Inanime

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Inanime

by SpencerRemyLvr

Summary

An rather strange AU where Spencer was created and raised by someone he knows as 'Sir'. The Spencer that the BAU knows is a lie. Who he is, who he was, are nothing like what they know. The only reason that Spencer was there was that he had a job to do. Now he's been pulled from that job and sent on something new. Sir unlocked the binding that he put on Spencer's powers and is sending him to the X-Men under the guise of needing help while, in reality, he wants any information he can to be able to take them down. But will Spencer be able to give him that information? Or, after spending time with them, will he find that for the first time in his life he can't do what he's been ordered to do?

Notes

So this is a little weird. It's the first chapter of a story I found on my computer that was made back in 2012 and hasn't been touched since then. It's got 122 pages on it, though the ending isn't there. I'm not sure if I should just laugh at it, or if I should take the time to read through it and fix it up. Let me know what you think!
Chapter 1

Was there anything more miserable about this side of the country than its weather? Spencer cursed the East Coast weather as he continued to make his way along a bare stretch of road. It had been cold enough when he’d started his walk; the rain that had come since then had only made things worse. Now he was drenched down to his skin and shivering. As thunder clapped overhead and lightning arced in the sky, he started to curse out loud. “Bullshit, that’s what this is. Bullshit.” Another shiver had him crossing his arms over his chest and stuffing his hands in his armpits. He wanted nothing more than to be in some warm hotel room, watching the rain from the warmth of the room, maybe sneaking out onto the balcony for a moment to enjoy the lighting storm. But no, he was out here on this dark, empty road, walking to a place he didn’t want to be, assigned with a job he didn’t want to have to do.

Want didn’t factor in to this. Needs didn’t factor in. Sir had tasked him with this assignment and who was Spencer to think of disobeying?

Spencer had been with Sir for as long as he could remember. Even when he’d been allowed to live with other people, to attempt to have a family, he’d still been Sir’s property and he was never allowed to forget that. The product of three strong mutants, bred in a clinical setting under direct supervision of Sir, Spencer was born of a test tube and implanted into a woman of Sir’s choosing. And since the day he was born, he was never allowed to forget that he wasn’t human like the rest of the world. He wasn’t even a mutant as others were. No, he was a creation. Non-human. A science experiment. And he belonged to Sir the same as the lab equipment.

He’d been raised to be the perfect tool for his Sir. He had a high intelligence, multiple degrees and doctorates, was proficient in many languages and the accents that went with them, and quite talented in not only hand to hand combat, but weaponry as well, and all of that was before his mutation was factored in.

Could it accurately be called a mutation in a being that was non-human and had been specifically bred for this ability? Spencer pondered that for a few minutes as a way to distract himself from the freezing rain. Sir had bred together these powerful mutants to attempt to get a powerful offspring. Spencer was the only one that he had kept alive once his powers had manifested. He was Omega class, Sir told him. At his full potential, he would be able to destroy half the country with but a thought, Sir said. And what was it that he could control that was so dangerous?

Lightning flashed overhead and had Spencer smiling slightly. His skin tingled in response to the electrical display even as it was dulled down by the water falling from the sky. He had to resist the urge to reach out to that lightning and channel the energy that he could feel. That was his main mutation; electrical control. He could absorb, conduct, create, generate and control electricity of various intensities. With a touch, he could control any objet through its electricity. He could shut down the power grid of an entire city with one finger.

There was also his healing ability, which Sir said was not technically a mutation but more a part of the electricity inside of his body working to keep it from killing him when it was inside of him. But he did possess a secondary mutation that was strong, even if it wasn’t as strong as his offensive power. He was an empath. That, out of everything, had created the most trouble for him. Sir had never blocked any part of that power for Spencer, not overly concerned with the effect of emotions on him except to add them to his observations. However, he did teach Spencer how to shield his mind, using that shield to keep the emotions at bay so that they didn’t overwhelm him. At least, nowhere near as much as they had used to.
Sir had shielded his mind, however, so that Spencer never fully used his electrical power. While on his last assignment, Sir had kept that shielding on, preventing Spencer from being able to create anything more than simple currents. But once he’d pulled him from that assignment and sent him on this one, his mental blocks had slowly been dissolving, Sir had taught him only enough to keep the charge off his skin. Granted, there were still times that Spencer couldn’t keep it off his hands when his emotions got the best of him, but that was what he had these gloves for. Rubber insulated gloves with their leather outside kept him from conducting electricity with his hands and from absorbing it into him.

It was a good thing Sir had helped him learn to keep it off his skin, or Spencer never would have made it from Virginia to New York. He’d had to leave behind pretty much everything but a bit of money when he left his last place, which meant that he hadn’t had a car. A train had brought him a bit of the ways and hitchhiking had brought him the rest. There was no way he would’ve been able to ride with anyone if he hadn’t been able to keep the charge off his skin. There would’ve been a whole lot of walking, then. Luckily, that wasn’t the case, and he’d had a ride most of the way. This last car had dropped him off not far from his destination, refusing to drive any closer, and Spencer had finally had no choice but to walk.

Not that his clothes were exactly conducive to walking. In the rain. At night. But, a person does what they have to, right?

A stone caught Spencer’s heel, almost rolling his ankle. He cursed as he stumbled. Just barely he managed to keep from falling to the ground. “Dammit!” he snapped. Looking down, he kicked at the offending rock, not feeling the least bit better. Maybe a person did what they had to, but it didn’t mean that they had to like it. He looked down at his boots with their thick heel and resisted the urge to sigh. They were perfect for strolling at night, keeping his feet comfortable for hours standing on a corner or in a quick run from the cops, but they didn’t exactly lend themselves to long walks on the side of a dark road.

Sir had been very specific on the image he’d wanted Spencer to project here. He wanted Spencer to look young, like someone on the streets who’d had to rely on his wit and his body to get by. Well, this outfit sure did it. The tight, low slung jeans were even tighter than normal from the rain plastering them to his skin. The A-shirt he wore didn’t offer much in the way of warmth or protection and he had no jacket to put on over it. The leather bracelet around his wrist felt like it was made of ice; leather did not hold heat well. Even his Fedora was more for looks than practicality. It did nothing to keep him dry, although it did shelter his face just enough to keep his sunglasses semi dry, allowing him to still see. But every bit of him was cold and wet—even the rucksack over his shoulder with his few meager possessions was soaked. The clothes were what he usually wore when ‘working’ at night because they showed off his frame in its best light. He was tall, but the heels made him taller. His body was long and lean, mostly angles and pale skin. He’d never been able to put any kind of weight on whatsoever and countless times being on the streets and starving when Sir threw him out to fend for himself had put a sort of starved look to parts of him that never seemed to fully go away.

But he was still considered attractive. No matter how much sunshine he went in, he still maintained mostly pale skin—smooth as a baby’s, he’d been told. Chestnut hair hung to his shoulders with little flips and curls at the ends, framing a face that could draw eyes with the right help. He had naturally high cheekbones and wide eyes and a mouth that people often told him was just begging to be kissed. Usually he wore sunglasses, sheltering his eyes so that they weren’t seen. While on his last assignment, Sir had given him contacts to hide the fact that Spencer’s eyes were pure white—a sign, Sir said, that he wasn’t human. He was soulless. The only time his eyes had color was when he was embracing his electrical powers. Then, he’d been told lightning seemed to spark inside of them.
Lifting one hand, he sheltered those eyes, trying to see through the pouring rain to gauge how close he was to his destination. When lighting lit the sky once more, he caught a vague glimpse of the mansion in the distance, still a ways away. But it was there. Xavier’s School for Gifted Youngsters. Home of the X-Men. And the place of his next assignment.

“You are to go to Xavier’s school.” Sir had told him before he’d sent him on his way. Gaze raptor sharp, he’d stared at Spencer, making sure he understood. “I want you to infiltrate the school and the X-Men. Become one of them by any means necessary. While there, I want you to gather intelligence on its members, the school, and their technology. Everything that you can so that we can assess their threat level and deal with them accordingly if it becomes necessary. You are not to tell them that you work for me, but the rest of what you tell them is up to you. You will go there under the guise of a young mutant needing help controlling his powers. This at least will not be a lie. I will check in with you every other night for a week to see if you have arrived there safely.”

Only half of his time limit had gone by so far. It had taken a full day to extract himself from his previous assignment. He’d had to do tons of paperwork to officially end his stay as SSA Dr. Spencer Reid, Profiler for the FBI. They had been loath to lose him and his team had most definitely tried to stop him. But he’d told them that he was leaving and there had been nothing that was going to stop him. Once the paperwork was done and he once more became simply Dr. Spencer Reid, he’d sold the items in his ‘apartment’—a cover maintained solely for the assignment—and he’d canceled the lease. Then he’d left to start his new assignment. Infiltrate the X-Men and report back to Sir. By far, one of his easier assignments. Gathering information wasn’t hard for him. It would be gaining the trust of the team enough to be allowed to ‘become’ one of the X-Men that was going to be difficult. More than that, learning to control his powers would be difficult. Sir dissolving his shields and leaving him exposed to the full extent of his capabilities had guaranteed that he would actually need their help, lending credence to his story, but it left him susceptible to his powers as well. He knew Sir wouldn’t have cared about that.

A sudden glare of lights hit the road in front of Spencer. A vehicle came around the corner behind him, their headlights lighting the way. Because of the corner, they didn’t see Spencer until they were practically on top of him. The young doctor dodged to the side, his ankle finally wrenching as he stumbled off the road and onto the uneven ground. His hands darted out, just barely managing to catch him before he would have face planted on the ground. Pain exploded in his left ankle.

The air filled with the sound of squealing brakes. When Spencer was back on his feet, he saw the car had skidded to a stop a few feet ahead of him. Even knowing that it wasn’t the driver’s fault, Spencer still glared at the figures that came rushing over at him, mouth open to snap and snarl at them. His words died an early death in his mouth when he caught sight of those coming at him.

One of the men was large—big enough that he could probably snap Spencer with one hand, despite being quite a bit shorter than him. There was something about him that just screamed dangerous to Spencer’s instincts. He’d learned to trust those instincts a long time ago.

The other one was Spencer’s height, even with these heels, and he was built more compact than the muscular man with him. Not as lean as Spencer, but lean still. There was obvious muscle in that slender form. There was also something about him that set off Spencer’s instincts. The man may have looked smaller than his friend—and definitely much hotter—but he was just as dangerous. Spencer couldn’t help bracing his body in preparation for whatever they might do. He thought vaguely of his knives and if he’d be able to get to them in time to defend himself.

“Jesus shit, kid, are you ok?” The bigger man said. He moved right toward him, stopping suddenly when Spencer took an instinctive step back.
The other man stopped beside his friend. “Did y’ get hurt, *homme*? Look at y’! Wolvie, he’s soaked t’ de skin!” The thick Cajun accent gave the words a warm sound that part of Spencer ached to respond to.

The large man glared at his friend. “Quit calling me Wolvie.” He snapped before looking to Spencer again. “What’re you doing walking on this road so late at night and in the rain, kid? Is there somewhere we can take you? A place we can drop you off?”

Spencer finally seemed to find his voice in the onslaught of questions. “I’m on my way to Xavier’s school.” Maybe, if he was lucky, these two were going that way. There didn’t seem to be anything else in the distance. The idea of getting a ride and not having to walk the rest of the distance had him wanting to beg and plead. He was cold, tired, and now his ankle was throbbing in tune with his heartbeat.

The two men exchanged a look before they gestured toward the car. “Come on, *homme*.” The Cajun called over the sound of more thunder. “We’ll take y’ dere.”

It took effort for Spencer to grit his teeth and force himself to start moving. His ankle was screaming now that he was walking on it and he had to fight not to collapse, but he made it to their car and gratefully climbed in through the door the Cajun held open for him, putting his wet bag down between his knees as he sat. It wasn’t until he was inside and the door was shut that he realized that they’d put him in the front passenger’s seat with the big guy driving. Fear clenched in his stomach, ruthlessly shoved down.

When the car turned on, the heaters kicked on as well, almost making him moan. He couldn’t stop himself from leaning toward his vent, his shivering body trying to absorb as much heat as possible. The big guy noticed and cursed suddenly. He yanked his jacket off even as he started driving down the road, tossing it to Spencer once he was free of it. “Here, wrap up in this. You’re soaked straight through and you’ve barely got any excuse for clothes on. How long you been walking out there?”

Spencer gratefully stuffed his arms in the coat, pulling it close. It was wet from them coming out in the rain to get him, but it still held the man’s body heat and it felt wonderful. Glancing at the clock in the dash, Spencer calculated the time that had passed since he’d been dropped off by the last person he’d hitchhiked with. “I got dropped off on the road about two hours ago.” He finally answered. “Been walking since then.”

“Two hours in dis?” The Cajun said with what sounded like sympathy. “*Mais*, no wonder y’r soaked. Y’ shoulda found somewhere t’ hole up fo’ de night, *homme*. Weather like dis aint de best t’ be walking round in.”

“Found that out.” Spencer stammered out. He saw the mansion coming closer and closer; the guy was driving fast.

Leaning forward, the Cajun stuck his head between the seats and looked over at Spencer. “M’ name’s Remy, *mon ami*, and dis be Logan. Are y’ sure y’r ok? We didn’t hurt y’, did we? Didn’t see y’ till we got round de corner.”

“I’m fine, thanks.” Biting his lip, he looked from one to the other. They’d probably expect his name now. Well, he’d give them something. “They call me *Inanime*.”

Logan shot him a look right as they pulled up to the mansion’s gate. “That don’t sound like a regular name.”

For a brief second Spencer felt a pang in his heart, there and gone again in a flash. “It’s not.” He said
simply. Long ago he’d grown used to that name. Watching them, he saw the man punch in a code for the gate quickly and realized that he’d been right, these two had been heading here. He said nothing on it as the car made its way up the driveway and into the garage. Only once the car was off did Spencer speak up again. “Thank you.” He told them, starting to take Logan’s jacket off to hand it to him.

Logan held his hand out and shook his head. “Keep it on for a bit till we find you a place to get warmed up. Come on, kid. We’ll get you inside and see what we can do for you.”

He couldn’t help but give them a strange look as they all climbed from the car. “You two don’t seem too surprised to have a stranger showing up in the middle of the night.” He pointed out with more bravery than he felt. No matter that he’d developed a hard outer shell, being around people still made him terrified on the inside. He’d just become a pro at shielding it away so that no one knew. When you let others know you were scared, it only handed them a weapon.

Remy flashed him a grin as he shut his door. “Dat’s not unusual round dese parts, homme. We learned t’ get used t’ dat long time ago. Now, let’s go find de Professor.”

“He or Jean probably already sensed us coming, Gumbo. Wouldn’t surprise me if we’ve got a welcoming committee inside.” Logan called to him.

For a bit Spencer managed to follow them even with his pained ankle. They went out of the garage and through the rain to the front door. But when he had to take those few steps up the porch and had to put all his weight on that ankle, it finally had enough and started to collapse underneath him, wringing a sharp hiss past his lips. He startled when hands grabbed him, catching him before he could hit the ground. First instinct was to yank away. But a glance showed him it was simply Remy trying to help him stay upright. The Cajun was looking at him with concern over the top of his sunglasses, letting Spencer see the red on black eyes that the glasses had hidden before. This man was a mutant. He barely had time to log that away before he was being cursed at in Cajun. “Y’ said y’ wasn’t hurt! Couillon!”

“It’s nothing.” Spencer instantly defended. Habit had him trying to minimize his injury in any way possible. No weakness. “I’m fine.”

“Oh, are y’? Den just walk right on in dere if y’r so fine.”

Too used to commands like this, Spencer missed the sarcasm and simply took the words as an order. He pulled himself away from Remy’s hands and forced himself as hard as could be so that he could take that last step up. It hurt, like sharp knives stabbing into his skin, but he managed to do it and to start toward the door with only a minimal limp. He’d only made it just two steps before Remy was back at his side, grabbing his arm and ducking underneath it. His voice was so much gentler this time as he said. “Stubborn lil shit. Can feel y’r pain, mon ami. Didn’t mean fo’ y’ to really walk on y’r own. Not cruel, me. We’ll get y’ in and den we’ll get Henri t’ look at y’. He’s our doctor.”

Logan opened the door, holding it wide so that Remy and Spencer could limp inside. As Logan had predicted, they were met by a welcoming committee. There was a woman with dark skin and white hair that was watching them with a look that transformed to surprise. There was also a red haired beauty that was practically radiating concern and a slight trace of suspicion. From the basic descriptions that Sir had given him, those had to be Storm and the Phoenix, or Ororo and Jean. The other one present was one that Spencer recognized from what Sir had told him. Cyclops, aka Scott, with his sunglasses on that controlled the optic blast in his eyes when he wasn’t wearing his battle visor. Scott took one look at them and shot forward on a curse, quickly getting himself underneath Spencer’s other arm, either oblivious to the boy’s flinch or ignoring it. “What the hell did
"T’ink he rolled his ankle." Remy explained in a calm voice. "Went round de corner and didn’t see him walking. He jumped outta de way, but t’ink he might’ve rolled it as he went, yeah."

"I’ll call for Hank." Jean said quickly. "In the meantime, let’s get you in Scott’s office. You are absolutely soaked through, all of you. The professor will meet us there momentarily."

So it was that Spencer found himself inside the mansion of the X-Men, with two of them helping him limp his way down the hall. He was dripping wet, injured, and being watched with quite a bit of suspicion, but he was in. Now it was time to get to work.
Well this got a better reception than I thought it would, so I figured I'd go ahead and add chapters as I get them edited, if you guys really want to see them. But I'm only editing it as I go, I'm not changing the story line from what I originally wrote years ago, because, well, it amuses me. Please keep in mind that this is AU and that Spencer is playing a part for these people, so that's why he's going to come off as OOC :)

Thanks for the comments and kudos, m'dears!

Settled on a small couch, Spencer tucked his gloved hands in his armpits once more, trying not to flinch as a man covered in blue hair knelt down in front of him and pushed his pant leg up to get to the zipper of his boot. No sooner had Scott and Remy got Spencer in the office than this Hank had come rushing in, moving straight to Spencer as soon as he’d been pointed out. They’d settled Spencer on the couch and the doctor had dropped down right by Spencer’s foot. “Let’s take a look at this ankle. Which one is it?”

Reluctantly, Spencer had let him know which. He fought his wince as the doctor found the zipper and slid it down, releasing some of the pressure. A tug got the boot off, but also drained all color from Spencer’s face. He made not a sound as he sat perfectly still. Every inch of his body went on lockdown. Not only because he knew better than to complain, but because he could feel his pain and exhaustion mingling in him, lessening his control enough that his hands were tingling underneath his gloves—hence the reason he had stuffed them in his armpits once more.

Hank’s hands were surprisingly gentle as he examined the ankle, probing gently at it. “How is the pain? Dull and achy or sharp?” he asked Spencer.

The young doctor looked down, mentally assessing his injury. “Sharp when full body weight is applied but otherwise a steady ache and throb.”

The flat way he spoke had Hank furrowing his eyebrows, but the man said nothing as he finished his examination before pulling an ace wrap out of the pocket of his lab coat. “Most likely a sprain. We’ll put this on it and check it in the morning more thoroughly, I think.” He didn’t know that there would be no point. It would be fully healed by the morning time. But Spencer said nothing; he knew better than to argue with a doctor.

Once the ankle was wrapped, Hank looked up at him. “Are you injured anywhere else, young man? Anything at all?”

“Nothing.” The tingle in his hands grew stronger and he fought to control it.

Logan moved forward, eyebrows furrowing, looking between Remy, who sat beside Spencer on the couch, and over to Spencer. “Gumbo, you charging anything?” The big man demanded. The question confused Spencer, who looked over to Remy only to find the Cajun raising an eyebrow at his friend as he said “Non, mon ami.”

“I smell ozone.” Logan said boldly. His eyes shifted from Remy to Spencer. All of a sudden three
long claws slid out of either hand and Spencer finally placed who this man was. Sir had only had one thing on him for a name. Wolverine. But the adamantium skeleton and claws had been in the information he’d had, as well as the feral nature. That would explain why he’d said he could ‘smell’ ozone. “Back away from him.” He snarled out suddenly.

To Spencer’s surprise, everyone but Remy instantly obeyed. He looked at Remy when he realized that he’d stayed by his side. “Aren’t you going to listen to your friend?” He couldn’t help asking. “He’s right to worry, you know. Being right by me isn’t exactly the safest route, honey.” The honey slipped out without thought; a habit from the streets that he found himself sliding into as he tried to pull on the character that Sir wanted him to play here.

Remy gave him a slightly lopsided grin. “Don’t t’ink y’r here to hurt us.” He said simply. The words stunned Spencer so that he could say nothing as Remy kept going. “Remy t’inks y’r here fo’ help, just like everyone else. Remy, he feel how tired y’ are, cher. He feel how hurt and tired and scared y’ be. Y’ don’t gotta worry no more. Y’r safe here. We aint gonna hurt y’ and y’ aint gonna hurt us.”

He’s an empath, too Spencer realized. This man was an empath, among other things. He recalled Logan asking if Remy was charging something. Obviously he possessed an explosive power as well. Was there something about powers of a charged nature that seemed to breed empathy with them? Part of his brain couldn’t help but ponder that.

He drew back to the present when the tingle in his hands made his fingers twitch a little. “Not intentionally.” Spencer admitted in answer to Remy’s words. No, he wouldn’t hurt them intentionally, not right now. He had a job to do and he tried to remind himself of that, over and over. He couldn’t afford to blow this place and potentially injure everyone inside. He needed to get them to take him in and trust him, not kill him. Mentally he quivered as he tried to control his powers. The tingle was spreading up from his hands, though, and into his arms. “You need to scoot back. Please.”

Remy scooted over just a few inches, but he made a show of staying there once he did. “Not going nowhere, me. Look at Remy. T’ings gonna be ok, homme. Y’ just gotta calm y’self down. De professor is coming and he gonna help y’. He’s a good man, cher.”

“Why thank you, Remy.” A cultured voice said. Spencer looked up to see Charles Xavier coming into the room. He didn’t hesitate to bring his chair straight to where the two men were sitting on the couch. Stopping in front of them, he folded his hands in his lap and looked to Spencer. “Welcome to my home, young man. My name is Charles Xavier. And what do they call you?”

“Inanime.” Curling his hands, he fought hard in his mind, forcing the charge back down his arms to sit only in his hands. In his hands, he could deal with. He’d almost grown used to having that tingle in them. At the same time, he gave a quick mental check, making sure his shields were firmly in place. This man was a telepath and there was no way Spencer could risk having the man enter his mind. He almost sighed when he found his shielding strong and secure.

Charles barely flinched at the name Spencer gave. “Interesting choice of name. Latin, I believe. Do you know the meaning to it?”

Closing his eyes behind his sunglasses, Spencer said “Yes.” Lifeless or soulless, both definitions had been listed for it that Spencer had seen. It was apt for one such as him.

That brought quiet to the room. That quiet was broken when Logan stepped forward, his claws retracting once more. “The smell dulled.” He told Charles. “Either he let go, or he’s controlling it.”

“I’ve got it under control.” With those words, Spencer admitted to them that it was him and that, for a moment, he had been without control. “It’s still there, but I’m containing it.” Oh so slowly he pulled
his hands from his armpits, resting them on his lap. His eyes locked on the leather gloves with their rubber insulation. Feeling his control, he decided he had enough to show them rather than tell them. The release of the electricity would help ease some of what was in him as well.

He undid the catch on one wrist, loosening it before grasping the fingers and sliding it off, revealing the slender, long-fingered hand underneath. Curling his hand palm up, he drew on the tingle in those fingers, drawing it out of his skin and into the space just above his palm. It started as a small spark, barely noticeable, but he fed a little more and a little more into it until he had a small ball of electrical energy in his hand. “I can manipulate electricity.” He told the quiet room. “I can control, manipulate, absorb and even create it. All I need is the smallest spark and I can make it grow and grow to what I want it to be. The storm tonight has me a little overcharged.” Very carefully he drew the electricity up from his hand. “Would one of you open that window for me?” he asked suddenly.

Ororo was the one to move and open the window, quickly stepping back. He gave the pretty woman a smile. “Thank you.” With that, he focused the energy toward the open window, sending the electric ball flying outside where he released it, letting it flow into the air and make a fork of lightning up into the sky. The relief he felt as he released it was wonderful. His hands didn’t tingle as much as they had.

He looked back down, picking up his glove. With a wry grin he turned the edge of it, showing it to the professor. “Rubber insulation. Sometimes, even that doesn’t work, but that’s only if it’s really bad. I don’t typically need these unless I’m exhausted or if I get emotional or ill. Or, occasionally my control wavers. Someone I know told me that you guys here help people like me to control this stuff. I can’t afford to lose control of this. Last time I did…” He paused, swallowing as he remembered trying to control that much electricity in his body. To cover the pause, he pulled his glove back on. “…I shut down the entire power grid in the city I was in. It took them a week to repair all the damage.”

“Oh my.” Hank breathed out.

Charles just looked at him with a speculative look. Whatever he was thinking, it was hidden behind his eyes, and none of Spencer's profiling was letting him read anything from him. “I’m sure that we can help you, young man. I don’t turn away those in need. We would be glad to welcome you to the school. There is just one question I have tonight before we send you to bed. The rest can wait for the morning.”

Apprehensive, Spencer watched him with a steady look, adopting as casual a pose as possible. He pressed just a little bit and let his voice slip into something that was so far from the part he'd been recently playing that he'd almost forgotten how to do it. “An what’s that, honey?”

If being called honey affected the older man, he didn’t show any sign. He looked right at Spencer and asked him “What is your actual name? The one you gave…that’s not something to call a person by and I can’t simply continue to call you young man.”

A snort slipped out before Spencer could stop it. No, it wasn’t a name a person was called by. But creations like him? It was perfect. Still, Sir had always told him ‘Be honest where it’s safe. That makes the lies all the more believable.’ And for this mission, he’d told him ‘Do what is necessary to integrate yourself in with them. We want them to trust you implicitly. But betray me, Inanime, and I assure you, you will regret it.’

He schooled his features and slanted a look at the man who he would ultimately betray. “Spencer. My name is Spencer.”

“Well, Spencer, welcome to my school.” Charles didn’t offer to shake his hand, the both of them
knowing that wasn’t best right now. But he did give him a wide smile that was a lot friendlier than Spencer had been expecting. “Tomorrow morning, I’d like you to join me after breakfast in my office. Remy, can I ask you to help him find a room and to find his way to my office in the morning?”

“D’accord, Professor.” The Cajun agreed.

“Good. Now that this is settled, let us all retire.”

As the others slowly started to file from the room, Remy reached over and patted Spencer’s gloved hand. “Come on, mon ami. Y’ t’ink y’ can walk a ways till we get y’ to a room?”

Spencer tried to act as casual as possible despite the exhaustion that was pulling at him. Play your part. Play your part. “Sure thing, honey. I can walk just fine.” He smiled before bending down and unzipping his other boot, yanking it off once he was done. He picked both boots up in one hand and put his rucksack over his shoulder. Then he rose, trying not to wince too much at his ankle. “Let’s go.”

CXCX

The walk to the rooms was quiet. Remy seemed to be content to leave Spencer to his thoughts, which he appreciated. There was quite a lot to process for one evening and he was just too tired to manage it as well as maintain a conversation. When they finally stopped, he looked up and around him, seeing only a hallway with a few doors. Remy lift a hand and pointed to a room on the right. “Dis is m’ room. On de other side of Remy be Logan. Dere’s a room on m’ other side, or one across de hall here. Y’ can take either one, cher.”

Right beside the Cajun or across the hall? One would let him be close and might encourage a sense of friendship between them, something that would benefit his work. The other, however, would grant him a little more privacy, something he knew he desperately needed. The most logical choice won out. He raised a hand, pointing to the one across the hall. Remy moved over and opened the door, flipping the switch to turn the light on. “Go on and get comfortable, cher. I’ll come and get y’ in de morning when it’s time fo’ breakfast.”

“Thanks.” Spencer stepped inside the room, taking a look around. It was a simple room with a closet, a dresser, a bed, and a large window with a window seat. There was also a desk off to one side. He couldn’t believe the luxury in here. This was better than anywhere he’d stayed so far. Even better than the hotels he’d stayed at with his last assignment. He couldn’t help but look around him and smile. This room was really his? Unsure, he slanted a look to Remy who was watching him from the doorway still. “You sure this is for me?” he couldn’t help asking. Honestly, he’d expected somewhat quite different for a ‘thing’ like him. Then again, they don’t know what you are. They only know what you’ve let them see so far.

The answering grin Remy gave him was both kind and amused. “Remy had de same thoughts when he first came. Dis, if y’ want it, is y’rs, homme.” With a final wink, he told him “Sleep well” and left the room, shutting the door behind him.

Being alone gave Spencer the freedom to relax a little. He dropped his bag on the ground and looked around him. “Well, Spencer, you landed yourself a fine one.” He murmured to himself. The he let out a soft laugh. Maybe this assignment wasn’t going to be too bad.

CXCX

Out in the hallway, Remy leaned against his door, feeling the current of emotions in the air. He
couldn’t help but smile at the door across from his as he felt the stunned joy get replaced with a happiness so pure it was almost childlike. He heard Logan come out of his room, dressed in dry clothes once more. He leaned beside Remy and looked toward the door as well right as Spencer let out a tinkling laugh that made the both of them smile. “Someone seems happy with his room.” Logan rumbled.

Remy flashed his friend a grin. “Oui. Stunned him when I told him it was his. Dat *homme* aint used to t’ings dis nice, I’m t’inking.”

“Kind of like a certain Cajun when he first came here.” Bumping their elbows, Logan chuckled. “You kept looking for the poison you were sure was hidden somewhere in all this.”

“Know better now, me. Dis one, though…. *Merde*, Logan. He’s hard t’ read. Some of dem emotions come through loud and clear and others he makes disappear or dey murky, like he’s shielding dem but de shields is failing a little.”

That had Logan looking at him with surprise. “You think he’s an empath, too?”

“Could be. Wouldn’t surprise me.” It would make sense. Remy probed, feeling the emotions in the other room change, slowly shutting down behind what he was positive was a shield. That was the only thing he could think of that could make them vanish so completely. No one was emotionless. “Either dat or someone taught him how t’ shield his emotions. But he seemed sensitive to emotions around him. Flinching back when y’ got defensive, even afore he looked up at y’. I don’t know what it is, cher, *mais* dere’s something about this boy.”

“You don’t trust him, do you?”

Remy finally looked at Logan once more and he was grinning again. “Dis Cajun don’t trust no one he don’t know, cher. Especially strangers dat turn up in de middle of de night. But I t’ink I might like him. People around here, dey aint gonna take to him to well. We gonna have to keep our eye on dis one. Y’ see de way he dress? De way he call us all ‘honey’?”

“Yeah, I caught that.” Sighing, Logan scratched his head. He’d seen it just the same as Remy had and recognized the act for what it was—an act. One that quite a few street kids learned how to do. “I put plenty of people in their place who thought they could call you a whore. I’m not gonna be shy about doing it for him, either.”

The smile Remy wore now was slightly gentle. He put his hand on Logan’s arm, silently sharing the brotherly love he felt for the man who had terrified him when he had first come and somehow had ended up being one of his best friends. The feral smiled back at him before they separated and went into their rooms, each wondering about their newest resident.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Now, in this chapter is where Spencer's really going to start to come off as OOC. Remember, this is AU, and Spencer's background is quite different than in canon. Plus, he's playing a part here, which means he's deliberately not acting like himself. Keep that in mind.

Reviews are loved! :D Thank you all for your comments so far!

Overnight, Spencer had hung his clothes up in the bathroom to get them to dry out. Everything had been drenched from his walk in the rain. There wasn’t much that was ready by morning, but there was enough for him to put something on, thankfully. He was fresh from the shower and throwing on clothes when a knock came on his door. There was a moment where he paused, freezing in place, before he pushed back his initial worries. Shimmying his jeans up over his hips, he pulled up the zipper as he called out “Come in!”

He was just doing the button when his door opened and Remy strolled in. The Cajun wasn’t wearing his sunglasses, so Spencer easily saw as Remy’s eyes traveled from Spencer’s bare feet, up the low-rise jeans he’d just pulled on, over his bare chest and up to his face. There was an appreciative gleam in those eyes that Spencer had long ago learned how to recognize and that usually only served to make his stomach roll. Men had looked at him that way before and it had always led to the same thing. Yet, as Spencer felt those eyes travel over him, he was surprised to find that he wasn’t afraid, nor did he feel sick. He just felt, warm. That warmth grew when Remy’s eyes landed on his face. “Morning, mon ami.” Remy said with that lopsided smile he’d given Spencer the night before.

For years now he’d had to play his role as Dr. Reid. It was taking constant reminding for Spencer to slip into the role he was supposed to play here. Instead of the blush that Dr. Spencer Reid would’ve given, or that Spencer would’ve felt naturally, he had to remind himself that the person he was playing here would have an entirely different reaction. Reminding himself of that, he let his eyes run over Remy in return, admiring his shape in his own blue jeans, shirt and duster. Auburn hair was pulled back from his face and into a ponytail, allowing Spencer to admire the sharp angles and lines and those beautiful eyes. “Morning, honey.” Spencer almost purred the words out. He took his t-shirt off the bed, putting his arms in before pulling it over his head. He pulled the bottom down, amused as Remy’s eyes followed the path of the material until his skin was covered by the plain blue shirt. “Just give me a sec and I’ll be ready.”

“D’accord.” Relaxed, Remy leaned against the wall, pushing the door most of the way shut behind him to give Spencer some privacy. “How’d y’ sleep last night?”

Taking hold of his boot, Spencer balanced on one foot while bending down to pull the boot on. This pair only went up to mid-calf and had a minimal heel on them. He put his foot down and switched to the other while answering. “Oh, I slept great, thank you. These beds are absolutely wonderful. Like sleeping on a cloud.”

“Looks like y’ ankle is feeling better dis morning, yeah.”

Straightening up, Spencer shifted his weight, adjusting his boots so that they were comfortable. He
strolled over to the bathroom, chuckling. “I tend to heal faster than most. Comes in handy sometimes, you know?” In the cover of the bathroom, he hurriedly reached into his rucksack and pulled out his knives, sliding one into each booth. He would not go unarmed in a strange place. That was just suicide. After adjusting his pant legs, he made his way back out to the room while tucking his gloves in his back pocket—better to have them on him, just in case—one hand reaching up to brush his hair back from his face. “It’s not instant healing, but it’s pretty fast.” He’d thought about it last night and had figured out just how he wanted to word this to explain it to the group here. There was no way he could hide a healing factor from them. But he wasn’t going to tell them the extent of it, or how much he knew about it. Best if they didn’t realize quite yet just how smart he actually was. “I think it’s some kind of reaction to my electricity. A doctor I knew thought it might be my electricity charging up all that stuff inside me and making it heal even faster. Another thought it’s just some kind of mutation connected to it. Me?” He stopped right in front of Remy, hiding his nerves behind a mask of a smile and a wink, letting his empathy push just a tiny bit to test out something. “I say I know better than to look a gift horse in the mouth.”

He could feel the lust coming off the other man as well as something that surprised him. Amusement. Remy reached a hand up and patted Spencer’s cheek. “Y’r empathy aint gonna trip me up, cher. Remy can do de same t’ing. Mais, merci fo’ confirming fo’ me dat y’ got it.”

Spencer just looked at him for a minute and logged away the confirmation he’d sought. The other empath could feel when he used his empathy. He brought his bare hand up as well and patted Remy’s cheek in return. “Same goes, honey. Now, you gonna feed this boy or what?”

The amusement from Remy grew until the Cajun let out a husky laugh. “T’ink I might like y’, mon ami. Let’s go eat.”

It surprised Spencer to find that his words were honest when he replied “I think I might like you too.” He kept his smile in place, but his words worried him. He couldn’t like this man. He couldn’t come to like any of them. In the end, Sir would destroy them all if he saw fit. Liking them would only lead to heartache later. But how on earth am I supposed to get close to them and let them trust me and not end up liking some of them? Yet another problem that Sir had probably considered unimportant. That was something to think on at a later time, though. For now, there was breakfast to deal with. Spencer didn’t even think about the extra sashay he put into his walk; it was habit. He was really stepping out of the character he’d been as SSA Reid and was steadily slipping back to the one that Sir had made him into. “This is a very nice place you have here.” Spencer said as he observed everything around him.

They made their way to a staircase, Remy leading them. “Oui, dis place be nice. Remy barely notice it half de time anymore. Now, it’s just home.”

The sound of Remy’s voice pulled him out of his thoughts and back to their conversation. “It’s a
good place to live. Better dan anything dis Cajun had b’fore. Good people here. And definitely good food.” Remy said the last with a wink when they reached the bottom of the stairs. “Allons, mon ami. Let’s go eat in de kitchen. Usually less crowded and dat’s probably what y’ want, oui?”

“Sounds perfect.” Again, that slight purr to Spencer’s words. “I like a little privacy. Sometimes.”

The sexual innuendo in that only made Remy laugh. Then their conversation cut off when Spencer found himself brought into the kitchen where there was actually a group of people already gathered. The woman Jean from last night was there, as were Scott and Logan. There was also a male talking to Scott that Spencer was easily able to identify from the information Sir sent him. The wings clearly gave him away as Angel.

Logan looked up at their entrance and flashed a fanged grin at them. “Bout time you two made it down for breakfast. Pull up a seat, kid. We got plenty of food to eat.” He said with a gesture to the counters that indeed held quite a bit of breakfast food. At his comment, all attention seemed to turn to Spencer and Remy. Nerves ate at Spencer’s stomach and had him wanting to back out of the room. On the outside, he stayed as calm and collected as before, his lips curving. “Morning, everyone. Nice to meet you while I’m not looking like a drowned rat.” Don’t let them get to you. Just play your part and you’ll be fine. You can do this. Gathering courage, he made his way toward the group of people. Time to try and start making some friends. “We didn’t get to properly meet last night, but I think I remember some names being used. You would be Jean, right?”

“That’s right.” Jean gave him a smile of her own. “And this is my husband, Scott.”

Spencer battled back his instinctive urge to just wave and he made himself stick his hand out to them, shaking first Jean’s and then Scott’s. “A pleasure to meet you both. And thank you for the use of your arm last night, Scotty.” Barely registering the good humor around him when he said ‘Scotty’, he turned his attention to Angel. He gave the guy another look over, taking in the slacks and nice shirt he wore, even at such an early hour. The way he held himself and the cut of his clothes—it suggested someone who had been born into money. Most likely still had it, too. There was something about him, the look on his face and in his eyes, the body language, that made it clear what kind of impression he’d already made. It was one that Spencer had seen plenty of times before. This Angel person obviously had already made his judgments about Spencer based on appearance alone. That reaction didn’t bother Spencer. If anything, he was happy with it, because it meant that he was playing his part well enough.

Biting his lip, Spencer let his own natural shyness creep into his features, giving him what Garcia had once seen and labeled his ‘deliciously innocent’ look. “And who might you be?”

A look of utter disgust crossed Angel’s face. Instead of offending Spencer, it amused him. When he’d spent time on the streets, rich guys like this had always faked disgust around other people, but they were always the ones to shell out the most for a private show and they were usually the ones with the most kinks.

Scott almost choked on his coffee when Spencer asked his question. He was quick to step up beside Angel and answer for him, forestalling anything that Angel might’ve said. “This is Warren. Warren, this is our newest student, Spencer.”

“Warren, hm? Pleasure to meet you.” The intonations he put on the word ‘pleasure’ made Warren’s expression sour a little more but it amused Spencer. He would’ve winked if he hadn’t had his shades on. Deciding to let him off the hook, he turned toward the others. It was good timing because Logan was just reaching for him, catching his shoulder and moving him over to the island bar before practically pushing him on the stool. If he noticed the way that Spencer flinched under his touch, he didn’t comment on it. “Sit down, ya troublemaker. You’re flustering Wings.”
Spencer rested his forearms on the countertop and leaned forward to watch as Logan made his way to the food. “I was just being friendly.” He said innocently.

Snorting, Logan gave him a look that said he knew better. But he said nothing about it as he picked up a plate and started piling on food. After he had a mound of everything, he put the plate and a fork in front of Spencer. “Eat up. You look like you’re about twenty pounds underweight.”

Free food was something Spencer never turned down. He looked at the large servings he’d been given and his mouth practically watered at the sight. One arm moved, curling just slightly around his plate, while he used his other hand to pick up a fork. “I can’t help my weight. It doesn’t stay on me, even when I get to eat. And trust me, when I get a chance to eat, I can eat.” Taking his first bite, he chewed and swallowed before grinning at Logan. “I’ve been told I have a healthy appetite.”

Laughter echoed around them from Remy as he took a seat beside Spencer with his own plate of food. “Sleep did wonders fo’ y’r mood, mon ami. Y’ seem in fine spirits dis morning.”

Spencer scooped up another bite of eggs and filled his mouth. “Of course I am.” He said when he was done chewing. “Warm, soft bed, a shower, great breakfast, great company. What’s not to enjoy about this?” That said, he settled down and tucked in to breakfast. Conversation flowed around him, the others in the room obviously comfortable with one another. Eating allowed Spencer the excuse to watch them all behind his shades, observing how they interacted and how things were run. It was always best to find one in power and let himself latch on, even in a small way. That would make the ride easier. In his last job, he’d let himself be more like his actual self, coming off as a little weak, nervous and meek, providing the image of a person someone would want to protect, thus putting himself in a position that the team he was on had looked out for him and accepted him as a ‘baby brother’, so to speak. It had provided quite a bit of help.

Of course, there had been downsides to that assignment, too. Being shot in his knee and having to fake being injured longer than he really was just so that they wouldn’t know about his mutation. Being kidnapped and held for two days while watching people die, forced to feel the emotions of his captor as he’d been ‘drugged’, all the while grateful that Sir had left the block on his electricity so that it couldn’t come out of him and kill those around him. And, more than anything else, making friends that were so close he almost felt like he really had a family, only to have to end up walking away from them in the end, knowing that his chances of seeing them again were next to nothing.

Spencer shook his head, effectively shaking off those thoughts. That assignment was done. He was moving on now. Later on, when he was alone, he could allow himself to grieve a little for what he’d lost.

Looking down, he realized that he’d emptied his plate. There was still a feeling of hunger in his stomach, but he resisted the urge to go and eat more. Still, he couldn’t stop himself from looking longingly at the food for just one second. Maybe just some sausage and eggs on one of those biscuits? They wouldn’t get mad at him for eating so much, would they? Some people did. Sir didn’t tend to think about it, though he had documented it as something to do with the electricity and his higher metabolism causing him to consume more food to keep producing the required energy he needed. But maybe these people wouldn’t be comfortable with him eating them out of house and home.

To his utmost surprise, Scott suddenly stepped right up beside him, leaning down to softly say “If you want more, you’re welcome to it, Spencer. We’ve got plenty of food.” His words were pitched low so that the others wouldn’t hear. Well, except for Logan. The man’s stronger senses allowed him to hear what Scott said. The next thing Spencer knew, two loaded biscuits were being pressed into his hands. He looked up at Logan, who gave him a look that was kinder than anything Spencer
would’ve expected from a feral. “Go on, kid. Take those and head off to meet with Chuck. He’s probably waiting for you.”

For once, Spencer didn’t quite know what to say. These people were being kind to him. Honestly kind. It floored him so that he could only mumble a low “Thanks” before he was scurrying out of the room, food held tightly in his hands. Because of his embarrassment, he missed the sympathetic looks he got as he left.

By the time Remy joined him in the hall, he had himself back under control and one of the biscuits already demolished. He was starting on the second one when the door opened and Remy walked over to him, smirking slightly. “Y’ ready, mon ami?”

Swallowing his bite, Spencer smiled. “Ready.”

Together, the two took off through the mansion, with Spencer once more cataloguing everything around him. He was slowly going to build himself a mental layout of this place so he could navigate easier and so he knew the safety and danger zones. It was always smart to know the best places to hide and the places to avoid if trouble came. And trouble always seemed to find him.

They stopped outside an office labeled with the Professor’s name. Before they could knock, the man called out “Come in, gentlemen.”

Remy opened the door and gestured Spencer inside with one hand. Finished with his food, Spencer dusted his hands off on his pants before making his way in the room. Mentally he braced himself for whatever was going to come. This meeting was not one he was looking forward to. Trying to pull one over one of the world’s strongest telepaths seemed like a suicide mission. Sir had assured him that his mental shields would hold in place. What he would do if the man demanded to scan his mind, Spencer had no idea. He couldn’t let him in there.

“Please, Spencer, have a seat.” Charles spoke up from where he sat behind his desk. He wore a smile that was meant to be reassuring, but it did nothing to soothe the knot in Spencer’s stomach. That knot grew a little when Charles looked up at Remy and said “Thank you for bringing him, Remy.” Clearly dismissing him.

Remy nodded his head in acknowledgement. “Y’ need me fo’ anything else, Professor, just give a holler.”

“Thank you, Remy, I shall.”

The sound of the door shutting had Spencer’s stomach dropping. He was alone with the Professor now. With a calming breath, he forced the fear down, pulling on his outer mask. His legs crossed and he rested his arms on the armrests of the chair, slouching his back slightly to show a casual, slightly sensual pose. This was one that had taken him a lot of practice a long time ago, but he’d perfected it since then. Surprisingly, his years at the BAU had actually helped him with his acting skills. Studying body language had left him with a better understanding on how to manipulate his own. He used that now to put on the most bored, lazy look he could. It didn’t seem to bother Charles, who only smiled at him and said “Good morning, Spencer. Did you sleep well?”

All right, time to get this started. “You’ve got some nice rooms here, boss. I slept like a baby.”

“Good, good. And how is your injury this morning?”

Lifting said foot, Spencer rolled it a little, showing his return of movement. “Right as rain, boss. I heal rather quickly.”
That seemed to catch his interest. He locked on to Spencer’s face with honest curiosity. “You have a secondary mutation, then?”

“I do. But it’s not my healing.” Crossing his legs once more, Spencer waved a dismissive hand in the air, working so hard to be casual. “That’s just part of my electricity. It sparks the cells in my body and all that and speeds up my healing. At least, that’s what a doc told me.” He quickly added on the last part, not wanting to reveal how he knew what he knew. He had to word this all carefully. These people weren’t allowed to know about Sir or the tests he’d run on Spencer. He couldn’t let them know of Sir’s existence.

Charles nodded in understanding. “Logan is an accelerated healer as well. His body can repair any wound done to it in a short time. In mere moments his injuries will heal before your eyes.”

Spencer already knew that, but he nodded as if he didn’t. “Mine isn’t that fast. Wouldn’t that be nice? No, what he’d heal in five seconds would take me about a day. The worse the injury, the longer the healing, but nothing has ever kept me down for longer than a week.” And it had been tested repeatedly to come up with that number, though he didn’t tell him that.

“What exactly are your mutations?” Charles sat back, picking up a pen and pulling over his notebook. “So that we can properly help you, we need to know what it is that you are capable of.”

That made sense. Shrugging, Spencer started to explain. “You already know about my electricity and healing. Other than that, all I’ve got is empathy. I don’t need help with that, though. It doesn’t bother me any when I shield. When it does, well, I deal with it.”

“You’re an empath as well?” Again, that fascinated look. “I’d wondered about your shielding last night. I almost couldn’t sense you in the room at all. Just a bare sense of who you are. You see, I’m a telepath. I wouldn’t have read your mind without permission, but I tend to rely on that sense to alert me to the presence of others in the room. You were just barely there at all.”

Fantastic! That meant his shields really were working the way they should. At least, if the guy was telling him the truth. There were no guarantees on that. Spencer decided he wouldn’t trust it and would simply keep his shields at the strength they were.

“We won’t ask you about your past, Spencer.” Charles said suddenly. His gaze was sharp on Spencer. “Everyone has a right to their history, so long as it does not put my school or my people in danger. If there is anything in your past that could present a problem like that, now would be the time to speak about it.”

Nausea churned in Spencer’s stomach. He let a corner of his mouth curl up and he gave a lazy shrug. This was a perfect chance to build a little more on the cover he was trying to present here. “I’ve pissed off some people in my past, but none that’ll come after me. The few men I pissed off aren’t going to chase after a whore. Not when there’s a chance it could get out that they’d been with that whore to begin with.” Rising, he stretched himself a little. “Is that everything, honey? Do I go to some classes now or something?”

Charles sat back in his seat, his elbows resting on the armrests and his hands folded near his mouth. “You don’t have to live that lifestyle anymore, Spencer.” He said slowly. “That doesn’t have to be a part of who you are.”

That had Spencer letting out an honest laugh. He put his hands on his hips and shook his head at the ridiculousness of that statement. “Professor, that, as you put it, is who I am. Nothing’s going to change that. Some people are born for great things. Some of us are made for others. Me being a whore, it’s not something you can change, it’s just something that is. I’ve been that way since I was
This time it was Spencer giving the Professor a gentle look. “Fix what you can fix, honey, and settle for that. The rest is as it is.”

It seemed that Charles accepted his words. He sighed and nodded before saying “First I’d like you to report down to the Med Lab. Dr. McCoy is going to give you a full physical. Then, if you’re in good health, we’re going to take you to a special room known as the Danger Room to assess your powers and try to figure the best teacher for you. Let me call someone to escort you down there.”
Chapter 4

Sitting on the table in the medical lab—and hadn’t that been a bit of a surprise, being brought down here to the sublevels and seeing what exactly was hidden in this house—Spencer swung his legs slightly, waiting for the doctor to come in. When he’d first entered the Med Lab, Dr. McCoy had told him to go put on a gown and have a seat and he’d be there in a moment. Well used to doctors and scientists alike, Spencer had gone straight to the table and stripped down to his skin before putting on the typical hospital gown. Any of his usual shyness wasn’t present here. He’d never felt it; not in a medical setting. Modesty had been something that he’d had to learn, not something that he’d ever had early on in his life. Medical labs had been so much a part of his life, no matter the pain that had been inflicted there. There were some days they felt more like home than anything else.

It amused him that his ‘escort’ had taken up a place nearby once Spencer had changed. Logan caught him looking at him and raised an eyebrow. “You want me to go wait outside till you’re done?” He was sticking around so that he could take Spencer to the Danger Room afterwards if he was declared healthy.

The idea of making him leave made Spencer smile. “Hell, honey, I don’t mind if you don’t.” This was nothing special. When he was staying with Sir full time, he was subjected to daily physicals to go with the experiments.

Dr. McCoy came walking over there, gloves stretched over his furry hands, a smile on his face. “Welcome to my lab, young man. Charles tells me that your ankle has healed. He explained to me about your healing abilities. Most fascinating, I must say.” While he spoke, he reached out and took Spencer’s wrist, checking his pulse. “Hmm, you have a higher than normal heart rate.”

“I always have.” Spencer assured him. “I also run, on average, at one hundred point five instead of ninety eight point six.”

“Fascinating.” He said again.

The room went quiet as he ran through the typical vitals check. When he was done, he set the blood pressure cuff on a cart to his side and looked from Spencer to Logan and back again. Reading that look, Spencer smiled. “Oh, it’s ok. I don’t mind him being here. What do you need me to do, big guy?”

Usually being called ‘big guy’ by others made Hank grumble slightly. But there was something about this new young one that made it hard to get mad at him. Hank shook his head at that before telling him “I need you to pull your gown down to your waist an lie on your back so I can check your stomach.”

Spencer easily did as he was told, settling himself down on his back with his arms loose at his sides, grateful that he still had his sunglasses on so that the lights wouldn’t hurt his eyes. He was far too light sensitive. Gentle hands surprised him by touching, not on his stomach, but on his left hip. “These are some pretty strong scars. I thought you had healing ability?”

“I do.” Spencer tried to think of a way to explain this to them. “It’s not an instant heal. It’s more, accelerated. So my body goes through the normal healing process—just a lot faster, which means I get the scars to go with it because that’s part of a normal healing process, you know?”

Hank seemed to contemplate his words. “How different. I’ve never seen a healing ability quite like that.” His fingers traced the scars once more. Spencer knew which ones they were. Two were on the
front of his hip and one on the backside; there was a mirror set on the other side. He remembered perfectly the night that he got them and the feel of those talons cutting into his skin. He had to push that image down before it made him shudder. As if sensing his patient’s sudden discomfort, Hank moved on from the scars and started the abdominal exam. “Do you know any of your medical history, Spencer? Is there anything I might need to know or check for? Any diseases that run in your family or any conditions I should be made aware of?”

