hooked onto the least disturbing mind.

.: He tells himself he’s following her lead because it’s just what he’s used to. Antonia was always a better tactician, and they’re in hostile territory with uncertain allies. Death trusts her, and since Death can read her mind, he figures he can trust her, too. :

_just for a little while. just for now._

.: He doesn’t like how much the cold-hearted despot looks like his best friend, but he can swallow a lot of bitter pills if it means getting his hands on the power to find the perfect timeline, to undo joining Apocalypse, to get Antonia back. He—the feral has stopped, is sniffing around like something’s wrong. He unhooks his shield from his back. :

Nathan grasped Tom’s forearm, and the room was surrounded by a wall of sound and fire for a split-second before the floor fell out from under them.

Spider-Man waved dust and smoke away from his face. “Yikes, the place is out to get—oh.”

And bedlam broke out.

Nathan concentrated carefully, ignoring Logan leaping for his black-clad counterpart, Tom chasing
Spider-Man with fists and feet and minor explosions, Will floating high above to shield them, the Traveler vanishing in a curl of reddish smoke to reappear with one blade blocked by a vibranium shield and the other impaling a cybernetic arm.

Nathan’s job was to get his hands on the Node, by telekinesis if possible, by destroying Iron Woman’s suit if necessary. The Traveler had very kindly acknowledged that Nathan and Hope both hated to waste life. If Nathan could just get Archimedes away from them, Forecaster was waiting to bodyslide them straight into the Null-Resonance suspension field in the containment facility.

She was trying to fight the Traveler, but it seemed that even against three powerful enemies, he could hold his own just fine. He flipped nimbly out of the way of a repulsor blast, forcing War to raise his shield quickly to deflect it.

“Hey, look at that, ya missed me!” the Traveler mused, ducking a fist and rolling away from several more blasts. “Oh, boss, I knew you had a soft spot for me. I see you replaced your toy—looks just like the old model, don’t you think that’s kinda boring? What if this one decides to side against you, too? Should I just off him now to save time? I wouldn’t mind, because he ‘n Evil Nate here killed me once.”

“Pestilence?!” War exclaimed, shocked.

“Hi, War!”

“You!” shrieked Iron Woman.

“Me!” the Traveler cheerfully answered, pausing to grin cheekily. His audacity earned him the edge of War’s shield in his face (there was a splash of blood, a metallic clang, a flicker of disturbed holographics). “Now with one hundred percent more adamantium! Or, actually, more like about a hundred and ten, with the swords.”

Nathan didn’t dare try to interfere in the frenzied melee; he simply watched the Node in Iron Woman’s left hand.

Spider-Man went flying through the air five inches in front of Nathan (on fire, no less) and slammed into Iron Woman’s shoulder, sending the Node tumbling to the ground.

“Yes! Who’s the man? I’m the man! Shepherd one, Parker nil.”

Nathan grabbed for the Node as quickly as he could, and it obediently shot toward him…

…only to be caught by War as he spun to throw his shield. Tom, needless to say, dodged.

While Iron Woman was still staggered, the Traveler tagged her with the electromagnetic scrambler Tony had given them—as promised, her suit locked up and keeled over like a felled tree.

Above, in the room where they’d waited, there was a sound of metal bouncing off metal and a brief cry from Will…and Nathan felt something in the air change.

“Ah,” said Death. “Enough of this.”

And suddenly Tom’s next volley of explosions hit an invisible barrier.

“Shit,” Nathan muttered. Without thinking, he pulled a slab of metal from the nearest wall and threw it in front of Tom as a shield. Broken line of sight would make it much harder to use telekinetic attacks, and the dense material would slow a dissolution attack long enough for Tom to run. Just in
case, he felt outward with his old senses, latched onto the mass of molecules that made up the younger mutant, and held them together with all his might.

There was a curious pause in the action. Logan had temporarily incapacitated his opponent, Spider-Man was out cold, War was kneeling beside Iron Woman.

Beyond the fragment of wall, Nathan’s counterpart said, “Now, darling, you’re not really going to kill me.”

“You know how good I am about returning favors, sweetheart.”

Nathan had enough time to take two steps toward War and the Node before a blinding red beam sliced through the corridor.

“Hm, a new trick,” said Death, unconcernedly. “I’m afraid you’ll have to do better than that, dear.”

“I got it!” Tom yelled, blasting War into a wall and scooping up Archimedes before it hit the ground.

The five invaders vanished in a flash of light, just before the Traveler could put two blades through Death’s head.

Then there was a groan of metal.

Nathan nudged up and out at the walls and ceiling with his powers.

“Sure, blow a bunch of holes in the place, then throw a frigging armor-clad evil Captain America into a structural support beam,” snapped the Traveler.

Tom made a snide face. “Well, you’re the one who sliced out a bunch of wall with a laser-thing. Besides, they’re gone, and we have Archie. You okay up there, Will?”

“I fingk I loscht schum teef,” came the miserable reply. “Dat fing hitsch hard.” Sluggishly, Will floated down to them. His nose and mouth were bloody, and a diagonal line of bruising was just starting to show.

Tom immediately rushed to his brother’s side. “Let me see…”

“I’ll be fide, mom.”

Nathan nodded to the Traveler. “Any time you’re ready to call the slide.”

“Don’t,” Wade said, still facing away, blades buried in the wall. “Don’t talk. Don’t say a single goddamn word. I don’t wanna hear your stupid voice.”

Without meaning to, Nathan caught a snatch of replayed memory.

.: The hand on his back is warm, but he shivers. :

When Lord Apocalypse rules all, we’ll be kings. Kings, my love. We four Horsemen will crush any and all we see fit.

.: He’s horrified. He realizes that the man he loves has gone way past ‘joining the winning side’ and into ‘ruling the world, BWAHAAHAHA!’ territory. Something inside him breaks, and he suddenly can’t feel. He isn’t afraid, or angry, or sad, or…anything. :

Nathan faltered a step, blinked away the haze as he watched dark eyes lock on him with that odd mix
of love and hate that he’d seen when the Traveler first arrived.

“Let’s get Hope’s info on the last Node so we can get the fuck out of here,” the Traveler muttered, pulling his swords free.

Mutely nodding, Nathan decided to use his telepathy instead of the comm-link to call Reed.

.End.
Leaving Now

Chapter Summary

Logan and Wade get the skinny on Eight-Ball so they can get the hell outta Dodge.

Chapter Notes

Wade and Logan land from this jump in Alive, a Dark Avengers fic with adult content. if you prefer to skip the DA jaunt, you can continue with The Traveler (Dreams of the Waking Man) without missing too much.

warnings: Movieverse (as-yet unnumbered Earth version; NOT Earth-616/Main Comicverse) with bits of the Wolverine Gameverse and B&T ficverse mushed onto it. incredible amounts of AU and technobabble. angsty bits and mention of AU character death. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f***, s*** and g**damn).

pairing: Logan/Wade (with hints of Nate/Wade).

timeline: other than "right after Detonate," doesn't matter.

disclaimer: i doesn't owns the movies or the characters. or the assorted objects of pop culture reference.

notes: 1) AR091-Eta is the most sane, sensible Nate in the multiverse. that's really the only way to describe him. 2) don't worry, Logan, the funky physics confuses me, too. 3) Wade’s yellow boxes are talking about old school American Gladiators, and the version of Siren who was a hot (and hearing impaired) blonde. 4) aside from the DBA, only a Wade would know how to unlock a Node that doesn't strictly belong to him. more on that later.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

Leaving Now

Hope made them promise to stay another five minutes.

She said they needed a breather, and she had to call the Core to give a status update anyway.

Wade fidgets and tries not to count the seconds while she’s standing there talking to someone who looks a lot like Emma (might actually be Emma…an Emma, at least). There’s maybe twenty feet between them, but it feels like an ocean, and he hates goodbyes. He’d rather just skip out while Hope’s distracted, rather not have to look her in the eyes and be hugged like he’s the greatest guy in the universe.
But getting hugs from cute little girls is great.

Not when you have to make yourself turn around and leave right after.

“Are you all right?” Nate asks him.

He winces. “Am I all right? You’re the widower, pal.”

“You have that look you get when you’re upset.”

He doesn’t like having someone know when he’s upset. It’s bad enough having Jamie smell it. “We just saved another world. Why the hell would I be upset?” he counters.

“He betrayed you.”

The words turn into a little ball of ice in the pit of his stomach. He doesn’t have to ask who Nate’s talking about.

You. You betrayed me.

“Us,” Wade mutters to his yellow boxes. To Nate, he says simply, “Sort of.”

Nate doesn’t look like he plans on moving any time soon. “Would you like to talk about it? Or yell at me?”

Yelling might be nice.

He arches an eyebrow. “What good would that do? The one who did it’s already in the Fridge.”

“You could use me as a proxy, just to get your yelling in. My husband usually did. I’m pretty good at not taking it personally.”

I’ll just bet.

His head hurts, and his throat aches with memories he’s pretty sure he doesn’t deserve to be stuck with.

“Wade?”

“It’s better he’s dead,” Wade suddenly says. “Your husband, I mean. You have a habit of doing stupid shit for him. Fucking stupid, crazy shit, like promising to make the world exactly the way he wants it.”

“He was worth it,” Nate tells him calmly.

He wasn’t. We aren’t.

Wade winces again. “He didn’t, actually, y’know. Betray me. That world really, really sucked, and I really, really wanted to die. He just kind of decided that I wasn’t allowed to, and it pissed me off, and then I found a way to make them do it. Take that as a goddamn lesson, will you? If a regenerator looks at you, completely sane, and says, ‘I’m tired, I’m ready, I wanna die,’ don’t fucking flip your shit. Because if you really care, you’ll say ‘okay.’ Living as one of us is fucking exhausting, in a way most people can never understand.”

Nate’s hand touches his shoulder briefly, gently. “Then I’m glad you’ve got Logan.”
Jamie gives a territorial growl, so Wade takes his hand and squeezes it as hard as he can, until he feels the painful press of metal on metal. He uses that touch to say what he doesn’t want to say in front of an audience.

*Don’t go. Ever. If you do, I’ll kill you.*

“You’re a good man, Wade,” Nate says. “Better than you think. I hope you succeed in this, and not just because of the ‘saving the multiverse’ aspect. The thing about being a hero that most books tend to ignore…is that the happiest moment for the hero is coming home at the end.”

“Well, yeah,” scoffs Wade. “The only reason I agreed to go on this crazy adventure was ‘cause Effcee promised to take me to meet Bea Arthur when we’re done.”

Nate laughs, but it sounds strained.

Guiltily, self-consciously, Wade remembers that the way he thinks, the way he talks, are enough like the last Auditor that nobody noticed the difference. “I’m sorry we didn’t get here sooner,” he feels the need to say.

But Nate shakes his head. “You said you came from the Database. Their timescale is too different from ours, too stable. It could’ve been a matter of seconds or a matter of minutes. When you came here, you arrived at the point-oh…but within a millisecond, the timestream moved on.” He looks at the watch on his wrist. “From the Network Core’s perspective, four and a half minutes passed between Natalie’s call to us and Hope’s update to Emma. On the Database, it’s been eighty seconds.”

Wade makes a face. “Fucking relativistic chronography… You know that shit still confuses me?”

“Wait,” grunts Jamie, waving a hand. “If time’s moving at a different speed there, how can we have a conversation with someone over that fancy-ass telephone you got?”

“It creates a gravimetric distortion band,” Nate replies, “temporarily connecting our branches of the timestream so that the timescales align. Gravitic-power-source curved-space technology, the same as we use to travel the timestream without worrying about chronometric signature calculation.”

Wade glances up with a grin. He can practically see the gears grinding behind Jamie’s confused grimace. He decides to rescue his poor, tech-unsavvy boyfriend. “Makes a time-bubble, honey.”

“Right,” Jamie says slowly. “One o’ these days, when I’m bored as hell, I’ll sit down and read about all this shit, because it sounds pretty cool. Straight outta H.G. Wells.”

Wade winces. “My God, you’re old,” he mutters.

“Asimov?”

“No, you’re still old.”

“Buck Rogers?” Jamie tries.

*Got you there.*

He sighs unhappily. “My God, we’re both old.”

“And just think,” Nate puts in, with that smug tone he gets sometimes. “I was born almost fifty years after you were.”
Wade exacts vengeance by kicking Nate in the left knee.

“Ow. I think you dented something…”

“Daddy, are you being mean to Wade?” Hope asks sternly. If it weren’t for the silly pout and the fact that Wade remembers carrying her on his shoulder as a little girl, she’d be really intimidating. Something about being six feet tall and having the upper body musculature to use a rocket-launcher for a baseball bat.

*She looks like an American Gladiator. Remember Siren? Man, she was hot.*

Okay, not making mental connections between hot badass chicks and the precious little red-haired princess…

“I was only teasing,” Nate says innocently.

“Well, stop it. I told the Analyst that the situation was contained, and I went over the info from the CDB—it looks like Node 250 is heavily sentient, to the point that it may be able to apply creative reasoning to the Smart Node Laws.”

“Crap,” Wade sighs.

“It’s crucial that the Node remain where it is, something to do with a time loop and relocating another Hope. The static feedback it’s been giving is a little off, but it doesn’t look like a big deal. It’s found its Keeper, but he hasn’t done anything to activate it—you may get stuck with that job.”

*Oh, sure, just remember how to turn on one Node. Like we don’t know how to activate about a hundred of the things. It’s okay, we can probably just guess. That’ll work out great.*

“Shush,” Wade grumbles. “How do we turn it on?”

She looks at him and blinks. “The DBA said it worked the same way as Forecaster, so I kind of assumed that meant a lot of Nodes work the same. Uh…you *do* know how to turn Forecaster on, don’t you? You didn’t just…like…happen to find him while he was activated?”

*As a matter of fact…*

“Actually, I completely remember how to wake Effcee back up,” he tells his skeptical little yellow boxes. “Okay. Anything else? It doesn’t have any death-rays or thought-altering abilities or anything sinister like that?”

Hope shakes her head. “From the report, it looks like it’s just a really smart, really sentient Node that may or may not have intuition. Other than that, it’s got the standard capabilities. Average-precision sliding, typical chronographic calculation, resonance transmission…” She shrugs.

He thinks on that for a bit. “Spiffy,” he says, and stands. “C’mon, Jamie, let’s get this show on the road. The Hunter ain’t gonna drop dead on his own.”

The room’s lighting is still dimmed for the benefit of the holographic projector in the table, so Wade has some trouble finding the activation angle.

*Should start carrying a flashlight for these things…*

When the grid appears on Effcee’s surface, he has to pause and remember the commands. Nodes can do a lot of things, even without being ‘awake,’ so it’s probably for the best that he only learned
three or four of the command sequences. Light source. Timescale signal. Pre-programmed slide.

Aha.

Boot-up sequence.

It’s been a long time since he’s had to boot a Node, so he’s kind of surprised he remembers which buttons are which. He knows he’s gotten it right when the grid splinters into flickering symbols, and he remembers which one he needs to look for to start the code.

He remembers because it means Hope.

Slowly, he rotates the crystal sphere until he sees the symbol. Line up the thumb, grasp the Node to turn it right-side-up, press in.

And then all he has to do is pretend he has a knife in his hand.

“Holy monkey shit,” Hope says.

The Node beeps and blinks unexpectedly, long before he thought it would.

~Oh, sure, wake me up now that all the fun’s over. Am I just a chauffeur to you, Wade?~

“More like a cab driver,” Wade tells the thing. “A chauffeur would know when to shut up. Grab us the coordinates and ship us out.”

~…wait. That’s not right. What the heck?~

Wade frowns. “What?”

~Well, the DBA gave me coordinates that are…they’re way below Point of Operation.~

“She’s not sending you to the Node?” Hope asks, confused.

~She is. She must be. I specifically asked for 250’s coordinates.~

Nate drums his fingers against the table. “The laws are clear. Unless the Netcon and the Sysadmin ordered her to do it, the only way for her to be able to give a Node’s coordinates below the point-oh is if the Node’s actually there, and the only way for that to happen is for the Node to undergo a timeslide while dormant. So something else with sliding tech put that Node where it is.”

Hope shakes her head. “That doesn’t make sense. Why wouldn’t the Administrator flag it?”

Because the Node is where it’s supposed to be.

Wade snorts. “It’s all part of the plan,” he says. “It needs to do some pretty finicky work inside a loop, and the only way to make sure the loop stays stable is with solid-phase interaction, right? Easiest way to get that is to be physically present instead of just resonantly present.”

