The Last Four Rats Standing

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Summary

One betrayed by a government that left his parents to die by Stalin's execution squads. One betrayed by the agency he had sworn loyalty to when they tried to kill his partner. One forsaken by the woman he had pledged his devotion to when she left him to suffer alone. And one who was corrupted because her father was on the wrong side of a war and seen as a threat. Alone, they are powerful. In pairs they are dangerous. All together they are unstoppable. Now the first three just have to convince the fourth her best option is to join them.

Notes

This is my first Bond fic, and while I acknowledge Craig is drop-dead gorgeous, Brosnan was always my dream Bond, the one I always day-dreamed about. I see Brosnan as the perfect balance for Bond; Connery's suave sophistication, Dalton's wit, Craig's good looks
(times ten) and none of Moore's arrogance (seriously, no offense to Moore fans, but I couldn't even get through The Spy Who Loved Me, and my dad, a true-blue, book and movie, Bond fanatic, told me that was Moore's best Bond flick). Not to mention his voice always made me melt. That being said, there may be some inconsistencies here and I can tell you right now, Thunderball, my favourite Connery Bond film, is going to be here. Still, first Bond fic, please be patient with me and take it easy with the comments; I have trouble telling flames from constructive criticism (some people at fanfiction can be a little mean).

Still, here's hoping you enjoy my first Bond fic!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Alec had lost track of how long he had been kept here in this dungeon (seriously, who even still had dungeons these days?), where he was constantly tortured for the information he refused to give up, not really out of any sense of loyalty to Queen and Country but rather a sense of loyalty to James; James would never forgive him if he actually said anything. He was still pissed off at himself that he had allowed that invisible twerp get the best of him and knock him out. He had awoken in this dungeon with a power suppressant collar strapped tightly onto his neck, and it hadn't taken him long to find out that he was currently a guest of his and James' favorite organization of criminal nut jobs; S.P.E.C.T.R.E. He and James had gotten separated after they detonated the bombs at Arkhangelsk; he had been able to use his telekinesis to throw everyone away after he had been caught, only for the bombs to go off early. James had been right beside him so he pushed him away and took the brunt of the blast, thanking whatever deity it was that handed out abilities that he had been given powerful telekinesis for an ability, especially as it was the only reason that he had not been killed outright, only knocked off his feet, made a little woozy, gave him some facial scars that would become less noticeable with time, and allowed an invisible to knock him out cold.

They beat him regularly, threatened to take away his powers permanently, and other useless threats that Alec knew they would never go through with; he was one of the most powerful telekinetics in all of Great Britain, which when combined with his secondary ability of having enhanced instincts that made him act a bit feral at times, made him particularly vicious, and S.P.E.C.T.R.E. refused to deny the powerful their gifts. His feral side made him stronger, faster, have better reflexes and instincts, as well as being able to suppress pain and have a killer hunting intuition, he also had battlefield adaptation, what was known as hyper-instincts, piloting intuition, predator instinct as well as prey instinct, weapon proficiency and vehicle intuition; simply put, those abilities alone made him quite valuable to MI6. As for his telekinesis, ever since his sister’s death, he had been honing it, though it was not easy since, naturally, his only teacher was the pain he received when he bungled it. But he was proud of his progress; nearing 40, he had the basics of it perfected, along with the advanced level. He could bind or choke his opponents, levitate objects, increase his strength, alter an objects trajectory, stop certain objects from moving and he and James had a lot of fun with his push/pull power. That was all the basics of telekinesis, and James had helped him get a lot of the advanced stuff; his ability gave him a kind of homing effect, he had a certain level of puppet mastery in that he could control the movements of others (he got the impression that that ability both excited and scared James), he could unlock doors without keys (among other things), he had a telekinetic blast, compression, combat, destruction, his speed and endurance were augmented, he could cut things (James would jokingly call him Sylar when he did that) and he could fly, a little; he could hardly fly from England to Istanbul, still too great of an effort, but he could stay afloat after being tossed from a building. He was drawn out of his thoughts when he heard machine guns going off and screaming. For a moment, he allowed himself to think that James had finally found him, but there was way too much noise for a telepath as skilled as James, especially because James’ secondary ability was ghost physiology; he was the stealth, Alec was the wrecking ball.

As his door was blown open, three men came in, two running to him to melt his shackles off, whilst the third calmly walked towards him. Alec was beyond shocked; this man was one of those that could be described both handsome and average, blond hair that was carefully brushed out of his face, tanned skin, eyes that couldn’t seem to decide if they wanted to be brown or deep blue. In other words, he had the perfect look for an agent; handsome enough to stand out in a crowd, but average looking enough to blend back into that crowd when the bombs went off. What was most certainly not average however, were his power levels; as a high level himself, even with the collar he could
sense other high levels, though this one clearly left him and James in the dirt with how powerful he was.

“You are one half of the pair I’m looking for; with your co-operation, I hope to soon have the ghostly psychic that could very well control all of Great Britain if he so chose.”

“James may be good but he isn’t that good, and I’ll never help you catch him; he’d skin me alive for it.” Alec said with his usual smirk, only to be surprised when the other man simply smiled back and took the collar off.

“I think you’ll find that not only will you help me, you’ll gladly help me.” Alec then felt a tight pinch in his neck and felt himself lose consciousness. When Alec came to again, he found himself lying on a very comfortable bed in a sort of apartment with plain stone walls and a balcony overlooking what looked like the ocean. He got up and went over to the balcony, hoping to see if he could use his telekinesis to fly/float down, only to feel himself gently pushed back; there was a type of force field that let a cool breeze in from the ocean but kept him inside the apartment. He turned as he heard the door open and let loose a telekinetic blast that would stop an elephant, only to have an even stronger one thrown at him that threw him back on the bed and kept him there.

“I was wondering when you were going to wake up, but I suppose you haven’t been sleeping that well for the last two weeks. I do hope your body is sufficiently healed? I personally healed you, but you sometimes need your patient awake to tell you where it hurts; I also think the scars on your face are rather fetching so I left them.” The powerful blonde from before asked as he came inside and looked at Alec as if he hadn’t just broken a powerful blast that few had been able to stand against, let alone stop and send back at least twice as strong.

“Why heal me if you want me to help you find James?” Alec asked as he strained against the hold pinning him.

“Oh, I don’t need you to help me find him; you are going to send a distress signal that will bring him running to here.”

“And then you’ll take him down with your telekinesis and wipe out two agents at once.” Alec summed up, only for a wounded expression to cross the blonde’s face.

“‘Take him down’? Oh no no, I plan to have the two of you help me in my ‘grand scheme’ as it were. And my ability is not just telekinesis; rather, telekinesis is a sub-power of my true power, as is healing.”

“Your ability is magic based then? That’s the only way I can think of in which you could have more than two abilities, unless you are some sort of replicator.” Alec asked, still trying to break free from the much stronger grip.

“You were right the first time; my ability is called Evocation.” The stranger said, though Alec was only more confused, so confused in fact, he stopped struggling.

“Evocation? I’ve never heard of that ability.”

“I’m not surprised; it’s the ability many fear because it is so rare and powerful, Mummy made sure I was thoroughly prepared before sending me out into the field. Of course, it took two agents to replace me when she betrayed me.”

“Mummy? Replace? You were a member of MI6?”

“Yes, and when I ‘operated beyond my brief’ she turned me over to the Chinese, who tortured me
for a long time. But more on that later, right now I have to set about convincing you to call your little
ghostly telepath and then convince him to join our cause.”

“What makes you think for an instant that I would join you when S.P.E.C.T.R.E. couldn’t break
me?” The stranger smiled in that annoying way parents do when their child has said or done
something particularly foolish.

“You really don’t know anything about the ability of Evocation, do you, Cossack?” The title made
Alec’s insides freeze; James knew he was a Russian by birth (there was only so much control you
could exert over your tongue and mind when you were inside James), but only MI6 knew he was the
son of a Lienz Cossack. He had been working for a long time to set himself up as an arms dealer so
that he could avenge his family, though a monkey wrench by the name of James Bond had been
thrown into the works about six years ago. When he had been given a partner, he had originally
planned on using them as a means to an end and then disposing of them, only to find himself falling
in love with the ghostly telepath. He had spent more than one quiet moment waiting for targets to slip
up thinking of ways for James to come with him when he defected. They ranged from having a
mental manipulator play with James’ mind just enough that it was his idea for them to defect (could
go horribly wrong in the fact that James was a strong telepath himself and if he broke the command,
he could make Alec get a rather powerful migraine) to simply locking James in a ‘ghost-proof’ room
where Alec could take his time ‘convincing’ James. From the smile that crossed the strangers face, he
knew exactly what Alec was thinking.

“Evocation allows you to read my mind as well?”

“Allow me to fill you in on my ability; my ability allows me to use magic to call upon the physical,
psychic and spiritual forces of nature.”

“And what the hell does that mean?” Alec interrupted, and gasped as it felt as though someone had
just pinched his nipples, causing a spike of arousal to go straight to his cock.

“If you could be patient for more than ten seconds, I would tell you. First, the physical; the forces of
the physical plane, which mainly consists of the elements including the celestial elements Aether and
Nether. Not that I use the last two all that often, far too dangerous and not very effective in the field.
Now, I don’t think I have to explain the psychic realm, but I will tell you that my gift allows me
psionic manipulation, which to you means telepathy, telekinesis and empathy, as well as psychic
energy manipulation.”

“What’s the difference?” Alec asked before fighting a moan as it felt like two strong hands stroked
his inner thighs as the stranger explained

“Psychic energy manipulation allows me to create, shape and manipulate psychic energy in various
ways, including manifesting it in a material form. My version of telepathy includes mental
manipulation, a psychic shield and telepathic communication. Meanwhile, my telekinesis includes
matter manipulation and telekinetic force manipulation, which frankly makes me a stronger
telekinetic than you as I can do all that you can do, as well as throw yours back in your face. Finally,
the spiritual plane, otherwise known as the forces of the astral plane; with this plane I can mimic the
abilities of the other planes, summon ghosts and deities, fire blasts of pure astral energy, become a
spirit as well as use spiritual magic such as mysticism and shamanism. But, I seldom use that part of
the ability; that is even more dangerous than using Aether and Nether, as if you piss off any spirits,
they will retaliate against you very harshly.”

“I would hardly think that you would be afraid of your own powers.” Alec tried to come off as
cocky, but when he felt his nipples twisted harshly, he quickly shut up.
“Anyone who does not respect the spirit world is just asking to be torn limb from limb and tormented for the rest of eternity! However, I know that you are merely hoping to get me angry so that I may break my concentration and give you a fighting chance to escape. But, you might as well accept what is going to happen, because there really is no escape and my powers will allow me to play you like a violin.” The blonde explained before he stroked Alec’s neck with his bare fingers.

“You sound very sure of yourself; you should know however, that James and I use our abilities to play with each other all the time, as he teases me with mental images whilst Q is talking about our gadgets, I tease him by stroking his cock lightly with my telekinesis. I doubt there’s much you could essentially do to me that James hasn’t.”

“Really? I wonder what the two of you would have done if the Quartermaster was a telepath as well. But, you’ve never been on the receiving end of your telekinesis, have you? And even if you had, it would not be on this level.” As the blonde spoke, it felt like someone shoved a vibrator up Alec’s ass and was shoved right against his prostate.

“Ahh!” Alec could only imagine the control it would take to put pressure on his prostate as well as make the particles vibrate at the right consistency so that he felt intense pleasure, instead of being ripped to shreds.

“Also, if just the idea of James helps you relax and get aroused, why don’t I do all I can to help you relax?” As the stranger spoke, his face changed, with his hair darkening to beautiful midnight locks, his facial structure changing, and while his hair darkened, his eyes lightened, changing from dark pools into ocean blue.

“Does this help, Alec?”

“It would if I didn’t know for a fact that you’re not James.”

“That’s absolutely true; I’m much stronger with greater capabilities than James has thus far been able to produce. For example, have your ears ever been exceptionally sensitive?” The stranger asked to which Alec just shook his head, which is why he was shocked as not-James gently bit his ear and it felt like he had been electrocuted.

“When one has learned the control I have, you can fool around with certain brain functions, such as which nerves make you hot, and which don’t, and I just turned all of yours on to very high levels. This should prove to be a very interesting experience for you. By the way, I don’t approve of being called ‘not-James’; you can call me Silva.” The newly christened Silva then proceeded to kiss Alec within an inch of his life, and though Alec knew that this wasn’t James, Silva was using his mental manipulation to make it feel like it would if it was, and for some reason even his enhanced senses couldn’t tell the difference. Silva then started unbuttoning Alec’s shirt (which Alec was thankful for; he hated the outfit he was wearing with its flamboyant design), before he started kissing and nipping at Alec’s throat. All this, such seemingly simple actions, actions that he and James used to get each other in the mood, was shooting straight to his cock as if he were a bloody teenager again. When Silva got to his nipples, the only thing that kept him from shooting off the bed was the other’s telekinesis; they had been mildly sensitive before, but now with his nerves being played with, not to mention Silva using his apparent ice manipulation to make his fingertips feel like ice cubes, he doubted he could truly do anything but moan and occasionally whimper. And he was right; he came in his pants before Silva even reached his navel. Silva tsked in a humiliating way as he looked down at the wet spot in the trousers.

“Such little self-control you have! It appears as though I will have to restrain that part of you as well.” Alec had a feeling that Silva had intended to put a cock ring on him from the start, but found he was having difficulty catching his breath to voice such a thing. After his trousers and pants were
off and the ring was on, Silva returned where he left off, though when he swirled his rough, cat-like tongue in Alec’s navel, Alec was rather ashamed of the moan that ripped itself out of his throat; he hadn’t even known that was a sensitive spot for himself, and now it felt like Silva had just tongued his slit. He was only mildly surprised when Silva flipped him onto his stomach; he knew this was what Silva wanted, he just thought Silva would have done it face to face. He hissed as hot wax was suddenly dripped on his back; he had neither heard a match being struck nor suddenly smelled a candle being burned, but now that he thought about it, he did remember seeing some candles on the bedside table, and the man had said he could control the elements; if he could easily summon ice, he could just as easily summon fire. It was just his luck that wax play was a kink of his; when the mission had been rough and James had gotten hurt, Alec would have James pour wax on Alec’s chest, a good stinging pain that he deserved, yes James hadn’t gotten seriously hurt (after all, technically speaking the man was already dead in a sense; ghost physiology and all that), but Alec’s secondary ability made him see James as his mate, and good dominant mates don’t let their submissive mates get hurt.

“You always top James, don’t you? And all the playing you do is on the front isn’t it? I would hazard a guess that the most you’ve ever done on your backs was spank James, am I right?” Alec was ashamed to say he moaned when Silva spanked him when he didn’t respond right away. What was happening? Alec had never allowed someone to dominate him; he himself was unable to give up control to anyone, that was what made him and James good for each other, James needed someone to help ground him in this world, someone to help remind him that not everyone could be saved but that didn’t make it James’ fault they had died. Alec needed someone to need him, someone to look after and protect, and he had found that in James, which was why he had kept off-putting his defection; he truly needed James and James truly needed him. So why on Earth was he so turned on at this Silva dominating the hell out of him?

“Yes, I sometimes spank James, but not in a sexual sense or strictly for foreplay; he needs it when he feels like he has let someone die and I need to do it when he deliberately doesn’t tell me I’m hurting him beyond his limits.” He was surprised when Silva ran a soothing hand up Alec’s back (now clean of the wax thanks to telekinesis and a little nail scraping) before he felt him lean over to grab something (probably a condom and lube) from the nightstand.

“I can see that you are truly a caring dominant; putting off your own revenge whilst looking for a way to bring your sub with you in your defection. What I am about to do you may find that you like, or you may want to try on James when you get the chance, as I have known many to find this act highly erotic.” Silva explained as he leant down and spread Alec’s cheeks.

“And what would that be?” Alec asked, trying to keep his voice steady as he prepared himself to be breached. He could not hold back his cry of arousal as Silva licked him from his balls all the way to his tail bone.

“I think you may just like rimming after all.” Was all Silva said before he started licking around Alec’s hole in earnest, making Alec shamefully whimper, as he had never felt like this before. When Silva tried to breach him with his tongue, it took all Alec had to keep him from entering; he did not want to think about how that tongue would feel inside of him, with him having the sensitivity of a virgin teenager at the moment. Silva then used his telekinesis to drop more wax on his back, make it feel like someone had just clamped his nipples, and make the cock ring vibrate. As his body tried to adjust (as well as make a valiant effort in cumming), he lost control and felt Silva’s tongue practically dive into his entrance. /You see, little Cossack, the immense pleasure that can be given when you truly control telekinesis? When you control the very particles around you? If you knew how to do this, do you honestly believe your little telepath would be able to stay stubborn about defecting? Make him cum helplessly again and again while his body is helplessly stimulated until he is screaming in that perfect mixture of pain and pleasure. Your sub is loyal, but he is loyal to
whosoever holds his leash, and do you truly believe he would rather stay loyal to something that will eventually betray him, the way it did you and me? Something that wants him to remain alone so that he doesn’t betray it, whether intentionally or accidently; see all strangers as potential threats, not potential friends or even allies? To admit to the world there is something wrong with him in that he can execute a man, shoot him in the head, slash his throat or carve up his chest, and then walk away, return for a pat on the head before he returns to his cold, empty apartment, where there isn’t even a pet that is happy he’s home because he could be away for weeks at a time and of course he has no friends to look after them whilst he’s away. Yes, return to a place that for all intents and purposes is just a spacious tomb where he can drink himself to death and the only ones who will miss him are you, the Quartermaster, Agent Moneypenny, and maybe a few restaurateurs. All that loneliness and pain, when what you, and by extension me, offer him is warmth and acceptance, a warm apartment where you and he can be together without the sneers of others, of those who look down upon you and especially on him, as he has admitted he needs a grounding agent or he will lose himself to the winds of betrayal and loneliness. To be something that matters, instead of just a number or a ghost, pointing an empty sleeve, smirking at everything people feel or want or struggle for, while feeling all the while that he wants to be part of that group, because that is the group that can make him feel not so alone, not so disconnected because he ultimately want the same things they want. MI6 wants you, James, all the other 00s, and all their other agents to act like nothing touches you; nothing warms you, that you don’t need anything, not people, love, even a dream or an idea just to cling to in the darkness. We all wish to belong somewhere, make James understand that it is with you he belongs; it’s you, because you accept him for all that he is.

As Silva gave his mental speech to Alec, he had dropped his illusion, used his telekinesis to stroke Alec’s prostate, and had also started fingering him, but it was nothing like what he did to James; that was just scissoring and stretching, what Silva was doing was massaging and caressing, coaxing the muscles to surrender and relax, whilst no movement was made to actually stretch him apart from the finger that was gliding alongside his tongue. Alec felt his resolve weakening; this was what he wanted, the perfect way of both avenging his parents, his sister, and still having James, how had he not seen it before? James had worked solo missions, and he had worked missions with other agents before and after working with Alec, but it was Alec he would often choose when given the choice of working solo or with a partner of his own choosing. It was James who had, in his own way, offered friendship when all Alec wanted was to watch England burn. James, in his own remarkably shy and roundabout way, asked for friendship and then physical companionship from someone who could have mocked him endlessly for openly admitting he needed someone. It had become what it had, after a particularly bad mission; they had saved the mission, but a village full of innocent people that had helped them had been destroyed. The elders of the village, as well as James and Alec via a closed circuit, had been forced to watch as the women and the children had been defiled in every way imaginable, had been forced to listen to their screams as they were raped, burned with acid, the women watching their children being mercilessly destroyed while the fiends all laughed and jeered each other onto greater cruelty to people whose only crime had been sheltering them for a few hours whilst they prepared their assault. After they were done, they had forced everyone into their house of worship, then locked everyone in and set it on fire, listening to the screams of the people as they tried to get out.

As James had been forced to listen to the screams of people, innocents that could never have done anything to deserve such a fate, he had done something rather extraordinary; he was able to slip off the power suppressant collar, and soon everyone around them was screaming while clutching their heads. Alec managed to get his own off and shielded James whilst their enemies tried to shoot him to make the pain stop; he couldn’t be certain if James’ intangibility was active during such a strong telepathic episode and he would rather not chance it, as James was obviously also making an effort not to hurt Alec. Alec watched on the screen as the men who had violated the villagers, men who were at least fifty miles from their location, fell to their knees and then to their stomachs, as they felt
what their bosses and co-workers felt. Some were fortunate in that Alec simply used his telekinesis to crush their throats before they could shoot at James or use their sonic screams, but others he left to James’ ‘tender mercies’. When James’ eyes finally cleared again and focused, everyone who had been present had their faces fixed in horror, but many were still alive; alive in the sense that their hearts beat and their lungs took in air. He didn’t worry about them though; one look at James and it was obvious that while those people may still breathe, and their hearts still beat; James had taken their minds away, and locked them in permanent nightmares. Some were fortunate enough to simply be brain dead. James then walked over to the man who had betrayed them and his village by informing the warlord they were there to get rid of in the first place of where they were, he was one of the ones who still breathed, until James put his hand in the man’s chest, and pulled out his heart, which was still beating; Alec hadn’t even known that James could do that. All while they drove back, obviously with Alec at the wheel as James was in no shape to drive; Alec noticed James had a dead look in his eyes, as if he were trapped in his own mind, and neither said a word until they were back in their hotel room and Alec had made James take a shower, doing his best to scrub the blood off of James’ hand. And the only words were Alec calling to James, who finally broke down and cried, and Alec could only hold him while trying to bring James fully back to him. Finally, Alec kissed him, deep and slow and coaxing, a kiss worthy of lovers, not just casual partners. From there on, Alec had used everything he could think of to get a reaction from James; ice cubes, shallow cuts that bled for a few seconds, his belt, even candles and cigarettes which seemed to work the best. When they had reported in a few days later and returned their equipment to Q, the Quartermaster had taken one look at them and told M in no unequal terms that unless they were allowed to rest, he would refuse to outfit any other agents. That night, whilst James lay exhausted in Alec’s arms in Alec’s apartment, Alec came to the decision that no matter how he did it, he would take James with him when he defected, even if it started as kicking and screaming. Alec was summarily brought out of his thoughts when Silva withdrew his tongue and finger, and also flipped him back onto his back so that they were facing each other.

“I take it you’ve considered my offer?” Silva said with his little smile.

“Yes, so long as James and I can stay together, and I can have revenge for my family, I’ll join you and bring James here.” Silva’s smile only grew as he said

“Wonderful! Now, as part of your official welcome.” Silva then again surprised Alec when poured the lube on Alec’s cock, not his own.

“Not what you were expecting, eh Cossack?” Silva smirked before straddling Alec and slowly sinking down on his cock. Alec whimpered at the tight heat that encased his over sensitive cock; he didn’t know how many times he had dry orgasmed, but needless to say it was enough to make him highly sensitive, and wishing he could just cum already; hopefully Silva wouldn’t tease him too much.

“You know, I could keep you like this for hours? Just constantly tease you until you break down and cry like a little boy; I think it would be a good look for you.” Silva said as he kept a steady pace of rising and falling on Alec’s cock.

“Please, don’t, please just let me cum, I can’t take much more. I’ve given you my loyalty, my promise to bring James here and to even help you break England’s leash on him. What else do I have to do?” And Alec actually was crying though he didn’t realize it and Silva was right, or rather he was half right; it was a good look for Alec Trevelyan, but it was only good enough for Silva to gaze upon, anyone else who made the feral telekinetic upset would find themselves in for a world of hurt. He then started a vicious pace that they both enjoyed, and as he felt his own orgasm coming, he leant down so that they were chest to chest and as he stuck his tongue in Alec’s ear, he broke the cock ring off, and held onto the Cossack as he released quite the load. Alec was barely conscious as Silva lifted
himself off and finally released Alec from his grip and returned his nerve endings to normal, but he listened as Silva again leaned down and whispered in his ear

“You are mine now, little Cossack, as soon your telepath will be, but I will never make you separate, never tear you apart or let anyone insult you or him. I have given you and him the freedom you truly wish for; all I ask for in return is loyalty.” Alec nodded before Silva kissed him one last time and he passed out. Silva laid there for a few moments before he gently lifted himself off of Alec and went to the adjoining bathroom and got a cloth so as to clean Alec of the sweat and sperm that was slowly cooling on his skin. He had intended to only recruit a trusty lieutenant and instead he now seemed to have acquired something of a partner, two when they managed to break and remake James. Ah well, it just meant that he would have someone to enjoy his revenge with all the more; he had been building up his empire ever since he had destroyed the Chinese who had imprisoned him, and as such, he also built up quite the repertoire of assassins, masters of disguise, extortionists and other such charming people that would put the fools of S.P.E.C.T.R.E. to shame. Whilst he had been doing this, he decided that it would be all the more satisfying if he had at least one member of his own team in MI6, to watch over things and make sure he stayed in the shadows until he was ready. He had looked through every single file of every person working there, from the maintenance staff to M’s personal assistants. He had almost decided on somebody from Q branch, a man that looked like he was slotted to be the next Quartermaster, when he had come across not one but two interesting files; the files of 006, Alec Trevelyan, and 007, James Bond. Trevelyan’s file had read like a script for a movie; a mother and father betrayed by a leading power, surviving execution squads only for the father to kill himself and his wife while charging his only son to remember what had led them there. From there, 6 year old Alec Trevelyan had done his best to survive whilst looking after his little sister and keeping out of the clutches of Children Services, only for the three year old sister to succumb to hunger, dehydration, and exposure and die in her brothers arms. From there, Alec had been sent to an orphanage until he had been chosen by M to become an operative, everyone figuring that Alec would have been too young to remember how they had left his parents to the wolves. Of course, that wasn’t the case, but it was a quaint notion to believe in, as he had only been the best agent he could be so that he could gain influence and power, as well be in a position of real power for knowing when to strike, though he had not been expecting on getting a lover as well.

James Bond lost his parents at a young age due to a climbing accident, though the way the files read, it would seem that there had been those that doubted if it really was an ‘accident’. He had been eleven years old, and he still had family, but it was obvious to any that cared to look that, like Alec, he had become mentally reclusive and spent every waking moment perfecting his abilities, which had proved to be invaluable in the navy. After he had met Alec, he found himself often requesting the telekinetic as a partner on missions whenever the other was available, to which MI6 complied to as alone, the men were deadly, but together, they became a force of nature; the silent telepath and the destructive telekinetic. He knew MI6 would find this both appealing, and troublesome; after all, the two men had the highest mission success rate of any of the other 00s especially when they were together, and James loyalty to the crown was commendable and seemingly unquestionable. On the other hand however, you had the son of a Lienz Cossack who may just remember a thing or two one day (never knowing he already remembered), and he was the one who could make sure the telepath either stayed on their side, or defected. Not to mention there was the fact that SIS feared that any two assassins, let alone ones that were as close and as powerful as James and Alec, would decide to take what MI6 taught them and go into business together as very effective mercenaries.

James Bond had met Alec Trevelyan about a year after the Tracy incident, as it was called in the files, and Alec had been the one to help James heal, though even now he was still badly broken. There was also the fact that the two men were both incredibly powerful; you could train all you wanted but if you didn’t have the raw power along with the discipline to back it up, all you had was a highly refined ability. Bond and Trevelyan had both the power and the discipline to become
masters of their abilities, and that scared the hell out of the big wigs back in England; James had caused an entire facility of people to either go brain dead, lose their minds, or simply told their bodies to shut down, imagine if he got even stronger and could do that to a whole country on a regular basis. Then there was Alec, who could stop elephants and trucks in their place or lift them over his head, could choke a man, kill him without leaving a trace, unlock any door, was stronger and faster than most, could tear people in two without ever touching them. But what if he went to the next level? Seeing the particles, the atoms of existence, and dividing them? Controlling elemental attacks that were thrown at him, manipulating them how he wanted them to behave? That was what made people so nervous around telekinetics; you never exactly knew just how far they could or would go, and in the hands of a man whose loyalty could be called into question, they were undoubtedly afraid. And all of that was before anyone took into account James’ ghost abilities or Alec’s enhanced instincts; the men were highly armed and dangerous. Silva had to laugh; perhaps that was the reason M had held back in promoting him to 00, but she didn’t appear to have had the same problems this time around. He had smiled after reaching his decision of using both agents; Trevelyan wanted revenge for his family, but he didn’t want to lose James, meanwhile Bond wanted to be loyal to something, but he wanted his loyalty repaid with companionship and maybe even love, something that he got from Alec. They were perfect for his plans, now he just needed to help Alec attain a few finer points of telekinesis before they lured the telepath here and set about convincing him that his loyalty was better suited to those that actually valued his loyalty and would repay it in the right manner.

It took what seemed like two weeks for Alec to begin to fully realize his power, but he was stunned when Silva told him that to the outside world, less than a week had gone by; apparently, Silva did use his astral plane powers a little bit, and he had made it so that time could pass much faster on his little island if he so desired. Silva had been a vicious teacher, causing Alec to move even faster than he had ever done, as well as perfect his telekinetic shields. The first few days had been rough, as Silva proved he was not above sneaky tactics; just as he thought he had the shield to perfection, Alec would feel pressure on his prostate as well as feeling like someone was deep throating him and he’d lose all concentration. After a while though, he managed to perform such tasks without succumbing to Silva’s ploys, which made Silva quite proud, something that Silva showed the night before Alec was to summon James.

“"You have progressed very quickly; when you summon James tomorrow, and when he eventually arrives, which won’t take long thanks to my little trap in Shanghai, you will be able to bind him before he can do any real damage to anyone. From there, I doubt it will be too much effort to redirect his loyalty and turn the terrier into a wolf.” Silva said as he sipped his wine and Alec sipped his beer; Alec seldom drank alcohol, preferring to keep his wits about him, and when he did drink, it was only one or two and he really didn’t like most wines.

“"Not like there was a whole lot of choice; it was either advance or get cut to ribbons, I still have healing gashes on my legs and back thanks to not being fast enough or the shield not holding. Not to mention the various burns from when I would make something combust but I was unable to control it from there.”

“"Yes, we will hold off a couple of days before perfecting that technique; I want James to understand he will not be leaving until we are able to break England’s leash on him before we start up again on you setting things on fire and trying to control it.”

“I hope you will refrain from the canine comments around James, as he will undoubtedly guess I’m the reason behind them and that will put me in the doghouse.” Alec then noticed a strange look on Silva’s face, as if he were contemplating something. Alec didn’t know exactly what they were, but Silva was helping him cut James’ strings before they got all tangled up and he had to be thrown away, so he felt it at least polite to ask
“Anything in particular on your mind?”

“I was stationed in station H, quite a few years ago and I used my abilities to make sure we stayed ahead of our opponents, I was one of the first hackers and as computers got better I just got better at hacking them. It wasn’t even one of my powers, and yet, I was still better, even better than some who were technopaths! Then, when the prisoner exchange came up, M gave me up in return for five agents who had been foolish enough to get themselves caught, no offense. From there, they kept me in a small room with no air for five months, and I protected M’s secrets, I protected her. But they made me suffer… and suffer… and suffer until I realized M was the one who had betrayed me, leaving me with only one option; my cyanide capsule in my back left molar, the same as the one I took from you when you first arrived here while you were unconscious. But even after I broke the tooth and bit into the capsule, and I felt it burn my insides, life clung to me like a disease, and it was then I realized I had survived so that I could see her one last time, and free others from her control before they suffered my fate.” Alec looked shocked at the end of the history lesson, to survive cyanide was no laughing matter, and he knew that James had often wondered what would happen if he bit into his capsule, after all the man was technically speaking a ghost already, so would the cyanide work for him, or would his insides just burn? He knew that James greatly feared being left behind, left a broken thing for the enemy to constantly abuse as he kept MI6’s secrets (his stupid loyalty still getting in the way), and that was what cemented the idea in Alec’s mind that they could and had to persuade James to become a double-agent for them. Alec was further shocked when he felt silk brush over his eyes as Silva tied a blindfold around his eyes, and felt himself unable to move as his trousers were opened and pulled down along with his pants.

“I wanted you to know this to understand why I wanted revenge so badly, going so far as to take two of Mommy’s own children and making them loyal to me. I chose the one, who wanted revenge as badly as I did, and I also chose the one who needed to betray England before history could repeat itself and she could betray him like she betrayed me. Thanks to her, my abilities make me quite possibly the strongest person on the planet, but I will use my mind to bring her down.” Alec couldn’t stop the moan as he was all of a sudden aroused to an almost painful amount in an incredibly short time.

“I never told you my secondary ability; Pheromone Manipulation, it helped me with the illusion that I was your beloved James, it’s why even with your enhanced instincts, you were confused at some points. I could make you feel whatever I want you to feel, I can make you more afraid of a small mouse than you’ve ever been in your entire life, or I could make you love the British Government that destroyed your family, and make you have an irresistible urge to be the good son, better than James to the point that you would reject James simply because your love for Queen and Country would far outstrip your love of a mere man.”

“NO! No matter how strong your ability is, or how far I’m willing to go to help you and myself, I would never disregard James for England or anything else! He is my mate and my instincts would never allow me to hurt him!” Alec then heard a light chuckle and knew that Silva had been teasing him, and if he could he would have smacked himself; Silva just loved teasing him until his feral side came out. He then paused as he heard the strangest noise; it was something of a pop and clicking noise, like something was being popped and then slipped out. He then heard Silva talk again as his cock dropped and he was no longer aroused, though he was surprised when he voice sounded strange; deeper and slightly warped.

“That is why you will primarily be the one to break James; I will be around at night, but that will hopefully only drive him further into your arms, as you will be the only familiar thing, even if you were the one who got him into the problem in the first case, but even that is familiar, isn’t it?” Before Alec could make a comment on his voice, he felt wet heat encompass him, and it took every fibre of his being not to scream at the sensations. He had had James blow him before (frankly he was the
reason James was so good at it), but even on his best day, James could never have done this; there was no resistance from jaw or palate, Silva’s mouth and throat was like an open, wet cavern. The tongue that had helped Silva play him like a fiddle his first day here, was again playing with him, the rough patchiness sliding along his cock and somehow seemed to wrap around his cock as if it were a hand stroking him. He gasped and moaned as the sensations of wet heat sucking him and a rough tongue stroking all over him before he explosively came in Silva’s mouth, though he whimpered as he kept sucking and licking him as he came, milking every last drop out of him. As Alec slumped in defeat, he felt Silva release him and slip his pants back on while completely slipping his trousers off.

“I don’t understand though; how were you able to do that thing with your tongue? That wasn’t telekinesis, and I’m pretty sure it wasn’t any kind of mental manipulation.” Alec asked (more like slurred) as Silva grabbed him and helped him walk over to his bed.

“I may tell you when James has accepted his new role as you have accepted yours; I’m afraid it’s a little difficult to explain, and considering I just turned your brains into liquid, and frankly I think you squirted some of that liquid with your cum, I don’t think you’d understand even if I explained it in Russian, using small words. For now, rest, and think about the best way about bringing James here; we have to make sure he does not suspect anything until it is too late for him to retreat.” The next day, Alec was able to mentally send out an S.O.S to James, including sending images of some of Silva’s followers, a couple of which would be in Shanghai with Silva’s rather pathetic pet, Severine; she would draw James in, and the men would make sure he didn’t run. Then Alec would set about showing James the truth; that in spite of everything he had done for them, including losing his wife, his beloved Tracy, MI6 would eventually turn on him and either find a way to destroy him or keep him locked up with no human interaction. Alec would not allow that to happen; James belonged to him, and it was time his weapon was allowed to truly indulge in those bloodthirsty tendencies he did his best to hide except when he was on a particularly brutal mission. With these thoughts in mind, he upped his efforts in controlling his telekinesis, determined to become an expert at the advanced level of telekinesis before James arrived, and get some of the master level techniques down as well. By the time James arrived, he was proud to know he had accomplished his goal and now, with Silva locking down James’ psychic powers the minute he came around (apparently Severine had done one thing correctly, and that was drug James with a powerful sedative) James would have no choice but to listen and obey. As James was carried into Alec’s room, Alec noticed the men were doing their best not to let him bump into anything, not that he blamed them; many of these men had some kind of a healing factor, and were often the targets of Alec’s training, especially with combustion, the seismic shock-wave and the ‘remote’ telekinesis, which allowed him to manipulate things that were not in his direct line of sight; such as those on the farthest side of the island away from him. Silva and Alec talked in hushed tones until both men felt James’ start to regain consciousness, in which Silva left the room, but with the promise that James would be unable to use his powers in any way to escape. As James came to, he kept his eyes closed, no doubt hoping to throw his captor off balance and trying to figure out just where he was, and what the situation was.

“I know that you’re awake James; you never could fool me when it came to this.” Alec watched as James’ eyes snapped open and looked straight at him, trying to figure out a multitude of things.

“It’s no good looking through my mind; there is a telepath on this island that is even stronger than you, and he has clamped down your powers.” Alec said as he came over and stroked the inside of James’ leg.

“Alec, I don’t understand; what’s going on?”

“For you to understand you must know something very important; I am a Lienz Cossack. My parents survived the British betrayal and Stalin’s execution squads, but my father couldn't let himself or my mother live with the shame. So he killed her, and then himself, leaving me to fend for myself and my
little sister; I was unable to save her, and she died in my arms when I was six and she was three.”

“I know.” Alec paused as he looked at James, who now wouldn’t meet his eyes until Alec used his telekinesis to make him look.

“I thought you never entered my mind without permission.” Alec asked as he moved his hand up so he was petting James’ stomach, a gesture he often used as part of the aftercare; it was what led to many of Alec’s canine comments, it was a bit strange, but useful in calming James.

“Just before Arkhangelsk, you were having a nightmare; I hid myself from your defences and snuck in, hoping to figure out how to calm you, and I saw it. I didn’t know how to say it without you killing me and, when Arkhangelsk happened, I thought, maybe…” A smile bloomed on Alec’s face unbidden when he realized what James thought and sat next to him on the bed, turning the petting into full on rubbing.