He’d been prepared for that question and already had his answer ready in his mind with the pertinent information. If he was going to be treated here for anything at all, there were a few things they did need to know and some they didn’t. “No diseases in my family that I know of, and I don’t have any conditions. I’ve had three previous surgeries. One here…” he paused, lifting a hand to touch the scar on his left shoulder. “One here…” next he touched his right side. “And one here.” He reached down, touching his knee. “I also have a sensitivity to light and slightly improved night vision.” That made him pause and shudder. He absolutely hated the dark. Hated it. “My night vision only works if there’s some form of light to work with, though. I can’t see in pitch black. The only other thing I can think of off the top of my head is medication—I can’t take any.”

That stopped Hank. He stepped back to look down at Spencer with shock. “What?”

“I can’t take meds. Well, I can, but there’s no point. My body doesn’t process them properly. Pain medication is a sort of hit and miss; some work and some don’t. Narcotics react strangely in me. Sedatives make me slightly sleepy but I burn them off too fast for them to be effective…” Spencer cut himself off as his empathy picked up on the horror the two with him were feeling. Raising himself up on his elbows, he looked from one to the other, trying to read their faces. “What? What is it?”

“You had three surgeries to remove bullets from your body, but you can’t be anesthetized or medicated for pain? How on earth did they perform the surgery, then?” Hank asked him gruffly.

Spencer gave him a strange look. “The sedatives keep me sleepy and my empathy allows me to dull my own emotional awareness. In a sense, it’s like I cut off my connection to the pain receptors in my brain. I feel it but I don’t, if that makes sense.” He could see that his explanation didn’t really help them feel any better and he didn’t quite understand it. None of the surgeries had been anything extremely invasive. They were just removing bullets and the like. His empathy let him cut off those sensations so they were only dull, barely felt. In a sense, it was almost like he was unconscious. Wasn’t that the same as sedation? What pain did leak through, well, he knew how to deal with it. He offered them a smile as he quoted “Someone once said ‘Pain is weakness leaving the body. The question isn’t how much more you can take, but how much more can you give. Just when you are ready to quit, your mind says push harder. You listen, sensing an inner strength that wasn’t there before. And suddenly you discover—you no longer feel the pain.’”

His quotation seemed to surprise them. After he said it, he realized that it didn’t fit in with the image he was trying to present to them here. He was letting some of the smart guy slip through and that wasn’t who he was trying to be here. To try and lighten the mood, he added on one more fact. “Oh! I almost forgot. You probably don’t want to stick me in an MRI machine or anything like that.” His grin was impish as he sat up straight. “I have a bit of a tendency to accidentally fry them. It’s just a little too much electricity around me, begging to be touched.”

They both chuckled at that and seemed to understand that the medication topic was closed now.

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The rest of the exam went easy enough for Spencer. The only little hitch they hit was the eye exam, which Spencer politely declined, only saying that he still had a bit of a headache and could he please...
do that later. In his eyes, things went well, and there seemed to be no real trouble. But Hank was
talented at hiding his own emotions and he did just that as he finished his examination. None of the
anger or the heartache he felt as he uncovered each new scar was allowed to show through. The
amount of scarring he found on the boy’s body was absolutely horrible. Beyond that, it was
infuriating, knowing that someone had been treated this way. When they were done, Hank left
Spencer to dress on his own and drew Logan over into his office, shutting the door. The window in
the door allowed them to watch Spencer as they spoke privately.

“What’s up, Blue?” Logan didn’t waste time once the door was shut.

Hank looked out the window to the boy that was dressing, his eyes traveling over the tattoo on his
back. A few forks of jagged lightning were blazing down his back in blues and whites and purples,
looking almost real. He knew, however, what they covered. “I strongly urge you to keep an eye on
that boy, Logan. Not because I’m worried for our sake, but for his.”

That definitely had Logan’s attention. “What do you mean?”

“We know nothing of his past, correct?” At Logan’s nod, Hank sighed. “Well, I can take a guess at
some of it. Most definitely that boy has spent time in a lab before. He shows a sign of intelligence
when it comes to how this works and he moves through a physical like it’s a natural thing for him.
Judging by the scarring in his inner elbows, I would guess that he’s either an addict, or …”

“Or they’re medical.” Logan concluded, his expression thoughtful. He’d seen marks like that on
another friend before.

A soft sigh slid from Hank. “Correct, my friend. Some of his other scars show a slightly medical feel
to them as well.” It wasn’t just Logan that had been reminded of their other friend. Hesitating only a
moment, Hank added, “In a way, they remind me of some of the scars our Cajun friend possesses.”
And they knew where those had come from. After Antarctica, after the truth came out, everyone
knew of Remy’s time as Sinister’s science experiment. They knew at least some of the tests and
torture the Cajun had been put through under that man’s hands. To think that yet another boy,
another empath, had gone through it was chilling.

The similarities between the two of them hadn’t escaped Logan’s notice. “You notice how many
ways he and Rems seem to be alike? Both empaths. Both have some kind of charge. Now,
apparently, both tortured by some scientist. Remy, well, you know what his charm does. And
Spencer, he doesn’t seem to hide that he is or was one.”

“It is rather startling. But there are differences as well, my friend. Where young Remy has to almost
be dragged into my lab for any kind of work, Spencer seems to be almost completely at ease in here.
Also, Spencer does not seem to carry this hatred or sadness that Remy once did.”

Another sigh slid from Logan. This time it surprised Hank, who turned to look at his feral friend. The
sadness on Logan’s face stunned him. Looking out at Spencer, Logan shook his head. “That makes
it worse. He’s not upset about it, Blue. He’s resigned. To him, this is just what life is. He doesn’t
know any other way to know he should be upset by it.”

The two watched Spencer for a moment longer, the boy finally dressed and patiently lounging
against the table. Finally Logan looked back to Hank. “I’ll keep an eye on him. I got a feeling there’s
more to this kid than meets the eye and I’m gonna find out before it comes to bite us all in the ass.”

That said, he opened the door and stepped out of Hank’s office.

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Once he’d gotten dressed, Spencer knew better than to go over to the two in the office. It was obvious they’d gone in there to talk about him where he couldn’t hear them. Not surprising, really. He just ignored them and settled himself in against the table to wait. It didn’t take very long before he heard the door open. Spencer looked up as Logan came walking over. “Come on, kid, let’s get you to the Danger Room. You seem to be in good enough health. Let’s go see what you’re made of, now.”

It was easy for Spencer to push off of the table and wink. “You think you can handle me?” he flirted jokingly. Though ferals usually made Spencer nervous, this one seemed a little easier to be around than most. He didn’t set off any of Spencer’s internal warnings the way that some people could. If anything, his presence was soothing. For all that he was dangerous, he was at least a danger that Spencer knew well and could predict. He’d learned over the years that ferals were just as capable of feeling things as anyone else, but they felt things just a bit differently. Stronger. More, simple. If they were mad, they were mad, and you knew it. If they were happy, you knew it. Their emotions were more primal, more open, without some of the mixed up bits that the rest of the world could get.

To his utter delight, Logan flirted back just as casually. “Aint come across a boy yet I haven’t been able to tame.”

A feel of Logan’s emotions told him the feral man was amused by their conversation. No lust was coming from him, so he wasn’t taking the words seriously, thank God. The ease he was feeling around Logan right now made it simpler to play the part he knew he had to. Laughing, Spencer stepped up and put his hand in the curve of Logan’s arm, smiling down at him. He channeled just a little bit of Penelope in that moment, bringing to mind the way he’d seen her interact with Derek, and tried to use it to help him respond to Logan. “Big strong man like you? Bet you don’t even have to try. The boys and girls just fall at your feet, don’t they?”

Logan raised his eyebrows and looked down at their moving feet before looking back up at Spencer with a smirk. “Don’t see you there.” They were rounding a corner at the time and Spencer took advantage of it to curve his body, sliding easily down to his knees in a graceful move. He looked up through his bangs at the man that was now grinning down at him. “You lunatic.” Logan growled playfully. He grabbed Spencer’s arm and pulled him up one handed. “Get on your feet.”

“I couldn’t have you make me wrong, now could I?” Spencer joked. His hand went back into the curve of Logan’s arm, resting there easily. About then was when Spencer looked up and saw Scott and Remy both standing outside of a doorway. They were both grinning at them.

“Did we miss out on something?” Scott called out jokingly. “Do I need to be kicking some ass?”

Logan laughed and looked over at Spencer before looking at Scott. “You’ve got nothing to worry about, Scooter. The kid wishes he were so lucky.” He broke apart from Spencer as he said it, sending him a grin that had Spencer shaking his head and laughing.

Whatever had caused the feral’s fine spirits, Spencer wasn’t going to protest it. He put his hands on his hips and mockingly shook his head. “You couldn’t afford me, honey.” He said with a fake sniff before turning toward Scott and Remy. Meanwhile, his brain logged away what he’d just learned in the mental file he was slowly building. Surprising as it seemed, it appeared that Logan and Scott were a couple. That was an interesting fact. Hadn’t Jean introduced Scott as her husband earlier? It was something that he would have to think on later.

Before they could keep going, Scott held his hands out. “Enough, enough. Let’s get this session going before we run over into training times. Spencer, we’re going to go ahead and put you here in what we call the Danger Room. This room can simulate any scene we choose to set in here. We’re going to set you up and pull up a simulation of a cityscape. I’m not going to stick in any civilians; all
I’m putting in is bots. What you need to do is use your powers and anything else to destroy any bot you come across, okay? That’ll let us see your strength and control as well as how you use your powers and where you need some work. From there we can figure out who your best instructor will be and what you need help with.”

“Sounds simple enough.” He was glad he’d dressed comfortably. That would make this easier.

“Good.” Nodding, Scott looked to the other two. “You two are welcome to come up to the control room with me. We’ll be in there, Spencer, watching the whole thing. If at any time you feel you have to stop, just shout out for us to stop and I will. We’ll be watching out for you, don’t worry.”

The door by them was opened and Spencer stepped inside when gestured. He heard the door shut and couldn’t help but start to look around the room. There didn’t seem to be anything special about this place. But, most likely they had to go to the control room to activate the simulation. He decided to take advantage of the moment to stretch himself out for what was to come and to use that stretching to allow him to check out the room around him. His eyes discreetly scanned the room behind his sunglasses as he ran through a basic set of stretches to loosen up his muscles and prepare his body. When he straightened up again, a voice came into the room. “Are you ready to start?”

“Ready when you are.” He called back.

There was a pause and then “Is there any specific city you prefer? A place you'll be more comfortable to work in?”

That was an easy answer. “Las Vegas.” Maybe it would set him more at ease if he could be on a familiar landscape.

A second later, the room around him transformed. It was a jarring sight, but he managed to maintain his feet, locking his surprise and curiosity behind his shield. Inside, he wanted nothing more than to start quizzing them, begging to know so many different things about this. How on earth was this simulation so real? He had a feeling that, if he could fly, he’d be able to soar up in the sky beyond where the ceiling to this room should stop him. How did they manage this kind of technology? It was amazing! The science geek inside of him was quiver; the other part of him knew they wouldn’t answer anything right now. This was not for him to ask questions, anyways. This was a test. One that, for the sake of his assignment, he could not fail.

“Anything you see, destroy, Spencer.”

Standing in the middle of the Las Vegas strip, the reminder seemed even stranger coming from seemingly nowhere. But Spencer grinned and saluted. Then he pushed the fun aside and pulled himself into fight mode. This was a part of himself that really hadn’t been able to come out on his last job. There, he’d had to be a bit more uncoordinated, a bit bumbling. Kind of like he was naturally when he was deep in thought. Sir hadn’t wanted him to show off any of his physical skills and make anyone suspicious of where he would’ve learned things like that. Now, after years of holding back, it felt good to let go, to relax himself and extend his powers in the way that he’d learned. He held perfectly still, reaching around him with his empathy, eyes scanning all around, searching for that first threat.

The first person came strolling out of an alley nearby. Spencer stayed still as the guy came toward him. Then, when he was close enough, he twisted his body quickly, and in a few well-placed blows he had the body on the ground. He backed up a few feet and waited for the next.

For a little bit they came at him one by one, never much of a challenge. Slowly, the skill level grew. They came in sets of twos, with stronger fighting skills. Then there were three. He managed to
dispatch them all without an injury. When the next trio came out, one of them was a mutant that shot fire from little devices on his wrists. Now this was more like the training that Sir had put him through. Spencer blew out a breath and then darted underneath a jet of fire, his own hand shooting out toward the man. He sent a surge of electricity through the devices the boy wore, destroying them on his wrists. Then he drew that electricity out, making it into a whip to lash out at another of the mutants that came at him. In no time they lay around him, dissolving as they were ‘destroyed’.

He kept the electric whip on him, coiling it around one hand and wrist, keeping it at the ready. When a new group came at him, five this time, he threw himself into the fight with all he was worth. The whip struck here and there while his body twisted and turned, punching and kicking and rolling as needed. A blow caught his chin, snapping his head back, and he responded by letting the force carry him into a backflip, landing him on his feet a few steps back. The electricity coursing in his system stimulated his nerves and sped up his reflexes, agility, even his strength in some ways. He let it fill him, giving him the ability to fight that he wouldn’t have on his own.

More mutants seemed to suddenly be coming at him. He was going to be surrounded if he wasn’t careful. Dodging to the side, he jumped at the nearby building, calling on the electricity in his hands to create the static electricity necessary to allow him to cling to the metal. Using that, he scaled halfway up, calculating what he would need to do in his mind as he went. Once he reached his mark, he braced his hands and feet and shoved backwards at the same time as gathering as much electricity as he could from the signs around him, using them to create himself an electric platform to land on. From there, he sent bolts of lightning down, working to keep it all under his control. He then leapt again, snatching the knives in his boots as he landed, his arms swirling to slice the chest of the one he’d landed closest to. His other hand snapped out when he spun, burying in the chest of another as he’d tried to sneak up behind Spencer.

Another mutant stepped up, hands pushing out as they sent a powerful energy blast Spencer’s way. There was no time to dodge. Spencer planted his feet firmly and brought his own hands up, calling on the electrons in that energy, using those to convert the rest of the energy, to twist it and change it and claim it. Sweat broke out on his brow and his whole body seemed to tingle with the power he was gathering. With a cry, he wrenched control of the energy blast from her, turning it to pure electricity and firing it right back at her.

It had been too much to gather, though. Even after his blast, so much was riding in him, glowing along his skin, inside of him. He felt like he was a live current. More electricity gathered to him from the neon signs around him. Air crackled around him and the smell of ozone was sharp in his nose. It was too much. He could feel his control over it slipping and he knew it was simply too much. He had to stop it. He had to let it out before he lost complete control over it. Pain rocked through him, pounding in his head, aching in every inch of his body. He curled his hands into fists and steadied his feet, fighting the pain back. Then he called the electricity and forced it up into the sky. Lightning bolts struck all over the simulated city of Las Vegas. It was a lightning storm to rival any seen on earth. Each bolt pulsed from him, releasing a little more and a little more.

The last jolt of it ran through his body, dropping him down to his knees. His hands pressed against the concrete as multiple bolts shot down in a circle around him, pulling a scream past his lips as it all finally let him go. Finally, it was gone. It was done. His body sagged and he bowed his head, panting from exertion. A small spurt of pride sat in him. He had done it. He’d channeled out the excess. Granted, he couldn’t create a storm like that in the real world, but it had done the trick now. It had poured out of him in the way that he had demanded, not under its own demands.

The scene around him changed again until the room was back to what it had originally been. Almost instantly the door opened and people shot inside. Before he could think to be concerned about being touched, a hand settled on the back of his shirt. “Spencer? Spencer? Can you hear me?” Logan’s
deep voice was practically growling at him. If he hadn’t been so sore and exhausted, he would have made some smart remark. As it was, he managed to shift his weight so he dropped down on one hip. With a shaking hand, he reached behind him, grabbing his gloves from his pocket. Better to be safe than sorry, right? Except he couldn’t seem to make his hands work enough to slide them on.

Logan took the gloves from him, gently holding one out, his fingers carefully out of the way. Spencer smiled gratefully at him and slipped a hand into each one as it was held out. Only then did he relax enough to look and see who had come in. Logan was right beside him, as well as Remy. He saw that Scott and a woman his mental files told him was Ororo were there as well. All of them were full of concern for him with a hint of something else. Was that…awe? Fear? He didn’t want to know.

On a shuddered breath he brought a gloved hand up and ran it down his face. “Shit.” The uncharacteristic curse slipped out on a slightly shuddered breath. The trembling got a little worse and he knew he was going to pay for that little display there. “I could eat my weight in food right about now.”

For a second they all just stared at him. Then Ororo started to laugh; a soft, sweet sound that brought out everyone else’s laughter.

Logan clapped a hand on Spencer’s shoulder. “Come on, pup. Let’s go stuff that bottomless pit you call a stomach.”
Chapter 5

To the amusement of others, it was Logan and Scott who took charge of getting Spencer to the kitchen. Almost like two mother hens, the two sat him at the bar and proceeded to make him a large sandwich and serve it up with chips and a glass of milk. As they prepared it, Spencer looked over to where Remy had sat down beside him. He couldn’t help raising an eyebrow and leaning in to ask “Are they usually like this?”

Remy looked beyond just amused by this. “Non. Y’ just must be special, cher. Sure is funny, though.”

The idea made Spencer just a little uncomfortable. He tugged a little on the bottom of one glove, better settling it onto his hand. These people were treating him in ways he wasn’t used to. Oh sure, on his last assignment, the team there had treated him well. They’d been kind to him and they’d respected him and his knowledge. Leaving them, these people who had been like a family, had been hard for him to do. But, in a way, they’d always looked at him slightly different, still not normal. They’d seen an awkward genius when they’d looked at him. None of them had ever honestly seen Spencer—and how could they? They’d never even known that he was a mutant! Imagine the government discovering that they’d been employing a mutant.

This assignment was more difficult for the simple fact that he was allowed to be more himself. He didn’t have to hide that he was a mutant from them, and the cover that he was making himself play was, if he were honest with himself, a person he’d been most of his life. A mask that he’d worn for so long it felt real to him sometimes. If he’d talked or walked or dressed this way on his last assignment, they wouldn’t have known what to do with him and they never would have trusted him. Here, Spencer didn’t have to worry. The only things he was keeping from these people were Sir and the assignment he was here under. Granted, those were big things and they made part of his past need to be hidden, but they didn’t change his core. That, he was allowed to be, and it was quite a liberating experience. More so because, for only the second time in his life, there were people who so far seemed to like him for him. He just didn’t know how to handle that. You’ve been here a day and you’re getting too attached to them. You better cut this shit out before Sir finds out or he’s going to make you pay and you know it. ‘Things’ don’t get to make relationships. You are Sir’s property and you damn well better not forget that.

His thoughts had consumed him so that he didn’t even realize that he was fiddling with his bracelet underneath his glove. When a plate was set down in front of him, startling him from his thoughts, he looked up to find Scott looking down at him. “That’s a nice bracelet.” The man commented in an easy voice. There was something on his emotions, vague and barely there, but it was enough to have Spencer cautiously paying more attention.

He looked down at his hand for a second more. “Thanks. It was given to me a long time ago.” Long enough ago that he was too young to remember it. The bracelet had always been a part of him. Always there to remind him just who he belonged to. He fought to keep his emotions under control, mentally cursing his exhaustion that was making it difficult. To try and stave off more questions, he picked up half the sandwich they’d given him, grinning at how stacked it was. Apparently Logan had taken him at his word when he’d said he had a healthy appetite earlier.

The first bite had him wanting to moan. It tasted delicious! Again, as was habit, one of his arms curled around his plate a little, a gesture that spoke of someone far too familiar with protecting his food from being taken. “Thanks, guys.” He told them between bites. “This is exactly what I needed. Stuff like that always sucks my energy straight out of me.”
Glancing up, he realized that they were all watching him eat and suddenly he felt self-conscious. Slowly he finished chewing his bite, taking a drink of the milk to wash it down with, his eyes never leaving the group. “Do I have something on my face?”

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen someone so small eat so damn much.” Logan told him with a shake of his head. “Rems over there can pack it away sometimes, but he doesn’t always remember he’s supposed to eat.”

Remy scoffed at him and rolled his eyes. “I remember to eat, cher. Just get a little busy sometimes, d’accord?”

While they bickered, Spencer polished off the last of his sandwich and moved on to the chips. When the attention turned back to him, he flashed them a grin. “For the record, I’m not that small.” He defended himself against Logan’s earlier words. “And my size isn’t my fault. I have a faster metabolism and the electricity in me kind of absorbs my energy when I use it. I either have to eat to fuel my natural energy, or I have to tap into something and steal some of its electricity. Trust me, I’d much prefer getting my energy this way. Food tastes much better than electricity. Though, I’ll admit, I tend to forget to eat sometimes, too and then I have to tap into some electricity because I’ve left myself with no real choice.”

Leaning against the counter, Logan folded his arms over his chest. “So you weren’t kidding when you said you have a healthy appetite then.”

Again, Spencer felt like he was channeling Penelope a little as he shot back “In more ways than one, honey.” Finishing the last chip, Spencer looked at his plate, debating. He decided not to push his luck and pushed it away with a resigned sigh. Better to eat too little than to eat too much. He could always borrow a little electricity from the mansion later if he needed. The place was big enough it wouldn’t miss a little bit. “Thanks for the food, guys. Definitely recharged my batteries a little bit after that.”

His words seemed to bring them around to the conversation all of them were eager to have. Scott reclined against the counter beside Logan, their arms just barely touching; love sparked between them that had Spencer wanting to sigh. It was a beautiful thing. He had to pull away from it when Scott started to talk or he knew he’d be distracted by the sensation and miss the words. “First off, I have to say that you’re an excellent fighter. Your hand to hand was extremely impressive, as was your knife work.”

Smiling, he nodded. “Thanks, honey.”

“About your powers, well…I don’t really know what to say about that.” Scott wiped a hand over his mouth, taking a second to find the words he wanted. “I can see the areas you need to work on and things that we can help you with, but your capabilities and strength are staggering. What you did at the end, I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like it.”

“How was he going to explain this to them without coming off sounding like a science nerd? More accurately, he needed to make it so that they would all understand it. Some of it even he had a hard time understanding—he’d run off of instinct to do what he needed to. The general idea had been in his mind but once he’d started it, instinct had started to take over.

His eyes went down to his gloves as he tried to order his words. Carefully he took his gloves off and set them on the counter top. That allowed him to stretch his fingers out and look at them. To his eyes, he could see the small current on his skin. Not enough to kill, no, but enough to jolt. Almost like a
Taser. “I knew I wouldn’t be able to dodge what she was throwing at me and I could…I felt it building in her hands before she threw it. I just, took the energy she sent and converted it to electricity and then I…I took control of it.”

“You converted it to electricity? Someone else’s energy and you converted it to electricity in midair?” Ororo’s voice showed her shock at this information.

One of his shoulders rose and fell in a shrug. “Electricity is just a form of energy result from the existence of charged particles like electrons or protons, either statically or in an accumulation of charge, or dynamically as a current. So long as there are those charged particles there for me to sense, I can use them. It’s a hell of a lot harder to convert it like that than to create my own.” Looking up, he flashed them a wry grin. “Bad side effects, too. I made too much and it didn’t have enough of an outlet, so it was filling me up. I felt like I was the lightning bolt.” A faraway look came into his eyes as he thought back to that sensation. The pain and pleasure that had twirled around inside of him. “I felt like, if I let it keep growing, I would have turned into electricity and shot off into the sky.” For a moment, the idea of that thrilled through him. With a shake of his head, he got rid of that thought and went back to his explanation. “Anyways, I pulled in too much and I needed to let it out before it ripped its way out. I was losing all my control. I could feel it. So, I did the easiest thing for me. I made a lightning bolt. It’s the easiest thing for me to do and one of the first things I ever did. I forced it all out in the bolts and cleared it out before I lost control of it.”

“Kind of like m’ charge.” Remy said to the room. “When I feel like I’m gonna lose it, when dat energy gets to be too much, I gotta let it out somehow so I blow something to take it outta me.” Holding up a card that Spencer hadn’t even seen him get, Remy ‘charged’ it, causing it to glow a faint pink. Even that small feel of energy had Spencer’s hands twitching. The skin on his fingers had a slight bluish white light that seemed to grow, pulling at the pink of Remy’s charge. That energy called to him, making him want to moan out loud.

Ororo was the one to notice. “Brother!” she called to him. Right as Spencer bowed his head and curled his fingers into fists, Remy cursed and the charge vanished from Spencer’s senses. He didn’t bother looking up yet.

“Merde. Je suis désolé, mon ami.”

The energy in Spence surged just a tiny bit and he felt it jump into a few things around him, finding places to go. He winced as he felt three cell phones around him fry. The microwave gave a loud pop as its circuit board fried as well and the coffee machine crackled along its cord as it hissed with the sudden surge. Just as quickly, all of it stopped. Spencer pulled his gloves on quickly before he could cause any more damage. “Sorry, sorry.” He apologized quickly. “I’ll replace it, I swear. I’m sorry. I’ll replace the coffee pot and the microwave and your phones.”

He rose from his chair, trying to keep his hands tucked into his armpits. His eyes darted toward the door that would lead him outside. “I just, I’m going to go take a walk for a bit. Outside. Where there’s less I can destroy.” And before they could say anything to stop him, he took off to the door and rushed outside. By the time anyone even made it to the door after him, he was already weaving his way around people outside and making his way toward the lake.

“Let him go.” Scott suggested quietly. “Let him calm down again. We all know how emotions affect our powers.”

Ororo stood at the door and watched Spencer as he walked, hands still tucked into his armpits. “We’ve got to help him, Scott. Not just for his sake, but for the sake of everyone around him. With his powers out of control, he will be a danger to everyone. He is a walking weapon.”
“The question is, whose weapon is he?” Scott murmured. No one had an answer for him.

The worry on their faces tore at his heart. The last thing he wanted was for a kid to be scared of him. They were just out here playing, having fun, doing what kids do. What real kids got to do. Licking his lips, Spencer made a split second decision, looking from one kid to the next. “You realize what this means, don’t you?” he told them in a low voice. They all stared back, unsure of what was going to happen. One kid stood with a bucket on either side of him, not far to Spencer’s right. He waited a beat before darting and grabbing the bucket, pulling out a balloon. “This means war.” He cackled and launched one of the balloons.

The kids exploded with shrieks and laughter and the water fight was back on. Despite it being a cool day and everything still being mostly wet from the rainstorm the night before, the kids were having a blast playing this way and Spencer found himself enjoying it as well. He got knocked down in the mud, soaked by balloons, threw enough balloons to soak half the kids at least, and he was having the time of his life.

Upstairs, a small group of people watched the activity through a window in Charles’s office. Scott, Logan, Jean, Remy, Hank and Ororo had all gathered with Charles to discuss their newest charge, but had been distracted by the shrieks coming from outside. When they’d looked, they’d been surprised to see the kids in a water balloon fight with Spencer right there in the midst of it.

“How can they be playing in water?” Jean asked with a shake of her head. “It’s warmer than yesterday, but everything’s still wet from the rain.”

Logan gave her a sharp toothed grin. “They’re kids, Jeannie. Kids don’t care about water and mud.”

“Apparently neither does Spencer.” Scott said on a laugh when he saw three of the kids tackle Spencer in the mud now that the water balloons were gone. “Oh, they’re going to be filthy. We’ll have to hose them off before they ever get inside.”
“Dey’re having a good time, mes amis.” Moving to take one of the chairs near the desk, Remy winked at the Professor. “After dat hellish place we got dem from, dey deserve some fun. It’s as dey say, kids will be kids. Droit, Professeur?”

Charles smiled and nodded. “That is right, Remy. Now, the rest of you, come away from there. I’ve asked Rogue, Robert and Jubilee to take care of getting the children clean before they enter the mansion. What I’d like to do is take advantage of this time to discuss our newest resident. That is the reason I called you all up here.” He added slightly impishly. “Not to gawk out my window.”

There was the sound of soft laughter as the group arranged themselves around the room. Ororo took a chair near Remy while Scott and Logan claimed the couch, arms brushing against one another. Jean stepped to the side to pour a drink for herself and Charles. Hank took a seat on the other couch. It ringed them around the Professor so that they could all watch him and each other as they spoke.

Charles accepted the drink from Jean when she brought it. Taking hers, she sat down at Scott’s other side, sliding her arm through his, and turned her attention to Charles. The Professor looked around at them, this group of young people that he trusted and relied on so very much. “Before we get into anything else, I’d like to first gain your general impression of our new guest.” It wasn’t surprising that he turned to Scott first. “Scott, what do you think of him?”

“Personally or professionally?” Scott asked.

“Both.”

“Personally, I think he seems like a good kid. He’s friendly enough if you don’t take the flirting seriously and he’s quick with a smile even if it doesn’t always seem real. He’s got a lot hidden in there that he doesn’t want people to see, but so do the rest of us. So does everyone. He’s definitely got a sense of humor. There’s just something about him that seems to make him likeable. I don’t know if it’s him, or his empathy, or what.” Shrugging, Scott sat back against the couch, adjusting a little, and his demeanor became a little more serious. Less Scott and more Cyclops, field leader. “Professionally, I think we have to train him. He only has half-control on his electric powers and what he can do with that half-control is astounding. Let loose and not taught to control what he can do, he could destroy the world or fall into the wrong hands and be used as a weapon. He’s definitely Omega class. If trained right, he’d be a great asset to the team.”

Nodding, Charles didn’t comment or offer his opinion on Scott’s words, instead looking over to Logan. “And you?”

The feral man didn’t hesitate to answer. “Kid’s scared of something. I don’t know what it is, but it scares the hell out of him. I’d say he’s honest about wanting our help. He’s got a good heart and he’s friendly enough, like Scooter said. Sure, he flirts almost as bad as Gumbo there, but it’s just part of him. We make him nervous and that’s how he reacts. He doesn’t question doing what he’s told and he seems eager to please. I like him.”

Next Charles looked to Jean. “You haven’t had much contact with him, I would think. What is your opinion?”

“Like you said, I haven’t spoken with him much.” Jean agreed. “But I think the others are right. He’s friendly. That’s the first thing that comes to mind. But at the same time, he makes me sad. The poor boy looks like he’s spent more time starving than fed and he devours food like it’s going to vanish on him. Not the amount, but the speed at which he eats it and the way he guards it as he does eat, as if life has taught him someone’s going to take it away if he doesn’t protect it and eat it quickly. He seems…lost. That’s the best word I can find to describe it. He seems lost.”
Next was Hank. The doctor looked down at his hands and sighed. “Earlier, Spencer spoke with me and told me that I had his permission to speak with whomever I felt necessary about his medical history. He said that he had nothing to hide.” After another sigh, Hank looked up. “That boy has been beyond tortured in his life. He definitely has been in labs quite often. He was well versed in what I needed to do for his physical and he bears scars of multiple blood draws. There are many, many scars over his entire body, some of which are medical and some that I can only give a horrified guess at their cause. Yet, he views it all as normal. Pain is a part of life to him. He’s had three surgeries and went through each one without being properly put to sleep.”

That was enough to draw an outcry from the room. Scott sat forward on the couch, his mouth falling open. “What?” he demanded. Jean brought a hand to cover her mouth, Ororo looked like she would be sick and Remy’s head had snapped toward Hank, red-on-black eyes locked intently on his face.

Hank nodded at them. “He told Logan and myself that he cannot take medication. Or, rather, that he can but it does not work properly. Anesthetics, he explained, make him sleepy, but they don’t put him to sleep. His metabolism is too high and he burns through it too fast. What the anesthetics don’t cover, he claimed that his empathy does, somehow using it to ‘cut off’ the pain receptors to his brain, though I’m not sure I understand how that works. I’d need to ask him to explain it in greater detail before I understand it right. In regards to his own treatment, I would say that he has no sense of what is right or wrong. I believe that if I had said I wanted to cut him open and look at his insides, he would have lay back on the table and allowed it.”

That had more than one person feeling just a little sick. Charles didn’t give them a chance to discuss Hank’s it, though. There was a purpose behind what he was doing and he continued on with it. Turning, he called on the next person. “What about you, Ororo?”

“I have not been around him enough to formulate an opinion. I will reserve my judgment, Professor.” She said simply.

As if he’d expected that, Charles nodded and moved to the next—the one that he’d deliberately saved for last and the one that he thought might offer the most insight of all. “And you, Remy? What is your opinion of Spencer?” He focused intently on the Cajun, curious to hear his response.

“Dat’s a long answer.” Remy warned him. When Charles said nothing, the Cajun’s lips curled and he continued. “On a purely personal level, I like de boy. He’s funny and kind and a whole lot more dan he seems. Could be good friends with him, me. Mais I t’ink he’s been hurt a lot and he don’t know how to act around all of us. He aint sure if we gonna hurt him or help him; he’s prepared fo’ either one. Aint used to even semi nice t’ings—de room was a luxury fo’ him. Made him laugh like a petit enfant at de sheer joy of having something so nice. An Jeannie’s right; de boy aint used to getting regular food. Or, at least, he aint used to having it round other people. He’s too protective of it.”

He shifted his weight in his chair, letting one leg dangle over the armrest, his hands absently pulling out a deck of cards that he started to shuffle. “Professionally? First off, he’s a helluva lot smarter dan he’s letting us see. Second, de boy definitely done time on de streets. He carries knives on him in his boots fo’ protection and he won’t go nowhere without dem, f’sure. De flirting, it aint just to cover up nerves. Some of de comments he makes are fo’ fun and some are to see if anyone’s gonna take him up on dem. He’s feeling us out, seeing how we’ll react to t’ings. Dere’s no doubt de boy’s sold himself. Been doing it a long time, I t’ink. De bracelet he wears, it’s an ownership bracelet. Whoever dat be is de one dat sent him here. He’s on some kind of mission.”

“A mission?” Charles asked calmly.

“Oui. I can’t be sure bout it, but I got a few ideas.” Expression intent, Remy started to shuffle faster
and faster. “If he were mine? I’d send him as a spy. De boy got empathy to help him feel how to get in good with people and to gauge when he’s in trouble. He’s smart, fast, more intelligent dan he lets on, and no one’s a better judge of character dan a whore. Dey gotta be. It’s a survival skill, non? Y’ gotta know which person gonna be de one dat pays and which one gonna be de one dat might hurt y’. Dat skill helps fo’ somet’ing like dis. Hell, I done jobs like this m’self b’fore. Y’ go in, earn dey trust and den y’ report back to y’r boss.”

That sure silenced the room. Everyone went quiet as they processed what he’d said. They didn’t question Remy’s assessment; out of all of them, he probably had the best capability to read someone, especially if that someone was from the streets. He was also one of the best at just reading people in general.

Eventually, the silence became too much. “So what the hell are we gonna do with him?” Logan growled out.

Running a hand through his hair, Scott let out a sigh. “We can’t just set him free, not with that power. I honestly believe he doesn’t have full control. That doesn’t feel like it’s a lie to me.”

“Non, it’s not a lie.” Remy confirmed. “When he was charging on his hands last night, de boy was really afraid. Even with his shields mostly up I felt dat. Even empaths can’t fake dat honest an raw of an emotion, homme. He does need help.”

“But can we risk having him here if he’s spying on us? Who knows who he’s reporting to or for what purposes.” Jean said.

“Whoever he is working for is most likely the one that has marked him with the bracelet.” Hank interjected thoughtfully. “I would also assume that he is the same one that has put those scars on his body. Can we, in good conscious, send that boy back to that life?”

Jean turned to look at him, leaning past Scott so that she could see him. “We can’t save everyone, Hank. Sometimes people just don’t want to be saved.” Much as she didn’t like to say it, someone had to point it out.

To her surprise, it was Scott who argued her point, his tone much sharper than she’d expected. “Sometimes they don’t know they need to be saved.” He snapped at her. “And sometimes they don’t believe they deserve it. Does that mean we just let them go? I doubt that boy knows he deserves anything better than what he’s getting!”

Ororo spoke up in that calm voice of hers, cutting through the temper that was building in the room. “We do not turn away anyone that can still be saved.” She pointed out to them all. “Spencer can still be saved. I believe that from everything I have heard from you all about him. He is a boy who has been hurt far too often and is lost and confused. Maybe some of what he is doing is an act, but I do not believe he could have so easily fooled us all into believing he is good. I vote that we do not banish him from the home. Let us keep him here and learn more about him. Give it a week or a month. If, after that, we feel there is nothing that can be done, we can banish him from the grounds. But until then, are we not obligated to try? Can we live with ourselves if we do not?”

Her words hung in the air, silencing any arguments the others might have given. Charles smiled at her proudly. “Well said, Ororo. Well said.” He complimented her. “I too believe that there is something in the boy that is still worth saving. His mission, if he has one, may be to gain our trust for whatever reasons, but I propose that we make it our mission to gain his. If we get him to trust us, we may yet be able to save him.”

“Aint gonna be easy, cher.” Cards still in his hands, Remy looked more subdued than anyone else
there. “De life he lived, it don’t make trusting easy. Y’ learn to trust no one. And if y’ tell him y’
know what he’s here for, de homme gonna bolt f’sure.”

There was something in his words that had Charles cocking his head and asking “And what would
you suggest, Remy?”

The Cajun brought his leg down and sat forward in his chair, arms resting on his thighs. “’T’ink we
should do as y’ said. We should try to gain Spencer’s trust. Mais we should also try to show him dat
he’s more dan what he t’inks he is. Show him dere’s more to him dan just being someone’s property
or a whore. Dat he’s a person too and deserves to be treated dat way. Show him he’s more dan
Inanime. Den, after a month, maybe two, we talk to him and tell him we know why he’s here and
offer to help him. Den he might take us up on de offer. And, we watch him de whole time to make
sure dat t’ings stay safe. Play it safe, too. Make sure he aint around security or t’ings like dat so dat
he can’t pass dat along. Personal information aint gonna hurt if dey can’t get to us. And if we can,
maybe we see if we can find de man dat de mark on his bracelet belongs to, oui? Maybe we stop him
before it becomes a problem.”

The plan was strong and sound and Charles couldn’t help but grin in pride at the Cajun that had
come so far since he’d first joined their team. From a man who had trusted no one and had been hurt
and angry with so much of the world, he was now fully a part of their team. Their family. He had
changed and grown and become a man in his own rights.

“Does everyone agree with this?” Charles asked his team. When he received agreement from
everyone, he smiled. “Then that’s what will do. But, I advise you, mention this to no one outside this
room. Encourage others to make friends with him, but do not let them know what we know. There
are a few who would not be able to contain themselves, I believe.”

It was a much more somber group that left his office. Each one was lost in thoughts of all they’d
discussed and the conclusions they’d come to. Though they knew it was dangerous to leave a
potential spy in their midst, but they all believed that it was the best plan. They couldn’t simply
abandon this boy who, in the span of a day, had managed to inspire such caring in all of them. There
was just something about him that tugged at them in different ways. They would do everything they
could to try and save the lost soul that had come to them.
Chapter 6

I'm adding some tags to warn for the upcoming violence, so please take note of that. If that triggers you or just isn't your thing, I'd stop reading now.

By the end of the day, Spencer felt exhilarated. Playing with the kids had been extremely fun. He’d never played like that before. Not ever. Was this what it felt like to be a real kid? To be a normal human being? This happy, tired, silly feeling that settled in the body and in the heart? He had laughed so much with the children. Even when they’d been covered in mud, dirty from head to toe, all of them had laughed and had a wonderful time of it. There had been no fighting, no yelling, no disapproval. When the three adults had come to hose them off before getting them inside, Spencer had laughed right along with all the kids at being hit with the cold water. And after coming in and showering and changing, he’d gone back with them and cleaned up their mud tracks that they’d made despite their best efforts not to.

After that, the kids had claimed him, pulling him along with them to dinner. What else was a guy supposed to do but go with them? He couldn’t just tell the kids no. Not when they were looking at him with such smiles and happiness. It wasn’t in him to deny them. So he’d gone with them and he’d sat at one of the large tables with them and enjoyed a lively, happy dinner full of jokes and laughter.

None of the children looked at him like he was strange, or different, or like he was some kind of freak. If anything, they were the most accepting group of people he’d ever been around, which was so far from his previous experience with kids that it was laughable. Kids in all ages, ranging from ten to twenty were at these tables, enjoying their food and having a good time with each other. There was a bond with them that was obvious; and, for this night, they let him in that bond. Let him feel what it could be like to belong to somewhere.

While he ate, Spencer forgot entirely about his assignment. He forgot about Sir and gathering intelligence and everything but the conversation around him and the happy feelings that floated off these kids. It was like a drug. He was almost drunk off the happiness in the room. It left him smiling and giddy. When the kids started to show him some of their powers, under the watchful eye of older ones, he cheered at the appropriate times with the other kids and laughed with them too. They all turned to him and asked him to show them what he could do and he grinned in response. He knew the perfect thing to show them. When he was younger and was alone at night somewhere, he had often done this to help keep the dark at bay.

Gathering electricity, he created three small balls in front of him. He lifted a hand and pointed a finger, moving it slowly to get the lights going. The balls swirled at his command, slowly gaining speed, spinning and dancing around one another to make a pretty show. The kids were cheering loudly at his display. With another grin, Spencer slowly dissolved them and added the electricity to the house. It was such a small amount that it didn’t even make a surge.

As dinner was finished and they were settling back, a ten year old girl named Allie that was sitting beside him reached up and took his sunglasses, putting them on her face. “These are pretty!” She told him happily. Spencer didn’t even stop to think that it was the first time he’d had his sunglasses off around anyone in the mansion until one of the kids said “Hey, cool. Your eyes are all white!”
There was no time for Spencer to tense over those words. One of the kids leaned in and grinned at him, loudly proclaiming “Those are awesome!” After that, all around him the kids were complimenting his eyes.

Spencer didn’t notice the adults off to the side, watching from a doorway. They all saw as Spencer’s smile grew to a grin and his white eyes seemed to shine. No one, not a single being, had ever liked his eyes. They had always been a mark of his lack of soul; something to be shunned, not complimented. Yet these children were not only complimenting him, but they were honest as well and not a single one of them had a problem meeting his eyes.

Eventually he had to reach and take the glasses back when the indoor lights started to bother him a little too much. Allie pouted over it, but he ruffled her hair and she smiled once more.

The party was broken up by Jean, who had to smother a smile as she stepped in. “All right, everyone. Time to gather up dishes and get them in the kitchen.” She called out to the room.

Immediately, the kids jumped to attention, amusing Spencer a little bit. In no time at all it seemed the room was cleared but for a couple teenagers who gathered up all the dishes and put them on a rolling cart to take to the kitchen. As everyone passed him they said their goodbyes and goodnights.

When all the children and teens were gone, Spencer sat in his chair, staring at the table. The sheer strength of the emotions that had been in the room was still in him. He thought the drug analogy he’d come up with earlier was well suited. Or maybe they were like alcohol. Was this what it felt like to be truly drunk? He didn’t know, but it was glorious. Tipping his head back, he looked up in just enough time to see people coming toward him. One of them was that girl from earlier, the one with the stripe in her hair. Rogue? Wasn’t that her name? And there was Jean, as well as Logan, Remy, and what was that kid’s name again? Robbie? Bobby? Bobby! That was it.

Logan was the one to get to Spencer first. “Hey there, kid. Looks like we found you.”

“Well hey there, sugar.” Spencer said happily. He barely resisted the urge to giggle. “Aren’t you just looking mighty fine tonight?”

The girl named Rogue looked at him funny, a slow grin starting to build. “Been having a few drinks, have ya, sugar?” she asked teasingly.

The pleasant feeling of her teasing only added to Spencer’s happy-emotion fueled high. He chuckled at her and shook his head. “Not a single drop, pretty girl. Wouldn’t work anyways so what would be the point?”

Warm, husky laughter drew all eyes to Remy. The Cajun was shaking his head, still laughing, as he made his way over to Spencer. With one hand he grabbed the chair and pulled it out, bracing on the back and bending to look at Spencer’s face. “Y’ aint touched a drop of alcohol but y’r still drunk as a skunk, cher.” The words were full of amusement. “Feeling it all, yeah? I’ve done dat before. Hell of a feeling, aint it?”

“Mm, sure is.” Spencer agreed. “Feels fan-tas-tic.”

With another laugh, Remy looked up at the group, all of whom were staring now. “De boy’s been feeling dat petits happiness and joy all evening. Fo’ an empath, if y’ take in all dat positive feelings, oh, cher, it’s like de best drunk y’ll ever feel. Everything’s all warm and fuzzy and just feels s’ bon.” He turned back to Spencer and shook his head again. “Come on, mon ami. Let’s get y’ up to bed.”

“I like where this is going.” Spencer said before he thought about it.
The others laughed; all except for that Bobby fellow. The look he gave told Spencer that he didn’t like him flirting with Remy. Oh-ho, so it was like that, was it? Spencer chuckled, shaking his head before bracing his hands on his chair to try and stand up. Well, little Bobby could just deal with his flirting. Remy wasn’t stopping it so what did it matter?

“Good Lord you look like you done drank a whole barrel of Jungle Juice, sugar!” Rogue laughed out as he tried to stand. The idea of drinking a barrel of something called ‘Jungle Juice’ was so ludicrous that Spencer started to snort out a laugh, which only sent him flopping back down into his chair. The thump he made as he connected and the laughter of the others spurred his laughter on even more.

A growl from Logan cut through all their laughter. “That’s it. We’re solving this my way.” He walked right up to Spencer and grabbed him around the waist. “Alley-oop, pup.” And with one swift move he had Spencer up and over his shoulder. Spencer squealed and grabbed on to Logan’s shirt, earning him a firm swat on his backside, making him jump once more. “Behave, or I might drop ya, pup. Now let’s get you upstairs.”

“I knew I pegged you right earlier.” Spencer said tauntingly.

His words earned him another swat that had everyone laughing even more. As he took off out of the room, Logan told him “I told you I aint yet met a boy I can’t tame.”

They were by the staircase when someone called out “Catch yourself something there, Logan?” Oh man, that was Scott. Spencer put his hands over his face and tried not to giggle. He was failing miserably. Logan just made a deep rumbling sound and said “Gonna go put him to bed. Kid’s punch drunk off of being happy, I guess.”

“He’s lying!” Spencer called out jokingly. He looked over to where Scott was leaning against the banister of the stairs. “Help me, Scotty! I’m being kidnapped!”

One eyebrow arched over rose-tinted sunglasses. “You think I’m gonna rescue you from him?”

“Come on. Tell your hunk of a man here to put me down and let me go!” He flashed Scott his most charming smile, propping his elbows in Logan’s back so he could lift his head up enough to look at the other man. The surprised look that Scott was giving him was priceless. It had Spencer dissolving into gales of laughter once more. Remy, who had been following behind them, smiled at Scott and told him. “Remy told y’, cher. Y’ can’t hide t’ings like that from an empath, oui.”

The two friends got Spencer inside of his room. Once in there, Logan dumped him on the bed and Remy reached to start removing Spencer’s boots. When Spencer made to protest, Remy put a hand on his shoulder and pushed him back into the bed. “Hush, mon ami. Let Remy help y’.” He scolded before going back to the boots. Without having to be told, Remy reached into each boot and pulled out a knife. Those he set in a drawer on the nightstand. Then he pulled the boots off and put them down on the floor.

Spencer felt the blankets being moved and actually lifted over him and tucked around him. Closing his eyes, he could almost pretend he was someone else. He could pretend that he was a normal person with a normal life and normal friends. That he was in a safe place where people actually cared for him. It was a crazy fantasy and one that he hadn’t indulged in for a long, long time. This place is messing with my head he realized. This is supposed to be an easy job. It is an easy job. But emotionally? I think this is going to be my hardest assignment yet.

He kept his eyes closed while the happy, drunk feeling started to fade in the face of his melancholy. He felt someone’s hand—surprisingly, it felt like Logan’s—brush hair back from his face and take
his sunglasses off. Then Remy’s voice, whisper soft, saying “Come on, mon ami. Let de boy rest. Been a long day fo’ him, oui? Let’s y’ and me go get a drink.”

“Sounds good to me, Cajun.”

Spencer lay there silently until they were gone. When he opened his eyes, he saw they’d shut the light off on their way out. Almost instantly he hopped up, making his way to the bathroom, his heart racing a little. All of his earlier happy feelings were gone now, washed away by melancholy and now fear. That fear faded as soon as he turned on the bathroom light. Leaving the door cracked, he stripped out of his clothes and made his way back to his bed. He’d be able to sleep now that the light was on.

Back under the covers, he curled up on his side and stared toward the window, his mind racing over everything that had happened in less than twenty four hours. Not only was he inside the mansion, he’d been accepted as one of their students, given a physical, had his abilities tested and been cared for afterwards when it had exhausted him, played with kids, eaten dinner with them and been drunk off their emotions and then he’d been taken to bed by people who were treating him like he was human. It put a warm something in his stomach that he didn’t recognize. What was this feeling?

He blinked and shook the thought away. Feelings weren’t what were important. What was important was his assignment and he couldn’t forget that. Sir would never let him forget that. Someone like him didn’t need to worry about the rest. The only reason these people were treating him so nicely was because they didn’t know the truth about him. They didn’t know he was a spy and they didn’t know that he wasn’t human or mutant like them. He was a thing that was born out of an experiment done by Sir and he belonged solely to Sir. The bracelet on his wrist was a constant reminder of that ownership.

On a soft sigh he closed his eyes and willed himself towards sleep. Tonight was the night that Sir would check in with him; it wouldn’t do to be late.

CXCX

Almost as soon as he drifted to sleep, Spencer found him in what he called the ‘world of dreams’. As he had expected, Sir was already there waiting for him. Spencer could sense him. Never were his dreams so vivid and bright or as realistic as when Sir was controlling them. His ability to enter dreams and control or manipulate things there was very, very strong. Spencer knew that from experience. He knew that, with the right link to the person’s mind, Sir could induce a daydream like state and enter that way. He could hold a person in their dreams as long as he wanted and do with them whatever he wanted.

As he saw the empty white room around him and became aware that he was in his dream, he folded himself down to the ground on his knees, head bowing. He knew what was expected of him. He knew what he had to do.

“Have you managed to infiltrate the mansion yet, Inanime?” The cold voice sent a soft shiver down Spencer’s spine.

He didn’t bother lifting his head to answer. “Yes, Sir. I arrived last night.”

“Tell me everything.”

And so Spencer spoke, running through each moment since he’d almost been hit by the car on the road. He left no detail out from his account and did not stop speaking until he was done. The room he was in fell silent. Muscles in his stomach jumped and quivered as he waited for Sir to respond.
What was he going to say? Was he going to be pleased? Would he be upset with something? What was going to happen? It was the anticipation that was the worst. Had he pleased his master? Displeased him?

“You have done well for your first day there, Inanime. You will gather intelligence on these X-Men. Do not disappoint me. I will check back next Sunday. That is one week from today. By then, you will have more information for me. Also, you will find a way to purchase yourself transportation since walking from the home to the city is not an option. This is non-negotiable. But for one day, you have done well.”

The praise was given in a voice that held just a slightly pleased note to it. Before Spencer could relax, the voice was around him again, harder and colder, speaking in a tone that Spencer knew far too well.

“But do not think to forget who you belong to, Inanime. Do not start to think that you are actually one of these people. You are not theirs. You are not even human. You are my property and you will remember this. You do not want to displease me, Inanime. Let me give you a reminder of what happens to those that displease me.”

Manacles appeared around Spencer’s wrists, jerking up and dragging him to his feet, stretching his arms above his head until he was just barely standing on his toes. In a flash, his clothes and sunglasses vanished. The light in the room grew, making him cry out as it blinded his eyes, the brightness like knives into the sensitive orbs. Bound, hung, and blind, Spencer could do nothing as the first lash was laid over his body.

Back in his room at the mansion, his sleeping body gave a small twitch as one single tear fell from the closed eyes.

CXCX

Bright and early the next morning, Remy knocked on the young man’s door, waiting patiently for it to be answered. When a voice called out “Come on in.” he opened the door and stepped inside. Almost instantly Remy frowned. There was something off in the air in the room. A sort of heavy feeling. His eyes sought out Spencer, finding him on the window seat, legs curled up as he looked out the window at the rain that was steadily coming down. The image he presented was relaxed and casual, already dressed and ready to go for the day. But, something was off. Something was wrong. Remy just couldn’t quite figure out what it was.

He tried to keep himself casual as he walked in and shut the door behind him. “Morning, Spencer.” He said cheerfully.

The boy turned his head to look at him and smile. “Morning, honey.” His tone was cheerful and flirtatious, but it too didn’t seem quite right. What the hell was going on here?