“Ya lost me again,” Jamie sighs. “Can we just go?”

“You got it.” He wants to use the opportunity to skip the whole ‘goodbye’ thing, but Forecaster is apparently conspiring with Hope.

She hugs him tightly. “I’m gonna miss you so much.”
“Yeah,” he says, awkwardly patting her on the head. “You be good for your dad. And don’t go getting yourself killed.”

“I know you hate saying goodbye. And I do, too. So I won’t say it.”

“What’ll you say instead?”

She steps back; her eyes are wet, but she blinks the tears away and grins. “May the Force be with you?”

He smiles. “Nerd.”

“I learned from the best.”

As soon as Jamie’s hand slips into his, the world vanishes.

.End.
A Glass Darkly

Chapter Summary

Logan and Wade visit the Network Core, and we find out that most Wades need a Wade-style verbal kick in the ass to get going.

Chapter Notes

crosses over with Fateverse Side Stories and Satori in a Papercut. immediately follows Secrets.

warnings: Fateverse/X-Men Movieverse AU. mention of war, violence, and what may be construed as sci-fi style mass murder. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f***, s***, and g**damn).

pairing: Logan/Wade, Stephanie/Tony.

timeline: August 9, NO 3651 (Core Standard). the day after the events of Read Error, Sysadmin, and Knots, with a little calculation, we can deduce that year is equivalent to AD 6188. the future is very shiny.

disclaimer: marvel owns all base characters, but i created the AU and various AU versions of the characters.

notes: 1) all incoming slides have to be attended and confirmed by a Keeper to be authorized. without a Keeper's presence, the slide is deemed unauthorized and will be responded to with armed force. all Network-related lateral timestream transit on the Core takes place in a designated timeslide room in the Core compound (like a transporter room in Star Trek. 2) if Traveler!Wade is having a Bad Day, Savant!Wade is having an EPIC BAD DAY. he is not in the mood for this shit. hence his slightly-more-than-liberal use of the F-bomb. 3) more about Savant!Wade's past can be seen in One Spark and Firework. 4) "don't be such a big baby"......actually a nod back to Quartermaster when Q wanted to snip off one of Herald!Wade's pinkies for a genetic sample. i miss Q...he had a real Dr. Theopolis thing going. 5) p.s. the title is a reference to the biblical quote from Corinthians ("for now we see as through a glass darkly"), which compares reflection to face-to-face viewing as a metaphor for our ability to know God with and without charity in our lives. the concept is similar to the zen idea of detached action, in that attached action (such as false charity) creates a barrier between ourselves and enlightenment.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

A Glass Darkly
Logan expected to have guns pointed at them when they landed.

He did not expect to see the female Analyst from the first call on the Auditor’s world (Natalie, wasn’t it?) standing with a blonde in the same uniform and another version of the pale-skinned girl from the Demolition Squad.

“Confirm the record,” the pale girl says to the ceiling. “Incoming primary-to-primary timeslide event reported by the DBA completed as expected, Core Standard eleven-hundred thirty-two hours. Authorization Keeper 035.”

Something beeps and says, ~Confirmed.~

“Thanks, Neena,” the blonde says, and the pale girl leaves with a wave of acknowledgment.

The female version of Summers-Dayspring-whatever holds out her hand to shake. “Analyst 109, Natalie Summers. We met briefly via telepresence.”

Logan shakes her hand—she has an impressive grip to go with her Amazon build. “Logan.”

“BT511, I know,” she finishes, and holds her hand out to Wade. “Traveler, it’s nice to meet you in person.”

Wade stares at her, pointedly doesn’t shake her hand.

Awkwardly, she lowers it and steps back.

The blonde takes her place. “Analyst 043, Stephanie Rogers. It’s an honor, Keeper 188.”

Wade actually does shake her hand, so clearly it was a personal thing before. Makes sense, considering how many male versions of Natalie they’ve had to deal with today (and how much Wade seemed to absolutely loathe them all). “Girlie Captain America. That’s super-hot on about five different levels. Too bad you’re probably keeping Tony Stark’s mattress from floating away.”

“We know about the situation,” Stephanie continues, ignoring Wade’s rude comments. “Natalie here is the Analyst in charge of your home bundle, and she’s the one who caught the anomaly. If it weren’t for her work and yours, we would never have known about the Hunter until it was too late.”

“And where do you come in, blondie?” Wade asks.

Intriguingly, she smells embarrassed. “My eccentric fiancé claims he has a plan to improve your odds against the Hunter. Apparently, he and the Sysadmin have been running the numbers. They’re already conferring with the Savant, and they’d like you to join them.”

“Savant?” says Logan. “The one who leads the Demo Squad, right?”

“Yes. His intuition is an invaluable addition to any strategy session, and he may actually know more about hyperbolic chronometry than the Network’s Programmers do. This way, please.”

She leads them along at a brisk pace, and they follow—the better to get things over with quickly.

The whole place smells vaguely of water and sunshine, so it’s uncomfortably easy for Logan to smell the people nearby, and just about everything about them. A tiny Asian woman had a roast turkey sandwich for lunch, wears a water-lily perfume, washes her hair with fruit-scented shampoo. A skinny man has a scrape on his knuckle that was disinfected with something Logan doesn’t
recognize, and he seems to wear bad aftershave in lieu of cologne. They pass a dozen people, and he smells them all, unnaturally sharp and bright as they come close, unfiltered by things like the collected scents of carpet, tobacco smoke, recycled air, potted plants, floor wax…

“I apologize, Logan BT511,” Stephanie says with a glance over her shoulder. “I realize meta-humans with enhanced senses of smell find the Core compound overwhelming. We’re nearly there.”

At a broad set of doors, she pauses to press her hand against a panel on the wall.

~Ident confirmed, Analyst 043,~ says the panel, and the door slides open with a low hiss of disturbed air.

Stephanie gestures for them to go in, but stays outside while the door hisses shut after them.

At the center of the dimly lit room is a round conference table surrounded by empty chairs. One chair is occupied by a dark-haired man. Over the table, white text scrolls as part of what may be the strangest argument Logan has ever walked in on.

the numbers say he’s twice as likely to win as lose. ò_ô

~Fuck the numbers,~ says a disembodied voice from near the ceiling. ~I’m telling you we can erase him before he manages to collapse anything structure-critical.~

you’re mean. =>C

“Gentlemen, please,” says the brunet sitting at the table. “Our guests are here.”

hi, 188! i’m 001, this is my friend Anthony, and Meanie McMeanGuy is 056.

~Meanie McMeanGuy, that’s real mature. I liked you a lot more when you didn’t talk and just did what you were fucking told to do. You, with the swords in your arms—you’re the Traveler?~

“Yeah, that’s me,” Wade says, tentatively approaching the table. “You the Savant?”

~Yes. Sit down somewhere and help me convince this yapping chunk of silicon that I’m fucking well right. Because I’m never wrong.~

but the numbers say

~Fuck the numbers!~

but

~Fuck ‘em!~

numbers

~FUCK ‘EM!~

dude. anatomic impossibility. i lack a body, remember? besides, should any kind of scientist really be so down on numbers?

Logan wanders over and pulls up a chair, wishing he’d thought to ask someone for earplugs.

“He’s right, y’know,” says Anthony. “He’s never been wrong, even when his intuition conflicts
with a Node’s extrapolation.”

…never?

“Never.”

…never, never ever, never?

“Never, never ever, never, I really mean it,” Anthony says in a loud, firm voice (good thing, because the text hovering over the table seems to have the personality of a persistent, hyperactive eight-year-old). “There’s a simple way to enhance the accuracy of the extrapolation.”

~Oh?~

~

“Put the Savant in the same timeline with the Hunter.”

~Eeeent.~

“Yeah, no,” says Wade, holding up his hands in a ‘time out’ signal. “Uh, last I checked, he needed a Wade-brain to live in, and the Hunter doesn’t exactly let us hang out. I’m pretty sure he’s killed all of the ones he’s met besides me.”

~Exactly. Thank fucking God, there’s finally a voice of reason in this fucked up room.~

“Somebody’s having a bad day,” Logan mutters.

~Fuck you, furball, I just got done with my third demolition in a row that required me to assassinate a minor because he was a nice enough guy that he could stop his world from going to shit. You might dig indiscriminate murder, but I don’t. I’m not in the mood to be patronized, and I’m definitely not in the mood to have these two computer-nerds question my expertise. I’m a goddamn chronometric physicist, so fuck you all.~

“Dude, you are?” Wade asks in a hushed voice. “Are you, like, a doctor and stuff? Because that would just be cool.”

~Actually, yeah,~ the Savant answers in a much calmer voice. ~Wade Wilson, Ph.D. Wrote my thesis on the probabilistic effects of quantum entanglement on branch absorption, about six years before I became a Keeper; it’s where I first coined the term ‘phase-solidification.’ You should read it, I think you’d like it.~

Anthony timidly clears his throat. “Before this…delightful little tangent, I was about to suggest that we try a non-permanent brainslide into the Traveler’s brain.”

“No,” Logan says immediately. “No way are you stickin’ some other guy’s mind in Wade’s head, however temporarily.”

~Uh, hello? ‘Some other guy’? I’m Wade, too. Asshole. And it’s not like I like the idea any more than you do. Temporary brainslides are tricky to time; durational uncertainty due to mutable timescale relativity becomes an issue.~

“Well, his brain doesn’t exactly work right in the first place,” Logan growls. “Forecaster had to fiddle around with stuff just so he could timeslide. For all we know, you could fry some of his hardware and really fuck ‘im up.”
“Hardware?” Anthony asks, hopping up and scuttling to Wade’s side. “Over the table, if you would. Please.”

Wade gives the man a look composed of equal measures of irritation and distrust.

Anthony waves a hand. “There’s a scanner built into the thing. I’m an expert, too. I designed the Smart Nodes.”

“Really? I’d like to punch you later, then.”

“Don’t be such a big baby. Lean over the table so I can look at your brainware. Number One, if you would be so kind as to give us ten-times magnification…”

aye-aye, cap’n!

In the middle of the table, a holographic projection traces itself into being. It’s shaped vaguely like a radar dish.

Anthony pulls a pen from his pocket and starts writing in midair. “Aha. I recognize this. Hmmm… mm-hm… Perfect. I mean, not perfect, there’s still likely to be some data leakage…”

~What’s ‘perfect’? Spit it out, pencil-neck.~

“There’s just enough memory space for us to piggy-back a persistent projection of the key parts of your consciousness without interfering in his own conscious thought. Real-time data interaction, like streaming media. Call it ‘double-exposure’ brainsliding.”

Wade sits up straight and scowls. “So I’d have—Meanie McMeanGuy, was it?—in my brain with me while I’m awake? Listen, Iron Geek, the position of annoying backseat-brain-operator has already been filled. By me.”

Anthony shrugs and puts his pen away. “Suit yourself, tough stuff, but don’t come crying to me when the Hunter steals Forecaster and runs again. Not that you’d be able to come crying to me, since you’d be stranded. But hey, at least you’d have a great view when he manages to bring the timestream toppling down in his misguided quest to ‘save the world.’”

“I thought savin’ the world was a good thing,” Logan says.

“Rule One, Jamie,” Wade reminds him.

Timesliding to ‘save the world’ is a waste of time; the world’s already been saved.

Logan grunts in acknowledgement.

“Exactly,” agrees Anthony. “Back to the topic at hand. You have three options, Traveler. One, you fuck off home and leave us all to fend for ourselves—the numbers win and he resets the multiverse. Two, you chase after the Hunter on your own—the numbers win again, he still resets the multiverse. Three, you take the thirty-one-point-eight percent risk that having the Savant streamed into your brainware will kill you or drive you insane—fuck the numbers, we all have a chance at contiguous existence. I don’t know about you, but I have a hot blonde fiancée I’d like to keep, and I’m not sure what my chances are if all of existence gets ticked back to zero.”

Wade stands up. “Lemme tell you how I see those three options. One, I fuck off home with my awesome boyfriend and live in ignorant bliss until the multiverse resets. Two, I go after Mister ‘I-Point-Guns-at-Infants’—he maybe steals Effcee and runs off, in which case I live in ignorant bliss
with my awesome boyfriend until the multiverse resets; or I maybe get lucky and slice him into Fancy Feast, save the multiverse, and still go home to live in ignorant bliss with my awesome boyfriend. Three, I have about a one-in-three chance of kicking the bucket or turning into a goddamn vegetable, which kind of makes the whole ‘having an awesome boyfriend’ thing moot.”

Logan finds himself taken aback. From the sound and smell of things, Wade is seriously considering giving up. It doesn’t make sense to Logan, after the things Wade said to his cowardly counterpart in the last world.

Something hardens in Anthony’s gaze, but he doesn’t say anything.

~Grow the fuck up, you chicken-shit,~ the Savant says abruptly. ~Timelines don’t just fucking vanish. When they collapse, it’s in fucking fire and brimstone. Everybody in them dies. The fact that they might be recreated after the timestream begins to diverge and develop again doesn’t change the fact that they died. As we speak, there are about six hundred and fifty primary bundles, another five thousand secondary bundles, and about thirty-nine thousand tertiary bundles. The average sentient population in a bundle is eighteen billion. I know you can do the math.~

Logan can’t, not in his head, but the number is fucking huge.

Wade closes his eyes.

~Now fucking get your ass in gear—that stupid self-righteous fucker is probably collapsing bundles as we speak.~

“We could back him up in the Tower, just in case,” Anthony says quietly.

The projection on the table flashes red.

no time, the Hunter’s approaching a critical locus

“Weck,” Wade breathes, barely loud enough for Logan to make it out.

~Now or never. Get your Node out.~

Logan wants to say ‘stop.’ He wants to say ‘wait.’ He wants to say ‘for fuck’s sake, let him have five minutes to just sit and breathe.’

But they don’t have five minutes to sit and breathe, and Wade has a determined gleam in his eyes. He looks beautiful and courageous, and it makes Logan’s heart race.

“Let’s do this shit,” Wade says softly.

.End.
Singularity

Chapter Summary

Logan, now with a pair of Wades in one body, takes on the Hunter. Thanks to the Savant's presence, things go smoothly (more or less).

Chapter Notes

have i mentioned i suck at writing action sequences? 8D

warnings: Fateverse/X-Men Movieverse AU. violence, death. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f***).

pairing: Logan/Wade.

timeline: a few hours after A Glass Darkly, in an unknown timestream bundle.

disclaimer: marvel owns all base characters, but i created the AU and various AU versions of the characters.

notes: 1) the title refers both to the heart of a black hole and to the state of being the only one of something. 2) "Six" is a reference to Anthony's Programmer number. agents who do a lot of lateral travel tend to call people by job titles to avoid confusion (after all, the Savant has probably encountered dozens of Anthony Starks). 3) the tricky business of "erasing" is explained in The Fateverse Glossary. 4) LOS = "line of sight." an unobstructed view of something, the better to shoot at it.

visit The Fateverse Glossary for terms, concepts, Nodes, and important people.

Singularity


Logan reaches out slowly and touches Wade’s hand. He feels the muscles flinch under his fingers, but Wade doesn’t pull away. “All right, darlin’?” he mumbles.

Wade blinks hard several times. Then he teleports across the room, hangs there in midair for a moment while he unsheathes the blade in his left arm, and teleports back. “Yeah, okay, we got this,” he says in that same low, self-assured tone the Savant used. “Are all the stolen Nodes still in convergence, Six?”
“Yeah,” says Anthony. “The guy’s a real piece of work; he acts like he knows jack shit about
timestream theory and lateral travel.”

“Just enough to get in trouble,” Wade snorts, sounding like himself again for a moment before
switching back to the unnervingly familiar-but-unfamiliar tone of voice. “Get me coordinates fifty
meters from his position, with cover; I’ll need the time and space for an extrapolation.”

Logan abruptly realizes that it’s nearly the same voice he’d heard from the other Node, Eight-ball.
He doesn’t know why the sound of it makes the hairs rise on the back of his neck when hearing the
synthesized version half a minute ago didn’t.

~Parameters supplied by System Administrator override. Timeslide to commence upon physical
contact of subjects to be transported.~

Wade glances at Logan. “Don’t just stand there like a fucking moron, get over here. Sorry. Please
get over here so we can timeslide before that ignorant jackass causes irreparable damage to the
timestream.”

He doesn’t feel comfortable holding the Savant’s hand (even if it’s Wade’s body and therefore
technically Wade’s hand), so he settles for gripping the man’s shoulder.