“You thought I had chosen revenge over you and left you all alone. If you know what made me this way, you undoubtedly know what I intended. For the record, I had intended to defect years ago, but I didn’t want to lose you.”

“I don’t want to lose you either, but I don’t know how to fix this; I’m loyal to England, and you want to destroy it.”

“Simple; you join me, watch England burn, and what grows from its ashes will be significantly better than what is there now.” Alec said as he moved his hand up even further and started stroking James’ neck, a rather erogenous area for James.

“Alec-” James found himself unable to continue as Alec dragged a nail down his throat, making him whimper.

“Don’t ‘Alec’ me; England has been corrupt for too long James and deserves to burn. You know the only place where post-humans have it rougher is America? There, they have to register the minute it looks like they may be developing a power or they’ll be thrown in jail regardless of their age or their ability. There has even been talk of doing blood tests on newborn babies to see who will be human and who will be post-human, a futile test as the baby will still possess much of the mother’s genes until the child is around 8 months old or at most a year; a post born to a human will most likely register as human, likewise a human born to a post will just as likely register as a post. Now, if such a thing were allowed, how long until someone in parliament over here will suggest the same thing? Where children are immediately labelled as being different, labelled as mutants, when all they are able to do is Empathy or something, and very few are able to weaponize those kinds of abilities. Or have you forgotten that parliament almost managed to pass that law two years ago where those with intangibility had to be monitored at all times since if they could easily walk through walls, what was to stop them from walking into a bank vault?” James’ remembered that law alright; he had been sweating over that law for a long time until it had been beaten down.

“Alec, that may all be true, but there are good people too, those that try to help post-humans, those that try to treat all equally, and those who admit that what England did to the Cossacks was wrong.”

“So we are to keep the garden, even though only a handful of the flowers are good?” Alec asked as his hand went up again and started gently petting James’ hair.

“We are to simply give up and destroy the forest just because a few trees have an infection?” James shot back, though he was in deep trouble, as Alec was using every trick he had in order to make James submit to him, which was tricky as his body was used to doing exactly that.
“James, our mouths could debate back and forth for hours, so why don’t we let our bodies do all the talking?” Alec smirked before kissing James fiercely. James tried phasing through the bed, but Alec had managed to get a secure lock on James’ body; meaning he really was going nowhere. Alec then threw his leg over James and was straddling him in a heartbeat, and started to use his telekinesis like Silva had taught him, starting with a light pressure on James’ prostate, which surprised the hell out of him.

“Neat little trick I’ve learned since coming here, do you like it?” Alec asked with a smirk as he used his abilities to make it feel like he was fingering James, though he was doing it like Silva did it; massaging instead of stretching, coaxing the muscles to surrender; that was the only way to truly break down James Bond’s defences, instead of a battering ram, you needed to sneak in and coax him to relax.

“Alec, please – stop for a minute and – ah!” James gasped as the light tickling of his prostate turned into full on massaging for a good five minutes. The massaging of his inner walls wasn’t exactly helping any either; Alec had always approached this part with techniques of stretching and scissoring his fingers, opening James up as quickly as possible to get to the fun part, and James himself took the same approach when he teased the women he seduced. But Alec was doing something entirely different now. His telekinesis was massaging and caressing, with absolutely no attempt being made to stretch him out. Without his intangibility to get away from the sensations and with his telepathy locked up tightly, meaning he couldn’t even read Alec’s mind to figure out what was coming next so he could brace himself. All in all, the experience was one of the most arousing things they had ever done, and James worried about blowing his load before he was even able to get his trousers off, let alone his briefs.

“You can accept what is meant to be, James, or we can chip away at your defences until you accept. I assure you, it will be much easier if you give in now.”

“Alec-”

“I suppose that answers that.” Alec said before he licked a stripe up James’ neck, ending it by curling his tongue around James’ ear before going to work on unbuttoning James’ shirt and stroking his chest.

“Al-” Before James could even utter his name; he felt pressure on his vocal cords, silencing him before he could say anything.

“I’ve learned a lot more about my abilities since I came here James; now, unless the next words out of your mouth are your desire to go along with the plan, I suggest you just lay there and look pretty whilst I set about turning your brain into liquid.” Alec was very seldom gentle, not that James ever wanted that, but now, Alec used his hands and telekinesis to properly over stimulate James; everything from stroking his neck, to pinching his nipples, to making shallow cuts that would allow just enough blood to well up before Alec licked it up. James whimpered in embarrassment as the lightest touch on his cock made him come helplessly as he lay there and Alec watched in amusement.

“No need to be embarrassed James; I was unable to stop myself from coming when our new head, Silva, teased me, and he hadn’t even reached my navel when he made me cum.” James had a puzzled look, to which Alec elaborated on by saying

“He has Evocation and-” Before he could continue, he noticed James get a worried look on his face. /James must be completely exhausted to be wearing his heart on his sleeve like this/ Alec thought as he eased up the pressure on James’ vocal cords so he could talk.

“I never thought that there was a living person who would actually be given Evocation as an ability;
I thought it was one of those abilities you only hear about in legends and myths because you essentially control everything.”

“Nope; he has it, and quite frankly I am rather glad I gave I when I did, because frankly, if you’re going to remain stubborn, he is going to take you apart better than I ever could, and I’d rather that not happen James, as I love you a great deal. Now, taking into consideration my will as a rather dominant fellow, he reduced me to a crying mess within two hours, when S.P.E.C.T.R.E. had me for two weeks and I didn’t break. Believe me when I say this James, but it would be much easier if you gave into me now; because if he’s allowed to fuck you tonight, you will be a crying mess by the time he’s done with you. And do you want to know probably the worst thing of all?” Alec whispered the last part directly into James’ ear, pausing to rub his scarred flesh against James’ which had quite the stubble. He felt it when James had a minute shiver, before swallowing and shaking his head.

“You will be immensely grateful when he accepts you into the fold.” James whimpered again as Alec stuck his tongue into James’ ear after speaking into it. Figuring he had given James enough time to recuperate, he flipped James over and started stroking, kissing and nipping James’ back. When he remembered the candle on his nightstand, he lit the candle using his combustion technique, and let the wax pool as he listened to James moan. He also glanced at a toy he had always wanted to try on James, especially when he was flirting with women; sure, it was part of the job, but that didn’t mean he had to like it. Silva had had one of his men get it, as he wanted to make sure that once James became their double agent and not MI6’s, he stayed that way, which meant he had to be completely broken, and Silva firmly believed that those who could not be broken by pain, could be broken by pleasure. He really was hoping he could break James by tonight, since he knew Silva would bring out his ‘A-Game’ for her majesty’s loyal terrier, and he’d rather rather avoid that if he could; he had been easy since he always intended to defect, but James was different in that he was loyal. It was just like Silva said though; James was loyal to whoever was able to keep a good hold on his leash without choking him, James just didn’t realize England had tightened his leash so much he could barely move without cutting off his air. When he noticed enough wax had melted, he brought the candle over and dropped a few droplets between James’ shoulders, making him moan loudly. He let it cool before scraping it off with his nail and then he decided to show James the other thing Silva taught him, and he licked his hole.

“Ah! Alec, please don’t do that.” James pleaded as he tried to buck away as Alec grinned; James seemed to be exceptionally sensitive down there; he would often beg Alec to just get on with fucking him instead of carefully stretching him out (not that he ever particularly wanted to), but he had thought it mere impatience; this was going to be a lot of fun. He started gently circling James’ hole with the tip of his tongue, having to strengthen his telekinetic hold as James tried to buck away as if he were a bronco trying to throw his rider; he barely held his laughter as he realized how apt that analogy was. As his tongue finally penetrated, he felt James convulse and come a second time; James must have been practicing celibacy whilst Alec was away with the way he was coming.

“Are you ready to give in, or do you need more convincing?”

“Alec, please – please don’t make me cum anymore, I can’t-”

“It won’t be long before you realize that what I’m doing right now is for your own good, both in regards to Silva, as well as England’s hold on you. Tell me James, do you know what a fleshlight is?” When Alec’s enhanced senses picked up James’ increased heart rate, he just knew he was going to have a lot of fun with him.

“Alec, please-”

“You have no idea how many times I wanted to show all those silly women that they didn’t have
what it took to keep you satisfied – Honey, Tatiana, Pussy, Aki – they thought they could give you what you wanted. Well James, since you seem to like the female flesh so much, I thought that this would be an appropriate toy for you.” He then summoned the toy, and fully flipped James onto his back. He then slowly lowered the toy onto James’ cock, listening as he whimpered and tried to buck away from the toy.

“How does it feel James? Does that feel better than what I do for you?” Alec asked after settling the toy fully over James’ cock. He watched as James shook his head and tried to buck away. The feral side was almost completely in control now, wanting to show James once and for all that only Alec could satisfy him.

“Doesn’t it feel as good as those women? They must be as good as what I give you; you certainly go through enough of them. Maybe this will help.” Alec then activated the other feature of the toy; it had three vibrating bullets inside of it. James no doubt would have come right then and there, already being so over stimulated, but Alec used his telekinesis to act like a cock ring and kept James from coming.

“Please, Alec, make it stop – you know I was only with those women because of the mission; I was supposed to seduce Tatiana to get the de-coder, and Operation: Grand Slam would have succeeded if not for Pussy switching the gas canisters as well as getting word to Felix. Please, you’re the only one that I want, now please, make it stop.” Alec then picked up the candle again, and used the wax to drizzle patterns on James’ chest, glad that even away; James had followed his orders and waxed his chest to keep the hair off. He then moved so his cock was level with James’ mouth, and he didn’t have to say a word before James took him in his mouth, hoping that if he got Alec off, Alec would let him cum and stop this, even for a little while. Finally, Alec accepted the fact that James would have to experience Silva’s tender mercies tonight, so he started jabbing at James’ prostate to help bring him to completion. When all was said and done, he stood to put the toy away, and noticed James was trying to stay awake, he sighed, pulling his trousers back up, getting ready to resume his training. Leaning down, he gave a small kiss to James’ forehead and whispered

“Do yourself a favour James; just give in to Silva tonight, or he will break down every iota of existence that makes you, you, and he will completely rewrite them until you are his.” As James went back to sleep and Alec left, he could only hope James would take his words to heart.

“Any luck?” Silva asked as soon as Alec came out of his room, but he just shook his head.

“Any advice on how to treat him then?”

“Does it matter?” Alec asked and was not surprised when he found himself pushed against the wall, Silva’s knee between Alec’s legs, and Silva’s lips on Alec’s own. He whimpered as his hormones were again played with.

“Advice?”

“Ah, his neck is quite sensitive, I also just discovered the nerves around his rim appear to be very sensitive and if you want to be rough, his nipples are very sensitive.” Alec sighed in relief when he felt the arousal fade; coming from sex with Silva was all well and good, but when he made you come from playing with your hormones, it could be a little rough, not to mention humiliating. As Silva kissed him again before letting him go, and he went down to the field to again practice aspects of his telekinesis until they were perfect, such as actually grasping the organs that he couldn’t see with his eyes, he worried about how long James’ stubbornness would make him suffer under Silva’s hands.

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Later that night, James was taken from Alec’s room and brought before Silva clad only in a pair of Alec’s sleep pants. James looked at the person he assumed was Silva, and he was unnerved by the power levels he was sensing from Silva; he had never encountered anything like it.

“Well James, I know you haven’t had much of a chance to see the island, but hopefully tomorrow will yield better results.” Silva could sense the trepidation that James was having trouble hiding; poor thing must have had trouble sleeping without Alec there to wake and calm him from his nightmares.

“I was never a big fan of islands; always seemed so lonely.” James replied, trying to call on the 007 persona that everyone always saw.

“Perhaps a little lonely, but I think sometimes it’s good to be alone or just with one or two close companions.”

“When you’re a telepath, you find yourself seldom alone.”

“I imagine you’re feeling a little lonely right now with your abilities on lock-down.”

“I’ve been cut off from others before.”

“Turned you into quite the survivalist, didn’t it? It reminds me of something when I was much younger; you see, my grandmother had an island. Nothing to boast of. You could walk around it in an hour, but still it was, it was a paradise for us. One summer, we went for a visit and discovered the place had been infested with rats. They’d come on a fishing boat and gorged themselves on coconut. So how do you get rats off an island? Hmm? My grandmother showed me. We buried an oil drum and hinged the lid. Then we wired coconut to the lid as bait and the rats would come for the coconut and... they would fall into the drum. And after a month, you have trapped all the rats, but what do you do then? Throw the drum into the ocean? Burn it? No. You just leave it and they begin to get hungry. And one by one...” Here Silva briefly interrupted himself to mimic the sound a rat made as it ate before continuing.

“They start eating each other until there are only two left. The two survivors. And then what? Do you kill them? No. You take them and release them into the trees, but now they don’t eat coconut anymore. Now, they only eat rat. You have changed their nature. The two survivors. That is what she made us, though this time there are three survivors; you, and me, and our little Cossack.”

“I’ve been called a few things in my travels but I’ve never been likened to a rat before.” James said, with a slightly disgusted look on his face.

“You should feel grateful; in some cultures the rat is so revered it’s practically a deity unto itself.”

“And in some cultures they are seen as disgusting rodents that carry diseases that kill people.”

“I take it you are referring to the bubonic plague that ravaged Eurasia for 5 years, resulting in a third of Europe’s population being wiped out – an estimated 25 million people. You know, it was the fleas that brought the disease around; they infected the rats with it and when the rats died the little parasites would jump on us.”

“I’ll be sure to send them an apology card once I get off this island.” James snarked and Silva couldn’t help but laugh as he went to stand beside the telepath, only to have him move around and avoid him.

“You know James, I really don’t understand why you’re fighting this; you fight for a nation that is filled with those who would gladly see you branded as a freak, a nation that promises equality for all and then tries to pass laws that trample post-humans rights.”
“Anything worth having is worth fighting for.” James replied and Silva could hardly resist his snort.

“You know, in places like Canada, Japan, Egypt and other certain places, post-humans are treated equally if not a little better than simple humans? Whereas in places like America you are called that disgusting word, mutant, as if there’s something wrong with us. Even in your beloved England, having abilities like telepathy or telekinesis can disqualify you from certain jobs, like athletics or business; of course, if a post-human does better than a human, they must have used their abilities, because everyone knows that post-humans never just have natural skill in certain areas. If not for our beloved M, you indeed would have a very difficult time.”

“M knows I know how to control my powers.”

“Really? You don’t think a cold chill ran down her spine when she heard about what happened in Nigeria? When she heard about you actually driving people insane, shutting their minds and bodies down, mentally attacking and killing people that were 50 miles from you? About you sticking your hand in a man’s chest, and pulling his heart out, you don’t think that made her wonder about some interesting things?”

“That was a one-time thing brought on by extremely high levels of stress.” James replied, still side stepping and keeping just out of Silva’s reach.

“Really? Then tell me James, seeing as how both you and Alec were restrained, and had the power restraint collars on, just how did you manage to get your collar off?”

“It obviously wasn’t on as tight as they thought it was.” Silva adopted a curious look on his face before nodding.

“Yes, that could explain it, if only I hadn’t seen the footage of what you did; the light on the collar was on James, and that can only happen when the collar is securely fastened to a post-humans neck. Then, all of a sudden, poof, the little light went out. Plain and simple, you felt such rage the collar could not contain your powers any more, and it shorted out. A rare feat in and of itself, but to follow up with such an impressive telepathic display? Could you really blame M for being the tiniest bit worried that you could learn to summon that power at will? Or even worse? Make it grow?”

“It was just anger.” Silva adopted a disappointed look as if he were a parent who caught his child with crayon stains on his hands, but refused to admit he had drawn on the walls.

“If it were mere anger, James, do you honestly believe you could have reached people 50 miles away from you. James, you and I both know that there are some who are average at their abilities, some who are on the weaker end of their spectrum, and then there are those who are just plain powerful. You, Alec and I are all on the higher end of average.”

“I see despite your many talents, you do not know the meaning of the word ‘humility’.” James suddenly found himself unable to move, and realized Silva had had enough of cat and mouse, though perhaps in this instance, cat and rat would be more appropriate.

“Why bother with humility, when all it does is waste time? I much prefer a far more direct approach.” Silva then kissed James on the mouth, and if James was forced to admit it, he had to silently say that Silva was indeed a good kisser. He tried to jerk away, but like earlier, he couldn’t move a single muscle, not even as he felt a telekinetic touch drag his pants down.

“Apparently I’m not as strong as you would like to believe; I am feeling high levels of both anger and stress, and I can’t move a muscle.” James snarked as Silva moved away, but Silva merely chuckled.
“That is simple enough to explain, my pequeño fantasma*: you can’t break free because you don’t want to. You know what I offer is what you really want; your loyalty repaid with Alec’s love. In spite of everything you’ve done and given up for them, eventually they will hate you and you will be cast aside. But you know that Alec will never let them cast you aside, and because of that, you and he have no desire to be apart from each other. You realize that what I offer is the best thing for both of you, and so you have no desire to throw off my hold on you.” Silva had stage-whispered all this into James’ ear before licking it. James could do nothing as Silva used his telekinesis to wrap James firmly in nylon rope; he felt his arms being tied in reverse prayer position but the rest was simply a bondage web, one that was made to wrap around his cock and Silva added to it by having a thick knot pass over James’ hole.

“I must say, mi pequeño*, you look stunning in such an intricate web. Not too much strain on your shoulder is there?” Silva asked as he examined a shoulder that had been shot at, giving James the opportunity to go off the grid and look for Alec. James looked away in complete disinterest, realizing too late that if he looked anywhere but straight ahead, he would cause a chain reaction that made the rope rub over his nipples as well as rub the area around his cock and it made the knot rub over his hole. Three reactions that would have started getting him aroused, but certainly should not have made him bite his lip trying to hold in a moan.

“You were only ever interested in the reading and controlling of thoughts of people that you never thought about how the ability can be used in other ways. You touched on the possibilities that day in Nigeria, but only just. I’m going to show you just how much fun mental abilities can have with the body.” James understood that to mean that certain erogenous zones had just been amplified to an almost unbearable level.

“Alec also mentioned you had pheromone manipulation?” James asked, doing his best to stand still as he was still mentally exhausted and without his abilities to protect his body, he was basically at the mercy of a man who could play him like a violin.

“Yes, an ability that helped me break down Alec’s defenses and will also aid in breaking through yours. Not that I need that ability to break through yours; I know what you long for deep down, and that is what will help me.”

“If you can break me with your abilities, then why bother with this?”

“Simple, if I used my abilities, I might just get carried away and break your mind beyond repair, whereas if I use our bodies to bend your will, I can be certain that you simply bend, not break, as I believe Alec would be most upset if I did that to you. Once you have been relieved of your pre-conceived notions about certain things, then you will be able to achieve your true potential.” As Silva said as he ran his hands over James’ shoulders and lightly skimmed his lower back. He knew from looking through Alec’s memories that James was actually a physically sensitive person. Just as he had used his mental manipulation to make Alec as sensitive as a virgin, James had subconsciously used his ability to dim his own sensations. James was about to go on sensation overload, so Silva had to be careful; as he had previously said, he only wanted to bend James’ will, not break him and make him a mindless doll.

“You make me sound like a horse that needs to be broken before it can reach its full potential.”

“Alec compared you to a dog that is tethered to an abusive owner but the horse analogy works as well.” Silva replied and watched as James tilted his head back in frustration (as he knew he would at the canine comment), then watched as James again bit his lip as the ropes tugged against his hole, cock and nipples.

“One would think you like this; you certainly seem determined to stimulate yourself.”
“Call it irritation over-coming common sense.” James grunted through clenched teeth.

“It’s strange you know; how much you and I are alike. I believe it was fate that brought the three of us together; a trio of orphans, powerful, two already betrayed by something that should have protected and care about them, and one just waiting to be betrayed.”

“You mentioned that this had something to do with M, but I don’t see how.”

“It’s about her, and you, and me, and Alec. And you see what she has done to us?”

“Well, she never tied me up before.”

“Her loss; I know Alec greatly enjoys doing this to you, and I can see why. What do you think Alec?” James then jerked his head up and watched as Alec emerged from the shadows and James couldn’t help but blush as Alec’s eyes took in his bound form and seemed to darken. Without any words Alec came over and stood behind James, gripping the rope, making it all tug against his spots again. He then felt Alec’s fingers at his hole, starting off with two fingers shoved a little roughly into his hole, but James could admit he didn’t care as Alec used his telekinesis to turn his head and kiss him. This turned out to be a very good idea as, while James had been preoccupied with Alec, Silva had gotten on his knees and started playing with James’ cock using his mouth. James moaned into Alec’s mouth as he struggled a little, but between Alec’s raw strength and Silva’s mastery over his powers, there was nowhere he could go. When James was prepped enough, Alec nodded down to Silva, making Silva literally hum in agreement, making Alec tug the rope over James’ cock tightly so that he didn’t come until Silva was ready. Alec entered James as Silva propped himself against the wall and then lowered himself onto James’ cock. The three jerked and Silva saw James quickly losing control so he leaned down and bit James’ Adams apple the same time Alec bit the spot where neck meets shoulder. The three men came, all interlocked, and tried to settle their breathing, and since he was so close Silva heard Alec say

“I forgive you James.” Silva did not have to be as close as he was though to see the clear confusion on the younger telepaths face.

“For what?”

“For the explosives going off early; I saw the surprise on your face when they went off in three minutes instead of six.”

“Alec, I was given specific instructions to set them off in three minutes instead of six if need be; since you were captured by Ourumov, I figured that counted.”

“James, how on Earth was setting the timers off early supposed to help me?” Alec asked and James did his best to turn his head to look at Alec, causing the ropes to again move with him, though this time Alec felt it on his cock and Silva felt it near his own hole.

“Alec-” Before James could continue, Silva pressed down on both men’s vocal cords using his telekinesis. Upon seeing them still trying to argue with each other (how domestic), he further used his telekinesis to press down on Alec’s prostate as well as play with James’ urethra (causing both men to react quite violently to the overstimulation) and said

“Hold it boys, I’m not as young as the two of you are, and I can’t hold this position for much longer.” So saying, Alec nudged back, drawing James with him, allowing Silva to lift himself off James. He then untied James from the web, but kept his arms tied behind his back.

“Your shoulder still alright?” This caused Alec to look at James sharply, and when Silva let up...
pressure on his vocal cords, he immediately asked

“Why would there be any trouble with your shoulder?”

“MI6 wouldn’t exactly sanction my going to look for you, told me that you were dead and that I should move on, but I knew you were still alive so whilst Ronson and I were on a mission, there was an instance where the target and I were fighting on a ledge, Ronson attempted to fire on the target, and I didn’t get out of the way of the bullet.” James knew the expression on Alec’s face promised him a little session after this about not pointlessly putting his life in danger. Alec looked at Silva who promptly said

“Don’t worry, I started healing it as soon as I saw it when he was brought in here; he’ll still have the scar, but it won’t hurt him as much.” This caused Alec to shake his head and mumble

“You and your scar kink. Any ways, James, the mission was clear cut; I clear the path for you, you come in, lay the explosives and we get the hell out of dodge before they explode. I’ll admit, when Ourumov caught me, I thought about using the chance to disappear from MI6 but there was no clear cut way I could do it without making sure you came along. Then the bombs went off early; something I thought was a mere malfunction.”

“Alec, those weren’t the instructions I received at all; you were to go in early and scope the place out to look for appropriate places to lay deadly gas canisters. The bombs were supposed to be a sort of time freeze bomb; a giant flash, then everything solid would be frozen in time while you and I, being intangible at the time, would go on to places you had determined to be ideal to lay the gas canisters. If anything happened, such as you being captured, I was to set the time bombs off early and you would use the device in your watch that mimics my intangibility. I mean, Alec, think about it; who in their right mind would plant explosives at a chemical plant that had nitroglycerin in the same room as where the agents setting off the bombs were located? The chemicals that weren’t burned up immediately would become airborne and possibly travel to the village that was down the mountain.” Both men looked at each other and Silva could see they were having trouble believing each other so he offered up a solution.

“Gentlemen, if I may offer up a solution? Bring the memory of your briefing to the foreground of your minds, I will link your minds and we shall compare your briefings.”

“Before we do that, can I please ask to be untied? I think we can all agree that I am a little outmatched here between two telekinetics with my own powers on lock-down. I fear that much longer in this position and my shoulders will pop out.” Silva looked at Alec, who nodded knowing that James was right; James was one of the most deadly people at MI6 with or without his powers, but between being completely naked, being at the mercy of two powerful telekinetics, and having his own powers on lock-down, there wasn’t much he could do. Silva and Alec both used their telekinesis to cut the ropes, and then each grabbed an arm and slowly put it into the correct position.

“Now, ready?” Silva asked and, after a moment, both men nodded. Putting his pointer and middle fingers on the temples of both men, he then acted as a medium and watched as both men were revealed to have been telling the truth. Tanner had briefed Alec and sent him on ahead, with Moneypenny briefing James and neither having been equipped by Major Boothroyd, so there was very little chance that they would suspect anything.

“As my grandmother would say: gentlemen, you’ve both been bamboozled.”

“They set us both up; either to be killed or just plain separated, why though? We have the best mission success rate.”
“Best mission success rate, but the two of you combined were also the most dangerous if you two ever went rogue. Think about it James; they know Alec is a Lienz Cossack, they give you actual bombs instead of the time bombs you thought you were being given with specific instructions that you should shorten the countdown should anything go wrong, assured that Alec will be alright. Afterwards, they refuse to let you search for Alec, and if I’m not mistaken, they have not let you have a moment to yourself since Archangelsk; they were hoping you would eventually lay your memories of Alec to rest and go on as you had before, though a little less trusting of any partner you may receive, after what happened to your partner and lover. And Alec, without James to temper your emotions, what would happen?” Silva asked as he turned to look at said Cossack who had a contemplative look on his face.

“Without James my mind would be solely set on revenge and I would ignore everything else.”

“And, dead-set on your revenge, MI6 would eventually send an assassin to take you out; and we all know there is only one person with the qualifications to assassinate you; your former lover who, upon discovering you were alive, would feel so betrayed that he wouldn’t think twice about killing you, no matter what you said; he probably wouldn’t even blink if a satellite fell on you or something! And you, dear James, would probably never let another person see you for yourself and never commit to a real relationship ever again. And we all know the benefits of that.” Silva could see both men were quickly losing their tempers, and he could feel James’ powers start to try and break free from his grip on them.

“With me never in a real relationship, there would be no reason to make sure I stay alive to see that person again, as I did when Alec and I were on separate missions. ‘Orphans often make the best agents.’” James quoted bitterly and Silva at least knew who he was quoting. In James’ feuding moments, he never noticed Silva mentally say to Alec ‘He begins to see how his loyalty to England has truly been repaid’ and Alec only nodded discretely whilst trying to keep his own temper in check at the revelations. Putting a hand on James’ shoulder to calm both himself and his sub, Alec asked

“Do you think I’ve been completely compromised?”

“Not if you play it the right way; play up the idea of malfunction, S.P.E.C.T.R.E. playing its part in trying to make you both doubt your bosses so that they can gain two new allies, with MI6 still suspecting, but never knowing one way or the other. Are you in, James?” James’ glare could have sent an alpha wolf running with its tail between its legs.

“Obviously; I don’t like it when my loyalty is repaid with someone trying to kill my partner, especially when I’m the one who would be doing the killing. And Alec, if you make the comment I know you want to, rest assured, I will castrate you.” Alec only nodded, knowing in this instance James would indeed carry out his threat.

“Wonderful! Then, my darlings, rest for tonight, and in the morning, James, you are going to be put through serious rounds as you are farther behind in the usage of your abilities than Alec was when he came here. You only use the reading of thoughts, as well as mind control and illusion part of your telepathy, as well as only the invisibility and intangibility of your ghostly powers.” Silva adopted an admonishing look on his face, but both Alec and James were confused at the comment.

“I get that I’ve been lacking in telepathy; without a teacher it can be difficult, seeing as how one wrong move can have me hearing all of London, and children have particularly loud thoughts. But I thought the whole sh*tck about being a ghost was being invisible and able to walk through walls.” Silva rolled his eyes at such naiveté.

“Dear boy, have you never seen a horror movie or read a ghost story?” Silva asked and James replied rather snarkily
“Seeing as how when you think about, I would play the role of the monster, no, I haven’t.”

“Point taken, nonetheless, ghost physiology gives you the abilities of flight, possession, your own telekinesis, though you’ll never be on Alec’s scale, inducing fear into your enemies, ectoplasm manipulation and the ability to freeze things.”

“I get all of those abilities except for the ectoplasm bit; just what is ectoplasm?” James asked to which Silva replied

“Ectoplasm is energy that comes from outside the physical realm; many believe it comes from the spiritual realm and say that it is the energy spirits are coated in so that they may enter our world.” James just nodded, and as he and Alec turned to leave, Alec made the comment to Silva

“Ironic, isn’t it? England tried to make James a more loyal soldier by separating us, and all they did was seal their own fates.” As both men left, Raoul Silva smiled to himself and said in the emptiness of his room,

“A person often meets his destiny on the road he took to avoid it.” Mind, he was not expecting the call in the morning. At James’ urgent telepathic message to come running, Silva broke out his enhance speed thanks to his telekinesis, came charging into Alec’s room, and was semi-shocked at what he saw.

“Is there any chance you could explain why I woke up with a tail and horns this morning and James woke up sprouting a pair of bird wings?” Silva used his astral powers and saw that, as his own had hoped when he saw the two of them, their souls each had an extra passenger attached.

“Did you get a chance to tell him about what happened to me that caused all this to happen?” Silva asked and, knowing Silva as he thought he did, Alec simply nodded his head as James, with the added weight on his back, was trying to stand up without falling over.

“Well then, I can tell you that even though I was powerful, the cyanide had ravaged my body to the point that I couldn’t move even my pinkie. In my emotional turmoil and physical obsolescence, an ancient creature felt my hatred and gave me the power necessary to take my revenge on my jailors.” As Silva said this, horns protruded from his forehead, his canines and tongue lengthened and to top off the image, his neck sprouted gills.

“The creature that saved my life was a leviathan. It made me even stronger, giving me control over the oceans and its denizens, fish physiology as well as snake physiology and a multitude of other goodies. I believe that last night, in James’ moment of realization, two more ancient spirits took up residence within your souls.”

“And just what would those creatures be?” Alec asked as his tail wrapped itself around James’ middle as the newly winged male almost face-planted for the fifth time.

“Well, according to the leviathan currently purring in my mind, I would say a pair of old friends of his; for you Alec, the primordial monster of the land, the behemoth, and for you James, the primordial monster of the skies, the ziz.” Silva watched as James finally managed to gain his balance and was able to stand up straight.

“If I may ask, what the bloody hell is a ziz?” James asked as he fought to keep his hard won balance.

“Essentially a primordial monster of the sky large enough to be able to block out the sun with its wingspan, it was rumored that the wingspan was so large, its shadow not only blocked the sun but cast the whole world in darkness.” Silva said as Alec’s tail kept swishing about in his irritation, much
like a cat’s.

“So, not only do I have to still perfect some techniques of my telekinesis, and James has a lot to catch up on in regards to his ghost abilities as well as his psychic abilities, we also have a whole new set of powers that we need to learn how to control so that we don’t let MI6 find out we now have monsters from the dawn of time prowling about in our souls. Thus giving them even more ammo to worry about the two of us and possibly being less subtle about trying to get rid of us.” Silva merely flicked his tongue at the two disgruntled double agents before giving them a look as if to say ‘time’s wasting’. Silva helped both men get used to their new spirits as well as develop their already existing powers. All in all, it took almost six months, making it around June when Silva decreed it was time for the two to indulge in James’ hobby; resurrection. As the three men (who were now very well acquainted with each other’s minds and especially each other’s bodies) stood on the helipad where the helicopter they would ‘steal’ in order to ‘escape’ waited, James again sighed in frustration.

“I still don’t understand why I’m having so much trouble with the air abilities as well as flying beyond simple movements; I thought the ziz was supposed to be a master of aerial combat?”

“I don’t know James, but I think it has something to do with your personality; instead of going the path of least resistance, you always find a way to barrel on through to the path you want to go. From what I’ve noticed from air manipulators, that’s just not the way to go about it.” Silva said and both men could see how much it bothered him that he was having trouble with his new ‘guardian’s’ element, especially when the other two men had had it come to them so easily; true Alec still had problems with the volcanic fields extract of his earth abilities, but it was nowhere near as bad as James, as whilst he could fly, it really did look like a human flying, in a very mechanical sort of way, instead of like a bird flying, that seemed very fluid.

“Yeah, well that air manipulator you had me talk to didn’t make things any clearer; ‘air is an element all about spirals, able to change direction at a moment’s notice’. And don’t tell me I over-reacted when I froze him because he just kept using that stupid phrase that made absolutely no sense and he kept saying I wasn’t trying hard enough.”

“Well, we’ll have chances here and there to try and find your center when we get back to England as well as on missions, seeing as how often we manage to lose our ear-pieces.” Alec finished with a smirk which was copied.

“An added bonus, of course is that with James crash-landing so much, he has enough scratches and bruises to make our story believable.” As Alec turned to get into the chopper (pilot seat of course) he was knocked to the ground whilst listening to Raoul’s laughter. Seeing James’ wings out for a moment (wings, they had learned early on, that packed quite the punch, but were also rather… sensitive to the touch), he watched as James sauntered to the chopper, throwing over his shoulder

“And now you have a few scratches of your own to lend credence to our story.” Raoul helped Alec stand up and walk over to the chopper, still laughing.

“Laugh it up fish-brains.” As the three men now stood directly in front of the chopper, Raoul looked at them and said

“I believe it would be prudent if the two of you had codenames to make sure your true identities stay hidden for as long as possible from MI6 and mother. Any preferences?”

“I’ve already got mine; Janus, the Roman God of beginnings, passages, and endings. Fitting, considering what I always intended to do. And for James, I thought Ares was appropriate.”

“Over my dead body.” Alec looked confused at James’ vehement dismissal of his choice, so Raoul
took pity on him.

“You must have only read some basic facts on Ares to think beyond a moment’s consideration that Ares would fit our warbird.”

“Ares may have been the Greek God of war, but he was little more than an overgrown child. He would start wars for his own amusement, act all brave and strong, but the minute he got hurt he went running to Hera, his mother, to bandage his wounds, acting like a big baby the whole time. If I may say so, Athena was a far greater warrior, and only fought to protect state and home from outside threats.” James elaborated and Alec admitted that Ares did not suit James at all.

“Do you have any preferences then?” Raoul asked and James thought for a moment, until he said

“Going with the idea of having the name of a war God, as that does admittedly seem to fit me, what about the Egyptian God, Set? He was the God of deserts, chaos, war and just general violence, since he was the God that murdered his own brother.”

“I think it suits you to a ‘T’ Set, don’t you, Janus?” Silva asked and Alec smirked before replying

“I admit it is far more suiting than my original choice, Silva. Let’s get going Set; Tanner is already going to be having quite the snit fit about our ‘resurrections’ as it is.”

“Hold it you two; don’t forget, whilst it has been six months here, you Alec have been missing in action for almost five months, and you James have been missing for around four months.” Both men nodded then got in the chopper, waited till Silva was a safe distance away, then took off. As they took off, Silva had never been so sure of his revenge in the last ten years, as he did in these last six months. However, neither the leviathan warlock, the behemoth telekinetic, nor the telepathic ziz could foresee that there was still one element missing for them to be complete and whole; the dangerous element of power and life.

The element of fire.
James and Alec had just finished being checked out with medical and were currently in M’s office, regurgitating the story they had agreed on. They weren’t 100% certain she fully believed them, but even they knew that with their record, she would need some concrete evidence to call them traitors and try and have them executed.

“So once again the two of you have been resurrected from the dead. Do the two of you ever put any thought into how much paperwork I have to go through in order to bring you two back to life?” Tanner asked as he looked at the two men.

“Oh, sorry about that this time Tanner; S.P.E.C.T.R.E. enjoyed our company so much they didn’t want us to leave. Kept trying to convince us to stay just a little bit longer.” James replied and Alec merely shook his head; even with James’ loyalties switching, nothing could stop his smart ass tongue from coming out to play. Not that Alec wanted that; after all, smart ass comments were as much a part of James Bond’s calling card as his Walther or his efficient seduction of women.

“Medical confirms your stories; multiple bruises, slashes, among other physical wounds and both of your minds show signs of multiple mental attacks on your shields.” M’s phone rang before she could say more.

“Yes? You’re positive she’s ready? Alright, Bond and Trevelyan are back so I’ll bring them with me. Yes, Tanner will alert the other 00s about where to meet you.” M then hung up the phone and Tanner pulled out his own phone. As M stood, the two 00s in front of her rose as well and followed her, wondering where they were going.

“We are currently on our way to the training and exercise room. Whilst the two of you were in the company of S.P.E.C.T.R.E., certain events happened around here that not even you two chauvinistic dinosaurs can avoid or ignore.” M explained as they got in the elevator and went down a few levels.
to where the room that was specially built for those that had volatile powers (i.e. the field agents and more importantly the 00s) was located. As they exited the elevator, they saw Q was already waiting for them, as were 002, a woman who was nearing the age of mandatory retirement for humans, but she proved that she was a spry woman with her abilities of access and occlusion, better known as opening and closing any security system without the key as well as snake physiology which made her quite agile as well as quite venomous. Her name was Emily Blake and there was a warm look in her eyes as she saw both James and Alec accompanying M.

“Certainly took the two of you long enough to come back.” She greeted them and merely rolled her eyes at the ‘charming’ looks they sent her way, though she couldn’t help that her eyes lingered on Alec’s new scars.