Remy strolled over, taking a seat beside him and looking out the window as well. “Merde, I still aint used to dis weather. Miss de heat of home, me. Dis place be so much colder and wetter dan dis Cajun likes.”

“You’re telling me.” Spencer said agreeably.

“Dat’s right. Yesterday in de Danger Room y’ seemed so excited about Vegas. Is dat y’r home town?”

Casually the boy hummed a sound that could be taken for agreement, that smile still in place. Remy
couldn’t help but notice the false note to it all. Something had changed about the boy overnight. Something had happened to him. But what was it? Gone was the happy boy that he and Logan had tucked into bed. In his place was someone so much more different. Maybe someone else wouldn’t notice the changes, but Remy did. He could see it and he couldn’t stop himself from wondering what had brought it on.

He pushed his questions back and started to do what he’d come in here for. “I came to tell y’ dat y’r gonna start some training today. Since y’r and Remy’s powers so similar, Scotty thought we’d work well together. So, I’m gonna take y’ in de Danger Room dis morning to work on control. In de afternoon, after lunch, y’ll do physical lessons with Wolvie. After dose, y’ll meet with de Professor fo’ a little bit. Sound like a good schedule fo’ y’?”

“Sounds great to me, honey.” Rising from his seat, Spencer stretched before offering him a smile. “Can we get some breakfast first, though? I’m starved!”

“Sho’ t’ing, mon ami.” Remy rose and well, carefully watching Spencer the entire time. Whatever it was that had changed, Remy was determined he would find out. It would take some watching, but he would figure it out.

For now, he flung an arm around Spencer’s shoulders and started to move them toward the door, smiling at him. Not only was today the start of Spencer’s training, but it was also the start of their mission to try and gain the boy’s trust. To do that, they’d have to get him comfortable first. And Remy was bound and determined to do his best to get the boy comfortable with him. “Let’s get on down to de kitchen afore it gets full. Remy gonna show y’ how to make a proper cup of coffee. Y’ drink coffee?”
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Merci, everyone, for the reviews you've left. Even if I don't take the time to reply, I am reading them, and you're all giving me the courage to continue to post this, no matter how nervous I get about it. Merci beaucoup!

For the next week, Spencer followed the schedule that Remy had set for him. Every morning he went and had a hearty breakfast, eating more than he ever had before on a regular basis. Hank’s orders, he was told. It was a diet designed specifically for his ‘special needs’. Then it was off to the Danger Room for a morning training session that usually left him tired, on edge, and sorely depleted of energy. From there it would be a little free time to go to his room, shower, any of that kind of thing. Then lunch, followed by his afternoon sessions with Logan. Once the feral man had found that Spencer was in decent shape and was also a talented fighter, the sessions turned more into sparring matches for the both of them that were quite enjoyable. For all his size, the Wolverine was a worthy opponent. Then he spent an hour each afternoon with the Professor in what Spencer had found out was a daily ‘counseling’ session. In that session, the Professor worked to try and help him understand what emotions created his loss of control and how he might cope with them. It was a sparring match just as much as his time with Logan. Here, they sparred with words. Spencer fought to talk to the man without giving anything away and while maintaining his strong shields.

He had some free time during his evening. That was spent trying to integrate himself in the ‘group’. Sir had told him to gather information this week and that was what he was going to do. He would not disappoint him again and he would not forget who he was or what his place was, no matter how hard that was proving to be. These people were just so nice. How could he not respond to the niceness?

In Remy he’d found someone who was not only attractive to look at, but was slowly showing how attractive he was on the inside as well. He was also fun, quick witted, ready with a smile or a joke or a kind word here and there. He didn’t offer false praise as he taught Spencer, making the few words of praise he gave seem that much more special. Spencer actually found himself looking forward to their time together, no matter how he told himself that he shouldn’t.

His time with Logan was another bright point in the day. Logan was so straightforward in both his words and his emotions. With him, Spencer never felt like he had to second guess anything. What Logan felt was right there for anyone to see, even without empathy. If he didn’t like something, he said so. If he thought you were being stupid, he told you. There was this brutal honesty to him that made him a great friend in Spencer’s mind. At least, so much as a person like him could have friends.

One that surprised him was Scott; he had thought to latch on to the obvious leader of the group simply because that was the best way to get information. For a bit, he’d even contemplated seducing the man. But that had been only early his first day; once he’d seen that Scott was in a committed relationship with not one, but two, he scrapped that idea. There was no way he was going to try to get in the middle of a couple, let alone a trio. Oddly enough, Spencer found himself grateful for that. The idea of bedding the man bothered him more than he cared to admit. He couldn’t quite place why—Scott was a well-built man. But Spencer couldn’t bring himself to even think about it. Maybe it was because the man treated him like he was a kid.
It was even more surprising to Spencer that he didn’t mind being treated that way by Scott. Somehow, it wasn’t condescending or anything like that. It was…nice. Scott checked up on him through the day, making sure he was taken care of, that he was getting plenty of food, asking him how he slept. Instead of being bothered by the questions or feeling smothered, Spencer enjoyed them.

It was growing difficult to try and keep an emotional distance from these people. They were all being so friendly toward him. Well, not all of them. Warren avoided him like he had the plague, which made Spencer laugh to himself. Bobby often glared at Spencer when he saw him, but only so that no one else could see. He really sulked anytime he saw Remy or Spencer touch and that seemed to happen frequently. The Cajun was always reaching out to touch his arm, or his shoulder, or to brush hair back from his face. At least, when they weren’t in their sessions.

His life wasn’t confined solely to the mansion, though. On Wednesday he’d gone to town with Logan and Bobby, who were going to pick up supplies. Neither of them had questioned it when Spencer said he had some errands to run. They’d just told him the time to meet back up. And when Spencer had come back with only a single bag, they hadn’t commented on that either, despite the fact that Spencer knew Logan could probably smell on him just what he’d been doing. Spencer didn’t volunteer any information on it, either. Honestly, he thought nothing of it. He’d needed money and he’d earned it before turning around and getting a few personal items that he needed and stock the rest away towards getting that transportation that Sir had demanded he get.

Everything seemed to be going well—it didn’t appear as if anyone suspected him of anything. But now it was late Friday afternoon, the start of the weekend, and Spencer knew he needed to get to town to take care of what needed to be done before his deadline on Sunday. He was still trying to figure out how to get into town when he happened to wander past the garage and see Bobby there, climbing into one of the cars. As much as he knew Bobby didn’t really like him, Spencer knew he needed a ride. So he prepared his empathy and made his way over to the boy. “Hey there, Bobby! You heading on in to town?” he called out cheerfully.

Bobby looked up and Spencer could clearly see he was fighting not to scowl when he caught sight of who was walking towards him. “Yeah, obviously.” He sat down in the driver’s seat, shutting the door in an obvious brush off. That didn’t dissuade Spencer. He walked to the passenger’s door and leaned in the open window. Shamelessly he projected his empathy to try and get Bobby to relax a little and agree to this. Manipulation like this made him feel a little sick with himself, yet he didn’t really have a choice, not if he was going to do what needed to be done. “You think you could give a boy a quick ride in?”

Looking at him for a long moment, indecision written clearly on his features, Bobby finally sighed. “Get in.”

Grinning, Spencer hurried in the car before the kid could change his mind. Here was half his problem solved. He buckled in and settled back as Bobby turned the car on. Almost the instant they started to move, the music was cranked up to ear splitting levels, effectively ending any chance of conversation. Shamelessly he projected his empathy to try and get Bobby to relax a little and agree to this. Manipulation like this made him feel a little sick with himself, yet he didn’t really have a choice, not if he was going to do what needed to be done. “You think you could give a boy a quick ride in?”

When they finally reached town he was pretty sure he had everything planned out. Once Bobby parked, Spencer climbed from the car with a smile for him. “Thanks a lot, Bobby. I appreciate it. You have a good evening now, you hear?”

Almost against his will, Bobby asked “You need a ride back?”
“I think I got that covered, honey. But thanks for your concern.” Spencer winked at him. “I’ll make my own way home. I’m not quite sure when I’ll be ready to head back. You have a good night!” And with that, Spencer set off to find the local bar, the quickest place for a boy like him to earn him some money. And if he wanted to get his own vehicle as Sir had ordered him to, than he was going to need to earn some money, fast.

When he found the right kind of place, he didn’t hesitate to stroll right in and over to the bar. Inside, Spencer pushed himself down low, locking away everything that made him Spencer inside that secret place, and Inanime came to the front and took over. It didn’t take long before the first man was buying him a drink. He swirled the ice around in his glass and gave the man a flirtatious smile. Time to get to work.

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It was almost dawn by the time Spencer made his way back inside the mansion. He used every skill he had to look as normal as possible while making his way to his room. New coat on, hat on his head, brim pulled down to shield his face. No one was up at this time, but the security cameras were running and he didn’t want anything to be seen on them that could bring up any unnecessary questions. Still, it was an effort. He fought to keep his shields up tight and not to leak out any emotions. Having another empath here was making his life a little more difficult than he’d been ready for. He was used to not projecting, but he wasn’t used to walling his emotions off entirely. No one but another empath would typically feel his emotions.

Eventually he made it to his room and he sighed once he was able to stop trying to force his expression neutral or his body not to limp. He plucked his hat off and tossed it on the bed, followed by his coat. Even those movements hurt. Slowly, cautiously, he made his way to the bathroom. Once there he sat down on the toilet seat, wincing at the movement, and he went to work on pulling his boots off. They landed on the floor with a low thud that wasn’t loud enough to drown out the moan of pain he gave.

The pants were easy to get off. Just unbutton, unzip, give them a little nudge and they slid right down to the floor. The shirt was a little harder. He wasn’t sure how he was going to get his arms over his head enough to pull it off. The first attempt had him panting and gasping and clutching the bathroom counter to try and keep himself from passing out. Finally he figured the shirt wasn’t worth it. Grabbing a knife from where they’d come off with his boots, he cut his shirt until it simply fell off of him. Then he threw his knife down on the floor and started to move to go turn the shower on just as he heard a soft knocking sound.

Out in the main part of the room he heard his door crack open only seconds before a voice called “Mon ami? It’s Remy. Y’ mind if I come in a minute?”

Shit. This was so not going to go over well. If there was one thing he’d learned about Remy this past week it was that the other man couldn’t stand to see someone hurt. As startling as the discovery was, apparently that included Spencer, too. He wasn’t going to take well to this. What would his reaction be? Would he be angry about it? Would he finally start to realize exactly who Spencer was? That last thought should have made him happy. Instead, it fueled the bit of nausea in his stomach. You’re an idiot he scolded himself. Why not let him in? Let him see what you are so he knows the truth. Fucking fool.

Not like he really had a choice. He doubted Remy would just go away or wait patiently in the main part of the room. Whatever had brought him over this early was most likely important. Spencer sighed and bowed his head. “If I said no, would it really make you go away?” He called back dryly.

There was a soft chuckle and then he heard the man come in, shutting the door. “Non. Heard y’
coming in but y’ gone blank as ice on me, cher. Can’t feel a t’ing. Figure dat means something’s wrong or y’r hurt. Had to come and see which one, me.”

Of course he did. Dammit. Now Spencer really knew he wasn’t going to go away. What the hell was he supposed to do, here? Having someone around at a time like this wasn’t something typical for him. He had no idea how to act. He tried to play it cool and see what he could salvage out of this. “I’m fine, honey, I’m just not feeling too hot. Why don’t you go ahead and go back to bed? Once I get a shower, I think I’m going to go ahead and try to sleep this off.”

“Y’r so full of shit.” Remy fired back.

The bathroom door pushed open and Spencer jerked up straight in surprise, instinctively snatching a towel to hold it in front of himself; he hadn’t actually expected Remy to just waltz into the bathroom! Stunned, he could only stand there with just a towel to protect him, staring right into Remy’s suddenly wide eyes. It took one long beat for Spencer to unfreeze and for his body to drop out of the flight or fight mode that had kicked in. As soon as that drained away, resignation slumped his shoulders. Well, there went any chance of hiding or downplaying this. He’d known the minute Remy came in the bedroom that he wouldn’t be able to hide it but he’d held out hope for downplaying it. Now, because Remy apparently had absolutely no respect for privacy, that option was off the table, too. The best he was going to be able to do now was damage control. “It’s not as bad as it looks, Remy. It’ll be gone by this time tomorrow.” He said softly with a gesture at his face. “It’s okay.”

Those last two words—he probably shouldn’t have said them. The minute they came out of his mouth, Remy snapped taunt and his eyes flashed fire. “Okay? Merde! Dis….dis aint okay, cher!” Furious, Remy moved forward, his hand coming up to grasp Spencer’s chin and turn him so that he was facing the mirror. “Look at y’r face! What about dis is ok?”

Spencer swallowed the lump in his throat, unable to do anything but what Remy ordered. He looked at his face and tried not to wince at the sight. Both eyes were bloodshot from endless tears. His left eye was bruised up to his eyebrow, dangerously close to his temple, and down onto his cheek with a bruise so dark it was startling on his pale face. There was a split in his lip that had finally stopped bleeding and already looked better than it had an hour ago. On his neck were handprint bruises that were, thankfully, already starting to fade after being hours old. And that was only his face.

As if the same thought had occurred to Remy, he let go of Spencer’s chin and stepped back to look his body over. The gaze was clinical and assessing. Used to that, Spencer stood still, waiting for what he knew was coming. If Remy had reacted that badly to what his face looked like…

“Fils de putain!”

Remy had moved around to Spencer’s backside. There, he had discovered the worst of the damage. From neck to knees, Spencer knew he would be a mass of welts, some of which had most likely broken the skin. At least, he thought he remembered bleeding. He wasn’t entirely sure. Some of it got a little hazy here and there. That tended to happen when he let himself be submerged in the emotions of the person he was with.

Gentle hands were suddenly cupping Spencer’s face, tipping his head up so that he was once again forced to look into Remy’s eyes. They were so much gentler this time than they had been only moments ago. The shock was gone, replaced with compassion and sorrow. “Dese need to be treated, cher. Y’ can’t just let dem go. Know y’ got healing, but y’ say dat it’s not fast like Wolvie’s. We gotta help y’r body along and try to make y’ more comfortable.”

“I did basic field treatment before I drove home.” Spencer tried to reassure him. Only after the words
came out did he think about what reaction it was going to cause.

Remy’s eyes closed and there was an ache in him that Spencer’s empathy easily picked up. “Y’ drove home like dis?”

There was no way to answer that without causing more trouble. Spencer said nothing, just standing there and looking at Remy’s face, unable to understand why this bothered him so much. Why was this a big deal to him? He didn’t understand. This was just…it was a fact of life. Before he could say anything, Remy was opening his eyes again and sighing. “Cher, Remy gonna go get Logan. Know how to treat some t’ings, me. Mais, Logan’s better at dis t’ing dan I am and I doubt y’ll go down to de Med Lab.”

“There’s no reason to. I just need some rest, Remy, really…” Trailing off, he saw that argument wasn’t going to work. Remy was just watching him patiently and waiting for him to be done. Bewildered by this whole thing, Spencer sighed and shook his head. “Fine. Go get Logan then, I don’t care. Go ahead.”

Once he was free, Spencer rolled his eyes and made his way to the sink so that he could brush his teeth at least before his room was once again invaded. He took a moment to use the towel he’d been clutching and wrap it around his waist, tucking it in by one hip so it would stay up.

While he did that, Remy took off from the room on silent feet, soundlessly shutting Spencer’s door before taking off over to Logan’s. Even with the light emotions on the other side of the door that told him exactly what he would be disturbing, Remy didn’t hesitate to raise a hand and knock. He could read emotions well enough that he knew that the two in there hadn’t really started yet. Most likely they’d only been flirting.

The door yanked open and Logan stood there in just shorts, glaring at Remy. Behind him, Scott was sitting on the edge of the bed, his bottom half fully dressed and his top half bare. From the looks of it, he’d been trying to dress and leave and Logan had been trying to stop him. It was a playful argument that Remy had heard countless times, his room being so close to Logan’s. More often than not, this interesting trio tended to sleep in Jean and Scott’s suite. However, on nights like tonight where Jean was pulling a security shift, Logan liked to drag Scott back here, just as he’d drag Jean here on the times that Scott had security detail. Usually, it made Remy roll his eyes and chuckle at them. Not tonight. Tonight, he didn’t even waste time teasing them about what they’d been doing. There were other, more important things to deal with. “I need y’r help.” He said without preamble.

One of the things that Remy loved about having a friend like Logan was the fact that, no matter what, his friend was there for him without hesitation. It showed in the way that Logan’s scowl dropped away and he instantly straightened, asking “What do you need?”

“Spencer finally got home.” They’d all worried when he’d vanished that afternoon and they’d worried in a whole new way when Bobby had come home and told them that he’d dropped Spencer off and that the younger man had said he’d find a way home. “He…Merde.” There was no way to say this but bluntly. “He had a rough client, Wolvie. He ain’t de type to see de need to go to de Med Lab and I don’t t’ink forcing him is gonna do any good. Need y’r help treating him, s’il tu plait.”

Scott was already moving, grabbing a pair of pants and tossing them to Logan, who immediately put them on. By the time Scott came over with Logan’s shirt, he had his on as well and a small bag in his hand that Logan kept in the trunk at the foot of his bed. “Let’s go.” Scott said firmly.

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Spencer had just finished brushing his teeth and using the facilities when his door opened again. He
cautiously made his way out of the bathroom and into the main part of the room. When three people walked in, he couldn’t suppress a snort. “Am I turning in to some sideshow here? Maybe I oughta charge a fee at the door.”

Any bravado he’d built up faded away at the annoyed look that the feral shot his way. Spencer couldn’t help how his body froze in place when Logan growled at him. “Shut up, pup.” Wasting no time, he marched straight over to where Spencer was and mimicked Remy’s earlier move by taking hold of Spencer’s chin and turning his head this way and that, looking over his face. “Aint a damn thing to do for your face right now.” He declared evenly. Letting go, he stepped back and looked at the others. “Why don’t you two get some towels and lay em down on the bed. Then we’ll get you laid down and I can look at the rest of you, kid.”

Bewildered, Spencer watched Remy and Scott follow Logan’s orders, getting towels and laying them down on the bed. Then Logan was gesturing toward the bed and giving Spencer a glower. “Get your ass on that bed and lay down on your stomach.”

The instinctive shiver Spencer gave, his mind and body responding to that command and assuming the worst, had Logan’s face softening. “Remy says your back is all messed up. I just need to look at it, that’s all, Spencer. Now go lay down.”

Spencer was beyond confused as he made his way toward the bed. When his backside came into view of the others, he heard Logan’s growl and Scott’s hiss. Remy, however, just stepped up to him and helped to brace him as he first sat on the bed and then gently stretched out onto his stomach. Once he was on his stomach some of the pain eased a little. He let his arms lie loosely at his sides and pressed his uninjured cheek onto the bed. The towel he’d put on earlier was carefully kept over him so that he was at least somewhat covered.

The touch that brushed against the back of his shoulder was gentle. Hands that Spencer knew could do some serious damage now brushed over him with a butterfly soft touch. “These are pretty deep bruises. Some of them split the skin. I need to clean those and make sure there’s nothing in there.”

“My body will just heal them anyways.” Spencer pointed out.

Logan didn’t bother arguing that point, just offered his own. “But it’ll probably heal better and scar smaller if we make sure they’re cleaned and well cared for. And I can try things to relieve your pain, too.”

Before he could stop himself, the question that had been nagging at him since Remy had gone to get help now slipped past his lips. “Why?”

His question seemed to floor them. Opening one eye, he squinted past the bright lights to try and look at them. The three men were standing alongside the bed, staring down at him like they couldn’t quite understand him, like he’d been speaking a language that they didn’t know. “What do you mean, why?” Scott asked finally.

He’d thought his question was pretty obvious. Furrowing his brow in confusion, Spencer shifted enough that he could look at them all a little better. “Why does it matter how they scar? Why would you bother to try and find methods to relieve pain when I already told you medication doesn’t work right for me? Why…” Here was the big one and one he couldn’t stop himself from asking, no matter that he reminded himself it didn’t matter, that this was a good thing and could only benefit his assignment. He had to understand! “Why are you guys acting like this is a big deal? A client wanted it rough. I knew what I was getting in to. I agreed to this. It’s not like, like it’s one of you that’s hurt. It’s just me. Why does it upset you so much?”
He grew even more confused when he saw their reactions to his questions. Scott seemed stunned. Logan looked as if someone had punched him right in the face. And a single tear slid down Remy’s cheek. That one was the hardest for Spencer. Remy was crying? No. No, that wasn’t right. That wasn’t what was supposed to happen. He shifted his arm, reaching out instinctively toward his Cajun friend, lightly touching his hand. “Don’t cry, please.” In a moment of honest emotion, Spencer looked at him pleadingly. “Please don’t cry. I’m sorry.”

Remy turned his hand so that he was holding Spencer’s lightly. Moving forward, he sat on the edge of the bed, near where Spencer’s head was. It allowed him to hold his hand still while Spencer’s arm rested on the bed instead of dangling. His free hand came up to stroke lightly at Spencer’s hair. The gesture was surprising and soothing all at the same time. “I wanna tell y’ some t’ings, cher, and I want y’ t’ listen to me closely, y’ hear?” Remy spoke in a soft voice, his accent thicker than Spencer could remember hearing it before.

While Logan and Scott started to move around—gathering water it sounded like—Spencer turned his eyes toward the man sitting with him. “Ok.”

“Bon.” Remy’s hand continued its soothing stroking even as the other two came back and sat on the other side of the bed. Something wet and cold touched Spencer’s back, startling him enough that he had to slam his eyes shut to keep his composure. He anchored himself on Remy’s words as a distraction while his back was carefully cleaned. “Y’ve seen m’ eyes, cher. Y’ve see de color. Where Remy grew up in New Orleans, dese eyes marked him to everyone. Le Diable Blanc, dey called me.”

Now, that was surprising. “The white devil.” He murmured.

The hand in his hair didn’t pause, though Spencer felt slight surprise from those around him. Then he was caught in Remy’s story once more.

“Oui, cher. Dis po’ chile spent most of his life being considered a devil just cause his eyes be different. Just cause dey red and black. Dere was even people dat tried t’ exorcise de chile t’ free him from de demon inside. De chile grew up believing he was nothing more dan a devil chile. Do y’ t’ink he was? Just cause his eyes be different, do y’ t’ink dat meant he was le diable blanc?”

“You’re not a devil, Remy.” How anyone could think that, he had no idea. Remy was one of the kindest people that he’d ever met! “But it…”

“Non.” The firm word cut him off before he could finish. “Dis is Remy’s turn t’ talk. Y’ just listen, cher.” When he was sure Spencer was going to be quiet, he continued. “Y’right, I aint no diable. Took me a long time t’ see dat, yeah. Took de people here at de mansion t’ help Remy look at himself and see a person, not a creature. Y’…Remy guesses y’ been told y’ra whore fo’ a long, long time. Dat y’ always been told dat it’s what y’ are, oui?”

He couldn’t be anything but honest to the question. “Yes.”

“But de t’ing is, just cause someone tells y’ dat y’r somet’ing don’t make it true, cher. Dese people, dey told Remy he was le diable blanc. De men dat Remy’s charm hit, de ones his charm made lust fo’ him, dey told him dat he was a whore when dey raped him. Humans told Remy dat he was a freak. But none of dat makes it true, cher. None of dat is who Remy is. Who I am.” The hand that had been stroking his hair now pushed his bangs back before sliding down over his cheek. Spencer couldn’t bring himself to open his eyes. Remy’s kind words, the compassion that he was projecting, the tender care of the two men behind him as well as their compassion, felt so nice. It was a soothing thing for him, even if it was all bullshit.
Remy brushed a finger over Spencer’s split lip. “Y’r worth more dan dis, Spencer. No one, no matter who dey are, deserves t’ be hurt like dis. No one should be hurt like dis so much dat dey t’ink it’s normal. *Mais*, it made m’ heart ache when y’ said dat it’s just y’. Don’t y’ know how precious y’ are, Spencer? How much y’r worth? Y’ don’t deserve dis hurt; dis abuse.”

To their complete and utter surprise, Spencer started to laugh. He turned his face toward the bed and laughed, long and loud, ignoring the way it made his injuries ache. Oh, God, he had never met anyone like this group of people. They sure were something else. Still grinning, he turned his cheek to lie on the bed again, a few last chuckles slipping out. He looked up at his Cajun friend, giving him a smile in the face of Remy’s confusion. He reached out and patted his leg. “I know exactly what I am and what I’m worth, honey. You guys want to clean me up, that’s fine. Saves me from having to stand in the shower and try to reach. But don’t think that you need to try and ‘fix’ the rest of me. It’s like I told the Professor—this is who I am and it isn’t something you need to try and save. Fix what you can fix. The rest, just let it be. We’re all who we are, no more and no less.” Shifting his weight, he chuckled as he laid his head on Remy’s leg. “Now, you guys just go ahead and get me all cleaned up if it makes you feel better, but I had a long night and I’m tired, so I’m going to catch a few winks.” And with a skill born of long practice, Spencer closed his eyes and dropped down into sleep in just moments.

He fell asleep so quickly, he didn’t get a chance to see the pained looks from the other occupants of the room.

“Jesus.” Logan said with a shudder. He forced his hands to go back to cleaning. “Just…shit.”

Scott shook his head and gently wiped his cloth across the boy’s lower back. “This is going to be harder than any of us thought.”

“Aint giving up.” Remy murmured. His hand was back to stroking Spencer’s hair. Looking down at him, he made a soft promise. “Aint giving up on y’, cher. Remy aint giving up.”
For almost six hours Spencer slept. When he finally woke, he was alone in his room. Funny. He hadn’t felt them leaving. Shrugging, he shifted on the bed, sighing at the ache that was still there. A few twists and turns told him that he wasn’t anywhere near as bad as he’d been when he’d come home. Movement was definitely simpler. Sitting up, he yawned a little and stretched out the kinks in his muscles. That was when he noticed the note on the nightstand. He smiled as he picked it up and read it.

Spencer,

I made everyone leave so you could get your rest. The last thing you needed was to wake up and be surrounded by mother hens. Sadly, I can only keep them away for a while, so if you’re not down by lunch, one of them is probably going to come check on you. Remy would just look in but Logan would most likely wake you up and force feed you. Trust me, he tends to be overprotective.

You don’t have to worry. None of us will tell anyone what’s going on and we won’t press the topic with you again. Today, at least.

I’ll be watching for you at lunch.

Scott

And then was a hastily scrawled postscript that made him laugh.

P.S. – I had to run back up here to write this after I went to the garage. Is that your 69 Charger in there? And, if it is, please tell me you aren’t going to be selfish and keep it all to yourself. As a friend, I beg of you, let me help you work on it. I’ll pull rank and order you to let me help you if I have to. I can make up some excuse why – a bonding exercise, maybe. I don’t care. I love that type of car and I used to love working on them. So, yeah. Say yes.

That Scott was definitely one in a million. Spencer folded the note and stuck it in his nightstand before rising from the bed. The first stop he made was the bathroom to go and take care of business. Then he stood in front of the mirror and took stock of his body. The marks on his face were gone but for a slight darkness underneath his eye. Sunglasses would cover that up. The split in his lip had already healed over. Turning, he looked over his shoulder, using the mirror to look at his back. Some of the bruising had faded, but some was still there. Most of the cuts had either healed over or were almost so. His clothes would keep these hidden. The only other injuries he’d had, no one would be able to see anyways, but he could feel that they’d healed too.

He was careful about the clothes he chose as he dressed himself. He put on plain dark blue jeans, ripped at the knees and at random parts of his legs to better show off skin, and a bright blue button up short sleeved shirt that covered his back perfectly. He left the top couple buttons as well as the bottom button undone so that skin peeked out the bottom and showed at the top. Then, to complete the look, he pulled out his small bag of jewelry and makeup and started to work. Part of his brain wondered as he applied his makeup why he was bothering—the other part knew. In some small place inside of him, he wanted to make a point. Make a statement to the three men that had been in here. This is who I am he wanted to say to them. This is me. Get used to it. But he couldn’t help but wonder if they would finally be disgusted with him because of this.

He couldn’t let himself think like that. This was work and he needed to do his job. Keeping that in mind, Spencer leaned in and touched up the eyeliner one last time. Then he stepped back and gave
himself a look over. The effect of the makeup was, as always, startling on his eyes. He deliberately
hooked his shades in the front of his shirt; let them see his eyes. He was done hiding them. He’d
covered the remaining bruise under his eye with his makeup, so no one would be able to see that.

He’d put on a few jelly bracelets on his free wrist—on the other was the leather bracelet that never
came off. Instead of doing anything with his longer hair, he’d deliberately mussed it, giving it that
sex-hair look. As a final touch, Spencer stepped forward, opening one last little box. He pulled out a
small hoop and put it in the piercing in his nose. Then he added two to the top of his left ear and a
little yellow stud to his bellybutton. Last but not least he pulled out the barbell and put it into his
tongue with the yellow and blue balls on it. Perfect. Any sign of the old Spencer was gone. He’d
pulled his cover on here like a coat of armor and he relaxed into the protection that it provided him.

With a smug smile, he made his way back to the main room, grabbing his boots and sitting down to
yank them on. A fedora topped his outfit.

Now that he was ready, he grabbed his keys from the nightstand, having seen that someone had
cleaned up his clothes and emptied his pockets, and he grabbed his money as well, and then he was
out the door. Once his door was shut he made his way down the hall. As he walked he put his
money in his pocket and tried to think about what he was going to do. Today was Saturday, which
meant that there were no formal training sessions and no big things going on, unless something came
up for the ‘team’. Tomorrow, Sir was going to contact him and he was going to want information.
Spencer played with his tongue ring as he thought about that. There was no way he had enough
information for Sir’s pleasure.

As he thought about it, he wondered what kind of information was he supposed to give. How they
fought? Who they were? What exactly did Sir want to know? There had been no specifics but to
gather information on them, their technology and the school. But what about them? Tomorrow night
he would have to ask Sir what would please him the most to know so that he could gather what was
necessary and not get unnecessary information.

Not for the first time he found himself wondering what Sir wanted with these people. They didn’t
seem like a threat. Sir wanted a threat assessment on them and information so that they could be dealt
with accordingly if need be. But Spencer had seen nothing that would label them a threat to Sir.
These people weren’t murderers, going out and killing all the time. The two times that they’d
disappeared during the week, they’d brought people back or taken them somewhere else. The kids
that had been here when he first arrived now had somewhere else that they were staying, somewhere
that the Professor insisted was better for them. A few new kids had arrived since then. Spencer didn’t
believe they were kidnapping kids. No, the children wouldn’t be so happy here if they were being
stolen. There was just nothing here that he could see that would suggest these people were a threat to
Sir in any way. But maybe it was because he didn’t know exactly what it was the X-Men did. What
was their goal? What was their purpose? Maybe he could carefully pose that question to Scott today.
He seemed like the logical person to ask. Was that what Sir wanted from him? An understanding of
what the X-Men did?

Spencer didn’t want to be the cause for any of these people to be hurt. He knew that, on previous
jobs, the intel he’d provided had been used to hurt others, but Sir had always had a good reason for
what he was doing. A valid reason. The people that he’d hurt, they had all deserved it. Did these
people? He missed a step in the hall, almost stumbling down, as he thought of what Sir could do to
these people. To sweet Ororo. Or Jean. His face lost color for just a moment. The children. Sweet
Jesus, he wouldn’t hurt the children, would he?

No, no, of course not. Sir didn’t hurt people that didn’t deserve it. But, again, what had these people
done or what did they do to deserve it? What were they guilty of here? Caring too much?
For the first time, Spencer honestly felt strong worries about his job. But what on earth could he do about it? He couldn’t go against Sir’s orders. That wasn’t his place and it was also suicide. Tools didn’t survive after disobeying Sir. What good was a tool if it no longer did what it was supposed to? As a good ‘tool’, a good creation, he shouldn’t even think of disobeying Sir. What was wrong with him that suddenly, he was questioning orders he had always followed without fault? By all rights, he should report to Sir and tell him that he needed to come home; that he couldn’t be trusted for this job anymore. But he didn’t. No, he kept walking, making his way to the kitchen, his negative thoughts already being shoved aside to think about later and his slightly amused mask slipping onto his face.

When he stepped inside the kitchen, it was surprisingly crowded. Spencer stepped inside, one eyebrow raised as he took in the amount of people. The room was packed with Logan, Hank, Scott, Remy, Jean, Ororo, Charles, Bobby, Warren, Rogue, Jubilee and the girl Spencer had just met named Betsy that was apparently Warren’s girlfriend and yet another telepath. For a minute he just looked at them. Then, bolstering his courage, he put on a grin he hoped no one would see was fake and made his way toward whatever was cooking on the stove. One sniff told him it was that had made lunch. The Cajun spices prevalent in the kitchen were a dead giveaway. Remy had made Gumbo. Spencer felt his mouth start to water. He absolutely loved Cajun food and he had dearly loved on his last assignment when he got to go eat at the house of one of his friends and coworkers. Her fiancée had been from New Orleans and he had often cooked Cajun food.

In the noise of the conversations that were flowing around the room, Spencer easily slipped in and made his way to the stove. Before anyone noticed, he had a bowl of gumbo served and was going to grab a spoon. That was when he saw the jar on the counter and he actually gave a little moan. Spicy pickled eggs. Oh, sweet Jesus. Without hesitation he grabbed the long fork and speared a few, carrying them with him. As he was trying to find a place to hide out and eat—forget talking to anyone yet!—he looked up and saw an empty spot on the counter. Right next to Remy. The Cajun was looking right back at him, grinning as if the events of last night hadn’t happened. He made a gesture with his hand for Spencer and the young man shrugged before sashaying over. He looked at the counter and then looked at Remy. Silent, he held his bowl out. The other man grinned but took it, holding it so that Spencer could turn and hop up on the countertop right beside him. It hurt less than he’d thought it would, thank goodness. While settling in he took the first egg off his fork and closed his eyes on a moan when the spicy flavor exploded on his tongue. He didn’t realize that the room had finally noticed him and were all looking his direction. But he heard the conversation drop off and finally opened his eyes. At the sight of everyone watching him, he raised one eyebrow. Swallowing, he asked “What?”

“Don’t tell me we’ve got another spice loving person in the house.” Jean said teasingly from where she stood by the Professor.

Oh. That’s what they were looking at him for? Spencer gave them a wide grin and ate the other pickled egg. “What’s the point of cooking if you don’t put some flavor in it?” He asked when he was done. With a wink he tossed his fork into the sink, grinning when he made it, and then he took his bowl back from Remy. “Thanks for holding that, honey. I have to say, it smells like a slice of Heaven right here.”

“Y’ a fan of Cajun cooking, mon ami?”

Taking his first bite, Spencer hummed appreciatively. “C’est bon.” He complimented him. “What’s not to love about it? There’s always so much flavor and spice. It’s not as bland as other kinds of food.” Fully in his part, Spencer made himself tip his head enough that he could wink at Remy. “And trust me, honey, a little spice is always good.”
Charles looked at the two, his expression mildly amused and annoyed at the same time. “Remy, you seem to be encouraging bad habits. Will I ever convince you that the counter is not for sitting?”

“Mais it’s just de right height, Professeur, an dere aint never enough seats when everyone crowds in here. Gotta find a spot somewhere, oui?”

Shifting toward them just slightly, Logan gave Spencer a once over, those blue eyes sharp and searching. “You look like you woke up in a good mood.”

His words had Rogue snorting and teasing Spencer “You’re a brightly colored little peacock today, aint you?”

Spencer had kept eating while they’d all been talking. He was halfway through his bowl by now. Tipping his head at Rogue, he flashed her a wink. “Bright colors are cheerful. It’s hard to be upset when you’re in bright colors. A good friend taught me that.” He added that last bit, thinking of Penelope in all her cheerful colors, the bright colored clothes and toys, things she surrounded herself with to combat the darkness that filled her screens each day. That was just one of the lessons he’d taken from her. In the back of his mind, he noted to himself just how much of this cover he was playing here he’d drawn from inspiration from her. His clothes, a bit of the personality he was displaying, the way he spoke with others—a lot of it was inspired by what he’d seen from her, or between her and Derek over the years.

Tipping his bowl, he polished off the last of what was in it before setting it beside him so he could clean it when he got up. Bringing his thumb to his mouth, he sucked off the little bit that was left there. He must have tipped just right, because Rogue moved forward suddenly, eyes on his face. “Is that a nose ring?”

Chuckling, Spencer tipped his head a little, letting her see. “Sure is. I have a few more, too, but I can’t show you those ones.” The look he gave her had her blushing and had Remy smacking his arm. “Ça suffit.” The Cajun told him with a shake of his head. “Behave y’re self, homme.”

Spencer wrinkled his nose at that. “Where’s the fun in that?”

They were interrupted before they could really start to debate that point. Jean called out Spencer’s name. Once she had his attention, she asked “I thought you had a healing ability? Wouldn’t that just close up the piercings when you take them out?”

He shook his head at her. Crossing his legs, he braced his palms on the edge of the counter, arching his back a little to ease the ache that was still there. “It doesn’t work that way.” He explained to her and to the room. “I don’t heal the way that Logan does. It’s not instant, perfect healing. It’s an accelerated healing. That means that my body heals up quickly but it takes the natural process a body usually does. So, you put a hole in my…ear…” A hint of a devilish grin flashed, making a few of them chuckle. “Then it’ll heal the way it should, only faster than the average person would. Now, the little things sometimes heal without any marks. And if I pierce my ear and take the ring out instantly, it’ll heal shut, but so does a normal person’s. I just have to leave the ring in for about a day after I get a new piercing.”

“How many do you have?” Betsy asked him.

There was a spark of humor in her eyes that Spencer could appreciate. He grinned over at her. “Total? Last count I had eleven. But I don’t wear them all that often. They’re just there if I want them. Or anyone else does.”

Conversation was interrupted then as Jubilee stepped through the people to walk over and put her
hand on Rogue’s arm. “Come on, Rogue. We should go start looking for something to wear for tonight. You still taking us into town, Logan?” She turned her eyes toward Logan, who rolled his and sighed. “Yeah, sprout. I said I would, didn’t I?”

“Where are you two off to this evening?” Charles inquired of them.

The two girls grinned widely and looked over at him. “We managed to get tickets to the K4 concert tonight!” Jubilee exclaimed with excitement. “I can’t wait. I’ve been dying to go for weeks now!”

That almost had Spencer falling off of the counter. Of all the things he’d expected to hear, that sure hadn’t been it. The timing of it was stunning. Wide eyes turned toward Jubilee, his mask gone for a second. “K4 are here for a concert?”

Jubilee gave him a strange look. “Are you a fan of them?” Her tone was skeptical, suggesting she didn’t believe the idea of it. For a second he could only stare at her. Then he was rocking back on the counter, his warm laugh echoing around the room, the first real laugh he’d let out since he’d been here. Shock and happiness were swirling around inside of him. How ironic was it that he’d been questioning Sir’s motives and morals today, wishing that he knew what to do, and secretly wishing he had someone to talk to who would know what to do—and now here was this opportunity put right in his lap. A friend he’d known for years that knew the whole truth about who he was. A person who, at one point in time, had been an employee of Sir. One that had managed to get away from him. And here he was, ready and close for Spencer to talk to him! The timing seemed almost too perfect.

He forgot entirely about Jubilee’s question. Looking over to Remy, he couldn’t stop his grin from growing as he asked “You got a cell phone or something I can use, honey?”

“Don’t fry it.” Remy cautioned before handing it over.

Laughter bubbled from Spencer’s lips. He flipped the phone open and dialed a number, all his attention focused on the phone and off the others in the room. Who cared if they were watching him? He was too caught up in the moment. When the phone started ringing, he held it to his ear, waiting for the person to answer. A second later a warm southern voice came on the line. “This better be who I think it is. I almost didn’t answer the strange number popping up on my caller ID.”

“Is that any way to answer a phone, Ly?”

“Spencer!” The exclamation was loud enough that Spencer pulled the phone away from his ear a little. “It is you! I was hoping it was when I didn’t recognize the number.”

He chuckled and settled in on the counter a little better. Across the room, Jean, Charles and Warren had struck up a conversation, as had Scott and Logan. But Betsy, Jubilee and Rogue were all watching him intently, as was Remy. He didn’t care. “It’s good to hear that southern drawl of yours. How are you? What’s this I hear about you being in New York for a concert, huh?”

“Yeah, we’re at the hotel right now waiting for the show tonight. Don’t tell me you’re here? Get over here!”

“Well I can’t get there right now. Plus, we’d just get going and then you’d have to go do your show. But I tell you what I can do—I’ll meet up with you after the show. How does that sound? Can you spare yourself from the after parties to get together with an old friend? I’ll make it worth your while.” Purposely he added a sexual tone to that, just to make Lyle laugh. It worked. His friend laughed out loud and teased him “You know Jo would castrate you if he thought you were seriously trying to get in my pants, Spencer.”
“Jo can get his panties out of a twist and suck his own—” his words were cut off when Remy covered his mouth quickly. Almost, Spencer blushed. He looked at the girls that were still watching him and realized that one of them was young enough that he really should watch his mouth in front of her. “Sorry.” He apologized when Remy let go of him. He didn’t notice the shy smile that he gave the Cajun, something so very out of place with the character he was supposed to be playing here.

“Thanks.”

In his ear Lyle was making a soft noise. “You with someone, Spencer?”

“I’m with a whole group of someone’s, Ly. Be more specific than that.”

The line went quiet for a long minute. “Talk about a change in speech patterns. You sound like an idiot. Are you working?” His tone had gone from playful to serious.

Spencer swallowed and worked to keep his voice as light as before. His emotions weren’t as steady, though. The way Remy looked at him warned him that they were leaking through a little bit and he had to fight to try and get them back under control. “I am. Kind of what I wanted to get together and talk about, you know? And…Him too.” It was the first time in their friendship that Spencer had ever actually said to Lyle that he wanted to talk about Sir. That had always been a taboo topic between the two of them since Lyle had left. Work, they talked about. Things related to work, sure. But Lyle hated Sir with a passion and Spencer had always been loyal, so they avoided the topic of the man himself.

Lyle’s voice held surprise and worry both when he said “Be at the show tonight. I’ll notify security to keep an eye out for you.”

“Thanks, honey.” On a sudden burst of inspiration, he looked at the girls that were still watching him, their eyes wide. “Hey, I have some friends here that are coming to the show tonight. That’s how I found out about you being here. Do you think you could, well…?”

“Front row or backstage, sweetheart?”

“Both?”

“I’ll leave a few passes at the ticket booth for you and friends and I’ll leave a message that their seats are to be upgraded. You better be there, Spencer. Oh, and you better not mess with our pyrotechnics or I’ll beat you up myself. Got it?”

His grin stretched wide once more. “Got it. See you tonight!”

“You better be there!” The last threat was delivered before he hung up the phone.

Closing the phone, Spencer handed it back to Remy “Thanks, honey. I appreciate it.” He looked over to the girls. “I’ll drive you ladies in so Logan doesn’t have to drive in and wait around for you. I just need to clean out my car first.”

That caught Scott’s attention. “So that is your car!” he exclaimed.

“It is.” Pushing off from the counter, Spencer hopped nimbly down, his expression teasing. “Would you like to come take a look at it with me? Could be a bit of a ‘bonding exercise’, you know.” He quoted that bit from Scott’s letter, making the man grin. Spencer wove his way around the others, smiling at the girls as he went past. They all seemed to be staring at him with shock. Spencer just winked and kept walking to where Scott now stood by the door. “So, tell me.” Scott started to say. “It’s a 69, isn’t it?”
“Of course it is. That’s my favorite year for the Charger.” Spencer answered. And, together, the two made their way out of the kitchen, talk of cars floating out with them.

As the door shut, Jubilee spoke up into the quiet of the room. “Did he seriously just call Lyle Donovan of K4 and arrange to meet with him tonight?” she said slowly.

“He’s probably lying to you.” Warren said with a shake of his head. He made his way toward the door. “Don’t get your hopes up. People like him lie easier than they breathe. He’ll probably find some way to back out before the show. I wouldn’t count on him if I were you unless you’re looking to get disappointed.” And with that final comment, he left the room.
Chapter 9

Hours later found Spencer and Scott half buried under the hood of the used 69 Charger parked in the corner of the garage typically used for repair work. They’d worked their way through most of the outside of the car and had already done an inspection under the hood. Then they’d taken time to debate what kind of work needed to be done and what should be done first. It was a nice feeling for Spencer. He found himself relaxing as he hadn’t since that first day with the children. Here, he didn’t have to fake anything. He didn’t have to put up any kind of front or anything like that. He could just simply be a guy who enjoyed working on cars, talking with another guy who enjoyed working on cars.

Their conversation had been steadily growing more and more comfortable as well. Because of that, Spencer didn’t startle that much when Scott suddenly spoke up, saying something that typically would have had him panicking inside and scrambling to think of how to lie just right.

“Tell me one thing about yourself.” Scott said as he leaned under the hood of the car. “One thing that you haven’t told anyone here.”

Chewing on his lip, Spencer pulled himself out from under the hood on the guise of getting another tool. For a split second he debated if he should answer that. Should he tell Scott something about him that no one else here knew? Why?

Why not? His brain countered. What would it hurt? Sir had told him to be as honest as he could without betraying him, ‘You are not to tell them that you work for me, but the rest of what you tell them is up to you.’ That was what he’d said. There were plenty of things that Spencer hadn’t told the people here yet that wouldn’t really be all that bad if he actually said them. What could it hurt to give just a little bit of background about himself? After a moment longer to debate, Spencer finally settled on saying “I’m not as unintelligent as I allow people to think I am.”

“Ok, let me clarify.” Turning his head, Scott flashed a grin. “Something that we haven’t already figured out on our own.”

Something about that grin had Spencer grinning back. What a smart ass. Suddenly feeling a little more comfortable about this, he rested his arms on the edge of the open hood and looked in, eyes on Scott’s face as he said “I have an IQ of 187. I also have an eidetic memory and can read twenty thousand words a minute.”

“What?” Glancing over, Scott had a slightly dumbfounded look on his face. “Did I just hear you right? One hundred and eighty seven? Seriously? You’re a genius?”

Something about this man made Spencer feel relaxed as he looked at him. Instead of worrying about his reaction, it made him laugh. “Yes. Though, I believe intelligence can’t be accurately quantified, by common standards I am labeled a genius.” For some reason, he kept talking, telling more than Scott had even asked for. “I graduated high school when I was twelve and I got my first degree when I was fourteen.” When he saw the stunned look on the man’s face, his cheeks heated and he ducked his head back under the hood, hiding a little as he got back to work.

“Your first?” Snickering, Scott bumped their shoulders. “You’ve been holding out on us, Spencer. How many do you have?”

Suddenly shy, Spencer flushed a little. “Three doctorates and three BA’s.” He caught Scott’s look and started to answer the question he saw there. “The doctorates are in mathematics, chemistry and
engineering. The BA’s are in psychology, sociology and philosophy.”

“Damn, Spencer. Just…damn. All those smarts, and…”

Spencer’s lip curled and he pulled himself out from under the hood. “And I work as a whore. Yeah. Funny thing is, all the degrees in the world don’t make someone want to hire a mutant freak.” His voice held a bitter note to it. Though he’d had jobs over the years, like his recent stint at the BAU, he had never forgotten what it was like when he’d been living on the streets, without the benefits of his contacts, and no one had wanted to hire him. One look at his eyes was all it had taken for them to deny him. With effort he pushed those thoughts back and brought his mood back to normal once more. “Anyways, it doesn’t matter any. I knew who I was before I got them. Having them doesn’t change that. I didn’t get them so I could change my life or change the world.”

Straightening up, Scott looked at him curiously. “Why did you, then?”

“Partially because I wanted to learn.” Spencer said simply. “And the other part was because… because I was told to.” Abruptly he turned and grabbed a rag off the car, wiping his hands. Things were treading far too close to a part of his life he couldn’t and wouldn’t talk about. His voice was just a little strained and a little fast as he tried to switch the topic back to something safe. “So, it looks like things aren’t as bad on the inside as they seemed. Not going to take too much work. He’ll run for now, at least.”

Sensing the conversation was over, Scott turned back to the car as well, mentally filing away this information and promising himself he would think hard about it later. “He’ll run well enough. Like you said, the inside isn’t as bad as we thought. The outside is all cosmetic. You should probably get a new battery in there before you drive all over, though. Why don’t you take one of the other cars here tonight when you take the girls in? I’m not sure how much life this battery has. You’d probably end up needing a jump at some point.”

It was more than Spencer could take to not laugh. The sound echoed around them. “Oh, honey. You’re a riot.” He teased Scott. Reaching out, Spencer held his hands over the battery for a second, gathering the electricity that was always waiting inside of him. Once he had enough, he put his hands on the battery as if they were jumper cables and he fed the electricity into the battery, effectively ‘charging’ it. When he let go, his hands were tinged with a small amount of blue light. “There. That should hold me till I can buy a new one.” His voice was just a little bit smug.

Scott laughed at him, grabbing a rag to wipe off his hands even as he shook his head. “Point well taken, Spencer. You’re awfully handy to have around. I see quite a few uses for you already. Why, imagine, never having to worry about a dead cell phone battery in an emergency ever again. I’ve got myself a walking cell phone charger on the team.”

“Watch it.” Holding up a hand, Spencer let the energy crackle over it. “I might just accidentally overcharge your phone.”

“Hm. I think you would.”

“You better believe it, honey.”

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Somehow the girls resisted quizzing Spencer until it came time to leave. When they made their way to the garage and found Spencer leaning against his car, keys twirling on his finger, their curiosity got the best of them. Rogue was the one to march forward, hands on her hips, and get right into his face. “Tell me the truth, sugar. You really know K4?” she demanded.
Spencer smiled widely at her. He’d been wondering how long it would take before they’d question it. He knew it was hard to believe. A low down mutant hooker, friends with one of the most famous music bands in the teenage world? A band that was loved by mutants everywhere because one band member, and they refused to announce which one, was suspected of being a mutant? Spencer knew which member that was, of course. The same one that he was going to see tonight. The same one that he had been friends with since before he even really knew what a friend was. “Guess you’ll just have to wait and see.” He said coyly. “Now, you girls ready to go or what?”

“Shotgun!” Jubilee shouted out.

Another voice joined the mix and three heads turned to look to where Logan stood, leaning against the door. “I’ll be there to pick you girls up at eleven.” He called out. At the strange look Spencer gave him, he smiled and said “You’re meeting up with a friend, pup. You think I’m gonna make you cut it short to ferry these two brats home for bed? Yeah, right. Have fun with your friend. I’ll pick the girls up once the show is done, so you just worry about getting them there.”

While the girls protested at the ‘brat’ and ‘bed’ portion of things, Spencer grinned. “Thanks, honey!” he called as he took his seat. Jubilee had apparently gotten ‘shotgun’ and Rogue was sulking over it in the backseat. But they both smiled when he turned the car on and let it roar to life. For being used, it sure had some decent parts on it, even if it didn’t look so pretty. Grabbing the CD from his pocket that he’d taken out of his room, he stuck it into the CD player and cranked it up loud.

K4 blaring on the speakers and the two girls screaming, Spencer took off from the garage, leaving Logan behind, shaking his head at them.

The drive in was full of laughter and music. They left it on the entire trip, psyching themselves up for the show. Spencer couldn’t help but feed off of their excitement. He let his walls down just a tiny bit so that he could feel it without it overpowering him. But once they started to get close, he tightened his shielding as tight as he could get it. A concert hall full of people? Oh, that could be trouble if he wasn’t careful.

He parked his car in the parking lot, taking just a moment once they’d stopped to look in his mirror and check his makeup. He’d redone his earlier makeup, touching it up just a little bit. By now all of his bruises were gone and the parts where skin had torn were thin red lines. Logan had been right; caring for them had minimized the scarring. Some of them couldn’t even be seen underneath his tattoo. Because of that, he’d gone ahead and changed his shirt to something a little more comfortable and that would breathe. The sapphire shirt he’d chosen was short enough that, when he moved in the slightest, skin peeked at the bottom. If he lifted his arms, it would show most of his stomach. The top had a low plunging collar that was laced together, the strings dangling down the front just a little. He’d left on the jelly bracelets and he’d kept the fedora from earlier. A perfect look for his role and one that definitely wouldn’t get him recognized anywhere in public. This was so far from Dr. Reid. No one would ever suspect him of being that person.