The jerking sense of unnatural motion hits him, and the instant it subsides, he has to lean away and
throw up.

“Like a cat in a carrier,” snorts the Savant.

Logan almost says something snide, but the Savant is staring into space when he looks up. He looks
distant, unfocused…like he’s going over some pretty complex math in his head.

“There are two ways to do it,” the Savant says after a while. “Our primary goals are to stop him
from assassinating Hope DV991-Omega, erase him, and retrieve the fourteen stolen Nodes. The
only way to erase him, even as we approach a primary locus, is for him to be within half a meter of
the physical presence of one or more Nodes. One way involves us distracting him while you steal
the Nodes back—more than likely, the Sysadmin will slide you back to the Core—and we’ll kill
him. With luck, the combination of the primary locus and proximity to Forecaster will be enough to
erase him. The other way involves fighting him while he still has all the Nodes, before he gets close
to Hope—but then we run the risk of damaging the Nodes during the fight. With fifteen Nodes in
proximity, he’ll be completely annihilated.”

“Which one d’you think we should go with?” Logan asks, uncomfortably aware that the Savant is
the only one here who really knows what they’re doing. “I mean, there’s an up-side and a down-
side to each method. Keep the Nodes safe at the risk of him not being completely killed, make sure
he’s completely killed at the risk of some of the Nodes gettin’ damaged.”

The Savant’s eyes narrow. “That baby-killing jackass has already offed eighteen Keepers. He’s not
getting away. Does teleporting make you sick, too?”

“As long as it doesn’t involve heights, I’ll be fine,” Logan says cautiously.

“Good. We’re teleporting in. He’s got all the Nodes together now, probably in a bag of some kind.
They can withstand a lot of impact, but an adamantium blade will cut right through them. All the
same—no fucking mercy.” He holds Forecaster up; the Node is blinking intermittently. “What’s the
Hunter’s current distance from Hope DV991-Omega, and does he have LOS?”

~Around three kilometers, and no,~ Forecaster says meekly. Three lights flare up inside it. ~The
“Stay here and wait for us,” says the Savant. He sets Forecaster on the ground. “He uses energy blasts, and he’s got some nasty guns on him right now. Shouldn’t be anything we can’t handle. He’s ambidextrous, but favors the left hand because he had the right one replaced with cybernetics several years back. He’s left-footed. His fighting style is straightforward and heavy on grapples to take advantage of his strength.”

“Got it,” Logan says.

“Love you, Jamie,” Wade whispers.

Startled, he looks over. Wade’s face is set and determined again, and Logan almost can’t tell which of them it is for a moment. “Yeah,” he says. “Love you, too, darlin’.”

The impersonal grip on his shoulder is definitely the Savant, and they’re suddenly flickering through some other place that smells of cinnabar and brimstone.

Adrenaline kicks in when he sees that they’re a good ten feet over the Hunter’s back, and he extends both sets of claws as he hears the smoke-puff of Wade teleporting again.

The Hunter whirls, gun at the ready. He looks momentarily confused to see Logan (he probably expected Wade), but opens fire all the same.

With no real way to dodge while he’s falling, Logan takes the shot high in the chest. It burns all the way through, leaving him stunned and breathless even as the organs and tissues regenerate.

Wade (or the Savant?) has appeared behind the Hunter now, takes a swing with one blade that the big black man spins to parry with his mechanical arm.

Logan lands claws-first on the Hunter’s shoulders.

The Hunter cries out and raises his left hand, fires a few blasts at Logan (one hits him across the cheek and half-blinds him), but quickly decides he needs to aim the firepower at Wade instead.

There’s a pack across the big man’s back, and from the bruises against Logan’s ribs it’s full of Nodes. He moves one set of claws away from the pack’s strap—since they need the things to be touching the guy, it would be a pain in the ass for them to go flying.

Right about then, the Hunter decides to use Logan as a shield. He’s pretty fucking fast, to be able to maneuver Logan in front of various kicks and slashes.

The blades are sharp enough that Logan only feels the sting after they’ve cut into him, sometimes accompanied by the jarring impact of blade-on-bone, and he’s starting to wonder whether that asshole Savant is even bothering to aim anymore. It’s not permanent damage (nowhere near), but it’s annoying, and it hurts.

When he finally gets himself balanced enough to try for an attack of his own, he only nicks the Hunter’s throat—because he’s busy being blasted in the face again and trying not to get flung on his ass at the same time.

It buys Wade exactly two seconds.

Two seconds is half a second more than Wade needs to cleanly slice the Hunter’s head into three sections (and catch Logan across the forehead with one blade).
And then Logan’s trapped under a dead guy twice his size, with a backpack of crystal spheres digging into his gut.

“Ow,” he grunts.

Wade plants a foot on the guy’s shoulder and shoves. “Still in one piece, sweetums?”

Logan looks up while he catches his breath.

Wade is spattered with blood (Logan’s and Bishop’s, no doubt) and grinning like an idiot.

It’s one of the sweetest sights he’s ever seen. “Can we go home yet?” he huffs, accepting a hand up.

“Gotta count our booty first,” Wade says with an apologetic frown.

Logan passes the pack of Nodes.

“That’s everybody,” announces the Savant, after a moment of rummaging through the pack’s contents. “Let’s pick up Forecaster and deliver these to the Core. Then they can start replacing all the Wades we lost.”

“And we can get a bath, and a meal, and a nice long nap,” Logan sighs.

“After we meet Bea.”

.End.
Logan snapped out of his light doze and glared out the doors leading from the common room to the backyard.

“Ack, Jamie!” Wade whined, mashing buttons while the TV announced his computerized opponent’s impending victory.

“Shh!” he hissed, and finally caught the sound of a low, rhythmic mechanical thudding. “Chopper.”

“Should we be concerned?” Wade absently wondered, still playing his video game.

“Sounds high-tech.”

“I don’t hear any radio chatter.”

Logan arched an eyebrow.

Wade glanced at him. “What? I believe I’ve mentioned the Radio Shack in my skull that lets all kinds of cool transmissions in and out. I can pick up cell phones and wi-fi, too, remember?”
Compared to actually having somebody else’s brain beamed into my head, overhearing a secure radio channel’s pretty forking mundane.”

Logan tried to get a handle on the situation, to pin down where the kids were—there were just too many of them these days. Most of them should be in class (he could hear the nearer X-Men lecturing), but the ones that weren’t…


He leapt to his feet. “There’s kids outside.”

Wade heaved a sigh and paused his game. “Fine. Jeez.”

When Wade was at his side, he drew his claws and went out onto the back patio. “Everybody inside!” he called. “Now!”

As the chopper slid into view from the southwest, they could see that it was sleek and black.

“Ooh, nice,” Wade whistled.

Logan squinted. “Stark Industries?”

Wade bounced and hugged him like some soccer mom who’d won the Publisher’s Clearing House sweepstakes. “Seriously?! Ohmygod, that is so effing cool! I wonder who they sent…”

“Calm down,” Logan grumbled.

Ororo came out to join them at the stone railing as the chopper landed and powered down.

“We expectin’ someone?” Logan asked her.

She nodded. “Hank said he’d called in a favor to get Wade’s control chip looked at. Friend-of-a-friend, or something like that.”

A dark-haired man in a grey suit stepped out and straightened his tie (a pretty redhead with a PDA was hot on his heels).

“Oh. My. God!” Wade gushed, bouncing again. “Ohmygod, ohmygod! Do you know who that is? I need a camera. Do you have a camera? Does anybody have a camera? I’ve gotta get my picture taken with him, Weasel will die of jealousy. And he’s hot! Damn, he’s hotter in person than on TV! Little shorter, maybe, but nobody’s perfect.”

Logan scowled at Wade.

Ororo rolled her eyes with good humor, met their visitor at the top of the steps. “I’m Ororo Munroe, headmistress of the Xavier Institute for Gifted Youngsters.”

“Tony Stark,” the dark-haired man said, shaking her hand with a gamine grin (and a wandering gaze). “A pleasure to meet you, Ms. Munroe. Reed Richards told me that an old colleague by the name of Hank McCoy had an interesting case on his hands that could stand to be looked at by a gear-head, and I’m sure hell will freeze over long before Reed points me to a puzzle that doesn’t turn out to be utterly fascinating.”

“Utterly fascinating!” Wade said, nudging Logan. “Hear that? Tony-fricking-Stark thinks my malfunctioning brainware is ‘utterly fascinating.’ This is the coolest day ever.”
Logan didn’t see why Wade was making such a big deal out of it. They’d met two Tony Starks already and he hadn’t turned into a squealing teenager over either one of them.

Stark smirked. “I do believe I’m in the presence of a fan. Pepper, make a memo: remind me to write Steve a note that just says ‘I told you so’ in very, very big letters.”

The redhead behind him made a long-suffering face, but said nothing.

“Wade Wilson,” Wade introduced himself. “I actually did some work for your company a few years back, on the DL[2]. Some bad guy stole something, I got it back. I was paid very well, and they let me kill a lot of people, it was nice. You’re here to look inside my noggin and play with all the blinky lights.”

Stark smoothly avoided having to shake Wade’s hand by putting his right hand in his pocket and using his left to gesture to the mansion. “Well, then let’s take this to McCoy’s lab and see what we can see. Call it a preliminary consult.”

Ororo escorted them down to the infirmary (which Logan had learned was actually converted from Hank’s lab long ago and still held many interesting bits of machinery not normally present in an infirmary) and excused herself to teach her next class.

The moment they walked into the room, Logan heard Wade’s heartbeat rev.

“So who’s your leggy sidekick?” Wade babbled, hopping onto one of the examination tables. “She strikes me as the witty, ascerbic type. I get bossed around by women a lot, so I’ve become an expert.”

Stark bustled around like he owned the place, dragging equipment here and there, pressing switches and poking buttons. “The very witty Virginia Potts, my distinctly ascerbic personal assistant,” he quipped. “And your looming fuzzy gargoyle there? Is he gonna need kibbles and newspapers? I can have Pepper fetch some for him.”

Logan would have said something vaguely threatening, but Wade laughed and calmed down. He’d put up with a lot, if it meant that Wade didn’t end up having another panic attack just from being in the room (he’d nearly had two when Hank first checked him out).

“Who, Jamie? He’s a pushover. All it takes is a sniffly little kid, or a cat stuck up a tree.”

Stark snorted. “Sounds like somebody else I know.” He flicked on another machine, watched a screen while he adjusted something. “Huh. Well, that’s interesting. How old did you say these implants were?”

“At least twenty-something.”

“Hm.” Stark wandered over to something that looked like a laptop computer, typed something up, waited. “Huh. This is unbelievable.”

“Is that good or bad?” Wade fretted.

“Uh…kinda both. I wrote what’s in your head and designed the chip for it. Bad news: the government stole my second MIT graduate thesis project—somebody else stole the first one, long story[3]—I never had access to the resources to properly troubleshoot it, and it looks like it’s malfunctioning pretty badly. Good news: I can probably fix it. I think. But not here. I’d need Jarvis.” And he scurried around, turning things back off.
“So, what, that’s it?” Wade asked. “Just… ‘here’s what’s wrong, have a nice day’?”

“And miss a chance to fix something my professors wouldn’t let me finish when I was fifteen?” Stark scoffed. “No, my friend, you and your brain are coming back to Stark Tower with me. You’ll get to see the inside of my workshop. And depending on how long it takes, we’ll see if we can’t get you some superhero autographs. Pete, Carol, and Steve love signing autographs.”

“Need I remind you, your book is full?” the assistant said pointedly.

Stark waved her off and headed for the door. “Clear it all out, Pepper. This falls under ‘cleaning up my messes.’ Unless I’m very much mistaken, this gentleman has a skull full of copyright infringement, of a variety that could lead to all sorts of nasty things, up to and including mass murder.”

“Mass murder is such a strong phrase for what I do,” Wade said, scampering out of the infirmary (his heartbeat slowed back down to something closer to twice a normal human’s). “I prefer to think of it as ‘unique thoroughness.’”

Stark paused, looked at Wade, blinked. “Okay, even acknowledging that you’ve been pretty much engineered to be the killer-ninja-assassin version of a Kitchen Aid[^4], that’s kinda sociopathic. Gonna have to tone back on that a little around the Avengers, especially if Thor drops in for a visit, because it would completely ruin my ability to play with your brain if it’s been smashed in with Mjollnir.”

“Not sure he’d get through the skull, but let’s not find out,” Wade said quickly. “It’d never go back the right way again if he did get through, and then I’d look really ugly.”

Stark grinned and started walking again. “Is there anything you’d like to pack? An overnight bag? Keep in mind that room and board will be covered if you do end up needing to stay a while.”

“We travel light,” Logan said as they got on the elevator.

“But you’re gonna regret offering to feed us,” added Wade.

“I doubt you can pack away more than Thor and Steve,” Stark chuckled.

Wade just grinned.

Logan didn’t know much about this Thor character (except that he was supposed to be the actual Norse god of the same name), but he seriously doubted that he and Captain America could out-eat a determined Wade Wilson. One fit of munchies had completely emptied two fridges and a deep-freeze stocked for a hundred growing mutant teens.

On their way to the back door, they bumped into Wanda, who frowned fiercely at Stark.

“Wanda!” he exclaimed happily. “How are you? Settling in?”

She crossed her arms. “Well, Tony, you’d know how I am if you ever bothered to read your email. But yes, even with Mr. Wilson’s violent and disruptive presence, the Institute is a hundred times more relaxing than playing superhero with your martyr complex, Carol’s alien abductions, and Peter’s torch-bearing mob of arch-enemies.”

Stark’s charming grin froze, and he smelled worried. “Ah. Well, there’s that, isn’t there?”

Wanda looked at them all. “What exactly is going on? Don’t tell me you’ve decided to poke your
nose into the Deadpool Program...of all the people who should never be allowed anywhere near that kind of thing...”

“Wanda, that’s not very nice,” Stark tsked. “I’m perfectly responsible when it comes to other people’s armageddon engines.”

She gave a loud and sarcastic laugh.

“Can we get going before the Crimson Crazy-Lady remembers how much she hates me?” Wade suggested.

“Going?” Wanda echoed, immediately suspicious.

“To my workshop,” Stark clarified. “Very hush-hush, need-to-know. Having a peek at his brain.”

“Pepper, you’re actually allowing this?” Wanda demanded.

The assistant opened her mouth to say something.

“Chill, Wanda,” Stark interrupted, stepping between them. “It’s not rocket surgery. What’s the worst that could happen?”

Wanda’s jaw dropped. “ Rocket surg—the worst? The worst. Let me see...all right. Your poking in Deadpool’s brain could somehow lead to him malfunctioning, blowing up a school or something, and instigating an all-out super-powered civil war, in the wake of which the Avengers could be left in a complete shambles, allowing some crackpot nemesis of Pete’s to take over the country.”

“Never happen,” Stark dismissed. “Even if a malfunctioning mercenary could lead to all-out war, super or otherwise, Thor would stop it. Or the Hulk.”

“Uh, actually,” Wade said, mostly to himself, “funny you should mention them...”

They ignored him.

Wanda waved a hand. “Thor was...I don’t know, blown to bits while vanquishing some all-powerful evil mutant. And the Hulk was...launched into space. Now what, smart guy?”

There was silence for about five seconds. Then Stark wagged a finger. “I wait for Pete’s country-usurping nemesis to paint himself into a corner like they always do, and then I hit up the system restore.”

“The world doesn’t come with a system restore point, Tony!” Wanda screeched. “Never, ever, ever say ‘what’s the worst that could happen’!”

Stark looked incredibly taken aback by her outburst. “Wow. Jeez, Wanda, I thought this place was supposed to be calming you down...Pep, make Wanda an appointment with Samson, will you? Give her some time on the couch to talk out this paranoia.”

And he just walked away, leaving Wanda gaping and sputtering in the hall.

“...one of these days...” Stark’s assistant was growling to herself. “...going to take over the whole damn thing again...make Natasha get me a double mocha soy latte every day...wearing La Perla and saying ‘yes, Miss Potts, will there be anything else, Miss Potts’...”

“Sounds good, Pep,” said Stark. “Just make sure you get video coverage.”
“…lock him in his damn workshop…” the woman went on as she blustered through the back doors and down the steps to the lawn. “…let him play with his chemistry sets and his math and his glorified tinker-toys with no pretty people for a month…”

“Don’t mind her,” Stark told them. “Wanda’s little tantrums have that effect on her. Probably an unresolved-sexual-tension thing.”