“I’m still not entirely convinced that they’ve been held by S.P.E.C.T.R.E. all this time; I think they just dropped off the grid for a month or so to relax on a beach somewhere.” 008, Emily’s apprentice in opening and closing things but where Emily had snake physiology, Joanna Harker had vampire physiology, an ability that, combined with her name, had a lot of people often teasing her, replied even though she gave both agents a welcome back hug which they returned; Joanna could be a vicious little bitch, but when she wasn’t on a mission, she was really quite friendly especially if she even remotely liked you.

“You two better be weary; ‘Mina’ there just got back from a mission and therefore hasn’t had her bloody Mary yet.” 005, a bigger chauvinist than even James, sneered and Joanna shrunk back from them, causing Emily, James and Alec all to glare at him. 005 had electricity manipulation and the man thought that he was the deadliest agent they had on hand, which wasn’t helped by the fact his secondary ability was werewolf physiology. His name was Frederick Wilson and none of the other 00s particularly enjoyed working with him; he was like an animal that was too dumb to train, but he had his uses.

“Right, just like you haven’t had your flea and tick bath yet.” 009 snarked back and Joanna smiled as Franklyn came to her defense. The man was a social chameleon even without his abilities, but with them he was the perfect one for when they had need of an impersonation. Franklyn Lawrence had psychometry as well as shapeshifting, and he was one post-human you did not want to piss off as he could easily assume your identity and get you into a lot of trouble.

“Welcome back guys, hope you gave S.P.E.C.T.R.E. your warmest regards as you humiliated them once again.” Franklyn said as he shook both agents’ hands, never taking off his gloves, which were his only protection from his own psychic ability.

“You could say we left with a bang. Now, any idea what we’re doing here?” Alec asked and it was Emily, who replied with,
“We can’t say for certain but we think Q has chosen his protégé for when he retires.” The thought struck James hard; though it seemed like he did everything in his power to aggravate Q, it was no secret that he cared deeply for the old Quartermaster, and James had a hard time imagining anyone else in the role. They quickly shushed as 004, Scarlett Williams, teleportation and succubus physiology, 003, Lukas Jones, persuasion and satyr physiology, and 001, Charles Evans, half of his face horribly scarred so that he barely has any vision in his right eye, the man himself had gravity manipulation and stone mimicry, all arrived on the scene.

“Ah good, now that all of the 00s are here, I can tell you all that I have chosen a successor; now, I won’t be retiring for another year yet, as this person is quite young, as well as a little anti-social so, to help her adjust, she is going to be working close beside me.” Q said and most of the 00s were in shock, either from the idea that they had a young Quartermaster, or the fact that it was a woman.

“10 pounds says his idea of ‘quite young’ is some old bag in her 40s or something.” Frederick whispered to Lukas, causing Emily, Scarlett, Joanna and M to silently glare at him, and Lukas as well as Franklyn to hit him upside the head.

“Now, the reason we came here is, since she is young, we understand that some of you may have trouble taking orders from her. To that end, anyone who wishes to test her may feel free to do so, as we cannot and will not risk your lives just because you lot are being stubborn.” Tanner explained and anyone who had their eyes on Q saw him talk into his ear piece.

“Uh, excuse me? Not to be rude or anything, but why test her physically? I mean, as a Quartermaster, surely she’ll stay here at Q-branch?” Joanna asked, still very polite despite her 00 status and it was M who answered.

“With her particular abilities as well as her skill set, Q believes she could be valuable both in Q-branch and in the field. To that end, she will be sent on a mission with each of you, and your recommendations will determine just how much of the field she actually sees. Now, I believe Q is ready to unveil his chosen protégé?” M looked at Q who nodded and then a door opened and in walked two women, if the second one could be called that. The first one, was a field agent, an agent called Eve Moneypenny, but the other one appeared to be a mere slip of a girl; she had very short brown hair, done almost in what Bond believed to be called a ‘pixie’ cut, she was rather short (if the two men had to guess they’d wager she just barely reached their chins) and the most remarkable thing about her was her eyes; they were a sharp, almost acid green.

“Q, please tell me that this is your estranged daughter who is about to introduce our new Quartermaster.” Frederick asked and a few had to admit, they were a little shocked; this young woman appeared to be in her late teens, and sure, Joanna wasn’t that old either, but she at least was 34 years old.
“Everyone, allow me to introduce you to Cassandra Knight, your eventual Quartermaster.” A few thought they saw a vindictive gleam enter Q’s eyes as he looked directly at 005 for his little comment. But James and Alec were having a hard time concentrating on their little drama; something was not quite right about the girl, but neither could put their finger on it.

“I must say Q, she appears to be a lovely young girl, but maybe she’s a little too young? After all, being Quartermaster is a very stressful job, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen her around Q-branch before.” 009 pointed out but those that were really listening could hear a certain undertone; from the sounds of it, Franklyn seemed to have developed something of a crush for the girl in under a minute.

“Well, as Tanner said, any who wish to test her are welcome to come up and do so.” Q said and James didn’t even have to look to know who would be the first to ‘test’ her. He hoped the girl wasn’t afraid of doctors, because it was almost a sure bet that 005 would be sending her to them. However, as he turned to look at Frederick, he was shocked by what he saw; whilst the other 00s had disbelief and even worry for the young girls imminent fate written on their faces, 001 had a different look on his face; a look of pure hatred was written across it. Before James could think on it however, he saw 005 walking up to the platform where ‘Cassandra’ was waiting.

“Alright little girl, here’s how it works; we both use our abilities and if you manage to even wind me, I’ll admit that you at least could probably work here in MI6.” At the ‘little girl’ comment, Alec was certain he saw the girl’s eyes flash for a moment, before setting her shoulders and nodding. He wasn’t too certain how he felt about the situation; on the one hand, Fred was a colleague, on the other hand, he was an obnoxious asshole that had been absolutely horrible to James once it was found out the two were in a relationship. Especially since, before Silva’s training regime, Fred just touched their power levels, and now, they left him in the dust; he could perfectly see 005 being a true prick once he saw how powerful the two had become (people often liked to bet on who he was more disrespectful to; women or those that actually were more powerful than he was). So, yeah, he couldn’t say that he would mind it all that much if someone took the idiot down a peg (or four). On the subject of the girl however, was where the true confliction lay; he had no problems with a female Quartermaster (look how well things turned out with a female M, after all), but no one could deny that this girl was painfully young and looked like a strong breeze would knock her down. He had to give her points though; Fred loved electrocuting people with his electricity so, she had to have some balls to go up against him. That or she hadn’t read any of their files and therefore didn’t know what any of their abilities were. If that were the case, he doubted she would make a very good Quartermaster. Fred led with a fairly large bolt of lightning, which she expertly dodged. He kept firing at her and something they quickly learned about the girl; she was very agile as she had yet to be hit.

“Are you going to use your powers or not?” Fred asked, and one could tell he was incensed that he had yet to hit the girl, and from the looks of things, she was not the least bit afraid.

“This is a fight you little coward! Not dance class! Fucking fight!” None of the other 00s could understand what Frederick was doing; he was letting her inaction get to him and it was showing in his attacks as they were quickly growing out of his control. At the vulgarity, she stopped and looked
at him. This turned out to be a bad idea, as she was finally hit with a powerful bolt of lightning,
which made many flinch and Frederick smirk; he had finally gotten her. Everyone was shocked (no
pun intended) however when the girl was still standing, without a scratch on her, and what’s more,
she looked completely unfazed by the knowledge that most would be lying on the ground in horrible
pain by what was just thrown at her.

“You know, they say that for people who swear, it’s a sign of low intelligence.” Cassandra finally
spoke and it seemed, with her voice, came her attack as she launched two streams of fire at Frederick
and then she was moving faster than the eye could see. Frederick then managed to solidify a bolt of
lightning in the form of a vice, and used it to grab her. The other 00s were becoming worried as they
saw the vice tighten around her, however, a red glow enveloped the girl and then it sounded like a
bear roaring as she broke the vice, then rammed Frederick. As she got behind Frederick, she grabbed
his left hand with her right hand and his right with her left, and again that glow enveloped her,
though this time the hissing of a snake was heard, and everyone realized that it was Frederick who
was now in a vice. As Frederick tried to call on his werewolf physiology for help in breaking away,
some of the ropes that were left lying around suddenly sprung to life, and wrapped themselves
around his legs and one around his neck. A couple of the others grew worried that she may try and
choke him, but then the ropes changed color and unless some were mistaken, the girl had just turned
simple jump ropes into silver ropes.

“I read your file; so long as you remain human, silver has no effect on you, but the more you draw
on your wolf powers, the more affected you become until you are writhing in agony.” Many were
impressed with the girl; she had him with the grip of possibly a boa constrictor, and if he tried to
break free, he would be hurt by the silver.

“Are you convinced, 005?” Q asked and when Frederick glared, then nodded, they watched as Q
nodded to Cassandra who immediately let him go. When he tried to sucker punch her though, he
received the surprise of his lifetime when she calmly caught the fist, and used it to fling him off the
platform.

“Perhaps I should take this moment to explain Cassandra’s abilities while she gets ready for the next
who wishes to test her. Her abilities include computer hacking as well as computer programing, she
is a skilled combatant in more than one form, and she has proven to be quite the strategist as well as
thief. Her powers are bionic physiology and magic.” Q explained and quite a few had to admit; she
may be young, but she seemed to have quite the control over her abilities. Joanna then raised her
hand again.

“Yes 008?” Q asked.

“Uh, first of all, after seeing her move, I’d like to challenge her to a game of retrieval. Just to check
out her other skills cause I get the feeling you’re not telling us everything about what she can do.
Secondly, um, I hate to seem ignorant, but what does bionic physiology mean?”
“Well, simply put, bionic physiology means she takes on various characteristics of mechanical devices.” Q explained as Cassandra seemed to be setting something up, and Joanna walked onto the platform.

“You mean she’s a robot?” Scarlett asked and a few chuckled but Emily and Lukas, the two oldest ones after Charles, admitted that someone who was like a machine could prove to be very valuable to MI6 and Q-branch especially.

“No, the major means that I can take on various characteristics of mechanical devices but if you lot are thinking you can use me like a telephone you’re off your rockers. I can pick up certain signals but I need a computer in order to organise it all, otherwise my brain starts to over-heat.” Cassandra explained as she finished setting up some kind of program.

“So, the bionic physiology makes you a good member of Q-branch, whilst your magic could make you a good field operative. If I may ask, what branches of magic are you able to perform; I ask because my mom could use crystal magic as well as use verbal spells to do just about anything.” Joanna asked as she came over to stand by Cassandra.

“Well, there are the simple things all magicals can do, such as abjuration; the power to protect and/or heal. I may not be able to heal a person if they are an inch from death, but I can mend broken bones and heal most injuries if they are brought to me in time. So I’m sorry; a bullet to your heart will still kill you, but I can easily draw out poisons and such. Just don’t lolly-gag in getting to me. I can also do illusions as well as transmutation as you all witnessed when I changed the chemical composition of the ropes from hemp to silver. Something I have a bit of talent in however is enchantments; something that includes, but is not limited to, emotion manipulation.” Cassandra added with a little smirk, which helped many realize why Frederick had lost his control so easily.

“You played with Wilson’s emotions until he could barely aim.” Joanna stated and Cassandra nodded.

“Yes, although it was only a minor spell; if he had true control over his emotions, he would never have lost as much control as he did as quickly as he did. Electricity is a dangerous element and, like fire, can easily get out of control if one does not have complete control over their emotions.” 005 flinched at M’s glare; apparently, he would be in for some serious training thanks to that witch.

“As to the branches of magic I studied, I majored in animal magic, as you all saw since one of the aspects of it is animal imitation, as it gave me the strength of a bear to break Wilson’s vice, the crushing power of a rock python, and Wilson’s electricity had no effect on me. I can also use elemental magic, and shadow magic. Now, for your little test against me, I have set up a simulation
in which we will have to take out targets to get to our ‘goals’; if you fail to properly take out these
targets, a klaxon will sound, just as if someone had seen you and had sounded the alarm. I figured
this was the kind of test you wanted since your file says these are your specialties.”

“So these targets are going to be made out of wood or something?” Joanna asked and she couldn’t
help but blush at Cassandra’s look.

“Those would hardly be a challenge for a 00; these are 3-dimensional computer generated images
that could give you a fairly sized bruise if you let them get too close.”

“How can we be sure that you aren’t going to cheat, considering one of your abilities is interacting
with machines?” Scarlett asked and many would have outwardly flinched if not for their training
when Cassandra cast Scarlett a look that would have frozen lava. Frankly, many made the mental
note to do some research and find out whether this girl had any relation to M; they certainly shared a
glare that could quell most of the 00s.

“Unlike some, I am confident enough in my abilities that I do not need to use my powers to achieve
my goals. Now, 008, we each will use a weapon so as to subdue our targets, be forewarned that if
you choose a loud weapon, it will still set off the klaxon, as if this had been a real situation, a loud
noise would have alerted others.” As Cassandra explained Tanner brought out a wide range of
weapons, including some guns that sounded like canons when they went off. Joanna got the
impression that Cassandra was testing her, rather than the other way around. But, Emily, who was all
about stealth, had taught her how to throw knives expertly, so she picked up a multitude of throwing
knives. She glanced at Cassandra who she noticed was also picking up knives, as well as a bow with
a small quiver and a small sword. She also noticed a whip attached to her hip. After they gathered
their weapons, they both stood at the starting line, waiting for it to begin.

“Alright ladies, you will have 15 minutes to get to the end of this platform, open the safes, retrieve
the objects within, and get back to this point, all without being detected by your targets. On my
count; 3…” Joanna was surprised when she saw what looked like projectors powering up;
apparently Cassandra had not been joking about the 3-D images.

“2…” The beams of light quickly hit the floor and took the shape of an average male. An average
male holding a gun at that. They both got into running positions as they saw the safes waiting to be
opened.

“1…” Q paused for what seemed like ten minutes before he dropped his hand, signalling that they
could go. While Joanna used her knives by throwing them, Cassandra got up close and personal to
the targets, slitting their throats. If Lukas was correct, he would guess that she was cutting their vocal
cords, cancelling any chance of them calling for help, but giving them a few more seconds of life.
She certainly seemed to be a cruel little Quartermaster in training and he would almost hazard a guess
that she had Cartel training as that was a move of theirs. As both women neared the safe, he watched as Cassandra switched from getting close and slitting their throats, to using the bow from afar. He supposed that had something to do with not giving your target a chance to stop you, but he would ask for certain later on. One thing was certain however; Lukas had no desire to challenge her, she would make a fine field agent and with bionic physiology, he was certain she would also make a fine Quartermaster when the time came. He then watched as both women reached their safes and went about opening them in different ways; Joanna used her ability to open the safe whilst Cassandra used some sort of hand-held device. He wasn’t too sure what it was as she and Joanna were so far away that he couldn’t see properly. A minute later Joanna’s safe was open, she grabbed whatever was inside and then started running back, a minute before Cassandra. Just as Joanna came back to their starting point, and the others (001, 002 and 004) were about to congratulate her, a 3-D figure popped up behind her. As it raised its gun to shoot at her, a whip came rushing at the figure and relieved it of its gun. A second later, a curved blade came whizzing through the air and took the simulation’s head off, the blade ending up embedded in the wall.

“Well, it looks like the vampire was able to beat the witch.” 005 commented and Alec saw that same spark of annoyance flash in the girl’s eyes only stronger this time. He wondered if it was over being beaten, or was it because of what 005 called her?

“That may be, but if she hadn’t of gotten the figure behind me, I would be dead.” Joanna pointed out as Eve and Tanner picked up the knives and arrows both women had used.

“Bah, they were only holograms, you wouldn’t have gotten hurt.” Frederick brushed off, only for one of the projectors to suddenly shoot a 3-D ball of light at him and hit him smack dab in the face, courtesy of Q, who was standing by the control panel.

“I said they were projections; I never said they couldn’t hurt you. The mission isn’t over until your commander says it’s over. I hope that that little demonstration points out that I will have your backs, whether I’m there with you on the field, or guiding your asses back to HQ.” Cassandra said and many nodded.

“Well said Cassandra, now, would anyone else care to test her?” Just as James was about to volunteer, Alec held him back, allowing Franklyn to volunteer.

/*Why did you hold me back?*/ James mentally asked.

/*Something isn’t right about her, can’t you feel it? I want someone else to go up one more time before you take her on and make an ass of yourself*/ Alec replied and James decided to test that feeling, trying to figure out was ‘wrong’ with her, but he wasn’t feeling anything. He stiffened as he heard the ziz growl in his mind.
Don’t be so foolish keeper! Use your mental powers and you will see what behemoth keeper hears!% James and Alec had been shocked out of their minds when the ziz and behemoth started respectively talking to them, which of course Silva found hilarious. But, James did as he was told and sent out a light mental wave, which was supposed to act something like radar in that when the waves met resistance (i.e. another mind) he got a mental image of how many people were in the room. He was therefore surprised when he came up one short; the only ones that didn’t have brainwaves were those that strictly speaking weren’t alive in any sense of the word, such as those that had been brought back to life by some outside force. Even Joanna, who had an ability that classified her as ‘undead’, emitted a brainwave; so long as their heart beat, he should register them. While James and Alec began to realize what was going on, Franklyn talked to Cassandra.

“Now, please don’t misunderstand me my dear little Quartermaster to be, I applaud you for kicking Freddy’s ass, and coming in so close to our dear Joanna’s time is impressive, but I want to know that the one watching my back on certain missions is as skilled in un-armed combat as she is in weapon combat and powered combat. Now, when you are ready-” Before Franklyn could finish, he squawked (actually squawked!) as Cassandra suddenly used the tips of her fingers and hit Franklyn in certain spots, causing him to suddenly collapse under his own body weight.

“I’m so sorry 009! Since you were asking me if I was ready I assumed you were ready!” Cassandra explained as she knelt down beside him, making sure his head was turned to the side so that he could breathe.

“That’s alright, I should have been ready. What did you do to me? I can’t move a single muscle in my body except my mouth and as your bare skin touched my bare skin, I was not assaulted with your life’s story.” A few were shocked at this answer; she had not used any of her powers, and yet 009’s were completely turned off.

“Nerve attacks are my specialty in un-armed combat. I basically shut down your motor-skills as well as cutting off your powers.”

“Is it true that you can actually erase memories and knock a person out this way?” 009 asked as Lukas and Joanna came up to help move him off the platform.

“Well, yes, but I try not to use those applications too often, as you could completely shut down mental functions, turning the person into a vegetable, or you could just plain kill them.” Lukas looked a little surprised as he helped Franklyn move off the platform but he had to admit; Q seemed to have made a good choice.

“Now, Franklyn, Cassandra’s nerve attack should wear off in about an hour give or take. I trust you
are all sufficiently satisfied with Cassandra’s skills?” As Q was about to continue, James and Alec both moved to stand in front of the gathered 00s, and it seemed like everyone stopped breathing at the blatant challenge. No matter what 005 thought of himself, everyone knew that the telepath and telekinetic were their most dangerous agents; this girl had proven to be tough, but could she hold her own against the two that were so powerful, S.P.E.C.T.R.E. always did everything in their power to convince them to leave MI6 and join their organization?

“You annihilated 005 because you could play with his emotions and he underestimated you, and 009 was put on the ground because you struck as quickly as a viper with your nerve attack. We want to see what you can do against two people who have a pretty good idea of what they’re going up against. We only have one stipulation.” James explained as he and Alec removed their jackets as well as their ties, leaving them in their dress shirts.

“What’s the stipulation?” Cassandra asked as she watched both men, no one noticing however how she seemed to flinch away from James, moving closer to Alec.

“Will the real Cassandra Knight please join us on the stage?” Alec asked as both men rolled up their sleeves and everyone was shocked into silence.

“How did you know? I put a lot of effort into this illusion.” Cassandra asked as the illusion disappeared and the door where Eve and the illusion had originally come from, opened again and this time, both males had to use all of their training not to show their shock; this girl was almost as strong as them! And as she came to stand before them, they were further shocked at her appearance; she was beautiful! True, she could stand to let her hair grow out, as well as wear better fitting clothes and put some meat on her bones, but they could see past all that to the woman beneath. Her skin was pale as snow, which made her brown sugar hair stand out as well as her beautiful green eyes that were not acid green as previously seen, but more of a shamrock green. She was still rather short of course, though now, if she was dressed properly and she let her hair grow out, she could look a bit like a doll. If James was completely honest, at least with himself, he would admit that whenever he heard the story of Snow White, she came in very close as a ringer as what he figured the fabled beauty would look like.

“Hah! I knew there was no way she could have been that strong!” 005 exclaimed and many rolled their eyes at his idiocy.

“Is he always this stupid?” Cassandra whispered to Alec who nodded with a very put-upon expression before speaking loud enough for everyone to hear.

“You cannot make an illusion stronger than what the caster actually is; what she did was a mirror image of what she actually could do. What that means, idiot, is that she is actually even stronger than what she showed us.”
“To answer your question my dear, your illusion was very good, even if looking at you now, we realize you didn’t give your looks nearly as much credit as you should have. However, Alec and I both have abilities that help us to see beneath masks and we both realized something rather important about what we saw from you. Alec, with his enhanced hearing, realized you had no heartbeat. This in itself didn’t mean much, after all, Joanna’s heartbeat is very faint, and the longer she goes without blood, the fainter it gets, and we have come across a few that truly had no heartbeat whatsoever, yet they still lived. However, unless you were a true re-animated corpse, and not just someone with zombie physiology or anything like that, you would still emit brainwaves, which your illusion did, but not nearly as strongly as what you should have been admitting considering your actions; to someone with psychic abilities such as telepathy, they could see that they were mere reflections of the real thing.” James elaborated and many nodded; illusions could appear very realistic, but if you didn’t pay attention to every single detail, then people who knew what they were looking for could find the details. But as to James’ brainwaves comment, they knew there was very little Cassandra or any illusionist could do; even psychosomatic illusions* weren’t alive and therefore did not produce real brainwaves.

“Darn it, I’m going to have to work on that. Any ways, to the fight on hand, how do you wish to fight, as you’ve seen me in both a powered and non-powered fight?” Cassandra asked them and it was Alec who answered.

“Seeing you trounce Fred was fun but all we really saw was your animal magic and a small amount of elemental magic. We want to see everything that you can do.” Cassandra looked at him and nodded; he had a feeling she would get along slightly better with him than some of the other 00s; after all, they both had an ability that could make them rather feral at times. She also knew that her little enchantment wouldn’t work on these two; James would naturally be on guard with his own mental abilities, and telekinesis was most certainly not an ability that belonged in the hands of those that couldn’t control themselves. She couldn’t help the smirk however when Bond was thrown back but she herself was surprised as well; her mental defences usually sent people flying into the nearest wall, but Bond had only been knocked back a couple feet.

“Naughty.” Cassandra said as James regained his footing.

“It’s not every day you run into someone who has a psychic element guarding their minds. Especially such a vicious one; mind telling me how you have what appears to be a serpent made out of psychic flame prowling around in your mind?”

“I don’t fully know, it’s been there since I was a little girl. I always figured my magic summoned it to protect my mind, seeing as how my affinity lies with fire and all. Now, before we start fighting, is there any technique or anything that would be considered ‘out-of-bounds’ or ‘cheating’ that I should be made aware of?”

“Absolutely none; you can use your nerve attacks, your knives and whip, even your hocus pocus.”
James said and everyone was aware of when Cassandra lost her light air and suddenly seemed a little ticked off.

“I suppose that means that if they had any effect on me, you would be using your ‘mind raping’ abilities on me?” Cassandra snarked back and a few people flinched, ‘mind raping’ was what some narrow minded people referred to telepathy as. Still, none could blame him when Lukas muttered “Touché,” under his breath.

“So that’s why you were glaring after your test with 008.” Alec remarked and both Cassandra as well as James turned to look at him.

“I saw your eyes flash just after you lost to Joanna, but you weren’t angry at having lost to Joanna, you were angry at Fred for having called you a witch.” Again her eyes flash at the word, though this time James saw it as well though they were the only ones who could see her eyes apart from Q. The strange thing was, they appeared to flash orange.

“I must admit that I have trouble controlling my irritation when I am called that word. Partly because ‘witch’ has so many negative connotations, and partly because I prefer to be called a sorceress, as I am hardly a child.” Cassandra admitted and James huffed.

“You hardly seem like a grown up either, what were you called when your abilities presented? A conjurer?” James asked and Cassandra gave him a dry look.

“I’m afraid that the society of magicals is rather hard to explain to a brainless nymphomaniac ghost but I’ll do my best to give you a crash course. Now, when we are young, we are called illusionists, as illusions are the easiest of feats to accomplish, seeing as how you telepaths should be able to do it. Once you have mastered illusions to the point that only a true master can see the flaws, you have enchanter, who, as I stated before, can enchant the mind, simple on some people but near impossible for some who know how to control their minds and their emotions. After that, you have sorcerer’s, like me, who are strong enough to study magical branches, but not strong enough yet to master them. They usually can learn from 3 to 7 branches of magic. Once you have mastered at least 5 branches of magic, and with any luck you may still be able to learn more, you are granted the title of warlock.” Cassandra appeared to be finished, but Alec then asked

“And what is a ‘mage’? I heard someone mention the term once before, but I never asked what it was.” Cassandra finally took her eyes off James and looked at Alec as she responded

“A Mage is the highest member of a magical society, though they are also the rarest as they have mastered all branches of magic.”
“And how many branches are there?”

“51.” Cassandra casually stated.

“Well, that would certainly explain why the title of mage is so rarely used.” James commented and again her attention was on him, along with a bored expression like she was explaining something every 5 year old should know. Alec had to bite the inside of his cheek; women usually fawned over James and avoided him as he had such a vicious air about him, but this woman seemed to like him and find James boring.

“Actually the term is so rare because so few are magically powerful enough to study all the branches, especially when you take into consideration that some branches clash with each other.”

“Such as which?” Alec asked and again she turned, and again her patience seemed to return.

“Well, let’s take the most obvious example; destruction magic and creation magic, two branches that are on opposite ends of the spectrum as one is destruction and the other is creation, one takes and the other gives. Now, most people are unable to master both of these magic’s because they appear so different from each other, but a Mage is able to because he not only understands that these two magic’s are actually two sides of the same coin, but he believes it in his very soul. Creation cannot come about without destruction, if a person wishes for peace than they must accept that war will almost certainly come first; chaos cannot exist without order and vice versa. And the ultimate ones, where there is light, there will always be darkness, and where there is life, there is death. You see, most people can say they believe that, but your soul will always cry out for one or the other; warlocks who enjoy chaos will be unable to truly master life magic, and those who practice white arts and who have never spilled blood will have difficulty practicing dark arts as there is much sacrifice involved, even if it’s only a tiny amount of blood, and to those who practice white arts, all life is sacred, and would not take a life even to save their own. But a Mage can do all that, and he will feel no moral conflict because his soul accepts the balance of everything in the universe. For even the black holes out there where it seems so dark there could not possibly be any light out there, somewhere, there is a white hole where matter and energy is reversed and released rather than consumed and supposedly destroyed.

In a way it’s like how certain post-humans are weaker than others who have the same ability; just because you have telekinesis doesn’t mean you can hone it beyond moving objects from point A to point B. And yet, there are those who can actually kill a person from over 200 feet away with telekinesis by focusing it into a weapon form. Some are even reported as to having been so strong that they could see the atomic glue that held atoms together and divided them, which caused the object in question as having ceased to exist. The few Mages that are out there have that same raw power, and, like them, have been able to hone it to the same level of complexity and possible
dangerousness.” Alec had to admit; she may be young, but she certainly knew a lot about her ability as well as others. Now he just had to find a way for her and James to get along since right now they were getting along as well as a rattlesnake and a mongoose.

“One last question, I thought ‘warlock’ was a term for an evil, uh, magical?” James asked and since it was at least a semi-fair question and he was honestly asking it as well as appearing to try and be polite, Cassandra decided to answer it.

“That is simply something Hollywood came up with; to them, good spell casters were called wizards, whilst ‘evil’ ones who were bent on world domination and all that twaddle was called warlocks and even the term sorcerer sometimes come with sinister connotations. But that again is a misappropriation as ‘sinister’ in Latin simply means ‘left-handed’, which I admittedly am.” James had to admit; that did make some sense.

“Well, now that we have that out of the way, I think we should continue and get our fight underway.” Alec stated and the other two nodded as they continued looking at each other; this time Cassandra was at the disadvantage as she had only read their files, as these two had seen a number of her tricks. That was when both men heard Silva use their bond to say /*Use this as a chance to show off your new techniques; this girl seems like one who can take quite a bit of damage and I want to see how much she can actually do*/ Both men sent back mental affirmatives as they got ready.

When Cassandra blended into the background, Alec quickly sent a telekinetic blast where she had been, only for a sonic scream to suddenly sound off, disorienting both men and hurting a lot of ears in the process.

“And that is why I have always hated birds.” Alec said as he tried to reduce the ringing in his ears, only to suddenly have the wind knocked out of him as it felt like he had been charged by a rhino. Meanwhile, James had been frozen and it was taking him a few minutes to get out of the ice block.

“How come we can’t see her?” Joanna asked Emily who replied

“A number of different kinds of animals use camouflage as a ways of trapping their prey or protecting themselves from other predators; she must have done extensive research on animals to be able to camouflage herself this well, as we’re not even seeing minute changes in the background as she moves.” As Alec heard that comment, he was reminded of one of his own abilities; she may be able to hide from his sight, but she couldn’t hide from his seismic sense. He used it just as James came out of the block, and with his telekinesis, he found Cassandra and further used his telekinesis to slash her arm, which helped James take aim at her with his own telekinesis. As both men used their telekinesis to hold her, flames suddenly erupted around her form, and both men felt it when the telekinesis no longer had a hold on her as she again became visible.

“I admit I’m impressed 006; when your files were last updated, they said nothing about you having a
seismic sense. I imagine you developed that whilst in S.P.E.C.T.R.E.’s care?” Cassandra asked and Alec nodded while James said

“And may we compliment you Cassandra; I have rarely come across those were able to use psychic flame to actually consume and destroy other psionic attacks, such as a telekinetic grip.”

“Thank you, 007, but you don’t have to call me Cassandra; Cassandra was the name a priestess whose warnings went unheeded. To everyone but Major Boothroyd, I am simply, Cassie®.” No one but Alec noticed James flinch and Alec had to wonder at what made him do as such, though he wasn’t able to wander for long as Cassie started using her shadow magic, to hide her as well as the two of them from each other.

“A lot of your attack style seems to involve hiding in the shadows.” James tried to goad, to which Cassie replied

“I’m not stupid 007; only with my magic could I match the two of you physically. If it was one on one I would be willing to try it, but a telepath and a telekinetic to keep an eye on? Forget it; you always have to use the correct strategy when fighting, and not just barrel your way on through. When your plan doesn’t go as planned, you have to change it at a moment’s notice.” James was struck as that sounded like air manipulator philosophy; go with the flow when things went wrong. However, he didn’t dwell on it as he focused on where her voice had come from and both he and Alec used telekinetic blasts, only to hit nothing but each other!

“Something Major Boothroyd may have forgotten to mention is that I’m something of a ventriloquist. Pretty good, huh?” Alec chuckled; this girl certainly had her bag of tricks. He couldn’t wait for their mission together. He was shocked however as the shadows started dissipating. He looked and saw James had a physical hold on Cassie, with one hand on her neck and the other at the base of her spine. At first Alec couldn’t understand Cassie’s look of pain, then he turned and saw that it wasn’t the flesh James had a hold on; it was her spine, James was using his intangibility to actually grasp Cassie’s spine.

“Give up?” James asked and Alec saw that not only was he using his intangibility on her, he was also freezing his hands, no doubt causing a lot of discomfort.

“Not yet, do you really think a little cold can hurt me?” Cassie then managed to maneuver her arms so that she grasped James neck with one hand and his manhood with the other, and more than a couple of the men flinched as they saw her hands become electrically charged.

“Tell me 007, can you handle being electrocuted longer than I can stand a little cold? My magic is
constantly healing my body, and your psychic abilities can’t shut my abilities down. You meanwhile have no healing abilities whatsoever. So what are you going to do if I fry your cajones?” Alec knew however that neither would back down, so he used his telekinesis to separate them, causing a shock to both their systems but nothing neither couldn’t handle. He watched as both caught their breath, while Cassie was no doubt trying to figure out her next trick. Both men had to give her credit though; a freezing spine could not be an easy thing to deal with and continue fighting.

“I think that’s enough for now.” Major Boothroyd tried to intervene, only for Cassie to say,

“With all due respect; I can continue and I would like it if we cleared the air on the subject of my ‘hocus pocus’ as Bond put it here and now.” Cassie than launched a concussion beam from her hands which Alec redirected at her, but she dodged it, and used the resulting minor explosion as cover while she got close to James who used his invisibility, only for her to make a pinging noise that allowed her to see where James was. She then used her claws to slash at his chest, which allowed him to grab her. Alec could see that was a bad idea before he saw the glow.

“James don’t grab her!” She then let out an aura of psychic flames followed by a sonic scream, though this one was significantly softer than the one from before. As he was launched back, he surprised even himself as he let a small blizzard loose from his hands, which knocked Cassie back as well. To further try and confuse her, Alec let out minor combustions around her, which surprised her but she followed up by creating a psychosomatic illusion of a jaguar and having it launch at Alec.

“Enough.” M ordered and immediately the jaguar stopped mid attack and went back to its creator, who was standing in a military pose as she looked at M.

“It would seem that the three of you are almost equal on terms of raw power. I now agree with Major Boothroyd’s belief that Cassandra will do well in the field, providing she has the correct handler. We will soon see just which of our agents she responds best with, in the meantime, she will be with Major Boothroyd in Q branch. 007 and 006, be sure that you report to personal and register your new techniques and Cassandra, I want you working on improving our firewalls to keep out intruders.” M ordered as the other 00’s left and Cassandra nodded as both men went to retrieve their jackets, only for the jaguar to grab them and bring them over.

“Are you sure you’re alright Cassandra? A freezing grip to the spine is no laughing matter.” Major Boothroyd asked his protégé who simply nodded.

“You can really take a lot of damage.” Alec said as he came over, the jaguar following and going to brush against its creator’s legs.
“You two as well; my psychic flames are no laughing matter to normal people, and psionics have told me that its agony when they’re touched by them.” Cassie replied as she took James’ hand that she had burned, and when she let go of it, the burn was gone. James was surprised when he felt the residue energy go up his arm and touch where Ronson’s bullet went through him, taking a bit more pressure off.

“I still have some training to do though; even if it was painful, I shouldn’t have allowed my shadows to dissipate when you had that grip on my spine. If that was on a mission, and I was using my shadow magic to hide someone, my lapse could have gotten them killed.” Cassandra seemed actually quite angry with herself as she said that.

“Don’t be so hard on yourself; the fact that you were still standing, let alone able to fight, is something to be proud of, especially at your age.” Alec replied and James nodded his agreement.

“My age? How old do you think I am?” Cassie asked, looking a little confused, to which the two men replied

“18 at least and 21 at the most.”

“For your information I will be 29 come November; I was born in 1986.”

“You’re joking.” James said as he looked at her again, trying to figure out why she would be lying about her age.

“I was born the same year as when Chernobyl happened. If I had a birth certificate, I’d show it to you, but I don’t so I’m afraid you’ll just have to take my word that that is my birth year.”

“How can you not have a birth certificate?” Alec asked, as even he had had one before MI6. He rather doubted that MI6 had been able to completely erase this girl from existence just yet.

“When I turned 10, I erased myself from the system, which includes erasing my birth certificate.”

“Why would you do that?” James asked the same time as when Alec asked
“How could you do that at ten?”

“I’ll answer ‘how’ first since that is the easiest to understand; my bionic physiology allows me to connect with computers and back in 1996, they didn’t have the strongest walls to keep people out. Essentially, I was a good hacker at ten, and I’ve had an extra 18 and half years to get even better. As for the why, again, it’s a magical thing; essentially, names have power, they give you control over someone. What I’m about to say will probably make it so you and the other 00’s never want to work with me, let alone trust me, but you have to know. There are several branches of magic that give you control over things, including people. One of those is invocation—”

“Evocation?” James and Alec asked but Cassie shook her head,

“No invocation, with an i, is a branch of magic that uses the power of the word, specifically, names and certain phrases to control and manipulate a person or an object. The user can even casts spells or other powers by speaking names or phrases. Having many uses and diverse origins, different forms of the power may have limitations while another may not. Evocation can be much trickier as they use magic to call upon the forces of nature and in essence, energy period. You see, they don’t rely on words; it’s a matter of will power. Not to mention, a person, if they have a strong enough will, can break the power of invocation, but how can you fight your own chi or mana?” Cassie asked but the two were confused.

“What is chi and mana?”

“Sorry, I keep forgetting to use layman terms; chi and mana are other words for your life force. Essentially, the evocater can turn you into a puppet or just drain your energy into their own bodies, killing you and making themselves stronger.” James and Alec were admittedly shocked. What was rather amusing, was when they heard Silva say /*I never thought of that*/.

“Well, that’s a little disconcerting. What are the other branches that can actually control people?” Alec asked and Cassie replied

“Well, obviously there’s voodoo, sympathetic magic, which is what certain aspects of voodoo are based off of, as it deals with the law of similarity (like affects like, i.e. voodoo dolls), and blood magic are the biggest ones you have to look out for.”

“Blood magic?” James asked.
“Exactly as it sounds; you use blood in your spell-casting, your rituals, and it can control a person but in order to control a specific person, you need that particular person’s blood, unless of course, blood magic is one of your mastered branches.”

“Then what?”

“What blood type are you James?” Cassie asked and Alec felt he knew where this was going.