The three of them moved from the car and Spencer actually took a second to look at the girls. Rogue had her hair free flowing, which he thought was the best look for her. She’d put in wide hoop earrings that complimented her face well and had been sparing on the makeup. Her jeans were dark, with designs on the back pockets. Since she was going to be in a crowd of people and could potentially bump into someone, she’d worn a turtleneck, but he was pleased to see that it was of a soft, breathable material. Over her turtleneck she’d put on a vest that gave her outfit a younger, slightly hipper look. She also had on gloves to keep her hands shielded. It was sad that she had to be careful that no one bumped her skin here for fear of hurting them, but it was a fact of life for her. At least she knew how to work with it.
Jubilee on the other hand had dressed with her usual disregard for what anyone else might think. A jean skirt instead of her typical shorts tonight and she wore her K4 t-shirt. She’d even left behind her usual trench coat, surprisingly enough. He didn’t think he’d ever really seen her without it.

“Are you ladies ready?” He asked them. Holding out his arms, he offered them to the girls, grinning when they took them.

Together, the trio went forward and got in line, waiting to make their way to the front. Jubilee started in talking about the newest album and how well the tour was doing, just gushing about being able to go and how long it had taken her to convince Logan that she’d be just fine at the show, and her bubbly conversation kept them occupied as the line slowly moved forward. Eventually, though, they reached the front. Spencer grinned and let go of the girls to reach into his back pocket while they both got out their tickets. He pulled out his ID and slid it through the gap. At least, one of his ID’s. His driver’s license that he was using here. “Spencer Samuels. I believe you have some things for me and my girls here.” He told the lady on the other side of the glass. Taking the girls tickets, he slid those under as well.

The woman looked at his ID and slid it back to him. Then she pulled out an envelope and passed that over as well as the upgraded tickets for the girls. “Go on in and enjoy the show, Mr. Samuels.” She told him cheerfully. Spencer reached in and pulled out the three lanyards with the VIP tags on them. He gave one to each girl and put one around his own neck.

“Oh my God, you weren’t kidding!” Jubilee squealed as she looked at her pass. “I have a VIP pass! A VIP pass! Oh, you have got to introduce us to them, Spencer!”

Rogue had a hold of his elbow again and was grinning widely. It was one of the few times since he’d met her that he’d seen her look her age. “Spencer Samuels, huh?”

He tipped his sunglasses down just enough to wink at her. “That’s what this ID says, at least.”

“Why do I get the feeling you’ve got more than one?”

“Because you’re a very, very smart girl.” Smiling, he patted her gloved hand, which still sat in the crook of his elbow. “Now let’s go enjoy the show.”

They made their way into the arena and, once they showed their passes, were escorted to special seats right up towards the front and off to the side, giving them one of the best views in the house. Settling back in his seat, Spencer fortified his shields and watched as the arena filled while the two girls with him started to chatter excitedly. He found himself drawn into a conversation on the group’s music as well as debates over their best songs or best albums and which one of them had the nicest hair, the best ass, and things like that. Then the lights dimmed.

It never failed to make Spencer grin when he saw his friend perform. The screaming in the arena grew to epic proportions as lights flashed blindingly and the four boys ran out on stage. For this first initial part, Spencer had to close his eyes, the lights far too bright for him to handle, even with his sunglasses on. Once they evened out, he opened them again and watched the show.

Lyle looked good up there. He noticed Spencer almost right off and gave him a huge grin, never breaking from his choreography or his singing. But he made a point to look their way most of the night. A few times he made a face or executed a move that had Spencer laughing out loud at him. Lyle had always been a little wild and zany. It was the way Spencer liked him. His happy go lucky, cheerful friend. That part of him hadn’t come out as much back when they’d first known one another, but the after Lyle had left Sir’s employment, it had started to come out more and more.
After a bit, the lights from the show started to get to Spencer’s eyes. He leaned over and tapped Rogue’s shoulder between songs. “I’m going ahead backstage!” he called out to her over the screams. “The lights are a little too much. You guys have backstage passes, so I’ll see you after the show. If I don’t, I hope you have a good time!”

“Thanks, Spencer!” In a random burst of goodwill, Rogue reached out and hugged him. The gesture surprised Spencer. He couldn’t seem to stop his smiling as he made his way over to where security was at. A flash of his pass and his ID got him admitted backstage. There, he had someone point him in the direction of Lyle’s room. It required him to show ID again and get approval from security, who seemed entirely unsurprised by his arrival once they saw his ID, but eventually he was led to the dressing room and left in there. After turning off the overhead lights and turning on the single lamp in the room, making it much dimmer in there, Spencer climbed onto the little couch in the room and curled up. His head was aching from the bright lights and he just wanted a quick nap. No one could get to him in here except for one of the boys or security and none of them would hurt him. There was still at least an hour left of the show, too.

Comfortable, his headache eased quite a bit by the semi dark room, Spencer fell asleep.

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A hand running through his hair was what woke him from his sleep. He didn’t even have to open his eyes to know who was there. The touch combined with that emotional signature was very familiar to him. No one else had ever had that kind of love, bright humor and that slight sense of protectiveness to them where Spencer was concerned, except for one person. Without opening his eyes, Spencer murmured “Your show is done, I take it?”

“What was your first clue?” Lyle teased. His voice was pitched soft. “The lights bothering you, Rakurai?”

The fingers in his hair shifted to rub lightly at his temple and he couldn’t help but sigh happily. “Just a little.” He felt his lips twitch at the name Lyle used. The man had never approved of the name Sir called him. No matter what anyone said, Lyle had absolutely refused to call him Inanime but he was forbidden by Sir to call him Spencer. So he’d searched around on his own until he found a name that he felt suited. He told Spencer once that Rakurai was the Japanese term for ‘bolt of lightning’, essentially. Sir had allowed it, shaking his head at the ridiculous nickname. But it had been Lyle’s nickname for him ever since then.

“I didn’t think about that until after inviting you to the show. When I saw you disappear, I knew you’d be in here. I let your friends know you were ok, by the way. I met them after the show.”

Wait a second…cracking one eye open, Spencer looked into his only real friend’s face. “How long have I been asleep?”

Lyle smiled at him in that sweet sort of way that he had. “The show’s been done for about an hour. I already did the meet and greet and everything. Don’t worry, I made sure your friends were well taken care of and I introduced them to everyone. You looked like you needed the sleep when I came in. I should have had you back here from the start. I know how the bright lights hurt your eyes.”

“Yeah. I deal with electricity and can pull lightning from the sky, but I can be blinded by bright lights. Oh, the irony.” He said dryly.

“Your own lights don’t seem to blind you.”

“They don’t.” He agreed. “That’s a plus, at least.” Sighing, Spencer finally gave in and opened both
his eyes. He smiled at his friend. “Hello, Ly.”

Squatting beside the couch, Lyle Donovan shifted his arms to rest on his knees. “Hello, Spencer.” There was a familiar twinkle in his blue eyes. Impulsively, Spencer sat up enough that he could reach out and wrap his arms around him, hugging him tightly. Lyle didn’t hesitate to bring his arms up and hug Spencer back just as tight. In that hug, Spencer felt the maelstrom of emotions that were in Lyle and he reacted instinctively to it, projecting love and comfort. “Oh, honey, what is it? What’s wrong?” Pulling back, he framed Lyle’s face with his hands. “Tell me. Tell me what’s going on.”

“It’s nothing.”

“Ly…” Spencer tried to look stern, knowing that it never worked on his friend.

Sighing, Lyle shook his head. “Damn your empathy.” He said without any real heat. “If I don’t tell you, you’re just going to worry about it all night, aren’t you?”

Spencer nodded quickly. “Yes.”

“Naturally.” This time Lyle’s sigh was a whole lot deeper and it carried an edge of exhaustion that had nothing to do with the physical. “It’s nothing new, Rakurai. I’ve just been fighting Adam again, that’s all. And I don’t really want to talk about it at the moment. That’s not why we got together. We got together to visit and because you said you wanted to talk.”

“And I will. When’s your next show, Lyle?” Spencer sat up all the way, still holding Lyle’s face in his hands.

The surprise at the change of topic showed on Lyle’s face. “We’ve got tomorrow off here in the city and then we leave on Monday. Why?”

Spencer made the decision easily. He let go of Lyle’s face only to grab his hands and pull them both to their feet. “You’re coming with me. We’re going to go out and have some drinks and you’re going to get rip roaring drunk, talk only about happy things, and then you’re coming to sleep at the mansion with me. We’ll spend tomorrow together talking and I’ll bring you back in time to leave Monday, ready and raring to go. How does that sound?”

With no one else would Lyle have relaxed enough to do this. But looking at Spencer, he sighed out some tension and let himself smile. “Sounds like a plan to me. Let’s blow this popsicle stand.”

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The two stuck to their plan. Once they’d disguised Lyle, they snuck him out of the arena and crept away to Spencer’s car. From there they’d driven to a hole-in-the-wall bar that Spencer knew and he proceeded to get his friend as drunk as could be. The night was full of nothing negative whatsoever—only tales of humor were told between them. Good memories were rehashed. Lyle told Spencer tales from the tour that had them both laughing so hard they almost fell onto the floor. Spencer regaled Lyle with stories of the team he’d worked with on his last job, making Lyle laugh so hard the water Spencer was forcing him to drink came out of his nose.

Eventually Spencer decided he better get Lyle to bed before the man got to the passing out portion of the night. “Come on, Lyle. Let’s get you in the car.” Spencer said as he paid off their tab. Putting himself under one of Lyle’s arms, he started to help him weave his way out of the bar and to the parking lot. It took a little bit of work to get Lyle inside his car and he prayed as he did that the man wouldn’t puke all over the place at any point. Furrowing his brows at the disgusting idea, he quickly looked to Lyle. “If you need to throw up, please, speak up first. I just purchased this car this morning
“Blah, blah, blah.” Lyle made the ‘talk’ hand at him and giggled. God, the man was beyond sloshed! Spencer shook his head and gunned the engine. He better get him back fast before Lyle really did throw up or pass out or something like that.

They practically flew back to the mansion, playing the radio and singing along the entire way. Lyle whistled at the sight of the mansion when they pulled up to the gate and Spencer entered his code. “Damn fine place you’re staying here, Rakurai. What the hell’s he got you doing here?”

Just the mention of Him was enough to have Spencer shivering and casting a quick look around him like there was a chance that someone was close enough to have heard that. “Be quiet, would you?” Spencer grumbled. He shot a glare in his direction before making his way up the drive to the garage. “Are you looking to get me caught and in trouble, Ly?”

Lyle had the decency to look chagrined—for all of five seconds. “Don’t be mad at me. I can’t take another person being mad at me.” He slurred out.

Parking the car, Spencer shook his head and turned the engine off. That left him free to look at Lyle. It really wasn’t fair that someone could look so adorable while being so drunk. The hazy grin that he got just made him shake his head again. “You are far too drunk for this. I should’ve thought my plan through a little better. You probably aren’t even capable of walking on your own.” He really, really should’ve thought of this earlier. It was going to be hell to haul him in the house and upstairs to his room. “Come on, let’s get you to my room. You’ve got to be quiet, though. There are people asleep here.”

“Quiet as a mouse.” Lyle agreed with a drunken giggle. Spencer couldn’t resist reaching out to tug on a dark brown curl that was dangling in his friend’s face. This had been what Lyle had needed. A night with someone he trusted to just cut loose and have fun. To forget his troubles for a little while. It had been what Spencer needed a little bit, too. Someone he knew and who knew him. Someone he could relax around a little and not worry all the time about keeping back from or getting too close to.

Getting him into the mansion was proving to be an interesting task, however. It wasn’t difficult to get him from the car, but beyond there, Lyle could barely manage to walk on his own and every bit of it was funny to him. Each time he stumbled, almost taking them down, he giggled. To whoever was on security detail they had to look completely ridiculous. Spencer hoped vaguely that it wasn’t someone like Warren or Bobby. They’d hold this against him. The others, though, would probably get a good laugh out of it. Especially right at the moment. The stairs were proving to be rather interesting to navigate. Halfway up, after stumbling and almost falling countless times, Spencer had to stop and take a breath. “You are going to be the death of me, honey! Can’t you just make it up a few more stairs? Then I’ll drag you if I have to. But you keep weaving and laughing and we’re going to end up breaking our necks.”

“I am not that graceless.” Lyle said indignantly. “I’d catch myself.”

“Oh, so it’s just my neck you’d break.”

“You’d heal.” Reaching out, Lyle grabbed his chin and shook his head. “Such a pretty neck too. Be a real shame for it to break.”

Rolling his eyes, Spencer couldn’t stop his smile. “Come on, honey. We’re almost there. Then I’m tucking you into bed.”

“Why Rakurai, you coy thing. Getting me drunk and taking me to bed. Whatever would people think
of you?” The words were slurred enough that Spencer almost had to translate them in his mind. Then he laughed. Cautiously, he started to slowly get them up the stairs once more. “Get your mind out of the gutter, Ly. You are so not my type.”

“I’m breathing, aren’t I?”

Again Spencer laughed. Taunts like that never bothered him when Lyle said them. He knew his friend was just joking with him and that Lyle would never, ever, intentionally say something to hurt him. To amuse himself, he smacked his hand to Lyle’s chest right as they got to the top of the stairs. “Sure hope you are. Otherwise, I’m in a lot of trouble.”

That had Lyle sniggering the whole way to Spencer’s room. Once inside, it was much easier to deal with his friend. Spencer stripped them both down and put pajama pants on them. Then he grabbed a bucket and set it beside the bed. Before Lyle could fully pass out, Spencer made sure he took two Advil and drank a whole glass of water. Then he laid him down and climbed into the bed with him, lifting the blankets up and tucking them around them.

Snuggling close as he’d done so many times when he was younger, Spencer kissed Lyle’s cheek. “Sleep, honey. Tomorrow, we’ll fix whatever’s wrong. Just sleep now. I’m here and I’ve got you.”

“You’re a good friend, Spencer. Thanks.” Lyle mumbled.

As sleep took him, Spencer smiled.
Chapter 10

Morning found the two much earlier than anyone would have thought. Lyle was even the first one awake. Spencer was woken up by the feel of Lyle repeatedly poking him in the stomach. Without opening his eyes, he told him “If you don’t knock that off, Lyle Donovan, I’m going to break your finger.”

“I’m hungry.” Lyle whined at him. “You’ve got to feed me.”

That pitted two of Spencer’s three favorite things against one another. Sleep or food. Which one? Another poke told him that he wasn’t going to get a choice. Lyle was as bad as him when it came to food. They could destroy a well-made buffet together. Part and parcel of their mutations. Where Spencer’s electricity required him to refuel frequently and allowed him to burn off much of what he ate, Lyle’s mutation was ‘enhanced condition’ that also took extra energy and allowed him to pack food away without gaining all the extra weight. Physically, his skills were generally triple that of the average human. It was what made him so good at sports.

Yawning, Spencer opened his eyes and pretended to glare. “Fine. I’ll feed you.” He said it as if it was the hardest thing he was ever going to have to do. “Let me get dressed.”

“That’d probably be smart.” Lyle agreed. He was already sitting up and reaching for his pants where Spencer had set them on the chair. “I’m going to go piss and such. I’m using your toothbrush, by the way.”

Spencer scowled and finally sat up. “Don’t you dare!”

While Lyle took care of his morning needs and got dressed, Spencer pulled himself from bed and dressed as well. He didn’t bother with shoes this morning, not particularly in the mood to be totally dressed up. If anything, he wanted to simply relax. That, and the warm sun shining outside, was the motive behind the casual clothes he put on. Lightweight jeans and a loose t-shirt that draped off of one shoulder when he moved. Both were old clothes and usually reserved for when he wanted to be comfortable.

He didn’t bother knocking to walk into the bathroom. Lyle was at the sink, brushing his teeth. Spencer gave him the shirt in his hands. “Here, it’s clean and probably smells less like alcohol than yours does.” He said. Then, without shame, he made his way to the toilet to take care of his own morning needs. Lyle just shook his head and spit the foam into the sink. “You’ve got such modesty, Spencer.” He said dryly.

Spencer snickered and finished what he was doing. “Not the first time we’ve shared close quarters.”

“Yes. You’re so kind like that, sharing these moments with me.” Lyle rinsed his mouth out and spat the water into the sink.

Flushing, Spencer made his way over and washed his hands. “Sharing is caring, Ly.”

“Share a little less, Spence.”

Once his hands were clean, his leftover makeup washed off and his teeth brushed, Spencer led Lyle from his room and down to the kitchen. It was early enough that no one was down there yet. That allowed them to start the first pot of coffee together in the early morning quiet of the kitchen. As it brewed, Spencer looked around. “If we’re going to make breakfast, we might as well make a proper Sunday breakfast for everyone.”
Lyle didn’t even bat an eye. “I want a full southern breakfast. It is Sunday.”

“Yes, yeah. I got it.” Spencer rolled his eyes. “Go sit at the bar while I cook. You’ll just get in my way.”

He’d already known Spencer would say that. Because of that, he was already moving to the island bar and taking a seat. There he watched as Spencer rooted around for everything he would need for a full Southern-style breakfast like he knew Lyle loved. Sausage, eggs, ham, biscuits and gravy. The biscuits came first, made from scratch. As he poured ingredients, Spencer probed out with his empathy and found the area around him empty. Perfect. “So.” He said into the quiet. “You finally realized you’re in love with Adam, huh?”

His words threw Lyle for a loop. He felt the southern man startle and blanch before pain echoed in him. “I should’ve figured you’d already know. You know me better than anyone else.”

“It wasn’t difficult. The love fills you every time you get around him. I’ve known for a while.” While his hands were clean, Spencer took a moment to make a cup of coffee and hand it over to Lyle and then make one for himself. He took a drink before setting it down and going to mix his biscuits together. While he floured a spot on the counter where he could roll the biscuits out, he snuck a glance up at his friend. The misery coming off Lyle was easy for the young empath to read and he’d never been able to resist his friend’s pain. Luckily, it never took much more than asking for Lyle to open up to him. The older man once told him that he never saw a point in keeping things from a person who could read his emotions anyways. “There’s no one around—talk to me, Ly. What’s going on? Why is it hurting you so much?”

As always, the man showed no resistance. His shoulders slumped a little and he wrapped his hands around his cup and let out a soft sigh. “It was just a stupid fight. We’ve had a million of them. I don’t know why this one is any different.” Staring at the dark brew in his mug, he spoke in a voice that was soft and aching. “He’s been treating me so distantly lately. We don’t even really hang out as friends much anymore and it hurts. It hurts a lot. I…I love him. I love him so much I feel like I’m gonna explode from it. And lately he can’t seem to give me the time of day.”

The ache he felt had Spencer’s heart aching in sympathy. These two fools were lovesick and only hurting one another at the moment all for stupid reasons. Spencer was always up for listening, but he tried to avoid interfering as much as possible. It never seemed fair to him when he had a bit up on others by being able to sense what they were feeling. Then again, that gave him an advantage that could help if he was careful about it. As he thought about his words, trying to choose them carefully, he put his dough on the floured counter and proceeded to knead it out. After a second he started to speak, slowly, hesitantly. “Ly, have you stopped to think about why he’s avoiding you? What it is that’s changed for him that made him start to avoid a person he used to spend so much time with it?”

“I, I don’t know.”

“Do you think that maybe, just maybe, he might feel the same way about you?” Spencer slanted a glance up at him. “That maybe he’s scared you won’t want him and so he’s never spoken up about what he’s felt? He’s never said anything to me, but I’ve seen the way he looks at you. I’ve seen the light in his eyes. I’ve felt his emotions spike up just because you walk into the room. That man cares for you more than anyone else. He’d hang the moon for you, Ly. Maybe he’s picking fights and backing away because it hurts too much to be around what he thinks he’s never going to have.”

His words seemed to have stunned Lyle. The older man sat there, staring off into space, lost in thought. Spencer let the silence stretch as he finished the biscuits. Once they were on the tray and in the oven and his hands were washed, he spoke up once more, deciding that the time was right. “Talk to him, honey. Tell him how you feel and see what happens.”
“What?” Lyle yanked himself from his thoughts and stared at Spencer in horror. “What?”

“You heard me.” After a drink of his coffee, Spencer started pulling out pans to cook the rest of breakfast “What’s the worst that’s going to happen? He’ll tell you he doesn’t feel the same?”

“He could never talk to me again!”

“And how’s that any different than him avoiding you now?” Spencer countered. “Right now, you’ve got nothing to lose and everything to gain. Don’t let the opportunity of your life pass you up because of cowardice, Lyle. Reach out for love and grab it by the horns. It’s so rare in life you can’t afford to pass it up.”

After a long moment, Lyle’s tension seemed to ease just the slightest bit. He picked up his cup and slanted a look at Spencer over the top. “Since when did you get to be so smart?” he teased.

Sliding sausage into a skillet and putting the lid on, Spencer grinned. “I beg your pardon? I’ve always been this smart. It’s about time you noticed it.”

The two teased gently as Spencer continued to make breakfast. When Lyle offered to help, Spencer just gave him that look that made Lyle raise his hands and laugh. After a bit, Spencer stepped back to drink some of his coffee, the first round done and the second already going. He knew he had to make plenty for everyone and what was already done was keeping warm on the warmed buffet cart. Once people woke up, the food he’d made would go fast. That much he’d seen in his time here. Witnessing meal times around here always made him wince just thinking of what the grocery bills looked like.

The feel of someone’s emotions intruded on Spencer's mind. He’d been absently monitoring the area around him to make sure that no one managed to sneak up on them while they were talking and he could feel now as someone made their way toward the kitchen. Then the door opened and Spencer couldn’t help how he smiled. A fully dressed yet still sleepy looking Remy came wandering in, his chin lifted as he sniffed the air. “Dieu, something smells good in here.” His morning voice was still husky with sleep and it sent a soft shiver down Spencer’s spine. That had been happening to him more and more. Lust was an emotion he was familiar with and one that didn’t bother him. He’d felt lust plenty of times. What unsettled him about this was that he didn’t find himself attracted just to Remy’s body. He found himself attracted to the man’s personality too. It was an entirely new experience for him and one he wasn’t sure he was comfortable with. Especially about someone on one of his ‘assignments’. That was just asking for trouble.

Licking his lips, Spencer pushed all that back and made himself smile. “I came down to feed Lyle and figured I’d feed the whole house too.” He explained. Moving to refill his own cup, Spencer got down a cup for Remy and poured him some coffee, preparing it the way he knew the Cajun took it. Over his shoulder he said “Remy, this is a friend of mine. Lyle, this is Remy. He’s my, well, my _ami_ too, t’ough he’s shy about dat.” Remy said easily. When Spencer turned, he watched Remy turn his full megawatt smile on Lyle. “It’s a pleasure to meet y’, Lyle.”

“A pleasure to meet you too.” Lyle said charmingly. “So, you’re a teacher, hm? What exactly do you teach here?”

Spencer set the coffee cup in front of Remy right as he realized that Lyle had no idea why he was here or what the ‘story’ was. “Ah, hell, sorry Ly.” He said quickly and with an embarrassed grin. “I didn’t even think. Remy’s helping to teach me to control my electricity.”
“So I wasn’t imagining things when you brought me in. This is really Xavier’s school?” Lyle said with a raised eyebrow. His grin slowly spread. “Man, I’ve dealt with the Professor here before, but I’ve never actually been here.” At Spencer’s curious look, he explained. “He donates to my foundation.” This time he turned toward Remy as he explained “I run a foundation for mutants who are sick and need medical assistance but can’t seem to get medical insurance once it’s discovered they’re a mutant.”

The two went into an involved discussion on the foundation while Spencer pulled the batch of biscuits from the oven and added them to one of the buffet containers. He put the lid back on and then added dough to the tray before putting it back in the oven. When he straightened back up, Remy was stirring his pot of gravy for him. To Lyle’s immense surprise, Spencer didn’t bitch about someone being in the kitchen. He grinned at Remy. “Thanks, honey.”

“Bien sûr.” Remy looked him over from head to toe and let a grin build on his lips. “Y’r looking awfully nice dis mornin’, mon ami. Très bon.”

Spencer flushed a little at the compliment and tried to turn quickly to cover it, putting his back to them and stretching up to reach the tray he wanted from the top of the cabinets. Remy and Lyle’s laughter melded together nicely in the small room and told him clearly that he hadn’t turned quickly enough. At the same time, Spencer heard a door shut and felt disgust hit him like a tidal wave. His shields had been down to feel at Lyle as they’d been talking and he hadn’t pulled them all the way back up yet. He took a quick second to close his eyes and do that now before he pulled the tray down and turned around. He knew who he’d find there. Only one person was that disgusted with him. “Morning there, honey.” He said to Warren.

The winged man looked to Lyle—who definitely had that sleepy, disheveled look to him—then over to Spencer, who knew that his tousled hair and cheeks warmed from the stove probably made him look like he’d just crawled off his partner and out of bed. The sneer on Warren’s face grew more pronounced. “Don’t you have better tact than to bring your clients back to the mansion?”

Spencer didn’t flinch at the man’s words, but the disgust pouring off him was strong enough that it was even managing to push at Spencer’s shields. It was like the man was purposely pushing it at him. Spencer tried to pour more strength into his shields in an effort to keep it out. Because of that, his tone was just a tiny bit strained no matter how light he tried to make it. Trying to act as casual as possible, he poured some eggs into his pan. I will not let him get to me. I will not. He’s not treating me any differently than I’m used to, anyways. There is no reason to get upset over it. Just be calm, casual. “And a good morning to you too, honey. You want some breakfast? I just made a fresh pot of coffee, too, if you’re looking for some. The rest of the food should be done in a few minutes.”

“Breakfast and a show, huh?”

The snide remark rolled off Spencer’s back, but apparently it irritated Lyle. He felt his friend’s annoyance flash right before he snapped “Are you always this much of a self-righteous prick or is it just special for Spencer?”

Embarrassed, Spencer turned toward Lyle, trying to get to him to shut him up. He was too late, though. Lyle was already on his feet. Just when Spencer was getting ready to hurry over to him, needing to stop this, Remy caught hold of Spencer’s arm and held him back from going to his friend. There wasn’t time for Spencer to wonder why Remy stopped him. Lyle had stepped right up to Warren and was glaring at the shocked man. “I got no idea who you are and to be honest, I don’t really care. But let me get one thing straight with you. Guest or not, I won’t sit and listen to someone talk to Spencer that way. I don’t care what he’s done or what you think he’s done; the man deserves more respect than to be insulted by you while he’s offering you breakfast and coffee.”
“I don’t have to listen to this from some whore’s dumb John.” Warren snapped out at him. “Why don’t you pay the boy and scurry on out of here?”

Again Spencer tried to go to them, but Remy held him in place. “Let me go before he hits him.” Spencer said quickly. Remy shook his head. “Non, mon ami. Ange deserves what he’s getting here.”

Lyle looked absolutely livid. His usually kind face was a mask of anger. “Who the hell do you think you are? Who are you that you’re so high and lofty that you can afford to pass judgment over people you don’t know? People you will never begin to understand? I’ve known that man over there since he was seven years old and I can tell you he has more integrity, more honor, more compassion in his little finger than you have in your entire body. You could never begin to understand the man that lives inside of him or the life that he’s lived. How dare you think you have the right to judge him just because he whores?”

This was going too far. With his temper up like this, Lyle was saying things he had no right saying with the audience he had and Spencer was afraid that even more was going to slip out. Before the man could end up saying something that they wouldn’t be able to take back, Spencer quickly called out “Lyle!” his tone was sharp enough to cut through the tension that had been building in the air. “Enough!” This time he succeeded in yanking his arm from Remy’s grip. He had Lyle’s attention now and he didn’t bother going over to him. Embarrassment and pain were twisting in equal parts inside of him. “That is enough, Lyle. It’s not worth it. How many times do I have to tell you that?”

“How many times do I have to tell you that you’re worth so much more?” Lyle fired right back. “I may not be able to make you stop whoring, but I sure as heck won’t let people put you down because of it.”

“The insults don’t mean anything. They don’t matter to me, Ly. They don’t!”

“They should!”

No one paid any attention as the door opened again and Logan came strolling in. He saw the fight between the two, with Warren gaping on the sidelines, and went to Remy, who was quietly finishing Spencer’s cooking. “What’s going on here?”

Remy didn’t get a chance to answer as Lyle started to yell once more. “I swear, you piss me off sometimes, Spencer. Why can’t you see that you deserve to be treated better than this? Why can’t you finally wake up and realize that you’re worth more than a quick screw and a few bucks? Why the hell do you let him convince you that you’re worthless?”

All color drained from Spencer’s face. “You know why.” He said hoarsely. There was a wealth of pain in those words that stunned everyone but Lyle. They had never heard him this raw. Spencer wasn’t thinking about them right then, though. He was caught up in his own pain and focused on Lyle. “You know exactly why. Why should someone like me care what people have to say, Lyle?” The emphasis he put on people let Lyle know that what he was talking about—it let him know that Spencer didn’t include himself in that group. “I know exactly what I am and so do you. Now, can we be done with this?”

Lyle skirted around the island and reached out, not hesitating to pull Spencer to him. “I’m sorry, Rakurai.”

Allowing himself to sit in the hug for a minute, Spencer eventually pulled back, gathering his composure as he went. “It’s fine. Really, it is. Go on, go sit down now. I’ll bring you more coffee.” He took a deep breath and picked up Lyle’s coffee cup, turning back toward the pot. That was when he noticed Logan standing at Remy’s side. “Morning, Logan.” It was a sign of how frazzled Spencer
still was that he didn’t use any pet names for Logan. “Want some coffee?”

“Sure, pup.” Logan could see that Spencer needed something to distract him and he had to resist following after Warren, who was quietly leaving the room. To try and move them past the slight discomfort that still hung in the air, he looked over to Lyle and introduced himself, pulling attention off Spencer briefly so he could have a moment to himself. “I’m Logan, by the way. I take it you’re Spencer’s friend Lyle that the girls were talking about. They sure had a good time at your show last night.”

Compliments on his music was always a good route to go with the singer. Lyle smiled charmingly at him. “I’m glad. They were sweet girls.” When Spencer came over with Lyle’s coffee, the older man leaned over and kissed his cheek. “Thank you, Rakurai.”

That caught the attention of the other two. Logan looked surprised at the use of the Japanese word for a second. Then his face split with a wide grin. “That’s nickname suits you a hell of a lot more, pup. I like it. Rakurai."

“What does it mean?” Remy asked.

“Bolt of lightning, essentially.” Logan explained. “Where’d you end up getting a Japanese name from?”

Grinning, Lyle put his arm around Spencer’s waist and laid his head comfortably on his shoulder, seeking to help him relax. “I gave it to him ages ago. I looked around for a while till I found something I thought suited. I heard someone I knew use that word during a storm and I thought it suited. I refuse to use his other one.”

A flush built in Spencer’s cheeks when Remy looked up from removing the last of the eggs from the stovetop to tell him “It sounds nice, cher. A much prettier name dan dat other one. A bel homme like y’ deserves a pretty nickname like dat.”

Spencer was saved from having to respond when the sound of footsteps signaled the others coming for breakfast.
Breakfast was a noisy affair. The tables were packed, adults, teenagers and kids alike, residents and guests eating together for once, all joined together for Sunday breakfast. Food was served and devoured until nothing was left. Conversation flowed easily around the room, once the girls got out their squeals at finding Lyle Donovan joining them for breakfast. Charles greeted him warmly when he realized that this was the man he’d done business with before. After that, no one seemed to find it strange that they had company. When the talk of mutations came up, Lyle easily disclosed his own mutation, explaining about how his physical attributes were enhanced.

By the time breakfast was done, one would have thought that Spencer would have been relaxed. It was such a nice breakfast and they all had such a good time. But, if anything, Spencer was a bundle of nerves. He couldn’t figure out what he was going to do here. What he should do here. Yet, at the same time, he knew what he had to do. It didn’t make it any easier, though.

There was no point in putting it off. After they got done eating and everyone was rising, Spencer looked over to Lyle and said “Want to take a walk with me, honey? I’ll show you around the grounds a bit and you can see Ororo’s beautiful gardens.” He put on a fake smile and hoped the rest of the room that was watching thought it was real. “She lets me sit and watch her garden sometimes in the afternoon. It’s a peaceful place to be.”

“You are always welcome in my gardens, Spencer.” Ororo told him kindly. “Your company is always a pleasure.”

Scott stood up from his chair and stretched his arms out before starting to help gather dirty dishes. “Take a coat, Spencer. It’s cold out there.” He said. His voice suggested it was more of an order than a request. Just barely did Spencer resist rolling his eyes. He did, however, stick his tongue out at the back of Scott’s head before putting on his nicest voice and saying “Sure thing, Scotty.” Then he grabbed Lyle’s hand and darted from the room before Scott could retaliate in any way. Still, as they headed toward the back, Spencer made sure to grab one of the coats hanging up there. Only after he had it on did he realize it was Scott’s. How…appropriate.

He stuffed his hands in the pockets to keep them warm as they made their way outside. The sun was shining and the day was warmer than they’d been lately, but there was a fall nip to the air that had him shivering just a bit. Lyle linked arms with him and, quiet, the two made their way toward the gardens. It was only when they were a safe distance from the mansion that Spencer finally spoke up and made himself start a conversation he was terrified to have. “I…I know I’ve never asked you before, Lyle, but I need to know. Why did you leave?”

There was no need for him to clarify what he meant. Lyle understood. For a minute more they walked quietly. Then, softly, Lyle started to speak. “I found out he was lying to me. When Sir first hired me, I was young and gullible and angry with the world, so it was easy for him to tell me that I needed to go steal this or that for him. For the right money, I didn’t care. Sometimes I didn’t even care about the money. I just wanted to do the job.” In his younger days, Lyle had been a top thief, his mutation allowing him to get into places others couldn’t. “But I did have standards. There were things I just wouldn’t do. Sir always told me he agreed with that and he assured me he would never have me do anything I didn’t want to. And my number one rule was that I’d never steal anything he could use to harm someone else.”

They reached the gardens as Lyle was talking. Spencer led them over to a bench in the sun and sat them down. Vaguely he wished he had his shades, but he’d left them up in is room. He angled himself so that the sun wasn’t right on his face and he could watch Lyle from the corner of his eye as
his friend kept talking.

“Right at the end I found out that something I had stolen for him wasn’t saving people, as he’d said it would. No, he’d used it to turn around and hurt people. Good people. People who were only guilty of getting in his way. And he didn’t just hurt them, he hurt their families, too. He used the information to find their homes and send assassins to slaughter their entire families.”

“Shit.” Spencer whispered. He felt like he was going to be sick. This was like taking his worst fears about Sir and having them thrown into his face. No his mind screamed at him. No! He always said he hurt people who deserved it! No! Lyle has to be wrong. He has to be!

A small shudder ran down Lyle’s body. “Yeah.” He rested his arms on his legs and clasped his hands together, looking down at them. “I told him it broke our deal and I was done. I refused to work for him anymore. And he told me no one got to quit. People were fired, but no one quit. That if I tried, he’d kill me.”

Spencer closed his eyes against the agony of this story. He didn’t want to hear anymore. He had to know the rest. “How’d you get out?”

“The only way I could. I made him fire me. You know as well as I do, the only way he’ll fire someone is if they’re useless. The only way I could be useless to him that I could see was to get caught. I worked a few more jobs for him, letting him think he’d won, and then I carefully planned on one and made a stupid mistake and got myself busted. I thought the worst I’d get was arrested.” Chuckling weakly, Lyle spread his hands and looked at his fingers, curling and uncurling them a littlebit. “The people that caught me didn’t take me to the cops. They were mob. They beat the living crap out of me and dumped me on Sir’s doorstep as a ‘message’ to him. Three fingers in my right hand were broken so badly that I still don’t have perfect use of them.”

The shock of that had Spencer’s eyes flying open. He knew Lyle had limited ability with his right hand but he’d never known why.

Lyle ran one hand over his face, his right one curling around his knee. The way his eyes lifted, the haunted look as they stared into the distance without really seeing anything, showed that his thoughts were back in the past right along with his story. “I was useless to him after that. A thief that had his rep ruined and then his hand. He had no use for me and he told me ‘Well, looks like you get your wish. I have no use for you anymore. You’re fired.’ And then he sent me off. I walked away beaten, bruised and with a damaged hand, but you know what? It was worth it. The damage in my hand was worth it. The whole beating was.” He turned now, pinning Spencer with his stare. “He’s not the man you think he is, Spencer. He’s not great. He’s not good. He’s an evil, conniving bastard who only wants to hurt people who get in his way. He wants power. And you have to be coming to see that if you’re finally asking me about this. I’ve been waiting for this day.”

It was all too much. Too much at once. Spencer brought his hands up to run through his hair. He rested his elbows on his knees and ended up burying his face in his hands. “I don’t know what to do anymore, Ly.” He whispered hoarsely. So many emotions were churning around in him that he felt like he was going to be sick. “Nothing feels right. I don’t know how to deal with this!”

“Tell me what’s going on. What’s your mission here?”

“He told me ‘You are to go to Xavier’s school. I want you to infiltrate the school and the X-Men. Become one of them by any means necessary. While there, I want you to gather intelligence on its members, the school, and their technology. Everything that you can so that we can assess their threat level and deal with them accordingly if it becomes necessary. You are not to tell them that you work for me, but the rest of what you tell them is up to you. You will go there under the guise of a young
mutant needing help controlling his powers. This at least will not be a lie.”

“Shit, Spencer. Shit!” The curses from Lyle were enough to bring Spencer’s head back up. It wasn’t all that often that Lyle really swore like that. He saw his friend staring at him with wide eyes.

Spencer battled back his nausea. “I know. These people, they haven’t done anything wrong, Lyle! I’ve been with them for just a week and it’s easy to see that. They haven’t done anything to him and he…what if he tries to hurt them? What if he tries to hurt the kids? I can’t be a part of that. I just can’t! The people here…” He rose from the bench, unable to sit still. His arms wrapped around his waist in an effort to hold in the emotion that was boiling inside of him. “I like them, Lyle. I like these people. And…and they like me. Me. Can you believe it?”

Lyle watched him pace, his heart in his eyes. “I can.” He whispered. But Spencer didn’t hear his words.

The young genius shuddered out a breath, his control wavering slightly. “I don’t know what to do with all of this. All my life I’ve been his creation. His tool. That’s the only thing I’ve ever known! He literally made me. I’m not a human, not a mutant. No, I’m a thing. I’m his. I’ve always known that and accepted it. Inanime, the soulless one. But this place, these people, they just…” Trailing off, he growled in frustration. How did he put this into words? How could he make Lyle understand? How could he make himself understand? “I don’t understand these people, Lyle! Ororo, she lets me come down here sometimes and watch her as she gardens. We talk a little, but mostly I just enjoy her company and she seems to actually enjoy mine. Occasionally, I read to her while she works. Jean treats me nicely and sometimes she sits down in the TV room with me and we watch Sci-Fi shows together. Then there’s Charles, who just let me in his home without knowing anything really about me except that I needed help. Who does that? And Hank. Holy shit.” A slightly hysterical laugh escaped. Spencer didn’t even notice. “He’s not the type of doctor I’m used to. Do you know he’s trying to figure out something that I can take as a pain medication so that, in case of emergency, he’ll be able to medicate me? No one’s ever cared about that before! But he does. He wants me to give him some of my blood. I refused to give him some before, but he keeps asking me. What if he finds out the truth in there? What if he finds out I’m just another creation? What if they make me leave?”

“I don’t think they will.” Lyle said gently into the silence. “But we’ll get to that soon. Keep going. Keep telling me about them.”

What else could he do? “There’s Scott. I don’t understand him at all. The guy treats me like…like I’m one of the kids. He does things like make sure I eat, or that I don’t stay up too late, or wear a coat when it’s cold out. He checks on me to make sure I’m okay if I have a hard training session, and he’s going to help me fix up the Charger. Logan treats me the same way, just a little rougher. He flirts back with me and we both know it’s not serious. He loves Scott and Jean. But, in his tough way, Logan acts like he cares about me and he makes sure I get taken care of whether I like it or not. When I got beat up the night before, he actually came and washed up my back so they’d scar less.”

It looked like Lyle was going to comment on that, but he changed his mind at the last minute. “Keep going. Who else?”

“Rogue and Jubilee you met. They’re nice girls. We don’t talk a lot, but they treat me the same as they treat everyone else. The kids…the kids seem to flock to me sometimes. I have so much fun with them and they actually like me. I can feel it. And they like my eyes. Bobby doesn’t like me much, but it’s only because Remy and I flirt and he gets jealous. Warren doesn’t like me, as you saw. I think he wants me and he’s scared by it. There’s always lust on him when he gets around me.”

“What about Remy? You haven’t said anything about him.”
That had Spencer pausing in his pacing. “Remy is...I don’t know. He talks to me like you do, sometimes. Just easy and fun and I kind of forget that I’m on assignment when I talk with him. He’s a patient teacher and he never gets frustrated with me. If he thinks something’s wrong with me, he asks. He flirts right back with me and sometimes, sometimes I think he’s serious but I don’t want to probe and see if he is. He treats me so nicely, Lyle. Like...like he cares. Like he cares a lot. And I, well, it makes me feel good. I want him to care. I know he wants me. I can feel the lust. I want him too. I mean, come on, he’s an attractive man. But, it’s not just his body that’s attractive. The rest of him is too and I, I just don’t know how to deal with that. I’ve never been attracted to more than a body before. Lyle, I don’t know what to do!”

When he spun this time to face his friend, tears were streaming down Spencer’s cheeks. Lyle couldn’t resist rising and going to him, wrapping him close and holding him tight. “Oh, Spencer, honey.” He whispered into his hair. “You’re so mixed up inside. My poor Spencer.”

“What do I do, Ly? Nothing feels right anymore.” Spencer whimpered against a shoulder that had always been there for him. “Half of me can’t even seem to think of disobeying Sir. But the other half of me...I want so badly to take what they’re offering me here. I want this feeling of belonging, but I’m scared it’s not going to last. They’ll find out who I am and they’ll push me away. Then I’ll have nothing at all.”

“Then do it in baby steps.” Lyle suggested. He pulled back and framed Spencer’s face in his hands. “Go down tonight and tell this Hank that you’ll give him some blood to test if he wants. Let him test it. Give him a few days and then ask him what he found. Ask him if there’s anything you should know. If he tells you what I’ve always known, that you’re just as human as the rest of us, then you’ll know that Sir’s a liar. Then you can start to think on how to get away.” Using his thumbs, Lyle started to wipe away Spencer’s tears. “It sounds like you’ve got the potential for a great life here, Rakurai, with people that care about you. How can you live with yourself if you don’t try?”

“And what if it blows up in my face? What if he finds out that Sir is right? That I’m really just a soulless tool of his?” Spencer whispered brokenly.

Lyle leaned in, gently kissing lips that were wet with tears. “Then you’ll know for sure. But now, after all these questions, can you live with yourself if you don’t find out?”

Sighing, Spencer leaned back in, snuggling in to Lyle’s embrace despite the man being shorter than him. He held on tightly. “Can I come stay with you a bit if I need to?” he whispered. It was hard for him to ask, but he wanted to know he had somewhere to run to no matter what. He needed to know he had somewhere safe.

Lyle squeezed him tightly. “Always. You never even have to ask.”

“I’m scared, Ly. I’m scared of either answer.”

“I know.” There was nothing else Lyle could say to that.

The two stood that way for a while; neither knew how long. Lyle just held Spencer tightly, supporting him silently and offering him some much needed strength. After a long time, Spencer spoke once more, his words so soft they were barely able to be heard. “I’ll give Hank the blood tonight, when no one else is around to hear me talk to him.”

Saying nothing, Lyle smiled, a single tear sliding down his cheek. He prayed to God that this was going to be the start of healing for his friend. “I’m proud of you.” He finally whispered.

The two stayed like that even longer as Spencer’s silent tears slipped down his cheeks and he clung
to Lyle like the only safe harbor in the center of a storm. Neither one was aware of the eyes that watched from various windows in the house. Neither knew how some hearts up there ached for the obvious pain in the boy being held by his friend.

When Spencer finally pulled away from Lyle, the older man wiped at his cheeks, drying them off for him. “Come on.” He said finally. “Finish giving me the tour before you have to take me to town. I need to be at the hotel tonight to leave bright and early tomorrow morning, so I’ve only got a few more hours here.”
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When it came time for Lyle to leave, Spencer found himself not wanting to let the other man go. There were so many things in Spencer’s life at the moment that were rocky and unsure and Lyle was a peaceful place in the center of it all. He was someone that Spencer could cling to and know that he was going to be safe with. However, he couldn’t be that selfish. Lyle had a life of his own to get back to and he couldn’t just drop it and abandon everything so that he could stay here for a little while and hold Spencer’s hand through things. No, Spencer had to stand on his own two feet and do this himself.

Their drive into the city was quiet. Neither needed to really say anything to the other. So many things had been said already. When they arrived at Lyle’s hotel, Spencer parked at the service entrance so that Lyle could sneak in past fans. The two sat quietly for a few minutes after the car was shut off. Finally, Spencer looked over to him. “Thank you, Lyle. Just, thanks. I, I’m going to do what you said. I’ll go to Hank once I get back home. I promise.”

“And I’m going to go straight up to Adam’s room and talk to him.” Lyle said in return. “I promise. If you can be brave enough to face your demons, so can I.”

That succeeded in making Spencer smile. He reached out and squeezed Lyle’s hand. “I’m glad. I think you’re going to be happy you did, honey.”

“I think you will be too, Rakurai.”

The use of his nickname had Spencer’s smile growing. “You do realize you’ve probably passed that nickname along now, thank you very much. I have a feeling Logan’s going to make sure that one sticks around.”

Grinning, Lyle didn’t even pretend to look ashamed. “Thank Goodness. We can get them to banish that horrible other one entirely.” Then, before Spencer could say anything, Lyle leaned in and gave him a kiss and a quick hug. “You take care of yourself, Spencer. And call me. I want to know how all of this goes. I’m going to be wondering about you.”

“As soon as things get, well, figured out, I promise I’ll let you know.”

“Good.” Still smiling, Lyle opened his door and climbed from the car. Holding on to the top of the car and the top of his door, he bent so that his face showed again. “One thing you might want to think about, Spencer? With your psychology degree, you should be able to see significance in the fact that, just a bit ago, you referred to the mansion as home.” With that revelation, he smiled and said “I love you. Be safe.” And then he was shutting the door before darting into the hotel. Just like that, he was gone. But his words stayed behind.

The whole way home, Spencer could think of nothing else. He had called the mansion home. And he had done so while talking to someone who knew he was on assignment and knew that this was supposed to be just a job. Yet he’d still said ‘home’. The significance in that wasn’t lost on him. Subconsciously, had he already made the decision as to where he wanted to be? Had he already separated himself from Sir in his mind? He just didn’t know anymore. Everything he’d learned today, everything he’d shared, was still rattling around in his mind. He had to get it under control by bedtime or else Sir was going to see it in his mind when he did his check in.
I’ve got time to worry about this later he scolded himself. Right now, I just need to do as Lyle suggested. Give my blood to Hank and let him test it and wait and see what the results are. It won’t take a few days like Lyle thought. Most likely it’ll take about a week. But for now, I can just start with that and see what happens. Then I’ll finally have proof that Sir was right and I’m a freak, or that Sir was wrong and I’m...I’m just like everyone else. That, more than anything else, was preying on his mind. For a long time Lyle had tried to convince him that he wasn’t soulless. That he was just like everyone else. Spencer had just never believed him. But he’d never believed that Sir would lie to him either. Yet now there were so many things that were starting to show that maybe Sir was more of a liar than he’d ever thought. That he wasn’t the good man he’d led Spencer to believe. All the bad things he’d seen before, Spencer had always assumed he didn’t understand because he was a thing and not a person, or he’d assumed the bad was in a goal for the greater good. Now that was all being cast in a much darker light.

He fought to push this all back. Follow the plan and worry about the rest of this later! He scolded himself once more. Then he was pulling up to the mansion and there was no time for long thoughts. Now was time to fulfill his promise. Nerves ate at his stomach as, once his car was parked in the garage, he made his way into the mansion.

As he’d suspected, it wasn’t hard to find Hank. The man was in his lab just as he always seemed to be. Rarely ever did he come out of here unless it was for work related things or training sessions. Sometimes he even skipped meals! Talk about a man dedicated to his work. That was something Spencer could understand. He’d done the same thing before, plenty of times.

There was no time for backing out anymore. Spencer stood in the Med Lab, the door shutting behind him. The blue haired man looked up at the sound and caught him standing there. “Spencer! Is everything all right, my boy? Are you okay?”

The instant concern warmed Spencer in ways he had never felt until he’d come to this place. He took a deep breath and tried to smile and slide in to character to help himself get through this moment. “I’m fine, big guy.” He told him with a smile. Strolling in like it was nothing, Spencer took a seat in the chair near where Hank was working. He couldn’t help the way his eyes traveled over the notes Hank had out in front of him. The scientist that was in Spencer ached to ask questions and find out what he was doing. The rest of him knew better. Crossing his legs, he wrapped his hands around his knee and looked up at Hank. “I just got back from dropping Lyle back at his hotel.”

“I found your friend rather enjoyable.” Hank smiled at him briefly before turning back to his notes. Now that it was apparent that there was no immediate threat, whatever he was working on was drawing his attention once more. Spencer shifted his weight in the chair, trying to think on how to do this without rousing Hank’s suspicions. How on earth could he go about just bringing up the topic?

When he put his elbow on the counter and rested his head on his hand, it gave him a new vantage point to look at the man’s notes as well. Spencer couldn’t stop himself from looking at the mathematical equation written there, or from seeing the error in the math. It was more than he could resist to lean forward and point a finger to the number that was wrong. “This should be seven, not nine.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“See, here?” Caught up in the numbers, Spencer didn’t even take notice of Hank’s surprise. He leaned in and picked up a pencil and a fresh piece of paper. For that brief moment he was wrapped up in the world of numbers. The equation appeared under his hand on the paper and he found himself rambling out the mathematical process to Hank, explaining where the error had been and what the actual result should be. By the time he was done, Hank was just as caught up as he was.
The doctor picked up his own pencil and a new sheet of paper. “Of course! That would explain why none of my results appeared right. I cannot believe I made that kind of mistake.”

“Don’t worry about it, big guy. It’s a common mistake people make. See, things should come out just fine now.” Spencer gestured to the information Hank was writing down. “A new experiment you’re working on here?”

“Yes. I’m testing how certain diseases react differently in a mutant compared to the normal human. Is there something in our physiology that would cause our body to react differently to something as simple as the flu? Think about it. How many mutants have you come across that have something like cancer, or AIDS? Any of these debilitating diseases that humans suffer from, I have yet to come across a mutant that has them. Why is that?”

The idea was definitely intriguing. “So you think that there’s potentially something in the X-gene that gives our body a certain antibody for these diseases? Or do you think it has something to do more with the actual mutations we have?” Spencer mused. He twirled his hair around a finger as he scanned the notes that Hank had made one last time. “There’s also the potential that, at our core, all mutants have some sort of healing ability. While mine is accelerated and Logan’s is extremely accelerated, what if we all carry some variation of it? I mean, without it, wouldn’t our bodies attempt to kill us with the things our mutations cause? How could Mystique transform her entire body if there wasn’t a type of healing factor in effect that prevented the transformation from damaging cells?”

“Or when Robert uses his ice. Logically, that should cause frostbite on his extremities.” Hank looked up excitedly. “Yet it does not.”

Spencer nodded absently. “And Ororo. She can stand in gale force winds, drenched in her own rains, and never comes away damaged by her own abilities. How is that unless she possesses some inner healing ability? I doubt it’s anything as strong as even mine, but there’s the potential for it to be there in all of us. Fascinating.”

Blinking rapidly, Hank’s eyes cleared a little and he looked at Spencer as if just realizing who he was talking to. The surprise and amusement on his face had Spencer’s lips quirking. “You’ve been holding out on us, Spencer. I knew you were intelligent, yet I didn’t realize you could calculate complex mathematical equations in your mind.”

Now it was Spencer’s turn to be surprised. “You mean Scott didn’t say anything?” he blurted out, eyes wide.

“What do you mean?”

“I thought…” Trailing off, Spencer looked down, completely stunned and flustered. “Scott didn’t tell you guys about my IQ? Or my degrees?”

“Scott would not tell something to others that you told him, Spencer. He would respect your conversation as private. That is the type of man that he is. He would consider that a betrayal of you and your trust. Our Fearless Leader has a strong sense of honor.”

To his surprise, tears pricked Spencer’s eyes. “No…” he paused, clearing his throat. “No one’s ever treated me like this. I, I don’t know how to, to deal with this.” For just a second his walls dropped. He lifted his eyes to the man in front of him. “You people mystify me. None of you react the way I think you will. None of you are anything like I thought you would be. I don’t know how to deal with the way you treat me.”