.End.

Chapter End Notes

1 The title is a conflation of two sayings that both mean something isn't particularly complicated or difficult: "it's not rocket science" and "it's not brain surgery." Leave it to Tony to put those together. XD [return to text]
2 The "down-low." To do something on the down-low means to do it quietly or in secret. [return to text]
3 See No Strings (chapter 8 of I Don't Dance). [return to text]
4 A fairly high-end brand of medium- to heavy-duty multipurpose mixer/grinders. Will whip, mix, or knead whatever you want, and grind pretty much any meat you ask it to. Kinda the Swiss Army Knife of kitchen mixers. [return to text]
5 OH, WANDA. She's such a pessimist. She and Lybbie should start a club. The whole time i was writing her part, all I could see was Rachel Weisz's dour performance in Constantine. [return to text]
6 A high-end brand of lingerie. I'm talking $200+ for a bra. It's the Rolex of ladies' undergarments. [return to text]
Chapter Summary

Tony takes Wade and Logan to Avengers Tower to have a look at that faulty brainware.

Chapter Notes

**warnings:** crossover between Iron Man Movieverse and X-Men Movieverse (some strange combined AU). silly 616 references. reference to human experimentation. language: pg (for hell and ass).

**pairing:** Logan/Wade with a little Tony/Steve.

**timeline:** Tony's got Logan and Wade at Avengers Tower so he can poke through Wade's glitchy brainware at which point Wade's brain goes on vacation. later in the same day as **Rocket Surgery**.

**disclaimer:** marvel owns all recognizable characters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Upgrade

“Holy eye candy,” is the first thing Wade says when they step out of the elevator.

The other people in the room turn and look with a collective facial expression of annoyed curiosity.\[1\]

Wade nudges Stark with his elbow. “How do you get anything done with the constant distraction of rampant pretty people? And do you have a thing for blonds? Because I’m seeing a lot of golden locks in this room.”

“Not more fanboys, Tony,” a blonde woman groans.

Logan resents the assumption that he’s a fan, but doesn’t say anything.


Stark gestures. “Guys, this is Wade Wilson, he’ll be staying for a day or so while I rewrite software for his brain—yes, you heard right, long story,” he says in one breath. “Forgive him if he gushes a bit, he is indeed a fan. Also—be gentle if he seems to suddenly lose his mind and attack—that’s the main reason I’m rewriting that software.”
“Well,” drawls the woman. “I guess we won’t have to introduce ourselves, if he’s a fan. Who’s the snarling wildman?”

“James Logan,” Stark supplies. “Who may, in fact, claw you limb from limb if you cause unnecessary damage to Mr. Wilson.”

“I ain’t a fan,” Logan says. “So if you don’t wanna be ‘bub’ or ‘hey you,’ you should probably tell me your names.”

One of the men on the couch stands up with a smile. “Hi there, I’m Steve Rogers.”

Wade gives a muted little squeal, like a teenage girl in the presence of a movie star. “Captain America. Captain fricking America. I have had a mostly-heterosexual crush on him since I was a kid. Completely nom-a-licious. This is the best day ever. Ever.”

“Carol Danvers,” says the woman.

“Clint Barton,” adds the other man on the couch.

“The collection of hotness continues,” Wade says with a broad grin. “But I see it’s not complete—where’s Sparky ‘n Spidey?”

Danvers gives Stark an accusing look, like he’s the one who told Wade all of this.

Barton gestures between Stark and Wade with one finger. “So. Science project? What, are you gonna install a laser cannon or something?”

“For the record, that sounds pretty awesome,” Wade pipes up.

Stark waves his hand dismissively. “No, no, I’m just gonna get up in the undercarriage and see what’s rattling around—wow, that came out wrong.”

“There’s a right way for that to have come out?” Barton says snidely.

Stark gives a tight smile in response. “Thanks for your contribution, Clint. You can be replaced by a bored little rich girl with a bow.”

Barton snorts. “Her bow wouldn’t be nearly as badass as mine.”

“Swords, then.”

“Pfft. Like I couldn’t use swords… I’d look better doing it, too.” [2]

“I’ll vouch for that,” Wade puts in. “Also, before Blondie stole my thunder, I was about to say you could do whatever you’d like to my undercarriage.”

Logan clears his throat loudly.

“Dude, Jamie, it’s Tony Stark. One part zillionaire, one part superhero, two parts rock star, shake well. He’s like James Bond with better toys and a superhero harem.”

The others in the room look half taken aback, but Stark is smug. Rogers pinches the bridge of his nose (he smells exasperated).

Danvers points. “One person agreeing with the James Bond comparison doesn’t make you right!” she argues.

“Notice she doesn’t correct the harem comment,” Wade whispers.

Logan closes his eyes for a moment to suppress the urge to hit his dippy lover.

“That’s because everybody knows where Tony stores his equipment,” snickers Barton. “And Cap don’t share.”

“So you can make all the crass implications you want,” Danvers finishes. “Because every tabloid in the country is still raving over Tony and Steve holding hands to cross the street.”

Wade bumps Logan with his hip. “So? I’m in an awesome monoandrous relationship, but it don’t stop me from appreciating the scenery. And I will make all the crass implications I want, especially about Captain America’s buns of steel and the way Tony Stark surrounds himself with pretty people.”

“I think we should hit the lab!” Stark says hurriedly, and turns back to the elevator.

Logan grabs Wade’s shoulders and steers him after the genius.

“Everybody needs a little manhandling now and then, don’t you think, Cap?” Wade calls.

When the elevator door closes, Stark pushes a button.

A speaker overhead emits a synthesized voice (it’s a good fake, probably convincingly human to people with normal hearing). ~Sir, you are accompanied by two unregistered visitors. One of them appears to have an unsafely elevated heart rate.~

“That’s right, Jarvis,” Stark replies. “Our friend with the zippy heartbeat is Wade Wilson, the other is James Logan.”

“And this is his resting heartbeat,” Logan tells the elevator voice.

~Noted.~

The elevator opens again to show a spacious work area that looks like an unholy collision of a garage and a computer lab. Stark walks up to the glass wall closing the place off, types up some kind of access code that unseals a door.

“C’mon in, Mr. Wilson,” Stark says, beckoning over his shoulder as he leads the way to a pad on the floor that’s been marked with a grid. “Stand right over here, and we’ll do some scans.”

Wade bounces energetically onto the very center of the grid, like a little kid being measured.

“Okay, Jarvis,” Stark calls. “Let’s see if we can see the hardware, first. Run the standard imaging scans and put the results on my left. We’re dealing with my grad project, Behavioral Modifier B-3. Have you got the static ping?”

~Yes, sir.~

“Pull up the connection on the main screen; I’ll try to hack in and grab the command list.”

~Very good, sir.~
“Hearing the word ‘hack’ in reference to my brain is just a little disconcerting,” Wade puts in.

Stark gestures vaguely. “No, this’ll be good. Fix ya up, get everything sorted out. Just, uh…just hold still, will ya? And if Mr. Logan will back out of frame…”

Logan scowls, but takes a few steps back.

“There we go. Sorry, I know you’re rocking the overprotective boyfriend gig, but this is delicate work, and we don’t need any extra interference in the signal. Ooh, this looks like where we need to be.”

~Sir, I would advise against——~

“Jarvis, who’s the expert here?”

~I see, sir. Shall I page Captain Rogers, in preparation for the unthinkable possibility that you may, in fact, be doing something that could have significantly undesirable reperc——~

“Jarvis, don’t make me hit the mute button.”

Logan pinches the bridge of his nose. He isn’t sure how much he trusts a man who argues with a computer to be able to fix his boyfriend’s brain.

“Here goes nothing,” Stark says happily, typing something in.

Wade stiffens for a moment, heartbeat gone slower than even a normal human’s, before jerking to life like a puppet and unsheathing both arm-blades.

“Stark, you idiot,” growls Logan, ducking a slice and trapping one blade between his claws.

~Sir, you appear to have surged the central——~

“Duly noted!” Stark cries, typing frantically. “Jarvis, hit the kill-switch!”

Whatever Stark’s done, Wade twitches and goes limp (Logan manages to catch him, but it’s a near thing, and he has to weigh almost four hundred pounds). Logan holds his breath until he finds the sound of Wade’s heartbeat.

Stark types something else. “Sorry about that—my bad.”

“Just make sure it doesn’t happen again,” Logan mutters.

Stark waves a finger. “I did say I never got to test the program or the chip. The chip was never meant to handle the kind of work they did to the software, so it’s been surging semi-unpredictably, which has been triggering skips in his reality matrix. Usually when something comes in on the same frequency as the chip’s command channel.”

Logan manages to get Wade to the floor without any injuries or property damage. “What the hell does all that mean?”

“Well, if alternate universes are radio stations, his brain is the annoying ADHD road-trip buddy who hits the scan button the second the reception’s not perfect. Jarvis, did you manage a data capture on any of that?”

~Yes, sir. Your hypothesis is correct: software overloads in the chip from electromagnetic transmissions are causing electrical surges. May I suggest a temporary deactivation of the chip until
the software has been streamlined?

“Is Mr. Wilson back with us?” Stark asks, leaning around a monitor to look at them.

Glancing down, Logan shakes Wade gently. “Hey. You there, darlin’?”

Wade blinks a few times. “Oh, good. I’m not a girl anymore.” [3]

.End.

Chapter End Notes

1 The Blood & Tears Avengers roster is Cap, Tony, Thor, Carol, Pete, Clint, and Hank (Wanda went to teach at the X-Mansion).[return to text]

2 Few people can out-snark Clint, and Tony really isn't one of them.[return to text]

3 And now you know what Wade was doing before he suddenly found himself turned into a Barbie girl.[return to text]
I Feel Pretty

Chapter Summary

When Tony surged Wade's brainware...this is where Wade went.

Chapter Notes

i completely blame ~MacKenzieX for the idea behind this fic.

warnings: crossover between Iron Man Movieverse and X-Men Movieverse (some strange combined AU), plus an out-of-AU-experience in a crazy Deadpool-ish world. rule 63 and femslash. silliness. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f***).

pairing: arc is Logan/Wade, but this part is adorably Neena/fem!Wade.

timeline: during Wade's little out-of-brain experience while Tony's poking around in Upgrade.

disclaimer: marvel owns all recognizable characters.

~MerianMoriarty drew me a pic of mercenary-assassin-barbie!Wade.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

I Feel Pretty[1]

Wade blinked.

He could have sworn he was just in Tony Stark’s Awesome Workshop of Awesomeness.

The room he found himself in was very...very...pink. Like...Barbie-factory-in-a-hurricane pink.

And his timeclock was gone. Stupid defective brainslidy brain...

“Oh, come on!” he cried.

His voice was...very girly.

So it’s one of those universes.

He looked down at himself.

Not too bad.

On the one hand, hey look BOOBS. On the other hand, ow springsteel corset what the fuck.
He spotted a mirror (big, gilded, a real Who’s-the-Fairest setup) and went to it. His borrowed body’s natural locomotion seemed to be a kind of cutesy little flounce.

The image in the mirror looked like a little girl’s doll[2]. Big pink pigtails in perfect spiral curls, dress like a cross between a Mardi Gras float and a Bob Mackie original, button-up knee-high Victorian boots. Enormous false eyelashes, pink collagen gloss, inch-long pink nails with rhinestones.[3]

“Jesus Christ,” he said, vaguely disgusted.

And then there was a little knock at the door and somebody bustled in.

“Oh-kay, sunshine, looks like today you got a choice between some ugly general in some little country in Central America and some dinosaur of a millionaire housewife who’s been cheating on her hubby with…uh, looks like pretty much everybody on the staff. Ooh, can’t blame her on the pool-boy…”

Wade knew he was staring. He also knew it wasn’t polite.

But he’d seen Sandi in a lot of interesting clothes that were nowhere near as disturbingly cute as the ruffly little mini-dress she was wearing just now. Kinda looked like she’d just stepped off the stage of a fancy burlesque show. She had a pink clipboard in one hand and a fluffy pink pen in the other.

“What’s up, pumpkin?” Sandi asked with a concerned little pout. “Oh, honey, is it what Alex said yesterday? Don’t listen to ’er, she’s just jealous ’cause you’re beautiful.”

“Wait, what?” Wade said.

Sandi blinked. “Is this some kinda thing where you hit your head or got shot with some funky dart or something and lost your memory?” she asked. “Because I could swear we already did that once this year, and Jennifer said they don’t repeat plot devices like that more than once annually.”

“Jennifer as in Walters? As in giant green-skinned lawyer chick whose ta-tas should win a Nobel Peace Prize?”

Sandi gave him a Look. “Uh, yeah. Jennifer as in our legal consultant for the past five years. You’re seriously amnesiac again?”

Wade thought about it. “For the sake of simplicity, let’s just go with that explanation. Yes, Miss Brandenberg. Amnesia.”

“She’s not coming, and neither are Inez and Tonya,” sighed Sandi. “Masters, the girl who constantly catfights with you on jobs, probably because she’s got some kinda raging crush on you? Oh, God.” Sandi pinched the bridge of her nose in a gesture of supreme exasperation. “Wade, sweetie, you know I love you dearly, but I hate amnesia subplots. So I’m just gonna walk right back out this door and pretend you’ve got a cold or something, and I’ll give Neena a call and she can deal with this.” And she hurried right back out of the ghastly pink room with stiff shoulders and an irritable clack of pink stilettos.

Wade stared at the door. “Wow. Really? What the fuck time branch is this?” Then he dug around in his petticoats and rearranged the frou-frou undies that were riding up.

He hated making long-term plans when he was stuck in somebody else’s body—after all, some of his
little side-trips only lasted a few seconds—but if he had to stay in the room a moment longer with all the pink, he was going to scream.

So it was time for the pink to go.

Couldn’t do anything about the wallpaper (yet). He could, however, grab every single evil little pink stuffed animal and shove them all in the supply closet. And he could tear down the pink curtains and pack them away in a drawer. Nothing to be done about the pink fluffy swivel chair behind the pink desk. All the pink pens, scented pink stationery, and pink paperclips could be stashed easily enough.

Twenty minutes later, the place was about forty percent less eye-gougingly pink. Pretty good for short notice.

In the next room, Sandi could be heard loudly exclaiming (sounded like ‘Thank God!’), and then there was another knock on the door of Wade’s office.

“Yeah?” Wade said, spinning in the awful pink chair.

Neena cautiously sidled in and looked around. “Um. I hear there’s more amnesia, even though we already had memory-loss pellets in March. What happened to the curtains?”

“Wait, wait, wait,” said Wade. “Before all that, one question—are we an item?”

“For four years, yes.”

That deserved a victory fist-pump. “Score!”

Neena rolled her eyes. “It’s like the last two sessions of amnesia all over again…”

Wade hopped up out of the ugly fluffy (flugly?) chair. “Now, in answer to your question, snugglebunny, this place is way too pink. I may have a cute rack, but that’s no reason to turn into a pretty pretty princess. We need to inject some macho in this place, stat[^4].”

Neena just stood there blinking for a moment. “Are you sure, babydoll? I mean…usually even when you lose your zany little mind, pink’s your favorite color.”

“I’m completely sure,” Wade grunted, rearranging those pesky frou-frous again. “Let’s get something nice ‘n manly going on, like sports posters, Playboy pinups, Captain America wallpaper…or Playboy wallpaper and Captain America pinups, whichever… Right after you get me outta this dress.”

“Always happy to help,” Neena said in a suspiciously choked voice.

Wade put his hands on his cute little curvy hips. “Not like that!” He hesitated. “Okay, yes, like that, but later. This corset is seriously killing me and I have no idea how to take it off. And we’re definitely going to have a long talk about your sketchy morals in regards to the informed consent of your amnesiac girlfriend.”

Neena cleared her throat and looked appropriately contrite. “Of course. Let’s go back to the apartment. You can, uh…borrow some of my clothes,” she said with a grin that was certainly not contrite at all.

Neena has a surprisingly pervy mind. Memo to me—when I get home, must find our Neena and explore possibilities of hot threesomes.
Their apartment had apparently been spared the pinkspllosion treatment (it figured that Neena would put her foot down about that). Neena actually behaved herself very well while helping Wade out of the corset, and even politely turned her back while Wade changed. It turned out that Wade was a little too busty for the borrowed Daisy Dukes to fit modestly (he suspected that was intentional on Neena’s part), but the tee-shirt (which said ‘PMS and an Assault Rifle’) fit okay. Under the pink wig, Wade’s hair was brownish and conveniently pixie-cut.