“B+.” James answered to which Cassie replied

“With a decent amount of B+, a blood warlock could control everyone in their area who has that blood type. The more blood they have or the stronger they themselves are the more people they could control and it’s like evocation; how do you fight your own life force?” Cassie asked and both men nodded.

“If that is the case, then why don’t we hear about blood warlocks taking over certain regions?” James asked and he saw as Cassie again became closed off and finally cancelled the jaguar illusion.

“If you have to honestly ask me that, we have nothing more to discuss 007.” Cassie then turned and left with Major Boothroyd in front of her.

“What was all that about?” James asked and Alec sighed as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“James, strong telepaths and telekinetics can manipulate people just like blood magic. But just because we can do it, doesn’t mean we will do it. I get the feeling she was expecting you to understand seeing as how telepaths don’t have the greatest reputation.” James suddenly got the look every man that ever insulted a woman by putting his foot in his mouth as he realized Cassie had given him the chance at being a confidant and he had spectacularly blown it.

“I better go apologize.” As James went to follow her, Alec stopped him by gripping his arm and holding him in place.

“Maybe you should let her cool off and we’ll talk to her tomorrow.”
“Most women are charmed by me; around her I put my foot in my mouth at least twice. You in the meantime seemed to be making fast friends with her. What did I do wrong?”

“I acted around her that way I act around you; you treated her like you treat women on missions, something she has doubt heard of and does not appreciate in the least. Make no mistake James; she may be younger than us but I know you felt what I felt; her power levels almost match ours, and she’ll only get stronger with age, I would be very surprised if she didn’t grow up to be a Mage. If we play this right, we may be able to make an ally in Q branch, we play this wrong, and when the time comes she is going to be a major obstacle. Come on, we better go ‘register’ our techniques.”

Thankfully the head of the registration for post-human abilities was not a post-human herself (the irony), and so she had no way of knowing they were only listing one or two of their new techniques, with James explaining the ‘blizzard’ as nothing more than him using his freezing ability a little forcefully. The woman didn’t even question it, as she thought abilities, once categorized, were all the same. She didn’t see any difference between fire breath and combustion, to her; you simply had a fire ability. When they were done, they were happy to see that their apartment hadn’t been sold whilst they were away, something they didn’t doubt was either Q’s influence or Silva’s. They ordered take-away and continued working on their new abilities, though Alec was severely hampered by the fact he could hardly work on his earth manipulation in an apartment, and James still had trouble with his air capabilities.

James and Alec both entered Q branch the next day to a rather interesting sight; the younger members all appeared rather excited, whilst the older members all appeared in a very sour mood. If the two agents had to guess, they would guess it was because John Cleese, who preferred dealing with people his own age and if you were under 35 he treated you like a child, was rumored to have been in line for the next quartermaster, but now there was a young woman who was going to be taking over, no doubt making the younger members happy even if they didn’t know her.

“Ah 007 and 006, here to once again cause havoc and mayhem?” The man in question asked as he spotted them, but the agents were both relieved that he was not to be the next Q; he may be able to snark at them, but when the chips were down, he would freeze. True, they had yet to see Cassie in action in that regard, but if she handled being their eye in the sky as well as she did when fighting, they doubted there would be any trouble.

“We are actually here to see Q and Cassie.” Both men saw the irritation before he stalked off, with a younger intern, Michael or Markus or something like that, coming over to them with a smile on his face.

“You’re here to see Cassie? Come on, she’s still working on the mainframe; she says that it’s in such bad condition she’s surprised we haven’t been hacked before.”

“I thought our contracts promised us the best protection?” Alec asked, noting a few were snickering at his scars, something he was too proud to let get to him.
“That’s what I thought but she says that there are gaps in our firewall so large you could fly a B-29 through them. Well, I’m not going to argue since she demonstrated by hacking all our computers and had them playing ‘Moonlight Serenade’ by Glen Miller for an hour and half.”

“She seems a little young to know that piece, let alone Glen Miller.” James pointed out but Matthew just shrugged as he led them to a computer which Cassie was sitting at and Q was watching over her shoulder. Both men were a little surprised to see her now wearing glasses.

“Quartermaster, sir, 007 and 006 are here to see you and Miss. Knight.”

“Thank you Martin.” Q replied, to which Cassie said without looking away from the screen

“That’s Markus, who likes to be called Mac from his last name MacAlister. Martin is the ginger who has a crush on Cindy from personal, which, somebody should tell him, is reciprocated.” When she was finished, all four men were staring at her.

“How do you know that?” Q asked.

“You remember she came down yesterday during her tea break? As soon as Martin saw her, he stopped slouching, sucked in his stomach and started fixing his clothes. And as soon as she saw him, she started brushing her hair back and tried making it presentable. She also lightly tugged her shirt down so as to try and show off her cleavage.”

“That doesn’t particularly mean anything.” Markus pointed out to which Cassie countered with,

“It does when they both start producing higher levels of testosterone and estrogen respectfully, with his telling her that he is a fertile male, and hers telling him she is fertile as well and nearing ovulation.” Markus gaped at her as he asked

“And how the bloody hell do you know that?!”

“Animal imitation gives me a strong sense of smell; pheromones do not just exist in the animal world you know.”
“Then you could smell that-”

“That you have a slight attraction to me? Yes. 009 shares your feelings as he seemed to develop something of an attraction as soon as he saw me.” Cassie pointed out which finally had James and Alec start laughing as Markus blushed heavily, before coming up with some sort of excuse to leave. Q shook his head with a fond look on his face.

“Cassandra, if you can take a break from your coding, I do believe we could do with some lunch.”

“That’s alright Major, I’m not hungry.” Cassie answered still without looking away from the screen.

“Now see here young lady, you don’t look like you had any breakfast, and now in the 6 hours since I’ve seen you when I came in, you mean to say you’re not going to have any lunch? Not on my watch; you will either cease and desist, and have lunch with me, or I shall have 006 bodily remove you from that computer.” James and Alec looked at each other with smirks on their faces before Alec went and stood behind her chair.

“You realize I could just flip you on your back right? I may not have shown it yesterday, but I am quite adept at Judo.” Cassie asked as she finally stopped coding and looked up at the man.

“Yes, but the most effective way would be to flip me forwards, thus smashing the computer, ruining God knows how many hours of work, and you would have to wait whilst another computer was brought in so you could restart the whole process, time which would be spent eating lunch with Q anyways. So, you can either willingly take the break, or you can struggle, and end up in the same conclusion, just a great deal more work to do on your end afterwards.” Alec smirked down at her, which she returned as she muttered

“Touché, alright, I know when to surrender. Though, for future reference, I really don’t have to eat that much since a component of Bionic physiology happens to be hunger suppression. I also don’t have to sleep much, use the loo all that often and, in the case we are someplace with limited oxygen, I can be oxygen independent.”

“Just because we can do something, does not mean that we should, or that we would all that often. And I would keep that kind of talk between us, or everyone really will be calling you a robot.” James pointed out as Q went to get some lunch for himself and Cassie, and Cassie took off the glasses.

“I get the feeling this has to do with your visit? And technically, I would be a cyborg, as there are
organic components to me."

“Yes, Alec helped me realize that what I said yesterday in response to blood mages was as small
minded as those who believe that those with telepathy use it to control the minds of others to do their
bidding or that athletes with telekinesis use their abilities to win their games or matches. To sum it up,
I was as a big a jerk as the small-minded twits in parliament who try to make things difficult for post-
humans.”

“Well, you are hardly the first person who made such comments to me, but you were the first who
had a similar ability.”

“Yes well, until recently I thought that mind control and the other aspects of my power were things
beyond my control and so I didn’t much care for them.”

“I suppose that explains why you couldn’t control your ghostly powers beyond the basics and you
still have trouble with the harder aspects.” Cassie said as she popped the cracks out of her neck and
back.

“I beg your pardon?” James asked whilst Alec looked uneasy.

“You don’t believe in ghosts, so you can’t possess people or use ectoplasm manipulation in any
way.”

“How do you know I can’t?” Cassie again gave him the exasperated look.

“Because no idiot who can summon ectoplasm would have physically grabbed a person who could
burn them with psychic flames; by grabbing me with the ectoplasm, you could have kept me at a safe
enough distance while I had to extend my flames to even reach you.”

“She has you there James.” Alec pointed out, causing James to glare at him.

“Yes well, it’s hard to believe in things you know aren’t real.” Cassie then gave him a look of total
disbelief.
“You know? You don’t know anything because you only see with your eyes. I’ll bet you know that you can control your telepathy, but if someone amps up your ability without your consent, that control snaps like a twig. By the Gods, if I had your mentality, I could never hope to control my magic, as it deals with things outside the realm of things you know.”

“But everybody knows—” Alec started off, only for Cassie to swirl around and look at him

“A little over 400 years ago, everyone knew that the sun revolved around the earth; a little over 120 years ago, everyone knew that man would never fly, and before July 16 1945, no one knew of the truly destructive force of the atom. Don’t you see? Everyone knows something, but that doesn’t make it true or fact; it’s simply an opinionated fact until someone else comes along and says ‘you’re wrong’. I’m afraid that until you do that Bond, you will never be able to truly control your ghost powers or reach the true expanse of your psychic powers.” Cassie pointed out.

“Enough of this, you came to apologise 007 and you have done so, so kindly—” Before Q could finish, one of the female interns came running in saying,

“Q, it looks like we’re being hacked!” Cassie immediately went back to the computer she had just gotten up from. No one noticed the two agents as they heard /*We have seen what she is capable of physically, now let’s see how she handles her technological powers. After that little speech of hers, I want to see all of what she can do.*/ The two then realized that this was one final test for the young Quartermaster-to-be, and Silva was going to be the one conducting it. All of a sudden, a message with Silva’s logo skull came up.

“LET’S PLAY LITTLE RABBIT.”

“Cassandra, can you stop him?” Q asked but Cassie didn’t answer as she was already fortifying the firewall as best she could, whilst unable to fully block the attack.

“He’s gotten through the firewall; I knew I shouldn’t have stopped.”

“Start moving all the files immediately, lock them down!” Q ordered, only for Cassie to start smirking.

“So you want to play fox and rabbit, huh? Ok then, follow me down the rabbit hole.” Cassie’s hands then started moving like lightning as she coded. Silva soon realized that whilst she was throwing up defense after defense, which he easily dismantled, making it seem like she was just slowing him
down, she had also launched a private attack on his own servers. If he didn’t want to lose everything, as well as be discovered just as the game was starting, he had to pull back immediately. /*Time for a tactical retreat.*/ One last message appeared on the screen before Silva fully pulled back.

“SMART LITTLE RABBIT.” Cassie breathed a sigh of relief as the intruder pulled out, though she would have liked to have been able to nab the hacker, she knew that protecting the system was first and foremost with how many agents they had in the field as well as all the information they possessed.

“What did you do?” Alec asked as he looked around and saw everyone breathe a sigh of relief.

“Did you know that rabbits can actually kill foxes? They can; you see, the rabbit knows that the fox can tear it to pieces, and she has no weapons other than her speed, which the fox can almost perfectly match, as well as her mind. So she leads him on a merry chase through the obstacles she knows, hoping to come to the right spot. Finally, she’ll come to a spot that her nimble body can squeeze through, but the foxes more bulky frame can’t. However, he’s become so caught up in the chase, so certain that he will win and soon be eating rabbit that he never notices the trap, and is soon captured, unable to move forwards and unable to move back, so the fox slowly starves to death. That’s what I was hoping to do, though he discovered the ploy a little early; whilst he was following me though the defenses, making wax paper out of them, I sent my own attack my, piranha virus, as I call it. You see, like piranhas, this virus will devour everything in its path, until nothing remains. He saw what I was doing, but he couldn’t destroy the virus and continue to chase me at the same time. If he was smart enough to truly see it, then he would also see that, like piranhas, unless you get them all, it would keep attacking, especially since once it got deep enough, it would break off into smaller factions, meaning you have to destroy each and every ‘pod’ to save your hardware. I had hoped to get him in far enough that I could trap him while my piranhas did their work, but at least this will give me time to strengthen the firewall and hopefully keep him out for good.”

“You think he’ll come back then?” James asked and Cassie sighed as she rubbed her neck.

“Oh yes, this was just a trial run; send out the foot soldiers to see how strong the wall is, then send out the horse. I saw his style as he followed me down the rabbit hole; he could have entered far more stealthfully than that, he wanted to see what kind of defense we had before sending out the heavy artillery. Until this firewall is up to my standards, everyone is to be extremely cautious of anything they find on their computers, which means I don’t want to see anyone playing Gallagher.” Cassie ordered in loud voice, causing a couple of the younger ones to immediately shut down their games.

“Who are you to command us to do anything?” One of the older ones, an actual friend of Cleese’s, asked in a pompous tone which had Q shaking his head in annoyance, to which she replied

“The one who just protected your niece in Gloucester from being used against you to steal sensitive
information. Becky turns what, 13, in 10 days? Or is it 11 because she was born around midnight wasn’t she?” Many became very nervous as she stated that information in such detail and the man in question quickly shut up; only he, as uncle and godfather, his brother and the doctor knew that Becky had been born a mere 30 seconds before midnight, causing some dispute over what day her birthday actually was. James and Alec were highly impressed by just how well she had investigated her future minions; she may be somewhat anti-social, but damn if she wasn’t good at finding things out and using them. The others nodded, many of them now white faced, and went about their business.

“Now, I realize that you may be feeling somewhat guilty over the firewall business. But please remember I drew you away from that in favour of eating. That being said, you yourself said that the piranha virus will take our hacker friend some time to fully dispose of, so please, eat something before going back to work on the firewall?” Q asked and Cassie sighed as she agreed.

“Alright, since it seems obvious you won’t stop hounding me until I have something in my stomach. Martin! Sally! Peter!” The three were a little surprised as the petite girl suddenly started shouting, causing three people to suddenly come running to their station. When one of the males suddenly stopped, the other male as well as the female slammed into him.

“You called Miss. Knight?” Sally asked.

“Yes, I’m going to take a small break, I want you and Martin to continue working on the firewall whilst I am unable to. I am not demanding perfection, but if we of could shrink the gaps in the firewall from letting a B-29 to fly through to a Four Wheel Drive Auto jeep, I would be greatly satisfied. Peter, you and someone of your choosing are going to monitor the computers and make sure our skilled skull friend does not try an immediate second attack. It is not unusual in military tactics to launch a fake attack, draw out the big weapon from your opponent, and then launch the real attack with everything you’ve got. Make no mistake, from you, I do demand perfection because if he sneaks past you whilst you are supposed to be actively looking for him and we are still standing at the end of the day, I will freeze your accounts and you will be lucky if you are not stopped by the Garda, sorry, you call them ‘bobbies’ here, on your way home because your car looks suspiciously like a reported stolen one. All a complete misunderstanding of course as you drive a somewhat common car. But you will be spending the night in the, ‘slammer’, I believe it’s called? Until noon tomorrow when your accounts magically become unfrozen, by which time you will be severely late for work and will be lucky to grab an apple for lunch before rushing here.” Peter looked very green at the end of her instructions as he nodded and took off, the other two following close behind him. James was about make a comment, when he saw Cassie freeze whilst again removing her glasses, then suddenly fell to the floor with a cry.

“Cassandra! Jessica!” Q called out as he, Alec and James all knelt around Cassie. James and Alec started really worry when the saw Cassie spit up a bit of bloody saliva, turn a bit blue in the face and start convulsing.
“Quickly, Trevelyan, try and cushion her head; she could crack her skull otherwise and Bond grab her glasses and push that chair away. She’s having an epileptic seizure.” Alec immediately ripped his coat off and James passed him his own, bundling them up and managing to get them under her head. Meanwhile, James had taken her glasses off and pushed the chair away from her. He started worrying even more when he saw her eyes roll back and her mouth clicking rather rapidly, he worried that she might just bite her tongue off.

“Shouldn’t we put something in her mouth before she bites her tongue off? Or at least hold her down?” James asked but Q shook his head.

“No, I’m afraid that may do more harm than good. Don’t worry Bond, biting their tongues off or swallowing them is actually near impossible to do. Jessica where-?!” Before Q could finish, an intern came over with an oxygen mask, which he immediately put over Cassie’s face.

“Cassandra, listen to me, it is 1:13 pm, we are in Q-branch, you are surrounded by myself, Major Geoffrey Boothroyd, James Bond and Alec Trevelyan, none of which wish to harm you, now please try and breathe deeply before this gets worse.” When Alec feared she wasn’t responding, he heard the behemoth growl %Calm keeper; panicking will kill the keeper of magic and psychic fire. Use your mind powers to help the child’s lungs take the air in again. Calm and visualize.% Alec did as the behemoth suggested, and used his powers to try and get her lungs working again. He relaxed as she suddenly gasped and seemed to fall into a deep sleep. He gently turned her on her side, and rubbed her back, hoping to keep the oxygen flowing. He looked and saw James looking after Q, who looked like he had had a few years taken off his own life.

“Q, what was that?” James gently asked as Q tried to regulate his own breathing.

“Well, Cassandra sometimes suffers from seizures. She told me that she has been to numerous doctors and none can tell her why she has them. Some even hesitate to officially call it epilepsy, but there is simply no other term to come up with. Apparently, if they are not hereditary, then the cause of them can be just about anything. She told me that the most common factor for her seizures is after a stressful situation.”

“Then what makes you think she can go out into the field, let alone work at MI6?” James asked incredulously.

“You must understand 007, they only occur after the adrenal rush of the mission, not during it. So the seizure would only occur once she was somewhere safe, such as a hotel room. Or until the one she was guiding was safe and sound. Not to mention, the seizures can be lessened with medication. Still, if you feel too troubled by this, then I will add you to the list of those who don’t wish to work with her along with 001, 004, and 005.” As Q went to make some kind of note, Alec was sure he felt Cassie squeeze his hand, and he spoke up.
“No, I’ll look after her when we’re on missions together; just make sure oxygen is always part of our equipment, even if it’s supposed to be a simple bodyguard mission, those can sometimes be stressful just because of the bitch we’re supposed to be guarding. It’ll be easy to get across customs if we have some kind of note stating she suffers from epilepsy.” Q nodded, and then looked up at the sound of nails clicking on the ground. He then saw Cassie’s two dogs come into the room. Both dogs whined at seeing their mistress on the floor as the intern who had taken them for a walk, took off their leashes.

“Don’t worry you two; Cassandra just had one of her seizures, she’s resting now.” The bigger dog came over and started growling at Alec.

“Forget it Fido, I’m not moving until she comes around and personally tells me she is alright.” The dog immediately stopped and went over to the couch, sitting in front of it, with its partner coming over and they had a look as if to say, ‘are you going to move her here or leave her on the cold ground?’

“Q, do you think it’s safe to move her? It can’t be that comfortable for her on the cold floor.” Q nodded and with James helping to safely maneuver her, they were able to pick her up (Alec frowned at how light she was; she was far too light for someone who had such a physically draining ability, he made a note to talk to her about it) with no problems and gently deposited her on the couch. Alec shushed her as she whimpered, and when one of her hands fell off the side of the couch, the dogs came over and licked her hand, and the whimpering stopped completely.

“I take it these dogs are hers?” James asked and Q nodded.

“Meet Rai and Zumi, two Kai Kens, a Japanese breed if I’m not mistaken. She also has an armadillo lizard around here as well as a crow for a familiar.”

“I thought wi- uh, sorcerers had black cats as familiars?” James asked, only to feel a telekinetic slap upside the head from Alec.

“Cats of any color, as well as any kind of animal, can be used as familiars, but she bonded with the crow. I don’t understand much of it, but if you make that comment again whilst she is awake I will ban you from Q branch until your next mission, do I make myself clear, 007?”

“Crystal Q. Seeing as how Alec wishes to play guard dog along with the mutts, why don’t you have lunch and when she comes to, if she feels up to it, we’ll take her out for something to eat. Any idea
what she likes?"

“I don’t honestly know; she usually just nibles from my food but I get the impression she’s not picky. You best clear it with M though; strictly speaking Cassandra is not allowed to leave MI6 unless it is mission related.”

“What, she has to inform M of when she goes home?” James and Alec became uneasy as they saw a strange look pass over Q’s face, before he said

“You may wish to eat something now; I’ve read that seizures can take a couple hours to sleep off.”

“She’s not the only one who can go long periods without food.” Alec simply said as he watched her. As Q turned and left, Alec looked at James and lowered his shield.

/*What do you think that was about?*/ James asked.

/*I don’t know, but it may have something to do with M. Did you see yesterday when M called our fight off? She flinched at M’s voice before falling into parade rest.*/ Alec responded.

/*I can’t say as I did, but that in itself was strange; she doesn’t really look like the military type, and that was a perfect parade rest.*/

/*Well, if she was in the military, that would explain why she keeps her hair so short; standard issue so the enemy can’t grip you by it, pull your head back and slit your throat. It doesn’t really do anything for her otherwise.*/

/*Still, I wonder why she flinched at M; sure, M can be terrifying at times, but she couldn’t even look at her, she was looking at the wall behind her.*/

/*Yeah, that’s what I thought as well. Plus, there’s one more thing that has me curious.*/ As Alec finished the thought, he gently pulled up Cassie’s sleeve of her cardigan to show James her wrist. There, across seemingly delicate, pale wrists were angry red lines like from handcuffs.

/*Maybe she and her partner are into kinky sex; it’s not like I’ve never had those marks after we’ve
played./* James pointed out with a quick flash to one of the numerous times in which they used handcuffs and James had similar marks on his wrists.

*/ James, take a good, long look at her, since you can’t smell what I can. Sex lingers on the body for a day or so no matter how well you scrub. She hasn’t been touched that way in at least a year. The only scents on her are her own, Q, Tanner, Eve and a couple from security. She doesn’t have a partner, but there is a real scent of pain and fear on her. Something doesn’t feel right at all. I suggest we keep as close an eye on her as possible.*/ James knew better than to argue; once Alec decided on something, there were precious few things that could deter him. True, James was one of them, but James also knew when to pick his battles. Besides, whilst Alec had a vindictive streak as long as his desire for retribution, he had a protective streak just as long. James had somehow invoked it when they became more that casual partners, and now this girl, of which he began to feel they knew nothing about, had as well. He looked down at her and he had to admit, it was easy to see she needed someone in her life besides the aging Major; she was small when she was conscious, and now, with the oxygen mask controlling her breathing whilst she was passed out, she looked as vulnerable as a newborn babe. It was seldom there job to protect something that looked so innocent, yet was so deadly. It would no doubt be an interesting experience.

Chapter End Notes

Certain words have a little * next to them. Here’s why:

*psychosomatic illusions, for those who don’t know, are illusions that feel almost impossibly real. Like John Watson’s limp; he felt it for the longest time, but it wasn’t actually there, it was all in John’s head.

*“Teresa was the name of a saint; I’m simply Tracy.” Was how James’ wife Tracy introduced herself, and I felt it would add something if Cassie introduced herself unknowingly in a similar manner.

Also, if someone would kindly leave some kind of review and let me know if anyone likes this, I would be appreciative. For further information about these abilities, go to powerlisting . wiki . com/wiki/Superpower_wikia. Also, if anyone gives a damn, should Major Boothroyd be a post human, and if yes, what should his powers be? Also, in case it wasn’t made clear before, this James Bond is Pierce Brosnan; no offence to Daniel, he makes a perfectly wonderful James Bond, but I was raised on Brosnan and Connery, and Brosnan was always the heart throb. If you don’t like it, just imagine it’s Daniel I’m writing about, I really don’t take any offence.
Goldeneye

Chapter Summary

Alec and James have their first mission with Cassandra and learn a few things.

I managed to get a new laptop! So here is an early Christmas present to my loyal readers. Also, if any of you also read Going on an Adventure/Finding Something better, I lost the bit that I had and that next chapter is having problems being written. Maybe you could give me some ideas on what could happen whilst Bilbo is unconscious? I just need a little help to get started.

Chapter 3

It had been a few weeks since Cassie's little seizure and the two agents still knew pretty much nothing about her, except that after her seizures she drank lots of fluids and whilst she could drink tea, she really wasn't a fan of it. They had tried talking to the 'minions' as Cassie had affectionately started calling them, but they all said the same thing; they didn't know where she came from or anything else about her. The only thing that was discovered in the few weeks they had devoted to figuring her out, were the names of her two other pets; Matches the lizard and Corvus the crow. When asked about the peculiarity of the names, she merely replied she didn't believe in giving silly names to animals; Corvus was the name of the crow constellation and she found Matches in the dessert; apparently the little bugger kept stealing her matches when she tried to start a fire. They had tried to look at her personal file, but were shocked when all that turned up was the name she had given as well as a serial number. Neither agent liked what that implied; their own files had more information than hers, nor did either have a serial number. But on hers there wasn't any real information; no blood type, no allergies, not even the epilepsy was listed. They had tried Franklyn, to see if he had gained anything when they touched, but that was shot down when he reminded them that she had shut off his powers just before she touched him. She was a true mystery; nothing on paper, her mind was protected by the psychic serpent, and she had shut off the psychometrics powers before touching him. Not even Silva could find anything on her and considering his own skills with computers; Raoul could openly admit that she was very good at hiding herself. When Raoul said that, there was more than a hint of admiration in his voice, causing Alec to tease the cyberterrorist about being yet another to develop a crush on the mysterious young girl, to which Raoul replied that at least his 'crush' was based on what he had seen of her mental skill and not her physical skills or her physical beauty.

It was as they were trying to figure out how to get more information on her that they were again called into M's office for a mission.

“You two have been called here for two reasons; one, it has reached the ears of our government that Russia has been developing a new weapon that could have devastating effects if it comes to fruition.
The weapon is called Goldeneye. You will get the details from the Quartermaster and Cassandra.” That appeared to be all, so James asked,

“M, you said that there were two things; Goldeneye is only one thing.”

“The other item is that on this mission, the two of you will be taking Cassandra along with you; 002 and 003 have returned from their mission with her and have agreed to work with her again in the future. After the two of you return with her and give me your report, in a timely fashion this time, then she will have her mission with 008 and 009.” The two looked at each other before Alec asked,

“With all due respect to both you and Cassandra, is this really the mission you want her second debut on?”

“It was the Quartermaster's idea to have her assigned to this particular mission; he feels that this mission is right up her street. As a matter of fact, he requested that this mission be a solo for her, but I wanted at least two agents to guard her, and this mission is too important for 008 and 009 is still in Nicaragua. Now both of you get out of here and get down to Q Branch.” Both men got up at the dismissal and headed down to the aforementioned Branch.

“Curiouser and curiuser, wouldn't you say so, partner?” James asked as they got into the lift and Alec nodded.

“Instead of seeing how well she does flying solo, she wants two agents to go with her?”

“And why would Cassie need guarding? We saw that she can handle herself just fine. I would be more worried for the enemy that has to go up against her.”

“The deeper we get into her mystery, the more uneasy I feel about this whole thing.” Alec confessed, making James to look at him.

“You know that we can just leave this alone and go on with our mission.” But Alec shook his head.

“I get the feeling that it's actually important to figure this out. I can't explain it, but it's almost the same feeling that told me to trust you.” After that, the lift doors opened but James silently promised to leave it alone, as he could hardly argue with the feeling that brought them together. The two agents then entered Q Branch and were privy to hear Cassandra and Q arguing.
“I still don't understand why I have to get on a plane to do this mission! All I have to do is give one of my translocation medallions to Trevelyan and I will be there in no time!”

“Cassandra, I'm sorry, I tried for an hour to explain that to M, but she wouldn't hear of it; you will have to get on the plane with Bond and Trevelyan. Just try to think of something else when you're on the plane.” At the comment, James got an idea of her problem and couldn't help but smile.

“Cassie, are you afraid of flying?” One didn't have to be a genius to hear the teasing quality in James' voice and as Cassie spun to face him, those near enough to him heard Alec mumble under his breath,

“Here we go again.”

“For your information Bond, any idiot who says that they fear nothing, is not only an idiot, but also a fool. Fear makes you stronger, makes you faster and can make you cleverer. Just because you are too much of a fool and a coward to ever admit that you are afraid, does not mean the rest of us have to be that stupid.” James never liked being called a coward, and so replied,

“Do you deny that for some fear is literally paralyzing? What good is fear if you are too frightened to move? To respond?”

“Without that fear, you can never know true courage. Courage isn't a matter of not being frightened; it's being afraid and doing what you have to do anyway.”

“Did you just quote Doctor Who to me?” James asked.

“It doesn't matter if the quote came from a television program or Alexander the Great or Churchill. If it applies to life, it’s a valid quote.”

“Well, here’s a real quote: Fear stifles our thinking and actions. It creates indecisiveness that results in stagnation. I have known talented people who procrastinate indefinitely rather than risk failure. Lost opportunities cause erosion of confidence, and the downward spiral begins. Charles Stanley.”

“Fear keeps us focused on the past or worried about the future. If we can acknowledge our fear, we can realize that right now we are okay. Right now, today, we are still alive, and our bodies are
working marvellously. Our eyes still see the beautiful sky. Our ears can still hear the voices of our loved ones. Thich Nhat Hand.”

“As soon as the fear approaches near, attack and destroy it. Chanakya.”

“What is needed, rather than running away or controlling or suppressing or any other resistance, is understanding fear; that means watch it, learn about it, come directly into contact with it. We are to learn about fear, not how to escape from it. Jiddu Krishnamurti. And, to follow, Fear, indeed, is the mother of foresight: spiritual fear, of a foresight that reaches beyond the grave; temporal fear, of a foresight that falls short; but without fear there is neither the one foresight nor the other; and as pain has been truly said to be ‘the deepest thing in our nature,’ so is it fear that will bring the depths of our nature within our knowledge. Sir Henry Taylor.” Before James could respond, Alec and Q got between the two, and Q had Cassie go and retrieve their equipment, with Alec going to help her.

“I can't understand how Bond honestly thinks that fear is a thing to be suppressed.” Cassie said as they entered the armoury.

“Well with his upbringing, out and out admitting you were afraid just wasn't done. I have to ask though; do you fear death?” Alec asked.

“I respect death, I am not afraid to die, but in the same breath, death is going to have one hell of a struggle if he tries to claim my soul. That fight, that desire to get as much as I can out of life, it's what will keep death and I from meeting for many more years.”

“Then why are you afraid of flying?” Alec saw Cassie glance at the surveillance cameras and saw her twitch her fingers.

“We are in a pressurized tube thirty thousand feet in the air, I can interact with machines and there are more than a few people in that plane with me. Being separated from the earth like that makes me very nervous.” Alec understood why she was nervous now.

“You are worried that if you lose control of your ability, people are going to be killed. It's not your own death you fear, but being the cause of others that frightens you.” Cassie nodded, then waved her fingers again and Alec didn't doubt that she had made the cameras not record what they had talked about, not that he blamed her. As they came back to where James and Q were waiting, Alec sent a message to James, telling him not to antagonize Cassie on the subject again.
“Ah good Cassandra. Now, for the two of you, we have the standard watch, as well as your new car; BMW, agile, five forward gears, all points radar, a self-self-destruct system, and naturally, all the usual refinements. Now, this I'm particularly proud of; behind the headlights, stinger missiles.” Q said with no small degree of pride as he showed them the car they may be needing.

“Excellent; just the thing for unwinding after a hard day at the office.” James replied. At this, Cassie walked over to him and said,

“Must we remind you, 007, that you and 006 have a licence to kill, not to break the traffic laws?” At her fierce glare, James quickly replied with,

“I wouldn't think of it.”

“Good, because with Cassandra around, you will actually have to take care with your equipment, since I have given her full permission to use whatever means necessary to ensure that we get at least half of our equipment back.” As Q said that, Cassie sent them a look that bordered on devious.

“Right, now let's get onto more practical matters: typical leather belts, male, size 34, buckle, notch.” Before Q continued, he saw that James and Alec were fooling around on one of the laptops.

“Are you both quite finished?” Cassie asked with a very irritated tone.

“Yes.” Both replied.

“Good, now, typical leather belts -”

“Q, Alec and I are well acquainted with those devices.”

“Not ones with a 75 foot repelling cord built into the buckle; fire, and out shoots a piton, with a high tension wire built to support your weight. But only your own, so if you damage one, you'll have to glide with Cassandra.”

“But I thought they only supported one person at a time?” Alec asked.
“Yes, but when she studied animals for her animal magic, she also studied arthropods, including spiders.” Q explained.

“So she’s spider girl?” James couldn't help asking, only to regret it as Cassie shot a wad of webbing at his mouth.

“That should wear off by the time we get to the airport.” Cassie mentioned as James tried to remove it to no avail. Alec of course was no help whatsoever as he was trying and failing to stifle his laughter. Q then presented them with their tickets.

“Flight 878 to St. Petersburg. Now you should rather enjoy this 006; this pen is a class 4 grenade: three clicks arms it and another three disarms it.” Alec then took the pen and clicked it three times.

“And how long is the fuse?” Cassie then grabbed it back, clicked it another three times, and replied,

“Four seconds mister wise guy. Kindly act your age when handling explosives.”

“Well, they always did say that the pen was mightier than the sword.”

“And thanks to me, they were right. Look, let's ask Fred here to demonstrate. Sorry about this Fred.” Q said as he put the pen on a testing dummy, and the four of them watched as the pen blew up the dummy.

“Don't say it Trevelyan!”

“The writing's on the wall?”

“Along with the rest of him! Now Cassandra dear, why don't you go grab those guns you were working on for 006 and 007 as well as your laptop and knives?” As Cassie went to do as she was told, Q turned to the two agents and levelled them with a rather harsh glare.

“Rest assured you two, if Cassandra comes to any harm whilst under your care, I'll make you both
wish you had never come back.” Both agents simply nodded, this time meaning it; never before had the Quartermaster looked so dangerous than that moment. As Cassie came back with a shoulder bag and two guns, Q's glare dropped and he smiled as she presented them with their guns.

“Now, these guns are specifically designed to fire only for you respectively. Not even a shapeshifter can use them as they are set to your individual mental patterns.” Cassie watched unimpressed as James and Alec tried firing each others guns at each others heads, only for them to click uselessly.

“Impressive.”

“I got the idea when I saw Lukas get shot with his own gun on our mission together. Now, the sooner we get to the airport, the sooner we can get the bloody aeroplane ride out of the way.” So saying, the three drove to the airport, and just as the webbing on James' mouth evaporated, they got on the plane, and both men saw that Cassie seemed to be getting more and more green around the gills. Since she looked ready to be ill, they decided that James would get the window seat, Alec would sit in the middle and Cassie would sit in the aisle seat. As they started to take off, Alec watched as she gripped the armrests with a death grip. Alec and James glanced at each other before he gently put his hand on Cassie's and tried to help her relax.

“Do you want a tranquilizer? The steward should have some.” Cassie shook her head.

“No good; I can't swallow pills.”

“Just try and take your mind off of it; it'll only be a few hours.” James pointed out. They saw Cassie nod, then watched as she started mumbling something under her breath. Alec leaned closer to her and tried to hear what she was saying.

“... conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.”

“Are you reciting the Gettysburg Address? In Latin?” Cassie nodded again and stopped just long enough to say,

“I will repeat it in as many languages as need be until we land.”
“So much for that bit of kindness.” James replied to Alec, which just made Alec want to swat him; it was hardly the girl's fault that flying affected her so badly. Only for Cassie to respond with,

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. Aesop.” Cassie then went back to reciting the Gettysburg Address, this time in Spanish. For the rest of the trip, James and Alec were quietly talking about nothing in particular and keeping an eye on Cassie so that she wouldn't accidentally cause problems. As they started to land, both agents saw her becoming worried again. As they felt the plane start to experience turbulence that was not natural, James was about to try and breach her mental defences and stop her, when Alec felt her grip his arm accidentally instead of the armrest. He felt her strength in the grip and knew that James would not be able to penetrate her defences, so he did the only he could think of; he maneuvered her hand so that it clasped his. At the sudden contact, she looked at him and he gripped her hand tightly. As he did, she seemed to calm down, and the turbulence eased.

“You don't have to worry so much; James and I won't let anything happen to you.” Sensing that Alec was telling the truth, Cassie soothed their trip so that they landed smoothly.

“Next time, give us one of those translocation medallions things that you mentioned to Q, even if M refuses. You shouldn't have to go through that.” James said as they got off the plane and went into the terminal. He may have teased Cassie about her fear of flying, but he hadn't known her fear ran that deeply.

“Thanks for that, but I'm afraid they don't work that well when you have to cross the ocean. You see, the medallions go along the electromagnetic ley lines that cross the world, but when they cross the ocean, something wonky happens and when you intend to land in Nova Scotia, you end up in Poughkeepsie. I still haven't been able to fix that since I don't know what I'm doing wrong; if you don't know how something is broken, it's kinda difficult to fix it.” Cassie said as they stepped out of the terminal and tried to locate the CIA man who was supposed to work with them. That was when James took a good look at Cassie and saw that she had on only a simple wind breaker; hardly fit for however long they'd be in St Petersburg.

“Did you forget to grab a decent coat when we left Q Branch?” James asked and Cassie looked at him strangely.

“This is the coat that M sanctioned for me. Don't worry about it so much Bond; I don't feel the cold.” Both men looked exasperated at this.

“I don't care if you feel the cold or not, I am not going to be the one to explain to Q why you developed a cold whilst under our care. There's a store just over there, go and get yourself a better jacket. We'll wait for you.” Cassie gave them a strange look but went to the store James pointed out to her. Again the two men looked at each other before Alec said,
“The coat M sanctioned for her? That coat is hardly suitable for English weather, let alone St Petersburg. Even if she doesn't 'feel the cold' as she said.” James nodded then saw the man who matched the CIA's description.