In that moment, Hank’s heart bled for the boy in front of him. He couldn’t stop himself from
reaching out and folding Spencer’s cold hand between his own. “We treat you the way you should be treated, Spencer. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think.”

Spencer gave a weak chuckle. “Winnie the Pooh, big guy?”

“It seems appropriate.” Hank said agreeably. He gently squeezed Spencer’s hand, enjoying his smile. “Now, what is this about degrees, young man?” The teasing words brought another smile from Spencer. In a soft voice, he told Hank what he had told Scott. His IQ, his reading abilities, his memory and his degrees. When he was done, Hank was grinning widely and Spencer could feel the man’s shock. “You realize what this means now, do you not?” Hank asked him.

Cautious, Spencer froze slightly. “What?”

“You are now going to have to deal with intellectual conversations with me. I very much enjoy discussing my work with minds that not only understand, but can contribute. I hope you’ll take full advantage of my knowing now and come down to the lab often to indulge this side of yourself. I will never turn away the company or the assistance.”

A hesitant smile bloomed on Spencer’s face. “I’d like that.” He said softly. Leaning in, he surprised them both by kissing Hank’s cheek in a gentle sort of way. “Thanks, big guy.”

“Of course, of course.” A little flustered, Hank patted his hand before letting go. “Now ah, oh, I imagine you came down to my lab for a purpose, young man. I forgot entirely. Was there something I could do for you?”

Spencer startled when he remembered the whole reason he’d come down here. Again the nerves exploded to life in his stomach. Just like that he went from happy to scared. It was a disorienting sensation. “Oh! Yeah. Whoops.” Biting his lip, Spencer tried to appear amused. “Lyle lectured me when he found out I hadn’t let you do any blood work, so he made me promise to come down and give you some samples so you can do whatever tests you need to.”

Hank looked stunned, but only for an instant. Than he was moving to grab what he needed off the nearby cart quickly, as if afraid that he had to hurry or Spencer would change his mind and run. “I must say, I’m pleasantly surprised by this.” He told Spencer. A grin stretched his lips when he rolled back over. “But immensely pleased. I would like to make sure that you are in fine health. Also, with your permission, I’d like to study your blood and store it in our databanks. Your mutation is so different and yet like Remy’s that I’d love to compare the two and to examine the genetic makeup in yours. If that is ok with you.”

The fear Spencer felt didn’t show in the least on the outside. “You do whatever you want, big guy. You have my permission to test or examine anything.”

The whole process was over fairly quickly. When they were done, Spencer stood up and wiped the blood off the already healing puncture mark while Hank labeled the four vials he’d taken from Spencer’s arm. Spencer smiled at how excited the man looked. All else aside, he’d sure made Hank happy this evening. Reaching out, he ruffled the doctor’s hair, laughing when Hank swatted at him. “You have a good night, big guy.” He called out on his way to the door. “I’m off to find my bed. Sweet dreams!”

“Sleep well and wake happy, young man!” Hank called after him.

Exhaustion was finally starting to settle in as Spencer made his way to his room. By the time he was in his room, he was ready to sleep. Unfortunately he knew that his sleep was going to be anything
but peaceful. Sir was going to find out that he’d had Lyle out here to visit. If there was one thing Spencer did that Sir did not approve of, it was maintaining that friendship with Lyle. He’d known he’d be punished for it even as he’d had Lyle come out. It was worth it.

After turning on the bathroom light and leaving the door cracked, Spencer climbed into his bed stripped down to his skin. He huddled underneath the blankets and closed his eyes. With a sigh, he used the techniques he’d been taught and brought himself down into the realm of sleep.

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As had happened the last time, Spencer found himself in the sterile white room, alone. He bowed as he was taught and waited there silently until Sir’s voice filled his ears. “Report.”

Spencer made his report, trying to give everything that he could, hoping the information would be enough. He closed his eyes tightly as he reported that Lyle had been there and the reactions the team members had shown. He tried to make it sound like an exercise in getting closer to them. When he was done and the room was silent, he gathered his courage to voice the questions in his mind. “Sir, please. What exactly is it about them that you wish me to discover? I ask only so that I may better gather what you need and not present you with useless information.”

“I want their strengths and weaknesses, Inanime. I want to know who they are and how to best stamp out their evil. This is what you are going to get for me. This is what I want.”

Destroy their evil? Spencer’s eyes snapped wide, staring at the floor under him. “But…but Sir, these people, they aren’t evil. I’ve seen them! They, they’re good people. They do good things. They help people!” He cut himself off when he realized what he’d just done. One hand came up to clap over his mouth. Never had he argued with Sir. Never had he blatantly disobeyed him this way.

The blow to the side of his head sent him flying to the side of the room. In an instant he felt the familiar agonizing pain as the room was suddenly full of bright, bright light. Sir manipulated the dream enough that Spencer found he could not close his eyes against the pain of it.

“You dare question me? You dare to argue with me? With your Master? Your Creator?”

Spencer tried to open his mouth to plead, but all words cut off on a scream as the pain grew in every inch of his body. It felt like the very electricity he usually controlled was coursing in him and burning him from the inside out. How long his punishment lasted, he had no idea. He lost all sense of time and meaning. Pain became his whole world. Pain, the blinding light, the sound of his agonized screams. When it was finally over, when he was a sobbing form slumped onto the floor, Sir’s voice once again filled the room. “Remember this lesson and remember who you belong to, Inanime. You are mine. I will be in New York in two weeks’ time and you will come to me to give your report and to receive a reminder on who you belong to. You are my creation and you had best remember that. You do not want to displease me again, Inanime.”

“Yes, Sir. I’m sorry, Sir. I’m sorry.” He sobbed out. It was all he could do. His body trembled from fear and from pain.

The white room began to fade as Spencer was released from the dream world that Sir walked. As he drew back to himself, he didn’t shift into sleep as he usually did, but found himself being pulled toward wakefulness, his body shaking and sobbing. Sir had made sure the pain stayed with him this time. That was something he rarely ever did; it took immense strength on his part to make what happened in the dream be a part of reality.

As he became aware of the physical pain, of his own sobbing, he became aware of something else—
someone was holding him. A warm body was curled around his, arms holding him tight, keeping him held close in the cocoon of that body’s warmth. What on earth? He tried to push past the sobs, to blink eyes that still held that blinded feel, so that he could figure out who it was. His body was refusing to cooperate with him. The arm that was around him was tight, the hand pressing over his rapidly beating heart.

“Shh, shh.” Soft whispers were breaking through his sobs now. “Shh, cher. Shh, it’s okay. Y’r okay. Shh.”

Remy? This was Remy, holding him so tight? Remy, whispering soothing nonsense into his ear? Somehow, Spencer managed to gasp the word out beyond his continued sobbing. “Remy?”

The arm over him tightened even more, pulling their bodies even closer together. Remy was completely spooned against Spencer’s back, chasing away the chill that Spencer felt straight down to his bones. “Oui, cher. Remy’s here. Everyt’ing’s okay. It was just a dream. Everything’s okay now. Remy’s got y’ and y’r safe here. Nothing gonna hurt y’,”

That only made Spencer’s tears come harder. He curled his arm up, taking hold of the hand that sat over his heart. Remy let their fingers lace together, gripping Spencer’s hand tightly. Trembles that were almost like shudders were shaking Spencer’s body. “Oh, God.” He whispered past his crying. The tears weren’t just for the physical pain. That, he could deal with. No, this was for the pain in his heart. The pain in his soul. Sir wanted to destroy these people here. He wanted to hurt them. They weren’t evil! They were not bad people! How could he let Sir hurt them?

Thinking on it made him cry harder. Tears he hadn’t even known he had were pouring from him. His shields were wavering on his empathy and he had to work hard to keep his own emotions inside. Apparently he wasn’t doing well enough at covering them. Remy gave a soft cry and suddenly rolled Spencer over, yanking him close so that Spencer found himself cradled against Remy’s chest, his face buried against the warm skin. “Cher, talk to me.” Remy pleaded with him. “What’s going on? What’s wrong? S’il tu plait, talk to Remy.”

“I’m sorry.” The words tumbled out before Spencer could stop them. It was all he could make himself say. “I’m so sorry. I’m sorry.” He couldn’t stop the tears. They poured from him, ripping their way from his body until finally, utterly exhausted, he passed out in Remy’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, folks, I wanted to say merci for all your comments. You’ve really made me feel great about this story! Also, I wanted to ask. I have up to about Chapter18 already edited, with around 60 more pages left after that to edit and then I need to write the last 2-4 chapters. How would you like me to do this? Do you want me to go ahead and post all the chapters I have ready and then you wait around until I get the ending written, or do you want a few chapters a day? Let me know!
When Spencer made the shift from sleep to wakefulness, there was a moment of disorientation. He could feel the steady rise and fall of the chest underneath his cheek and a gentle hand running up and down his back in a soothing way. Why was there someone sleeping with him? He never slept overnight with a client. That was kind of a steady rule of his. Pushing against the fog that seemed settled on his brain, he tried to figure out what was going on. It only took a second longer before reality came crashing back. In the blink of an eye, he remembered the night. He remembered making his report to Sir and the punishment he’d received for disobeying the man. He remembered waking up to that excruciating pain, both inside and out, and the even more agonizing sensation of realizing that most of his life had been one big lie. And he remembered Remy being wrapped around him, comforting him, holding him tight as he’d cried himself to sleep. No one had ever done that for him. Sure, he and Lyle had shared a bed before, but never when Spencer was hurting. Never when he was so raw. And not only had Remy held him, but apparently he’d stayed even after Spencer had fallen asleep.

He couldn’t focus on the way that made him feel; not right now. Right now there were so many other things that demanded his attention. Everything in his world had been turned topsy-turvy. Inside, he felt like someone had taken his emotions and just tossed them into a blender.

The hand stroking over his back went up to cup the back of his head. “Y’r getting yo’self worked up again, cher.” Remy murmured to him. “Can feel y’ hurting, me.”

“I’m sorry.” Spencer didn’t bother moving. It felt so good to lie here right now and it effectively hid his face. Safely hidden, he voiced the question most prominent in his mind. “What, uh—what’re you doing in here?”

Remy’s other arm came across him to wrap around Spencer, hugging him close. “I was sitting in m’ room thinking bout t’ings and I felt y’r nightmare hit y’. Felt de fear and de pain and all hurt in y’. Couldn’t just sit dere, me. I had to come over and make sure y’ was okay. When I got here, y’ was whimpering in y’r sleep, curled up in a little ball and it made m’ heart cry fo’ y’, cher. So I climbed in to hold y’ and try to wake y’ up. Took a bit, mais y’ finally did. Den, once y’ cried, I held y’ cause it seemed to help y’ sleep better.”

The explanation made Spencer’s eyes burn slightly with tears. He squeezed them shut even tighter and fought to hold himself together. He felt far too raw this morning to handle being around anyone, but most especially an empath. What he needed was a little time alone to think about everything that was racing around in his mind and to figure out some kind of conclusion. Something to do. Maybe he’d call Lyle and tell him what was going on and ask his advice. Yet, he couldn’t make himself move away from Remy or the comfort being offered. This was so new to him. “No one’s ever held me like this.” He blurted out suddenly.

“Remy always hold y’ if y’ need it, cher.” The Cajun offered. The tone to his words said that he understood the seriousness of his offer. “I aint de only one, either.”

“What?”

The hand on Spencer’s head stroked his hair softly. “Wolvie would do de same t’ing fo’ y’, cher. He’ll hold y’ if y’ need, or just let y’ climb on in his bed. I’ve gone to Logan’s room before when de nightmares be bad and I can’t stand being alone. Logan’s always dere to help. He cares about y’, cher.”
The idea of climbing into bed with Logan seemed both ridiculous and comforting all at the same time. Who were these people? Spencer would never have even thought to climb into bed with Sir for comfort at night. The idea was ludicrous. Not that he would have been able to, anyways. At the lab he slept locked in his cage until Sir let him out in the morning. The thought never would’ve occurred to him to even try, anyways. Not with Sir and definitely not here, with Logan. Spencer just couldn’t picture Logan letting him climb into bed with him. “What about Scott? Or Jean?”

“Mais, dey just make a lil room fo’ y’.”

That did make Spencer laugh softly. He had a mental image of Remy sandwiched between Logan and Scott like a little kid, or dog-piled in with Logan, Scott and Jean. Was this how real people lived and cared for one another? Was this something normal people did? Or was it unique to the people here? Spencer had never encountered anything like this that would help to guide him now. “I don’t understand any of you.”

To his surprise, a soft kiss was pressed to the top of his head. “Je sais. Y’ can’t even see how much we all care about y’. I wouldn’t be here like dis if I didn’t care, cher.”

“Plenty of people want me, but, well, Lyle’s the only one who ever really, well…” Flustered, Spencer trailed off, wondering why he was talking so much. Why wasn’t he just getting up and going to take his shower? Anything to get himself away from here before he started to spill his guts.

Another kiss was pressed to the top of Spencer’s head. “I’m not here cause of lust, cher, mais cause of caring. I care about y’ and I don’t like seeing y’ hurting.”

The emotion that brought to Spencer was all consuming and terrifying. He had no idea how to deal with it. So, he fell back on what he knew and what was safe in a situation like this—flirting and sex. Realizing that he was still naked—he remembered stripping before climbing into bed—he slid up a little, letting his nose nuzzle against Remy’s neck and skin rub against skin. “Now you’re going to go and hurt my feelings. Are you trying to say you don’t want me, honey?”

Without warning, Spencer found himself flipped onto his back, his body pinned down by Remy’s, his wrists captured and held above his head. A surprised moan slipped out when Remy ground his hips down, making Spencer brutally aware of the fact that Remy was only clad in soft cotton pajama pants. When he opened his eyes, he was face to face with Remy. The look in the Cajun’s eyes had Spencer wanting to moan once more. Remy’s pupils were dilated so much that the red was almost gone in them. They looked almost completely black but for the little sliver of red left, which seemed to almost glow softly. Remy bent his head, teeth sinking into Spencer’s bottom lip and pulling, his hips rolling again and wringing another moan from the young man. Letting go of Spencer’s lip, he let their mouths just barely brush against one another. “Y’ don’t wanna play dis game with me, Spencer.” The husky words were a definite warning. “Y’ know I want y’. Y’ know I’ve wanted y’ since de first moment I saw y’ and y’ were sopping wet, looking fuckable right dere on de roadside.”

Breathing heavily, Spencer strained up, trying to add more friction. He could feel Remy’s lust coming off of him, but he could feel his own as well. It was like nothing he’d ever experienced before and he’d enjoyed sex plenty of times. He got off every time he did it. But this, this was different. His skin felt hot and stretched tight over him. The hands locked on his wrists didn’t scare him, but made him want more. His legs had fallen open of their own will and he couldn’t stop his hips from rolling upwards into Remy’s.

The older man nuzzled along Spencer’s jaw and down to his ear, taking the lobe into his mouth to suck and nip at it before letting it go. “When I have y’, it aint gonna be like what y’ve known, cher. It won’t be no quick fuck. I aint gonna be another John to y’. When I take y’, y’r gonna know it’s Remy with y’. Gonna taste y’ and tease y’ and have y’ begging for more.”
Sweet Jesus, he was ready to beg now. The huskiness of Remy’s voice right in his ear, that accent so thick, and the feel of the body over his were slowly breaking his walls down. He ached with his need. He tried to push up into him, but Remy’s free hand came down to curl over his hip, holding him to the bed, making him moan out his frustration. “Remy.”

“Non, cher.” That dangerous mouth sucked just under his ear and he gasped. “I want more dan just y’r body, cher. I want all of y’. And I aint gonna settle fo’ less. Only when dere aint no more lies between us; only den.”

How did he know that there were lies between them? How did he know that Spencer was hiding things? In that moment, Spencer didn’t care. He was hard and aching and now he was frustrated to go with it. “You’re using sex as a weapon against me?” he demanded with a growl.

Remy lifted his head so that he could smirk down at him. “Oui.” He admitted easily. “I won’t sleep with someone dat don’t trust me, cher. So long as y’ insist on keeping dese secrets, y’ show y’ don’t trust me. When y’ finally decide y’ do, we’ll have dis talk again.”

“I trust you more than I’ve trusted anyone except Lyle.” The honest admission wasn’t what he’d intended on saying. However, the words were still true. The honesty in them was undeniable.

Softening slightly, Remy bent and nuzzled their lips together. “Merci, cher. Dat means a lot to me to know. But dere’s still so much y’r hiding from us. So much y’r hiding from me.”

Pinned down, with Remy’s eyes staring intently into his, Spencer felt exposed in a way he never had before. He felt something in his heart and decided that, in that moment, he could only be honest. “I don’t know what to do anymore, Remy. I don’t know what to think, or what to feel. I don’t feel like I even know who I am anymore. Until I figure that out, can’t you see that I can’t tell you? How can I tell you what I don’t even understand yet?”

“I wanna help y’, cher.” Remy replied quietly.

Spencer could feel the truth of that and it made him warm inside. “I know you do. I feel it. And, God, I…I want your help too. I do.” Admitting it seemed like it pulled some of the weight off of his shoulders. “I just need a little more time, Remy. Please. I need a little time to make this make sense inside of me. Can you give me that? Can you give me just two more weeks? We’ve only known each other for one. Can you give me two more to figure this all out?” That was how long he had until he was due to meet Sir in New York. Two weeks to figure out what he had to do and how he was going to fix this mess he’d made of his life. Two weeks to choose between the man he had known his whole life and this man here that made him feel things he’d never felt before.

For a long moment Remy looked into his eyes. They held one another’s stare, so much passing there without a single word. Then Remy nodded. “Oui.”

Looking up, Spencer smiled. A real, honest smile. “Thank you.” He said fervently.

“Pas de quoi.”

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Remy was true to his word. He backed off from the subject and gave Spencer the time he needed to sort through it all without any undue pressure. After that morning, Spencer had been sure that things would change between them. That Remy would either pressure him, or pull away from him. Both options Spencer would have understood and he would have been okay with. He should’ve known better than to assume anything, though. Remy didn’t do either of them. Instead, he acted as if nothing had happened, simply continuing on the way that they had been before. The only difference was,
around midnight every single night, Remy ended up in his bed, holding Spencer tight as nightmares plagued him.

He knew it was Sir that was responsible for his nightmares. The man could manipulate the dream world and it wasn’t the first time he had caused Spencer to have constant nightmares. Every fear Spencer had, every bad memory, seemed to be haunting his nighttime hours so that he woke feeling as if he barely slept at all. Somehow they were easier when Remy was wrapped around him. Spencer couldn’t bring himself to actually go seek the Cajun out when they hit, though. Thankfully, he didn’t have to. If Remy wasn’t already there when he woke, he was in the room within moments of Spencer waking. Neither one of them mentioned it, or how much Spencer was coming to rely on him.

The lack of sleep wasn’t helping Spencer think about what it was he had to do. Over half of the first week of the time limit he’d set was already gone and he had barely thought at all about what he was going to do. Instead, he’d thrown himself into the life here, losing himself in training and the people and the whole lifestyle. It was so easy to do. These people were so wonderful. Finally, at the end of his first week, Spencer knew he had to take the time to think. So on that sunny Saturday afternoon, he strolled around the yard, away from everyone, letting his mind wander over everything. As always, his brain sought out the facts, first. Once he had all the facts he would be able to figure out what to do. So, facts. Sir wanted to hurt the people that lived in this mansion. Evil, he’d called them. But Spencer saw no proof of this evil. He saw nothing that would suggest that they did anything wrong.

In the two weeks he’d already been here, Spencer had seen quite a few different sides of these people. He’d seen them all interacting with the children or adults that came through here. He’d seen them with one another. He’d seen them practicing together, or playing in the yard. Instructing in Danger Room sessions, or visiting in the TV room at night. Laughing together at the table while they ate and comforting one another when someone was hurt. He’d seen them race to leave when Charles called to them, hurrying from the school in their jet. He’d seen them return, bruised and tired from what they did. Sometimes they came back alone, sometimes they came back with adults or children they had saved. Never once had any of those people that they’d brought back been scared of them. If anything, they sang the praises of the X-Men.

In his heart, Spencer knew one thing for sure. He could not help Sir destroy these people. What was bothering him the most, what was terrifying him down to his very heart, was trying to think of how to stop this. Unlike Lyle, he couldn’t just get caught at an assignment and have Sir fire him. For creations like Spencer, he would not fire him. No—Sir would destroy him. That was what you did with tools that stopped working. You destroyed them, scrapped them for parts, and started over again. Sir would kill him build him up all over again, only more obedient. Was Spencer willing to let himself be destroyed to save these people here? Was he willing to potentially sacrifice his life to save them all? More importantly…could he not? Could he stand back and let it happen? Could he knowingly let their lives be sacrificed just to keep his own?

Spencer was so lost in his thoughts that he hadn’t realized his walking had taken him towards the gardens until he stumbled slightly over something in his path. Abruptly jerked back to the present moment, he looked down to see what it was he had tripped on and found himself surprised. Frozen, Spencer just stared at a small kitten that was winding its way around his ankles as if he hadn’t just tripped over it. His limbs seemed to move suddenly without him realizing it. Without meaning to he found himself squatting down and he held his hand out ever so cautiously. The kitten noticed him and made its way over, sniffing at his hand before swatting lightly at it. A smile stretched Spencer’s lips when the kitten tried to pounce on his hand. He caught it, scooping it up and bringing it toward his chest where he could scratch behind its ears, reducing it to a purring ball of fur.
He hadn’t even known that Ororo was there until she spoke. “I love kittens.” She said in that soft, sweet voice of hers, startling him. “The Professor let me get a new one after my last passed from old age. They help to keep the mice out of my garden sheds.”

“I always wanted a pet.” Spencer said absently. He stroked the soft, purring form, barely noticing the conversation he was having. “But pets are for real children.” That old pang was still there, he found. It still hurt even after all this time. That hurt had the effect of bringing him to the present moment and reminding him of where he was and who he was talking to. Flustered that he’d opened up that way, he gently set the kitten on the ground. “It’s a beautiful kitten, Ororo. Thanks for letting me hold it.”

Her eyes held a hint of sadness at what he’d revealed, but she didn’t press it, recognizing the deliberate change in conversation. “Anytime, Spencer. You are always welcome down here in my gardens.” Her words were overlaid with the kindness that he had come to associate with her. It made him smile and some of his tension drained away. Seeing that, she smiled at him. “Are you enjoying your walk? It is a beautiful day.”

“I was trying to clear my head a little. Somehow, I ended up here.” He smiled in a shy sort of way at her. “Your gardens always seem so soothing. Kind of like you.” The last part he hadn’t meant to say and it brought a blush to his cheeks.

Ororo, on the other hand, looked pleased. “You are more than welcome to stay here while I work, child. There is a nice patch of grass there I often like to lie on and stare at the clouds. It helps me to think a little clearer. Why don’t you give it a try?”

He looked at the patch she’d gestured to and, after a second, gave a shrug. Why not? He made his way over there and sat down first. Then, stretching out, he lay back and stared up at the sky. It was a nice spot to lie, he’d grant her that. Something about the sounds of nature around him, the soft clouds floating overhead, and the warm sense of emotions from Ororo really was very soothing. When she started to hum softly, a wordless melody, Spencer felt his lips curve. He never noticed as he drifted off to sleep.
For a few hours, Ororo worked in her gardens and then her greenhouse. She left Spencer where he was, keeping an eye on him as the sun started to fade from the sky and evening settled in. Now and again she saw him stir, his body twitching or his face scrunching up in a pained sort of way and she would feel her heart twist a little. The boy was obviously suffering from nightmares. She’d talked to Remy and knew that nightmares were what had been giving Spencer the tired look on his face. Lately he looked so exhausted. Oh, he was good at covering it up with makeup and that natural mask he wore. But she could see the exhaustion in the slight bags under his eyes, or the way his body would droop a little when he thought no one was looking. Her heart ached for him.

A hand on the small of her back almost startled Ororo until she recognized who it belonged to. Then she smiled and found herself leaning in to it. It was the touch of one of her dearest friends; Jean. The two had been the best of friends, almost like sisters, for quite a few years now. Jean was one of the people that Ororo trusted most in her life, right up alongside Remy.

“I don’t want to wake him.” Ororo said softly. Her eyes never left the greenhouse window that she was looking at him through. “Yet at the same time, I do not think his sleep is peaceful. My brother says that Spencer is having nightmares, but they are handling it. Yet…he looks so tired, Jean. So sad.”

“He seems to be opening up to us more. I don’t know what it is that Remy’s doing, but it seems to be working,” Jean said. Her tone was just as soft as her friend’s. “He still hasn’t told us what’s going on with him, but I have a feeling it’s going to be soon. His walls seem to be crumbling little by little.”

Remembering their earlier conversation, Ororo felt her heart ache a little. “Earlier, he was walking, looking so sad, and he stumbled over my little kitten. You should have seen how amazed he looked when he picked it up. And when I told him I loved kittens, do you know what he told me?” Turning, Ororo looked at Jean, sadness bright in her eyes. “He told me how he always wanted one, but they were only for real children. Real children, Jean.”

Gathering her friend close, Jean held on tight, her own heart throbbing at Ororo’s words. “We’re doing all we can for him, Ro. Part of it’s up to him. He has to want our help.” Pulling back, she smiled at the woman. “Why don’t I call Logan down to get Spencer? Then you and I can go to your room and have ourselves a drink. I think we both need it.”

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It took no time at all for Logan to get down to the garden. Neither woman was surprised to see Scott in tow. While Logan went to Spencer, Scott went to the women. “Thanks for calling us down.” He told them sincerely. “Remy’s out doing something for the Professor and we’ve been wondering where Spencer was at.”

“He fell asleep a few hours ago while I was gardening. I thought to just let him sleep a little.” Ororo explained.

He nodded and looked back over his shoulder. Logan had squatted down beside Spencer and was gently moving to scoop him up. Then he looked back at them. “Good. He needed a little sleep. Not sure how restful tonight’s going to be for him with Remy gone. He probably won’t be back until tomorrow afternoon or later, depending on what he finds.”

Understanding flashed in Jean’s eyes. She knew her boys well. “I was going to spend the evening
with Ro, but if you two need me I can be there.” If they needed her help with Spencer; the message was clear underneath her words.

A soft smile curved Scott’s lips. “No, it’s okay. I think too many of us might overwhelm him, anyways.” Leaning in, he caught Jean with a hand on her hip, pulling her in enough that he could steal a quick kiss. “You two have fun.” Seeing Logan on his feet with Spencer cradled in his arms, Scott gave her another kiss and then he took off after Logan.

When he got close, he saw Spencer was slowly waking up and couldn’t help but feel a little amused. Logan and Remy were probably the only two people in the house who moved carefully and quietly enough—and, according to Remy, who were capable of shielding their own emotions so as not to give themselves away to an empath—to be able to get up to a sleeping Spencer and actually manage to pick him up without waking him up. He’d already showed in so many ways that he had the instincts and reaction time of someone well used to having to defend themselves. Moments like this, though, with him looking soft from sleep, he looked less like the adult he was and more like a lost little child. Scott couldn’t resist reaching out and brushing some of the kid’s long hair out of his face. Sometimes there was something about Spencer that almost tugged at the edges of Scott’s mind. It was like he felt he should know him somehow, but he couldn’t quite figure out how. He thought maybe it wasn’t so much that he should know Spencer, but that the boy reminded him of someone. But who?

“Logan? Scott?” Spencer murmured sleepily. He shifted a little in Logan’s arms. “What’s going on?”

“You passed out in Ro’s gardens, pup. We’re just bringing you on up to the house.” Logan answered.

“Oh.” For a minute, Spencer seemed to think about that, looking like he was still mostly asleep. “Any reason you didn’t just wake me up and let me walk?”

Logan grinned down at him and held on to Spencer’s upper half while abruptly letting go of his legs. Spencer squawked, clinging to Logan’s shoulders while his legs dropped down. As soon as his feet were steady, he let go and glared at Logan, who was busy laughing at him. “You’re awfully mean to this poor boy.” Spencer said with a pout.

Reaching out, Scott tugged on a lock of the kid’s hair, making him swat at his hand. “Do you hear this, Logan? The ‘poor boy’ been spending too much time with Remy. Pretty soon he’ll be saying it with that blasted accent too.” Scott teased.

Spencer’s pout grew even more. To their surprise, he spoke suddenly with a Cajun accent as thick as Remy’s. “Why y’ picking on dis po’ boy, cher? Aint done nothing wrong, me.” Then his pout disappeared and he was laughing, a bright sound that made them smile. Abruptly Spencer’s laugh cut off and he looked up at the sky. “The sun’s going down?” He exclaimed. Reaching out, he grabbed Scott’s wrist and looked at the watch there. His nose wrinkled and he let go, turning to jog toward the house. “Sorry, guys! I gotta go! I got some things to take care of in town.”

“Be back before midnight, or I’m coming out after you.” Logan called out in warning. Spencer was already a ways away, but he raised his hand in what Scott assumed was agreement. The two watched him go, Logan practically vibrating with the need to go after him. Scott reached out and put a hand on his lover’s arm. “You can’t stop him from doing things. He’s an adult, Lo.”

The feral man gave a low growl. “It doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

“No, you don’t have to.” Scott agreed. He left his hand on Logan’s arm and looked over to the garage where Spencer was already pulling out in his Charger. None of us like it he thought to
himself. But I don’t know how we’re going to change it.

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It was five minutes to midnight when Spencer finally made his way to his room. He was pushing that time limit that Logan had set for him, but he’d managed to make it. Even as he cursed the man for setting a curfew for him, he still had come in on time. He didn’t stop to question why he was obeying the order from someone who wasn’t his owner, his John, or his boss. He wasn’t forced to or paid to obey Logan. Yet he’d still made sure to be back to the mansion before the prescribed time. Spencer didn’t bother going to Logan’s room to let him know that he was back, though. That was just a step too far in his view. Besides, the feral man would have heard his car pulling in and most likely smelled him coming down the hall. The last thing that Spencer wanted was to be faced with him, anyways. Not while he was like this. Not while he knew he probably smelled like straight sex.

So caught up in the life here, Spencer had almost forgotten the client he’d set up weekly appointments with that night that he’d earned money for his car. Luckily Logan had gotten him up when he had. It had given Spencer time to get into town and meet the man at the arranged time. Once there, he’d done what he needed to do, making sure to get the man drunk enough beforehand that there was no way he’d be able to cause any real trouble. But for the first time, Spencer found himself unable to shut his thoughts off as he did his job. He hadn’t been able to stop himself from thinking about what he was doing. That blessed escape had always been what saved him from hating this ‘work’. Usually he just opened up his empathy a little bit and let himself feel the emotions of his partner and that was enough to get him in a mood and to help him lose himself. Not this time. This time, all he’d been able to think of the entire time was a certain red and black eyed Cajun. The way he felt curled around Spencer’s body at night. How warm and surprisingly soft his hands were with those three fingers on each hand that had the callouses on the fingertips. That slightly spicy, slightly sweet smell that he had; a combination of his own scent and what Spencer thought might be some kind of cinnamon-vanilla shampoo or body wash.

Shaking those thoughts off, Spencer stripped down once inside his room and climbed into the shower to wash the smell of sweat and sex off his skin. His brain seemed to move on autopilot as he washed himself. God, he was so tired. Just…tired. The nightmares Sir had been sending each night were starting to wear on him in so many ways. The nap today in the gardens had helped; he would have to thank Ororo later for letting him sleep there. But it didn’t make up for the lack of sleep at night.

Just one more week he told himself. One more week and you can end this. One more week and you can tell Sir that you’re done. Either you’ll prevent him from hurting them, or you’ll tell him you need to stand aside until the next job. One or the other. You’ve got one week to decide. Yes. One whole week. Spencer scowled at the shower wall. If he didn’t get some sleep soon, it wasn’t going to matter how long he had, his brain wouldn’t be able to stay awake enough to think of what to do. If Sir was hoping to torture him into some sort of compliant state, Spencer was very afraid he was close to achieving his goal.

Dragging, he finally made it through the shower, through brushing his teeth. Then he was in the bed. Before his head finished hitting the pillow, he was asleep.

And after just an hour, he was awake once more.

Jerking upright, Spencer’s hands curled into the blankets, his eyes wide as he gasped in air. His whole body was trembling. Instinctively he reached for the body that he had grown to count on lately. When he realized that Remy wasn’t there, his eyes drifted to the door. He would be in here any minute, then. He always was. No matter what, Spencer’s nightmares always drew him into the
room. He would come. Right?

No one came in.

Spencer shuddered out a breath, his eyes still locked on the door. He had two options here. He could stay there in bed and pray for sleep to find him, as he had done long before Remy had ever come into his life and would continue to do long after he was gone. Or, he could get himself up and walk over to Remy’s room. The Cajun had told him that he would always hold him if he needed it. He’d even said that Spencer was free to come to him. The idea was so different. So…strange. But as Spencer sat in his bed, shaking from head to toe, the sobs threatening to burst free, he knew he couldn’t just sit here. There was no way he would be able to stay here alone. He’d grown used to Remy’s warm weight beside him in bed. The comfort of having someone there, protecting him even as he slept—he’d never had that until now.

Even with the bathroom light on, the darkness in the room was overpowering. His dream had been a memory; a remembrance of a time on his last assignment. A time that he hadn’t been sure he would end up surviving. Thinking on it had Spencer fighting to choke back a sob. That was enough. He scurried out of bed, his trembling limbs barely managing to hold him up. He made them carry him to his rucksack where he pulled out a pair of pajama bottoms and a t-shirt and yanked them on, almost falling to the ground as he did so. Trembling from head to toe, Spencer wrapped one arm around his waist, his other hand going to open his door. Leaving his room was easy. Walking across the hall to Remy’s door was even somewhat easy, despite the way his legs shook. Once he was there, lifting a hand to knock on the door proved to be the hardest thing in the world. He just couldn’t seem to bring himself to do it.

Spencer forced down the tears that were trying to burn his eyes. Don’t think on it. Don’t think about it. Just knock on the door and he’ll let you in and he’ll hold on to you until the nightmares are gone. Until you don’t think about that damn shack in those dark woods or the smell of burning fish or the sight of your own grave as you dig in the dirt, about to be buried alive. In the dark. Whimpering, Spencer rested his forehead on Remy’s door, automatically reaching out with his empathy to try and connect with the other man, praying he would feel it and come to him so he wouldn’t have to knock. No one was in the room. Spencer shook as he felt and realized that no one was in Remy’s room. There were absolutely no emotions. Now, Remy could shield tight enough that Spencer couldn’t feel his emotions, but he didn’t do it while he slept. He didn’t typically do it at all except during their training sessions. Where was Remy? Oh, God. What was he going to do now? The one person who could make this go away and he wasn’t here! Where was he?

Logic told him that Remy was most likely on a mission of some sorts. Anything else and he would have been here. But the terrified part of him wasn’t logical. That part of him only knew that he needed to feel safe and the person that made him feel that way was not there.

Another set of emotions touched his empathy, though. Feeling the soft contentment and the happiness, Spencer remembered that Logan was here, too. His head turned in the direction of Logan’s door. Remy had said that Logan would be there for him if he needed, hadn’t he? He’d said that sometimes even he had gone to Logan’s room when he had bad dreams and that Logan had let him sleep in there. Logan and Scott both. Of course they let him. He’s one of them. You’re not. They’ll laugh at you and send you back to your room his mind taunted him.

Yet Spencer still stared down the hall. He could stand right here all night long, waiting for Remy to come back, terrified the whole entire time. He could go back to his room and sit in the bright light, terrified in there. Or he could go knock on Logan’s door and maybe, just maybe, be offered the comfort he craved right now. Logan and Scott were so nice to him during the day. The two treated
him almost like he was a kid to be looked out for. They cared about him and for him. Wouldn’t it make sense that they would care for him now, too? And they…they made him feel safe. How could anyone feel anything but safe with the Wolverine there? No one would get past him to cause trouble. Scott was no pushover, either.

What’s the worst they could do? Send him back to his room? If he didn’t even bother knocking, that’s where he’d end up anyways. He had nothing to lose by knocking. Right? Right.

His legs trembled as they carried him over that short space from Remy’s door to Logan’s. He couldn’t believe he was going to do this. He couldn’t believe he was here, ready to knock on Logan’s door. Look at you! You look pathetic! It was true. His whole body was trembling from the fear and the cold that seemed to have settled down into his bones. His breath was shuddering in and out from the effort he was putting into holding back his sobs. Tears burned his eyes and he kept having to blink rapidly to keep them from falling. All he wanted was to be held. Just held for a little while.

Before he could change his mind, before his courage could fail him, he brought one hand up and knocked two short, semi quiet knocks against Logan’s door. Almost instantly Scott’s voice called out “Come on in.”

Spencer just barely managed to make himself open the door. They knew he was here. There was no backing out now. If he didn’t open it, one of them would come out and look and they’d find him here, shaking like a leaf and looking like an idiot. So he opened the door and took a couple steps in. Scott was stretched out on the bed, a book in his hands. There was the sound of a sink running in the bathroom; presumably it was Logan.

A smile was on Scott’s face when he looked up. It started to slide away when he saw Spencer. He was just sitting up as the bathroom door opened. “Spencer?” Scott said with concern. “What is it? What’s going on?”

Clinging even tighter to his waist, fingernails digging into the skin on his hips, Spencer tried to force his voice to sound normal. It didn’t work anywhere near as well as he’d hoped. His words quivered slightly as he said “I, uh…Remy’s not here.” Biting his lip, he tried to keep his composure. “I, I went to his room and he, he wasn’t in there.”

Logan walked toward him slowly, almost cautiously, like one would move around a wild animal, as if any quick movement would cause it to bolt. Spencer wasn’t sure the analogy wasn’t correct. He had no idea what he’d do if one of them moved quickly toward him. Maybe he would run. The feral man stopped right next to him, one hand coming out to gently push the door shut. Then he lightly put his hand on the small of Spencer’s back. “Come lay down a bit, pup.” His voice was a gentle growl. “Come on.”

Already Scott was moving, putting his book off to the side and pulling the blankets back. With Logan’s urging, Spencer found himself climbing into the bed with them. He settled on his side, facing Scott. The bed dipped as Logan climbed in as well, his body spooning up behind Spencer’s, so warm and solid and safe that Spencer almost sobbed. When Logan’s arm went around him, he turned his face and buried it against the pillow to try and hide the few tears that leaked out. He felt the blankets settle over him and then Scott’s hand was on his cheek, tipping his face back up. “Talk to us, Spencer.”

“I had a, a nightmare.” Out loud it sounded so stupid. He closed his eyes and tried to push down the shame he felt at this. But if this was the price of sleeping in here, of being safe, than he would pay it. Better this than being alone. “A few years back I got, I got kidnapped. Sometimes I still, ah, I still dream about it.”
Logan’s arm pulled him a little closer. “Aint no one gonna touch you here, kid. I promise you that. You’re safe right here.”

“Getting beat wasn’t so bad. I was, you know, used to that. And I healed quickly. But he, he’d leave me there sometimes while he went and, and did things, and I’d just be alone in the dark. He burned fish liver and hearts to keep the devil away. But even that I could handle.” His voice started to quiver once more and a chill ran down him. “It was the dark and the anger. He’d leave me alone there in the dark. And when he was there, he was so angry, so angry at me, and it was all I could feel. No one else was around and I was so tired I couldn’t keep my shields up and I could feel his anger like fists in my brain. Then he’d leave me in the dark again. He, he m-made me…” Pausing, Spencer sucked in a breath, losing his battle with tears. “…he made m-me d-dig my own g-grave. He was gonna b-bury me a-alive for my s-s-sins. I tricked him and I s-s-shot him.” The tears came now, hot and fast, pouring down his cheeks. Scott was there, moving to cradle Spencer’s head while Logan’s body curled even more around him, a protective shield against the world.

“Oh, honey.” Scott murmured. He stroked Spencer’s hair, the gesture seeming to pull the tears from him. “I’m so sorry you had to live with that. I am so sorry.”

Giving up his shame, Spencer buried his face against Scott’s warmth, his hands clinging to Logan’s arm. Any adult rationality was lost in the face of a personal feel that ran so deep inside of him. “Don’t leave me in the dark, please. Don’t let me be alone in the dark. I’m sorry.”

“No one’s leaving you alone.” Logan rumbled in his ear. “Not ever again. You’re stuck with us, pup. We aint letting you go.”

It took the two men a good ten minutes of murmuring and petting and holding before they finally soothed Spencer down into sleep. Another few minutes to watch him and guarantee that he was going to stay asleep. Scott grabbed his shirt from the floor and used it to gently wipe the tears from Spencer’s cheeks. When he was done, he tossed it back down. Then he looked over Spencer at Logan’s bright, furious eyes. That fury was something Scott understood. He felt the same coiled tight inside of him. “Remy said his nightmares were bad.” Scott said with a look back down at Spencer’s face. “But this? Shit, Lo.”

“It’s fucked up, Scott. That’s what this is.” Logan snarled out quietly. He lifted his head and propped it up on one arm so he wasn’t right at Spencer’s ear. It allowed him to look down at the sleeping man’s face. “Did you hear him? How fucked up has his life been that he wasn’t scared of the beating or this religious bastard?” They both heard the echo of Spencer’s words. I was, you know, used to that.

Scott brushed back some of Spencer’s hair. He couldn’t squash this protective urge in him when it came to this kid. And to him, that’s what Spencer was, just a kid. A young, scared, hurt kid. “I’m just glad he actually came to us. I wasn’t sure he would.”

A soft whimper from Spencer had them both going quiet. They waited until he’d settled again before they looked at one another. “Let’s go to sleep before we wake him.” Scott suggested. He lay down, bringing himself against Spencer, cocooning the boy between him and Logan. The feral man lay back down as well, keeping curled protectively around the kid that had, in the mind of the Wolverine, become part of his pack. That meant quite a bit, including taking care of him. Together, the two men fell asleep, protecting the one in the middle.
Chapter 15

The next morning, when Spencer woke up to two bodies still around him, he was beyond mortified by what he’d done. If at all possible he would’ve climbed right out of bed and slipped out of the room without waking either one of them. Of course, that wasn’t possible in the least bit. Not with someone like Logan in the bed. He was awake the minute that Spencer moved. However, their reactions were nothing like what Spencer was expecting. Neither man even commented on the night before. They didn’t ask questions, didn’t say anything about him being there. None of it. They both got up like it was the most normal morning in the world. Sleepily, Scott got up and stumbled to the bathroom while Logan got up as well, practically ordering Spencer to go take his shower and then to meet them downstairs for breakfast in twenty minutes.

Dazed, Spencer returned to his room and did as he was told, not entirely sure what to make of this. He couldn’t believe he’d actually gone to their room! Or that they’d not only let him in, but put up with the nightmares that had woken him twice more through the night. His mind was baffled by this. But he followed orders and showered and dressed, pulling on his pair of jeans and a simple shirt. Then Once he had one a pair of sneakers, he set out downstairs, trademark sunglasses on his face, his mask back in place once more. If they weren’t going to mention the night, than neither would he.

Neither of them did. They acted as if what had happened was totally normal and made Spencer sit down and eat breakfast just as they had many other mornings. In doing that, they showed Spencer that he had been right in trusting them. They weren’t mocking him or trying to talk about it or even bringing up the subject at all. When he’d needed them, they had been there for him, listened to him and then held him while he slept. They’d kept him safe. And with that they had earned more of his trust than anyone else but Remy had.

By that afternoon, Remy returned to the mansion. After seeing Charles, he’d gone to see Logan and Scott and check in with them to find out how the night went. His next stop was Spencer.

Spencer was reading a book outside when Remy found him. Deliberately letting his steps make some noise, Remy walked over towards him, offering a smile when white eyes snuck a quick look over top of his ever present sunglasses. “Bonjour, mon ami! Comment ça va?”

It boosted Remy’s ego to see the way that Spencer sort of lit up when he saw him. There was a brush against Remy’s mind, a touch of empathy that Spencer rarely ever indulged in. It was an equivalent of an emotional ‘hello, I’m so very happy to see you’. Was it his imagination, or had Spencer's body relaxed a little, too? Was there just a hair less tension in his shoulders than had been there a moment before? Remy wasn’t sure. The thought made his smile grow a little, though.

“Hey, honey.” Spencer greeted him. “I’m doing okay. How’re you? How was your ‘trip’?” His voice was soft and sort of sweet, the sound that Remy had noticed it took when it was only the two of them and there was no one else around to hear. He lowered his book down to his lap, a thumb marking his place, and curled his legs in to better face Remy as the Cajun dropped down in the grass next to him.

Without hesitation or shame, Remy stretched his body out in the sun and wiggled until his head was pillowed on Spencer's thigh. He looked up and found that Spencer was watching him with a bemused expression on his face. There was that hint of tension that always came anytime someone touched him, an instinctive recoil that Remy doubted he realized he did, and then the gradual relaxation that had only recently started to happen. Pleased to see him relax, Remy smiled. “Went well, yeah. Would y’ expect any less?”
“From you? Of course not.”

“Damn straight, cher.”

Remy shifted just a little and settled his head more comfortably. Folding his hands over his stomach, he let his body melt and relax in the sunshine. He was content for the moment to just lie there quietly. He had his reasons for coming out here, more than just saying hi to Spencer, and they both knew that. Remy, however, was content to wait. The others might not believe it but he could be extremely patient when the need called for it. He never would’ve made it as a thief if he couldn’t. A good percentage of the job required patience to one degree or another. Impatience was what got you caught, arrested, or maybe even killed.

He didn’t have to wait long now. Spencer cracked rather quickly. He sighed softly and looked back up towards the sky though Remy could see the lines barely hidden by the edge of his sunglasses that showed he was squinting from the light. “I suppose you talked to Scott and Logan.”

“Oui.” Remy wasn’t going to lie. He wanted Spencer to be honest with him and that meant being honest in return. “Dey didn’t say much. Just dat y’r night was a rough one. Another nightmare?”

“Yeah.”

“Je suis désolé. I would’ve been dere, mais dere was somet’ing dat needed doin an Remy was de only one dat could do it.”

One of Spencer's hands came up and stroked idly through Remy’s hair in an absent gesture that was probably meant to soothe. “It’s okay. I’ve slept on my own plenty of times before, honey. I just… didn’t want to last night, that was all.”

“Mm.” Remy hummed. He pushed his head up, encouraging Spencer's stroking fingers, and sighed happily when they continued to card through his hair with light little tugs that promised to put him to sleep if he wasn’t careful. “Well, I’m still sorry fo’ not letting y’ know I wouldn’t be dere. I won’t do it again.”

“It’s fine.” Spencer demurred.

Quiet fell over the two of them. With just those simple words, any tension that had been in either one of them because of last night was faded away.

After a little bit Spencer picked his book back up. He kept one hand in Remy’s hair while he started to read, his finger slowly soothing Remy down to sleep.

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The day had turned into what was a typical day for Spencer there; and that night, when the dreams woke Spencer once more, he found Remy beside him in bed, holding him tightly, whispering to him, and Spencer felt his heart swell. He calmed easier than ever and fell back to sleep in a pair of arms that he was beginning to realize would always be there for him if only he would let them.

As he started on his third week with the X-Men, Spencer knew that he had to change things. Hank hadn’t come running and chasing him from the mansion or dragging him down for more tests, so obviously there was nothing in his blood that was different, or at least nothing that had showed up so far. Spencer was going to have to come to terms with the fact that maybe, just maybe, Sir had lied to him about that. Part of him still couldn’t begin to think that it was all a lie. Even with there apparently being nothing wrong with his blood, insofar as he knew, he still couldn’t believe it. Someone like him…he didn’t have a soul. It was just a fact of life.
What changed for him more than anything else was his interaction with these people. In his heart, he knew that giving Sir information on them would only lead to them being hurt. He couldn’t let that happen. Not after all he had seen here. Not after the bonds of friendship that had been made. He was growing closer with Logan during their afternoon classes together. In the evenings, he and Scott worked to fix up the Charger together, enjoying each other’s company. Sometimes they didn’t talk at all, simply listening to music as they worked. Other times they chatted about casual things. Movies they liked, or books, different types of food they enjoyed, places they’d been to and places they wanted to go see. He’d ask Spencer how his training was going and compliment him if he was doing well or offer pointers if he wasn’t.

The training was great, too. He actually felt like he was starting to get control on things and Remy agreed with him. Already he could force the charge off of the rest of him and only to his hands when his control was wavering. He was learning how to recognize the signs that he was losing control and some little tricks to help him gain it back. It was wonderful.

He had grown closer with Remy too, it seemed, and not just in the nocturnal visits. A couple of nights during the week, Remy would come over after others were in bed and ask him if he wanted to play a few hands of poker. Those were some of Spencer’s favorite times. Sitting in the quiet of his room, playing a game he loved with someone who was talented enough to present him with a challenge. They, too, talked about random things, such as their favorites of things or people that they’d known or things they wanted to try. Somehow Spencer found himself admitting to Remy, just as he had with Scott and Hank, about his intelligence. He remembered Remy’s reaction to his words.

The Cajun had looked up from his cards, a grin stretching on his lips. “Got a few degrees m’self.” He said with a conspiratorial smile. “Masters in Art History and Business Management. Funny enough, got a BA in philosophy too, cher.” Then he’d winked. “Don’t worry. Y’r secret’s safe with me.” And that had been it.

As the days progressed, Spencer’s resolve firmed inside of him. As much as it made him sick to think that Sir would hurt innocent people, Spencer knew it was the truth. And that was not something he could be a part of, no matter what happened to him in the end. There was only one thing that was right here and he knew he had to do it. There was no way he could step aside and let Sir hurt these people and there was no way he could help him hurt them. That left only one option. He was going to have to refuse to provide Sir with information and insist that they be left alone. He held no false hope that this would be enough to stop Sir. The man was too powerful for that. So Spencer made a backup plan.

He hoped, more than anything else, that he would find a way to survive this. He didn’t want to die. But he also was too practical to not think that there was a high chance he would. With that in mind, he wrote a letter, detailing everything that the X-Men would need to know to protect the school and the people inside. On Thursday, just days before his deadline, he went into the city and found a lawyer. Then he paid the man to hold the letter for him and, if he was not contacted by Monday morning, he was to deliver it to Xavier’s School for Gifted Youngsters. If Spencer survived this, he would contact the man and tell him to destroy it. But if not…there was something to make sure the people here were safe. Anymore, that was what mattered to him.

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Sunday came quicker than Spencer had hoped. When he woke Sunday morning, his mind was still full of the dream he had had, created by Sir. It had carried his orders for the day. At ten o’clock he was to be at the grand king suite that Sir had given him the address to and there he would meet up with Sir. There, everything would come together.
Because he’d slept without nightmares, Remy wasn’t in his room when he woke. Today of all days, Spencer didn’t bother denying to himself that he wished the Cajun was there. He wished he could have woke in his arms one last time. Sadly, things were what they were and there was no changing them.

Spencer dressed carefully and precisely. In his eyes, he dressed to do battle, though others may not have seen it that way. To him, the clothes he put on were a form of a battle uniform. In a sense he was making himself into someone entirely different. The terrified boy was covered up by someone who didn’t give a damn what happened. Someone who was strong and tough. Maybe if he looked the part, he might actually be able to feel it too. He put on his most comfortable pair of jeans, the ones that Remy had complimented him on more than once, and a pair of boots that came to mid-calf with a bit of a heel that gave him a few extra inches and a little more sway to his walk. For a shirt he put on an electric blue A-shirt and nothing more. It was just a step up from his usual look and not something that he’d really feel comfortable in on a normal basis. The shirt showed too much and the pants were too tight. It was perfect. Maybe being someone else would get him through this.

His makeup was dark. Black to outline his eyes and some mascara to help them pop. No sunglasses. He put on no jewelry, making sure he’d taken all of it out so that he was bare. Last, he stood in the bathroom, staring down at the wrist that had always held Sir’s leather bracelet. A bracelet that had always showed the world that he was someone’s property. That he belonged to another. With fingers that were surprisingly steady, Spencer reached out and undid the bracelet from his skin. Then he laid it down on the bathroom counter and left it there. Then with one final look in the mirror, he turned and left the room behind, wondering in the back of his mind if he would ever return here again.

It wasn’t difficult to use his empathy and feel ahead to make sure that he avoided anyone in the halls. Most of them were gathered in the kitchen, their voices echoing back to him. He looked down the hall to the kitchen door and smiled. Thank you he wanted to tell them. Thank you for showing me that life is worth living. That it’s worth protecting. And may whatever deity you believe in bless you all.