“Let’s go shopping,” Wade said very seriously. “Somewhere in this town, a Home Depot is calling my name.”

“Hold that pose a second,” Neena ordered, pulling a cell phone out of her jeans. “I’ve got to get photographic proof, or Nathan will never believe me. The day Wade Wilson wore an outfit with absolutely no lace. Seriously, honeybee, my X-Force buddies are going to faint.”

Wade pouted. “Photographic proof, really? That’s almost blackmail.”

Neena just arched an eyebrow and snapped a picture. “Well, what good is it sharing an ex with your girlfriend if you don’t ruthlessly embarrass each other to him?”

“Point. Do you have a gun I can borrow? There’s just something really demeaning about a pink M9. I mean, what am I—Mercenary Assassin Barbie? What is with all this pink? There are plenty of perfectly feminine colors besides pink, but I didn’t see even an ounce of lilac or mint in my half of the closet, let alone a decent pair of combat boots.”

“This is the happiest day of my life.”

Wade almost felt sorry for the proper owner of his current body. Almost. Not enough to put an end to Operation: De-Pinkify the Office. “You’ll be pretty disappointed when my memory comes back,” he pointed out.

“Nah,” said Neena, putting her phone away. “I love the pink version of you, too, but there’s a reason we don’t work together. The only thing I’ve got that you could wear without getting arrested is a Guardian[5].”

Wade took the little gun, and was irked to note how big it looked in his delicate, twinkly-pink-nailed hand. “Ain’t the size that counts,” he muttered, and stuck it in the waist of the too-short borrowed cut-offs.

“As you keep proving, babydoll.”

.End.

Chapter End Notes

1 A song from West Side Story, sung by the female protagonist as she prepares for a night out. [return to text]

2 I imagine Jena Malone here. She’s very cute and shares some similar bone-structure to Ryan, so that’s just where my brain automatically went. [return to text]
3 I briefly toyed with the idea of making Wade's yellow boxes pink in this universe, but decided that would be too cruel to him. [return to text]

4 In medical terms, "right away." [return to text]

5 A model of semi-automatic compact pistol made by North American Arms. Neena's is probably the .32 ACP version, which is about 3.5 inches long and would stash easily in a stocking holster or ankle holster (or any number of interesting clothing pockets). [return to text]
Gradual

Chapter Summary

Tony has turned off Wade's brainware for the time being...which means it's back to uncontrollable moods, insomnia, and finger-chewing. Fortunately, Pete and Thor are good at being bros to people who've lost their minds.

Chapter Notes

it feels like a setup piece. =\ i've been trying to make it not be like the dragging middle book of a trilogy (that bastard step-child of plot progression), but if i ain't gotten it done in more than a year, it ain't happening. *shrug*

warnings: crossover between Iron Man Movieverse and X-Men Movieverse (some strange combined AU). the BT universe's Avengers lineup is currently Captain America, Hawkeye, Thor, Captain Marvel, Yellowjacket, Spider-Man, and Iron Man (with Hulk and Black Widow drifting in and out, and Scarlet Witch retired to teach at the X-Mansion). language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

pairing: arc is Logan/Wade, this chapter briefly mentions some Pete/MJ.

timeline: almost immediately after Upgrade and I Feel Pretty.

disclaimer: marvel owns all recognizable characters.

p.s. the next chapter is actually (i think, i'm pretty sure, like 90% sure) done. but you can't have it yet, or you'll just want more, you cookie-loving mice....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gradual

The change when Stark switched off the brainware wasn’t immediately obvious. He told Logan to take Wade to the Avengers Suite and have him relax in front of some TV, and Logan spent his effort on navigating three hundred pounds of lethargic metal-plated mercenary into the elevator, rather than on noticing subtleties.

“T’im hungry,” Wade announced.

“He promised food, so we’ll see about gettin’ ya fed,” Logan replied.

~Is there anything in particular you’re craving, Mr. Wilson?~ asked the computer—Jarvis, Stark had called it.
“Cheesy puffs,” said Wade. “And Twizzlers. And a Cherry Slurpee. And a hot dog—with kraut and spicy mustard and grilled onions. And fried chicken—like, a whole fried chicken, and mashed potatoes, and biscuits. And a twelve pack of beer. And four enchiladas.”

—I’ve been instructed to restrict your comings and goings, Mr. Wilson. As such, your food has been ordered and should arrive, variously, in ten to forty minutes.—

“Sweet. Go ahead and order a pair of large pepperoni-jalapeño-peanut-butter pizzas, extra garlic sauce, slightly burned crust, and a few pints of Häagen Dazs for later. Not sure how hungry I am yet.”

—Of course.—

The huge TV was on a reality show about a marksmanship competition, and the mouthy blond from earlier was still settled lazily in the middle of the couch with both feet up on the coffee table[1].

“Move,” Wade said.

“Screw you, I was here first,” Barton replied.

Logan barely caught the smell of impending aggression in time to catch one of Wade’s blades an inch from Barton’s face. “Wade.”

The blond looked more irritated than afraid—dumb kid. “Rude much?” he huffed.

Wade blinked. “What?”

“You just tried to hack my head off because I wouldn’t get out of my spot on the couch in my home when I was in the middle of watching my favorite show.”

“Did I?”

“Uh, yeah.”

Wade flexed his arm, sheathed the blade. “Oh. Huh. Sorry, but I’m kinda hungry, and my mind wanders when I’m hungry, and somehow people tend to end up dead or maimed when my mind wanders, and it hasn’t in a long time, so I don’t really know what’s up with this, unless it’s maybe something to do with Tony turning off my brainware, which it probably is, come to think of it, since —”

“Blah-blah-blah, fine!” Barton said loudly. “Whatever; I’ll just watch it on the website later.” Then he got to his feet and stomped out of the room like a pouting teenager (and Logan would know, since he spends his days teaching pouting teenagers).

“You all right, darlin’?” Logan asked, watching Wade’s face carefully.

“Probably not,” Wade said. “I don’t think I’ve been actually ‘all right’ since, like, fifth grade.”

A little worrying, but still completely Wade. Logan shrugged a little. “Let’s sit down and wait for yer food, then.”

Wade sat down, seized the remote, started flipping through the channels like always. Gradually, he began to shiver. And then he started chewing his nails. And then he started chewing his fingers, and the air was heavy with the smells of blood and scared and not right.
“Wade,” he said again.

Unfocused eyes darted around (the ceiling, the TV, the coffee table, Logan, the wall, the window…).

Logan gently but firmly grasped Wade’s wrist. “Hey, don’t chew yer fingers, darlin’. What’s wrong?”

“Shhh, I’m being quiet,” Wade whispered. “You like it when I’m quiet.”

“Not just now. Just now, you’re worryin’ me. What can I do for ya? What d’you need?”

Suddenly, Wade was perfectly still, eyes locked on an ad for kid’s cereal. “Vicky used to bring me blankets,” he mumbled. “He was always pulling my fingers away from my mouth. And he’d put blankets around me. You were gone. You were gone, so he brought me blankets.”

“Well, I’m not gone now. So just relax, and settle on a channel to watch.”

“I’m not mad at you.”

Logan slowly nodded. “Okay.”

“I’m not,” Wade insisted urgently, watching the cereal ad lead into a motor oil ad. “It made sense to leave me behind. I would’ve left me behind. No way would I have fit into your happy log-cabin-in-the-middle-of-nowhere fantasy.”

Logan was confused. He had no memory of such a fantasy, of course, and Wade’s scent was sending out mixed signals of resentment and love and fear.

A young guy with dark hair stumbled out of the elevator with a briefcase and an armful of papers. He smelled like ink and kids. Teacher[2]. “Oh, uh,” said the young guy. “I didn’t know we had guests. Um. I’m Pete. Uh, I’d shake your hand, but I’m a little—my hands are kinda—is he okay? He looks cold. You know what, I’m gonna put down these tests and go get a spare blanket from the hall closet. Don’t go away, I’ll be right back.”

Wade started to chew on his thumb, so Logan pulled his hand away again. “Stop that. Don’t you have something else to chew on?”

“Oh!” Wade said, and pulled on the chain around his neck. “I can’t believe I forgot I had ‘em again. I used to chew on these things all the time…” With that, he stuck one of Logan’s old dogtags into his mouth.

The teacher came back with an afghan, which he passed to Logan (who in turn spread it out and wrapped it around Wade’s shoulders). “There ya go,” he said. “Like I said, I’m Pete Parker.”

“Wade Wilthon,” Wade said around the tag between his teeth, and stuck his right hand out to shake. “All right, cool,” said Parker, shaking his hand delicately with thumb and two fingers (avoiding the blood). “Nice to meet you. I’m guessing you’re here to get looked at by Hank.”

Wade shook his head. “Thony. Got computer chip in my brain need fixthin’.”

“Computer chips…in your brain,” Parker echoed slowly.

“Correcting for a pretty amathing thychotic bvreak. Tho right now, I’m kinda goin’ a little bit
Parker nodded. “Honestly, I’ve gotten pretty used to crazy, living here. You should see the stuff that goes on when Bruce is around. One time, he and Hank and Tony got drunk and ended up building a new ant habitat shaped like a working, lit scale model of the Stark Expo, and then they got out a bunch of action figures and pretended they were saving the ants from an alien invasion. Bruce kept apologizing whenever he accidentally went all ‘Hulk smash’ on the ants[3]. By the end of it, he and Hank were both crying, most of the ants were traumatized or dead, and Tony was laughing his ass off.”

Wade blinked a few times, and dropped Logan’s tags. “Okay, your crazy is more fun than my crazy. Tell me more about the crazy.”

Parker calmly sat on Wade’s other side, propping his feet on the coffee table. “Once, Thor’s brother—who was actually his sister at the time, long story—used magic to make Carol’s clothes vanish mid-battle. She kept fighting, but Steve had to go sit down and cover his eyes and apologize for about an hour. Wanda donated her cape for Carol to use as a toga, but Steve was still too embarrassed to fight.”

“Damn, why doesn’t that kinda zany shit end up in the papers?”

“Tony’s lawyers.”

“Boo.”

“I know, right? I told Carol she should start flying out in nothing but her mask, and that bad guys would be totally unable to fight, but she told MJ to slap me.”

“Did she?”

“Yeah, wives aren’t really very understanding about sexually objectifying jokes.”

Wade frowned. “But wait. Wanda’s got magic, too. Why didn’t she just magic Carol’s clothes back?”

Parker opened his mouth to answer, then stopped. “Y’know…that’s a good question. I mean, she once magicked up a pool full of Jell-O, so some pants and a shirt wouldn’t have been hard. I gotta save that one to break Tony’s brain with later.”

“After he fixes my brain, please.”

“Right on.”

Three minutes later, while Parker was deeply involved in the tale of ‘this one time—no, seriously—this one time we actually lost Bruce in the middle of a battle,’ the elevator opened and some Men in Black reject marched out with three plastic bags and a twelve-pack of Bud under one arm and a Slurpee in the other hand[4].

“—and we’re all looking around, and Clint goes, ‘Dude, where’s my Hulk?’ just totally straight-faced, and I lose it,” said Parker. “I’m talking complete hysterics. And Steve’s got this face—this—you can tell he’s, like, trying to be stern, but he’s totally confused, and Tasha’s no help, of course—”

“Mr. Wilson,” said the black-suit guy, holding out the food.

Wade tried to pounce.
Secret Agent Man held the Slurpee over Wade’s head. “All alcoholic beverages and most foods are confined to the kitchen. If you’ll follow me, please. The rest of your food will be along shortly.”

“Wait, don’t I know you?”

“I doubt it.”

“I do! Your first name’s ‘Agent.’ Aren’t you supposed to be dead?”

“I don’t think that’s any of your business, Mr. Wilson. This way.”

In the kitchen, Wade devoured most of the food and shotgunned six of the beers. He was starting on the Slurpee and cheesy puffs when the pizza and the bucket of fried chicken arrived (he abandoned the cheesy puffs in favor of the chicken). Logan, meanwhile, started a pot of coffee in lieu of large amounts of alcohol.

Some huge blond guy caught the empty bucket on its way to the trash. “I did not know that the exceptionally strong sailor had a restaurant,” he said. “Thor of the shiny golden locks!” cheered Wade. “I’m Wade Wilson—come on over here, pull up a chair, try a cheesy puff. You crazy god-types don’t have anything this awesome in Ass-guard.”

“I am sure we don’t,” said Thor. “You humans are very inventive in matters of foodstuffs.”

Logan was pretty sure the intentional mispronunciation went right over the big guy’s blond head.

“Here, here,” Wade insisted, shoving the open bag into Thor’s face.

Logan stared at the coffee pot and willed it to perk faster.

“By Odin’s Beard! This puffy cheese—”

“Cheesy puffs.”

“—is delicious,” Thor went on obliviously. “We must have more of it!”

“Jarvis, you heard the man!” Wade said imperiously, and stuffed his face with more pizza. “And bring us some more booze.”

~Regrettably, Mr. Wilson, there is a strict limit on the amount of alcoholic liquid permitted in the Tower.~

Thor slapped a hand onto the table with a raucous boom. “Then we will go out to imbibe! Come, Wade Wilson, O’Malley’s Pub awaits us!”

Logan was wary of the idea; Wade’s behavior without his chip on was somewhat erratic so far. “Maybe we oughtta just stay in and have soda instead.”

“Stay here then, you old maid,” snorted Thor.

~Once again, I must decline,~ said Jarvis. ~Mr. Wilson is not to leave the Tower. With the behavioral chip inactive, his mental state is extremely unstable and potentially violent. Should he leave the Tower without reactivating the chip, he poses an imminent danger to civilians.~

In a fit of temper, Thor flung the table aside (Wade squeaked a protest and barely saved the pizza).

~I have, however, sent for more cheesy puffs and Slurpees. Perhaps you’ll be so good as to sulk
Thor snorted. “Very well. Wade Wilson, let us see if there is anything to watch on the telly-vision!”

“On the what?” said Wade.

“The telly-vision. It is a large screen which acts much like a scrying stone, and can—”

“You are so precious! Can we keep him, Jamie?”

“Uh-oh,” said Danvers, as she wandered in to steal the first cup of coffee. “Thor’s being precious again. What’d he say this time? Was it pasketti? Suitcase? Popped tarts?”

Thor gestured. “I was merely suggesting, as Wade is not permitted more drink, that we might see if there is some engaging show which might be viewed by use of the telly-vision.”

Danvers just took a long drink from her mug (Wonder Woman). “Why don’t you have Jarvis ask the tee-vee-guy channel?”

“An excellent suggestion!”

Wade squealed like a teenage girl and hugged Thor’s arm. “Precious!” he gushed, and they marched happily out into the sitting room.

Logan lingered in the kitchen long enough to get his own mug of coffee.

“Clint started it,” Danvers said. “After that, it was too damn hilarious to stop, so it turned into our favorite pastime. We’ve got a list somewhere…we’re up to forty-eight words and phrases. Natasha’s gotten all the best ones. Right now, we’re trying to figure out how to persuade him that ‘recycling plants’ are actually ‘bicycling plants’ or something similar.”

Logan sighed. It all reminded him of the way the Rasputin kid kept trying to trick people into saying dirty and self-incriminating things in Russian.

Over the sounds of the TV in the next room, Wade laughed and Thor called out, “Lady Carol, we have chanced upon a Justice League marathon!”

Danvers grinned. “We’ve convinced him they’re historical accounts adapted for children,” she said with deep satisfaction, and strolled out of the kitchen.

.End.

Chapter End Notes

1 Clint is totally watching Top Shot
2 Science-teacher!Pete is my favorite Pete.
3 The drunk scientists were probably wreaking Man of Steel levels of destruction on those poor ants.
4 Phillllllllllllll. <3
A Proposition

Chapter Summary

On the verge of having all his brainware glitches taken care of, a Network Field Agent shows up to offer him a choice: become a full-fledged Keeper or give up his Node and have his memory wiped.

Chapter Notes

there was always going to be a decision to be made, and here it comes.

warnings: crossover between Iron Man Movieverse and X-Men Movieverse (some strange combined AU). the BT universe's Avengers lineup is currently Captain America, Hawkeye, Thor, Captain Marvel, Yellowjacket, Spider-Man, and Iron Man (with Hulk and Black Widow drifting in and out, and Scarlet Witch retired to teach at the X-Mansion). language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f*** and s***).

pairing: arc is Logan/Wade.

timeline: maybe the day after Gradual.

disclaimer: marvel owns all recognizable characters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wade feels like something’s about to snap. He feels like a spring wound too tight.