“I think I just found our contact, wait for Cassie.” James said as he started walking towards the man in question. As he came up beside him, James said

“In London April is a spring month.” Instead of replying with the proper code, the man said,

“Oh yeah? And what are you, the weatherman? I mean, for crying out loud... another stiff-stiff-ass Brit, with your secret codes and your passwords. One of these days you guys are gonna learn just to drop it. Come on, my car's over there.” As the man had his little tirade, Cassie, in a much warmer coat, and Alec had walked over.

“After you.” Cassie said and the men noticed an iciness to her voice that hadn't been there since they arrived at the airport. As the three walked over to any ugly little Volkswagen, James and Alec could not see any tension, so they assumed it was to do with something else. When the CIA man opened a door for Cassie, she again said,

“After you.”

“Thank you.” As the man started to get into the car however, Cassie slammed the door on him, grabbed his gun from its holster, tossed it to Alec and, using the car door to pin the man to the car, drew a knife faster than a man could sneeze. James and Alec were highly impressed with how fast she moved; the whole interaction happened in under a minute.

“Like you said, 'Drop it.’” Alec said so the CIA man quickly said,

“All right, in London April is a spring month, whereas in St Petersburg we're freezing our butts off. Is that close enough for government work?” Again the man tried to move, only for Cassie to push the knife closer to his throat.

“You know, I generally don't like Americans; your people have some of the biggest egos there are, and consider your nation to be the best there is, despite others having been around long before you. You also only ever talk about yourselves in wars; you talk about the Korean conflict of the 50's, but you never talk about how when your troops fled Seoul, the Canadians stood their ground and even
fought hand to hand combat. In the battle of 1812, because the Canadians only repelled you and
didn't take over your land, you say that they lost, when they proved to be better; you tried to expand
your land, a they didn't let you, but instead of taking some of your land, they merely said stay out.
Now, with all of that in mind, you are quickly dwindling down my last nerve. Now watch.” As
Cassie spoke, she put her knife away and the three men watched as quills came up through her arm
and through her coat, though that wasn't the end, the quills seemed to shine in the light, and that
shine had a rather venomous look to it.

“These are porcupine quills, alone, they are quite painful as they can go deep enough to practically
warrant surgery. But what I draw your attention to is the venom coating them; the venom is of one of
the most feared snakes in the world, as well as one of the most aggressive and something of a
favourite of mine; the dreaded Black Mamba. Its venom acts almost lightning fast, attacking the
central nervous system and shutting down major organs. Twenty minutes after being bitten you may
lose the ability to talk. After an hour you're probably comatose, and by six hours, without an
antidote, you are dead. And here in St Petersburg, do you really think that they have an antidote to
Black Mamba venom?” Cassie never looked away from the man's eyes as she said this, and the men
could tell she was dead serious.

“Unless you want to experience that, I suggest that you show us the rose.” James said.

“Please no.” The man pleaded, only for Cassie to bring her arm closer to him.

“All right, all right, all right, one of you call this pit bull off OK?” The man asked as he started to
lower his trousers. When they saw the tattoo on his thigh of a rose with the name 'Muffy' written
over top, Cassie retracted her quills and Alec asked,

“Muffy?”

“Third wife. Jack Wade, CIA.” Jack said as he pulled his trousers up and shook James' hand as the
three started to introduce themselves.

“James Bond, stiff-assed Brit.”

“Alec Trevelyan, partner in crime. And this pit bull is-” Alec was cut off as Cassie cut in with,

“Jessica King, and I am the one who has the dubious pleasure of making sure these two morons don't
start world war 3. Sorry about the quills mate, but if Goldeneye is anywhere near operational, we
can't be too careful.” Jack was so interested in Cassie that he never saw James and Alec glance at each other.

“Are you kidding? With that kind of coldness, I may just ask if we can borrow you for extreme interrogations. You do any other venom besides Black Mamba?” Jack asked as the four all got into the Volkswagen.

“Of course, I just used Black Mamba because most people are deadly afraid of them, seeing as they have a 75% mortality rate, previously 100%. And it's not just snakes, it's also arthropods like spiders and scorpions as well as mollusks like the sea dwelling cone snail.”

“The what now, honey?” Jack asked.

“Don't call me honey and I said the Cone Snail. You usually find them on the beaches of Australia, and they look like perfectly normal sea shells until you disturb it by picking it up. Then it stings you; it won't kill you but you will be in agony for months to come; one man who was stung said that he could still feel the pain of the sting six months after the incident. It can sometimes go on for even longer. And I'm afraid working with you would be a waste of time since I wasn't lying when I said I hate Americans.”

“Ah, just ask for me darling; I'm the cuddliest guy you could ever want to work with. Now, we're going to stop off at our hotel and you little lady are going to fill us in on just what Goldeneye is, since it was too case sensitive to reveal otherwise. Especially if those nut jobs in S.P.E.C.T.R.E. are listening and waiting for it to be completed.” The rest of the trip was spent in silence as Jack drove them to their hotel. As they arrived and stepped out, Jack said,

“So Jimmy and Alex are sharing a room and I guess you're sharing with me Jesse.” Jack then went to help Cassie with her shoulder bag, only for her to violently flinch away.

“Sorry, but no one handles my bag but me; anyone who tries loses their hands. And is infected with a vicious form of the flesh eating virus. You would be dead within two hours. And because it's magically induced, only another magical like a shaman would be able to lift it in time. And his name is Alec, with a 'c' at the end.” Cassie then went into the hotel to wait for the three males.

“Hot damn but she's one hell of a vicious little hellcat; actually infecting someone with the flesh eating virus for touching her stuff, reminds me a bit of my momma.” Jack then followed Cassie inside.
“Not only vicious, also highly paranoid.” Alec said and James nodded as they followed their future Quartermaster and Jack. As they checked in, the two agents saw Cassie constantly looking around in a nonchalant manner. When someone almost bumped into her, she moved away quickly and bumped into Alec. As she mumbled her apology, Alec again gently gripped her hand and kept her close. It appeared that the plane ride had disturbed her a bit, hopefully the debriefing would help her calm down. James also made sure people didn't get too close to her with his telepathy as he was beginning to understand Alec's bad feeling; she was an excellent fighter but her social skills were severely lacking, signs that someone may have bred her to be a soldier and little else, they did not need her having a panic attack with so many people around. As they took the elevator up, James noticed her taking deep breaths to stay calm. That was when he had a revelation; it wasn't flying that Cassie hated, it was the pressurized tube with so many people; Cassie suffered from claustrophobia. As they entered the room that would be James and Alec's, Cassie sat near the window and relaxed as Jack took his suitcase to his and Cassie's room.

“Feel better, Jesse?” Alec asked with emphasis on her name.

“Look, even if Cassandra Knight is an alias as well, doesn't mean I'm going to use it on every mission. I don't even understand why you use Alec Trevelyan and James Bond on every mission.”

“Maybe because those are our names.” James said and Cassie looked at them dumbfounded.

“You mean to tell me that you use your real names on missions that sometimes have enemies surviving? Names that the right person could use to track you down and kill you? How the hell are you two still alive?!” The two simply shrugged as Jack knocked and Alec let him in.

“OK, now, do any of you know what we're doing here? They just told me to pick you three up and help in whatever way I can. Whatever this Goldeneye thing is, it's got my bosses pretty scared.” Jack asked as he sat next to Cassie on the couch.

“I'm not surprised; if S.P.E.C.T.R.E gets their hands on this technology, no one is going to be safe, they could literally hold the world for ransom. Now, as to what Goldeneye is, in a nutshell, it's an E.M.P. emitter.” Cassie summed up and the three men looked at each other.

“So they could take out our computers?” James asked only for Cassie and Alec to sigh in an exasperated manner; James could be a little narrow minded sometimes.

“But just computers James; anything that gives off an electrical signal. So not only would our computers be out, think of people who have pacemakers; without that signal, hundreds of people would be killed. Think of the hospitals; people who have been in serious accidents need machines to
breathe for them, the newborn babies whose lungs aren't working yet. All of them would die. Traffic lights going out, accidents occurring all throughout the area, and the emergency response units wouldn't have a hope of responding, phones all dead, car batteries kaput. And think about all we use computers for; criminal records, credit card ratings, land ownership's, medical records and so much more. Our civilizations are so dependent on technology, that Goldeneye is a threat to the entire world. Now I hope you are aware of how badly we need to find Goldeneye and stop it.” All three men all looked properly worried.

“So how do we find Goldeneye?” Alec asked and Jack said,

“I guess that's where I come in. I know an ex-KGB guy who may know where it is. He's a tough mother, limp in the left leg, scar on his right cheek; fellow by the name of Zukovsky.” Before Jack continued, James and Cassie both said,

“Valentin Dmitrovitch Zukovsky?” The two glanced at each other as the two realized they had a shared person in their shady pasts.

“Yeah, you two know him?”

“I gave him the limp.” James said.

“I gave him the scar. I was here in Russia studying its wild life, he offered me a place to stay. What he didn't mention was that it would be in exchange for becoming his mistress; I told him no, he tried to detain me, so I slashed his face. And I may have stolen his car.” Cassie mumbled the last bit, but Alec still heard her and chuckled.

“So with all that in mind, we need to ask Zukovsky for a favour by asking him to point us at Goldeneye. How are we going to do this? Appeal to his heart?” Jack asked.

“No, his wallet.” James replied.

“Well now, that might work.” And that was how the three agents ended up in Zukovsky's club. All three disarmed.

“I told you this wouldn't work.” Cassie said as she shook her head and the three were seated in a booth, with James closest to Zukovsky, then Alec, and finally Cassie.
“Keep a close eye on Nikita, she is as dangerous as a wolverine.” Zukovsky said as he sat down in front of James.

“James Bond and Alec Trevelyan. Charming, sophisticated secret agents. 'Shaken, but not disturbed.’” Zukovsky and his men laughed before they heard Cassie say,

“Oh they're disturbed all right; what else do you call men that come to talk to a crime boss and don’t make sure his men are sufficiently distracted?” This again drew Zukovsky's attention to her.

“And Nikita Sterling, unassuming but beautiful, deadly as a snake, patient as a spider, with the temper of a badger. But, the most astonishing thing about her looks; her tiger eyes. Ordinary green one second until angered, then they show their viciousness.”

“I see you haven't lost your sense of humour or poetry, Valentin. Or your need for an audience. Who's strangling the cat?” As Valentin looked towards the stage, Cassie face-palmed.

“James, the woman you just insulted is his mistress. I can smell the pheromones from here.” Valentin then fired a shot between James legs.

“Nikita is correct; Irina is my mistress.” James nodded and said,

“Very talented girl.” Alec then added,

“Tell her to go.” Zukovsky again looked towards the stage and said,

“Irina, take a hike!” Irina looked particularly peeved as she stomped off the stage.

“So Mr. Bond, Mr. Trevelyan, and dear Miss. Sterling, what is it that brings you three together and into my neighborhood?”

“I have the dubious pleasure of working for MI6 now Valentin. I am going to be the new Quartermaster someday.”
“So these two have licences to kill, and you will have a licence to hack? Still, I'm surprised to find you working for MI6, after what happened with your family.” James and Alec looked at Cassie at the comment, but she was looking only at Valentin.

“The reason we're here is we need a favour. And kindly tell your man to take his eyes off my legs.”

“They want *me* to do *them* a favour! I needed almost twelve stitches in my face after you slashed me, and I had an infection! Meanwhile, my knee aches every single day! Twice as bad when it is cold. Do you have any idea how long the winter lasts in this country? Tell him, Dmitri. And Sergei, I would recommend taking your eyes off of Nikita's legs.”

“Well, it depends...”

“SILENCE!” Zukovsky shouted. Sergei, while he did take his eyes off of Cassie's legs, put a hand on them.

“Valentin, for an ex-KGB man, you seem to be rather short sighted. Obviously, by shooting you in the leg, I did you a favour by sparing your life.” James said as Cassie kept pushing Sergei's hand away.

“So why did you not kill me?” Zukovsky asked.

“Call it a professional courtesy.” Alec managed to growl out as Sergei actually gripped Cassie's leg, and he could feel her becoming ticked off.

“Then I should extend you the same courtesy.” Zukovsky said as he drew his gun again, only for Cassie and Sergei to jump up and Sergei slammed his mouth onto Cassie's. He then drew back with a cry of pain. As blood started coming out of his mouth, Alec saw Cassie spit something out of her own mouth. His eyes and mind were able to piece together what happened; in a fit of temper, Cassie bit the tip of the man's tongue off. He watched, mildly fascinated as the man started foaming at the mouth as well as convulsing. As another man rushed at Cassie, Alec prepared to send him flying, only for Cassie to open her mouth wide enough for her canines to be exposed, and then something actually shot out of her mouth and into the man's eyes. As it hit, the man fell to the floor, screaming.

“You've learned a few new tricks since I saw you last Nikita.” Zukovsky said as he watched in interest as two of his men writhed in agony.
“I have had the opportunity to study venomous creatures since our last meeting, Valentin. Now, the favour we need is the location of Goldeneye.”

“Why should I help you? And must I remind you that if you kill me, you will be back at square one, so can we skip the threats to my life?”

“Valentin, look at your men; are either of them dying? Idiot number one has been infected with a watered down version of Brazilian Wandering Spider venom. People usually start to feel effects within 30 minutes, where they may experience high or low blood pressure, fast or slow heartbeat, nausea, stomach cramping, hypothermia, vertigo etc. The venom is also why he hasn’t lost his erection; the venom has rather high levels of nitric oxide. If you hurry, you may be able to save him, as St. Petersburg has a high number of healers in their hospitals. Meanwhile, idiot number two was hit with Spitting Cobra venom, a cocktail of toxins that consist of nerve poisons and other components harmful to tissue. It won’t necessarily kill him but he will be blind unless you’ve got a warlock healer stashed away. Now, unless you want to see what other venomous animals I can conjure up whilst keeping you alive for hours, I wouldn’t push this. Also, must I remind you, that if S.P.E.C.T.R.E gets their grubby hands on an E.M.P. transmitter, then we are all dead meat? They are loyal only to their organization, not to any one country, so even if they have Russian operatives, they won’t care if Russia is taken out.”

“You may have a point, Nikita. Alright, but you did not hear this from me. Word has it that Goldeneye is set up in a secure, remote location in Severnaya...” So Zukovsky told them what he knew, which Cassie said was enough for her to find out where and how to get to Goldeneye.

“So she really intimidated Zukovsky into giving up info on Goldeneye?” Jack asked James as they came through the door to where Alec and Cassie were working in Alec and James' room with supper for the four of them.

“Partly intimidated, partly reminding him that if Goldeneye comes online in the hands of S.P.E.C.T.R.E, then we’re all fucked.” James said as he handed Alec his curry and Jack pulled out his hamburger. When Cassie tried to refuse, saying once again that she wasn’t hungry, Alec gently moved the laptop away from her, picked her up, and set her down between her and James.

“You’re not getting back on that laptop until you eat at least half of that curry.” Alec said and her shoulders slumped as she reached and ate the curry in front of her.

“So, any luck in finding Goldeneye?” Jack asked.
“I think I have, thanks to Valentin's information. Now, we need to get in and basically examine Goldeneye, possibly stealing it in the process. I have a plan, but it will only work if I know what Goldeneye looks like. So, after I'm done eating I'm going to hack their systems to see if I can find anything. If I do this right, we may be able to complete this mission without any bloodshed.” Cassie said this and Jack couldn't help but ask jokingly,

“And take away all the fun?”

“Spilling of blood when there's no need, is nothing more than senseless violence. We do this wrong, Russia could see this as an act of war and war, no matter how justified or necessary, is a crime. If I can avoid that crime by making sure this doesn't escalate, I will be a very happy person.” Jack simply shrugged, he hadn't thought that the girl would take him seriously, but she had struck him as the kind who had trouble understanding jokes. He noticed her finish her curry, then try to go back to her laptop, only for James to grab her arm and tug her back down and pass her a drink. She glowered at him, only to chug her drink back, put the empty cup down, and go back to her laptop.

“How'd she do that so fast?” Jack asked, to which Alec responded,

“One of the tricks of her ability is that, when she needs it, she has oxygen independence. Whilst she was drinking, she didn't need to breathe, so she could take the whole thing quickly.”

“Won't she need to go to the bathroom in like ten minutes?” Jack asked, only for Alec to shake his head.

“Another aspect is she can go long periods without having to use the loo, or even needing to eat or drink.”

“Guess she'd make one hell of a sniper, huh?”

“For your information, Wade, I am a damn good sniper.” This got James and Alec's attention, as this was the first real bit of information they had gotten on her. They heard the printer go off a few minutes later, but before they could look at the papers, Cassie grabbed them and looked at them.

“Alright, I'm going to make a copy of Goldeneye with the help of these, we'll see about getting a helicopter to fly us out there, go in, make the switch and erase all information on Goldeneye.”
“You make it sound so simple.” Alec couldn't help but chuckle; the plan was theoretically a good one, but with all the security bound to be around such an important commodity, it would hardly be so simple.

“I think you'll find it to be very simple, Major Kuznetsov.” Cassie then showed the men her laptop, and all three were surprised to see James, Alec and Cassie, all looking very official as Russian officers. She then pulled up a memo, saying that three soldiers, Major Kuznetsov, Captain Orlov and Major Zolnerowich, would be coming by in the next week or so to check up on Goldeneye's progress.

“Why am I only a captain whilst you and Alec are majors?” James asked

“Because you are too young to be colonels and Alec has the air to pull off major whereas you scream captain. And, had I been in the military, I would have been a major.” Cassie explained as she turned her laptop back towards herself, looking up places where she could find the parts necessary to duplicate Goldeneye's access key.

“Despite your age?” James asked, and Cassie simply replied,

“With my skills pal, I would have been a colonel before I turned 40.” James was about to say something when Alec gripped his arm and shook his head; Cassie talked when she was relaxed, when she was irritated, she clammed up.

“Alright, we dress up as Russian soldiers, somehow make the switch and get out of there. How do we make the switch and make sure that our faces aren't the ones that ignite a war, because I can just see S.P.E.C.T.R.E trying to use this to incite that war you're worried about.” Alec asked and that was when his phone rang. As he went to answer it, he saw the number was blocked.

“That will be for me, and half of your answer. M wouldn't allow me a phone so I gave my contact your number.” Cassie said, holding out her hand for the phone, which Alec gave.

“/Da? U vas yest' imena trekh vy uvereny predateli?/” James and Alec looked at each other as Cassie talked to her contact. Cassie was typing on her laptop as the two talked, only for her to pause and ask,

“/Da? I vy uvereny, o nikh? YA imeyu v vidu, u yest' neoproverzhimyye dokazatel'stva, chto oni predateli?/” Cassie continued typing until she again stopped typing.
“Рады, что не так долго, как ничего не идет неудачно, вы больше не будете беспокоиться о тех предателей. Если я узнаю, так не меня, что вы использовали эту миссию на дальнейшие себя вместе, я уверен, сделает Россия видит вас как предателей, что вы находитесь. Кроме того, если ваше мышление шантажирует меня позже, вы узнаете истинный смысл 'милосердной смерти', как будет ваша жена и дети.”

“Аren't you worried that he recorded the conversation to use against you at a later date?” James asked and again Cassie gave him the look that said she thought he was an idiot. James was sadly getting used to that look from her.

“If he tries anything of the sort, that recording will be one of him talking to one of the traitors we are going to be framing for the Goldeneye heist, confirming everything for the heist. Remember Bond, I can control electronic devices; over the phone, I can alter my voice without the device, so that is what will happen. He will be seen as a traitor, shot, and I am but a figment of his imagination. Meanwhile, the secretary of security or whatever his title is will receive an email assuring him that the family aren't traitors; I just added that part to scare him.”

“Well, darlin', is there anything I can do to help? Seems like you three are doing everything, and I should be doing something.” Jack said, trying to look good so that if they needed to work together again, she would request talking to him. She acted like the little sister he never had!

“OK, if you want to help, here's a list of places in the general area that may have pieces I will need to duplicate Goldeneye's key. Meanwhile, leave your phone here and take James'; I need to phone a very special seamstress to make our uniforms, but she'll never pick up a British number, but an American one? She'll pick up if the person waits eleven rings.” Cassie said as she held up a sheet, which Jack took.

“But our numbers aren't listed.” James said even as they switched phones.

“They are to her; she is even better at access and occlusion than Emily is. She could be a great thief, but she is content being a good seamstress who makes interesting clothes for the right price.”

“And for something like this, how much is it going to cost?” James asked as Jack left the room and Cassie turned to look at him.

“Not money if that's what you're thinking. She makes good money for her normal clothes, let alone
the special ones. What she wants is the safe return of her daughter and two grandchildren; her
daughter is over in America as a mail-order bride, in an abusive relationship with a barbaric brute that
has started to possibly turn his attentions to the children, if she read the last letter correctly. A boy
three years old and a girl of eighteen months, there would have been a third child but the brute threw
the mother down the stairs whilst she was in her fifth month, the poor girl miscarried. But, the
monster has the daughter's passport, and won't give it up voluntarily. I have an associate in the states
who will kill the husband and make it look like a mugging gone wrong the minute I give him the go-
ahead. Wife gets his money, no trails lead to the wife so she's in the clear in case the police get
suspicious, she returns home to live with her brother and his wife, and my associate is in Canada
watching a hockey game, with no apparent motive for killing somebody he never even met.” Cassie
layed out as she dialed her seamstress friend.

“Ana? This is Nikita, I need three Russian uniforms of good quality, but not too good, we're going to
be two majors and a captain, so a little wear and tear is to be expected, but it's for an important
meeting, so not too much wear and tear. You know I wouldn't be calling you if that was all; we need
a special spell woven into the threads and you are much better at weaving spells into clothes than I
am. Yes illusions are one of my specialties, but I'm working with two non-magical post-humans, a
telekinetic with enhanced instincts, as well as a telepath with ghost physiology. We are going to a
government facility, there are bound to be a couple power disrupters, we can't take the chance. Look,
a mild illusion woven into the clothes before we step onto the site will still be active even with the
power disrupters. You do this, my comrade will kill the scumbag holding your daughter and
grandchildren hostage across the pond. You do this within the week? Your daughter will have an
airtight alibi so the cops couldn't pin this in a million years. You do this even quicker? She won't
have to wait around for the insurance policy beyond two days and she and her children will fly home
first class after having won the lottery. Two males, both over six feet tall, broad in the shoulder, the
major's legs are a little longer than the captain's, both quite muscular but the captain's muscles are
more compact, like a swimmers. Hope to see your handiwork soon, call me when you're ready to
deliver.” Cassie then hung up, then erased all mention of her call to Ana before handing the phone
back to James.

“For someone who is anti-social, you seem to know a lot of people.” Alec said as he handed over his
phone without being asked.

“Yes well, a person can only go so far in life on their own before they need someone to lean on
whilst walking the path. Besides which, the people I know, actually know a few things about loyalty.
They know I would never truly do the things I threaten, but apparently there is something about me
that intimidates them into behaving for some reason.” Cassie said as she rung up the person she
needed.

“Maybe it has something to do with the fact that you could destroy everything they've worked so
hard for with a keystroke?” James asked, only for Cassie to ignore him.

“John? This is Maria, your target is Peter Lugash from New Jersey; make his wife a widow. I would
love for you to do that but it has to look like a mugging gone wrong. If you want, you can beat him
to death, that might be better actually; his wife can in no way be implicated and beating's seldom suggest planning. And a beating would suggest that things got out of hand, the brute has a short temper and is also short on brains. A mugger sometimes looses control when he's insulted and then he just keeps going, right? Remember, wait for a night when the husband is away from the wife, but she has to have a strong alibi. Yes, since there will be no money transfer in anyway to anyone I'm probably overreacting, but you know how I am; I burn anything that has a scrap of my blood or hair on it so it can't be used to control me. John? John? The woman is belittled and beaten almost every day, and he almost broke his son's arm last week, we can't take the chance that a determined cop who always suspects conspiracy will find anything. She could lose the life insurance policy, which is what is going to be keeping food in her kids bellies until she gets a job, she could go to jail, thus potentially putting the kids into foster care, or they could just take the kids away from her, period. She's been through enough John, get her and her kids out of there.” Cassie then hung up and sighed as she pinched the bridge of her nose.

“He's a nice enough guy, for an American, but he is also a tad obnoxious. He has to be told exactly how you want a person to die or something could go wrong and an innocent person, like Aloysha, or Alice as that moron calls her, goes to prison.” Cassie explained as she handed the phone back. Alec saw the name of the recipient before Cassie erased their call.

“‘John Wilkes Booth?’ He seriously calls himself that?” Alec asked in a joking manner. Cassie smirked,

“He's a little full of himself, but he's a good killer with the ability to teleport within 20 miles of where he is currently. There's no smell, no sound, no flash of light, and no sudden displacements like when a speedster runs by you. With those skills he could call himself Marcus Aurelius, Dorothy Gale or Orson Welles for all I care, so long as he does what he's told.” About a half hour later, Jack returned with his arms loaded with a multitude of bits and pieces.

“I hope what I got is enough, as soon as I mentioned the name Nikita Sterling, the shop owners couldn't seem to hand over the stuff fast enough.” Upon fully realizing she had been caught in a lie, Cassie glared at James, before saying.

“About that, I-”

“I've known you were a magical since you pinned me to the car darling, and I know that magicals seldom give out their real names out of protection. That's what my gift is; figuring out who are mutants and-”

“Don't say that word!” Cassie almost screamed, causing her to shatter the glass in the room, as well as crack the mirror in the bathroom and the windows. Upon seeing what she did, she sighed, looking ashamed, and waved her hand, repairing the damage she had caused, and left the room.
“I didn’t mean to insult her, it’s just the word we use.” James and Alec both nodded, they had been offended by the word, but having an extra decade on Cassie, they were possibly more used to it than her.

“I think I better go talk to her; as the record stands, I’m the only male in this room who hasn’t insulted her accidentally.” Alec said as he too left the room. He tried knocking on the door to her room, but when she didn’t answer, he used his seismic sense to see if she was in the room; he could have unlocked the door, but that might not have been the best move, as he liked his head exactly where it was, thank you very much. When he felt that she wasn’t in the room, he expanded the search and found her on the roof of the hotel. When he got there, he found her still on her laptop, but again without her jacket, not even the windbreaker was on.

“Are you trying to develop pneumonia?” Alec said as he shrugged his jacket off and wrapped it around her shoulders.

“What do I have to do to convince you and James that I don’t feel the cold?” Cassie said as she looked up from her laptop. Getting an idea, she set the laptop aside, stood up (and here a few would be snickering at how Alec towered over the woman who would eventually become his superior) and put the hand that should have been freezing cold, but was really quite warm, on Alec’s scarred cheek. As she withdrew her hand, Alec found the heat lingering on his cheek.

“I wanted to apologize for my tantrum back there; it was childish and unprofessional. I will also be apologizing to agent Wade and will understand if you don’t wish to work with me again.” Alec couldn’t understand how someone could treat this girl the way she obviously had been; militarily, and not allowed slip-ups of any kind. Sure, he was that way too, but not to her lengths, and he had been in the military.

“I am hardly going to be mad at you for showing post-human pride at being offended by that word. Do you really think James and I weren’t offended by the word? Not to mock you for your age, but our extra years have given us a chance to getting used to it.”

“It was still childish that I lost control to such an extent.” Alec sighed as he flat out asked.

“Who was it?”

“Who was what?” Cassie asked him, looking confused.
“You have a very military attitude in that you don't allow yourself mistakes of any kind. Whether
they be comments, your emotions or control over your powers, any missteps in your control and you
make yourself feel horrible over it. So I'm asking if it was your mother or your father who was
military.” Something flashed in her eyes and this time it wasn't annoyance or anxiety that made them
do it; it was anger. No, it wasn't even anger, for the coldness there was far to great to be mere anger;
it was closer to hatred.

“Don't act as if you don't know 006, I may be bound to work for MI6, but I will not be mocked by
someone who works for the organization that created me and is now trying to put a leash on me!
You and your fellow nincompoops may believe what you wish about my father, but he was one of
the sweetest, most affectionate, and most lovable men that I ever knew and the reason I'm like this is
because of people like you and what you did to my family!” Cassie then stormed off and went back
inside, and Alec took a moment to absorb everything, and that bad feeling had gone up quite a few
notches, but he couldn't think much more on it as he went back in as well as a storm suddenly came
in and it got much colder.

One Week Later

Cassandra, James and Alec were all dressed rather smartly in Russian uniforms; Jack had said that it
was a good thing he had stayed in the room as James and Alec changed since, the moment they
finished the outfits by putting their caps on, they no longer looked like themselves. As they looked at
each other, they did not see any difference.

“It's no use trying to see any difference; while we wear these clothes, we look the same to each other,
but if one of you were to even take your cap off while the other didn't, you would understand what
Jack is talking about.” Cassie said as she came out of the washroom in her own uniform. Both men
were rather surprised by how good she looked in it, as it showed off her body rather well, unlike the
clothes she normally wore. She might not have much in the chest department (if you looked at her in
the wrong light, she almost appeared male), but there was still something attractive about her.

“Is the helicopter ready Jack?”

“Sure thing Cassie, you got the fake Goldeneye key? You sure you don't want me to fly you guys
there?” Jack asked as Cassie put her cap on and the illusion completed itself on her before shaking
her head. After she had calmed down and Jack had returned to their room, the two had talked, Cassie
had told him the name Q had given her of Cassandra Knight, and Jack promised to try not to say the
'mutant' word around her. She was still cold around Alec and James, which had confused James until
Alec told him what she had accidentally let slip, believing they already knew. James and Alec had
talked and came up with a few ideas; maybe the military had been trying to create the perfect weapon
and found her too perfect but without the necessary loyalty, so they had given her to MI6? Maybe
she had been taken from her family at a young age and they tried to create a sociopath? Alec realized
tough that they had one clue as to where she had come from, which might give Silva something to
work with; instead of saying police, she had said Garda, quite possibly as in the Garda Síochána, or
Guardians of the Peace, the Irish police service. So, Irish female babies that had been born the same
year as Chernobyl, she may have deleted her birth certificate, but there was no way she could have
deleted everything about herself. But the fact that she had centered on her father, made Alec nervous.
Things may be beginning to line up, but where that lead, MI6 may be even worse than what they had
originally thought.

After the mission and our three heroes return home

James and Alec could hardly believe how well the mission had gone; as Cassie had hoped, no blood
had been shed, unless you wanted to count the three Russian agents who had been discovered
working for S.P.E.C.T.R.E, that had stolen Goldeneye's key, and replaced it with a dummy that
would have blown the place up, had it not been for a skilled programmer named Natalya Romanov
discovering the virus before it hit. The three traitors had been killed in their stead. M had wanted to
know how it was that the cameras had not seen their true faces, Alec and James both pointed out that
the power restrictive devices would have been inside the compound, not outside, so Cassie simply
hacked the cameras before they went in, and displayed what she wanted displayed. Neither man had
felt it prudent to mention how it was that three real traitors had been killed in their spot, nor the
payment for the uniforms that had hidden their true faces from those that worked on Goldeneye.
Cassie had also remarked that she had liked working with Jack Wade, despite him being an
American, and he had been a help when, after they got back to their hotel room, Cassie went into
seizures. Apparently Jack had a cousin who used to spend summers with him as a kid that had
epilepsy so he hadn't been frozen when she went into convulsions; he jumped into action. About a
week later, Alec was called into M's office, and James waited outside, trying to make sure they didn't
kill his partner. When Alec came out however, he had a look of annoyance on his face, and
motioned for James to start walking.

“What is it?” James asked as they left M's office.

“Apparently when medical checked us out after Goldeneye, they found that my left eye has been
slowly weakening. They figure that I'll probably lose complete use of it within six months.” James
knew what that meant; without both eyes, Alec could not be a proper agent, as he had to read body
language as well as inflections in tone. He also could not afford to have a blind spot that could cost
him the mission or his life.

“Is there anything that can be done?” James asked, knowing it was his fault with those thrice-damned
bombs.

“If I want to be Q branches guinea pig, then yes.”
“What do you mean?”

“For some reason, Q branch has been working on electronic eyes for quite some time, but they’ve been unable to give them a real field test as everyone in MI6 had good enough vision not to volunteer for such a crazy thing. So, if I don’t go with the procedure, I become a desk jockey with one good eye. If I do and they screw it up, I’ll lose vision in both my eyes and have to buy a seeing eye dog just to get around London.” Both men knew however there was only one real choice; Alec would sooner die than lose his ability to be out in the field with James. It took two weeks for everything to clear up; one week to get Alec prepped for the surgery, and another week to give his eyes a chance to heal. Today was the day the bandages came off, and it was taking a lot for James not to show his worry.

“Alright now, put your hand up in front of your face, as we don’t want to shock your eyes with such bright light so quickly. Now, very slowly open your eyes and tell me if you see anything.” The doctor instructed as he finished removing the bandages and Alec did as he was told, and was beyond relieved to see his hand smack dab in front of his face.

“It looks like the eye is working.”

“Good, do you feel headaches of any kind? Dizzy? Nauseous? Anything?”

“Nope.” Alec said with a big smile, which the doctor didn’t see drop ever so slightly as he wrote a prescription for antibiotics. As Alec looked at James, he saw all kinds of information on him appear, from his abilities and power levels to his hormone levels.

“Doctor, why is the eye glowing yellow?” James asked, to which the doctor replied,

“Q said that that would be the sign that the eye is online. It should clear up before the day is out.” The doctor then gave the prescription to Alec and left the room, happy to get away from the annoying 00's.

/* Why did you look shocked when you looked at me? */ James mentally asked as he helped Alec stand up and they headed towards Q branch.

/* Because the moment I looked at you, I got a detailed layout of everything about you. They didn't mention that little tidbit of information when they proposed the eye. */ Both men were silent as the
elevator took them to Q branch. When they stepped out and a few saw Alec, now with scars and the yellow eye, a couple started snickering, only for a small storm cloud to appear over their heads and start pelting out hail on their heads. Q then came out, sighed as he saw some of his people being hit by hail almost the size of a golf ball, picked up an umbrella, and came over to the two agents.

“Good afternoon 007, 006, I hope the eye is working alright for you? I see that it's on but is it relaying what it's seeing to your brain? However nonexistent it may be?” Despite the strangeness of the situation, both men couldn't help but chuckle.

“It appears to be working alright Q, but why am I getting statistics on everyone I come into contact with?” Q was thankful no one could hear the agent over the hail. He beckoned both to follow him back to his office. As they entered, Q put the umbrella down and the two agents saw Cassie working on what looked like a robotic arm, with a robotic heart next to it.

“I suppose I should have guessed when M said Q branch she meant you.” Alec said as Cassie sharply looked up and went to put the items away but Alec only raised his hand to stop her. Cassie looked down before raising her head, squaring her shoulders, again removing her glasses, and said

“I suppose you're hear to yell at me?” James and Alec both shared a confused look.

“Why on Earth would I be yelling at you?”

“I'm the one who told medical to check your eye for weakness. I noticed that during our mission, you kept squinting through your left eye and I remembered reading how close you were to the explosion at Arkhangelsk. So I asked the one examining you to pay special attention to your left eye. When he came to me and confirmed what I feared, I asked him to wait until the eye was ready to inform M about your development. I also knew to have Major Boothroyd present the eye as M would never sanction anything I presented and, considering how reckless Bond acted when you were presumed dead, I knew that this had to be done immediately.”

“Then why am I seeing so much more than I should be?”

“To make the idea of the eye more attractive to M, I installed many features; you can tell post-humans from regular human, they're power levels, detect any sign of lying (within reason of course; even the eye can't tell the difference between a real truth and a perceived truth.), and see through illusions as the eye can't be tricked by telepathic illusions, light illusions, or magical illusions. And, because I just so happen to be that good, there are technical inhibitors which mean that E.M.P inhibitors won't be able to shut it off and other technopaths can't touch it nor can it be hacked. I already had the blue-prints for the eye and a number of other prosthetic replacements, all I needed...
was the parts and MI6 had them and didn't even realize it. If I may say so, I am very good.” Cassie said with a small degree of pride as Q looked at her with pride. James thought to himself that Q looked like a proud father whose child had just solved Einstein’s equation. /* She is beautiful */ Raoul said loud and clear in their minds, and they had to admit, she certainly was.

“And I imagine that the others being pelted by hail was your doing as well.” At this, Cassie lost her playful look and looked quite serious as she pulled up her sleeve to reveal a rather nasty looking scar.

“See this? A wolf once attacked me as I had unknowingly wandered into his territory as a child. I raised my arm to defend myself and he bit right into it. He shook me like a rag doll, and it took all of my strength to keep him from going for my throat or him snapping my spine. If Rai and Zumi had not of come running to my aid, I would have died. The doctor where I lived did not give me anything for the pain because of what I was, nor did he try and reduce the size of the scar or its appearance. When I remarked on how it looked, my grandfather told me to be proud of it, as it was proof that what I experienced was not a nightmare, it was real; a wolf had tried to kill me because I wasn't watching where I was going, but I lived to learn from my mistakes. That is what scars are: reminders that the past was real, that we experienced something and are here to tell the tale. Just because these pampered idiots have never had to experience what you went through, does not mean I am going to let them get away with mocking you when you survived an explosion that would have killed other, weaker beings.” Alec and James were shocked; many of the men and women they came across detested their scars as they thought it detracted from their beauty. But this girl, who wasn't even thirty years old, seemed to, if her tone was anything to go by, find them both beautiful and badges of honour. Alec did something that shocked everyone; he walked over to Cassie, leaned down and gave her a small peck on the lips.

“Your not just good; you're a damn genius.” As if no one had ever told her that, her cheeks gained a light dusting of pink as she blushed and ducked her head. Both men thought she was rather cute in that moment. As she looked at him, she had a real, if small, smile on her lips that neither man could help but reciprocate. The smile was rather cute too.

Translations:

Da? U vas yest' imena trekh vy uvereny predateli? - Yes? You have the names of the three you are positive are traitors?