Silent as a thief, Spencer slipped out to the garage and climbed into his car. He wasted no more time. Once the car was on, he pulled out and headed toward the front gate, never looking behind him.

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It was ten o’clock on the dot when Spencer walked into the grand king suite of the Loews Regency hotel. Every ounce of control he possessed was being put to use. His mental shields were as tight as he could make them, more together than he had ever had them. He prayed it would be enough to keep Sir out of his mind though he’d never been able to before. His body moved smoothly, gracefully, as if he was strolling down the catwalk and not to his potential death.

Sir was standing and staring out the window when Spencer walked in. Off to the side, Spencer could feel another person in the next room, but that was it. No one else was in the suite with them. He stopped in the middle of the room and took a moment to stand and stare the man in his fancy suit. The man that had run his life from the very beginning; who had created him and then raised him to believe that he was worthless. That he was nothing more than a creature to be used at its master’s amusement. Well, maybe he was right in all that. Maybe Spencer was nothing. Maybe he was the soulless creation that Sir had always said he was. But the X-Men were not. And he would not let them die.

“Have you forgotten your manners, Inanime?”

The cultured voice was hard and cold. Spencer lifted his chin a little and stared across the room. He would not give in before him. Not ever again. Gathering the courage the X-Men had found in him,
Spencer hooked his thumbs in his belt loops and made his pose as casual as possible. “I don’t plan on staying long. I’m not here for anything special and I’m not here to indulge your need in manners. I’m here to tell you that I quit.” His stomach knotted and he felt as if he would throw up, but the words were out. There was no taking them back now.

Slowly, Sir turned to look at him, looking only mildly surprised. One dark eyebrow arched over cool green eyes. “I beg your pardon?”

“I won’t help you hurt these people, Sir. I can’t. I’ve observed them as you asked me to and they’re not evil. They’re good, honest people.” Spencer drew in a deep breath. “I can’t stand by and watch you try to hurt them. I can’t be a part of this. I always believed you when you told me you were hurting people who deserved to be hurt. But these people, they don’t deserve it. Nothing you tell me can change my mind on that. I’m sorry, Sir, but enough is enough. I’m done.”

Sir stood there, hands folded in front of him, watching Spencer through his entire speech. Nothing on his expression gave away anything to what he was thinking on the inside. The longer he stood that still, that quiet, the more Spencer’s stomach lurched. Something was coming. Something bad.

Finally Sir shook his head in a sad sort of way. “I was afraid of this.” He spoke as if he was saddened by what he said. “I had hoped I would arrive in enough time to prevent this from happening. Instead I find I am already too late. They have turned you against me. My most loyal tool and they have turned you against me.” Again, that sad little head shake. “You are well and truly lost to me, aren’t you, Inanime?”

Something was wrong. Spencer could see that, but he couldn’t see what it was. He was cautious as he answered him. “I can’t do this. It’s not right, Sir.”

“Do you really think they will take you in, Inanime? Do you think they will want you when they know the truth about you?” Sir asked him patiently. “Do you think they will want a whore such as yourself? A creation without even a soul?”

“Yes.” He forced all his conviction into that one word. Maybe the others wouldn’t, but Spencer had to believe that Remy would. He, and maybe Logan and Scott would be there for him. They would still care. Wouldn’t they? He refused to allow that small insecurity to show.

Sir smiled at him in a way that made Spencer shiver. “As I said, I was afraid of this. And so I came prepared.” Without warning, he brought his hand up. Nothing could have prepared Spencer for what happened next. He heard the soft pop and then agony exploded in him. Belatedly he realized he was lying on the ground. How had he got on the ground? Pain was like a wildfire in his thigh. Through the pain, his brain pieced together what had happened. Sir had shot him. He’d shot him in the leg!

The man moved to stand over him, gun still in his hands, a silencer on the end of it. He shook his head as he looked at Spencer. “You think they’ll care for you, but they won’t. They’ll throw you out if they don’t outright kill you. Both would be just punishments. You would deserve no less.” A sudden smile curved his lips and in that look, Spencer saw madness. “But I am going to show you how kind I am, Inanime. I am going to allow you this rebellion you have. And when it is done and you see that I am right, you will come crawling back to me. You will have to pay, of course, but I will accept you back into my lab. I will repair you and return you to your rightful work. You see? I am a merciful master.”

“I am not your tool.” Spencer spat out. His hand clutched at his leg. “And I will never work for you again.”

Sir’s smile grew even more chilling. He lifted his free hand, snapping his fingers. A moment later a
muscular male stood beside him. Spencer recognized the man and instantly shuddered. He knew who he was. He knew him very intimately. Just the memories of those moments were enough to have Spencer wanting to hurl.

“He is yours.” Sir said in that kind, cultured voice of his that seemed to hide the madness inside. “Punish him and then drop him outside of a hospital. We don’t want him to die. I just want this lesson to sink in.” Turning his head, he looked down at Spencer. One again he raised his gun and fired before Spencer could even blink. This time the bullet went into his shoulder. His head slammed back into the floor and he let out a hoarse cry against his will. God!

The last thing he heard from Sir was “You never should have tried to cross me. You’ll see that I’m right, Inanime.” A pause, and then “I will return in one hour. I want him gone by then.”

Not even seconds after he heard the door shut, a hand fisted in Spencer’s shirt, drawing him painfully up off the floor. He knew better than to let loose his electricity. This particular mutant would only nullify the charge. It wouldn’t harm him at all. His ears rang with his own heartbeat, blocking out whatever words were said. But he knew the look and he knew what was coming. There was no ducking the lightning fast fist that connected with the side of his head, sending him flying to the ground.

CXCX

Every inch of Spencer’s body hurt. There wasn’t a part of him that wasn’t filled with pain. Even with his healing abilities, there was a lot of damage done. It would take him at least a week to fully heal from this. Until then, he would be in pain. That pain grew a thousand fold when the van he was in pulled up outside of a hospital. The back doors were opened and Spencer was pushed, rolling out and hitting the pavement with a sickening crunch. He couldn’t even gather the strength to scream. Just barely he heard the van tear away and then voices were shouting. When he opened his eyes, he was surrounded by what he thought must be hospital personnel.

“Someone get me a gurney!” a voice shouted.

Oh God, it hurt so much. It hurt. He cried out when someone touched him. The agony was spilling out of him, making his shields weak. When they were suddenly putting him on a board and lifting him onto the gurney, the pain seemed to quadruple. He barely managed to keep his electricity under control, but his empathy was strained and he couldn’t keep it from pouring over the people around him. His agony was their agony. They dropped away from the gurney, crying out in pain.

Spencer heard footsteps as people backed away from him. “He’s a mutant!” someone shouted. Another voice said “Leave him here! This hospital doesn’t treat mutants!”

Somehow, Spencer jerked back control of his empathy. When he opened his eyes once more, only one person was standing with him. The man was staring with shock toward the hospital. “Get back here!” He was shouting at the people. “You can’t leave him here! You have to help him!” The man lifted a hand, putting it on the side of the gurney. He wasn’t dressed like hospital staff. A civilian, then. The man was absolutely livid and terrified all at the same time. Spencer could feel it. The guy looked down at him. “Hang in there, buddy. Hang in there. Someone’s gotta come help.”

“They won’t.” Spencer managed to croak out. That was a whole new lesson in pain. He forced it back as best he could and tried to make his aching throat work once more. “You got a phone?”

The guy seemed startled but he quickly fished one out of his pocket. “Yeah, yeah, right here. I got a phone right here.”
There was only one number Spencer could think of. Pressing his hand to his stomach, trying to stem the bleeding, Spencer closed his bruised eyes and whispered the number in as strong a voice as he could manage. “His name is Remy. Tell him you have…” Spencer wheezed, trying to breathe around a cough. When he got it under control, he finished “Tell him you’re with Spencer. He’ll come for me. He’ll bring help.”

“Okay, okay. It’s ringing, man. It’s ringing. You just hang on, okay? Oh, shit. Jesus.” The guy cursed softly. That told Spencer he must look as bad as he felt. He knew he was covered in blood. Thankfully, most of the bleeding had stopped. That much, his healing ability had already done. But the broken bones, the deep cuts and stabs, the bruising and the tearing, that would take much longer to heal.

Spencer listened as the guy suddenly started talking. Thank God, he’d got a hold of someone. Now Spencer could only pray that they would get to him in time.

CXCX

Back at the mansion, a group gathered once more in Charles’s study, this time summoned not by the Professor, but by Hank. Why he’d called them, they didn’t know, but each assumed that it had something to do with Spencer. That was the only thing they could think of that would have called all of them in there together—Charles, Jean, Ororo, Scott, Logan and Remy.

When Hank walked in, all eyes turned toward him, instantly taking in the frazzled look. The way his hair stood as if he’d run his hand through it repeatedly. His eyes were wide and his expression was slightly bewildered. Ororo was the first to move toward him. “Hank! Whatever is wrong? Come, come, sit down.” She took his arm and ushered him forward, her face bright with concern.

Hank held a hand out and stopped her before she tried to get him to sit. “No, no, Ororo. I must stand for this. I, I apologize for my appearance. This is quite, well, this is extraordinary. I have no idea how this is possible and yet, I’ve checked it three times.” He looked around at the room, wide eyed. “I just cannot believe it.”

“Believe what?” Scott said. He found himself reaching for Logan’s hand and Jean’s, inexplicably feeling as if he was going to need that strength for whatever they were about to hear.

For a moment Hank only stared. Then he shook his head as if to clear out the cobwebs. His expression cleared slightly. “Oh, my apologies. I’m going about this all wrong. I’m terribly sorry.” Taking a deep breath, Hank gathered his composure and started to explain what it was he had found. “Recently Spencer allowed me to draw some blood. Now, I knew he was in good health, so I set the samples aside until I had time to devote to them, sending only some off to have them better tested to see if we could isolate information about his mutation. Just this week I started my own tests. One I wanted to conduct was a genetic testing, to see if maybe it might lead to some answers about our mysterious friend. I thought maybe I would find something that would clue us in to his actual identity.” Pausing, Hank shook his head. “I never expected this.”

Ororo, who still held his arm, rubbed soothingly to try and calm him. He gave her a grateful smile before sighing and continuing. “Incredible as this sounds, Spencer’s genetic makeup is the result of not two, but three parents.” Into the stunned silence, Hank delivered the rest of his news, knowing that it was going to be an extreme shock to each person in the room. “I isolated the mother’s DNA as one Diana Reid of Las Vegas, Nevada. By the way, our young man’s name is Spencer Reid. As for his fathers, I matched his genetic makeup to two people already in my system.” Turning, Hank looked to where Scott and Logan stood with Jean, the three of them braced for whatever came their way. “I tested it three separate times. No matter how incredible or impossible it seems, you two are the biological fathers of Spencer Reid.”
The entire room fell silent. Each set of eyes had turned toward Scott and Logan, who were standing there as if they’d been struck. Scott was the first to regain his voice. “What?” he croaked out. He looked toward Logan, who was just as wide eyed, and over to Jean, who looked as if she’d been slapped, and back toward Hank. “That’s impossible! I’ve never met this Diana Reid, for one. For two, Spencer can’t be any more than ten years younger than me!”

“With three parents, he’s obviously genetically engineered.” Jean pointed out softly. Her hand tightened around Scott’s. “Who’s to say that whoever created a person with three parents couldn’t speed up the growth process?”

Charles spoke up before anyone else could, his calm voice drawing attention to him. “We must also consider the possibility that the person that did this, or even Spencer himself, is not from our time. He would not be our first time traveler.” That shut the room up rather quickly. Lifting his gaze to Remy, he asked “Where is Spencer? I think it is finally time for some of our questions to be answered.”

“He left a few hours ago.” Remy said slowly. He didn’t look anywhere near as stunned as anyone else in the room. No, he looked cold. “Dis whole t’ing, it reeks of M. Essex. He’d know how to do something like dis. He’d be one to make someone and den send de kid here to take down his parents without ever telling de boy dat his parents even be here.”

Jean shook her head. “I wonder if he knew that you two are his…his fathers.” She whispered.

It was Remy who answered that, his voice sharp. “Non. Dat boy didn’t know. Remy’s sure of dat.”

“I agree.” Ororo said calmly. “But I do believe that he knew he was genetically created. You remember, Jean, when he fell asleep in my garden? I told you how he had said he’d always wished for a pet, but they were only for real children.”

“It would definitely explain his self-esteem issues.” Charles agreed with her. “To be raised being told you’re a creation, not a person. It would also explain the name Inanime. In Latin, that stands for lifeless or soulless. That, combined with his white eyes, tells me that most likely his ‘owner’ has convinced him that he is without a soul. A creature, not a human.”

That was enough to bring Logan’s voice back. He growled, low and deep, a furious sound from way down in his chest. “I’ll kill the fucking bastard that did this.”

A loud ringing interrupted all conversation in the room. Remy jumped, his hand going to his pocket to yank out his phone which was ringing loudly. “Dat damn boy.” He cursed. He looked at the others and flushed slightly. “Spencer turns m’ volume up. He t’inks it’s funny.” Before anyone could comment, he flipped his phone open. “Bonjour?” His expression turned confused. “Oui, dis Remy. Who’s dis?”

The room watched as Remy’s eyes widened and his expression turned horrified. “Quoi? What?” He croaked. All at once the horror was gone and his work face slipped into place. Nothing showed on the outside; he was in full business mode, emotions locked down tight. “Where y’ at? D’accord, Remy be dere soon. Y’ keep him safe till Remy get dere. Merci. Tell him dat Remy’s on his way and to hold on tight, y’ hear? Merci beaucoup.” With that, Remy hung up the phone. Then he lifted furious eyes to the others. “Dat was some stranger outside Mercy hospital. Apparently Spencer’s dere, beat to hell, barely alive, and de hospital’s refusing to treat him cause he’s a mutant.”

There was no hesitation. No pause for shock. As one, the group started to move. “We’re taking the jet.” Scott barked out. “Jean, stay here and prepare the Med Lab. The rest of you, with me!”
Chapter 16

Spencer felt his body drifting in and out, never quite passing out all the way. Just as he would start to, something new would hurt and draw him right back up again. Reality was wavering around him, though. He lost track of all sense of time. The only constant in his world was the pain and the man standing with him. Apparently Remy had ordered him to keep Spencer safe until they could arrive. Spencer just appreciated that he wasn’t alone. At one point, someone shouted at them to clear the area. The guy cursed at whoever said it, but he started to move the gurney, apologizing to Spencer the whole time for every bump and jostle. Spencer managed to hold back the moans of pain. At least, until they hit the light. He couldn’t stop himself from letting out a hoarse scream then. “Please, please!” he croaked out. “The shade, please. My eyes!”

Suddenly he found himself back in the shade again and the guy was by his head. “Shit, shit, kid I’m sorry. I didn’t know it would hurt your eyes like that. I’m sorry. Just hold on, okay?” Something brushed over Spencer’s hand but didn’t hold it. He knew why—he could feel the broken bones that needed to be reset. He could feel quite a few of them in his body.

Everything really started to blur together for him. His whole world became breathing through each wave of pain. At least, until a voice cut into that world, drawing him up out of the pain. “Over here!” A thick Cajun voice shouted. Then suddenly he was there, right there by Spencer’s side, his curses the sweetest thing that Spencer had ever heard. Despite how much it hurt his mouth, Spencer managed a small smile. “Remy.”

The curses abruptly stopped when Remy realized that Spencer was awake. His voice changed, turning gentle. “Shh, cher. Shh. Don’t y’ talk right now, d’accord? Everyone’s coming and we’re gonna get y’ to de Med Lab. Y’ just shh and hang on. I’m here and I’ve got y’ now.” His hand gently brushed against Spencer’s face, soft as the breeze, but there.

More curses sounded around him. Spencer focused on those voices, trying to use them to ride out the pain, using them as a focus to draw his attention away. He picked out Scott’s voice and Logan’s, followed by Hank’s. “We can’t risk lifting him.” Hank was saying to them. “We’re going to need to use the gurney. We’ll lower it and then I want you two on that side and Remy and I will lift from here and we’ll carry it to the Blackbird. That’s the easiest transfer.” Then Hank’s voice was close to him. “Spencer? Did you hear that? We’re going to lower the gurney now. I need you to brace because this is going to hurt. I’m terribly sorry, but it’s the only way.”

“Do it.” He gasped out. Gritting his teeth and closing his eyes, he tried to prepare himself. He should have known nothing would prepare him for what was to come.

When the gurney lowered, they tried to be as gentle as possible, but the bed still jerked, moving Spencer’s body and bringing to life every injury all at the same time. Despite how tightly he had grit his teeth, a shrill scream ripped its way up his abused throat and past his lips. Tears streamed from his tightly shut eyes. When he could finally think past the pain, he heard voices once more and he felt a slight swaying. “That’s it, almost there.” Hank was saying. They must have already lifted the gurney while he was still fighting the pain back. Spencer realized that the light wasn’t as bright as it should be. It took him a second longer to realize he had sunglasses on. Someone had put sunglasses on him to protect him from the light. Bless their hearts.

The sound of their footsteps changed and Spencer could tell they were on the Blackbird. His bed was set down and then Remy was there and nothing else mattered for Spencer. He didn’t pay
attention to the sound of the hatch closing, or the sound of the jet being prepared for liftoff. All he focused on was the face that was right by his; the body kneeling beside his shoulder. “Oh, Spencer.” Remy said in a broken voice. “Oh, mon cœur. What happened to y’? Who would hurt y’ like dis?”

Spencer could tell that Remy didn’t expect an answer to his question. But as Hank started to cut away his clothes, Spencer needed something to focus on, and there was no time like the present to let them know just what was going on. It would come out anyways. Why not now? “I quit.” He forced the words out, keeping his eyes on Remy. He didn’t stop to think about the fact that, as far as he knew, no one knew that he even had a Master. Mustering up his strength, he lifted the hand that usually held his bracelet, though it shook and trembled. “See?” He couldn’t keep his hand up; it hurt too much. Weakly it dropped back down to the gurney.

A flash of understanding lit Remy’s eyes. “Y’r master did dis to y’ fo’ quitting?” He spat out. Well then, so apparently Remy knew more than he’d been letting on. At a better time Spencer would have to think about that. Right now, it was so difficult to even get his thoughts to go in a straight line, let alone really process anything other than simple questions and simple answers. He could answer Remy’s question with a soft, “No.” He paused as he felt Hank and another set of hands, he thought they were Logan’s, started to pull away the pieces of cut off clothing. It tinged his world in red for a second. He forced his brain to focus on what he wanted to say and not on how much everything hurt. “Punishment. Says I’ll come back.”

“He punishes y’ like dis and den t’inks y’r gonna come back to him?” The idea seemed to mystify Remy. “Dat don’t make no sense! Why would y’ come back?”

Spencer licked his lips. Even though it hurt, he turned his cheek toward the hand that was lightly touching him. Would he get to feel this, later? “Thinks you…kick me out.” He gasped out. “All of you. Once y-you…ahhh…k-know.”

The hand at his cheek cupped gently. Bending, Remy brushed his lips over Spencer’s forehead, a kiss so sweet that Spencer wanted to cry. “Don’t care what y’ tell us, mon cœur. Don’t care if everyone wants y’ to go. Y’ go, Remy go with y’.”

Those last words were a fierce whisper just breathed out against his skin. The emotion behind them, though, came in loud and clear and had Spencer's eyes watering for reasons other than pain. This kind of fierce emotion, this loyalty, was stronger than anything he’d felt anywhere before. Would it still be there once Remy knew the truth? Would he still stick around once he knew what Spencer was and what he’d been doing here? Those questions tripped around Spencer's mind as he looked up into the demon eyes hovering above his.

Hank’s voice broke into their moment and dragged Spencer's attention down. “Spencer, I need to put pressure on a few areas. Though your healing is helping some, there are still places that are bleeding. I also need to get an IV in so that we can be ready to give you blood.”

“Do it, big guy.” Spencer told him hoarsely. “I trust you. Do what you have to.”

He watched as Remy shifted up more by his head so that Hank could access Spencer’s arm on that side. At the sight of Spencer’s hands, the good doctor growled, moving instead to Spencer’s inner elbow. There he attached the IV quickly and efficiently. Amidst everything else, Spencer didn’t even feel the small prick. Then Logan was moving up on his other side, a cloth in hand that he pressed to Spencer’s shoulder as gently as he could. Even so, Spencer still shuddered and moaned. “H-Hey Logan.” He finally managed to gasp out.

Looking up, it stunned him to see the look on Logan’s face. Were those tears in the feral man’s eyes?
Impossible.

Logan cleared his throat before gruffly saying “Hey, pup. You look like shit.”

“Aren’t you just the sweetest thing?” Spencer gave him a weak smile. “You sure know how to turn a boy’s head.”

“Hush, cher.” Remy said softly. He bent and pressed another kiss to Spencer’s forehead. It was one of the few unmarked places on him. “Y’ save dat beautiful voice of y’rs fo’ a bit.”

Spencer almost shook his head before he thought better of it. “Need to talk. It helps.”

They were interrupted when Scott’s voice called out “Coming in for landing.”

The world seemed to turn into a flurry of movement at that. In no time at all the jet was landed and the hatch was opening. Once again, the four men were lifting his gurney to carry him off. Spencer thought he saw Ororo near his feet. Had she been on the plane? Strange, he hadn’t seen her. She must have been co-pilot. Spencer tried to focus; really he did. But everything hurt so much. He couldn’t stop the whimpers from coming out, or the tears from slipping down his cheeks. He lost track of things, barely understanding the voices around him, when suddenly he was being moved and *everything* hurt. He screamed long and hard, his throat scratched raw even more by the sound.

When the scream died, he became aware of a hand stroking his hair back from his face. He didn’t know who it was; couldn’t see past the tears. He didn’t really care. “Please.” He croaked out. “God, please.”

“Please what, kiddo?” Logan’s low rumble was right near his ear.

Blinking, Spencer tried to clear his tears, failing as they were simply replaced by more. “Hit me.” He finally gasped out. “Please, hit me. Please.”

“What?”

“I can’t take this. It hurts. It hurts so much.” He couldn’t think past it anymore. Everything was sheer, living agony. He couldn’t get through it enough to use his empathy to shield himself the way that he usually did. The pain was taking up too much of his mind. “Just hit me. Please. Please!”

A hand was suddenly at his neck. Spencer knew what was going to happen before it did and he sobbed in anticipation of relief. Then those fingers moved and *pinched* and Spencer slipped down into the blessed darkness of unconsciousness.

CXCX

Those around him watched as Spencer’s face relaxed and lost some of its tension. He was out. “It’ll only last for a bit and I don’t know how much pain he’ll take before it wakes him back up.” Logan told them all. “But that should hold him some. I can’t do it again for a while without potentially damaging him, so get the worst shit done first.”

Hank nodded firmly. He didn’t need telling twice. “Logan, stand by his head. Be ready to restrain him if he wakes.” He commanded. Now that they were in the lab, Hank was in his element. He seized control of the situation and started handing out orders to those around him. “Remy, scrub up and get gloves. You’ve got enough experience to help me with this. Jean, I want you to start on the gunshot in his leg while I attend the one in his shoulder.” His gaze lifted to those that were crowded in the lab, watching with wide eyes. “The rest of you, out. This is not a sideshow. We need room to work!”
It was Charles who ushered Scott and Ororo from the room. Before they left, Scott a look with each one of his partners. In that was a silent message—protect him. Logan nodded firmly, as did Jean. They would keep him safe, this sudden member of their family. It didn’t matter to Jean that he was technically theirs and not hers. What belonged to one, belonged to them all, and he was theirs. Hank wouldn’t get something like that wrong.

The door made a soft sound as it shut behind the exiting group, barely noticed in the busy room. Unable to do anything, Logan simply stood at Spencer’s head, keeping a close eye on the kid and watching as the others got to work. Hank had Spencer hooked to the standard vital machines, keeping track of his heart rate and blood pressure, so Logan watched those. When Remy came back over, the Cajun was put to work running an ultrasound, checking for internal bleeding in the stomach. Jean was already moving quick fingers over Spencer's leg, trying to work both quickly and efficiently. It was something that the feral loved about her, this ability of hers to work so calmly in a crisis situation.

There was nothing for Logan to do. He wasn’t used to this helpless feeling. No, he was a man of action. This helpless waiting, unable to do anything, only able to watch, it was hard for him. Absently he stroked a hand over Spencer’s forehead and tried not to wince as he looked at the bruising on the kid’s face. Whoever had hurt him had done a thorough job of it. Logan hadn’t been able to help cataloguing the kid’s injuries and it only made his temper grow. There was barely any clear skin on the boy’s body. Moving the sunglasses for a second, he saw that both eyes were blackened, one almost completely swollen shut. The bruises spread down onto his cheeks as well. On his left cheek was a cut that wasn’t bleeding and looked as if it was already starting its healing process. Logan wouldn’t have been surprised if his cheekbone was broken. And his mouth—how he’d managed to talk at all was a mystery. His lip was split open; most likely it would need stitches. Around his lips looked bruised. And all of that was just his face. That didn’t take into account the rest of him. Face grim, Logan slid the sunglasses back into place.

While the others worked, Logan continued to stroke Spencer’s hair, trying to calm himself some. All he wanted to do was let the feral side of him have lead and go find the bastard that would dare to do this and rip them limb from limb. Not only was Spencer a damn good person, but apparently, he was his son. Logan could barely think that without reeling in shock. A son. He had a son!

How the hell was it possible? Spencer looked like he was in his twenties. For Logan, okay, that was possible. No one knew how old Logan was. So it was entirely logical that he might have a son this age. But Scott? How was it possible for him to be the boy’s father as well? Was Charles right? Was Spencer from the future? Or was the man who made him? That seemed to be the only way that this was possible.

As he looked down to where Hank had just finished cleaning the wound on Spencer's shoulder, Logan decided that the how didn’t matter. Hank’s tests didn’t lie and Hank was too talented to have made a mistake. He’d said he’d checked it three times. That meant that there was no doubt. This boy was genetically Logan and Scott’s son. In the end, that was what was important. How he got that way wasn’t. He was theirs and Logan was going to protect him from this point on out. I’m going to protect you, pup. I’ll do everything I can to make sure no one ever hurts you like this again he swore to Spencer.

Suddenly Spencer’s features started to tighten and Hank’s voice warned “Brace him, everyone. I’ve got to set these bones. It’s highly likely he’ll try to fight this.”

Logan held a hand out to stop them before anyone could touch Spencer. “Blue, I don’t know how strong his control’s gonna be if he wakes up and you’re hurting him. You got any gloves like his around here?”
The idea surprised Hank for just a split second before he regained his composure. “Of course. Thank you, Logan. I’d forgotten entirely about that necessity. If he shocks me, this won’t completely stop it, but it should protect me enough.” As he spoke he hurried to his personal office, coming back with electricians gloves. He pulled them on while striding back toward the bed. Logan looked at Remy and Jean and gestured them back. “You two back up. He jolts me, I’ll live. You two wouldn’t.”

While Hank took hold of Spencer’s hand, preparing to set the fingers, Logan leaned over the kid and braced his upper half, holding it down on the bed in preparation. “Ready.”

Grimacing, Hank took hold of the first finger, taking a deep breath before setting it back into place.

CXCX

Out in the hallway, the others paced, waiting anxiously for news. Nerves were stretched tight amongst them. When the first scream had ripped its way through the air, Scott had gone absolutely pale. Then he’d tried to move toward the lab. Ororo had quickly darted in front of him, hands on his chest to stop him before he could get to the door. “You need to stay out of the way, Scott.” She told him gently. “They need the space as clear as possible to work in.”

As much as it had hurt to do, he’d listened, but only because it was in Spencer’s best interest. Yet each scream that came out was like a knife to his heart. Then it went eerily silent. For a short pause there was no sound. Then another scream came out, one more painful than the ones that had come before. Suddenly the doors opened and Jean came rushing out into the hall, one hand going to brace on the wall, the other over her stomach. The three of them converged on her. Ororo slipped an arm around her friend’s waist, helping to hold her up, and Scott slid up to her other side, letting her lean in against him.

“I’m sorry.” Jean said to them. She brought her hand up from her stomach, wiping at her mouth. There was another scream, turning hoarse toward the end. Jean shuddered and closed her eyes, tucking her face in against his chest. For a moment she just stood there and trembled in his arms until Scott couldn’t take the wondering anymore. When he spoke, his words were sharper than he’d meant them to be, and he was damn lucky that Jean knew him well enough not to take offense to his tone. “What the hell is going on in there? What’s happening to him? What’s happening to my son? His son. Oh, Jesus, his son. Blinking watery eyes, Jean looked up at him, a wealth of heartache in that gaze. “They’re setting the bones. Once that’s done, they’ll splint them and let him rest.” She told them all. “He was unconscious for most of it, but setting the bones…” Another scream, a little quieter than the last. “He’s awake now.” And with those words, Scott remembered. Spencer couldn’t take pain medication. He couldn’t have anesthesia. They didn’t work for him.

He couldn’t just stand there. There was no way he could stand there, knowing what was happening in the other room, that Spencer was awake and hurting. He had to do something. Ignoring those around him, Scott carefully handed his wife off to Ororo and then spun on his heel and strode toward the Med Lab doors. When someone reached for him, he brushed their hand off. This time he would not be stopped from going in there.

When he strode into the room, Spencer was flat on the table, Remy and Hank holding one leg, Logan practically lying on top of Spencer's upper half to hold him down. The boy’s face was a mask of agony, his lips pressed together in an obvious effort to restrain the scream that wanted to rip free. It took all the control Scott had not to give a cry of his own. But he wasn’t their leader for no reason. He forced down his emotions and made himself be as strong as was necessary. He walked right up to the table, moving to Spencer’s lower half. Without a word, Scott braced Spencer’s other leg, keeping
it held tightly, effectively freeing Hank from having to lean on it to work. The good doctor took just a second to smile thankfully at him and then he was concentrating on the task at hand.

There was a sickening sound as the bone was set back into place and a muffled scream sounded behind Spencer’s compressed lips. But when Hank started to splint and bind the leg, Spencer visibly slumped, relaxing. “That was the last of them.” Hank breathed out shakily. “Now he just needs rest, fluids, and blood. I’ve done what I can for him. His healing factor should take care of the rest of it. And be sure to let me know if the medication mixture I gave you is working, Spencer. It’s the one that seemed to have the best chance, based on your body chemistry.”

Scott watched as, once his hands were free, Remy moved straight up to Spencer’s head. His gloves were stripped off and his hands were on Spencer’s cheeks, stroking softly as the Cajun bent and murmured in a voice so low only Spencer could hear. Logan straightened up, reaching out to take Scott’s hand in his. The two watched silently as Spencer turned his face into Remy’s touch. His eyes were hidden by sunglasses, so they couldn’t see the look there, but the expression on his face was easy enough to read. The boy was either falling or already head over heels in love with Remy.

Stepping close, Logan pulled Scott against his side, taking a moment to breathe in the man’s scent. Scott knew it was most likely an attempt to wash away the scent of blood that even his human nose could smell. “I wonder if he realizes it.” Logan murmured in his ear. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what he meant. Smiling, Scott looked at his lover, whispering back “Which one?”

“Spencer.” Logan’s grin showed just a hint of teeth to it.

Hesitant to interrupt the obvious moment between the two young men, Hank stepped toward them. “Gentlemen, I hate to interrupt. We need to get you into a proper bed so you can rest, Spencer.”

“It’s fine, big guy. We can go ahead.” Spencer croaked. He flashed a weak smile at the man. “On one condition. Get these vitals monitors off of me.”

Hank was at Spencer’s bed the minute ‘fine’ crossed his lips, carefully starting to push it out of the main room and toward the recovery room with Remy alongside him, rolling said vitals monitors with them. Scott and Logan trailed behind, reluctant to leave him. “I need to have those there, Spencer.” Hank told him as they moved. “I know you understand the reasoning behind them.”

A jostle of his body had Spencer going white and slamming his lips shut once more. He stayed like that, almost perfectly motionless, as they brought him alongside a recovery bed and even through the transfer. Scott swore that Spencer lost even more color through that transfer, but he made not a sound. Remy and Hank adjusted Spencer’s limbs gently on the bed, raising the back up slightly so that he was able to sit up and look at everyone. Once he was situated, they tucked a blanket around his waist, leaving him bare from the waist up. When Hank offered a gown, Spencer finally seemed to find his voice again. “God, no! I hate those things.” He said with just a hint of his old sass coming through, a severely cracked shield he nonetheless tried to hold up. “If I’m going to expose myself, I might as well go all out and not just for the little gap that gown likes to show.”

“As always, you are ever so eloquent with your words.” Hank said dryly.

Spencer smiled a weak little smile at him. “Naturally. Now, the monitors, big guy? Please?”

“As I told you, Spencer, they are a necessity, as you very well know. They stay where they are.”

Shifting a little, Spencer swallowed before saying “Let me put it this way. Either get them off, or I can’t promise they won’t get fried. The electricity in them is very…tempting.”
“Oh!” Abruptly Hank moved forward, detaching the machines from him without any more delay.

Once they were detached, Spencer visibly relaxed for just a second. Then his body seemed to tense again. His head turned just slightly and Scott could tell, even behind the shades, that Spencer was looking right at him. “Go get the others and I’ll explain everything. Or,” The last he said a little forcefully, seeing the instant protests building all around him. “I will get up and go find the Professor myself.”

Scott looked at him for a long moment, the friend in him warring with the leader. But he could see that this was something Spencer had made up his mind on. He gave him a brief nod. “Don’t make me regret this.” He warned him.

There was a slightly broken note to Spencer’s voice when he said “I hope to God you don’t.”

Scott had a feeling they were taking about two entirely different things.
Chapter 17

Letting his head rest back against the bed, Spencer tried to relax as he waited for Scott to return with the others. There were three that waited outside the Med Lab; Spencer could feel their emotions. He knew who they would be, too. Really, the only one that mattered was the Professor. This was his school and these were his people and it was his trust that Spencer had abused the most. To the others, he had simply been evasive. To the Professor, he had lied directly.

“Mon cœur, open up.” Remy said softly, interrupting Spencer’s thoughts. When the young man opened his eyes he found Remy standing beside him with a cup of ice shavings in one hand and a spoon in the other. Spencer gratefully took the first spoonful, letting the cold ice melt in his mouth and soothe the dryness there as well as some of the ache. As Remy fed him another spoonful, he said “Y’ don’t gotta do dis yet, Spencer. Y’ should be resting.”

“I have to, Remy.” It was the only thing Spencer could say. He prayed the other man would understand, as he had understood so much already.

“Je sais. Mais, don’t mean I like it.”

Spencer lifted his hand, ignoring the splint that held his fingers in place, and moved it slowly toward Remy. The other man instantly put the ice cup down and gently took Spencer’s proffered hand. “Remy.” He didn’t know how to say what he wanted to say. So he settled for saying “I want you to know in advance…I’m sorry.”

“Now y’ listen here and y’ listen well, Spencer.” Suddenly firm, Remy placed Spencer’s hand back on the bed and then brought his hands up to cup Spencer’s battered face and hold him perfectly still. “I already told y’. I aint going nowhere, me. Not without y’. Mon cœur, mon amour.”

Even as those beautiful words filled Spencer with so much—his heart was bursting with emotion to hear Remy call him his heart, his love—but at the same time the rest of him knew that something like this wasn’t meant to be. Remy didn’t know the full story yet. There was no way he would stick around once he knew the truth. “Wait until you hear it all before you make promises.” Spencer warned him.

About then was when the two felt the others arriving in the room. Remy stared at Spencer for a long moment, looking like he was debating something. Then he shrugged and leaned in, letting their lips touch in a kiss gentle enough that the pain it caused was light and, to Spencer, well worth it. That kiss gave him the strength he needed to do what came next.

When Spencer looked up again, chairs had been brought to his bed. Charles was at the end of the bed, looking right up to him, and Logan, Scott, Jean and Hank were ranged around his bed. Remy didn’t leave his side. He just reached a foot out and hooked a chair, sliding it over and taking a seat right there by Spencer, lifting a hand to let it rest on a mostly clear spot on Spencer’s arm.

“Let me just put out there that this goes against my medical advice.” Hank stated sternly. He glared at Spencer. “You have been severely injured, young man. If it wasn’t for your healing abilities, I know for a fact that you would not have survived this beating. You need your rest, not to sit up and talk.”

“I’m sorry, big guy. But this can’t wait.” Spencer said. He believed that wholeheartedly. This couldn’t wait; not if he wanted to keep everyone safe. And hadn’t that been what this whole thing was about? His standing up to Sir, earning this beating, had been to keep people here safe, and he wasn’t going to stop that now just because he was sore. He took one last look at the people around
him, committing their faces to memory. He had no idea if he would ever be able to see them again. Then he locked his eyes directly on the Professor and started the conversation he had never wanted to have. “I lied to you.” He said simply. “You asked me if there was anything that would put your school or its people in danger and I made a flippant remark about past Johns. But I lied to you.”

“We know.” Charles told him calmly. His words threw Spencer for a loop. “We’ve known from the start that you’re here to spy for someone. We just didn’t know who.”

Wait a second; they’d known he was a spy? They had known from the very start that he was here on a mission for someone? The implications of that were like a knife straight to Spencer’s heart. If they knew, how much of their actions had been geared towards trying to gain his trust, to trick him into telling them the truth? How much of it was real? As the hurt grew, Remy’s hand suddenly pressed on his arm, drawing his attention down to him. Remy’s expression was fierce. “Don’t y’ dare, cher.” He snapped out.

“What?”

“Don’t y’ dare start thinking dem nasty thoughts. We set out to get y’ to trust us, oui, but dat don’t make de t’ings we did or said a lie. Use y’r brain! Y’r empathy woulda showed y’ if we wasn’t honest in our feelings. So don’t y’ sit dere and start thinking dat way. Now, get back to telling y’r story so y’ can get de rest y’ need.”

That speech not only eased the hurt that had started to build—because what Remy had said made absolute sense to him—but it made him smile a little. Sweet and commanding all at the same time. Spencer nodded ever so slightly before looking back to Charles. “My real name is Spencer Reid. The woman whose genes were used to create me is Diana Reid, who currently lives at Bennington Sanitarium in Las Vegas. She’s labeled as a paranoid schizophrenic, but in reality she’s a telepath and empath that was tortured and experimented on until she’s a broken shell of the person she apparently used to be. Her powers were…burned out of her.”

Stop stalling his brain told him. You’re putting off the inevitable and you know it. Quit stalling and just say it already. If they still stick around after that, THEN you tell them the rest of it. But suck it up and spit out the biggest part first! His mind scolded him. “Sir sent me here to spy on you. Before I left, his orders were to infiltrate the school and the X-men and become one of you by any means necessary. I was sent here to gather intelligence on you, your school and the technology you have here. So far I’ve only been able to report on the people here but not your technology. You’ve been smart enough to keep me away from it and, honestly, I haven’t really tried. But he knows everything about you all that I do, work wise. I kept the, the personal things to myself.” He cut himself off for a moment, trying to keep control on his shields. He had them up as tight as possible to try and avoid feeling the hurt and anger he was sure they all felt.

“How have you been making your reports?” Charles asked him calmly. “All means of communication in and out of the mansion are monitored.”

“Sir is a mutant.” Spencer said softly. “His mutation is dream manipulation. He’s a low level telepath, essentially, but is extremely strong at manipulating dreams. He can step into my dreams and speak with me and control the dreams themselves. Or he can simply watch my dreams. He, he can also create dreams. Nightmares.” Embarrassed, he looked down at his lap. “He’s been sending them lately as my punishment. At our last dream conference, I showed him disrespect by questioning what he wanted to do here. I argued with him.”

Because he was looking down, Spencer didn’t see Logan open his mouth to speak, or Charles hold a hand up to silence him. “Tell us about how you came into Sir’s employment.” The Professor requested.
Employment. As if he’d ever had a choice in the matter. “Sir created me.” Spencer whispered. He went to bite at his lip as he usually did when nervous and flinched as he hit the cut there. It took him a moment to regain his composure enough to speak. “He took what he needed from three different donors and combined them to create me. Then, he implanted these inside of Diana Reid and she carried the creation, me, to term. She also carried four others before he finally broke her mind. I was the only one to survive. The others were failures. But I…I was everything he had hoped for. With my small healing and my electrical power, he said I was the perfect tool. Trained, I would be able to control anything he wanted through the technology the world is so fond of today.”

He had to pause to rest his throat for a moment. Remy let him drink some of the melted ice, wetting his throat enough that he could continue to talk. Closing his eyes, Spencer picked the story back up, forcing his voice as flat as possible so that no emotion leaked free.

“My high intelligence made me an even better tool. When he had me tested and found my IQ was 187, he was ecstatic. I pushed myself to always be as smart as possible for him, wanting to impress him. That was why I graduated high school at twelve, got my first degree at fourteen and my first doctorate at sixteen. He at least allowed me to pursue the degrees I was interested in. Thankfully, they coincided with what he wanted me to learn, though he thinks the philosophy was a waste of time. He sent me on little assignments as a teenager, gathering information here and there, slowly working my way up and proving myself more and more each time I did. My last assignment had been my biggest. It was one that Sir was already on and he brought me into it with him to assist him. I’ve been there for…for years.”

“What was it?” Jean asked him cautiously.

As if it was nothing, Spencer said “I worked for the behavioral analysis unit of the FBI. I was SSA Dr. Spencer Reid, the youngest agent to be allowed into the FBI and the resident genius. Doing so gave us access and clearance to view anything we needed in the federal databanks.”

It was Logan who broke the tension of the moment by laughing out loud. When all eyes turned to him, he snorted, still laughing. “I can’t picture you a fed, kid.” He said with a grin.

Whereas Logan was laughing, Scott seemed to have paled. He looked over to Spencer as he said “Wait. That dream…you mean that was…?”

“Part of the job, yes.” Spencer knew exactly what he was talking about. “We were in Georgia going after an Unsub and one of the other team members and I were at a house to interview someone about dogs. We happened to discover he was our Unsub. When we split up to get him, he hit me in the head and walked away with me. I spent two days with him before, well, you know the rest.”

That killed off Logan’s laughter. He was growling lightly, now.

Charles drew the conversation back on track. “You said Sir worked with you at the FBI, Spencer? Who was he? Who is Sir?”

“I don’t know what his real name is. At the Bureau, he worked in Counter Terrorism and went by the name Casey Smith. With some, he still uses that name. Otherwise, I only know him as Sir. He has always been Sir.”

“Where does Casey come from?”

That was a tricky question. Spencer licked his lips and tried to think of how to answer that. “I’m not entirely sure if what he told me is the truth. Once, when he’d drunk so much he could barely walk, he came and sat on my cage in the lab and talked to me for a while.” Lost in memories, Spencer
missed the way the others blanched at the word ‘cage’. “He told me that he’d been a great scientist in his time. But that people had sought to destroy his greatest works. Creatures that he’d created, like me. People had destroyed them, claiming it was too dangerous, and then they’d tried to banish him. So he’d gathered what tools he would need and he traveled come to this time and this place to stop them before they could ever stop him. He said he built the greatest tool ever made by mankind. Me.”

Spencer remembered that part clearly. He remembered that, as he’d said it, Sir had reached through the bars to lightly stroke Spencer’s hair with more gentleness than he’d ever shown before or since then. The memory of that random gentleness softened Spencer’s voice. “He said I was his greatest creation.”

A loud growl clearly told the room that Logan was reaching the end of his patience. “You’re not a damn tool or creation or creature. You’re a human, just like the rest of us!” he snarled out.

Surprise had Spencer looking up again. He’d thought for sure that they’d understand now. Why was Logan protesting this? Why wasn’t anyone else arguing with him? This simple fact had been the core of Spencer's world for his entire life. It was the one thing that he’d known from as far back as he could remember. “I’m not a human. I’m a product of three mutants, genetically engineered in a test tube and put into a woman. I’m a creature, Logan. Not a human, not a mutant. A thing. Don’t you realize that? It’s why my eyes are the way they are. I’m Inanime. Soulless.”

“The hell you are!” Logan growled back. He turned his head, looking to Scott and Jean. The three shared a look that carried a wealth of words. Something about the look on Jean’s face told him that the three were having a mental conversation. Whatever it was, they came to their conclusion quickly, a soft smile shared between them as they finally broke each other’s gazes.

Apparently the others understood what was going on. Hank looked to the trio, his eyes darting over to Spencer for a moment and then back to them. “Are you sure this is the right time?” he asked cautiously. What on earth was going on here?

Remy spoke up from Spencer’s side. “It’s de perfect time.” He said in a soft voice. “De rest of us should go work on our defenses and prepare just in case dis Casey connard decides to hit de school while he t’inks we’d be blindsided.”

“I agree.” Charles said with a nod. He looked up at Spencer. “When you are done speaking with them, get some rest, Spencer. I will come back and speak with you later. But let me say one thing to you now that I hope will set your mind at ease. You are, as you have been from the first day, welcome in my home.” With those kind and stunning words, Charles left the room, Jean trailing behind him after giving her two men one last look and a final smile. Hank looked at Spencer and told him “I’ll be back to check on you in a bit. Try not to move too much, young man.” Then he, too, was leaving. Spencer stared after him with emotion clogging his throat. Had he heard them right? Were they really going to let him stay, even after all this? Would they really let him stay here with them when they were potentially in a great deal of trouble because of him? It seemed impossible.

Remy started to leave too, granting them privacy for whatever was going on here. The thought of him leaving had panic filling Spencer. He knew it was irrational, but he couldn’t stop the fear that Remy wouldn’t come back if he left his sight—that he wouldn’t ever see him again. His brain told him that disappearing wasn’t something Remy would do. He’d promised he wouldn’t leave him and he was a man of his word. But the rest of him wasn’t listening to his brain.

That panic must have leaked past his shields. Remy stopped in mid turn, looking back to him. He brought a hand up to stroke his cheek. “I’ll be back. It’s just dat dis be a private moment, mon cœur. But I promise, I’ll be back, d’accord?”

“You can stay, Remy.” Scott said.
Logan nodded his agreement. “It’s fine with us, Gumbo. Probably a good idea anyways.”

That was all Spencer needed. Whatever was coming, he had a feeling it was going to be big. His stomach was twisting in knots and the fear was starting to build. For a brief moment he’d felt elated; the Professor was not yelling at him or sending him packing. No, he’d said he was welcome here. Actually welcome here! No one had seemed to judge him for his story. If anything, they’d been defending him! But what if it had all been a lie? What if they’d been afraid to tell him that he had to leave and they wanted Logan and Scott to do so now?

Spencer didn’t realize that his breathing had sped up until the pain started and Logan was suddenly by him, putting a hand over his heart. The look the feral wore was steady and firm. “Slow it down, pup. Slow you’re breathing down and take it easy. Focus here, remember? Inner calm.” He quoted the technique they used during their cool down from physical training. Spencer closed his eyes and focused on the rise and fall of his chest as Logan removed his hand; on drawing one breath in slowly and letting it out slowly. Only when he felt it was under control did he open his eyes.

“Whatever’s going on, just tell me and get it over with. Please.” He looked at Scott, who looked so nervous and worried all at the same time, and the back to Logan, who looked determined. Spencer met him stare for stare. “Tell me, please. Just say it straight out, no evasions.”

Logan nodded once and reached back to take Scott’s hand and pull him forward. “No evasions, pup.” He promised. Then he took a deep breath and dropped his bombshell. “Hank did his tests on your blood and isolated the three different DNA types. Your parents, basically. The woman and… and Scooter and I. Apparently we, the both of us, are your… your fathers.”

Silence fell over the room. Spencer looked around at them, one eyebrow arching up. When no one said anything else, he shook his head, the corners of his mouth quirking. “Ha, ha, guys. Nice icebreaker. Now, really, what is going on?”

Scott clutched Logan’s hand tighter and his voice was just a little hoarse when he spoke “He wasn’t kidding, Spencer. Hank said he checked it three times. Logan and I are your fathers.”

A look at their faces had Spencer pausing. Were they really serious? He couldn’t believe it. They had to be playing him. They just had to be! Cautiously he lowered his shields on his empathy, allowing himself to feel the emotions in the room. It took a second to sort through them and to figure out what belonged to who. From Remy he felt that warm feeling that had been there for a while, only stronger than ever, with the dimmer colors of concern weaved through it. But Spencer focused himself on Scott and Logan, searching their emotions to try and gauge the truthfulness of what they said. His heart skipped a beat when he felt nothing from them to suggest they were lying. “You’re serious, aren’t you?” he asked past lips that felt almost numb.

“Yeah. We wouldn’t lie to you about this.” Logan told him.

Sweet God, they were telling the truth. Spencer felt his eyes grow wide. “But…but that’s impossible!”

Scott wiped a hand over his mouth in a nervous gesture. “That’s what we thought, too. But if Sir—Casey—really did time travel, then it’s plausible that he gathered the necessary DNA from the future us. If he brought that back with him…”

“No, no.” Spencer interrupted. “That would be exactly what he did, but not at all what I meant. The science of it is entirely plausible. After working for him, I could do the same myself if I so chose, which I do not.”

“Then what did you mean?”
Wasn’t it obvious? How could they not see it? Spencer looked down at himself and looked back at them. “Well, look at me!” He finally said to them. How could they not understand? “There’s no way that something like me came from two people like you. I mean, kids are like their parents, aren’t they? I’m nothing like you guys. The two of you, you’re good people. You fight for the rights of everyone else and you take care of people and you protect them. I… I’m responsible for the death of innocents. I can’t be your, your son. I don’t even look like you two!”

“Actually, cher, y’ kind of do.” Remy interjected softly. He hitched his hip onto the side of the bed, offering Spencer a sweet smile. His hand came up to stroke over Spencer’s eyes, tracing the shape of them with a feather lite touch before moving up to his eyebrows. “You’ve got de shape of Scotty’s eyebrows here.” His hand slid down toward Spencer’s cheeks. “And his cheekbones. Y’ definitely got Summers in y’r face and in de tall, lanky body. But y’ have Wolvie’s chin and nose. Can’t believe I didn’t see if afore, me. Y’ve even got de second generation version of Wolvie’s healing, yeah?”

It seemed so impossible. There was no way a thing like him came from these two! Yet at the same time, his heart rose up just slightly at not only knowing who his parents were, but finding out that they were two people he cared for and respected. Good people. Honest people. He turned his eyes once more toward them—toward his fathers. “Are… are you sure? Really sure?” he whispered.

“Yeah, pup.” Logan was standing firm and strong, the obvious support for Scott, who looked beyond nervous. But Spencer could feel both their nerves. They were worried about his reaction to this as it settled in. The one he finally gave wasn’t what they’d expected at all. Closing his eyes, Spencer sent up a prayer to the God he didn’t even believe in. “Oh, thank you God. Thank you.” He opened his eyes and gave them a shaky smile, sensing their confusion. “All these years I…I was always afraid that, that Sir had used his own DNA… that I was his. Or that my real parents were, were monsters. He would never tell me. I, God, I can’t believe it.”

Scott edged just a little closer to the bed, his movements unsure. “Does this mean… are you okay with this, Spencer? Are you okay with us, you know, being your, well, your parents?”

“Of course I am!” Spencer answered so quickly, so honestly, there was no denying the sincerity of the words. “Why wouldn’t I be? You two are… you’re the nicest people I know. I can’t believe I’m lucky enough to have you as my parents.” Pausing, Spencer realized something and his face fell just slightly. “But I, well, I’d understand if you don’t, you know….I mean, I’m not exactly the uh, the type of person someone could be proud of…”

That seemed to be the final straw in the room. Whatever tension had been in Scott and Logan before was now gone. As a unit, the two moved right up to the head of the bed. Scott sat on the edge, his hand resting on Spencer’s arm while Logan moved to stand by his head, stroking his hair back from his face. “Now see here, Spencer.” Scott said firmly. “We are not ashamed of you. You are greater than you give yourself credit for and it drives me crazy that this Casey bastard raised you to look at yourself this way.”

“He’s right, kid. You’re a good person and the two of us, we’re proud to say that you’re our son. Don’t you ever doubt that. A man couldn’t ask for a better kid, you hear me?”