He wants the work to get done right, but this waiting shit’s for the birds.

“Why don’t you go tell Steve all about the evolution of rock music?” Tony says tersely, head between his hands as he stares at lines of code.

“Like, starting from the fifties, or starting from African influences?”

“Elvis might make an easier segue. Just get out. Go eat something. I’m still waiting on an email from McCoy about what he thinks your medical needs from this program are. Because I have no idea how much sleep you need, compared to the average human. That’s all you actually need it to do, right? I mean, I can leave in the HUD and timeclock if you want, but there’s a whole priority array of bullshit directives jammed in there just waiting to turn you into a mass murderer.”

Wade hesitates. “You…” he says. “So. It’s done? You just get rid of all that and build in a sleep timer, and I’ll be fixed?”
“You said you had a psychotic break. This can’t fix that. But yeah, we can tune it to regulate your various neurotransmitter levels on regular intervals, instead of this stupid manual-override version. And no, that doesn’t constitute ‘done’—we still have to make sure the lighter load is sufficient to stop the hardware malfunctions, so that you stop leaking toxic chemicals into your brain.”

Nervously, Wade shifts from foot to foot.

“Get out already!” Tony reiterates. “Your boredom and fidgeting make this even more difficult. See if Hank’s done with your grumpy boyfriend.”

Wade feels scolded and superfluous. He teleports to their temporary living space (third room from the far end, not in one of the cushy spots that’s farthest from Sir Snores-a-Lot, but snug between the Hulk’s currently vacant room and Hawkdude’s nest). For a moment, he wavers, light-headed.

“Hm. You’re three seconds late.”

He spins, catching himself in a hover when he loses his balance.

Some little Asian chick (maybe half-Asian from the bone structure) is sitting on his bed. She holds up her hands to show that they’re empty. “Chill, I come in peace.”

“How did you…”

“It’s a secret agent thing. Name’s Skye. I used to work with the Strategic Homeland—”

“I know who you are, Agent 5529.”

She raises her eyebrows. “Well, that makes things easier, doesn’t it, Traveler?”

“What do you want? I already saved the multiverse once this month.”

“And I assure you we were all very impressed.” She gives him a patronizing little golf-clap. “I’m here to make a proposition. You have gifts, and a responsibility to use them.”

He irritably clicks the button on his holoprojector and points at his own face. “If this is a gift, I’d like to toss it into the White Elephant pool.”

She doesn’t even flinch. “It’s already been unwrapped, and I don’t think everybody’s had a turn.”

“I get that a lot.”

“We all pay a price for our abilities, Traveler. You have a Node that has for some reason become fond of you. You are exceptionally capable physically. You have enough experience with the Network to rival some of our oldest members. Even setting all that aside, your ability to brainslide without adversely affecting the neurological health of your hosts is worth some intense study.”

“I don’t do it on purpose.”

“And I don’t see red and green as different colors on purpose, but there are still people who can’t do it and consider it miraculous.”

He swallows. “Effcee identifies me with an Omega suffix. I’m already working for you assholes, whether I like it or not.”

“This is a point of schism,” she says gently. “You do have a choice.”
“I have the illusion of a choice,” he retorts. “Same way it’s only an illusion that the cat is either alive or dead. Right? Because there’s a part of the Timestream where I turn left and another one where I turn right.”

“If it really doesn’t make a difference, flip a coin. Here—I’ve got a quarter in my pocket.” She digs it out and holds it up. “Leave it to chance and the mercy of the Schrödinger-Dread Interaction. Or you can choose whether to give up Forecaster and have your memory wiped. You could wake up tomorrow and never remember Nodes or the Hunter or your brainslides again. You could live out a nice long life with your lumberjack boyfriend.”

“With Swiss-cheese memory?”

“You have a laundry list of psychoses, Traveler; the blank spots would practically explain themselves.”

He watches her; she waits. He says, “Except that in the hundreds of years I’ve lived across about a zillion timelines, the only truly good thing I’ve accomplished has been raising amazing kids who don’t exist in this branch. I would forget all about Hope, and Ellie, and Evan. I’d never see them again.”

He thinks he sees her lip tremble, but she gives him a shrug. “You’d never miss them again, either.”

“You know that’s not true. People shape us, whether or not we remember them. I would know something was missing. Maybe it wouldn’t always bother me, but it would sometimes. I’d be doing fine, just going about my business, and I’d see some sweet little Latina baby, and I’d feel like crying without even knowing why.”

The agent sighs and rubs her knees. “You’ve been doing this for too long for me to give you all the pretty lies, Traveler,” she tells him. “But we don’t want you to feel trapped. That leads to the kind of instability that makes you hard to predict…and the Network’s all about predictability.”

They let the silence stretch for a while.

“The new one,” he finally says. “The one I helped unlock. It was supposed to be some…some super-advanced, super-smart Node.”

“Node 250 has been confirmed as an artificial consciousness,” she says with some minor hesitation. She shakes her head. “I don’t see the relevance here.”

“Consciousness. Not intelligence.”

“They came up with a new classification; he’s a sentient construct. Some weird Fidelis thing where he’s absorbing old memories. He’s got intuition and everything. Natasha said that even Six doesn’t totally understand it, and he’s the one who programmed Node 250.”

“So it would be able to see which parts of my memories to take and which ones to leave. It could build me a mem-wipe to engineer a particular branch for me.”

There’s something like sorrow in her eyes, but she feigns disinterest well. “If you like,” she admits. “But wouldn’t it be better to go straight to the source in that case?”

Over by the window, something beeps and a dude is appearing out of thin air, like someone poured hot water on a color-changing kiddie toy.

“Sweet baby Jesus on a unicorn’s back,” Wade mumbles.
“Hi again,” says the guy who looks like a grumpy version of Wade’s old self. “Thanks for the hospitality last time, by the way; I don’t usually get the chance to say that to the people whose brains I hitchhike in[4].”

“Yeah. Uh. Thanks for not getting us killed. New outfit?”

The Savant rolls his eyes. “New one made off the old pattern. My shrink made me get it. I skip my mandatory leave without it.”

“You guys have mandatory vacations.”

“Mandatory psychological wellness leave. All active field agents are required to take a minimum of three days for every six months of active duty—subjective time. The doc said if I didn’t already have years saved up, she’d make me take double leave. As it is, I’m sent home after every assignment.”

“It’s supposed to be a stress-management measure,” Skye puts in. “To prevent mental breakdowns. Especially important if you happen to be almost purely mental, like certain comp-ints who get beamed from brain to brain for work.”

“Yeah, yeah,” mutters the Savant. “Well, Wade, here you are: face-to-face with the multiverse’s most prominent chrononeurologist. I can slice your mind into tidy pieces and throw away the ones that deal with the Network, if you want. But you’ll think all those other lives were a complex set of hallucinations. You’ll think your kids were delusions…comforting fictions you told yourself to ease the loneliness. You’ll pine for people who don’t exist here, people you would never be able to see again if you give up Forecaster. You’ll think that it’s just John, or Victor, or some nebulous nostalgia for the good old days. Jamie will blame it on the implants in your brain. Stark will tune you up, get you set straight. But you’ll still miss your children, Wade. There is no way around that without ruining your branch’s stability.”

Wade rubs his eyes to fight the stinging in them. “That sucks,” he says. “But Stark’s fixing my brainware so that I don’t make any more random hops, so… I mean, even if I do become a Keeper, what are the odds I’ll ever see any of them again anyway?”

“Come with me,” the Savant offers. “Give me six months to study your brainslides. Let me find a way to control them.”

“Six months?”

“Back at the Core. And then right back here, about a second and a half after we leave. They’ll never even know you were gone.”

“What if it doesn’t work?”

Something cold and a little scary flashes through the Savant’s eyes. In a low tone, he growls, “Don’t be such a fucking chicken-shit. Do you know how many people would walk on broken glass to have what you’ve had? Are you gonna just roll over and quit, or are you gonna stand up and take a chance?”

Wade swallows thickly. “Take me to see Eleanor first. Just in case.”

.End.
1 Hank's probably running a bunch of interesting scans on Logan, since his genetic and molecular structure would have to be pretty freaky to do the regeneration thing. [return to text]

2 Skye was way more tolerable in Season Two. She'd make a decent Network employee. [return to text]

3 In a White Elephant gift exchange, wrapped gifts are placed in a pile; the first person picks a present and unwraps it (and shows it to everyone else), and each person afterward has a choice to unwrap a new present or steal a previously unwrapped present. When everybody's had a turn, the first person gets a chance to swap his present for a wrapped present. Some people use more rules to limit swapping (such as leaving gifts wrapped until they've been stolen), but these are the basics. [return to text]

4 Savant!Wade is thanking the Traveler for his assistance in killing the crap out of the Hunter back in Singularity. [return to text]
Visitation

Chapter Summary

If things could go wrong, if Wade might never travel the multiverse again, he wants to see one of his kids one last time.

Chapter Notes

the promised pre-brain-scrambly visit.

**warnings:** crossover between Iron Man Movieverse and X-Men Movieverse (some strange combined AU) plus my Fateverse (dimension-hopy sci-fi). language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus s***).

**pairing:** arc is Logan/Wade, this chapter briefly mentions Wade/Inez.

**timeline:** right after A Proposition.

**disclaimer:** marvel owns all recognizable characters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Visitation

“It’s got a white picket fence,” Wade says.

“And a little doghouse with a red roof,” Skye agrees with a slow nod. “Even though they don’t own a dog.”

“Doghouse and no dog? What’ve they got instead?”

“Three goldfish named Probably, Maybe, and I-Dunno\[1\], an asthmatic guinea pig named Goose, and a fat orange cat named Alf.”

“Not Garfield?”

“She likes Alf reruns, okay? Don’t judge.”

She and the Savant started up the front walk, but Wade hesitated.

“Does she have a mom in this world?” he asked.

Skye knocks on the door. “She has a great dad and an awesome big sister. That’s more than a lot of little girls get, and she feels pretty lucky to have it.”
When the door opens, there she is: perfect and beautiful and about five years old, soft brown curls in disarray (nothing like the neat ponytails Carmelita and Preston always put her in), big brown eyes curious and excited. “Skye!” she gasps, jumping.

With a laugh, Skye catches her and hoists her up onto one hip. “Hey, monkey!”

“You’re not supposed to knock on your own door, dum-dum,” Ellie informs her sternly.

“Well, I was playing a trick on someone to see the look on his sanctimonious face. Where’s Papi—at work?”

Ellie nods. “Outlaw’s in the kitchen. We’re making apple turnunders!”

“Turnovers?”

“She says that’s a dumb name and turnunder is more fun. Are you staying?” And she sticks out her lower lip and pouts for all she’s worth.

“Oh, monkey,” Sky says, and sighs. “You know I’d stay all day every day if I could. Buuuut work, work, work.”

“Mr. Phil came by yesterday. He cleaned. A lot. Papi told him he didn’t have to, but he did the thing where he pretends he didn’t hear, and he said cobwebs can trap allergens.”

Skye carries the little girl inside. “Ugh, Coulson…” she mutters. “Well, monkey, Mr. Phil has a fairy godmother complex, and he thinks Papi can’t take care of us by himself.”

“But you’re practically a grown-up!”

“I know!” Skye agrees with exaggerated insult, before calling out, “Outlaw? I brought two this time.”

Wade feels like he’s in the Twilight Zone. Or maybe on Candid Camera. He thought he got over that feeling a few dozen borrowed lives ago…

Inez is wearing flour-dusted sweatpants and the world’s frumpiest plaid shirt as she slides a baking sheet into the oven. She looks at Wade and the Savant. “Hi, Wades,” she says brusquely, and sets a timer.

“Uh,” says Wade. “Hi.”

After a pause, Skye punches the Savant’s bicep. “Don’t be rude to my future step-step-foster-mom,” she hisses through a frozen smile.

“Step-step…” the Savant says.

“Yeah. Papi was single when he fossed me, then he got married, so his wife was my step-foster-mom. And then she…y’know. So the next one’s a double-step at least.”

“Don’t getcher hopes up, sweetie,” Inez drawls. “Your papi’s got that irritating Wade habit of thinking he gets everybody he loves killed. I figure he’ll drag ass for another year, bare minimum.”

“Nooooo,” whines Ellie. “I’ll pout at him! I’ll pout until he marries you! You have to be Skye’s step-step-foster-mom and my stepmom. We’ll wage thumb-wars over it if we have to. We’ll get Mr. Phil and Miss Preston to help.”
“We totally will,” Skye agrees. “Soooo, don’t be rude to my future step-step-foster-mom.”

The Savant crosses his arms. “Sorry,” he grunts. “You just remind me of my shrink, ‘s all. I’m oh-five-six.”

Inez tips her chin up. “Ah. Zombie-Slayer-Hope’s your mom.”

“She’s not my—I’m three thousand years older than she is.”

“She’s so your mom. You know her duty reports are full of soppy gushing about you? She’s real proud of how far you’ve come.”

“I guess she’s gotta say something to explain near-catastrophic delays in her work.”

For a moment, Inez looks like she might press the issue, but then she switches her attention to the girls and says, “Well, ladies, these turnunders are gonna be about half an hour—how’s about you take Shy Wade out back and show him the treehouse while Grumpy Wade helps me clean up a bit?”

Wade assumes the Savant is ‘Grumpy Wade.’

Skye and Eleanor each grab a hand and lead him out the back door.

‘Treehouse’ is accurate in a much more literal sense than Wade expected.

Instead of the typical rudimentary platform (perhaps with railings or a roof for the truly enterprising), it’s like something out of Robinson Crusoe built on the scale of a kindergartener. A rope ladder (which can be drawn up, naturally) leads to a small open platform like a vestibule, which in turn has a rope bridge, a narrow plank, and a climbing net leading to other trees. There’s a lookout perch (expertly camouflaged with leaves and moss) that gives a view of the driveway and both corners of the street. There’s a roofed area with a metal firepit circled by low benches. There’s a proper hut with shuttered windows and a door (all of which bar from the inside, Ellie is proud to point out) that holds a child-sized cot, a bookshelf, and a table with two chairs. There’s even a little latrine (which Ellie very seldom uses, because ‘she who fills the bucket empties it,’ her father has decreed).

“Mami hated it,” Ellie confides with a face of deep disappointment. “She said it wasn’t safe. She made Papi put out nets and cushions. It didn’t feel faraway like that. It didn’t feel separate. I like it better like this.”

“It’s our little getaway,” Skye agrees fondly. “If we miss Papi, or we’re mad at him, or we just want to be alone for a little while, we come up here.”

He makes a show of looking around the little hut. “It’s nice.”

Ellie goes to a wall and pats what looks like a map drawn in crayon. “Papi and I made a drawing of the treehouse I wanted, and Outlaw and Tasky built it[3]. He cheats—he watched her and then he could do carpenter-things.”

“Sounds like she’ll make an extra-good stepmom, then,” he tells her with a nod of approval.

After a thoughtful pause, Ellie goes to her little bedside and brings back a hairbrush and some hair ties. “Can you do braids? Skye sucks at braids.”

“Traitor,” Skye hisses.

“Sure, I can do braids,” Wade says as he accepts the appropriate tools.
Ellie promptly plops down on a little chair with her back to him. “I want braids like Anna in Frozen. Anna’s the best; she punched Hans so hard his face went wonky. Papi slowed the movie down so we could see.”

“Two princess pigtails, coming right up.”

Weasel (Weasels, actually, in a couple of different universes) used to give him shit about it, but braiding little girls’ hair is a necessary parenting skill. A Hope was unfortunate enough to be his first proper daughter, and they jointly suffered a full year of practicing on dolls and still getting it wrong before he could fix her hair without making her cry or having it come undone in five minutes. Jamie would laugh. Or maybe he’d understand…

While he works, Skye asks about school and teachers and friends (possibly for Wade’s benefit).

“I’m so good at math now that I can sit wherever I want, but I’m not allowed to raise my hand anymore to answer questions. Other kids have to have a chance, Miss Melanie says. So it’s like musical chairs now. I go around the classroom until there’s a minute left before class, and then I sit down at the closest desk. Prem likes to follow me, because he says I tell good stories.”

“Prem’s convinced that Papi is a reincarnation of Rama,” Skye explains. “So he’s always asking for more stories.”