Da? I vy uvereny, o nikh? YA imeyu v vidu, u yest' neoproverzhimyye dokazatel'stva, chto oni predateli? - Yes? And you are certain? I mean, you have irrefutable evidence that they are traitors?

Khorosh, tak dolgo , kak nichego ne idet nepravil'no, vy bol'she ne budete bespokoit'sya o tekh predateley . Yesli ya uznayu, tem ne meneye , chto vy ispol'zovali etu missiyu na dal'neyshiye sebya vmeste , ya uveren, sdelayet Rossiya vidit vas kak predatelya , chto vy nakhodites'. Krome togo, yesli
vashe myshleniye shantazha mne pozhee, vy uznayete istinnyy smysl "miloserdnoy smerti", kak budet vasha zhena i deti. - Alright, so long as nothing goes wrong, you will no longer have to worry about those traitors. If I find out however that you have used this mission to further yourself along, I will make sure Russia sees you as the traitor that you are. Also, if your thinking of blackmailing me later, you will learn the true meaning of 'merciful death', as will your wife and children.

Author's note: I know it was confusing for Cassie to have almost 4 names here and I apologize for any headaches. But remember, to a magical names have power so Cassie would never feel safe giving out her true name to anyone. And yes, Cassandra Knight is not her real name and we will learn her name in a few chapters, but not for some time. Some of you are probably wondering why she gives out different names instead of just one alias for everyone; in Hollywood, a lot of actors give themselves screen names and, in the public's mind, that is who they are; they're not Archibald Alexander Leach, they're Cary Grant. So, even though they are still the person that they were when they were born, they are also the actor that everyone has come to know, so that is their name as well. Does that make any sense? Please excuse the undoubtedly bad Russian; I use google translate.
Cassandra Revealed

Chapter Summary

Whilst trying to find out who Cassie really is, she is attacked and found out.

Chapter 4

“What do you mean you still can’t find anything on her?” Alec asked Silva as the three men were currently at a cafe in Paris whilst the two agents were on a mission. James had been worried about Cassandra using the cameras to observe them, but Silva had assured him that she was on her trial mission with 008 and 009, protecting an important dignitary that had been receiving a lot of death threats as of late. And whilst the Major may recognize Silva, Q would obviously be observing Cassandra's progress and making sure she was not hurt, as he had during her last two missions. And almost everyone else would have been too young to really remember Silva.

“I mean that there is no record whatsoever of a girl being born in November of ’86 matching her description or power levels in Ireland.” Silva replied as he sipped his wine.

“Maybe the hospital where she was born was burned down.” James suggested.

“There have been a few hospitals where they have lost records but none match where she could be from.”

“Maybe we're looking at this the wrong way; after all, she merely said 'Garda', she doesn't have any kind of accent indicating being born there, maybe she was simply raised there. She could have been born anywhere where the hospital burned down and her records lost. What we do have is a trace of medical history.” Alec pointed out, to which James followed up with,

“The wolf attack from when she was a child. She said that she saw a doctor, even if the bastard did nothing to help her.”

“Sorry to burst your bubbles boys, but I already tried that; no doctor in Ireland made any note of treating a child for a wolf attack. You'll pardon the pun James, but she is truly a ghost in the wind.”
“But maybe-” Alec tried, which tailed off when Silva pinned him with a look.

“I know how to search through world wide data bases Alec; there is no record of her. However, when I stopped focusing on her as a person and her as an image and possible power house, I did find certain articles that could very well have been her.” Silva then pulled out a portfolio and handed them the articles he found.

“I thought people used their tablets for this sort of thing nowadays.” Alec teased as he and James looked through the articles where the image of a young woman that might have been Cassandra was circled or highlighted.

“If she can interact with machines, they may tell her when someone is looking for information on her. If she could erase her birth certificate at 10, it would be no problem for her to become a true ghost now where you would find nothing on her.”

“But can't you put firewalls up around these things?” James asked, reading an article where an animal testing lab had been broken into, all animals set free and a couple humans made to become amalgamations of human and animals, including Minotaurs, Nagas and other such creatures.

“We don't yet know how strong she is; right now she needs a computer to access everything, in a few years she may be able to do it without breaking a sweat.” That made James pause in his reading.

“What if she doesn't need a computer to access it, but to organize it? When we first met she said that she needs a computer or her brain starts to overheat; if I try to access too many minds at once, I feel like my head is going to split in two from all of the voices. I think the purpose of the computer is the same as when I envision a door that locks out others from my mind; by using the computer, she decides what she sees and knows at any given moment. Without it, using that part of her ability overwhelms her; like an army breaking down a door.” Alec and Silva nodded, that made a lot of sense.

“What bugs me is how can she be at those power levels when she's not even thirty years old?” Alec asked Silva, who shrugged.

“We always had the power, but most only start to really access it when they reached their forties. I actually have this theory; I believe that when post-humans are born, we are born with all the power we are going to have in our lives. However, most of us cannot access it as babies because we can hardly control our own limbs, so the power is blocked off. When we are seven years old, the first part of the block starts to chip away, and that's when our abilities start to manifest. Those on the weaker end of the scale will barely notice the change, and it may only show up in times of extreme
duress, as our powers are largely powered by adrenaline in our early years. Then, you have average users, who will begin to notice things, like when they are bored in class, their pen starts to float in the air, or they start hearing the voice of the mind of the person sitting next to them. And then you have us; when my powers broke through, I left the area around me decimated.”

“I had a killer migraine for three days and my parents suffered bad headaches because of it.” James remarked. Alec didn't say anything but they knew what had happened; Child Services found him.

“Now, the block slowly dissolves over our lives; as control over our selves grow, so too does our control for our powers. However, great enough trauma can remove the block early and, in rare cases, destroy it completely, so the child has all of their lives to learn control over real power.”

“So, if she could hack her medical and government records when she was 10 and delete her birth certificate, she would have had to experience a tremendous trauma before then, right?” James asked and Alec sighed as he got an idea of what happened.

“Yes, and I think Alec just figured it out.”

“The mention of her father is what cinches it; she had a powerful trauma that caused her powers to develop early, she doesn't seem to be too fond of agents, and it's all centred around her father.” Alec paused as he looked at his two partners and they all agreed as they said together,

“The British government murdered her father.” After that meeting James and Alec finished up their mission, which was sadly a failure as their contact died of a heart attack before they could even meet, and without him the trail went cold. The two agents did their best to watch Cassandra and try to find out more, but there was only so much they could do without looking creepy. They managed by Alec coming in and having Cassie check out the eye, teaching him how to make it look normal, how to access the features etc. James also wanted to learn more about the magical community, to make sure he didn't insult Cassie again; that had shocked her quite a bit. Through these little sessions, he learned about Corvus, her familiar; he had apparently found her as a child, followed her for a few weeks until Cassie asked the bird (literally asked him!) what he wanted. Apparently he wanted to be her familiar because he felt a connection with her. When James had remarked that birds couldn't talk, she had given him The Look again before stating 'to hear the voice of nature, one only needed to listen'. After that, James had asked what the point of a familiar was, so she explained that a familiar was another set of eyes both in this world as well as others. He watched the world for dangers to her and she gave him a connection to the magic that surrounded the world. Through his connection to her, he also gained powers of his own, mainly telepathy as well as a danger sense, though James felt she was holding back on his powers. Corvus' biggest function though was to make sure, when her mind wandered through the astral plane, she found her way home. When James had asked why Corvus didn't attend their mission together, she replied that the mission was just as much for her as it was for the agents, and she hadn't felt she would need his guidance. Besides which, she didn’t want to hear him complaining twenty-four-seven about how cold St. Petersburg was. Again, James felt something
wasn't being told, but even the Ziz said that she would reveal it in time when he gained her trust, which was the goal in the first place.

“So, can I ask why crows and ravens are seen as such magical creatures?” Alec asked as the three ate in a secluded corner not many knew about. Apparently, when she had some down time whilst waiting for a program to finish or her gadgets were being completed, she liked to wander around in her area and find all sorts of nooks and crannies that others overlooked. In exchange for showing them one of the spots she found, Alec introduced her to a food she had never tried before; pizza. Not many could reconcile the image of suave James Bond eating a food like pizza, but Alec loved it and, as he pointed out, they were trying to have Cassie see them as friends and pizza was an excellent food to share with friends.

“Well, birds in general are considered magical because they see farther than humans can, and they see more; having the same perspective of the world as the Gods. Owls are considered almost as magically powerful as crows and ravens since a great deal of them can see at night and that is a powerful magical time as you can barely see your hand in front of your face, so your other senses have to open up in order to try and protect you. Corvus once told me that had circumstances been different, my familiar probably would have been an owl.”

“Not a cat? No, wait, hear me out, I swear I'm not insulting you. Cats are seen as stoic, silent and mysterious, which makes them perfect guardians for the Underworld. And, if I remember correctly, cats are associated with transformation, just as night shifts our perception of reality. Cats are also known to be astute, clever, secretive, mysterious, intelligent, intuitive, watchful, independent and selective of who they like; that seems to suit you to a 'T'. And, further more, unless I'm mistaken, felines are often associated with the element of fire, which you have admitted is where your affinity lies, whereas birds are associated with air.” Cassie looked at him in shock. Even Alec looked surprised.

“I suppose there's a first time for everything, even you saying something intelligent. But anyways, yes, a cat would have been a good choice, but like so many other things in life and magic; you don't get to choose it, it chooses you. Corvus was the first animal that asked to be my familiar, and when I heard his request, I was reminded of a story my grandfather often told me.”

“What was the story?” Alec asked.

“The Rainbow Crow.” Both men looked at her in confusion; they had never heard of that story.

“It's a Native American story from the Lenni Lenape Tribe if I'm right; when winter first came, the animals were the ones who experienced it. At first the snow was a novelty, something to play in, but it got colder and the snow kept falling; small animals were caught and buried in snow drifts whilst the larger animals could hardly move for all the snow. So Wise Owl said that someone had to go to
Kijiamuh Ka'ong, the Creator Who Creates By Thinking What Will Be, and ask him to make the snow spirit leave them in peace. The question was, who should be the one to go?

Not Wise Owl; whilst an excellent flyer at night, he couldn't see very well during the day and if they were to survive there could be no delay. Nor could Coyote; he was fast in the foot but also easily distracted and liked to play tricks, not the one to be trusted with everyone's survival. Turtle was steady, stable and reliable, but he moved too slow. Finally, Rainbow Crow, the most beautiful of all the birds with shimmering feathers of rainbow hues and an enchanting singing voice, was chosen to go to Kijiamuh Ka'ong.

It was an arduous journey, three days up and up into the heavens, past the trees and clouds, beyond the sun and the moon, and even above all the stars. He was buffeted by winds and had no place to rest, but he carried bravely on until he reached Heaven. When Rainbow Crow reached the Holy Place, he called out to the Creator, but received no answer. The Creator was too busy thinking up what would be to notice even the most beautiful of birds. So Rainbow Crow began to sing his most beautiful song.

The Creator was drawn from his thoughts by the lovely sound, and came to see which bird was making it. He greeted Rainbow Crow kindly and asked what gift he could give the noble bird in exchange for his song. Rainbow Crow asked the Creator to un-think the snow, so that the animals of Earth would not be buried and freeze to death. But the Creator told Rainbow Crow that the snow and the ice had spirits of their own and could not be destroyed.

“What shall we do then?” asked the Rainbow Crow. “We will all freeze or smother under the snow.”

“You will not freeze,” the Creator reassured him, “For I will think of Fire, something that will warm all creatures during the cold times.”

The Creator stuck a stick into the blazing hot sun. The end blazed with a bright, glowing fire which burned brightly and gave off heat.

“This is Fire,” he told Rainbow Crow, handing him the cool end of the stick. “You must hurry to Earth as fast as you can fly before the stick burns up.”
Rainbow Crow nodded his thanks to the Creator and flew as fast as he could go. It was a three-day trip to Heaven, and he was worried that the Fire would burn out before he reached the Earth. The stick was large and heavy, but the fire kept Rainbow Crow warm as he descended from Heaven down to the bright path of the stars. Then the Fire grew hot as it came closer to Rainbow Crow's feathers. As he flew passed the Sun, his tail caught on fire, turning the shimmering beautiful feathers black. By the time he flew passed the Moon, his whole body was black with soot from the hot Fire. When he plunged into the Sky and flew through the clouds, the smoke got into his throat, strangling his beautiful singing voice.

By the time Rainbow Crow landed among the freezing-cold animals of Earth, he was black as tar and could only Caw instead of sing. He delivered the fire to the animals, and they melted the snow and warmed themselves, rescuing the littlest animals from the snow drifts where they lay buried.

It was a time of rejoicing, for Tindeh - Fire - had come to Earth. But Rainbow Crow sat apart, saddened by his dull, ugly feathers and his rasping voice. Then he felt the touch of wind on his face. He looked up and saw the Creator Who Creates By Thinking What Will Be walking toward him.

“Do not be sad, Rainbow Crow,” the Creator said. “All animals will honor you for the sacrifice you made for them. And when the people come, they will not hunt you, for I have made your flesh taste of smoke so that it is no good to eat and your black feathers and hoarse voice will prevent man from putting you into a cage to sing for him. You will be free.”

Then the Creator pointed to Rainbow Crow’s black feathers. Before his eyes, Rainbow Crow saw the dull feathers become shiny and inside each one, he could see all the colors of the rainbow. “This will remind everyone who sees you of the service you have been to your people,” he said, “and the sacrifice you made that saved them all.”

It's one of my favourite stories and so, when a crow wanted to be my familiar, I was quite ecstatic. But back on the previous subject as to why crows and ravens are seen the way they are, apart from their own mysteriousness and their desire to keep their secrets, ravens and crows are seen as the emissaries to the dead and can sometimes bring a soul back for a time.” Both men were rather impressed by the story, and Corvus seemed to preen and look proudly at them as Cassandra told the story. As Cassie finished her pizza, she suddenly remembered something.

“Oh, I have something I want the two of you to try; if it works, I think I may be closer to earning that genius term you gave me Alec.” Cassie said as she stood up and the two men followed as she led them back to Q's office. That was another one of her quirks; just as she didn't believe that she was in any way physically attractive, she only believed herself to be smart, not a genius. As they came in,
they saw Q sitting at his desk, tinkering with something.

“Ah, ready to show them are you? She's quite pleased with these; even more so than your personalized guns, and she was rather proud of them.” Q informed the two men as the lady in question walked to her little desk and came back with a tray of rings. As she presented the tray to the two agents, both men noticed that under each ring there was one of their code numbers.

“I hope they fit alright; I've never made rings before and I also wanted to make sure that they weren't too flashy. I feared that if they were too flashy our captors would notice them for something other than a ring. So, hopefully nice enough that it doesn't seem strange for a double-0 to possess one, but not flashy enough to suggest anything other than an ordinary ring.” Cassie explained as James and Alec both tried on their plain silver rings with a small diamond in the centre.

“I think they look alright, but what are they for? Seems a little obvious for a tracking chip.” Cassie suddenly looked coy as she said,

“Meet me in the training room; Joanna and Franklyn are there and I want to give them their rings, especially if they work out.” James and Alec looked at each other, shrugged and headed down to the training room. Whatever these rings were, Cassie was excited over them, so they walked to the training room. As they arrived they saw Franklyn engaged in hand-to-hand tactics with Joanna, and she was trying to get out of the pin he had her in.

“Should we some back later?” James asked and Franklyn got off of her.

“I still have trouble getting out of that hold without using my powers, what am I doing wrong?” Joanna asked as Alec helped her stand.

“You need to learn how to 'Jack-knife' as my grandfather called it; you need to strengthen your body without your abilities and not let Franklyn pin you so completely to the ground. You also use too much energy before he pins you; conserve your energy, every movement should have meaning, yours, you act like a hurricane and hope you hit him, you don't and when he pins you, you're wondering what you did that led you there. Be a laser, not a forest fire.” Cassie explained as she came in, and passed the specific rings to their new owners. The two agents looked at James and Alec, who merely shrugged.

“The power restrictive aspect of this room is on right?” Casandra asked and the agents all nodded. Cassie showed her own ring, tapped the diamond in the centre, which seemed to glow for a second, then she turned around, and saw the shadows start to move. It took the four agents a few minutes to process what they were seeing; they were hardly slow on the uptake, but what they were seeing was
something that countless others had tried to do for years and had yet to succeed; Cassie had come up with something that actually negated the P.R.D's!

“I'm sorry, I thought they were more ready than this. Obviously they need more work before they're ready for the field.” Again, the fact that the rings weren't working perfectly seemed to burn her out, but as she turned, Franklyn grabbed her and hugged her. This startled her badly enough for her to teleport from in front of Franklyn, to behind Alec. He subtly moved his hand back and there seemed to be no hesitation as she gripped his hand.

“I am sorry, I didn't mean to startle you but I couldn't contain myself! You actually made something that can counteract the P.R.D's! Q has been trying for two years to make something, you are here for barely a couple months, and you almost perfect that? That is beyond incredible!” Franklyn practically gushed as James and Joanna turned on their rings and their abilities flared to life.

“I suppose we shouldn't be too surprised; the little robot makes something that interferes with other machines; shouldn't be too hard for it..” The four double-0s all held on (barely) to the groans that wanted to erupt as Frederick came in. Cassie moved from behind Alec and stood beside him, whereas Alec tried to keep her behind him; Cassie could squish him if Fred didn't keep his mouth to himself, but Fred could get her into real trouble, especially since they didn't know how Cassie came to be here.

“Freddy! How's your training going? Can you control yourself or are you still behaving like a mad dog?” Joanna asked as she smirked at him. She had respected Cassie from day one for putting Fred in his place, and after their mission together, she downright liked her.

“Why don't you go dine on some rats?” Fred snarled, to which Cassie replied, “And why don't you go chew on a bone or a slipper?” Fred moved to her, only to come up short when a low growling was heard. All but Cassie turned and saw her dogs approaching, prowling closer; their hackles raised, their teeth bared and their eyes seemed to glow as they came near.

“Let's make something very clear here Sabrina, if either of those mutts attack me, I'll make sure that both of them become charbroiled, is that clear?” That turned out to be the worst thing Fred could possibly have said as Cassie tackled him and started beating the crap out of him. Before any of the other 00s could do anything other than stare in shock at the girl who usually had such control she got off, Fred's nose was bleeding badly and, if James was right, he was missing two teeth.

“Congratulations Wilson, you did what very few are able to do; make me lose control. Now, you ever threaten my dogs again, you will never escape the nightmare I will put you in. Not even death
“Will you find peace because death will not come for a long time; a small fragment of my magic can keep you alive for years.”

“M will know all about this you little bitch, and when she does—”

“All anyone but the four 00s whom you’ve managed to alienate quite well will know is that you tried to again ‘test my mettle’ and were soundly thrashed by me. Try anything else, and your humiliation will be even greater than being trounced by a girl half your size and age. Again.” Cassie was ice-cold as she said this, quite the opposite to the white hot rage she had demonstrated but a moment ago. The four wondered what she meant by humiliation when they smelt it; Cassandra had used her powers to make Wilson lose control of his bladder.

“Keep what happened to yourself, we keep it as well; tell anyone, and this will be revealed as well.” Alec then came over to her and pulled her away. Franklyn and Joanna left for their respective showers, Joanna pausing to ask Alec if he wanted her to help Cassie wash the blood off of her hands. Alec shook his head, he would look after her. He and James led her away from the training room, with Rai and Zumi hot on their heels. They stopped in their lounge, James sending a mild mental message telling everyone to get out. Alec led her over to the sink and started washing the blood off of her hands, and as the water hit her skin, she sighed.

“Well, that wasn't very professional, was it? I'm afraid that when people threaten my animals, I can get rather vicious.”

“No more vicious than swans; don't they grab anyone they perceive as attackers to their nest and hold them under water? Until they stop moving?” James asked as he looked at her and again she gave him a surprised look.

“During a mission, there was a documentary on TV about swans and I was surprised that birds that are seen as such romantic creatures could be so deadly.”

“The truest expression of love is the one in which you're willing to kill for.” Cassie said as she gazed into the water. As if suddenly realizing what she said, she tried to turn away, but Alec held her fast.

“Sorry, sometimes when I'm around water I say weird things.”

“I'm more surprised that you can handle being so close to water without being hurt.” James remarked, only for Cassie to respond,
“Actually, I love water; I remember as a child my grandparents often had to yell at me to get out of
the bath tub before I permanently looked like a raisin or that I had to eat to have energy to swim so
get out of the lake and come to lunch!” Cassie had a small smile as she said this.

“So you were a little frog huh?” Alec asked with his own smile, only for her to give a small grimace.

“I actually don't really like frogs or toads; I don't mean to sound petty but I just don't like them.”

“How about a little dolphin?” James asked only for Cassie to again retort,

“Did you know that dolphins can be violent? Not only have they been known to kill and maim their
own young, they also kill porpoises and play with their dead carcass for no apparent reason other
than its fun. Male dolphins particularly show aggression towards human males when there’s a female
involved, even though it's a human female. Why? Sexual competition. They do their best to get the
female away and then try to mate with her, drowning her in the process.”

“Well, there goes my appreciation for the movie Flipper, but just tell me, is there any aquatic creature
you do like?” Alec asked as he finally let go of her hands, finally noticing how cold the water had
gotten.

“I like a lot of animals thanks to my studies, I'm merely stating a fact concerning certain animals.
Those I don't like, I have a great amount of respect for; I am not a huge fan of octopuses, but I feel
you have to have respect an animal that goes to a hidden spot and after she lays her eggs, she stays
there the whole time watching them and tending to them, occasionally stroking them, not even
leaving to eat and, in a final act of motherly devotion, she feeds the babies with her own flesh, as the
babies hatch, they feed on their mother's corpse. How can you not respect such an animal like that?”
Cassie asked.

“You certainly know a lot about animals and their behaviours.” James remarked.

“Well, I needed to study these animals in order for my animal magic to work properly so, whilst I
was studying them I obviously noted some of their, at least by human standards, strange behaviours.”
That made both men pause.

“You mean you actually studied these animals in their natural habitats, you didn't just read about
them or study them in a zoo?” Cassie looked at them like they were crazy.
“Of course not! How can I see the effects of the venom of the sea cone snail through the pages of a book? How can I observe the migratory paths of fruit bats in a zoo? My grandfather, a man who had no magical abilities, told me that sorcerers accept what is in the books and leave it at that, warlocks search out the knowledge for themselves and try to find the hidden things that others have overlooked. He was also the one who always told me that a fact is only a fact until someone comes along to prove otherwise.” Cassie looked solemn as she said that, and the men believed her.

“Your grandfather sounds very wise.” James said.

“I would like to think he was.” At this, both men looked at her.

“I'm sorry, when did he die?” Alec asked, wondering if his loss was still a fresh wound.

“About ten years ago, but I often feel him around me, giving me advice, scolding me when I'm about to do something stupid, that sort of thing.” James and Alec stuck with Cassie for a couple more days before both men were sent on separate missions, James to Canada and Alec to South Africa. Cassie gave them both a pair of cuff-links that, if suddenly dropped, became smoke bombs, but she asked them not to drop them until absolutely necessary, as, etched on them, was a symbol for luck and a safe, quick return home. Both men promised to be quick, as James was only needed for a consultation on security for a very important visitor from the British embassy and Alec was needed to see about a possible drug dealer that was working on a drug that was extremely hard to detect but could easily take control of a person's mind. Cassie gave Alec an extra charm; a chain that warmed up if he was in danger. She said that she hoped it would warn him against the drug but she had yet to have a chance to test it against drugs being consumed. Alec said he would be very careful whilst he was away, as would James. Apparently however, the dangers were not abroad but at home, as when the two agents came back, James one week after he left and Alec two afterwards (turned out the drug was nowhere near as strong as they thought, Alec had been dosed but it had been nothing to worry about), when Eve came running up to them.

“I need the two of you to come with me now! Emily and Joanna are trying to open the door but Wilson somehow managed to magically lock it from the outside.”

“What are you talking about?” Alec asked as they started following her.

“Wilson said he wanted to learn real control so he asked Cassandra for help, but he grabbed one of those rings she's been working on. Basically, Cassandra is fighting a post-human whilst her own powers are locked-down. She's good, but I don't think she can keep it together much longer.” Eve noticed that James and Alec seemed to break out their enhanced speed, running faster than she had ever seen them. As they came to just outside the training room, they saw Emily and Joanna trying to
unlock the door but there was a chain on it that they couldn't get off. Lucas and Franklyn were trying like crazy to override the system so that Cassandra at least could fight back in a fair fight, but Wilson had all but fried the control panel. Rai and Zumi were going crazy trying to tear the chain off, but the magic that kept it locked kept it from being broken.

“What if we hit it with a concentrated E.M.P. wave? That would knock out the P.R.D’s so that Cassie could fight back and kick Wilson’s ass for the last time before they haul him off to Belmarsh.” Joanna suggested, only for Lucas to shake his head.

“She'd still be locked in there and she has got to be feeling a strain from this fight. We need to get in there and help her.” James received a mental message from Raoul telling him to go for the control panel and he would help him re-wire the controls. Alec then remembered one of the knives Cassie had given him that she said would help him with any lock. So, whilst James went to work on the control panel, Alec set to unlocking the chain with the knife. It took them ten minutes but finally they managed to unlock the door, as well as undo the P.R.D. When they got in, both Cassie and Wilson looked like hell and the training room was practically destroyed. What was unsettling about Wilson was his eyes; they had been pecked out of their sockets. A loud caw from overhead alerted them that Corvus was in the room and was undoubtedly the cause for the pecking.

“I'm going to kill you you traitorous little bitch.” Wilson gasped out as he leaned against one of the machines.

“I'm no traitor Wilson, that title distinctly belongs to you; you are a traitor to your country by going against Major Boothroyd, your commanding officer, as well as a traitor to post-humans the way you abuse your powers. Now, I'm going to give you one last chance to walk away; stand down!” Cassie had burns, bruises, and slashes on her body, but she was handling her pain and exhaustion better than Wilson was.

“You better do it Wilson; right now you're just looking at Belmarsh, keep it up and they'll execute you.” Wilson turned sharply in Emily's direction as she spoke.

“I am an agent like you and you stand with that mongrel?! If you knew what I know about her family, you'd be helping me!” James saw Cassie's eyes flash at the mention of her family and the word 'mongrel', and this time they were staying their amber color.

“You know nothing about my family Wilson!” Cassie then took up a metal pipe that had fallen from someplace and banged on another, and they listened as Wilson howled in pain. Wilson then drew a previously concealed gun on her, giving Joanna no other choice but to hurl Alec's knife right at Wilson's back. He gasped in surprise and he seemed to scream in pain. Then something that belonged in a horror move happened; the barbed wire that was used in their obstacle course training suddenly went flying and hit Wilson; he landed on the ground in three pieces. Joanna screamed and
Franklyn looked like he was about to be ill, but the four older agents, as well as two loyal hounds, ignored the scene and ran to Cassie, who looked about ready to collapse and in real pain.

“I suppose you're wondering why I called you all here this afternoon.” Cassie tried to joke, but her smile was more a grimace than anything. Alec could hardly say he was surprised when the eye started giving him a list of Cassie's injuries, but he was surprised to see that many were starting to heal already. If only the bleeding head wound was doing the same thing.

“Hold the jokes for later Cas, right now we need to get you to medical.” Emily said, only for Cassie to go even paler. It also made Rai and Zumi get between the two females and growl at Emily.

“No, please! I can take care of myself, just don't let the doctors look at me!” None of them could understand her reaction; none of them liked going to medical but this went beyond that; she was actually frightened of going to medical. That was when James remembered some of Cassie's comments over the last couple of months and the little light went on.

“She's afraid that whilst in medical someone might steal some of her blood or anything that's hers; that would make her subject to either sympathetic magic or blood manipulation.” Cassie nodded, only to hold her head in pain.

“Cas, sweetheart, I understand your fears but you need to be x-ray'd, to see if Wilson did any internal damage like broken bones or ruptured organs or stuff like that.” Lucas tried to reason, only for Cassie to shake her head.

“My magic has already started healing my body, the only thing that needs to be done is the re-setting of my broken arm because my magic knows that it's a spiral break and it won't heal properly unless fixed. Like, my magic knows what my body should look like and won't heal bones unless the bones are in proper alignment. I just need Alec to set the bone, let me wrap it to keep it as such, then give it twelve hours.”

“Why so long? I mean, it's far shorter than normal, but wouldn't your magic heal you automatically?” James asked as Corvus flew down from the rafters and landed on Cassie's shoulder.

“Not exactly; MI6 keeps my magic at minimal levels so the magic goes for the serious stuff first; punctured organs, internal bleeding, and stuff like that. Once that is done with, when that energy has replenished itself, it goes onto broken bones, which are seldom fatal unless they puncture something or a cranial fracture. They just hurt like hell.”
“Why on Earth would MI6 keep your powers at minimal levels?” Emily asked and Cassie was about to say something when she hissed and grabbed the shoulder that Corvus was perched on. Corvus started pecking at the wound. Lucas tried to shoo Corvus away, when his own hand hit the wound and he gasped in pain.

“What the Devil?!” Lucas looked at his hand and Joanna gasped at how his hand blistered as though it had been burned.

“He slashed my shoulder with an iron blade; iron hurts magicals, which is why your hand is hurting Lucas, as Satyrs are highly magical. Corvus is trying to get the remaining iron flecks out as the wound can't heal so long as those flecks are there.”

“Why isn't that in your medical files?” James asked as Alec helped Corvus remove the flecks with his telekinesis.

“So your lot has something to keep me in check after I told them that I wouldn't do anything to harm them? Even with that assurance your security keeps me in a cell and drugs me so I sleep instead of hacking the bank of England or whatever you think I do -” Before Cassie could finish, the six agents who had come to her rescue all shouted,

“They do WHAT?!” Cassie was about to snap again when she looked at their faces and saw the truth.

“You really don't know, do you?”

“No, they don't. Your mission was a need to know basis and these seven, now six, didn't need to know.” Scarlet said as she came in, looking at Cassandra with contempt.

“She's a terrorist who Q thinks can be an asset to MI6. Frankly I think this just a sign of his senility finally kicking in.”

“Watch what you say Scarlet; Q has saved your ass on more than one occasion.” Lucas said and he noticed James and Alec moved closer to Cassie; apparently they believed that bilge water about Cassie being a terrorist as much as he did. Emily, Franklyn and Joanna all got closer as well with Rai and Zumi both moving to stand with him.
“What's your proof that she's a terrorist? Her abilities? Each and everyone of us here, minus yourself, Charles and that traitorous heap over there have enough skill and power to be very effective mercenaries, never mind terrorists.” Franklyn asked as he blocked Cassandra from Scarlet's view.

“She hacked the CIA.” Finally Cassandra spoke up.

“I did that to protect the CIA! They were about to be hacked by a virus that would have disclosed the identities of all their agents, especially the ones out in the field! Dozens if not hundreds of missions would have been compromised if that had happened! Drug kingpins keep producing their drugs, human traffickers keep treating human beings like animals and countless other fiends get to keep on destroying thousands of lives! Not to mention there was no possible way of getting their people out in time once their covers had been blown! Best case scenario they would have lost 20% of their people. Worst case, and far more likely scenario, they would have lost up to 60% of their people. That's an awful lot of families who would lose their sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, or parents and not even get the chance to say goodbye.” The six agents looked at her in shock; she may be a socially awkward person, Emily frankly wondered if she had Asperger's, but she seemed to be a firm believer that nobody should have to go through what she just explained. It made the four wonder why she would feel that way, and confirmed to James and Alec they were on the right track.

“Yes, I'm sure that's your reasoning. Seeing as how you didn't get a chance when your daddy was killed along with your whore of a mother-” Amazingly, it was not Cassie, James or Alec who stopped Scarlet from talking; it was Joanna's fist knocking her to the ground. Joanna's eyes were blood red and her fangs descended as she stood over Scarlet. Never before had her appearance been so frightening.

“The only whore around here is you Scarlet. Cassie is twice the agent you are while only having half the experience. If you ever try to talk down to her again, we'll see who is stronger; the succubus or the vampire.” Even her voice had change from that of a normal person, to a deeper, more... demonic tone.

“What? Not going to let her kill me like she killed Wilson?” Scarlet taunted, which might have been more effective if her nose wasn't dripping blood and looking broken.

“Actually, that would have been me; I've been working on my own telekinesis but it's still kind of choppy.” James said and Cassie looked at him startled; of all of them, she had figured 007 would hate her when he found out she was a 'traitor' to a place she didn't even belong in, as his record stated he was the most loyal after 001.

“You're crazy for siding with that little bitch Bond; her father-”
"Whether or not her father was a villain, Cassandra is not as she has had three separate chances to run away or sabotage us and has done neither. You are only an effective agent so long as your powers are active; she pretty much took Wilson down on her own while she was de-powered and he was charging at full steam. Joanna is right Scarlet; Cassie is a far better agent than you could ever hope to be." Emily said and the others all agreed. Scarlet said nothing more as she got up and left. Lucas turned and look at James and Alec.

"Right, we only have a few minutes before M shows up, and what I've got to say to her about this whole cock-up, I don't want Cassie hearing. Can you two take her to your apartment? Joanna doesn't have the space, Emily doesn't like birds and Franklyn hasn't gotten over his crush yet."

"Hey! I'm enough of a professional not to try romancing a woman that was attacked by a first-class bastard!"

"Maybe we should be asking the patient where she wants to go?" Joanna interrupted before the two males could get into another argument. They turned quickly when they heard the woman in question grunt and saw Alec had reset her broken arm while James held her, and then switched positions as James picked up some ripped cloth to bind the arm and Alec held her. The four observers saw her relax in Alec's grip and James wiped at the blood from the corner of her mouth with his handkerchief. They couldn't understand why, of all agents, these two were the ones she was calmest around, but the evidence was before their eyes. What was strangest though, was that she seemed calmer in Alec's arms than James, when people were generally much more frightened in Alec's presence, him giving off a more vicious air.

"Why are you going to such lengths for me? Am I not technically the kind of person you like beating the living shit out of so that I give up who I'm working for?" Cassie asked and Joanna couldn't help remarking

"You just swore." Cassie gave a slight smirk as she pointed to her head, which had yet to stop bleeding.

"Slight concussion from when Wilson decided to be a smart ass and sent a bull made of electricity slamming me into the gymnastic set; I hardly know what I'm saying. But the sentiment is exactly what I wanted; I am just the sort of person you lot bring in for questioning, beat up and practically kill, demanding I give up my sources, never believing that I don't work with or for anyone. And if I die whilst being 'interrogated', well, that's one less 'terrorist' that you've killed in the name of Queen and Country, right? You never stop to think about the families that you've left behind because of these missions, never looking back because you dare not, for fear that you will see the ghosts of your past and realize that whilst you were 'doing your duty for Queen and Country', you killed a lot of those that make up a country, and you'll realize that every victory you gained was a hollow one, because what's the point of winning a war when everyone is dead and buried? And what's the point anyways? You topple all those dictators, undermine all those regimes, only to come home: 'Well
done, good job, but sorry, old boy/girl, everything you risked your life and limb for has changed. Our enemy is no longer the Germans, now it's the Russians, no wait it's the Taliban, no on second thought it's I.S.I.S.” Cassie had a condemning look on her face and many paled as they began to get an image of the whole situation. They all knew however that that did not make her words ring any less true. However, Emily gently took Cassie's chin and said,

“I think I'm beginning to see that you truly have no reason to trust us, but Lucas and I will get to the bottom of this, that I promise you. James and Alec are going to look after you right now, whilst Joanna and Franklyn try to clear things up with security. Just put a little faith in us for 24 hours starting the moment you step out of here and away from the dampeners weakening you.”

“Why?” Cassie asked and Emily thought her mouth looked strange as it had the slightest blue tinge to it.

“Because we are your friends.” Emily saw the shock color Cassandra's face and the older woman wondered if the young girl had ever had friends before. After all, post-humans were seldom popular as children as they could seldom hide their 'gifts'.

“You two get her out of here, Franklyn, Joanna, you two go have a friendly little chat with the security guards that formerly looked after her. The words I'm about to have with M are not ones that should be spoken around young ladies.”

“I spent a good portion of my youth in Irish pubs hiding from bullies Lucas; I highly doubt that there's anything you can say that I haven't heard before.” Cassie called back as James led her and Alec out, Corvus reappeared, having disappeared for a few moments, with Matches in his talons.

“Do we need to stop and get the dogs some kibble on the way?” James asked.

“You don't mean that dry stuff do you? My dogs hate that stuff and only ate it when they were starving. Those guards wouldn't even let me try and make the food taste better.” Cassie asked.

“What did you feed them before you became a guest of MI6? Are you one of those who feed their dogs real food?” Alec asked and both Cassie and James heard the contempt at the word 'guest'.

“Like my dogs, I would only eat that stuff if I was on the verge of starvation. I would rather be stranded in the forest or in the desert and depend on myself for food than eat that garbage. Besides which, have you ever seen a wolf or a tiger eat this kibble garbage? No way; they are meant to eat
actual food.” Cassie had a rather disgusted look on her face.

“How about that mountain dog food stuff? I heard it was the next best thing to feeding them real food.” Alec asked as they reached the parking lot, one of the attendee’s bringing a company car around.

“I figured you didn’t want dog hair in your Aston Martin, so I asked Charlie here to bring around a company car for us to use. Thank you, Charlie.” Cassie explained as Charlie opened the back door, allowing her dogs to climb in. As Cassie went to move herself, Alec turned and backed his way into the Cherokee, gently pulling Cassie up to his chest. James meanwhile got into the drivers seat and was only mildly surprised to see Rai sitting up front with him.