Looking from one to the other, Spencer knew that there was going to be quite a lot of talking that was going to have to be done and quite a few things that would still need to be figured out between the three of them. But, in that moment, none of it mattered. These two men were standing right here, offering him the one thing in the world that he’d always wanted the most. Family. And through all this, Remy stayed at his side, a silent support to this moment in Spencer’s life, radiating a warmth and caring that no one had ever showed him before and that made his heart swell with joy. Even though
he was exhausted beyond belief and he hurt from head to toe, in that moment he felt happier than he ever had in his whole life. “Yeah, I hear you.” He said with a soft smile.
Chapter 18

It wasn’t long after their discussion that sleep finally came and claimed Spencer. It took him down and under, his body unable to continue the battle it had been fighting. The young man had been mid-sentence when it finally took him. Smiling, Remy brought the blanket up a little further, tucking it around Spencer as gently as he could, trying not to aggravate his injuries further. With a jerk of his head he gestured to the two men that they should step out. On silent feet the three made their way to the main part of the lab. Once there, Remy looked straight to Hank. “He’s asleep, Henri. De boy, he won’t take well to waking on his own but I gotta go talk to de Professor, me. Will y’ sit with him till Remy gets back, s’il tu plait?”

“Of course, my friend. I will watch over him and guard him as he sleeps.” Hank promised. Gathering his book, he made his way to the other room.

Now that the most important thing was taken care of, Remy nodded at the other two. “Let’s go deal with dis, yeah? Den we can all get to doing what it is we want to do. First, we need to make sure y’r fils, y’r son, is safe, non?”

“Our son.” Scott smiled brightly as he said it. Spencer’s happy acceptance of this news seemed to have bolstered their spirits quite a bit. Their smiles never fully left their faces. As they made their way out of the lab, Scott looked to Logan. “I still can’t seem to wrap my brain around it. We have a son, Logan. A son. Our son.”

“A damn fine one, too.” Logan rumbled.

Grinning, Remy winked at his two friends. “Aint dat de truth, mes amies. Y’ got a beau boy back dere.”

A growl came from Logan, the tone of it slightly teasing, letting Remy know he wasn’t serious as he said “Hey now, you watch your mouth about my boy, Gumbo. You think I’m gonna let you get your slick Cajun hands on him?”

The doors to the War Room opened right as Remy let out a laugh and shot the couple an impish look. “Let’s get one t’ing straight here, y’ two. De boy may be y’r son, mais dat don’t mean Remy gonna be after asking fo’ permission. Dis t’ief don’t go asking fo’ t’ings; especially not him. Spencer’s already mine, he just don’t know it yet.”

The three inside the room were smiling at the trio that entered. “How is he doing?” Ororo called out to them.

Scott made his way to the security screens that Jean was sitting at. “He finally fell asleep.” He told them. Hand on her shoulder, he bent down and pressed a kiss to the crown of her head.

“Good.” Jean said, leaning back just a little into Scott’s touch. “That’s what his body needs. His injures were rather…severe.”

Charles looked up from the screen he was working at to look over at the others in the room. “Does Hank have any prognosis on how long Spencer’s recovery might take? And has anyone discovered what exactly happened?”

Perching on the edge of the table, Remy swung his legs, looking so very young in that brief moment. At least, until one got to his face. His expression was hard and his eyes were those of one who had seen far too much. “On de jet, Spencer told Remy dat dis was his punishment from his master fo’
trying to quit. Dat dis Sir connard t’inks we gonna kick him out and dat Spencer will come running back home.” He muttered a few choice curses before continuing on. “As fo’ de injuries, most look worse dan dey are and some are worse dan dey look. Both hands and some of de fingers be broken but Henri set dem and dey should heal up bon. Best as he can guess without de machine, dere’s three broken ribs, maybe more. His leg was broken, too. Of dem all, de gunshots be healing de best, actually. Dey’re cleaned and closed up. De rest be a mass of bruises and welts and scratches. Remy saw some of de marks. From a belt, dem.” For a second he had to pause to force his voice to be level. “At de most, gonna take a week fo’ him to heal, best guess. Could be a little more or a little less, out? Henri’s still learning bout how Spencer's healing works an how fast it might be. Now, Remy wanna get on back in dere, so let’s get dis taken care of. What can Remy do to help?” It was obvious he was done talking about the rest of it; they knew they’d get nothing more from him for now.

“I need you to run a security check, Remy.” Charles instructed him. “We need to make sure that no one has been trying to get into the system and that no one is going to be able to. The rest of us are trying to gather as much information on this Casey Smith as we possibly can.” Twisting, Charles looked over to Scott, knowing that what he was about to say would not be received well. “If there’s a chance of an attack on this school or its members, the rest of the team has a right to know. We need to call a meeting and inform everyone of what’s going on.”

Just as he’d expected, Scott’s head snapped up and Logan growled. Even Jean turned tense. She looked up from between her men, a hint of fire snapping in her gaze. But what surprised Charles was Remy. The Cajun had made his way to the computer to run his check, which had put him right beside Scott. At Charles’s words, Remy reached out and laid a hand on Scott’s arm. “Scotty, y’ know he’s right. Mais, we can’t let others be unprepared and maybe hurt just cause we wanna protect Spencer. He wouldn’t want dat and y’ know it.” Those red-on-black eyes turned over to Logan and Jean. “We gotta let de others know de truth so dey can help keep everyone safe, mes amis.”

“Spencer has a right to be there.” Ororo interjected. When it looked like there would be protests, she raised a hand to stave them off. “You know there are some that are going to be full of accusations and other negative things. He has the right to defend himself.”

Logan made a scoffing sound. “He won’t. He’ll just take it as his due.”

“But it would do him well, I believe, to see that others will back him.” Charles said thoughtfully. “And he will have invaluable input for our defenses.”

“We need to meet soon and he’s still sleeping.” Scott pointed out. “And Hank isn’t going to let you wake him up to run this meeting.”

Charles nodded at his words. “The meeting does not need to be immediate. I do not believe that this Casey will attack immediately. From the sounds of this, his hope is that Spencer will be evicted from our home and will have to return to him. If he’s worked this hard to make the perfect weapon out of Spencer, then he’s not going to want to do anything that would damage him unless there is irrefutable proof that Spencer will not return to him. Most likely he will give us a day or more before he moves against us. Though I do believe he will go into hiding until then, as he would have to know that we are going to look for him.”

Making his way toward the door, Charles told them “I’m going to go speak with Hank and see about setting up this meeting later. If there are any problems that arise, come find me immediately.” And with that he left the members of his team to protect the place they all called home.
If Spencer hadn’t been so tired, nightmares would have jerked him from his sleep only a short time after he went out. But his body had been through so much that it took all the sleep it could, keeping him under even as the nightmares plagued him. When he finally woke once more, a gasp was caught in his throat, eyes snapping wide and his body instinctively trying to curl in on itself. At least, until he felt a familiar pair of arms holding him and that sweet, husky voice whispering in his ear. “Shh, shh, y’r okay, mon cœur. It’s just de dreams, Spencer. Y’r safe.”

Though it made his hand hurt, Spencer brought it up and rested it over Remy’s arm which was lying over his chest. Slowly he felt his brain making that full switch to reality. He was lying on his back, still in the hospital bed in the Med Lab, with Remy curled up against his side, one leg thrown over his good one and an arm across his chest, his face nuzzled in against the side of Spencer’s head. The lights above were dim but, thankfully, not off.

Remy moved his arm, but only enough for his hand to reach Spencer’s face. His fingers were gentle as they wiped away the tears that Spencer just now realized he’d been crying. His heart was still pounding from the terror of that dream. It had felt so real! All he could seem to do was hold his aching hand to Remy’s arm, grateful that he was here and alive and safe.

Shifting, Remy propped himself up on his other arm so that he could look down into Spencer’s face. “It’s okay, mon cœur. Look at me. I’m right here with you, yeah? I’m right here and nothing’s gonna happen to y’.”

“Shit.” Spencer finally managed to say. The word kind of shuddered its way out. Nuzzling his face into Remy’s hand, he breathed out “Shit” again.

“Y’r still having dem cauchemars.” At the look Spencer gave him, Remy translated. “Nightmares, cher. Y’ been sleeping bad de whole time y’ been out. Could feel de fear from y’ and y’ kept trying to toss and turn, yeah. Slept better once I got in here with y’, dat’s f’sure.”

“I couldn’t seem to wake myself up. My body was too tired and even though I knew they were dreams, I couldn’t pull out of them. It seemed to go on forever.”

Remy’s thumb was gently tracing over Spencer’s cheekbone. “Mais, y’ been out fo’ de whole night, cher. It’s eleven in de de morning now.”

“What?” Surprise had Spencer’s eyebrows winging up.

“Oui, cher. Henri said dat y’r body just had too much and dat y’ pushed it too hard after being hurt. He said it finally gave in and shut down on y’ so dat it could heal some.”

That meant he’d been out for hours and hours. Cautiously, Spencer shifted his weight, testing the aches and pains in his body. His lips curled just a little when he realized that, even though he still hurt, he was definitely in less pain than before. He looked down to his chest and saw that a lot of the bruises were gone; the ones that were left were down to healing colors. Bruises always healed quickly. There were none of the small cuts that had been there before, either.

Silent, Remy stayed still, allowing Spencer to run inventory on himself. The breaks in Spencer’s fingers were obviously still there—that one he knew to expect. Any breaks he’d ever had, had never healed in less than four days. The worse the break, the longer it took. His hands and ribs would probably be healed in four days, but his leg, that one he felt would probably take a full week, especially with the gunshot in his thigh on that leg. That gunshot would take a few days to heal, while the one in his shoulder would most likely take anywhere from five days to a week. That one had been dangerous. It could have permanently damaged that arm if Sir had shot just a little off. All in all, he had a little bit of healing ahead of him. He could speed it up, though, with a bit of
electricity. His healing factor was directly related to the electricity that coursed inside of him, so drawing in little more here and there would only help to accelerate that process.

“Well, nightmares or not, at least I slept through the first part of healing. Moving should be a little easier now.” Spencer said philosophically. The injuries themselves didn’t really matter. Now that he knew what was there and what wasn’t, he was free to focus on what was important. “Has anything happened while I was out? Did Sir come here? What’s going on?”

The hand on Spencer’s cheek moved over to press on his lips and stop his flow of questions. “Slow down dere, cher.” Remy said with a mock stern look. “Everything’s going fine. Aint been no trouble and we done checked the security and double checked it so dat dere won’t be no chance of anyone getting in or close without warning.”

Thank God for that. At least everyone was safe. “Has Charles told the other X-Men yet? Everyone needs to know so they can keep an eye out and be safe. I don’t want anyone getting hurt because of me.”

“We were waiting fo’ y’, cher.” Remy said. His smile was soft and slightly amused. Before Spencer could ask what was funny, Remy was continuing. “Supposed to let him know when y’r up, me. Den we can set up de meeting and get dis all taken care of at once, yeah. Telling de others and getting information from y’ at de same time.” Yet, instead of getting up, Remy lay back down and curled up against Spencer’s side once more.

It was peaceful to lay there with Remy’s weight against his side. Somehow, the trouble he knew was waiting for him when he got up just faded to the background, at least for now. They would still be waiting when he got up but that was fine. For just this little bit he would stay here in Remy’s embrace and pretend that everything was going to be okay. That he was a normal person and capable of having normal, regular relationships.

But even the fantasy wasn’t meant to be. Hank came walking into the room, smiling brightly when he saw that Spencer was awake. “Ah! You’ve finally arose, my friend. Might I say how wonderful it is to see you awake and looking at me one more. I was almost worried about you with as long as you slept.” The gentle doctor made his way to the bed with his stethoscope in hand, his intent obvious. Spencer sighed and resigned himself to what was coming. “I’m feeling quite a bit better.” He reassured Hank. “Really, big guy. My healing factor works just fine, you know. I’ll be all right in a few days.”

“Yes, well, I will be the judge of that, I think.” Hank told him calmly.

Spencer was well used to doctors and simply zoned out while Hank looked him over. His body responded to any physical command that Hank gave, but his mind wasn’t there for it. No, he was busy thinking ahead, plotting out what needed to be done. None of these people knew Sir quite like he did. None of them would be able to understand Sir’s mind quite like Spencer would. Once Sir figured out that Spencer wasn’t going to come crawling back, he would come after him. Spencer wasn’t stupid enough to think that it wouldn’t happen. He was Sir’s property—his greatest invention. Thinking that he would simply be able to walk away had been the stupidest thing he’d ever done.

He’d had plenty of time to think about this. Through the beating, being dropped off, waiting for his friends to arrive and through the treatment he’d had to get here, Spencer’s brain had been running over everything as a way to distract him from how much he hurt. He’d been able to see every moment that he’d been stupid; every little thing that he’d done wrong. How could he have thought that Sir would ever just let him walk away? The man had worked hard to genetically engineer a tool. Others had died when they hadn’t fit the bill. What had made him become dumb enough to think that he would simply be let free?
A look to the side answered that question. Spencer was sitting up now so that Hank could listen to his lungs, meaning Remy had moved out of the way. He stood alongside the bed now, watching Spencer curiously. This man right here was the reason that Spencer had been dumb enough to take a risk like this. The emotions in Remy, the ones he created inside of Spencer, were like nothing Spencer had ever felt before. They had blinded him to the truth. What he felt for everyone in the mansion had blinded him to the truth. In his effort to protect them, he’d been foolish and it had almost cost him his life and theirs. Well, he wouldn’t make that mistake again.

The way he saw it, there were little options to him right now. Number one: he could show them how to protect themselves and then walk away. Number two: he could show them how to protect themselves and then remove himself entirely from the equation. That made him shudder. Suicide was melodramatic and not something he wanted to contemplate. Number three: he could return to Sir and try to stop him from that side. Or, last, number four: he could help them defend against Sir and put them at risk by staying. Those were the only options he saw. There was no way he could just walk away from them; he had to help them be protected. They wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for him!

If he’d been out all night and part of the morning, he’d wasted precious time. On the plus side, his body was healed enough that movement should be manageable. Remy had said they were waiting on Spencer to wake up to have their meeting. Well, he was awake. It was time to prepare.

As Hank finished his exam, making a notation on his chart, Spencer turned to look at Remy. “Would you mind going and getting me some pants, honey?”

“You may have a gown.” Hank said before Remy could answer. “But you do not need pants, as you do not need to be leaving this bed, Spencer.”

Not even bothering to look at Hank, he kept his eyes on Remy. “Please, honey?” he said gently. Spencer could see that Remy understood what was going on, just as he seemed to understand that this was not something Spencer was going to be deterred from. The Cajun reached down and pulled up a bag, setting it on the side of the bed. “I had a feeling y’d be like dis, yeah.” Remy said wryly. “So I grabbed dese b’fore I came back down. Dere’s pajama pants in here and a few loose shirts. Easy on and off t’ings fo’ y’.”

“Thank you.” Smiling, Spencer gently sat up a little more, trying to turn his legs enough to swing them off the bed. But Hank reached right over him and grabbed the bag, yanking it away from the two. His glare was fierce when he leveled it at Spencer. “You are injured and you are my patient!” he said warningly. “And I will decide when it is you dress and leave my lab, young man. Now lay back down!”

Typically, Spencer wouldn’t have questioned a doctor. This wasn’t a typical situation, though. There was more at stake here than just Spencer’s health. He didn’t even bat an eye at Hank. Instead, he pulled the blanket off of him, grimacing at the feel of moving his hand, and continued to move his legs toward the edge. It was only Remy’s help that allowed him to get his broken leg down to the ground without extreme pain. Even so, he still went slightly pale. There was no cast on any of his breaks; there would’ve been no point with as fast as they healed. To better monitor the breaks as they healed, Hank had simply splinted and wrapped all of them. Spencer’s hands were splinted and then wrapped to his fingertips to keep them still. His leg had a tall splint on it as well as tight wrapping. Even so, he was smart enough to know he probably shouldn’t walk on it. But he was not going to just sit here.

“Sit back down!” Hank frantically hurried around the bed and reached out to Spencer, putting his hands on his shoulders to gently keep him seated on the edge of the bed. “Spencer, listen to me. You do not need to be up and you definitely do not need to be walking. You need rest, young man. As I
told Charles, anyone that needs to see you may come down here. You do not need to be up and about.”

“Then I suggest you find a wheelchair somewhere, because I am not staying in here.” Despite the pain, Spencer’s voice was firm and level. “A proper meeting can’t be held in here and that’s what needs to happen. I’m going one way or another. Whether I walk or go in a wheelchair is up to you.”

“And if I refuse? If I choose not to allow you up from this bed?”

Staring right into Hank’s eyes, Spencer lifted one hand, the brace there not enough to stop him from gathering a small skim of electricity over it, and met his friend threat for threat. “Then I’ll Taser you and leave anyways, big guy. There are lives more important than mine at risk. Children. I absolutely refuse to stay down here in this bed when I could be doing something useful to save their lives.” Spencer slowly rose up onto his good leg, his eyes locked on Hank’s face. The doctor had released him and was standing there, staring at him with surprise. Spencer didn’t like to threaten friends, but he would not let anyone stop him from this. “Now, this is all happening because of me. Sir will come here because of me. I will not be responsible for another innocent life, Hank McCoy. As much as I respect you and care for you, either bring me a wheelchair and give me my pants, or I will shock you and do it myself. The choice is yours.”

Neither had paid any attention to Remy during their confrontation. The other man had taken advantage of that moment to go and fetch a wheelchair himself. He also took back the bag with Spencer’s clothes. In the silence of the moment he stepped forward, pants in hand, and pointed to the bed. “Sit down and let me get y’r pants on, cher. De last t’ing y’ need is to be meeting people while naked. Much as I like de view, I doubt y’r pères want to see dis.”

Spencer carefully sat down on the edge of the bed, pulling the electricity from his hand and back in for now, allowing Remy to squat down and slide his legs into the pants so gently that it barely disturbed Spencer’s injury. Oh, his leg was on fire, there was no denying that. It was a burning, throbbing, aching mass of flesh and bone. But it wasn’t going to stop him. Nothing was.

While Remy helped Spencer into the pants and then a shirt, Hank stood silently nearby, looking stunned by what had happened. When it came time for Spencer to get from the bed to the chair, though, the man was there to help, gently easing Spencer down and getting his splinted leg adjusted in the lift on the end of the chair made just for that purpose.

Once settled, Spencer looked up at Hank, biting softly on his lip before finally saying “I’m sorry, big guy. I really am.”

Hank looked down at him and shook his head before bringing a hand up and resting it on Spencer’s shoulder. “I understand, my friend. There are no hard feelings. Do what you need to and then we shall bring you back down here. But,” He held a finger up, his expression going stern. “if I think you are pushing too hard and that you cannot handle any more, I will carry you back down here, shock or no shock. Are we clear on this?”

“Crystal.” Spencer mustered up a small smile.

“Good. Then let’s go get this done so we can get you back in bed.”
Okay, mes amies, we're down to the end here. I've got one more chapter left to edit and then another chapter or two that I have notes on that need written, so this may slow down for a day or two as I put the end of this story together. Be a little patient with me!

Hank must have called ahead because it took no time at all after Remy and Spencer were in the war room before everyone else came filing in, Hank included. Something of Spencer's serious mood must have been showing because no one said anything as they stepped inside and moved to their seats. Or maybe it was just looking at his battered body that kept them quiet. He knew he presented a pretty pitiful image at the moment. Spencer’s chair had been brought up to the table as best it could; behind him, Remy took up post, his hands resting on the back of the chair. After the revelation he’d received before falling asleep, it didn’t surprise Spencer that Logan sat to one side of him and Scott to the other. Somewhere inside he was still trying to process that bit of news. Parents! These men were his parents! The joy that brought to his heart was more than any he’d known. Their support now, with both of them knowing what it was he was going to share here, meant quite a lot to him. Remy felt the swell of emotion and put a hand on Spencer’s good shoulder, lightly squeezing there.

Once everyone was gathered and seated, Charles started to explain that Spencer had been in an accident that had brought to light certain bits of information. As he gave his introduction speech, Spencer observed the others. On Scott’s left was Jean and the look she gave Spencer was so strong and sympathetic, yet fierce at the same time. She nodded at him and Spencer knew that, with that look and nod, she was letting him know that she was on his side and that she was going to be just as protective as her boys were. Spencer realized that he hadn’t really gained two parents here. Judging by the look that Jean was giving him, he’d gained three. That was something that he was going to have to think on later.

Next to Jean sat the Professor, who looked as calm as always. Not much really ruffled that man. Next was Rogue, who looked confused but was watching Charles, waiting for him to speak. After her was Jubilee, her eyes darting between Charles and Spencer, back and forth. Then Hank, who was also calm and collected. He was another that wasn’t easily ruffled. Beside him sat Bobby, and then Warren, each of them watching Charles intently. Warren was deliberately not looking at Spencer. After him came Betsy, whose hand rested on his arm, her body turned toward the Professor but her eyes on Spencer. He felt her soft touch on the outside of his shields, not trying to get in, simply probing at him. It wasn’t the first time she’d done it. He didn’t mind. She never got in. After her was the serene Ororo, who sat with her back straight and her chin lifted. Then the circle rounded off with Logan.

All eyes abruptly found their way to Spencer. He startled, drawing out of his thoughts, as he realized that Charles had stopped talking. Everyone was looking at him now, waiting for him to start talking. Waiting for him to tell his tale.

It was time to come clean.

Spencer tucked his chin slightly and tried to make himself sit strong. Gathering strength for what he knew was coming, he began with the simplest, yet the hardest words of all. “I am a traitor.”
Almost instantly there was sound from either side of him. Spencer lifted one splinted hand and shook his head. “No. It’s the truth and I know it. I’m everything you ever said about me and more, Warren. You were right to mistrust me. Let me tell you the story…” And so, for the second time, Spencer told his story. He told of his creation, of Sir’s drunken explanation that suggested time travel, of who and what he really was. Without hiding anything, he told of his last mission and of being pulled from it to come to this one. He told them exactly what he was supposed to do. The only thing he didn’t tell them was Lyle’s story, or any involvement of Lyle at all. That was not his tale to tell. He also didn’t mention Hank’s discovery of his parentage. There was no need for them to be painted with the same brush as him. Let the others hate him for this, not them.

There was a pause then in which Remy gave him some water, wetting his throat and giving him a second to rest his voice. When he was done, he took a deep breath and then he told them about the dream meetings and the nightmares that were sent to him—though he didn’t tell them the content of the nightmares—and the decision that he’d finally come to. Finally, for the first time, he told of what had happened when he left the mansion; his meeting with Sir and the resulting visit at the end with the mutant Ja—“Sir had used him before. He’s a mutant that doesn’t have an offensive power, but he can nullify energy around him. He can’t do anything with it; he simply nullifies it.”—and his subsequent drop at the hospital.

When he was finally done, his throat was hoarse from so much talking and his mouth and throat hurt when he took the water that Remy gave him. Shields up high, he looked around him, trying to gauge the reactions. For a single moment no one spoke. Warren broke that silence with a snarl. “I knew you were a damn traitor.” He looked both furious and vindicated all at the same time. “Is this story supposed to make us feel sorry for you? Make us believe your sincerity?”

“You would doubt him after hearing that?” Jean asked incredulously.

Warren turned to look at her. “You don’t? It doesn’t sound to me like a person turning a new leaf. It sounds like a guy who pissed off his boss and now he’s looking to scurry to another protector. I don’t doubt his boss had him beat—that’s obvious by looking at him. But that doesn’t mean that he really had a change of heart.” His expression cold, Warren looked back to Spencer. “You’re just a whore looking for a free ride and protection. You may’ve manipulated everyone else, but I know better than to fall for your shit.”

“Watch your damn mouth, Wings, or I’ll watch it for you.” Logan snarled out. He held one hand up, letting his claws slide free.

To the surprise of the room, Bobby was the one to speak up next, looking just as angry as Warren. “He’s had you guys wrapped around his finger from the get go! How can you trust him after he openly admitted that he was lying to us the whole time?”

“Because we knew.” Scott said calmly. He didn’t flinch from the sharp gazes that turned his way. “From that first day, some of us knew that he was being used by someone. We just weren’t sure who or for what purpose. We’ve been watching him carefully and trying our hardest to earn his trust because we saw what you apparently do not.”

“I see him clear enough. He puts it right out there for everyone to see. He’s a whore. And if you think he can’t be easily bought to switch sides, you’re a fool.” Warren said nastily.

There was a sudden upsurge of energy behind Spencer and he knew without looking that Remy was holding up charged cards. Anger was radiating off of him that Spencer could feel. No one else got a chance to protest Warren’s words before Remy spoke up. “Aint gonna warn y’ again, Ange. Y’ watch y’r mouth when y’r talking bout Spencer. Keep it up and Gambit gonna come over dere and show y’ just what happens when y’ piss off a whore.” The threat was delivered in a low, hard voice.
that those in the room had rarely ever heard from their Cajun friend.

“All of us have done stupid shit.” Rogue suddenly said into the silence of the room. Her words effectively drew eyes to her and away from the fight that had been about to break out. Sure that she had everyone’s attention, she continued. “We’ve all done shit we ain’t proud of. Who the hell are we to sit here and judge him for it? We’ve done that before and we were wrong then.” Her eyes lifted to Remy, letting everyone know what she referred to, and there was honest regret on her face. Spencer knew from the information he’d read before coming here. She was talking about the trial in Antarctica. “We judge Spencer now and we’re making the same mistakes all over again. I ain’t seen nothing from him that makes me think he’d betray us. After hearing his story, I can see where he came from and I can see the courage it took to open up.” She looked at Spencer and gave him a smile that was sweet and kind. “No matter what that overgrown bird says, you got me on your side, sugar.”

“And me.” Jubilee piped up in her ever perky voice. She shot a glare at Warren and Bobby before leaning on the table to look down at Spencer. “Maybe you did stupid things, but it’s like Rogue said. We all have. You’re willing to change and make it right. That seems enough to me, you know?”

Next was Betsy, surprising the man sitting next to her. “I’m sorry, War.” She said, shaking her head at him. “I love you, but you’re not thinking clearly. I believe he’s a good person in his heart. Hearing all this only makes me believe it more. He deserves a chance, Warren. He does.”

Scott lifted his chin just slightly and angled his body toward Spencer’s. “There’s more he didn’t tell you, but this, it’s not bad news. We think it’s good news and it’s something you all deserve to know.” He said.

Shock had Spencer’s mouth dropping open. They were really going to tell them? Really? He couldn’t believe it. No. Scott had to be talking about something else. There was no way they’d claim him right here in front of everyone. Once Bobby and Warren knew, they’d tell everyone. There’d be no keeping it a secret. Scott and Logan wouldn’t want the world to know they had a whore for a son. Would they?

Apparently they would. In his usual blunt way, Logan dropped the news on them all. “Hank did the testing on the pup’s blood. The DNA this bastard brought back from the future to make him with, it was mine and Scott’s. Biologically, we’re the kid’s parents.”

“This means that, no matter what you feel, he’s not going anywhere.” Scott snapped out. In that instant he didn’t sound like the leader of this group. No, he sounded pissed.

“He’s right.” Jean added in, her voice just as firm. “Whatever’s decided here, Spencer’s ours now, and we’ll protect him with or without you all. We won’t abandon him.”

Spencer couldn’t believe it. He honestly could not believe what they had just done. It made no sense to him. Why would they tell people that he was their son? It made him so happy that he not only had parents, but parents that seemed to actually want him. But it didn’t mean that he understood it. Not only did they want him, but they were defending him! Hell, everyone was defending him here! Scott, Jean, Logan, Remy—even Rogue, Jubilee and Betsy! This made no sense to him. “I don’t understand any of you.” Spencer said suddenly. He didn’t realize he was interrupting conversation; their words had long since faded out for him as his own thoughts consumed him. But now he was staring at them all in confusion.

Charles calmly looked back at him and asked “What do you not understand, Spencer?”

“You people. This. It doesn’t make any sense.” He gestured at them all with one hand. “All of you
should be angry with me. You should be throwing me out the door or locking me up in a cell. Not…
not this. You’re defending me when you should be furious with me. And you two!” Now his eyes
went from Scott to Logan and back again. The words were spilling from him, the lock that had been
holding everything back no longer there, and those in the room got their first taste of the real
Spencer, one who spoke openly and bluntly without thought. “I respect the two of you in ways I
never have anyone else before in my life. To find out you’re my fathers, it, it makes me happier than
ever. To think a whore like me came from two great people is amazing. I’m always going to be
proud, knowing you’re my fathers. But…it makes no sense for you two to publicly claim me. I’m
nothing to be proud of. I’m a dirty little secret you hide from people, not openly share with them.
And you…” He twisted just enough that he could look up at Remy. “I understand you least of all.”

Remy bent his head and pressed a soft kiss to Spencer’s forehead. “Dat’s cause aint no one ever
loved y’ b’fore, mon cœur. Y’r history, it don’t change what I feel fo’ y’. Didn’t fall in love with y’r
past. I fell in love with de man I met here; de man y’ showed me y’ are. Not in words, but in actions.
Seen y’r heart, cher. Felt it. Dat, y’ can’t hide and y’ can’t fake.” Oh so gently he cupped his hands
over Spencer’s cheeks and bent, letting their lips brush lightly. When he pulled back, his smile was
wide, pulling an answering smile from Spencer. The Cajun projected that warm feeling, so bright
and beautiful, so that Spencer felt like he was wrapped in it. “Y’r m’ heart now, cher. Mon cœur.
Nothing’s gonna change dat.”

“I’m not a good person, Remy. You deserve someone who can give you the love in return that you
deserve.” Spencer couldn’t stop himself from whispering those words. The idea of Remy walking
away was like ripping his heart out, but he had to do it. He’d never loved another, but it was the only
word he could think of to describe the all-consuming emotion that Remy inspired in him.

Again, Remy just smiled at his words, projecting more warmth—no, not warmth, he realized. Love.
Remy was projecting his love. “Mais, cher. Remy aint an angel. Y’ know some of m’ history I bet. If
y’r boss is any good, y’ know some t’ings about us. I tol’ y’ some t’ings too on m’ own. Hell, I know
I mentioned m’ wife to y’. Can’t judge y’ for working fo’ a bastard when I done worked fo’ Sinister.
Can’t judge y’ fo’ being a whore when I done been one. Hell, I aint perfect, cher! I’m married to an
assassin!”

One of his and Remy’s many random conversations flashed into Spencer’s mind. He’d heard him
talk about his wife Belle before, but Remy had never mentioned she was an assassin. Not until now.
Shock had his mouth dropping open as his brain made a few connections and pieced together what
was in front of him. “Belle’s an assassin?” He said hoarsely.

His chair was pulled back and turned and then Remy was moving in front of him, squatting down by
his leg so he could look at him. Concern and a touch of fear were on Remy’s face. It looked like
there was a lot he wanted to say, but finally he settled for simply saying “Oui.”

Shit! “Bella Donna?”

“Oui.”

“Oh.” For a second longer Spencer just stared at him. Then, he couldn’t help it. Even with
everything going on around them at the moment and all the trouble that was hanging over their
heads, Spencer stared right at Remy and gave way to the giggles that suddenly made their way up his
throat. He laid his head back as the giggles turned to chuckles and then to a full blown laugh. He had
to wrap one arm around his stomach to hold his ribs as they protested, but he couldn’t stop the
laughter.

Trying to smother the laughter, he looked back over at Remy, who was still squatting in front of him.
The man was watching him with a half-smile, enjoying Spencer’s happiness but confused as to its
source. Spencer managed to get his chuckles under control enough to finally explain. “It’s a small world. I did a job down in New Orleans once for Sir when a case took me down there. I ended up having to steal something from, apparently, your wife. Last that I knew, there’s still a bounty on my head down there.”

Jaw dropping open, Remy went utterly still. “Hold on now.” Holding out one hand, he brought his other up to take his shades off so that he could better look at Spencer’s face. “Don’t tell me y’r de one dat stole de necklace from m’ wife! Thought y’ only gathered information fo’ de man?”

That was enough to have Spencer’s laughter dissolving. He stared at Remy, unsure if the man was seriously upset, or what exactly was going on. “I’m his tool, Remy. There’s nothing he didn’t make sure I knew how to do. He hired out others so that I wasn’t constantly working and so he didn’t have to risk me on jobs that weren’t as important, but I am his most important tool. He trained me in every field there was. Someone offered him a lot of money for that necklace. So, while I was there getting some…information and working a case with the BAU, he sent me to fetch it for him.”

“Merde, homme!” Remy’s eyes had gone wide in his face. “Y’ mean I gotta tell m’ petit ami is de one dat stole from m’ wife?” The shock on his face started to transform. Humor, brightened by…was that pride? Testing, Spencer lowered his shields enough to feel at Remy. It was pride. Then he had no more time to think about it. The Cajun grabbed the armrests of the wheelchair and yanked himself up, bracing his hands there as he kissed Spencer, short and hard. When he pulled back they were both grinning. Remy turned to look at his friends. “Did y’ hear dat, cher? Stolt it, right from m’ wife! From Belle!”

Jubilee looked around in confusion before leaning over to Rogue. “Why is he happy Spencer stole from his wife?”

Snorting, Rogue kicked back a little in her chair, grinning slightly at them. “Cause it takes a lot of skill to steal from someone like Belle, sugar.” She explained to her friend. “That woman’s one tough old lady. To get in and steal a necklace of hers would take talent. That means Spencer gotta be at least as talented as Rems.”

“Another thief in the house?” Jean said teasingly. “Whatever are we coming to?”

Spencer was still smiling at Remy. Pride had been the last reaction he’d expected. Then again, from a Master Thief, it was a logical reaction, really. Just to make Remy smile at him that way again, Spencer looked at him and told him “If things end up okay here, I’ll tell you where it’s at now. Maybe if we bring it back she won’t try to kill me.”

“Pfft.” Remy snorted out a laugh. “Dat femme t’reatens to kill me all de time. She aint gonna do it and she aint gonna touch y’ or she knows what I’d do to her.”

“Yes, well. Might we bring things back to the task at hand?” Charles called out to them all. With just that comment he brought everyone’s attention back to the subject they’d originally come in for. Remy straightened and moved behind Spencer’s chair again, turning him back toward the table. With all eyes on him, Charles nodded and spoke once more. “We need to increase our security on the school and keep an eye on our computer systems. I want patrols increased and a check on all systems to make sure everything is in place. Our first priority is to maintain the safety of the children we still have here.”

Chewing on his lip, Spencer lifted a hand slightly. “Boss?” he called out. When Charles looked at him, he said “Sir won’t go for the kids. Not with where they’re set up in the mansion. He’d factor in the unpredictability of young mutants powers and would consider them too much of a risk. No, he’ll come in silently, or he’ll send it someone else. Contract it out to people he thinks will do the job. I
"don’t see him directly attacking the school."

"Why not?" Hank asked him. "If he realizes that we are not giving you up, he would realize that we
know everything you’ve told him."

"But that’s exactly it. He’s not going to come here where we’ve had the ability to prepare for him.
He’ll draw us out somewhere with something he feels we can’t resist. Important rule in battle—never
fight on their turf if you can avoid it. Always draw them to your own. He’ll wait, too. He won’t
attack right away. He’ll be convinced we’ll be preparing for him to attack. He’ll also be waiting to
see if I’ll be coming back to him."

"What would you recommend?" Charles asked.

那 set Spencer back for a moment. He looked down, furrowing his brow, trying to put himself in
the right mindset to think like Sir. To think of what Sir would do and how best to counteract it. What
would be the best way to fix this? "You’re all his target. Yes, he’ll seek to regain me, but he’s going
to want to cause as much damage to you as possible. After all, taking down the X-Men was his goal
at the start of this. You can either wait for him to draw you out and fight him that way and hope you
survive, or you can take the fight to him. But…not in the way he expects. Don’t directly attack him."

"Attack the limbs, not the heart." Scott mused. He turned to look at Spencer. Suddenly his voice was
that of the leader once more. "We know he won’t stay at the penthouse that you went to. That would
be suicide. What do you think he’ll do for a residence as this happens? Will he stay in New York or
return to wherever his home is?"

Spencer didn’t hesitate to answer. "No, he won’t go home. He’ll stay close so that he can act at what
he deems an opportune moment." As he spoke, Spencer didn’t notice the way his speech improved,
losing some of that street edge that he’d been putting there, taking on the air to it that he’d cultivated
as Dr. Reid. His natural way of speaking. "I don’t know where he’d pick, as New York isn’t a base
for him. But he wouldn’t return home for now. He’ll also be watching to make sure none of us leave
here and head to there. If they do, he’d remote access his network and wipe everything and call
security to clear it out long before we got there."

"What if we had a way to leave here quietly, without anyone being the wiser?"

Smiling a little, Spencer thought it out. "Then I’d say give me another few days to heal and I’ll lead
you straight to where you need to go."

"I wasn’t proposing to take you." Scott said instantly.

The smile Spencer gave him was sharp and lethal. It was the most mercenary look any of them had
ever seen on his face. None of them had ever truly seen him angry the entire time he’d been there. “I
wasn’t making a proposition.” He said coolly. “I will do this. Plus, what you need to do to get in isn’t
something I can simply tell you and off you go. The only other person that would have a chance of
getting in would be Remy and I doubt even he could manage it alone. I only can because I know the
system. We designed it together."

For a long moment Scott just stared at Spencer. Off to the side, Warren looked at them with wide
eyes. "You can’t seriously be thinking about this, Scott!" He demanded furiously. "It’s gonna be a
trap! Can’t you see that? He’ll lure a team right there to the lab and everyone’ll be killed. You can’t
seriously be thinking of this!"

Scott didn’t even look at him. He was still looking at Spencer. "How long until you’re physically
capable of handling this kind of excursion?" He finally asked.
“Minimum, as best as I can figure, is five days. I need my hands fully operational.” Spencer didn’t even hesitate in his answer.

There was another pause before Scott nodded. “I choose the team.”

“I’m bringing Remy.” Spencer warned. This he would not budge on. “Not for personal reasons, but for professional. I need his skills. I can do it alone, but it’ll be easier with someone to help me.”

“Deal.”

As the voices started arguing around the table once more, some crying out for this not to be done, others trying to add their input, Spencer sat back in his chair. He felt Remy step closer to the back of his chair and then a hand was on his forehead, tipping his head back so that it rested against Remy’s stomach. “Just relax a bit, cher. We’ll get y’ on back to bed here shortly.”

“Can’t sleep yet.” Spencer murmured. But that didn’t mean that he couldn’t sit here for a little while and just enjoy the hand that was now stroking through his hair. The rest of it would be handled in a minute. Right then, he was content.
Chapter 20

Spencer was drifting in and out of sleep when the group finally broke apart. He was so out of it he didn’t even really notice some of them starting to leave until Remy shifted him a little. “Let’s get y’ back to bed, cher.” He murmured quietly to Spencer. “Y’r bout falling asleep in here.”

“Not yet.” Blinking to make himself wake up, Spencer looked around, seeing the others that were casually talking. Their noise provided him with enough cover that he was able to turn and ask Remy something without being overheard. “Which telepath would you trust the most to step inside your head and do only what you asked them to?” His tone was extremely serious and Remy picked up on that. He didn’t hesitate or ask questions, simply answering “Jean.”

Nodding, Spencer rubbed at his face. “Then would you ask her to join us in the Med Lab, please, honey? It’s important.”

“I’ll do it.” Logan offered. He turned in his seat and looked at them. “You go get him back in the lab, Gumbo. I’ll bring Jeannie. Less time pup’s in that chair, the better it’ll be for him. Bed’s where he needs to be.”

“Oui, cher. Merci beaucoup.”

The ride back down the hall to the Med Lab was jostling enough to keep Spencer awake. Being lifted by Remy and Hank and put back into the bed was definitely enough to wake his brain up. It had his face losing all color and his eyes slamming shut to try and ride out the waves of pain. Remy got the blanket tucked around him and then was by his face, stroking back his hair and whispering soothingly to him while his charm slipped over and around Spencer, soothing what little ache Spencer would let him touch. That was how they were when Jean, Logan and Scott all came walking in.

It didn’t bother Spencer that Logan and Scott were there, but it seemed to irritate Hank slightly. The big man put his hands on his hips and glared at the room. “Now, this is not a circus show. I am not going to have a group in here at all times bothering my patient. He is still recovering from serious injury!” he reminded them.

“Big guy.” Spencer called to get his attention. When Hank turned to look at him, Spencer told him, “I asked for Jean here so I can be able to sleep.” He turned to look at her now, some of his outer shield slipping just slightly. “I need some help.”

Jean moved right up by his bedside, opposite Remy. “What do you need, Spencer?”

“I’ve always had strong mental shields. They’ve wavered lately with my stress, but I’ve managed to keep them strong. The Professor’s never been able to get into my head and none of the other paths here have either, right?”

“I haven’t tried. I wouldn’t do that to you.” She informed him. “But you don’t show up on my senses the way the others do. I don’t know in advance that you’re there like I do with other people.”

Laying his head back on the pillows, Spencer tried his hardest to keep himself awake while talking to her. “And that’s the way it’s supposed to be. But, no matter how strong my shields are, Sir can still get in. He can still mess with my dreams and trap me there and he’s still sending me nightmares. I’m not going to be able to sleep and heal until I figure out how he’s getting in, but I’m pretty sure he’s hidden it from me.” He looked over to Remy one last time, silently asking if he was sure that he
trusted her. Remy must have been able to read it on his face. He nodded and stroked a hand down his cheek. Spencer turned to look at Jean again. “I was hoping you’d help me. I need someone to go in and make sure there’s nothing in there that shouldn’t be. Will you help me?”

She reached out and put a hand on his arm, smiling at him. “Of course I will, Spencer. Are you ready to do this now? You look like you can barely stay awake.”

“It has to be now. I can’t fall asleep and have him there. He’ll pull all our plans from me and everything would be ruined.”

Lowering the side of his bed, Jean sat down on the edge, adjusting until she was comfortable. “Are you okay with me using Scott as my anchor?”

“That’s fine.”

“Scott?” She turned to look at him, but he was already coming forward and taking a chair near her.

Spencer watched Jean turn back around and he knew that it was time for him to do this. As much as the idea of letting someone into his mind screamed ‘wrong!’ at him, he had to do this. Sir had always trained him to keep any telepath out of his head. He’d worked hard to make sure that Spencer had a properly shielded mind and had warned him, time and again, of the pitfalls of letting a telepath in. The damage they could do and the pain they could inflict. Only one telepath had ever been allowed inside of Spencer’s mind, to teach him how to shield and to help build up his walls properly. Also, to teach him what could happen when one was let in. The things that they were capable of. Yet here he was now, willingly allowing one in, knowing what kind of pain awaited him.

With a soft breath, Spencer lowered his shields—all of them—just enough to let Jean in. Then he took a deep breath and drew down inside of his own mind with her.

CXCX

The last thing that Jean had expected when she stepped into Spencer’s mental mindscape was to find herself in a giant laboratory. If she’d taken the time to imagine what his mindscape would be, this would not have been it. Yet, it made a kind of sense. He had been born and raised in a lab; he was a scientific genius! Add on how immensely comfortable he was inside of Hank’s labs and it made even more sense that his mindscape would reflect such feelings. Her eyes moved over the lab tables and all the equipment and computers on them, over to the islands in the center with even more equipment. Off to the left was a set of doors. She cautiously made her way toward them. When she reached them, they slid silently open.

The next room was most obviously a main office. It was smaller, with a large desk. On the desk was a computer, as well as piles of folders, and behind it were two large bookcases packed full of books. In the large office chair behind the desk sat Spencer, dressed as she’d never seen him before. He looked every inch the scientist here. His long hair was pulled back into a tight braid and he wore no sunglasses on his face. He was dressed in black slacks, a dark purple button up shirt and a black vest. All in all, he looked rather…dapper.

He looked up from his writing and smiled at her. “Hello, Jean. I’m glad you made it in all right.” He said. His voice was cordial with that same friendly tone he always had. Gracefully he rose from his chair. “I didn’t mean to just invite you in and then disappear, but I haven’t been able to step in here since I first came to the mansion. I needed to make sure a few things were in order.”

“Why not?” Jean looked around the room as she walked toward him. Really, it should have felt clinical, yet there was a warmth to the place that was wholly Spencer.
“Because I was told not to. Sir told me that even stepping inside my mind this deeply would be enough of an entry for someone as strong as Charles Xavier to use to step inside with me. I’ve been brought up to be cautious around telepaths, honey.”

She couldn’t resist shaking her head at him. “You know, it’s almost eerie, how alike you and Remy are. He’s very leery of telepaths as well and is more than reluctant to let one of us in his mind.”

Shrugging, Spencer stepped around his desk. “It probably has something to do with the pain.”

That had Jean stopping in her tracks. “What? What pain?”

Now Spencer froze. His eyebrows winged up with surprise when he looked at her. “You don’t realize it?” At the shake of her head, he watched her for a moment before shrugging again. “Entering the mind of an empath takes a special touch. Simple mind links, just to talk, are easy. They don’t cause problems. But when you project yourself into the mind of another, entering their ‘mindscape’, you’re not only sending a single thought, but a projection of your own consciousness, emotions and all. Since my shields are down to let you in, that means that my empathy shields are down as well. The closer you are to an empath, the stronger they feel your emotions. Even more so skin to skin, generally. At least, based on my own observations of my skills. Right now, we are closer than just skin to skin. You are inside my mind, as are your emotions. They’re so strong when you feel them that it’s translates as an actual physical pain, though it can be pushed aside and controlled for certain amounts of time.”

Jesus! Gaping, Jean wasn’t sure which flustered her more. Finding out that, right in that moment, she was causing Spencer physical pain by being here—or listening to the man who usually spoke like a street kid or a whore with occasional flashes of intelligence suddenly speaking like a science professor.

The smile he gave her said he understood and could feel her shock. “It’s quite all right, Jean. The pain is capable of being dealt with. I don’t mind it so much. You know I’ve dealt with worse. As for my speech, well, this ‘me’ isn’t the Spencer you see every day. This isn’t me, so to speak. This is who I was when I went to college and when I worked at the Bureau. This is the me that works in the labs with Sir. This isn’t Spencer, but Dr. Reid.”

“A separate personality?”

“No, nothing so severe. I don’t suffer from DID. No, it’s more a mindset than its own personality. It’s a little difficult to be giving a profile on a serial killer or to take a college test when I look, talk and act like a whore. So I learned how to be a little more refined, a little more awkward, and to let it show on the outside. People see what they want to see. I just provided an image for them. Underneath it all, I’m still me.” Abruptly he lifted a hand and waved it in the air. “That’s not important, nor is it what we’re here for. I’ve been looking around and accessing the databanks while I waited for you and I see nothing amiss. Nothing to suggest that he should be able to enter my mind while those shields are up. But like I said out there, I’m pretty sure he’s hidden it from me. Would you like to walk around with me and see if you can find anything?” He offered her his arm in an old-fashioned sort of way that charmed her.

Smiling, Jean stepped forward and slid her hand into the curve of his elbow. “Show me around, you scamp, and we’ll set you to rights.”

CXCX

Out in the lab, four men waited as the two on the bed stayed almost perfectly motionless. Remy had refused to leave Spencer’s side. He kept close, monitoring him physically as well as with his
empathy. He could feel the pain that came from having a telepath in his mind and he winced in sympathy. He knew that feeling. It wasn’t unbearable, but it wasn’t fun either.

Scott scoffed lightly, drawing all eyes to him. “What is it?” Logan asked him.

“He’s flirting with Jean, that’s all.” Scott said with a wry grin. “She thinks he’s charming right now.”

Logan shook his head and slanted an amused glance toward Remy. “Never thought I’d find someone that flirts as much as you, Gumbo. But you both do it as easy as breathing.”

“Mais, we’re harmless, cher.” Smiling, Remy stroked back some of Spencer’s hair. “Don’t mean nothing by it.”

“I know that. If I didn’t, I would’ve knocked you through the wall for flirting so much with Scooter an Jeannie.” He flashed a grin that was just a little sharp at the edges. It softened as his eyes went back to Spencer’s face. Back to looking at his son. “You two are perfect for each other, Rems. I don’t think there’s anyone who could understand you two better than each other. No one else will ever understand you the way you will each other, and that’s exactly what you need.”

The look on Remy’s face softened even more without him realizing it. He didn’t even see the smiles that Hank and Logan were giving him as he tenderly stroked Spencer’s hair. “He’s mon cœur. I love him. And, whether he knows it or not, he loves me too. Can feel it, me, each time he looks at me. He just aint never had no one show him what dat word really means, so he don’t recognize it when he feels it. But I’m gonna show him every day fo’ de rest of our lives.”

No one had time to comment on that. Scott suddenly jerked in his seat, his posture becoming just a little more tense. “She’s found something.”

CXCX

“Spencer.” Jean stopped in the hallway, looking down to the far end. “What’s that room down at the end, there? You haven’t taken me there.”

Spencer lifted an eyebrow as he looked at her. “What room?”

Drawing power to her, Jean stepped toward the shield she knew had to be there. It was well made. Until she was right on top of it, she didn’t even know it was there. But it didn’t prevent others from seeing the door—only Spencer. When she reached it, Jean drew power and unraveled the illusion until finally it dissipated. Just as she prepared to look at the actual shield locking the room away, she found herself yanked backward. Thankfully she realized it was Spencer before she lashed out; that could have ended up severely hurting him. She turned to scold when she saw the look on his face and froze once more. For the first time that she could really recall, Spencer looked furious. Not just angry, but furious.

“That God-damn piece of shit.” Spencer snarled out. He let go of Jean’s arm and, she could think of no other word for it—he stalked toward the door she’d revealed. Hands on his hips, he stared at it, practically growling. “That bastard. Who the hell does he think he is? This is more than just a simple link to my mind! He shut off a whole section of me! I never gave authorization for this!” Turning, he marched toward his office door, grumbling the whole way. “Despite realizing the man was a bastard, I never thought he’d stoop this low. To take a whole section of my own mind and lock it away so that I can’t access it? Who does he think he is? Well, I’ll show him.…” He disappeared into his office, his words trailing away for a moment, only to pick back up as he came back out. She wondered if he even realized he was talking out loud. “…think that he can do something like this? He has no idea. I know his tricks and I observed him every damn time he was in his mind, and his
little friend too. They think they can do this to me? I’ll show them. This is my mind. This is the one place that’s always been mine!

Small bag in one hand and laptop in the other, Spencer walked to the door. The very first thing he did was set everything down and then try to input a code on the panel beside the door. When it beeped at him, he shook his head. “Go figure. Of course it couldn’t be so simple.”

“Spencer?” Jean called out. She took a cautious step forward. “Why don’t you let me take a look at this? I may be able to show you how to take it down.”

Spencer was shaking his head before she even finished talking. He didn’t even look at her. Instead, he was getting down on one knee while reaching into the little bag and pulling out what looked like a screwdriver. “Can’t, honey. If it’s anything like I think it is, it’d cause us both a lot of pain if you even touched it. That’s why I yanked you back like I did. You don’t have to stay if you don’t want to. I’ll get this bastard down.”

“I’ll stay.” Moving to the side, she imagined a chair for herself and took a seat. “You should have someone here to help anchor you and to think with you. Just in case what’s in there is more than you’re able to handle. I can help you keep yourself together.”

“Now that I know what I’m looking at, I’ll be fine, Jean.” Briefly he shot her a look through a small screen of hair. His next words were more open and blunt than she’d expected. “I know the three of you see me as a child, especially now that you know that they’re my fathers, and I know that you feel almost like my parent, or even my aunt, but I can assure you that I’ve been taking care of myself for a very long time and I’m not going to do anything too risky. I have too much waiting out there for me.”

She met him blunt words for blunt words; how could she do anything else? “You’re ours now, Spencer. We look after our own. I want to be here and the boys will feel better for having me here. Just, humor me.”

The noise he made in response wasn’t actual words. All of his attention was focused on the panel he now pulled off the wall. Amazed, Jean watched him hook his laptop up to the panel. “What exactly is it you’re doing?” she couldn’t resist asking.

Almost absently, Spencer answered her, his fingers now flying over the keys on the laptop. “Best as I can figure, Sir did this in one of his dream sessions when I wouldn’t remember. He can make me forget my dreams if he wishes. To so effectively hide it from me, he had to integrate it into the style of my mindscape, which means that it should run the way I run everything else. All of this that we see and do here is essentially an illusion, a metaphor almost, for what we are mentally doing. Since he shielded this area, it appears in my mindscape as a restricted section of the lab to which I do not have the codes to access. So, I’m going to circumvent the orders he programmed in and break through any firewalls, or shields, that he has up. Then I’m going to override the locking mechanism and bring this section of the lab under my control once more. Once I do that, I’ll be able to step through those doors and access whatever it is that he’s hidden from me.”

“I think I understand…”

“If it wasn’t for the nasty traps he laid on it, you’d be able to do your thing and take it down. But he’s cued it so that no one but he or I can touch it. Anyone else and it would fry their mind, in turn causing me pain. He had to make it so I could touch it on the off chance that I discovered it somehow. He wouldn’t have wanted to have my mind destroyed.” Spencer fell silent for a few long moments. Then, with a final click on his laptop, he grinned. The door made a dinging sound.
Rising, Spencer looked over at Jean and smiled. “One code and I’ll get the door open.” The angry mask was gone, showing some of his nerves underneath. This was the moment of truth. She stepped right up beside him and put a hand on his shoulders in support. “Do it, Spencer.”