“We’ve definitely done some stuff straight outta the Ramayana,” Wade admits. “Armies of beast-men, rains of arrows, slaying giant serpents…”

“When the turnunders are done, do you want ice cream with them?” asks Ellie. “Outlaw says we can have ice cream with them or whip-cream—”

“Whipped cream,” Skye corrects.

“—but not both, because both is greedy.”

“How do you like yours?” Wade counters.

“I like mine with bunner-sotch ice cream.”

“Butterscotch,” says Skye.

“Now, Skye,” Wade scolds with a wag of his finger. “If the monkey wants blubber-socks ice cream and pasketti, she can darn well have it.”

“Ewww, who would have ice cream and sketties?” Ellie yelps. “We have manila, bunner-sotch, and moose prints.”

“Vanilla, butterscotch, and moose tracks,” Skye translates.

“That’s what I said. Now do Skye’s hair like Elsa, because she’s older.”

“That’s not very fair, making her be Elsa just because she’s older,” Wade points out. “What if Skye wants to be Anna? Or Kristoff? Or Sven?”

Eleanor looks up at Skye very, very seriously and says, “Skye, I don’t think you would look very good with ank-lers.”

It takes Skye several seconds to open her mouth without laughing (judging by the hilarious look on
her face). “Um,” she says at that point. “Ant-lers. And you’re probably right.”

They settle for ‘a braid like Rapunzel: you know, kind of like Elsa but different.’

So they have their turnovers (turnunders) with ice cream (even the Savant, who unsmilingly calls it ‘bunner-sotch’ after Ellie explains the flavor options), and Ellie regales them all with a thrilling story about the time she found a dead squirrel on the side of the road.

“Well, that was delicious,” Skye tells Outlaw. “But we’ve gotta be getting back to work.”

“I’ll help with the dishes,” Wade offers.

“Naw, sweetie,” says Outlaw, patting his hand in a way that somehow doesn’t feel patronizing. “’Round here, guests don’t do the washing-up. You take care; maybe we’ll see ya again sometime.”

The Savant stands and pokes some little palm-computer-thing. “Conduit Control, this is Keeper 056, confirm.”

Wade goes to Eleanor while their ride gets prepped. She smiles up, blithe and half-expectant and judgment-free. He rubs his thumb over a smudge of ice cream on her little round cheek. “You be a good little monkey for Outlaw, okay?”

“I will,” she promises.

“Traveler?” Skye calls.

Time to let the greatest minds in the multiverse tear his brain apart to see what makes it so damn special.

“Well,” Skye says, tilting her head. “She’ll be all right. Cross my heart and hope to cry.”

.End.

Chapter End Notes

1 When we were tiny tots, my sister and I had three goldfish named Toriaezu, Tabun, and Shiranai (which would more closely translate to ‘possibly, maybe, and I-dunno,’ but ‘probably’ is a better name for a fish because shutup that’s why). [return to text]

2 This version of Eleanor has been nicknamed ‘monkey’ because she was a climber at an early age. [return to text]

3 I think Taskmaster would be the most devoted Cool Uncle ever, upon meeting Ellie. [return to text]

4 I’m one of those trolls who tries to get little kids to say words wrong. [return to text]
**A Quick Jaunt**

**Chapter Summary**

The Savant brings the Traveler to the Network Core, the better to Do Science™. Time to poke the Thing with the Stuff and watch what it does.

**Chapter Notes**

lab rat time!

**warnings:** crossovers everywhere plus my Fateverse (dimension-hopy sci-fi), rampant dad-mode!Wade. language: pg-13 (primetime tv plus f*** and s***).

**pairing:** in general, the Blood & Tears Progression is Logan/Wade (only obliquely mentioned in this part).

**timeline:** right after *Visitation*; leads into *Consult*.

**disclaimer:** marvel owns all recognizable characters.

**general notes:** 1) the non-blue Beast here is the Nicholas Hoult version. 2) i’m thinking D’Onofrio!Fisk and Gunton!Owlsley here. 3) have some AoA!Loki and some America.

and if you haven't already bookmarked *The Fateverse Glossary* and *The Fateverse Appendix*, here are the links; they explain almost all Fateverse terminology and many of the characters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**A Quick Jaunt**

The future is as bright as Wade remembers[1].

*So bright, I gotta wear shades.*

He kind of hates it.

A guy with a mustache (a Serious Mustache, like, possibly stolen straight off Sam Elliott’s face[2]) calmly punches some buttons on a control panel. “Confirm the record,” he says. “Conduit transfer completed as scheduled, Core Standard fifteen-hundred nineteen hours. Authorization Transporter 1008. Keepers 056 and 188 on-site with Node 098 Ragnarok.”

The room’s computer gives a beep. ~Confirmed~
The Savant leads the way out of the room, grump mode fully engaged. They get in a lift, go down a few levels, then board some kinda subway-shuttle-thing. It’s creepily clean, and none of the other passengers give them a second glance.

When they get off, there are a couple of guards lounging beside some kind of checkpoint, watching absently while each person holds a wrist over some kind of scanner before moving on[1].

“Keeper 056 bringing a non-imprinted subject through,” the Savant tells the guards.

He scans through. Skye scans through.

Wade wonders if he should just walk, or hold his wrist out, or what.

“Come on, dumbass,” the Savant grunts. “Just walk. We’ll get you a subdermal after you meet the mad scientists.”

The scanner makes an angry beep when Wade passes, but a guard swipes his own wrist and says, “Escorted subject, authorization Warder 22503.”

And away they go.

“Stay close,” Skye warns him. “Since you’ve been authorized under escort, the automated systems won’t react as long as you’re within two meters of us.”

“And if I lag behind?”

“You’ll get zapped, and we’ll have to fill out a lot of paperwork. It’s not fun for anybody, so I don’t advise it.”

Another lift down, some kind of courtyard with a bamboo grove on one side and a koi pond on the other, a long corridor.

They stop next to a door with a nice, big, easy-to-read sign.

Chrononeurology: Special Projects
Henry McCoy NC212-δ

Skye touches the panel next to the door.

~“One moment—I’m just—oh, dear—”~

Something small and hollow clatters to the floor.

When the door swishes open, a non-blue Hank McCoy is standing there in a coffee-stained lab coat, pushing his glasses up his nose. “Never mind, I’ll have Moira bring another cup. Traveler, Savant, it’s very exciting to meet you both. Dr. Wilson, I’ve read so much of your work, it’s just—it’s an honor, sir.”

“Bones. The fanboyin’ can come later. Let’s get this show on the road. The mook needs to be fully registered and given an ident imprint so that Skye can get the ball rolling on his accommodations. He’s consented to six months of study, subjective time.”

The precious little nerd wilts a little. “Oh, is that all? I—I mean, excellent, yes, good. I’m sure we’ll learn a lot. Um. Len isn’t due for another ten seconds, and it’s technically illegal to start without him, so I’m just gonna go ahead and stall a little longer—”
“You’re early,” says a guy with a long green ponytail.

“I walk fast,” the Savant tells him unrepentantly.

Clearing his throat, the green-haired dude shakes Wade’s hand. “Traveler. I’m Leonard Samson, Head Proctor. I’ll be serving as ethical oversight during this study. If you have any concerns about your treatment or any of the experiments being performed on you, don’t hesitate to inform me.”

McCoy startles. “Oh! I’m so, so sorry, I didn’t actually introduce myself…” He seizes Wade’s hand and shakes it enthusiastically. “Hank McCoy, Head Medic. Of course you’ve met Dr. Wilson—he’s the Network’s foremost Chrononeurologist. He knows more about the effects of trans-universal travel on brains than, um, pretty much anybody, ever. I promise, you are in very good hands with us. Over the course of the study, we’ll probably be calling on the expertise of a few other specialists, all with excellent records and credentials.”

“I’ve actually had that grumpy bastard on a ride-along,” Wade says tapping his own temple. “Guess it’s only fair, though, since I’ve hitched a ride in his brain, too.”

This lab is somehow devoid of that eerie, unsettling quality that was layered neck-deep in the labs back at the X-Mansion when Storm made him get checked out. There’s sunshine, and a lived-in, professorial kind of atmosphere that makes him think of Pete and MJ’s room in Avengers Tower (he’d gotten a peek when Pete proudly showed off his Captain America comic book collection).

This version of Moira (Medic 2110) is petite and sassy, and brings enough coffee for everybody (and enough sugar for a pair of Wades). They all sit drinking while she drags a weird medical tool across the inside of Wade’s wrist that tickles somewhere under his skin.

Like an amateur with a razor blade.

“That’s not funny in this context.”

_Aw, sure it is. Remember, down the block, not across the street!

“Seriously. Stop.”

Moira ignores him. “All right; that’ll scan your ident at any Network facility or checkpoint now. We can’t let you leave the district, however, so it will ping a lockdown alert if you attempt to cross one of the bridges.”

“Shall we begin?” McCoy asks brightly.

“Right,” says the Savant. “We have the detail scan Six took when we aced the Hunter, and Skye very thoughtfully scalped the computer servers at Avengers Tower when we came to pick you up, so we have the broad strokes of how your brainware operates. We’re gonna start out with some low-power signal interpretation capture; with any luck, we can trigger a jump and get a resonance scan of your brainslide.”

“Oh, here we go again,” Wade mutters under his breath. He has a mental image of Moira in a Vanna White getup, waiting while McCoy tells Wade to spin the wheel. “Can I buy a vowel?”

They all look at him.

Skye pats him on the shoulder. “I’m gonna get back to work now—good luck with your Wheel of Random Destinations.”
McCoy gestures to a cushioned, ergo-whatsit-shaped reclined lounge thing. “If you would please sit over here? I promise there are no needles or scalpels involved. This is completely non-invasive, and Dr. Samson will make sure we don’t do anything untoward while you’re gone.”

The space-age chair turns out to be super comfortable. Wade wants to distrust that, but if he’s going to spend six months in a chair, he figures it might as well be a nice one.

“Okay, we should be able to tell right away if you brainslide,” Moira tells him as she pokes some kind of computer pad.

“Well, just be careful,” he replies. “Sometimes my body…wanders off while I’m gone.”

“I’m sure there’s nothing to worry ab—”

Evan is fifteen and crying. Wade usually tells him he cries too easily (really only because seeing his kids cry makes him want to cry; Hope and Ellie hardly ever cry, thank God).

There’s a bloody scrape on Evan’s knee, sluggishly closing up. There’s a bloody towel in his left hand: he’s sitting on the edge of his bed and dabbing gingerly at the wound.

That much blood on a regenerator means the wound used to be a lot worse. Like, compound fracture worse. Shotgun to the kneecap worse. Nearly-severed limb worse.

Wade has a gun in his hand before he really processes the fact that he’s angry. “Who did that to you?”

“Please, don’t,” Evan says thickly, sniffling. “It’s not that bad—look, it stopped bleeding.”

“Just tell me which one of those little fuckers—”

“Don’t. Please, Wade, you’ll just be proving them right. Sometimes, the only way to win is to bleed. You taught me that.”

“I’m pretty sure this isn’t what I meant.”

“Well, it’s what the Professor meant. It’s what Headmaster Logan means. Maybe I’m a freak, but I’m not a monster.”

“You’re not. And if you can spend a decade proving everyone wrong, I can survive high school.”

Wade sits down on the floor and hates himself. “You’re a good kid, Ev.”

With one more cautious dab at his bloody knee, Evan moves from the bed to the floor and leans his head on Wade’s shoulder. “You’re a good godfather, Wade.”

Just as he’s about to make some kind of denial, someone startles them by banging on the door.

“Hey, freak!” someone calls. “What’s with the blood trail? You didn’t murder anybody, did you?”

Wade nudges Evan with his elbow. “Your boyfriend’s worried about you.”

“Shut up, he’s not my boyfriend,” Evan hisses, but his cheeks are a hilarious shade of bright violet.

“I know you’re in there!” the other boy says crossly, pounding on the door again. “Evan, what the
hell is going on? I’m gonna give you to the count of three before I blast the damn door. I swear, if you’re dying in there, I’ll beat the crap outta you!”

“You’d better go,” Evan says, getting to his feet.

Wade snorts, but climbs out the window.

“—two, thr—”

“Quentin, please don’t blow up my door,” Evan says.

The pink-haired brat casts a suspicious glare around the room. “What’s with the blood? And you better not say something lame like you ‘fell down the stairs.’ I take my job as Student Body President pretty seriously.”

“Out of spite.”

“It doesn’t get much more serious than the spite of a telepath.”

Evan beams. “I’m okay now, I promise. Look—good as new.”

“Yeah, well, you shouldn’t let people hassle you when there’s proper authori—”

Someone’s cell phone rings.

Wade wakes up on the funky chair in McCoy’s lab.

“Fascinating,” the nerdy guy says with a huge grin.

The Savant takes the computer pad from Moira. “We tracked the transmission, identified the branch. Don’t know what sent him back, though. Something here? Something there? Electro-mag transmission? Psychosomatic trigger? Maybe we should get the Cartographer’s array in place…”

McCoy waves a light in Wade’s eyes one at a time. “Well, if you could perhaps just warn us when you try the next triggering frequ—”

Some guy is cowering at swordpoint under Wade’s boot.

Awkward.

A phone is ringing.

“Is that me?” Wade wonders.

“It’s m-m-mine,” squeaks his captive.

Wade waits.

The cowering guy whimpers.

The phone keeps ringing.

“You wanna answer that? Could be important. Maybe you won a cruise[5].”

He holds it up.

Wade blinks. He takes the phone. “Yello?”

~“I can see you’re not a man to be trifled with, Deadpool. You’ll get your money.”~

“Wait, I’m confused.” Wade takes the blade away from his captive’s throat, but keeps him pinned. “Who is this, exactly?”

The dude on the other end of the line growls a little, like he thinks Wade’s jerking his chain. ~“This is Wilson Fisk. Now, if you’ll leave my accountant alone, I’ll arrange for the rest of your fee to be remitted.”~

“Good,” Wade says, trying to remember whether he’s ever been to this universe. “Right. Because Deadpool is not a man to be trifled with. I’ll, uh…I’ll ace your whole bureaucratic cabinet if you try this crap again. Y’know. ‘Bitch betta have ma money,’ and all that.” He shrugs at the guy under his boot, because he really doesn’t have a clue how he ended up in this situation.

Kingpin is quiet in that special way that makes Wade think the veins in his face are bulging out. ~“I would expect nothing less. Good day.”~

The call cuts out.

“Huh. Coolio.” Wade tosses the phone back to his sniveling pal.

“My bad,” the Savant drawls, deadpan.

“You did that on purpose,” Wade accuses him.

“Right, but we learned a lot. Next!”

“Hateyousomuch—”

“One of us is gonna have to go out there,” Loki decides, inspecting the blood on his hand before putting pressure back on the wound in his side. “Of the three of us, you’re the best choice. While the idiot’s arm will reattach long before I can be back in fighting form, it’ll take time, and we’re standing targets until then.”

America clenches her hands together between her knees. “I’m afraid,” she hisses. Her eyes are wet, and her lips tremble.

“That’s good,” Loki tells her. He spits blood to one side (thoughtfully not the side where Wade’s sitting). “That means you’re not stupid.”

“Puto[6], sometimes I wanna punch you so hard the All-Mother will feel it.”

“I get that a lot.”

Wade listens to the muted grinding noise of severed bone growing back together, and the wet squelch of muscle and skin following suit. “He’s right, Rica.”

“My name’s not Rica[2],” she hisses (for probably the dozenth time, if the tone’s any indication). “My name is America. You know: land of the free, home of the brave?”

“You can’t be brave if you don’t start out afraid.”
Loki points with his free hand. “Listen to the imbecile.”

Wade draws a breath. “America, he’s right. You’ve gotta go out there.”

“But Kate—”

That’s right, Hawkeye’s about to get her soul nommed.

*How do I know that already? I just got here.*

“Don’t worry about Kate. I’ll get Kate. But I need you to distract those guys, or I’ll never make it to her. We’ve asked a lot of you kids, I know…and I understand if you wanna quit after this. I’ll be proud of you no matter what you do when we get outta here, but first I need you to help me save your girlfriend. What if it was the other way around? What if they had you, and Kate was stuck with us invalids? She wouldn’t just give up on you.”

“Kate’s braver than I am.”

“Bullshit she is. You tried to save your whole dimension when you were six.”

She bursts to her feet. “It’s easy to be brave when you’re a kid—your world is tiny, and you don’t know how impossible it is to save!”