“Rai is an alpha dog; he always takes point whenever we’re thrown into a new situation. Meanwhile Zumi is here in the back with myself and Alec to make sure Alec doesn’t hurt me and Corvus is flying overhead; if you start to deviate from the path needed to go to your apartment, he’ll alert me.”

“Does Matches do anything for your protection or does he just sit there and look pretty?” James asked with a smile, only for said lizard to look at him.

“Funny you should ask that; I’ve been wondering for the last three years if I threw a small dose of chaos magic at him, what would happen? I believe that he would roughly be about the size of an alligator if not bigger and quite vicious as all reptiles are flesh eaters, whether from the flesh of beetles or the flesh of a foolish human. Of course, that would be in a controlled environment, not during a time in which my energy levels are fluctuating and either nothing could happen or Matches could be the size of a skyscraper.”

“I thought you said you could only perform Animal Magic, Shadow Magic and Elemental Magic?” Alec asked as James drove to the Tesco’s that happened to be near their apartment.

“Joanna only asked me what I had studied, not what I was studying. If you truly believe that I would ever restrict myself to only three branches of magic, then I have a bridge to sell you. By the way, what does that saying mean?” Cassie asked and Alec thought she looked very much the part of a confused puppy as she looked up at him.

“You used a phrase you don’t understand?” Alec asked with a gentle smile.

“My cousin always uses it when people are being gullible or foolish around us. But he is never good
“You have a cousin?” Alec asked

“If you want an answer to that question, answer mine first.”

“Alright, the saying relates to the Brooklyn Bridge, a bridge that has been 'sold' numerous times by a man named George C. Parker, who supposedly would sell the bridge twice a week, along with other landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and Grant's Tomb. Now, your cousin?”

“His name is Matteo, he is 34 years old, has a partner, he has been my biggest defender for a long time; frankly there have been times when I think he thinks he's my brother, not my cousin. His powers are invisibility and teleportation, and he inspired my love of crafting things, and was the one who suggested that one of the first branches I study be animal magic. We are very close, and I miss him very much.” Cassie explained as James pulled up to Tesco's. As he put the car in park, he said,

“Well, after this, you may be able to at least phone him.” James got out then went around back to help Alec help Cassie out. He made a motion for the dogs to stay, knowing that even if the two were on leashes, Tesco's would never let them in. They growled for a moment, only for Matches to hop off Rai's head and jump onto Alec's shoulder.

“What information would you require in exchange for knowing what branches you are studying?”

“Why are you helping me? I read your file Bond, you are one of the most patriotic agents MI6 has, so why help me?” Before they could go into Tesco's, James felt it best to explain this. Not certain how much he could reveal, but he felt it was safe enough to say,

“I was a patriotic agent and I still am, but I'm more loyal to the people that make it up, than the government. When it looked like Alec had been killed, I knew he was still alive, but MI6 refused to let me go search for him. When I finally found him, S.P.E.C.T.R.E. had caught me but I was proven right when I saw Alec. It may be difficult to understand, but I figured if MI6 could make such a huge mistake concerning one of it's agents, I began to worry about it's intel regarding other things.” As they went inside Tesco's, Alec once again admired James' way of telling the truth without actually telling the truth.

“I suppose that's fair. As to the branches I am studying, I am studying Chaos Magic, Sleep Magic, Druidic Magic, Music Magic and a little bit of Alchemy, though I'm still working on that..”
“But that's eight branches; you said sorcerers can only learn up to seven? Or did we somehow misinterpret that?” Alec asked and he noticed the lightest dusting of pink on her cheeks. It made her look even cuter.

“Well, I may have lightly fibbed about the Elemental Magic; you see, one of the aspects of Druidic Magic is weather manipulation; with a little focus and determination, weather manipulation can look like simple Elemental Magic.” Cassie didn't notice the people looking at her for her broken arm, split lip and her black eye. James and Alec noticed and they saw many looking at them suspiciously. When a stock boy came over, Alec could smell the fear on him, but also determination to protect what he saw as a young girl being abused. Admirable, but slightly annoying.

“Uh, do you need help finding anything?” The boy asked Cassie directly. Again, she didn't seem to realize the boy was asking her if she wanted him to call the police.

“Yes, I need to get some dog food, do you happen to have any Mountain dog food? My brother says that it's closest to feeding them real food.” Though neither showed it, both men were confused over the 'brother' comment.

“Yeah, it's um, you know, maybe I should check the back room to see if we've got any...”

“I know what you're thinking, but it's not like that at all. I was in an abusive relation until a few hours ago; my brother and his partner finally managed to convince me that he's not gonna change, and the only thing that is, is me possibly being put into the ground. My brother is letting me stay at his place but I forgot to pick up food for my dogs.” The boy wasn't sure he believed her, until her eyes again flashed amber, though this time it was accompanied by a red glow that flowed from her hands and into the minds of the boy and those observing them. They soon stopped observing them.

“Two things; enchantments and brother?” James asked as everyone went about their business.

“In a way, and what else was I supposed to say? I was almost killed by a secret agent and the two protecting me are other secret agents that trust me for some bizarre reason?”

“Cassandra!” Alec growled, only for her to roll her eyes at him.

“Oh please Alec; part of the enchantment is that they can no longer hear us, either the spell is making them completely ignore us or, for those rare individuals who have magical immunity, there is a
privacy bubble around us that they can’t hear without coming near us, thereby exposing themselves.” However, the strain on her already strained body was proving too much as she lost balance and almost fell if Alec had not caught her.

“Maybe we should drop our privacy bubble until you feel better, huh?” Cassie nodded and though the spell ended, nobody looked at them again. After that, they didn't take much longer in picking up a few things, though Alec didn't miss Cassie slipping a few things into her pockets. /*She is either a kleptomaniac or she doesn’t think we'll pay for more than the dog food.*/ Alec said to James who countered with /*Or maybe she just likes taking things.*/

“Alec, why was everyone seemingly so concerned about my injuries?” Cassie asked, causing the two men to look at her. Seriously?

“Cassie, you look like you just went a few rounds with an Anderson Silva or Georges St-Pierre. People are bound to be concerned.” Alec explained as they got ready to leave.

“But where I grew up, I would sometimes look a lot worse than this and people didn't care. Why would a group of complete strangers care at all?” This caused both agents to pause once they left Tesco’s.

“Where did you grow up? Apokolips?” Alec asked as he again helped Cassie back into the car.

“Apokolips? Oh, pop-culture reference referring to the comic company, DC comics. A fictional planet that is often referred to as Hell personified. Home-world to super villain Darkseid, one of Superman’s strongest and most deadly opponents.” Cassie recited, making Alec look at her.

“If you don't want people to think you are a robot, you should try sounding a bit more normal when you remember something.”

“I wasn’t remembering, I was looking it up; my grandparents never let me read those comics, said they were an insult to post-humans. When you made reference to something I did not understand, my brain looked up the information and presented it to me.”

“If your grandparents didn't let you read those things, then out of curiosity, what did they let you read and watch?” James asked.
“Well, for movies, I was shown detective movies to show me how to survive and how to properly use my brains and eyes. Meanwhile, my grandmother showed me movies with femme fatales so that I could properly learn how to use my more, physical attributes to my advantage. Frankly, I think they were teaching me how to survive whilst my great-grandfather was teaching me how to fight.”

“Your great-grandfather?” Cassie seemed to coil in on herself as they arrived at their apartment.

“I don't think I can talk to you about him; you believe I'm not a terrorist, but if you hear about him you might think otherwise.” Alec thought for a moment, but as James had been able to get an answer out of her with a half-truth, he might be able to get one as well with a slightly better truth.

“When we get up to our apartment, I have something to tell you that may help you trust me because I think I have a feeling I know what you want to tell us.” /*Are you mad? We don't know how much she values her freedom!* James all but shouted at him, only for Alec to respond, /*What freedom, James? She has been in a cell since she arrived! Telling her this may help her believe the two of us mean her no harm and may help us sway her to our side when the time is right! Besides which, like you I'm not going to be telling her the whole truth, just the gist of it.*/ James knew he could not talk Alec out of this so he merely hoped that the psychic serpent was temporarily resting. As they got to their apartment, James let the dogs off their leashes and went to open a window to allow Corvus in.

“Right, now as you know, post-humans live a lot longer than regular humans so you can believe that when I was six years old I saw my father kill himself and my mother because they were Cossack’s who had managed to evade Stalin's execution squads. MI6 doesn't believe that I remember that and I would prefer to keep it that way since they might doubt my loyalty if they knew. Now, the reason I am a member of MI6 is because I believe, like you and now James, that governments often make mistakes regarding their agents and I hope to be one of those who try to avoid such things. Obviously I wouldn't be caught dead working for the government that caused my parents deaths so the KGB was out.” Cassie looked at him, sighed and sat down on the couch.

“Alright, I only have a short amount of time left before I am hit with a seizure so please don’t interrupt, as it's already going to be bad and the longer I try to keep it at bay, the longer and more violent it's going to get. Now, as I mentioned, I grew up in Ireland. After my mother's death I was sent to live with my father's family. Now, let's get this straight right from the start; whilst my grandfather and great-grandfather were IRA, my father and uncle were NOT IRA and once his sons were born, my grandfather retired from it. My great-grandfather however never retired and he always hated the British. Needless to say he wasn't thrilled when his eldest grandson married an English woman. Matteo was very young at the time, but he says that he remembers great-grandfather calling my mother a dummy because she was mute and other even less savoury things. My dad- I mean my father - didn't care about that one way or another; he loved my mother and I more than anything. He even learned sign language just to say hello to her and when he proposed to her, he did it in sign language, even if he could use his words, he wanted to do it in the thing that helped him learn what she was saying. My uncle told me that when my mom finally got pregnant with me, you would have thought St. Peter himself had come down and informed him of the child he was going to have. You may believe that because he came from a line of IRA members he himself was IRA, but my dad- my
father was one of the kindest men I have ever known and he never killed anyone. He spent most of his time at home with me; my mom was mainly the one who had the income. But MI6 agents could not let well enough alone, and one day they sent agents to kill my father and it wasn't even a fair fight; MI6 had eight agents when they came to our apartment to kill him. I was only five years old when your government, Bond, took my father away. After that, my mom lost a lot of her will to live; she tried to stay alive to look after me, but she just didn't have it in her; she had lost her match in every way and without him she just couldn't seem to focus. Finally, one day, whilst she was in the bath, her radio all of a sudden turned off; there had been a power surge for but a moment you see, but it was enough for her to get out of the tub and try to fix it. When turning the knobs didn't work, she did what anybody would do, she checked the plug. Unfortunately she forgot that the plug was frayed, and she forgot to dry her hands before hand and the power chose that moment to come back on. I saw the lights flicker, I heard a splash, went running in, and saw my mother, lying dead in her bath tub. I was seven when I lost her and went to live with my fathers family. By all accounts, I should have gone to my uncle, but my father had been more than just his brother; they had been identical twins, and his death caused my uncle to become an alcoholic. He would sometimes stop for a few days when he saw me, because my eyes are his eyes so when he saw my eyes he saw my father looking at him and he says he always saw disappointment. He didn't kick the habit altogether until it caused him to lose his wife and the use of his legs in an automobile accident. He had just had a couple drinks at one of the pubs, and my aunt Isabella, his wife, was taking him home when a car came out of nowhere. At nine, my aunt now numbered among my dead relatives and my uncle was crippled.

At seven, like most post-humans, I presented with my magic ability and when he saw one day just how strong I could really be, my great-grandfather, who for the longest time was happy not even acknowledging my existence, suddenly took great interest in my upbringing. When I finished my chores, he set to training me; how to handle a knife, how to shoot, how to build a bomb and when I asked him why, he would teach me how to take a punch and say I should be grateful that he was teaching me the skills I would need to kill those who had killed my father. When my grandparents found out, there wasn't much they could do; he was the oldest member of the family and everyone had to listen to him. They did what they could though; when I fumbled with the knife and he would yell at me, my grandfather would remind him that I was only 9, that my hands weren't strong enough yet to do that technique so effortlessly. When he started to de-sensitize me by putting me through some aspects of Spetsnaz training, as well as other techniques from other Special Forces from around the world, my grandmother would bind my wounds, clean the blood off and always remind me that, though I didn't have a choice in my training, it was still my choice in how I used it; it's easy to take a life in anger, she would say, but once the anger is gone and your mind clears, you have to live with what you did for the rest of your life. And my uncle, once he was truly sober and found out what I was going through said, always remember that an eye for an eye just leaves the whole world blind, and that killing those people would not bring my parents back or undo all the damage that had come of it. You see, my grandmother had been IRA as well, her specialty was in making bombs but one day, the wiring was faulty and went off ahead of schedule. It wouldn't have been that bad if only her best friend hadn't been the one delivering the bomb; it went off before she could get to safety and they tried to save her, listened to her scream for over two hours because they couldn't give her anaesthesis due to her stomach being all but gone and with all the nails in her she had a collapsed lung so ether was out as well. She listened as they tried for those two hours to save the life of the girl she had grown up with, gone to school with, and had promised that they would be each others Maid of Honour on their respective wedding days. That was when she realized, what was the point of all that fighting, if there would be no one left to celebrate, if all the future generations had to inherit, was a name many associated with murderers? No, my cousin and I may have been raised by IRA, just like our fathers before us, but like our fathers, we are NOT IRA!” Cassie looked at both men as if
daring them to contradict her, until she could fight it no more and with a sharp cry she had her seizure. Both men sprang into action right away. They felt it best to keep her on the couch since putting her on the floor could cause her to get hurt.

“All right, let’s pull her down a bit so she doesn’t hit her head on the arm. Now let’s put her on her side so any fluid can spill from the mouth and try not to put too much pressure on her body; we could dislocate her arm or something and with one already broken, try not to jostle it.” Alec recited, having looked up what to do during a seizure so that he wouldn’t get caught off guard.

“Here’s the oxygen mask.” Raoul said as he suddenly popped up from nowhere. James glared at him before fixating the mask over her face. As Alec set about helping her lungs work again, James turned back and looked at their partner.

“Taking quite the risk aren’t you?”

“I knew that after such a stressful fight she would have a seizure and while she has one, she can only hear those who speak in a loud, clear voice. After the seizure, she will sleep like a rock for quite a few hours. We will be quite clear to talk.” As Raoul said this however, Corvus flew over and watched as his own partner relaxed on the couch.

“But what about her four extra sets of eyes? You don’t think they’ll say something?” James asked as Alec got up to feed Rai and Zumi, who looked at their mistress worryingly.

“Not if they know the truth; I am a friend of yours that will be gone by morning and I only wish to help her.” Corvus looked at him and seemed to caw in acquiescence. As James picked Cassie up, Raoul picked up the oxygen device and Corvus hopped onto his shoulder.

“There’s a guest room not far from our room; if she should happen to have another seizure, we’ll leave both doors open and one of the dogs can come running for us.” James explained as he led the way to the room. When the dogs went to follow their mistress, Alec simply picked up the bowls, as well as putting Matches again on his shoulder, and followed as well. He arrived just in time to see Zumi grab the edge of the blanket and pull it down for her mistress, as well as Corvus flying over to the dresser.

“In the morning we’ll check her arm and make sure it wasn’t re-damaged during the seizure.” James said as he lay Cassie on the bed. As Alec set the bowls on the ground, both dogs came over and started eating. Matches had at some point jumped off his shoulder, and came into the room rolling a water bottle before him. Alec couldn’t help but chuckle at the image.
“Good idea Matches, she'll probably be super thirsty when she wakes up. I'll also leave the bottle of painkillers on the nightstand for her. These are special ones that will dissolve as soon as they touch her tongue.” Alec said as he did just that, with Matches sitting on the stand as well.

“Notice how they've positioned themselves; Corvus is near the window, Rai and Zumi are near the door, and Matches is the last line of defence in case someone gets past the first three.” Raoul noted and the other two saw he was right. Alec however could not bring himself to care much so he left a change of clothes (they may be a great deal larger than her small frame but they would have to do) for her and motioned the other two out. As the three resumed their location in the living room, Alec could keep silent no longer.

“No wonder she said that 'we' created her.”

“Pardon?” James asked.

“Back in St. Petersburg, she said that 'we created her and were now attempting to put a leash on her'. If MI6 had left her family alone, her father would not have died, her mother would not have followed him two years later thus landing her in her grandparents care and bringing her smack dab into her great-grandfather's sphere of influence. She would also still have her aunt, seeing as how her uncle, who I remind you was crippled by the same accident, wouldn't have become an alcoholic because of the loss of his twin brother. MI6 created her as surely as they created us, though we have our freedom whilst she is a prisoner.”

“M saying that we were to 'guard' her makes sense as well; we weren't to guard her from danger, we were to guard her and make sure she didn't run away.” James realized and Raoul sighed.

“Oh mother, the children you have raised.”

“Is there anything to be done? Someway she can escape?” James asked and Alec snorted to hear the once loyal terrier talk about helping someone flee MI6's custody.

“No, at least not right now; if she vanished under your care, you would be under intense scrutiny and I am not yet ready to be cast into the light. The best thing to do is keep her under your care, make her see that the two of you are her true allies, perhaps even her friends.”

“But what if she thinks that her best chance of freedom is turning in two real 'traitors'?” James can't
help but ask, but Alec shakes his head.

“I doubt it; her moral code wouldn't allow it. I can't explain it, like I can't explain a lot of things, but she doesn't like betraying those who help her.”

“Your psychic powers are not merely limited to telekinesis but also a form of intuition; it is what allowed you to trust James, myself, pursue the idea that something was not right with Cassie, and now in your belief that she will not betray you. Still, I would not reveal the whole truth until you are both certain, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that she will not betray you. Though I must caution you both; there is a fine line you will be walking, tell her before that time and she may tell your secrets, tell her after that and she will be deeply betrayed. And I can tell you right now; this is one post-human you do not want to make an enemy out of. She is almost at my level now; you don't want to see a sorceress of her calibre scorned.” Raoul warned them and the two knew he was right.

“One thing I can't understand...” James started only for Alec to snort,

“One thing?” James simply continued as if he had never been interrupted.

“Is why Q seems to be her staunchest ally? He has always been one of the most loyal people I know, and yet he is her greatest defender. He has to know about her past; M couldn't have simply dumped her on him.”

“It wasn't M's idea for her employment James, it was Major Boothroyd's. After tonight's little fiasco I finally had a baseline to search; it wasn't easy but I found the paperwork detailing her mission, which only listed her as 'Resource X', which featured 004 as the one to take her in. 004 couldn't take her in any kind of fight; Cassie's training enabled her to be faster and stronger than Scarlet, which is quite possibly why there is such animosity between the two. The way they took her in was by MI6 threatening to launch a missile near the village where most of her family was at the time. She relented and MI6 took her in. This was about two weeks after you went off the grid James, otherwise you probably would have been the one to take her in. MI6 tried for a month and a half to break her and make her confess to some non-existent crime when all of a sudden Major Boothroyd is sending petition after petition to have a young lady instated as his right-hand that would eventually become his successor. When I found out that tidbit, I looked deeper and found this message; it had no true destination, except to one who could and would help.” Silva pulled out a slip of paper that had only three words on it; 'PLEASE HELP ME'.

“How did she send that from inside MI6? There are power restrictive devices built right into the place and I doubt someone would lend her their hand-held, let alone a laptop.” James pointed out as he looked at the message. Silva gave a contemplative look before he stated his opinion.
“There is a rumour going around the underworld that if a technopath, or someone with a similar ability, is strong enough, they can essentially sort of... write themselves into the program which allows their own abilities to work while others do not. It doesn't happen right away, it can take anywhere from months to almost a year to interface with the technology, but there it is. That is why people fear technopaths as much as telepaths and telekinetics; you can never know just how strong they really are because they are the easiest abilities to hide once you get a handle on them.”

“So she somehow manages to write herself into the program, send out an S.O.S. to Major Boothroyd who starts petitioning to have her made his assistant and he does this believing she might actually be a terrorist?” Alec asked, looking skeptic, only for James to think and say,

“Don't forget Alec; Q has always been a strong judge of character. If he met with her, talked with her, he might believe her as the other 00's, apart from Charles and Scarlet, do. But I wonder if it was his idea or M's to make her a field agent as well as future Quartermaster?”

“It may have been Q's; if the government knew about how she came to be there they might-”

“It was the government who overruled M and brought Cassandra Knight into existence.” Silva interrupted, causing both agents to look at him.

“As soon as the first petitions started being issued, someone inside the government gave them to everyone connected in any way with MI6, convincing them of the idea to give her a job. Apparently this person approached even the prime minister and was getting ready to approach someone from the royal line, it doesn't say who, when the prime minister agreed and volunteered the idea of her being used as a field agent. But whoever helped her with the ministry business is rather high up on their own and simply wanted to bolster their ranks before fighting for Cassandra. Inside MI6, she has Major Boothroyd and about 70% of the 00's on her side, and on the outside she has someone politically powerful.” James and Alec could hardly believe it; they had a few answers, but at least twenty had popped up to take their place.

“Do you think the attack she was talking about was real? And how she was able to stop it?” Alec asked, causing Silva to laugh a little and say,

“Oh I can tell you she was not lying; it was my attack she stopped. I came to that realization when I launched my test for her on MI6 and I saw her style, though it was confirmed when both her and 004 relayed how she came to be here. Needless to say, as I am the reason this beautiful ocelot was captured I am about to make missions for 004 and 001 very difficult whilst making sure she looks wonderful, though the reports may shine a bit brighter when she is paired with the two of you. The same will happen to the new 005 if he turns out to be of the same calibre as the last one.” Silva told them and whilst they wanted to smack Silva for putting Cassie in this situation, they had to also ask,
“Can you arrange it so that one of your men gets chosen? It would be a relief to know that when she has to be paired with the new 005, it was someone that understood that if anything happened to Cassie, we would be looking for another new 005.” Silva looked at both men before replying,

“First of all, they are your men as well, secondly, I can make sure that one or two are up for nomination, but M and a few others are the ones who make the decision, all we can do is make sure our men look best, which of course they will.” Silva had no doubt in their men's capabilities, and they would be sufficiently warned about what would happen if anything happened to the little treasure who had a machine helping her breathe right now. After all, it was his fault this little ocelot was now caged, putting her under his protection, and, as seen through his two little lovers sitting in front of him, he took good care of those that were under his protection. They all turned their attention to Zumi as she came into the living room and retrieved more water bottles for when her mistress woke up. Upon seeing the three men still up, Zumi whined whilst looking back where she came from.

“Don't worry Zumi, if you want to roam at night we wont stop you, though if you or Rai need to use the bathroom, please go on the newspapers.” Zumi looked a little offended at that as if to say 'as if I were a pup who couldn't control my own bladder, the nerve!' before looking nervous again.

“Why does she keep acting so nervous?” Alec asked James, hoping he could read the dogs mind, but he shook his head.

“My ability only works on people, not on lower life forms.” As soon as he said that, Zumi huffed as though offended, got the water bottles and left.

“You may want to apologize to that pooch in the morning; or have you forgotten what happened when Wilson insulted her friends?”

“To be fair, he didn't insult them, he threatened them. But, just to be on the safe side, I'll hide behind Alec.” The other two men chuckled at the mental image. Though that did have Alec thinking about something else.

“Why does she seem more comfortable around me? Does it have to do with James' record?”

“I doubt that is it; your own record, before you were suspected, stated you were rather patriotic; case in point, your memorable line, 'For England'. And it can't be the womanizing; if it was that, I think being in his presence would be something highly distasteful to her. No, I'm afraid that is simply
another thing you will have to hope will be answered in time.” James then had a sudden flash of inspiration; Corvus.

“Her familiar is a bird and the Ziz, once the feather-brain tells me how to do it, allows me to control birds; what if the flinch wasn't her own, but Corvus reacting to someone who could try and make him turn on his partner? I'm not a hundred percent sure if that could work at all but what if it was?” Alec and Silva both admitted that that did seem highly likely.

“I will have to look up familiars and see what I can dig up. In the meantime, as I said, help her see that the two of you are her allies, preferably her friends and I will do my best to get one of our men on the inside. I had thought that that would just be the two of you but we can't afford to put Cassie in danger again because of some patriotic nitwit.” Both men chuckled as they got up, ready to head to bed; tomorrow was going to be interesting to say the least. Silva got up and kissed James before saying

“Adiós mi amor.” Then turned to Alec, kissing him and said,

“Proshchay moya lyubov’.” Silva then entered Cassie's room, took her pulse and found that she was now breathing on her own, so he took the mask off and watched as she rolled onto her stomach. He petted her hair and she leaned up into the touch. 'Poor child, you are so desperate for affection that you accept it from a stranger, a very dangerous thing to do.' Aloud he whispered as he kissed her cheek,

"Go dtí go gcasfar le chéile sinn arís mo tigress beag.” He then vanished. James and Alec both looked at her, sighed and went to bed.

A/N: I need help with my other story, Finding Something Better, I know where I want to go, but I'm having trouble getting there. I have tried writing that damn chapter 3 times and it keeps coming out wrong. If anyone is reading this story, and I hope someone is, can you take a look at that story and give me some advice? My fans are getting angsty. Before I forget, translations!

A diós mi amor – Spanish for Farewell my love

Proshchay moya lyubov’ – Russian for Farewell my love

Go dtí go gcasfar le chéile sinn arís mo tigress beag – Irish for Until we meet again my little tigress
New places, Thunderball, Samhain and New Faces

Chapter Summary

Cassie learns some things about her maternal family, Thunderball and Samhain happen, and a new 005 is finally brought in.

Chapter 5

When Cassie came around the next morning, she felt better than she had in months, even if she did down the water bottles that Matches and Zumi had gathered for her. Looking around, she had a moment of panic as she didn't recognize where she was until yesterday came flooding back to her but then she grew worried for a different reason; what would M do? Would Major Boothroyd get into real trouble for being the one who had recommended her for his protégé and eventual successor? Would they lock her up in a cage again?

/ Calm down little one; Wilson attacked you, not the other way around. You were defending yourself, and besides which, you aren't the one who actually killed him; that was Joanna and Bond. / Cassie calmed as she thought about the whole thing logically; it was true, she had been the one attacked, and she had given him multiple chances to stand down, and when her life appeared to be in immediate danger, Joanna sought to protect her the best way she knew how and James probably only meant to incapacitate Wilson and was over-enthusiastic. (Cassie, of course, had no way of knowing that the other 00s were all ecstatic that Wilson was gone and they could hopefully get someone less obnoxious. Though they all, save Charles and Scarlet, regretted Cassie had to be so badly hurt in the process.) Cassie heard her stomach rumble and had to admit she was looking forward to something other than the high in nutrient low in flavor slop they gave her and her friends. It had also been a long time since she had cooked for someone, even though she actually really enjoyed it. She got up, checked the fridge and had to admit she wasn't all that surprised that there was hardly anything in the fridge; she assumed that most agents only bought things for a few days at a time since you never knew when you would be called for a mission. It didn't take her long to unwrap her arm, which had fully healed over night, pull on one of Alec's hoodies, re-size a pair of James' pants for her slim body and head out with Rai and Zumi though she could tell Corvus was keeping an eye out from above. After she tricked an ATM with her powers, she got plenty of ingredients for a large breakfast since she was quite certain that neither male had had dinner after looking after her.

When she got back, she immediately started making a lot of the dishes she had learned in her travels. She did some basic things like eggs, bacon and pancakes, then started on stuff like kippers, some syrniiki (cottage cheese dumplings) for Alec, some eggs Benedict for herself and some other things like strudel, roti john (omelette sandwich with minced meat (chicken or mutton), onion, egg, tomato-chili sauce and a baguette-type loaf from Singapore and Malaysia), hash browns, cinnamon rolls and got some fried cheese ready for frying as well as a lovely quiche.
“Are you making breakfast for the whole floor or are you that hungry?” James asked as he looked at all that Cassie had done. Alec had a gentle smile on his face to make sure Cassie knew they were teasing her and not making fun of her.

“I know the two of you did not have dinner last night so I thought about things to make you for thanking you for looking after me last night. Then, before I knew what had happened, I had made quite a bit of food.” Cassie said as she passed the two men plates. Alec made sure to grab one for her as well.

“So, what would you like?” Cassie then motioned towards the plethora of food she had done. When James noticed the unusual eggs that reminded him of eggs Benedict, he had to ask,

“What are those?”

“My version of eggs Benedict; see, I don't like English muffins or ham so I replaced the muffin with a portabello mushroom top and the ham with some chorizo and a little-cooked spinach. The people I've made them for in the past often tell me that it's a good hangover remedy. Not that I'd know; my abilities plus my uncles made sure that it would take a lot to get me drunk.” Alec then bit into one of the syrniki and moaned at the flavor and the rush of memories it brought back.

“What is Alec having an orgasm from?” James asked, causing Cassie to laugh as Alec flipped him the bird and went back to loading his plate.

“Syrniki; it's a cottage cheese dumpling that is often served as a breakfast food in Russia. I learned how to make lots of different kinds of food during my travels and that one always stuck with me since it is so simple.” Cassie explained as she too loaded her plate, noting that James and Alec each took one of her eggs Benedict, as well as a fair amount of the kippers, though she noticed Alec seemed to hog the syrniki, a slice each of the roti john, and a lot of other things. She noticed the two men grab their plates, Alec grabbing the orange juice glasses with his telekinesis, and they took their stuff into the living room. As James went to grab the remote, Alec swiped it.

“We are not watching the boring news while eating from the lovely buffet Cassie made us. It may be a bit early but I'm sure there is a good movie on.” Alec started channel surfing whilst munching on his dumplings and Cassie and James ate the fried cheese. When Cassie's eyes noticed a title that had a creature's name, she asked,

“What's that?”
“Tarantula? A movie from the 50s deals with a scientist in the desert whose experiments lead to a
tarantula growing 100 feet high or something. Not bad really, but the score is amazing, say what you
will about other studios and their monsters, but Universal always had the best scores for their
movies.”

“Only if you like corn; there's a point you can actually see them poke the insect to get it to mo-”

“Arachnida.” Cassie corrected as she ate her quiche.

“Pardon?”

“The bug in question is a tarantula, an arachnid, quite likely from the family Theraphosidae, therefore
not an insect. Arthropod is a good, generic term to use if you're not certain what it is as it covers all
insects, arachnids, myriapods, and crustaceans. Just remember, all insects are bugs, but not all bugs
are insects, so if you don't know exactly what it is, just say bug.” Cassie finished her quiche slice and
moved onto her pancakes, oblivious to the way both men were looking at her; apparently, when she
wanted to eat, she could really pack it away.

“Well James, there's your lesson for the day, and I think we should let Cassie see if she likes the
movie.”

“Alec she is not going to-”

“Cassie, do you promise to watch this with an open mind, keeping in mind that it was made in the
50s, when not much was known about atomic energy or the fact that, as a B-movie, it won't have the
greatest special effects, and they made do with what they had?” Alec over-rid James and looked
square at Cassie, who simply replied,

“Yes.”

“Motion carried, we're watching the movie, James, if you find it unbearable at any point in time you
can do the dishes whilst Cassie and I enjoy the movie,” Alec said with a smirk as the movie started
and both men tried Cassie's version of eggs Benedict, only to moan at the flavor; damn but that girl
could cook.

“I can do the dishes, I don't mind,” Cassie said but both men shook their heads; it was a time-
honored rule in their lives, he who cooks, shall not clean. The three watched the movie until James couldn't handle it anymore and got up to do the dishes. He was unnerved by the fact that even a logic oriented girl like Cassie, seemed to be enjoying it. Just what he needed; a second person who enjoyed those campy films from America. He and Alec had both planned on convincing her to stay with them, and after breakfast, it was guaranteed. When it was over, Cassie and Alec came back into the kitchen with their dishes discussing the movie.

“I have never seen a film with Clint Eastwood, but I've heard he's really good, as an actor, producer, and director. That was really him at the end as the leader of the air squadron?”

“Yup, he also had a small scene in the beginning of Revenge of the Creature; I'll show you the trilogy one day. You'd be surprised how many actors got their start in either horror or sci-fi films. For example, if you watch Them! closely enough, you can see a young Leonard Nimoy, you know who he is, right?” Alec asked and Cassie nodded as she put the leftovers away in some containers she found; she was really good at ferreting things that other people had forgotten about.

“Whilst in America, I saw a lot of Star Trek conventions and I sometimes found books that others had thrown away. I read them to pass time between studies; it was nice not having my great-grandfather hitting my shoulder for reading ‘science fiction dribble’ as he called it.” Both men had to stop themselves from growling; this great-grandfather of hers was becoming a real pain in their sides without having even met the man, and Alec figured he was the one who had taught Cassie to be so negative about herself.

“Bond, why are you doing the dishes by hand when you've got a dishwasher?” Cassie asked and James sighed.

“One, please call me James, secondly, Alec broke it last month.”

“Did not!”

“Why don't one of you fix it? Or, I thought you could call somebody to do these things?”

“We can take apart guns and bombs and put them back together perfectly but what we can't do is fix a dishwasher. And if we called somebody, we have no way of knowing if they are the real deal or plants.” Alec explained, flicking some dishwater at James who was about to retaliate when Cassie left the room and came back with a tool box and Matches sitting on her shoulder. Before either man could stop her, she sitting on the floor and putting her hand on the washer and asked,
“Can you tell me what's wrong?” Both men were about to ask who she was talking to, when Silva mumbled /Technopath/ to them and both men had to hide their smiles as they remember Silva actually liked to sleep in on the odd nights he fell asleep without sleeping pills or the like. As they snap out of that thinking, Cassie has already started fixing the machine.

“It says that you two always yank its mouth open and then slam it shut, and the last time Alec did it, a fork got jammed in somewhere and it's been hoping that one of you would at least call a repair man, as it's been in pain for the last month because of it. It also has a screw loose thanks to your mishandling, and if I hadn't caught it now, in another week it would be hauled off to a scrap yard.” Cassie said as she used a pair of pliers to grab the fork before asking,

“3/4 wrench please.” James just handed the first wrench he saw.

“That's a 5/8, I thought it was mandatory for men to know tools,” Cassie said as Matches handed her the right wrench. Before James could retort, Alec asked,

“I thought machines actually did have genders, just people couldn't tell.”

“Actually, that's science fiction; machines like washers and fridges don't have genders, they are gender neutral, though it sometimes gives off a feeling as either feminine or masculine, but as no gender is put into its mind, they see themselves as being above gender identities. Though there are machines that have genders, but they have to be made with one in mind.”

“So when a guy rebuilds a car from scraps and manages to make it look new, and calls it his 'baby'-” Alec theorized.

“Then the car has a gender, most turn out female for some reason, though I have come across a few male cars. And it's not just about remaking it, it's about taking care of it; automobiles and other machines can feel emotions, so when it's taken care of, it responds to those emotions. When I was in Canada, there was a man who loved his car dearly, took the greatest of care with it, unfortunately, he also had a competitive streak and liked to show off his 'baby'. One time, he entered a drag race with someone whom we later found out had tampered with the car's breaks. The driver went to turn but with the breaks malfunctioning lost control and would have slammed into a tree, but the car threw open her door and flung him to safety. She was wrecked beyond repair, but I helped him scavenge what parts we could and he set to working on her again, bringing some of the love of the car that saved him to his new car.” Cassie explained as she finished fixing the dishwasher. As she finished, James' phone ringed.

“That is M; she wants to talk to all three of us,” Cassie told them before James even grabbed his
phone and just like that, Cassie's good mood and high spirits went straight down, so Alec grabbed her shoulders and made her look into his eyes.

“No matter what happens, we will make sure that you won't be going to any kind of cell, OK? Emily asked you to trust us for 24 hours; we still have like 14 hours of trust left.” Cassie nodded, though the fear did not entirely leave her face. The three all got ready, with James hooking Rai and Zumi on their leashes, Alec put Matches on his shoulder and Cassie groomed Corvus and kissed his head before telling him to fly. James drove them back to MI6, with Alec constantly reassuring Cassie, who they noticed kept turning the traffic lights red as they neared them.

“You realize that the longer it takes us to get there, the worse your anxiety is going to get? It's best to just get this over with; think of it like ripping off a band-aid.” James pointed out and Cassie mumbled 'sorry' before fixing the lights. Alec rubbed her shoulder to try and help her relax. Tanner was waiting for them as they pulled up.

“The lights against you?”

“You could say that,” Alec said as he helped Cassie out of the car. They were quiet as they walked up to M's office. One of M's assistants came over and took the leashes for Rai and Zumi, as well as gently picking Matches up. Cassie wanted to protest, but one of the people in attendance was Moneypenny, and James trusted her. She would have preferred them being with Major Boothroyd, but she trusted James for a few more hours so she resigned herself. When they stepped into M's office, M was there, along with two men whose presence screamed 'solicitors' and an Indian man who, when he saw Cassie, smiled reassuringly at her.

“Mr. Bond, Mr. Trevelyan, thank you for bringing Miss. Knight here so promptly. As the two of you arrived near the end of the most recent altercation, you will be serving as witness' to Mr. Wilson's character, state of mind that sort of thing. I am Jeremy Gosnold, and this is Harold Whitelocke, Mr. Whitelocke is here to make sure Miss. Knight is properly represented in case any criminal charges should pop up.”

“Wait, so Mr. Whitelocke is here to protect me? Not prosecute me?” Cassie asked as the three seated in front of M's desk.

“I come to praise Caesar, not bury him. I assure you, Miss. Knight, the law certainly appears to be on your side, I am here to make sure my worthy associate does not in any way railroad you. Also, this is Mr. Jayesh Jacobi, who has the special ability of lie detecting. He will make sure that everyone here tells the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Shall we get started? Mr. Trevelyan, you are the eldest agent in the room, so I'll talk to you first, Mr. Bond, you can talk to Mr. Gosnold, and Miss. Knight, if you wish, you can talk to Mr. Jacobi, as he is indeed a legal assistant. Take heed that any lie told, will be heard and recorded by Mr. Jacobi, even if you whisper it, so take note to say only the
truth to us. Let us begin.” The three all talked to one of the three solicitors, and by the end of it, the solicitors all agreed that Cassie was in no way in the wrong and no criminal charges would be placed.