Spine stiff, Spencer pressed a button on the keyboard. The doors in front of them slipped open and all hell broke loose.

CXCX

It had grown quiet in the lab. Those watching couldn’t help but feel anxious as they watched the three bodies slowly tense more and more as time went on. Then, like the flip of a switch, everything seemed to happen all at once. Scott gave a pained cry, one hand flying up to grab Jean’s hand. Jean gasped and slumped off the side of the bed, falling right into Scott’s waiting arms; and Spencer let out a hoarse scream, his back bowing upwards, head thrown back.

Hank and Logan moved to Scott and Jean while Remy practically climbed onto the bed with Spencer. He took Spencer’s sunglasses off and then put his hands on the man’s cheeks, trying to call to him. “Spencer! Spencer! Open y’r eyes, cher. Come on now, open y’r eyes. Look at Remy!” he called to him. Spencer’s jaw snapped shut and his eyes were squeezed as tightly shut as possible. His face was a mask of pure pain. But his body dropped back down to the bed, even though it stayed tight. Behind him, the others were lifting Jean, putting her on one of the other beds so that Hank could check her vitals.

Remy could feel the agony Spencer was in. He could feel the physical pain as well as the heartache. It was enough to have tears falling from the Cajun’s eyes, though he didn’t realize it. All of his attention was focused on the man he loved. “Come on, Spencer. Come on, cher. Come back to me here.”

“Keep talking to him!” Jean called out weakly. He didn’t turn to her, but he could hear how scared and tired she was. “The memories are swamping him. Call to him, Remy. Give him an anchor to find his way back. He threw me out of his mind. I can’t help him.”

He didn’t stop to think about it before he opened himself up, linking with Spencer in a way he never had with anyone else, their empathy making a strong link between them. Over that link he fed all the love he felt in his heart. Every bit of it he sent over to Spencer. “Feel dat, cher? Feel it? Dat’s me. Y’ feel me in dere? Je t’aime, mon amour. Je t’aime. Y’ come back to me. Don’t let dis connard beat y’, Spencer. Y’ gotta come back to me. What’s Remy gonna do without y’, huh?”

There was a small spark on that link, a flash of love and awareness. Remy almost cried out for joy. He could feel Spencer trying to respond to him. A soft sob slipped past the Cajun’s lips. He sent more and more love, continuing to talk, needing to bring Spencer back to him. “Dat’s it, Spencer. I can feel y’ trying. Y’ come back to me. I need y’ here, y’ hear me? I need y’ more dan I ever needed anyone else in m’ life. Aint no one I ever loved like I love y’.” In his desperation he lost his English, switching over to Cajun as he pleaded with the man he loved. “I can’t be without you, Spencer. I just can’t. My heart won’t survive on its own anymore. Don’t you leave me here alone. You’ve become everything to me. Please, please, don’t leave me here. I love you. Don’t leave me alone.”

“I won’t.” Spencer croaked suddenly. The tension in his face was slowly draining away. Tears ran in rivers from his eyes. Slowly he opened them, focusing straight on Remy. So much love flowed over their link from one to the other and back again. Lifting one hand, Spencer brought it to rest over Remy’s, nuzzling in. “I won’t ever leave you alone. I love you too, Remy.”

Hearing those words come past Spencer’s lips for the first time ever, Remy sobbed weakly, unable to stop himself from leaning in and kissing him. When they broke apart, he rested his forehead against
Spencer’s. “’Y scared me so bad, cher. Could feel y’ hurting but couldn’t get through to y’. Dieu, y’ scared me something fierce.”

“Everything hurt. It hurt so much I couldn’t seem to get it under control. But I could feel you. You were like a warm, bright light in my head, honey. And I could hear you. I heard you talking to me.” The tears kept coming and Spencer’s face crumpled slightly. “He had a loophole there so he could get in my mind any time he wanted, just like I thought. But he put memories of my early years, gaps I never remembered.”

Shifting his weight, Remy laid himself down alongside Spencer, gathering him close. Neither paid any attention to Spencer’s remaining injuries. Right in that moment the physical pain wasn’t important. The both of them needed the contact. Holding him close, Remy projected more love. “I’m right here, cher. I got y’, don’t y’ worry.”

“He really never gave a damn about me, did he?” Spencer whispered achingly. The throb of it echoed over the link. Squeezing his eyes shut, he buried his face against Remy’s shoulder, not even noticing their audience. “I remember it now. I remember the things he did. My brothers that he made like me, that didn’t make it. I remember him killing them.” A soft sob broke free. “I remember why he wants to hurt you all. I know. I know.” The sobs started in earnest then, ripping out of him, echoing around him. Remy gathered him as close as possible and held him tightly. Tears still ran from his own eyes. He tucked Spencer’s head under his chin and held him there, crying silently with his love.

Jean was sitting up in her bed now, her own eyes watering as she looked at them. Before Spencer had flung her from his mind, she’d seen the memories with him, as well as others she didn’t think he’d wanted her to see. They ripped at her heart and left her aching inside. She knew what it was that was hurting him so badly at the moment. Lifting watery eyes, she looked to Scott and Logan. “Go to him.” She told them softly. “Trust me, he needs you. More than anything, he needs you two right now.”

It was Scott who moved first, hesitantly making his way over toward Spencer, Logan moving behind him. When he got close, Scott reached one hand out, resting it on Spencer’s arm. The young man startled under the touch, jumping, but Remy instantly soothed him. “Shh, shh, Spencer. It’s just y’ père. It was just Scotty.”

“Scott?” The word trembled past Spencer’s lips, surprising them with how hopeful it sounded. At a gesture from Remy, Scott sat down on the edge of the bed by Spencer’s back, reaching to touch him again. This time when his hand settled on Spencer’s arm, the boy didn’t flinch. “I’m right here, Spencer.” He said in a hoarse voice.

Spencer started to cry harder and Scott couldn’t seem to help it. He moved, lying on the bed against Spencer’s back, wrapping his arm around him. Spencer took hold of Scott’s hand and held it to his chest, clinging. Lifting his head, Remy held one hand out over Spencer and Scott, leaving it hanging palm up in the air toward Logan. The feral man stepped up beside where Scott lay, taking Remy’s hand. He didn’t attempt to get in the already packed bed. No, he and Remy rested their joined hands on Spencer’s shoulder and Logan bent, following instinct and pressing a kiss to the side of Spencer’s head. The boy’s tears were slowing, exhaustion settling in, but they all heard him mumble “Log’n?” In a questioning voice.

The word made Logan smile. “Yeah, pup. I’m right here.” He said gruffly. The group stayed there as the day finally caught up with Spencer and pulled him down into sleep once more.
For the next six days, as Spencer’s body healed, he was a constant fixture in the Med Lab. Despite the fact that Hank would have cleared him to return to his room to heal after three days, Spencer stayed down in the lab. When asked about it by Jean, Spencer had simply said that he wished to stay here to make sure that everything healed correctly. Beyond that, he would say nothing more on the topic. He also, much to the worry of everyone around him, would say nothing about the memories he had regained.

After falling asleep surrounded by his parents and his love, Spencer had woken up entirely different than the sobbing man he had been when he’d fallen asleep. He refused to talk about what he had found in his mind, so much so that he would go entirely blank if pushed about it. Not just silent, but blank. His white eyes would take on this weird, hazy quality, and he would stare off into space, not hearing and not reacting to anything around him. The only people that got any kind of answer from him were Logan, Scott and Remy, and even then it wasn’t much. To them he’d answered “I need time for this, guys. I promise you, when I’m ready to talk, I’ll talk to you three. Just let me process it right now, okay?”

The two men were down almost constantly while Remy never left the labs at all. He would not be removed from Spencer. Only once did they manage to get him to step out of the room and then only by allowing him to watch through a window. When Jean and Ororo had stood with him, they’d asked him why he was clinging so tightly. Remy hadn’t even looked away from the window to say “Don’t know what he found in dere, but it aint good. He’s scared, but he’s determined bout something. I aint giving him de chance t’ slip away on me. I aint losing him.”

Yet, despite Remy’s worries, Spencer stayed with them. He didn’t plan on slipping away. No, he was taking advantage of every minute he had here. He happily spent his days with Remy, Logan and Scott, talking with the two men that were his fathers, growing the bond that had already been started between them. And his nights were dedicated to Remy. Though there was nothing sexual between them yet, they were closer than ever. Each night Spencer slept in Remy’s arms and woke up to him every morning. He slept even better now that the hole in his shields had been closed; there were no more nightmares.

Though he wouldn’t talk about his new memories, he did talk with them about their plan. He didn’t waste the time he had down there. With the three of them, Spencer willingly sat and discussed different aspects of their mission. He gave Scott the coordinates of where they would need to land so as not to be detected. As his hands healed, he drew schematics of the cabin for them so that they could see what needed to be done. Once he had as accurate a map as possible, he showed them the general idea of what they would need to do. The internal lab, he didn’t draw for them. It was the outside that the rest of the team needed to worry about. Once inside, Spencer would lead the way.

He was surprised that, when he mentioned the interior and that he would lead them through, Scott had nodded in understanding and told him “Once we’re inside, I’ll hand over control of the group to you. This will be your and Remy’s area of expertise and I understand that. I trust you two to get us in.” Then, with a half-smile, he added “But I reserve the right to veto stupid or reckless ideas.” That trust was something that Spencer held close to his heart over the next few days.

Dawn of the six day since his accident found Spencer already awake in his bed. He knew that today would be the day he’d leave the Med Lab. Today would be the day they’d put the plan into effect.
So long as Scott could deliver on the promise to secretly get them out of the mansion, Spencer would take them into Sir’s labs. They would destroy what they found there. And then...then Spencer was going to hunt Sir down, and he was going to kill him. It was the only thing he could do.

He flexed his hands, testing the bones. There wasn’t even a residual ache in them anymore. His injuries had healed with only a few additional scars to his body.

Though no movement came from Remy to show that he had awoke, his voice sounded near Spencer’s ear suddenly, a low murmur that Spencer knew he could now recognize anywhere. “I can feel y’r determination, me. Today’s de day, oui?”

“Yeah.” Spencer answered.

“Y’ gonna tell me de rest of de plan?”

He couldn’t help but smile at that question. It didn’t surprise him that Remy knew he had more planned than what he was admitting to everyone else. The man was exceedingly intelligent; more so than it seemed anyone else around the mansion gave him credit for. Out of respect for the man and his intelligence, Spencer answered as honestly as possible. “I don’t know, honey. I can’t let you stop me and I’m afraid you might succeed if you tried. This…it’s something I gotta do. Something I know the X-men aren’t going to approve of. But I have to do it.” There was no choice. Not if he ever wanted to be free.

No recrimination came from Remy at all; just the same warmth as before. His voice stayed with that slightly sleepy, content sound it’d had before. “Not planning on stopping y’, me. If dere’s anyone in dis house dat’s gonna understand what y’r gonna do, it’s gonna be me, cher.” Remy shifted a little, adjusting so that he was rolled on his side. Spencer did the same, letting their fingers link together between them. He looked into Remy’s beautiful red and black eyes as the Cajun spoke once more. “Y’ and I, we grew up in a different world dan dese folks here, yeah. Dey t’ink we can just shut dis homme down an t’ings gonna be okay again. But it don’t work like dat.”

“No, it doesn’t.” Spencer agreed softly. He felt his heart soften a little more. He should have known that Remy of all people would understand. “I’ve got to stop him, honey. Just frying his lab won’t work. I’ve got to go after him, or draw him to me.”

“If we destroy his lab, he’s just gonna build a new one.”

Spencer nodded. “Exactly. He won’t stop in his plans, even if he loses me.” Those new memories danced in Spencer’s mind, the words playing for the millionth time. “It’s become his life, his obsession, to destroy…” He couldn’t make the words come out. Couldn’t force himself to say what he’d avoided saying ever since the memory had returned. Yet, Remy again proved how well he understood Spencer and how quick his mind was. Apparently, he had managed to piece together quite a bit of this puzzle. “He wants t’ destroy y’r Papas, doesn’t he? Imagine dey done something t’ him in de future and he wants t’ destroy dem fo’ it now.”

“Yes.” Spencer croaked.

Remy’s hand squeezed his in a silent sign of support. “We’ll stop him, cher.” The words were delivered in a voice both steady and sure. “Together.”

What else could Spencer do but agree? “Together.”

CXCX

Later that morning, the two men finally left the Med Lab for the first time in six days. Without even
checking out with Hank, they quietly left the lab and made their way upstairs to their rooms. After each man showered in his own room, Spencer grabbed his bag with all his clothes that he had never fully allowed himself to unpack and he carried it with him over to Remy’s room. Once in there, the two set about readying themselves for what was to come. Spencer pulled out comfortable clothes; battle clothes, he jokingly called them in his mind. Remy was doing the same thing. The Cajun was not going to dress in his X-Man uniform. He was not going in as one of the X-Men today. Today, he was going in as the old Gambit.

Remy didn’t go for his usual armor that he wore on missions; he put on the lighter version, designed to protect while still providing him ease of movement. Spencer didn’t have armor, but his clothes were special, a little more durable than most. Once they were on the two looked pretty close to the same. Form fitting pants that tucked into boots that cut off just below the knee. Remy’s boots were black and reinforced over the shins while Spencer’s were a dark brown and held on by straps along the sides. Remy had his lightweight armor for a top and Spencer pulled on a long sleeved shirt that hooked over his thumbs to hold the sleeves in place. They both wore gloves. Remy’s, the usual gloves with three fingers open. Spencer's were completely fingerless.

The only obvious weapons that Spencer added to his outfit were the knives he always carried. These ones sat easily on the outside, held in by the straps of his boots.

Remy, of course, had plenty hidden in that trench coat of his, including his Bo. He started to move toward his tool bag before stopping and looking back at Spencer. “Y’ need m’ tools, or we gonna use y’rs?”

That was an easy answer. “Mine. I know absolutely that I have exactly what I need in mine. Plus, we won’t need much.” He took the small little cloth carrier that held the few tools they’d need. After a second’s deliberation, he held it out to Remy. “Would you mind?” he asked. Smiling, Remy took it and put it in one of his pockets. After that, the two finished preparing by braiding back their hair and tying it off. When they were done, they looked at one another. Spencer couldn’t help but snort. “You know, from a distance, people would probably think we were brothers.”

“That’s just wrong.” Remy gave a small shudder. “Dat’s just wrong.”

“You’ve got to admit, we’re proving to share quite a few similarities.”

“That doesn’t care, me. We ain’t related. Merde, y’r gonna make me sick if y’ keep talking like dat.” Giving his head a shake, Remy stepped forward and took hold of Spencer’s arm and started to pull him out of the room. “Come on, let’s go do some warm ups till Scotty’s ready fo’ us. We can check an see how healed y’ are and how much y’ can move. Maybe dat’ll distract y’ from grossing dis po’ Cajun out.”

“Warm ups? Sounds promising.” Spencer taunted him. “You gonna wrestle with me, honey?”

Remy winked at him and let a big grin grow. “Now dat sounds like one hell of a warm up t’ me.”

“Doesn’t it just? It always leaves me feeling nice and…limber.”

The two continued their teasing and flirting all the way down to the Danger Room.

CXCX

That was where the others found them an hour later. From the control room the group of X-Men watched as the two, in a simulation of a simple gym with basic mats, sparred with one another. It wasn’t a flirtatious playtime, or a laughing exercise. It wasn’t even one of the standard training
exercises. They both were calm and serious, yet they were running through the moves as if this were real. They were stretching themselves out and preparing for what was to come. No weapons, no powers, just simple hand-to-hand combat. The moves from Remy were familiar; though he didn’t let go often, they’d all seen him really fight at some point or another. None of them had seen Spencer fight this way. He’d never showed them before; it hadn’t been a part of his cover.

“Damn.” Logan murmured. He couldn’t help feeling proud as he watched his son hold his own against the Cajun. Though he and Spencer had sparred plenty of times, he’d never really seen the kid let go quite like he was now. The movements were very obviously deadly and yet there was a grace to them that was mesmerizing and that seemed so at odds with the kid they’d gotten to know.

Scott smiled at the two through the window. “Damn is right. How on earth do they manage to bend like that?”

“Hell if I know, but I gotta say, I’m damn glad they’re on our side.”

Logan’s words were met with sounds of agreement from the other occupants of the room.

In a soft voice, Jean said “It is moments like this that remind me that Gambit had an entirely different life than us before he came here. That there are things he can do and a person he can be that is so very unlike the one we know.” Her words had a slightly sobering effect on them all.

After watching for a moment longer, Scott shook his head. “Let’s go gather our two fighters. If we’re going to do this, we need to get it done.”

CXCX

The sudden end to the simulation had the two stopping their fight. Remy had been in mid roll and easily moved back to his feet. Spencer had been just about to land from a jump; he absorbed his landing on the hard ground, his body dropping to a crouch to lessen the impact. By the time the door opened, the two were standing side by side, waiting.

Scott stood in the door, his leader face on; no emotion showed through. “We’re ready to go.”

Reaching out, Remy linked his hand with Spencer’s. “So are we.”

Their serious mood seemed to be gripping not just them, but those around them as well. Spencer found himself wondering if they were unconsciously projecting it upon others. He checked his mental shields just to be cautious and found them strong. No, he wasn’t projecting, and he felt no projection from Remy. Maybe it was that they all understood how important this day was going to be. He moved alongside Remy, their hands still linked, and observed the others.

Scott was there, as he’d known he would be. Spencer had known that, when Scott said he would choose the team, the fearless leader would be one of the ones going. Those with him weren’t surprising, either. Logan, of course. Not just for his fighting skills, but because he wouldn’t let his newfound son go into a dangerous situation alone. Neither of his parents would. Jean was with them as well, another practical choice. Her TK would be useful, as would her telepathy. That would allow wordless communication and would also give them a form of stealth.

But when they entered the hanger with the Blackbird, Spencer saw others waiting for them, dressed in uniform the way that Logan, Scott and Jean were. Spencer and Remy stopped, looking at one another in dismay. Warren, Hank, Bobby and Ororo were all waiting. Hank was a smart choice to bring; that, Spencer could admit. A medical professional was never a bad thing to have on a mission. Bobby, even, could come in handy, maybe, if he could get past his anger with Spencer to actually
listen to him. But the others? Ororo’s powers wouldn’t be as strong in this lab setting and Warren was, in Spencer’s eyes, a liability. He was too angry, too emotional. Spencer needed people who were going to listen to him and Remy and he didn’t picture Warren being able to do that. Once they got inside the lab, he needed to know that he and Remy could direct people and their words would be listened to, not questions and potentially ignored.

“Non.” Remy said to the room. He and Spencer were still standing at the hanger entrance, looking at the group. Remy’s voice was firm when he said “We aint bringing all of y’. Dat just aint gonna happen, mes amis.”

“I told you that I would choose the team.” Scott said firmly.

Remy turned to glare at him. “And Remy thought y’d at least choose smart! Mais, y’ aint thinking clearly, Scotty.”

“Excuse me?”

Taking over, Spencer shook his head. “This is a lot of people to take. We have to be practical about this. Come on now, honey, think. I knew you and Logan would be coming. Taking Jean makes sense; her skills can add to our stealth.”

“M. Bete is smart to take.” Remy picked up the conversation. “Always good to bring a doctor, just in case, oui? But de others? No offense, mes amis, but dis mission is one dat’s gonna take stealth. We be destroying his labs, oui, but we gotta sneak in dere. Dis many people on a stealthy mission? Dat just don’t make no sense!”

Their words seemed to have no effect on Scott. He crossed his arms over his chest and simply stood there as they spoke. The battle visor in lieu of his glasses made it harder to judge his expression. When they were done, he spoke in just as calm of a voice as before. “I choose the team that goes and I say that we’re going. I’ll concede that we need stealth and, on that note, half will stay with the jet until clearance is given to arrive and to also act as a watch. But we all know there’s the potential for Casey to be alerted to our presence and show up. Or for any other of his employees to be there. Can you say for sure if this place is going to be guarded or not?”

“Of course it’s guarded, honey.” Spencer let out a laugh. The idea of Sir not leaving guards on his most important facility was ridiculous! “How stupid do you think he is? He wouldn’t leave it unguarded while he’s gone. I didn’t think I’d have to mention something that obvious to you.”

“I knew which is why I brought this team. This is not open for debate. Now, Remy, do you want to grab your uniform? And Spencer, I’m sure we have one that would be around your size.”

The two gave a resigned sigh. They were going to have to adjust to this change in their plans. Exchanging another look, a quick pulse of love and understanding, the duo started off toward the jet once more. “Non, merci, Fearless. Remy just fine like dis. More comfortable, yeah?”

“Same here, Scott, but thanks.”

It was Logan who forestalled that conversation before it could get going. He reached out and put a hand on Scott’s arm, shaking his head. “Leave it, Cyke. They know what they’re doing here; we’ve got to trust that.”

“I know.” Sighing, Scott watched everyone boarding the jet. “I just wish this didn’t feel like a giant mistake. Why do I feel like something’s going to go horribly wrong, Lo? Am I just being paranoid? I feel like I should be taking him back inside and locking him up somewhere I can keep him safe. Him
Since the others were on the jet, Logan indulged himself by leaning in and kissing Scott. “Me too, darlin’. Me too.”

CXCX

Spencer didn’t question how they were going to get a loud, giant jet out of the school without being noticed by anyone that Sir had set to watch. Scott had said that it could be done; therefore, Spencer put that worry from his mind. One thing he knew from working with Sir was that, when you hired someone to do a job for you, there had to be some level of trust that they would do the job. You could manage things, but micromanaging would only mess things up even more. With that in mind, he settled down into the seat Remy led him to, buckling himself in first before leaning his head back and relaxing. Now was the time to let his body be still, gathering energy for what he was going to do. His mind ran over the general plan as well as the private plan that he had, double and triple checking it for flaws. There was no accounting for every probability, but he was going to be prepared for as much as possible. And there were a few things that he had to mentally adjust now that he knew who was coming with them. Instead of sitting and sulking about the extra people, he tried to figure out the best way to put them to use.

If others spoke around him, Spencer didn’t hear it. He felt Remy’s warm presence beside him; both physically and emotionally. The man was as steady as a rock. A part of Spencer took a moment to indulge in those warm feelings that Remy created in him. Though he didn’t deserve it, for some reason Remy loved him. Nothing Spencer had ever done was worthy of that kind of love and yet Remy gave it to him without reservation.

The beaten down portion of Spencer’s mind, the part that still couldn’t stop thinking of himself as a ‘creature’, wanted to deny that it was love that Remy felt. Lust, he was used to. But being an empath meant that he couldn’t delude himself into believing one emotion was something else. How could he deny Remy’s love when it flowed over their link, or radiated from Remy every time the Cajun looked at him? He couldn’t deny the love he felt for Remy, either. It was bright inside of him; a flame in a place that had been dark for so long. It chased back the shadows. What was even more amazing was that Remy had been there to hear all the dark parts of Spencer’s soul; he’d been there for the nightmares, for the confession about Sir, for the little bits of his past that he’d let slip to them, and still this love was there. Somehow, Spencer felt that, no matter what he showed him, no matter what he told him, Remy would still be there when all was said and done.

Shaking his head, Spencer drew away from those thoughts and back to the job at hand. Later he could indulge in feeling sappy. Right now, he needed to prepare to work.

At some point in their flight, Jean tried to say something to Remy, a casual comment about his lack of uniform. When she got no response, she leaned forward in her seat, calling his name.

Logan turned and flashed her a grin. “Don’t bother, Jeannie. He won’t hear you.”

“What do you mean?”

“That had Bobby shifting in his seat as well so that he could look at them. “He’s usually as hyper as I am before a job!” The young man contradicted with a grin. “I’ve seen him bounce off the walls in here and drive Scott bonkers.”
Ororo smiled kindly at Bobby before turning a fond look to Remy. “My brother is energetic before our missions, yes, but this is not a mission. This is work. There is a vast difference between the two, young Robert.”

The sound of Spencer’s voice startled them all. By Spencer’s calculations, they should almost be there, so he had slowly started to pull out of his thoughts and back into the present moment. As he did, he heard Ororo’s last comment and he couldn’t resist commenting on it. “A mission, you know you can be killed, sure. But missions are emotional things sometimes, from my understanding of what you all do.” He didn’t even open his eyes as he shrugged at them. “On a job, emotions can get you killed. You can’t be energetic and bounce all over. You need to be steady and calm and above all, patient. Some things are all about the timing. If you’re too eager, you can get yourself and others killed.”

“When y’ got a five second window to do what y’ need to, y’ can’t be impatient and start early or late.” Remy added in as he, too, drew back out of his thoughts.

Spencer’s calculations had been correct. At just that moment, Scott was starting the process to stealthily land the jet. “Storm, a little cover.” Scott called back to her. The whole jet fell silent as the weather Goddess called on the elements. A moment later a fog gradually started to build amongst the trees, looking natural from the already cloudy skies. It would provide just enough cover for what they needed. The jet was brought slowly and quietly down to the ground. Once it had landed, the team rose from their seats, most eyes going toward Scott. But Scott looked directly to Spencer. “This is your show. How should we do this?”

“All of y’ are coming with us.” Remy said. He didn’t even look over to confirm his words with Spencer. “Leaving anyone here is too risky. Y’r gonna need us to get across without being seen.”

Spencer nodded in agreement. “How we move is going to be very important. Y’all need to make sure you follow directions exactly. If you think you can’t listen and trust us to lead you right, then just go right on ahead and stay here. I won’t sit and explain everything I tell you to do. Now, Phoenix,” and he barely remembered to use the codenames they used out and about. It wasn’t something he was used to doing with them. “Can you do that mind link we talked about before? The sensors close to the house have audio wired in and I don’t need whoever’s on watch hearing us before I can disable the audio.”

“I can, if everyone’s ready.” She agreed. After a nod from everyone, Jean closed her eyes to concentrate, setting up a mind-link with the group. Spencer fought the instinctive need to slam up his shields. Once the link was set up, he tested it out. //We all good here?// he thought at them. There was a mental chorus of agreement from each member. Shaking his head, Spencer grinned wryly. That would take some getting used to. //We’ll use this until we’re inside. Once there, I’ll have audio down and we’ll be able to speak openly. Now, is everyone ready to go?// Again, he got the chorus of agreement. //Good. Then let’s get this show on the road//

Chapter End Notes

And so the action begins - and the story prepares to end. Sigh. :P
Making their way through the forest wasn’t extremely difficult. Spencer set them up in a line, making sure that everyone followed exactly the route they were told. When they reached cameras, Remy silently scaled the trees, going to two of them and disabling the rotation on them while still leaving the cameras active. It would be enough to be viewed as a simple malfunction without actually giving them away. By doing it, he gave them a small trail to wind through that took them right up to the house.

Spencer couldn’t help the nerves that boiled inside of him. It seemed so utterly wrong to be breaking into this place. This was one of the places where he had grown up. This was home. Yet, at the same time, this place was hell. He had lived through and witnessed so much horror here. However, those emotions would do him no good at the moment. He pushed them underneath that well-practiced shield and let himself become, not Spencer, but someone else entirely.

Instead of following the trail to the house, Spencer checked the area with his mental map and turned them off to the left, tucking them around the backside of the house. Back here he had no choice; he was going to have to tap into the electronics of the house. //Okay, folks, here’s the deal// he warned them all when he stopped. //When I give the signal, we’re going to have no more than three minutes before the security system fully reboots. Backup lights will be on within thirty seconds. I need all of you to stick close and move without question when Gambit or I say// He didn’t phrase any of that as a question. After giving the order, he knelt down, dusting around the ground until he found the panel he wanted. Remy was right there beside him, quickly and expertly prying it open.

Once it was open, Spencer slipped a hand in, sliding it amongst the wires until he found the ones he wanted. For delicate work like this, it was easier if he could touch the wire he actually wanted. It helped to concentrate his power in the right place. When he found it, he wrapped two fingers around it, pinching it in place. Then, with a soft breath, he reached out to the electricity. First, he followed it down, letting himself integrate with the power itself until he felt almost like he was the electricity. Through it, he could see the entire security system, all laid out for him. Alarms, cameras, audio, lights, everything. And he knew almost instantly that there was something wrong.

Furrowing his brows, he tipped his head unconsciously, reaching out a little more. The power welcomed him in, putting up none of the resistance he knew it should’ve. But that meant—part of the defenses were down. Why were they down?

Remy’s mental touch brushed against Spencer. He was able to feel how off Spencer's emotions were. //Rakurai? What’s going on?//

They had no codename for him to use out in the field, so the team had sort of adopted the nickname that Lyle had given him. It worked. It was one Spencer knew and responded to, even when most of his attention was gone like this. //Something’s not right// Spencer sent back to the group. He dug a little deeper, following down the line further. //There should be defenses here. Sir knows my powers better than anyone. He had defenses in here to prevent me from easily breaking in. But there’s... nothing. I’m threaded through the whole security system and there’s nothing here to stop me// No, not just that. //There’s nothing here at all. No guards. No people at all. The systems are showing no life signs//

//Is that normal?// Jean asked.
//No. Even if it's just an experiment, there's always something here. There's always a guard. This isn't right// Spencer drew his power back in towards himself, untangling himself from the electricity around him. He siphoned some off, boosting his own strength, and then stopped at one section. Briefly he paused there, gathering up all that he could and then using a trick that he’d been practicing, he tapped into the current and sent that little jumble. Then he pulled back again until he was back in himself, finally able to open his eyes and truly see the team that was gathered around him. With the return to reality came that moment of clarity, of realization, like a slap to the face. Spencer swore he felt it as all the color drained from his face. “Oh, God.” He whispered. Oh, no. No, no, no. “We need to get back to the mansion. Now.”

He shoved up off the ground, scrambling to get his feet under him. The others were watching him strangely. “What?” Bobby demanded, glaring at him.

“We need to go, now. This isn’t right. We need to go!” Spencer didn’t waste any more time. He took off, praying that they’d follow him. He didn’t have time to stand here and explain. They had to get back to the house, now!

They reached the jet in half the time it took them to leave it earlier. Scott, it seemed, had caught on to his urgency. He moved right up to the front and immediately started prepping the bird for flight. It was Logan who caught Spencer's arm and demanded an explanation. “What’s going on here, pup?”

Spencer turned wide eyes to look up at his father. Oh, this was all his fault. He’d been so stupid! How could he have not realized this before? “This was too easy, Logan. Way too easy. There should’ve been safeguards, traps, extra defenses, guards. All of that should’ve been there. I figured Sir would have it there because he’s not stupid, he has to know that I’d be coming here. That, if I hadn’t returned to him, I was going to do everything I could to stop him, even if I had been without you guys. Even if you’d thrown me out, I would’ve still tried to stop this, and he knows that. So why weren’t any of those there?”

“He knew y’d be here.” Remy repeated his words slowly and with dawning comprehension. He braced his hand against a seat to hold himself upright as the Blackbird came to life. “Bon Dieu. He’s going to de mansion.”

The air in the jet seemed to crackle at Remy’s words. All eyes were on Spencer when he nodded. “He knew I’d come here and he’s either banking on either me having you guys with me, so the school is weaker, or on you having kicked me out and therefore not knowing everything. This…this was a diversion.”

“Son of a bitch.” Logan swore loudly.

Everyone had to brace then as Scott got the jet in the air. The urgency Spencer had felt was in all of them now. Part of that, he could tell, was his fault. They were feeling not only their own urgency but his as well. His shields were leaking. Yet he was too afraid to stop it. Would they get there in time? Would they make it? If anyone was hurt, if anyone died, it was going to be his fault. Oh, God. Air caught in Spencer's chest and he swore he couldn’t get a full breath. He barely felt it as Remy grabbed his shoulder and shoved him down into a chair before forcing his head down between his knees. “Breathe, cher.” Remy told him firmly, rubbing a hand over his back between his shoulder blades. Spencer tried to follow his advice. All the while, his mind was racing. Please, please, please let us be on time. Please, don’t let anyone die for my mistakes. Please, let them be okay. Let them be alive. Oh, please!

“Why is he so determined to take us down?” Warren demanded in the silence.

Bobby scoffed loudly. “Are you kidding? We have his favorite little toy here.”
“No.” Ororo said, her warm voice steady and calm even in this chaos. “He sent Spencer to us to try and help take us down. That means he started out hating us. What I don’t understand is why.”

Spencer flinched before he could stop himself. People must’ve been watching, because the jet went silent for a long moment. Logan was the one to break it. “Spencer?”

He debated answering for a moment. This was something he’d been holding on to. Something he’d kept to himself since those memories had returned to him. But maybe…maybe it was time. Maybe they needed to know. “In those memories I got back, there was one…” Spencer trailed off, chewing on his bottom lip. His eyes stared, unseeing, at the ground below him. “I found a message on Sir’s laptop one time. I was supposed to see it, but I wasn’t that good at control at the time, so when I reached into the computer’s electricity I accidentally gathered more than I wanted, including some of the information there. He’d saved news videos on there from his time. The time he originally came from.” Drawing in a breath, he carefully blew it back out. “I told you guys that he was doing genetic experimentations. Making creatures like me. The X-men fought against him. They came one night, found one of his secret labs and attacked, trying to save one of the mutants that he’d captured to experiment on. Only, they hadn’t counted on just how much mental damage Sir had already done. When the mutant got free, he went insane.” A small shiver ran down Spencer and he closed his eyes as he remembered that last part of the video. As he remembered the look on Sir’s face when he’d been inside his mind and had seen what Spencer saw. The anger there, the grief—it hadn’t been sane. In some ways, Spencer couldn’t blame him. Softly, he said “The mutant got free. To get his revenge, he went after Sir’s family and slaughtered them. His son was only three…and his wife was pregnant.”

“Mon Dieu.” Remy whispered. His soft prayer was echoed in English by more than a few.

“He blames us.” Scott said lowly.

Spencer nodded, though he knew Scott couldn’t see him at the moment. “Yes.”

It was Logan who said what all of them were thinking. “Grief like that, it can’t be reasoned with. We won’t be able to talk him down.”

The jet was silent.

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Even though he knew better Spencer couldn’t help but hope the whole way back to the mansion that he was wrong. He hoped and hoped and hoped, even when they couldn’t manage to ring anyone back home, and he kept on hoping right up until they got close enough that all of them could see the fight going on in the yard below. Spencer stared out the window with horror as the clouds cleared enough for them to see the fight going on below.

“No” Spencer breathed out.

Remy’s hand closed over his shoulder. The Cajun stood beside him, looking down as well. The emotions on the jet echoed the shock and fear that Spencer was feeling. He had guilt on top of it, though.

There was no time to park the jet away like they normally would. The fight was raging on the lawn and Scott wasted no time in parking right there on the grass, the hatch already opening before he’d even shut everything else off. They all moved quickly, swarming down the ramp the minute that it was open. Logan raced out first, claws at the ready, a snarl on his lips as he launched himself at the closest enemy. Luis, Spencer saw, a mutant with superhuman strength who Sir liked to hire as
muscle. He’d been attacking Rogue until Logan barreled into him.

One figure broke from the crowd and Spencer cursed lowly when he recognized who it was. Asha. She was someone he knew far, far too well. The scars she’d left him guaranteed he wouldn’t ever forget her. Her lizard-like powers made her stand out even more. He’d never seen anyone like her before or since. His horror grew when he saw her jump at the closest person—Jubilee. The girl hit the ground with Asha on top of her and Spencer was moving before he’d even stopped to think about it. Running, racing towards her, he sent out a jolt of electricity, snapping it into the ground right beside them both so that they both jumped backwards, separating, which was exactly what Spencer had wanted.

Fury took over Spencer like he had never felt before. He looked at the mutant just yards away from him and he felt that fury boil up and over. Every memory, every moment of their time together, came rushing to the front of his mind like poison. He watched as she smirked at him and spread her hands, her body angled defensively. She recognized him and was bracing herself; unlike the others that Spencer had met over the years, she’d never underestimated him. That was why she led this team, the team that was attacking here today. Sir had put her in charge of it because she had the quickest mind of them all. She was also the most bloodthirsty. Knowing that, Spencer knew he wouldn’t be able to reason with her. Spreading his hands, he braced his body, leaning his weight forward. “I won’t let you have them, Asha.” He told the woman. His use of her real name was a deliberate attempt to piss her off. She hated her name and anything that was associated with a human life.

Sure enough, she snarled at him, hands curling into fists. The scales and talons on her hands showed clearly in the sunlight. “Do not call me that.” Her voice was a low hiss, almost snakelike. It had always chilled him that this lizard like woman had sounded so much like a snake. But he couldn’t let himself think on that right now. Not here, not now. Now, he had to save the people around him. He had to protect them from what he knew she could do to them.

He watched for her to make the first move. Asha’s first mistake was in assuming that his strength was what it had used to be. She wasn’t prepared for it to have grown, or the newfound control he had over it. When she made to shoot forward, using her agility to leap to the side to come at him from an angle, he was already turning towards her. He gathered the electricity in him and flicked his hand up, creating an electric whip that he then flung at her, snapping it so that it didn’t lash at her but instead it curled around her arm. He gave a great tug and it sent her flying towards him too quickly for her to really react. She slammed into him full body and he fought to keep his feet under him.

Spencer caught her close with one arm and found himself looking down into her slit pupils, staring at eyes that had haunted him so many times. There was anger there, anger and madness, a sick sort of sadism he knew far too well, and a thrill that came from a fight. She loved this. Love the fight, the blood, the pain, and even more than that, she loved winning, defeating her enemies and taking them. Hurting them. IF he let her go, that’s exactly what she’d do to anyone here. She’d hurt them. Endlessly. And he couldn’t let that happen. If Spencer actually believed he had a soul, he knew what he was about to do would stain it, yet it was a stain he was willing to take so that no one else here had to. “I’m sorry.” He whispered. There was just enough time to watch her eyes go wide as he sent a flare of electricity down the whip, a sharp surge, and her eyes flashed brightly as the pulse raced through her body and stopped her heart. Her body dropped to the ground with a muted thud.

There was no time for Spencer to grieve for what he’d done. The others were all fighting around him. Everyone, everywhere, was fighting. They were holding their own, too. With enough time, the X-Men would win. Of that Spencer had no doubt. But they wouldn’t be able to fully win while Sir—while Casey—still lived. He had to be stopped—and there was only one person that could do it.

Spencer took off through the grass, weaving his way through everyone, throwing out little blasts of
Spencer had taken electricity as he went to help out those that he could. At the same time his eyes were scanning around him for the one person he wanted.

It didn’t take him long to find him.

Sir stood in the long driveway leading up to the mansion. He stood close to the top, near the front steps, watching it all with a small smile twisting his lips. True to form, he stood back while everyone else did the hard work, waiting to reap the rewards. He stood there to wait and see them fall. Well, the hell if that was going to happen. Spencer forced down the fear he felt at seeing his master, his creator, and he drew on the courage that these people here had granted him. He drew on the strength of them, their faith, their love, their hope, their passions. All around him they were fighting, this unit, this family, that had somehow welcomed him into it. His friends, his family. Spencer drew courage from the feelings that they had put inside of him and he closed that last little bit of difference between him and Sir—no, Casey. He would not call him sir. Not anymore.

Casey looked unsurprised to see Spencer coming towards him. When Spencer stopped, they were only a few feet apart. He stared into the face of the man that had create him and felt stronger than he ever had in this man’s presence.

“So, Inanime.” Casey drawled out, his head cocked as if studying something strange and yet interesting. “It comes to this. You would betray me. I, who have done everything for you.”

“What have you done for me except give me pain?”

“I gave you life!”

Spencer shook his head. “No. You created me. These people here gave me life. They gave me a home. And I’m not going to let you destroy it. They gave me family. You…all you did was take that away.”

A flash of something was there and gone again on Casey’s face. Then his mask was back in place. Once more he was calm, controlled, his hands folded in front of him and a politely distant look shielding his thoughts from showing on his face. “I am your family, Inanime.”

“No, you’re not, Casey.” Spencer deliberately used the man’s name. With that one word, he was making a point, loud and clear. “What family I had, you took from me. I remember.”

This time, Spencer was able to see the emotion that flashed over his face, that brief blast of fear. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“I remember them. My family.” Years of pain welled up inside of Spencer. The memories that had come back to him burned brightly in his mind now. “I remember you killing them. My brothers. My sister. You killed them all.”

“They were nothing. They were imperfections. Abominations!”

“They were my family!” Spencer spat back at him. The grief that he’d felt since those memories had come back was clawing its way up his throat now. “Serenity was three when you killed her. You handed her over to those, those animals.” And there’d been nothing he could do to help her. Nothing that he could do to stop as she’d screamed for him, begged to be set free. Spencer had needed drugged to stop him from fighting his way free to save her. The loss he’d felt when that empathic link had been severed, the same link he’d shared with each sibling, had been so huge it had crippled him. After that was the first time the telepath had come to see Spencer and when he and Sir had locked Spencer's memories away. “You killed them. You took them from me! But that wasn’t
enough. You had to take every last memory of them.”

“They made you weak.” Casey snarled. “You, my perfect weapon. I couldn’t have you being weak. I needed you strong. Obviously, I didn’t do a good enough job!”

Spencer let out a mirthless laugh. “Oh, you made me plenty strong. So strong I’ve lived through things that no person should ever have to live through. All to satisfy your vendetta.”

Fury stronger than any Spencer had seen lit up Casey’s face. In that instant, he looked insane. Any signs of sanity were gone. “They deserve to die!”

“It wasn’t their fault.” Spencer said softly. Despite everything, he couldn’t help but feel for him, hurt for him. He hurt for the person that Casey had used to be, before grief and anger had twisted him into this. He hurt for the accident—the horrible, horrible accident—that had led to this. Unable to resist, Spencer took a step forward, extending a small bit of his empathy towards Casey, this man who for so long had been Spencer's only world. “What happened was an accident. A horrible, terrible accident. But it wasn’t their fault. They didn’t know.”

“That is no excuse!” Casey shouted. His hands twisted into fists and his eyes glowed with the madness inside. “They have to pay. They deserve to pay for this!”

There was going to be no reasoning with him. Spencer had known that long before he’d started this conversation. He’d known the whole time that nothing he said or did was going to stop Casey. Even if they won the battle today, Casey would keep coming. He wouldn’t stop. It was his mission to destroy the X-men for what they’d done to him and he wasn’t going to stop until it was done. Spencer couldn’t let that happen. He’d been made specifically to destroy them. It seemed only fitting that he would be the one to save them.

All around him, he saw these people that had become his family. Scott and Jean, fighting side by side to take down two mutants known as the Twins, whose fighting skills were legendary. Logan, taking down someone who had dared go near Rogue and Jubilee. And Remy—his Remy. The Cajun was twisting and turning, that Bo staff of his flowing with him, laughing in the faces of his enemies as he struck with body, staff and cards, an unrelenting force that no one would get past. Remy, who had set himself up nearby, not just to defend the house, but to defend Spencer. Keeping him safe so that he could do what needed to be done here. Spencer felt love fill him and he sent it out to Remy, hoping he would feel it and understand what Spencer couldn’t say with words right now.

Turning back to the man who had made him, Spencer stood proud and tall for the first time in his life. “No.”

Spreading his hands, Spencer reached, stretching himself out wider than he’d ever done before, reaching for every bit of electricity around him. He caught it from the house, from the power lines under the ground, from the very air. Ororo was using her powers and the lightning she called only served to fuel him more. Throwing open his shields, Spencer sent an empathic pulse to Jean, and as soon as he felt her connect with his mind, he told her //Tell Storm to throw lightning directly at me, now!//

Power poured in him. It flowed over his skin, coils of it drawing out, swirling around him like they were alive. “I won’t let you have them.” He swore.

“Then you will die with them.” Casey said.

“So be it.”
Lightning struck and Spencer felt it filling him like it had never done before. He was the lightning and the lightning was him. More electricity than he’d ever touched before was inside of him. That explosion that day in the Danger Room when he’d called lightning from the sky—that was nothing. A ripple in the pond. This was a tsunami. It poured over him, in him, lighting him up. Throwing his head back, Spencer screamed, and his power exploded from him.
The silence of the Med Lab was almost stifling. After having spent the better part of the past week down here, Remy had hoped he wouldn’t have to step foot through those doors again for a while. Yet once more he found himself lying in one of the hospital beds curled up against Spencer’s side while his partner was so deeply asleep it was more like unconsciousness. At least this time there were no injuries. Or, none that they could see. Hank said it was simple exhaustion. Spencer had blasted almost every single bit of energy that he had.

Remy shivered and pressed himself just a little bit closer to Spencer's cool body. Nothing had ever scared him more than when he’d turned around to see Spencer standing there so full of power. There had been so much in him, his skin had been glowing. Remy had been terrified. He could remember wondering what on earth his lover was doing. Why gather so much power? Sir, Casey, was just one person. Why would he need so much to take him down? Then, when the lightning struck him, Spencer had thrown his head back and screamed, and Remy had understood. All of them had. Power arced out from the genius and then lightning had struck all around, bright bolts of blue, pure electrical energy. They hadn’t just struck Casey, though. They’d gone all over the yard, striking down every single person that the team was fighting against. Every one of them, hit by lightning and sent to the ground. In one giant storm of energy, Spencer took out every enemy. That kind of raw power had stunned them all. It had stunned them even more to find that there were only two dead—the one that Spencer had killed before going after Casey, and Casey himself. All the others were knocked out, unconscious and a few of them burned by the energy, but alive.

Some of the team had been assigned in getting them out of there. Remy hadn’t cared. He still didn’t care. Someone had told him that the bodies were all removed, that Casey’s body had been ‘taken care of’, and that they were safe. None of it mattered. Nothing had mattered since he’d watched Spencer crumple down to the ground out there in the yard. Remy had raced towards him, heedless of everything around him, and he’d gathered Spencer's frighteningly cold body into his arms.

Hank said that Spencer was cold because he’d burned so much energy. They had to keep him under tons of blankets and with the room temperature cranked up high just to keep him stable. Hank had tried heated blankets, just as he’d tried to use a vitals machine to monitor him, only to have all of them fried the instant they touched Spencer's skin. Spencer wasn’t awake enough to control his powers as they returned to him. That was why Hank tried to keep everyone back.

It didn’t work. Remy hadn’t left him once since he’d picked him up in the yard. The furthest he’d gone was the bathroom in the corner of the room. Otherwise, he was in that bed, curled right up against him, offering him all the body heat he could. Only once had someone attempted to try and pry him away. Remy hadn’t argued. He hadn’t fought, or yelled, or anything like that. He’d simply laid himself down and curled tighter to Spencer's body. Head on his shoulder, one hand on Spencer's heart, a leg thrown over his, he draped himself like a human blanket and ignored Hank telling him that he needed to leave. When that hadn’t worked, he’d reached out to touch Remy’s arm.

That was when they found out Spencer may have been unconscious, but part of him was awake.

Hank touched Remy’s arm and it was like he was Tasered. Spencer had very, very little energy inside his body, but he seemed to have an external shield going on. Hank theorized that Spencer's empathy was still working, reaching out to Remy, and he had responded to Remy’s stress the only way his subconscious could.
No one tried to move Remy after that. Not just because they didn’t want to get shocked; they didn’t want Spencer to use any more energy than he had to. He was dangerously low and he needed to recover before he channeled anything. So Remy stayed. For two days, he stayed with Spencer, watching his lover sleep, waiting anxiously for him to wake up.

Scott, Logan and Jean came and went. None of them could stay down here constantly the way that Remy was and they all respected that Remy wasn’t going to leave. But they came down often, either alone or in pairs, or the three of them together. Remy would lay there and either sleep, stay silent, or sometimes talk to them. He never moved away from Spencer's side to do it. He watched these three as they looked at Spencer, spoke to him, as their affection grew. Spencer had made a place in their hearts. Maybe he’d never had a true family before he came here. He was going to have one now. Logan and Scott were his fathers and that meant something to them. That was important. It meant something to Jean, too. She had no animosity that Remy could feel. Just, love. She acted as if Spencer were hers, too. To her, he was. He was the son of her men and that made him hers as well. By extension, it seemed to make Remy theirs as well.

Logan brought Remy things, clothes and books, things to entertain him. Sometimes he just sat with them. Scott would come and play sometimes, or he would sit and read aloud from one of the many books. Jean came down and made sure that Remy had bathroom breaks, a chance to clean up, food to eat, and she would stand guard over Spencer while he did.

They banded together, this little unit, standing guard and keeping watch over their fallen one.

It was four days after the incident that Spencer finally woke.

Of course, it was the middle of the night that he woke up, when everyone was gone and in their beds. Only Remy was there. Just Remy, lying against him, not really sleeping but not really awake, either. He was in that happy little half place between the two and so it didn’t quite register on him at first. He thought that maybe he was still asleep when he felt the arm slip around him and pull him just a little closer. Making a happy little sleepy sound, he snuggled in and draped himself more fully over Spencer's body, humming happily when he felt the warm emotions that it earned him. Those warm emotions were what finally drew him out.

His eyes snapped open wide and he found himself staring down into Spencer's white eyes. Somehow, those eyes seemed to convey both exhaustion and amusement. They were pools of white and yet to Remy they had never signified the soullessness that Spencer had always feared. To him, they were like true windows into his soul, showing little flares and flashes of color if one knew how to look, hints to the bright soul and the moods inside. They showed him exhaustion now, yet amusement and an overwhelming love that stole every single word from Remy’s lips save one. “Spencer.”

“You look as bad as I feel.” Spencer murmured dryly.

The sound of his dry throat had Remy trying to move, wanting to get him water. The arm around his waist gave a weak little tug. It was enough to freeze Remy, though. He stopped and met Spencer's eyes once more. Spencer smiled and gave another tiny tug. “Stay.”

“I was just gonna get y’ some water.” Remy said softly. Somehow, he made his voice work again.

“Stay.” Spencer repeated. “'S cold.”

“Henri says y’ burned out all y’r energy wit’ dat blast. It'll take a while to get y’ back in order.” Because he could see the questions on Spencer's face, he hurried to speak, explaining to him what was going on in short terms. He told him about his power strike, about how he’d taken everyone
down, and he let him know that the others were alive—except Casey. When he spoke of Casey
dying, Spencer's eyes shifted closed for a moment and Remy swore he could actually see some of his
tension easing. “Y’r free.” Remy told him quietly. “Y’r free, cher.”

Smiling, Spencer opened his eyes once more, and they shone so damn brightly. “I’m free.”

A shudder ran down Remy and he couldn’t help how he tried to burrow in a little closer. Now that
Spencer was awake, alert and looking up at him, his fear was finally free to climb up. He’d been
terrified that he wouldn’t ever see those gorgeous eyes again. Afraid that he was going to lose his
partner before he truly had a chance to have him in his life. He wanted to bury his face in Spencer
and just breathe him in. He wanted to never look away again. Words poured unbidden past his lips.
“I t’ought I’d lost y’.”

Spencer gave a soft hum. “M not going anywhere.” His smile turned just a little mischievous, one of
Remy’s favorite smiles, and he said “I’m ready to have that talk again.”

A promise? “What?”

“You said, when we had no more secrets. When I told you the truth.”

It took a second for Remy to remember that. It had been so long ago, it felt. But when his mind
connected on it, he couldn’t help but smile. His husky laugh slid in the air around them. He
remembered what Spencer was talking about. ‘I won’t sleep with someone dat don’t trust me, cher.
So long as y’ insist on keeping dese secrets, y’ show y’ don’t trust me. When y’ finally decide y’ do,
we’ll have dis talk again.’ That’s what he’d told Spencer all those days ago.

Laughing again, Remy finally gave in to what he wanted and he buried his face against Spencer's
neck, his body now fully draped over the younger man’s. Spencer seemed to enjoy the weight and
the warmth. Surrounded by his partner’s scent, Remy smiled, pressing a kiss to his skin. “Once y’r
outta here, we can talk all y’ want, cher.”

“Mm. I’m holding you to that.” Spencer murmured. He turned his head a little and Remy felt a kiss
press against his hair. “I love you, Remy.” It was the first time that Spencer had said those words
without any sign of anything else except for love in them. There was no stress, no fear, no doubt, just
love.

The same love filled Remy’s heart until he thought it might burst. “Je t’aime aussi, Spencer. Je
t’aime aussi.”

Chapter End Notes

And, we're done! Merci for reading and for all your comments and kudos, m'dears!
You've all been wonderful :) I never thought this would be enjoyed so much and I'm
glad I went ahead and posted it.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!