Loki laughs, chokes, coughs up more blood, spits again (so charming, really). “Dear girl, your world is going to have her soul devoured in about ten minutes. My shield will shatter in three, and a hundred skrulls will rush in here and drag us all out there to join her. If you can just distract them while the moron brings her to me, I can take back the shard that makes her so very appetizing in the first place. Easy, right?”

Wade grimaces through the stinging burn of nerves waking back up. “You heard ‘im. I need another five minutes, and we’ve only got three.”

“What if I fuck up? What if I fail, and we all die anyway?”

“Why are mortals so tiresome?” whines Loki.

“Okay,” says Wade. “Okay, super-fast pep talk, maximum effort. You’ll get a kick outta this, since you’re all cosmopolitan and interdimensional. If we count every single resonant iteration in the central portion of the timestream, there are about two hundred and fifty trillion of me. That’s twenty-five with thirteen zeroes after it.”

“I know that—I can see, like, a quarter of them.”

“But get this: there are eight of you. Eight! The universes need a whole bunch of me, so there are a whole bunch of me. If they only need eight of you, America, how much do you think each one of you can get done? How many skrulls do you think you can punch in one day?”

“I hate to rush you,” drawls Loki. “But I am, in all likelihood, about to lose consciousness. Best of luck, group selfie when we win. Please don’t draw things on my face.”

America flexes her fists and takes a deep breath.

Wade nods at her. “Hey, Ri—America?”

“Yeah?”
“You ever try punching a regenerator with a portal the size of a softball? Juuuuust big enough for, say, a shoulder joint, or a kidney, or a pre-frontal cortex?”

She flashes him a fierce grin as the first skrulls start to break through their shitty, haphazard barricade.

“He’s back,” Moira announces as she squints at Wade’s left eye and scribbles things on her datapad.

“I feel tired,” Wade notices with some concern. “I’ve done six hops in a day and not felt tired.”

“In light of this aberration, I would like the research to stop for the day,” the green-haired dude says.

The Savant fiddles with his portable for a bit. “Okay, we’ll stop here, then. I’ll take the data and put my head together with Mimi and Six, and maybe the Old Man.”


Wade doesn’t know how he knows there should be a capital letter there. ‘Doctors’ like ‘Doctor Who’ time-traveling crazies?

“We’re scientists, for fuck’s sake,” growls the Savant. “I can get past personal hang-ups for science. You understand this shit is my goddamn life’s work, right?”

Cowed, McCoy adjusts his glasses and pretends to be busy with some kind of control panel. “Right, yes, of course. Um. Traveler, we’ll escort you to your accommodations. Depending on how you feel in the morning, we’ll either try some more signal capture or simply analyze your cerebral structure.”

Now that he has a subdermal-whatever, Wade scans through all the checkpoints just fine. The scanner at the door of the housing building is much bigger and shinier, and identifies him by his subject designation: Subject Designate Wade Wilson WM562-Omega – Welcome home, Keeper 188.

Apparently, even temporary housing for Keepers is posh as hell. He’s got a furnished suite like something out of a Park Hyatt: bedroom, enormous bathroom, sitting area, kitchenette (which really just consists of a food synthesizer, a nifty future microwave thing, and a cold storage drawer full of fresh fruit and veggies). The view from the floor-to-ceiling windows in the sitting room is nothing but ocean and sky, as far as the eye can see.

Classy.

He misses Jamie.

The hell with our girlish figure, let’s see what these assholes have in their replicator banks.

He starts systematically ordering up and tasting absolutely everything on the food synthesizer’s menu.

Except gagh\[8\]. He skips that. Even the chocolate-covered version.

.End.
1 Timbuk 3 reference, lol. [return to text]

2 Sam Elliott’s mustache is the mustache all other mustaches aspire to be. It’s the king of mustaches. [return to text]

3 While there is a near-constant stream of identity verification in the Fidelis District, most of those are quick scans of a subdermal imprint of some kind (no, I don’t know how they would make something like that work for regenerators, but they somehow did, at least temporarily). Only a few key points would use a full-on chronometric scan. [return to text]

4 *author’s hand slips on keyboard* Oh, look, some fluffy pre-Quevan… [return to text]

5 Fifth Element reference. [return to text]

6 A terrible Spanish pejorative specifically aimed at a man and implying that his machismo is lacking. [return to text]

7 Cute/pretty/good, but in a way that would be kind of diminishing to a badass inter-dimensional superhero like America. [return to text]

8 A popular Klingon dish. [return to text]
Doc Samson chats with the Traveler in a break from the Savant’s experiments.

The Impossible Chair

Wade can’t really figure out how the chairs are real.

They’re, like…unreasonably comfortable. Then again, this is The Future™[1], so they probably had an entire think tank devoted to making the most comfortable chairs in the multiverse: chairs so perfect they faded from awareness.

Wade has to keep checking that he’s not floating.

**Nope, still on the chair.**


He blinks. “I don’t understand the question.”

Samson tilts his head a little. “How are your neighbors?”

“Yeah, still not understanding.”

“Well, are you getting on with them? Are they…loud, friendly, quiet, creepy?”

“Um. Kind of normal-ish? I guess? Jessica’s kind of a misanthrope, so I take it as a good sign that she only sneered a little when she said, ‘welcome to the neighborhood.’ Chocolate Captain America is smokin’ hot, but he’s got this wife who’s built like a really hot half-orc, or Jason Momoa. I think she could snap me in half in a way that only *sounds* sexy. Fortunately, she has the temperament of
Daria. Do you get that reference? Did you have MTV here?

“We didn’t, but I understand your meaning. Do you like your quarters? You can modify anything you like—as long as the result isn’t hazardous, of course.”

“Uh, yeah…” Wade shifts and checks for the chair again. “Look, I’m just as sane as I never was, pal. The experiments aren’t really having any kind of effect on my stress levels or my emotions or whatever. I mean, not more than usual.”

“But you miss James.”

Asshole.

“Yeah, thanks for that, Doc,” Wade snorts. “I never would’ve known I missed my goddamn boyfriend if you hadn’t dragged your head-shrinking meat-hooks right through that one. Good thing you’re not supposed to be making me feel better.”

Samson makes a note. “Feel better,” he says. “Implying that you’re not exactly content with the current situation.”

“I don’t know what you want me to say.”

“Good. I find that leads to more honesty. Say whatever’s on your mind; that’s what I’m for, really. Think of me as…a professional explainer who is also a professional listener.”

“Pfft. Okay, Guinan. What the hell is with these chairs?”

“They’re the product of twenty years of ergonomic and fatigue studies across all Network Employees, plus six thousand cumulative hours of materials research. We have made the perfect chair—it’s just as comfortable for over seventy percent of our non-human employees, too.”

“So you sell it to bankroll shit?”

“Oh, no. Any Network technology that we allow to leave the District is considered a non-tradable item. It can be given away, but never bought or sold, even in part. The penalty for monetary redistribution of non-tradable goods is generally single-instance retuning, occasionally escalating to erasure. The Chair is donated to hospitals and cat cafés on a regular basis.”

“Cat cafés.”

“Well, it wouldn’t do to be trapped under a sleeping cat on an uncomfortable chair. We did offer the Chair to various restaurants, but it turns out that most restaurants want you to eat, pay, and leave as quickly as possible.”

“How does that work here in Star Trek land?”

Samson blinks politely.

Guy must’ve learned that from somebody Japanese…

Wade makes a prompting motion with one hand. “You don’t have money here on the Island. So people don’t pay for things.”

“So they stay wherever they wish to be for as long as their duties and desires permit it,” Samson says with a shrug. “We devote quite a lot of resources to making sure all work is as comfortable and
healthful as possible for Network Employees, Wade. Those whose work requires a great deal of standing, for example, get the shoe equivalent of the Chair, and are required to perform certain simple exercises on duty to prevent bad circulation. Analysts are given a very carefully balanced set of lighting conditions and a recommended number of eyeblinks per duty shift, and are required to use enlarged fonts on all readers to reduce eyestrain.”

“And listeners like you?”

Samson gives a brief smile. “There are no other Proctors quite like me, Wade. Generally, mental health Proctors are given leeway to practice in whatever way we find most productive. Our choices are judged based on whether we evaluate our patients on the appropriate schedule, whether our patients’ personality profiles remain stable, and whether we can produce desired changes in our patients’ personality profiles.

“Maybe we don’t want a particular Employee’s depression to improve—” he goes on, waving a hand. “Perhaps she works best when she’s two steps above a maudlin breakdown. Or maybe we want another Employee’s energy levels reduced for the stability of his working environment—we would have to carefully induce either tranquility or malaise, and only a Proctor’s training can tell him how and how much. It’s interesting that you compare us to Roddenberry’s pseudo-utopian future, where replicators have eliminated the need for hard currency and the drive of life has been diverted from the acquisition of wealth to pursuits of knowledge and happiness. To be perfectly frank, the Network is an absolute totalitarian dictatorship that happens to operate on a socialist system of carefully evaluated equity—which is not the same as equality. The System Administrator has the final say on everything, and we have no system in place to depose or replace him. We trust that he is utterly incorruptible, and that all his decisions lead to the optimum stability of all universes. The reason we have no money is that everything we need is provided for us in a rigidly pre-determined fashion and many things we want are provided on a regulated basis.”

Wade’s immediate instinct is rebellion.

Okay, so defiance is Wade’s instinctive response to most things.

But it’s just words. A totalitarian dictatorship sounds pretty fucked up, and it would be if the guy in charge were a human being. And if people weren’t free to quit their jobs here whenever they want.

“You guys can quit, though, right? You can just say you’re tired of it and go back out into the world?”

“Yes and no. Employees who have undergone Life Extension treatments are obligated to pay back at least sixty percent of their most recent treatment before they can terminate employment, which is why they are rigorously evaluated before undergoing a treatment. Other than that, provided they relinquish all restricted items, they are free to quit at any point, and Network service generally screens very positively on outside employment applications. We have a current turnover rate of approximately three percent. Stress, mental breakdowns, loneliness, and nostalgia are cited as the most common reasons for departure. That stress, however, is nearly always the result of a lack of forthrightness with the Employee’s mental health Proctor. So, if there’s anything you want to get off your chest, any questions you want answered…”

“Why are you telling me all this?” Wade asks, suspicious.

“To see how you react to the knowledge,” Samson admits with a half-shrug. “That, too, is a Proctor’s job. We study, we predict. Every word I say is chosen to produce a specific reaction from you. The information I divulge, the phrases I use to do so, the order in which I do it—all of that is designed to create a predictable sequence of thoughts and emotions. I have studied personality
profiles nearly all of my adult life, and Wades are a particular passion. You happen to be a member of a fairly standard template: extremely reasonable, family-oriented, altruistic, pragmatic when necessary, quick to violence once enemies are known. Very similar to the Sysadmin, in fact.”

Wade fidgets.

*That’s very creepy. I feel sullied and unusual*[^5].

Samson points with his pen. “And there’s what Wades like to call the ‘I’ve been touched by Uncle Bob in the no-no place’ reaction. But I promise you will only exhaust yourself if you try to analyze your every reaction to see what benefit I gain from it. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

“Freud was a fucking nutcase[^6].”

Samson smiles indulgently.

“And you knew I was going to say that. So what was the point of this whole conversation?”

“To be absolutely certain of your personality, to judge your current mental stability, and to give you something to think about besides your dysfunctional, obsessive, borderline-abusive relationship.”

“What do I do these days that’s abusive?” Wade squawks.

“Who said you’re the abuser?”

“I’m—that’s not—”

“You haven’t self-harmed in all the time you’ve been away from him. And no: binge-eating doesn’t count in your case, considering your body’s optimum calorie intake.”

“H-he doesn’t—”

“You’re breathing designer air right now, and your food synthesizer was programmed only with items you would either recognize or enjoy, but not necessarily both. Even your neighbors were carefully chosen. I’ll see you at the lab tomorrow.”

And Samson just gets up and leaves.

Wade feels twisted-up and wrung-out.

Was that the point of the rapidfire ‘mwahaha’ shit at the end?

He turns off his projector (and why the hell did he bother, when the damn shrink apparently knows all the ugliest parts of him anyway?) and goes to sit on the couch (not the same kind of comfortable as the chairs…maybe so people won’t spend unhealthy amounts of time watching TV?).

“I could self-harm if I wanted!” he tells the blank screen.

But the urge isn’t there.

He spent years playing around, seeing how fast he healed from what, seeing how much things hurt, seeing whether he’d hurt worse before, whether he’d be okay with hurting that way again, whether he should avoid that kind of injury at all costs.

Ripping out fingernails, there’s one he can’t stand. He’d rather lose the whole finger. Weird, since he sometimes chews his fingertips literally to the bone.
Walking on broken glass or hot coals, not as awful as it sounds. Just messy.

Tooth-pulling used to be annoying because of all the blood and the little spurts of light-headedness, but his body kind of got accustomed to it and he learned to just spit the blood at people.

He flexes his right arm, extending the blade.

Getting that put in hurt. It really fucking hurt. He’d rather fall off a fucking building than do that shit again (besides, he’s got that hovering thing going on now, so falling off buildings isn’t really a big deal).

He should cut himself. He should slice a big ol’ gash in his arm, leave a nice stain, just to show the shrink who’s boss.

He sets the blade against his skin.

Do it. Go on. Just a slice. No biggie. It’s sharp as fuck, so it hardly even stings.

He presses down, determined—

He flops over onto his side with a huff.

“Goddammit,” he mutters, sheathing the armblade again.

And what the fuck does it mean, that he really, truly doesn’t feel like hurting himself, and hasn’t since he got here?

Is it something in the air?

‘Designer air,’ right? Gotta be it.

It’s not like Jamie makes him want to hurt himself.

Right?

No. No, that’s stupid. It’s stupid! Jamie takes care of him, Jamie puts up with him. Jamie came looking for him, and watches him sleep, and makes sad faces when he hurts himself.

Oh, shit.


“I hurt myself to hurt him,” Wade realizes.

They’re regenerators; they get used to physical pain. It hurts, yeah, but it doesn’t bother them. So he could beat the shit out of Jamie all day and he’d just get that raised eyebrow and an exasperated ‘are you done?’

But even a drop of blood, and it’s all soft hands and tearful kisses and ‘why would you do that?’

It’s the only way he can punish Jamie without leaving.

And he wouldn’t even have thought about this shit if fucking Samson hadn’t fucking mentioned it and told him not to think about it, so here he is, doing exactly what that green-haired fucker programmed him to do, thinking about elephants (metaphorically)\[2\].
He runs to the food synth and orders every chocolate item on the menu.

Even the gagh[8].

And then he knocks on his neighbors’ doors and invites Grump-ass and Mrs. Cap to help him eat all that chocolate.

“So,” he says to them, seated around his dining room table with a banquet of semi-identifiable chocolate. “I’m in a creepy mutually-abusive relationship where I self-harm to punish my boyfriend for my abandonment issues.”

Mrs. Rogers stares, a spoonful of Ktarian Puff[9] poised inches from her mouth.

Jess looks at him with something between confusion and disgust.

He braces for judgment.

“Is that…chocolate covered worms?” she asks.

He stops eating and looks at his spoon, which is wiggling. “Gagh,” he corrects. “Highly nutritious.”

Her lip curls.

He hesitates.

“S it any good?”

“I may throw up on you,” Mrs. Rogers warns them.

.End.

Chapter End Notes

1 According to RoosterTeeth, things are very shiny here. Seems legit.[return to text]
2 Doc Samson, Marvel’s superhero psychiatrist to the stars, is head of the Network’s Proctor branch.[return to text]
3 If you’ve never seen the show ‘Daria,’ the eponymous protagonist is a low-drive introverted high school girl who spends most of her time philosophizing to herself and her punky best friend and doesn’t outwardly display much energy or emotion.[return to text]
4 Guinan from Star Trek: TNG was a bartender from a race of listeners. If somebody had an issue and needed non-judgmental advice, they went to Guinan.[return to text]
5 Pirates of the Caribbean reference.[return to text]
6 Freudian psychiatry, while an Important Thing from History, is widely considered useless and nonsensical by modern psych professionals.[return to text]
7 Don’t think about elephants… ;)[return to text]
8 A species of worm served live as a popular Klingon dish. As far as the shows demonstrate, Klingons have four favorite food/drink items: chocolate, worms,
bloodwine, and coffee. [return to text]

9 Another Star Trek chocolate treat. [return to text]

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