“I just have one last question for Miss. Knight; we have gone over the footage and your pet bird is not seen anywhere on film, so how did he get into the locked room with you and Mr. Wilson?” Mr. Gosnold asked and Cassie replied,

“Corvus is not my pet bird, he is my familiar, and as such has certain abilities of his own, one of which is teleportation in case I am in danger. The power restrictive devices are inside the room after all, not outside.”

“But if that were indeed the case, how could he teleport into the room at all? As you say, the devices are inside, so I don't see how he could have completed the 'conduit' as it were.”

“That is easily explained; Corvus is not a post-human, he became a magical creature when he and I bonded. The devices only shut down genetic post-human abilities by syncing the machines with the genetic code, which is simple as, whether the ability is strong or weak, the code sequence is the same, not ones given by magic.” That quickly got everyone's attention, including Silva's.

“Are you telling me that there are post-humans out there who can override the system?” M asked sharply, causing Cassie to flinch before responding,

“Just because someone has powers does not automatically label them as post-human. An easy example is the Marvel character Juggernaut; a being that developed immense physical strength as well as endurance and invulnerability, but he was not a mutant. He got his powers from the Gem of Cyttorak. The same can be said for a number of people around this world; there are ancient artifacts that allow a person to gain certain powers and abilities. Unless you were born with the magic, then it is the artifacts and not the person you must neutralize, otherwise they will continue to draw on the power of the item. Corvus used the magical powers he received when he bonded with a magical, i.e. me, to come to my aid. My powers were cut off, but as the bond was magical and not genetic, Corvus could come to me.”

“And can all magicals create such bonds?” Mr. Whitelocke asked.

“Not all, and abilities often vary. I once met a warlock who had a large python as a familiar and the bond amplified the snakes natural hypnotic abilities to control others. Most of the time, familiars simply act as guides for us when we must reach into the astral plane for guidance. Corvus has only ever displayed his teleportation abilities when I am in extreme danger or when I am in the astral plane
and there, a whole different set of rules applies. The teleportation even has to do with the legends surrounding crows, as crows are seen as emissaries of the dead, requiring them being able to move between the worlds. In a way, the bond of familiar sort of enhances the animal's natural gifts.” James, Alec, and everyone else was shocked; here they were, thinking Earth had animals, humans, and post-humans, and it turns out there were those who were simply humans powered up be magic!

“Is there any way to block these people?” M asked

“It's much more difficult as you have to set the device to the frequency of the object in question and different artifacts give off different frequencies. And to try a broad range spectrum means that you are not putting as strong a grip on certain frequencies. Certainly, the lower level devices would be inhibited, but the higher level ones, there is virtually no defense against them, unless you want to call a priest in here bi-weekly.”

“Why a priest?” Mr. Gosnold asked.

“Because while there are many objects blessed by magic, and are therefore only harmful if their owner wishes to do harm, there are also objects that grant their master power through dark means; destruction of innocence, blood unwillingly spilled prophecies in which someone dies that sort of thing. These objects were not blessed by magic, but by an evil force, a force that Christians call Satan.” One of the solicitors couldn't help but laugh until M silenced him with a glare.

“You mean there really is a Devil?” Mr. Whitelocke asked, glaring at his colleague.

“Not a Devil the way you're thinking, with horns, a forked tail, and a pitchfork, as I said that's what Christians call it. To them, it is the personification of evil, but it can also be called Shaitan, Iblis, Māra, and many others. Satan is a convenient word for this force as it means opposer or the adversary, and so this force is the opposer of good, it is its adversary. This evil force exists quite strongly in this world and to give itself a greater foothold, sometimes it curses objects. These objects can either corrupt a person, or they can make an already evil person terribly dangerous. Unlike dark objects, which can be used for good if you are strong enough to resist it's extreme emotions, these objects can do no good and nothing good can come of them. Kind of like the difference between dark magic and black magic; dark magic feeds more heavily on negative energy which is simply another facet of nature, but black magic feeds on unnatural forces that few can ever really control.”

“So what do you do when you find these objects? Destroy them?” Mr. Jacobi asked.

“No, because nine times out of ten that just destroys the vessel, not the entity; so long as these objects are left alone, they are dormant, but once they are touched by anyone, they start feeding on their hate,
their fear, their pain, their insecurities, everything. Sometimes it's simply best to keep the genie in the bottle you have, rather than it finding something else and you have to hunt it down all over again.”

“Thank you very much for this highly informative lesson, Ms. Knight. Now, you don't have to stay in this office as I discuss things with M, but I would appreciate it if you remained in the building.” Mr. Whitelocke informed them and Cassie was about to ask what things when M said,

“I did not tell security to treat her as shabbily as they did. Whilst we were still uncertain of her loyalties, her assistance on the previous missions concerning her was invaluable and therefore awarded her some comfort. That security did not heed this is not my fault.” James and Alec both wanted to interfere but Whitelocke was already on it.

“It never once occurred to you to go and check on her and her living conditions? She was originally branded as an enemy of the crown, don't you think some of the guards would use that as an excuse to torture her? And I don't think I'm over-exaggerating when I say torture; first, she would be awoken at 6 am via a drug, thrown into a cold shower, she would then be given some kind of nutrient rich slop that most wouldn't feed to a condemned man, then she worked for hours on end, the only thing resembling lunch was what Major Boothroyd or one the other agents interested enough to give a damn gave her, then, around one in the morning she would be taken back to her cell, her companions forced into their own cages for the night, handcuffed to her cot, given another drug and left in a drugged sleep where she was quite unaware of her surroundings until the cycle would start all over again the next day.” James and Alec were both less than thrilled at Cassie's schedule and Silva wasn't pleased either; that reminded him a bit of his own captivity. Cassie stood up and left the office, with James and Alec following her. The two heard Whitelocke say,

“The way I see it, if you had treated Miss Knight like a person instead of a criminal, Wilson wouldn't have tried to kill her; he saw it as killing a traitor, why would he be reprimanded?” As Moneypenny closed the door behind them. Cassie took the leashes for Rai and Zumi and they headed down for Q branch. As the lift doors closed, Alec noticed Cassie's tight-lipped look. Alec touched her hand and finally she spoke.

“Everyone keeps calling me a traitor; I was never loyal to the empire that destroyed my family; I am a loyal servant of magic, nothing more, nothing less. And even there I have betrayed her secrets.”

“The familiars' bit? You had to answer that or it would have been extremely suspicious. I understand that magic has it-her secrets, but I'm also sure she wouldn't want one of her servants locked up in a cage.” James pointed out.

“I don't know if you are honestly trying to comfort me or mock me but it's the first time since I came here that someone apart from Major Boothroyd has been relatively respective of my religious beliefs. That's the problem with being around so many Christians and Catholics and other religions like them;
you try to talk about your religion and they either call it satanic worship or they laugh at it. And it can be a little hurtful when an important holiday is coming up and I can't even celebrate it.” James racked his brain until it hit him; tomorrow was October 1st.

“You mean Halloween?” James did not need the flick to his head; Cassie's eyes flashing was enough.

“I do not mean that disrespectful mockery of my religion. It is called Samhain, not that it matters as I won't be able to honor it this year.”

“Why not?” Alec asked, making sure James couldn't insult her... again.

“I need a place to worship these holidays, usually my home. I was taken just before Beltane, so I was unable to honor that day, and consequently I have been unable to honor Litha, Lughnasadh, and I just missed Mabon. And I shall miss Samhain as well and that is one of the most important holidays, being our new year, as well as being a personal favorite.”

“Why can't you celebrate it at our apartment? I understand you don't see it as your home, but Alec and I have no problem with you honoring your religious beliefs at our place. We'll even help you set up if we can or at least clean up afterwards.” Cassie look at him, shocked as they stepped out of the lift.

“You would let me perform a pagan ritual in your home? A ritual that could act against your own religious beliefs?”

“I wouldn't go that far; James and I don't believe in higher powers but we are not about to mock you for your beliefs. Tell us what you need, and we'll get it for you.” Alec explained and Cassie was thoroughly stunned; even her own family, apart from Matteo, had had trouble understanding her beliefs. Whilst no one was around, Cassie gave each a quick peck on the cheek; her sign of affection and gratitude. When they appeared in Q-branch, everyone, even the stubborn older ones came over and started asking her if she was alright. James and Alec saw this as a positive; considering the rumor mill of MI6, they all must have heard why Wilson attacked her but instead of viewing her as a threat, they all saw her as the person they had come to know the last couple of months.

Q was furious at M for the way Cassie had been treated but he was equally furious about how he had not noticed Cassie was being abused. Cassie tried pointing out that in a building full of spies, assassins and other people whose lives depended on being able to at least read basic body language, no one had figured out she was being abused. That of course, made everyone feel pretty lousy. They continued talking for a while, with Q being very happy that the other 00's were helping Cassie, going
so far as to let her stay with them and let her celebrate her religion in peace. That proved to be something of a moot point when Whitelocke came down and informed them that M was willing to provide proper lodgings for Cassie, and she could choose them, they just had to be close to headquarters in case of emergencies. James and Alec weren't thrilled as they wanted Cassie to stay close to them but, as she pointed out, Rai and Zumi needed a lot of space to roam and Matches needed a warm room. Whilst she liked hot temperatures, it wasn't fair to Rai, Zumi or Corvus who weren't as big fans. So yes, she was thankful for their hospitality, but she couldn't stay there indefinitely with such a variety of animals with different needs. James and Alec both had another mission coming up in two days but Cassie would be allowed to stay at their apartment and Tanner, Moneypenny and Q would help her find an apartment of her own.

*Three Days Later*

James and Alec had left just yesterday but Cassie seemed to be a little depressed, whilst she was used to being on her own, having two roommates gave her some sort of comfort. She was also not having much luck in finding an apartment; they were either too small or not close enough to a park, and those that fit that criteria were too far from headquarters for M's liking. She was about to settle on one that, whilst no true park, it did have a nice rooftop that she could walk the dogs around and it was nicely sized when suddenly her phone rang.

“Hello?”

“Miss. Knight? This is Mr. Whitelocke again, phoning on behalf of my employer, Mr. Whithers. He was your mother's solicitor and has things to discuss with you. Mainly your inheritance.”

“My mother's solicitor? My inheritance? I'm afraid I don't understand.”

“There is an opening today at three, will you be able to attend? If not, there is another opening tomorrow at ten.”

“One moment please.” Cassie put her hand on the receiving end of the phone before turning to Q, who was tinkering with something.

“Major, can you come with me to a solicitor at 3? They're saying something about an inheritance that my mother left me.”

“Yes, I believe we can 'swing' that. Tell them that we shall be there promptly at three.” Cassie
nodded and relayed the information to Whitelocke who agreed to have things set up for them. They left at two, arriving at the firm of Whithers, Reid, and Hall around a quarter to three. As they came up the lift and stepped onto the floor for the senior most partner, Chester Whithers, they saw a secretary waiting for them.

“Good afternoon Miss. Knight, Major Boothroyd. Mr. Whithers will be with you in a moment, would you care for sherry and biscuits whilst you wait?” Cassie looked at Q, who looked equally surprised at his name being mentioned.

“No apologies necessary Mr. Whithers, we arrived just moments ago and your secretary has offered us refreshments in the way of sherry and biscuits.” Major Boothroyd explained as he and Cassandra walked in.

“Yes, a practice that this firm almost stopped if it had not been for Melanie Jaeger, your mother Cassandra. She so loved talking business with me over sherry and biscuits, most ladies would rather have tea but your mother did not much care for tea. Of course, when one of the firm's biggest clients requests something, demands really but your mother had a way of phrasing her demands as requests, you do everything in your power to accommodate them.” Cassie paused as she heard her family name; it had been so long as her great-grandfather had refused to acknowledge the name and, in an effort to appease him, everyone called her Collins, like her grandparents. And as Whithers spoke, Cassie remembered her mother talking to people and she always did have sherry and biscuits ready.

“So, now that I have passed the first test, will you allow me to call you by the name the letter assigned you?” That got both of their attention.

“I beg your pardon?” Cassie was reaching for the knife hidden up her sleeve whilst Q prepared the flash matrix in his watch.
“There is no need for alarm; your mother's instructions were quite specific in that I was to call you today and inform you that her will left you an inheritance. To assure you that it was her will and not some sort of trap, I was to mention something that would trigger a memory only the real Melanie Jaeger would have done. Being her solicitor, I figured that something her associates and you would know would be the sherry and biscuits. I have the letter if you wish to read it, Erika.” Cassie looked sharply at him as he handed her the letter. She looked at it, seeing that her mother had taken the care to write the letter in German, not English, another sure sign it was her mother, not an imposter. It was addressed to Whithers, explaining that her will was not to be read until her daughter came back to England, even though it was against her will. There would be nothing he could do to get her her freedom, so instead, he was to ensure one of his best solicitors would be ready to arrange better living conditions for her, and then on October 3rd, to avoid suspicion, he was to bring up that her mother had left her,

“She left me what?!” A couple days later found Cassie and her companions settled quite comfortably in one of the penthouses her mother had left her, in the way of very fancy apartment buildings that her maternal grandparents had built many years ago. She was just dozing off in her bed when her senses told her that someone new was in her apartment, and they had not used the front door. She got up out of bed, reached for a poker from the fireplace and walked out of the room. She checked the study, found no one in there so, with Zumi beside her and Rai keeping an eye on the balcony attached to her room, she waited in the foyer across from the living/game room. As she heard someone coming, she counted to ten and, upon feeling the presence next to her swung the poker and hit the person in the stomach. As the person doubled over, she brought the poker down again, only for it to be caught by a second person.

“She has quite the swing, doesn't she, James?” Upon hearing the voice, Cassie suddenly ignited a fireball.

“Bond?! Trevelyan?! What are you two idiots doing in my apartment?! And why did you not knock or at least use the front door like normal people?” Cassie had a good idea what they were doing there as she caught sight of Alec's bloody face and James' slashed shoulder. She might have felt sorry about aggravating any injuries he had, but it could have been avoided if they had used the front door.

“I take it you play cricket? Or is golf more your game?” James wheezed before yelping as she grabbed his ear and dragged him over to the peninsula in her kitchen. Alec followed, chuckling behind his hand as he sat next to his boyfriend. She ducked down and brought up an extensive first aid kit, pulling out iodine, cotton, bandages as well as a needle and some stitching wire.

“If the two of you had acted like normal people and come through the front door I would have healed you by now with my magic,” Cassie said as she cleaned up Alec first, just to make sure his wounds, being head wounds, were more flash than substance. Besides which, she put a stasis charm on Bond's shoulder; she was peeved at him but she didn't want him to get an infection.
“I don't think we would have gotten past the lobby looking like this, do you?” Before Cassie could respond, she heard her lock being hurriedly unlocked, right before a petite man came rushing in, brandishing of all things, an umbrella and wearing an old style of nightgown.

“Miss. Jaeger! Miss. Jaeger! Are you alright?!” Cassie face-palmed as she answered,

“I'm in the kitchen, Antoine. What are you doing here and the better question; what in the name of sanity are you wearing?” The man, Antoine, upon noticing his attire started apologizing in French, until another man, this one tall in stature, broad in the shoulder (which was not covered by a shirt) and had short, cropped blonde hair came in and dropped a dressing gown on his head.

“There you go prude; now you can cover up in front of Fraulein Erika. And don't open that umbrella indoors; it's bad luck. Are you alright Fraulein? Your alarm company called us informing us that there had been a break-in but, as your phones still haven't been hooked up, they called us to make sure you were alright. At the mention of a break-in, the prude here grabbed the nearest thing and went running up the stairs to your apartment.” The man appeared to be German and whilst the other man looked unable to swat a fly, this one looked capable of wrestling a grizzly bear.

“I'm fine Otto; a couple of my friends were out of town when I got my apartment but, unlike sane people, they couldn't wait until morning to see it.”

“I see, and did they stop off at a... how you say... rumble?... before coming here?” Antoine asked as he tied the sash on his gown.

“They like bars,” Cassie explained only for Otto to make an odd gesture.

“No need to explain Fraulein, your mother had odd associates as well, though they always used the front door as, if they had awoken and scared you, your mother would have hung them by their intestines as they choked on their balls. If you require us, there is a bell rope in your room that will alert us; your mother may have been confident in her abilities, but worried about any accidents requiring assistance. Goodnight Fraulein, come along prude.” Otto said as he turned around and left, Antoine muttering behind him.

“So, Erika Jaeger? That's the name you gave them instead of Cassandra Knight?” Alec asked only for Cassie to pause.

“Actually, that is the name my mother gave me. Jaeger is my family name as my father decided to be
unusual and take my mother's name instead of the other way around.” Cassie explained as she went about stitching up James' shoulder.

“So your real name is Erika Jaeger?” James asked only to be jabbed.

“That is the name my mother gave me, so unless I give you permission, you are to still call me Cassie. Do I make myself clear Bond?” Cassie looked ready to tear his arm further open so he simply nodded. Alec noted that with this name Silva might have a bit more to go on, but he doubted it. That was when he noticed the mantle over the fireplace had some picture frames. He called a couple over with his power and looked at them. One of them just had to be Cassie's parents; the woman in the frame had raven black hair unlike Cassie's dark brown, but the bone structure and smile were all Cassie and as for the man, he had flaming red hair, a good solid build, unlike Cassie's seemingly delicate frame, but the green eyes sparkling with pride as he held his beautiful wife and daughter were again all Cassie. He looked at the second picture and it appeared to be an old wedding photo, though this one was in black and white rather than color, he could almost see the flaming red hair of both the newlyweds, though the woman's appeared to be a darker shade of red, and the features that combined to make the young handsome man in the first photo meant that these were Cassie's paternal grandparents. From the final picture, this one proved to be even older than the one set of grandparents; the man appeared to have blonde hair with a military posture and looked a rather grim fellow with a large scar that ran across her face, but the small smile that hid on his face let those keen enough to see he was happy to be with the woman next to him. The woman was gorgeous, even if she did appear to be at least ten years younger than the man standing next to her, with long black hair, a complexion that appeared even paler in the gray scale photo but what was most shocking was that she appeared to have only one leg.

“The picture you are currently holding Alec is of my maternal grandparents; my grandmother Colette and my grandfather Dolphus. The other set is my paternal grandparents; my grandmother Cornelia and my grandfather Cornelius though just about everyone called him Conner because he hated being called Cornelius. Don't ask me where Conner came from, I do not know. And the last photo is of my parents, Melanie and Keagan. The story of my maternal grandparents is actually interesting; apparently, my grandfather was a German soldier during the first world war who was stationed in France. There was some kind of attack that left him the only survivor of his platoon; fearing he would be executed for whatever reason, he fled and wound up in my grandmother's village, badly injured. The others, upon realizing he was German, voted to kill him, ranging from refusing him aid, to just downright shooting him. My grandmother pointed out that if they killed him they would be no better than him. So the village decided if she was willing to defend him, she would be the one to look after him, which she did. When he was almost fully recovered, a bomb landed near her cottage and she took a lot of shrapnel in her leg, most of which that village doctor removed but there was simply too much damage so the doctor had to remove it. She had been the town beauty before that but with a leg missing, not to mention she still refused to let anyone kill the German soldier, no one was all that interested anymore. Dolphus felt he owed it to her to return the kindness she had given him so he did as much with security by marrying her. Don't get me wrong, the two had become quite good friends during his recovery and whilst he looked after her that development showed how compatible the two were for each other. After she agreed to marry him she found out that he was apparently some sort of count or duke, though because he was marrying someone outside of the norm for their family, the title passed to his younger brother until his death in the second world war where it reverted back to my grandfather and he passed it to his son from his first marriage.
There isn't much about him in my grandmother's diary except his name, Franz. I'm glad I found it amongst my mother's personal effects, though; I never dreamed I was a quarter Jewish!” James and especially Alec got a pretty good idea what happened to her great-uncle at that little revelation; being Jewish in Germany during the second world war was a very bad thing, noble titles or none.

“So I guess whilst you have terrorist blood from one line from the other you have nobility.”

“Yeah, though you could look at it as ¾ fighters, ¼ compassion. Now, the two of you will heal better in a warm environment, so you better sleep in my room since the other rooms were painted this afternoon and those windows are all open to help them dry. The only room that was not painted doesn't have a fireplace and is between the two drying so you'll be between two sets of open windows with the smell wafting about. Whereas my room is far away from the smell and is already nice and warm from the fireplace.” Both men looked at her as she packed up her first-aid kit.

“That's nice of you but we are not kicking you out of your room.” James protested.

“You are not kicking me out of my room as the thing has its own sitting room and you are not inconveniencing me as I have always had trouble sleeping in a bed so I more often than not sleep in a hammock.” That made both men pause as they followed her and Zumi back to their room.

“A hammock?”

“Yes, they say it's better for the posture but I don't really give two hoots about that, I just like the swinging motion I get with it, helps to relax me and reminds me of water; I never have trouble sleeping on boats. Are you coming or not?” Both men started moving again and it was just now they noticed Cassie's sleepwear.

“Cassie, do you always sleep in your underwear?” Alec asked and Cassie shrugged before saying, 

“I didn't grow up thinking my body was something to hide away, though I do have a glamor on.”

“Why?” James asked it wasn't to hide any scars as they were all proudly on display.

“What I'm hiding is something personal to me and until I am ready to show you I would ask that you respect this. You may see it in a week, or you may not see it for a year, but I ask you to respect that. Come on now, we have work in a few hours and I would like to try and get a couple hours tonight.”
As Cassie opened the door to her room, Zumi ran over to the door leading to her balcony and pushed a button that allowed Rai to come back in. As the dogs went over to their very plush, and a little posh, pet beds, James and Alec looked around the room. It was indeed very spacious, with its own sitting room that had two chairs and a love seat, a fireplace facing the bed and the bathroom was,

“Cassie, I know you wanted a lot of space, but do you really need an Olympic size bathroom that has both a deep tub and a shower that could fit at least four people?”

“Don't blame me! My grandmother designed these apartments and she apparently felt that the en-suite bathroom for the master suite had to be opulent. This was the only one that was close enough for M's taste but allowed me some seclusion from MI6 and Hyde park isn't too far away. Besides which there is a large enclosed garden on the roof that Matches loves and the dogs can roam around in winter; there is a little section there for more exotic plants and it's practically a mini rain forest! There were two others that I really liked but they were just a smidge too far away.”

“Wait, when you say your grandmother designed these places, you mean-”

“Surely you guys have heard of Jaeger apartment suites? As well as the Jaeger hostels and Jaeger hotels. My grandparents designed them; the apartments are mostly for mid-range and higher people, you may have to pass an extensive entrance exam in order to be allowed in, but it's well worth it. We have complete facilities; fully equipped gyms, salons, hydrotherapy stations, Olympic sized swimming pool, day care for kids, library and a large game room. As for the hostels and hotels, whilst they don't have the exact same facilities, they are still some of the best places to stay in their respective countries. Now come on, I want to try and get some sleep, and so should the two of you, as I heard you will both have another mission to head out for.”

“We just got in!” Alec complained as he helped Cassie set up her hammock.

“Be that as it may, this mission concerns the two of you as word has reached MI6 that an operative of S.P.E.C.T.R.E. has recently died and we want confirmation. S.P.E.C.T.R.E. called him operative Number 6, but you two knew him as Colonel Jacques Bouvar, a man who has taken down two MI6 operatives, so look on the bright side, you two get to spend some time in Paris. Now, I have found that listening to radio programs from the forties helps my insomnia, so if need be I can create a soundproof barrier around myself so you two won't hear me. There are some of... my father's old sleep clothes in his closet that you can use if you so desire. And while we're talking about closets, do you two have any idea why my mother's closet would be practically twice the size of my father's closet?” Cassie asked and the two men chuckled as they thought about how to answer Cassie's question.

“You see Cassie, generally, women tend to have more clothes than men. Dresses for every occasion, shoes for every dress, heaven forbid she wear the same dress twice in two years, let alone in the same
year.” Cassie did not appear to understand what Alec was talking about at all, which didn’t surprise him in the least; from their talks before he and James left they came to the understanding that, after becoming her grandparents’ ward, she had essentially become a farm girl. With that mentality, anything over like ten outfits was seen as foolish and she probably didn’t see the point in having more than three or four pairs of shoes.

“Never mind, if we do have a debriefing in the morning, we should get some sleep, particularly you Cassie, seeing as how your seizures become less frequent and less severe if you have a more orderly sleep schedule.” James said as he shimmied out of his clothes though he left his boxers on.

“Not my fault I’m an insomniac, my brain just won't let me sleep.” Cassie mumbled as she climbed into her bed.

“You know, I think that might be a reason as to why you get your seizures like you do,” Alec said as he too shimmied out of his clothes.

“In what way Alec?” Cassie asked as she set up her programs and James crawled into the bed, though he too looked interested in what his partner had to say.

“Well, when we first met, you mentioned that your mind was something like a super computer right? And your mind is constantly in contact with the world wide web in case you ever need information quickly. So what happens when you leave a computer on for too long? It overheats and shuts down, or needs rebooting and I think that's what the seizures are; your brain rebooting. It would also explain why the seizures come after stressful situations; the computer is already overheated, but instead of letting it rest, you push it even harder, so when the crisis has been averted, your mind activates the seizures, forcing your mind and your body to reboot. That's why when you sleep at least semi-regularly and eat at least semi-regularly, the seizures aren't quite so bad; you are only putting the computer to sleep instead of turning it off, but at least your mind has a chance to cool down.” Alec then crawled into bed beside James.

“An interesting hypothesis, too bad we can't really test it, now both of you, go to sleep. I'm dead tired and I get the feeling that this month will be quite tiring.” Cassie started up her program and tried to relax.

*After the opening scene of Thunderball, James and Alec are at the Shrublands clinic*

James and Alec were slowly coming too; someone, most likely Lippe, had upped the power of the traction machines and almost damaged their spines by killing them. As they came back to their senses, they noticed two things; the controls of the machine were fried and someone was screaming.
“I don't give two hoots about your machines; I want to know why my brother and his boyfriend were hooked into machines, left alone, and then almost killed by said machines!”

“Ma'am, your brother was apparently being a little too forward with his physiotherapist and-”

“And instead of being professional like calling for a male orderly or something along those lines, she put them in a machine and then leaves. them. alone. And don't give me that crock about them hitting the switches; their wrists were bound and had no way of hitting the switch. Unless your facilities are not up to code and therefore do not possess P.R.D.'s, which became a requirement for clinics, police stations, courthouses and hospitals after 1986 when a latent post-human who had been badly burned activated their gravitational manipulation and almost killed the surgical crew attending to them. So which is it? Do you have a physiotherapist guilty of violating policies or is your building not up to code?” Before the owner of the facility could choose to damn an employee or get his place shut down, Alec spoke up.

“Ease up Cassie, there is no need for anybody to get in trouble and no need to shut down the facilities, just let Pat go with a warning OK?” After some discussions, Pat would be given a strict warning, their stay would be comped, and Cassie could stay and take full advantage of their facilities for free.

“You two are too soft; if I found out that the spas in my grandparents hotels were ever left unattended they would be given a pink slip before you could say 'lawsuit.'” James and Alec chuckled as Cassie truly looked like a pit bull ready to attack.

“Just like that? No second chances?” James asked before Cassie stopped and looked at him.

“Do you know what the temperature of a hot tub is?”

“Between 34 and 37 degrees isn't it?”

“Right, and do you know at what temperature your organs start to shut down?” At this question, James shrugged.

“39.4 degrees. A mere 2.4-5.4 degrees increase, one I doubt you would ever notice so you simply stay where you are whilst your organs slowly shut down, you probably won't even realize that you are dying. Do you really think my grandparents' hotels would still be around if my mother and those
she specifically hired hadn't of been hard asses when it came to the gym and spa policies? Hell, if you want to be a volunteer at the day-care you have to pass a background check, psychological testing and you are investigated to the extreme including social media; if you had sex with your students, you are not getting anywhere near the kids of my day-care. Each apartment complex employs at least three hackers to make sure no stone is left unturned.” Both men couldn't help but stare; it made getting into MI6 seem like a piece of cake!

“What do they have to do to get hired? Walk through fire unscathed?” Cassie gave Alec a droll look usually reserved for James.

“Imagine the fitness tests I have in store for you two and the other 00’s, with M's blessing, I might add. It will take some time to get the obstacle course up and running, but rest assured by the end, if you pass, you will hate me.” Cassie gave them her best evil grin as both men groaned. As time wore on, and the three talked about the assassination attempt on the two agents, Count Lippe's probable involvement, night eventually fell. When Cassie and Alec heard a car pull in, they went to investigate why an ambulance that had a late night patient arrived without sirens. After they found the body and James knocked out the second assailant, Cassie took a picture with a camera she was apparently keeping in her shoulder bag. She then left the clinic after making sure the two agents would be alright to develop the photo and find out from Tanner and Moneypenny if anything was going on. When the two agents were called into the conference room the next day, along with every other 00, with Cassie sitting in 005’s chair as they had yet to find a replacement for Wilson, they had a feeling it was something big. And oh, it was; S.P.E.C.T.R.E. had stolen a jet that had two atomic bombs on board and was threatening to detonate them either in America or the United Kingdom unless they received a very hefty sum. When James and Alec recognized the face of the pilot, a François Derval, they looked at Cassie who pulled out a picture, no doubt the one she took last night. As she compared the two, a small frown of confusion marring her face, she looked up at the two and nodded; it was the same man who had been brought into the clinic last night, already dead when the NATO plane took off.

“M, with all due respect, James and I think we should go with Cassie to Nassau. She's good, but on a mission with this kind of importance she could do with backup, and nothing against Franklyn, but his abilities won't be as beneficial in Nassau as they could potentially be in Canada.”

“Is there a particular reason for this request, other than your love of water sports and your desire to protect Cassandra from 009’s crush on her?”

“This pilot that was supposedly on the jet was lying dead in Shrublands clinic whilst you were trying to keep contact with said jet,” James told her only to be contradicted.

“No that's quite impossible; our security scans confirm Major Derval on was that jet.”
“Whilst 007 and 006 may appear unprofessional at times, if they say that they saw Major Derval at the clinic, they saw him.” Cassie then came in with a folder.

“Pardon my intrusion, but as time is of the essence, I figured you would want to hear this; as James and Alec almost got themselves killed yesterday by a spinal traction machine I went to the clinic and saved them, then stayed to make sure no one tried again. Late last night, a body was brought in; I took a picture and then fingerprints as well as blood, compared them to military data banks, and they confirmed that the dead man at the clinic was Francois Derval.”

“But our security scans said that no unauthorized post-human was on base, no shapeshifters, no-”

“People have been so caught up in tracking post-humans, that you are overlooking completely human methods of altering appearances; plastic surgery. Remember, S.P.E.C.T.R.E is made up of some of the best minds in the world; they wouldn't leave anything to chance; the local police near Shrublands just identified the charred remains of Count Lippe's body from his car. Along with a motorcycle that was equipped with rocket launchers, that was dumped further down the river.”

“That settles things; Cassandra ready yourself to go to Nassau, Major Boothroyd will join you in a few days and 007 and 006 will be going with you.” By the end of it all, James and Alec had rather wished they had handled the mission on their own. After Cassie had helped James humiliate Largo at the tables, she and Paula had been kidnapped and tortured for information. Paula had used her cyanide capsule (Silva had mentally shuddered when he heard Paula's fate) and they found out Cassie had never been fitted for one. Whilst James had had sex with Fiona, Alec had cleaned Cassie up and he had seen beneath the glamor; Cassie had a number of tattoos on her upper body and each tattoo had its own special story attached to it. Afterwards the three had been captured and Cassie had blushed like a tomato when James had admitted that the only reason he had remained hard whilst with Fiona was because he was thinking of Cassie the whole time. That even bloody and bruised, she was far more beautiful than Fiona perfectly composed.

“She had no reason to keep quiet; she could have spilled everything and just asked that Ireland is kept out of the blast radius. Instead, she kept silent and helped in the underwater fight, protecting many of the men down there, not only from Largo's men but the sharks that came at the smell of blood.” James reported to M after the mission was over.

“I am well aware of what happened to Cassandra, Bond, where is this going?”

“She is allowed to honor her holidays same as anybody else, and those guards that have been secretly following her disappear. We also want to know why her father was targeted.” Cassie knew about them of course, but so long as they stayed out of her home, she didn't care. James, Alec and Silva, sure as hell did though. If M was surprised by the request, she didn't show it as she poured three glasses of bourbon.
“That occurred before I took over as M, but I remember the details. Her paternal family was quite involved in the war between Ireland and England and was quite vicious in their tactics. Her grandmother's nail bombs had a large radius and would often kill dozens of people and she was also very adept at laying car bombs; people never saw her anywhere near the sight of the explosions. Her grandfather could load and fire a rocket launcher before anyone could even think of clearing an area. As for her great-grandfather, Brendan Collins, cousin to Michael Collins who eventually helped stop the fighting, but this man is a classic sociopath with no regard for human life and would kill five of his own men just to get one Englishman. It is believed that he even tried to have his cousin assassinated before he could sign the treaty, but Michael took precautions.”

“But by the time her father was a grown man, the war was over.”

“Did she tell you what her father's abilities were? Or even her uncle's?”

“No, being only five when he was taken out, I doubt she would remember if had displayed his abilities around her. And if he was sensible, after he started drinking, Killian wouldn't use his powers all that much.” James had to subtly kick Alec for his tone, as there was no doubt M was still suspicious of him.

“The ability that he showed most of the world was transmutation, the ability to turn one thing into another, and he was powerful enough that if he so desired, the changes could become permanent. He was advanced enough to change bullets into doves and pebbles into pieces of glass. As for her uncle, it was plasma manipulation, an ability that allows the user to summon both fire and electricity and he was strong enough to absorb plasma so the object would freeze. Those are the abilities they showed the world, and though they are dangerous on their own, they are not the abilities that worried MI6; Killian has puppet mastery, he could control whatever and whoever he wanted, but Keagan was the one that made MI6 sweat, as he had electromagnetic manipulation, an ability which (with the exception of gravitation) account for almost all physical phenomena observable to the unaided human senses, including light and other electromagnetic radiation, all of chemistry, most of mechanics (excepting gravitation), and of course magnetism and electricity.”

“Yes but 95% of users for that ability aren't strong enough to reach those levels, though they are still rather impressive.” James pointed out.

“Keagan was one of the 5% that could reach those levels, he could manipulate anything with a pulse, there were rumors he could even manipulate a persons' heart, but what he could do to radio signals was frightening. He could jam signals, redirect them, decipher any code, or even send false information. He could also manipulate metal perfectly to any size or shape that he wished.”
“What about her mother?” Alec asked at Silva's prodding. There was something in M's eyes at the mention of Cassie's mother, but it was gone quickly as she started talking.

“Melanie was potentially even more dangerous than Keagan; she had gravity manipulation which in and of itself is self-explanatory, but she also had weak force manipulation.”

“Weak force manipulation?” James asked, confused.

“Along with electromagnetism, gravity, and strong force manipulation, weak force manipulation is one of the four interactive forces of the universe; without these four forces, reality itself would cease to exist. Weak force manipulation causes radiation and is believed to be the reason the Sun can provide the Earth with energy. In contrast to electromagnetic and strong forces, the strength of the weak force is different for particles and anti-particles charge violation, for a scattering process and its mirror image parity violation, and for a scattering process and the time reversal of that scattering process time violation. Three of the four fundamental forces of reality went into making this child, the minute she did anything suspicious, she was arrested.”

“And during the two months she was held and you questioned her, with truth serum, lie detectors and everything else we have at our disposal, you still believed that she was a terrorist?”

“Look at what she grew up with.” James and Alec finally had enough so they got up to leave. As they reached the door, though, James couldn't help turning back and saying,

“M, do you ever wonder what she would have been like if MI6 hadn't killed her father and she had been raised by her parents instead of her suspected terrorist grandparents? Just food for thought.” Alec couldn't stop the smirk on his face as they head back down to Q branch where Cassie was under the careful watch of Major Boothroyd; she had already had her post-mission seizure, and it had been a bad one, but no one wanted to leave her alone, they were constantly asking if she wanted a snack, some water, if she was warm enough or if she maybe wanted to take a nap, Cassie wanted to snap at them, but as they were concerned for her health, it didn't feel right.

“I'm hoping the two of you can convince her not to go through with this tattoo nonsense.” Q said in lieu of greeting as Cassie was going through the database of tattoo parlors in the area.

“My tattoo's each tell a story of my life; I survived an interrogation by the hands of S.P.E.C.T.R.E without breaking, I would think that deserves some ink. Alec, what do you think I should get?”
"Well, how do the others work?"

"The panther standing opposite the bear on my stomach was my first; the panther represents courage, valor, and power whilst also representing not being afraid of the dark or its secrets and it's also a symbol of mysticism. Matteo helped me pick it out as he said that the panther sounded most like me. The bear represents courage as well, but it also represents freedom, protection, resourcefulness and unpredictability; I got it when I said no to my great-grandfather when he wanted me to kill somebody who had done me no harm. I was so afraid of him everyone was expecting me to do it, and they thought his training had completely desensitized me so when I refused to do it, they were all shocked. Matteo's boyfriend, Cody, helped me get the fox wrapped around my left bicep as Celts honored the fox for its wisdom; he figured that anyone who can understand computers and Einstein's unified theory deserved it. The fact that I'm good at strategy and quick-thinking helped his decision. The wolf wrapped around my right arm is the second most recent, as I got it after I went to further my studies, you see the wolf always trusts his instincts, is hungry for freedom and knows the value of social connections; those people I know have often proved invaluable in things and I doubt I would have lasted without them. And finally, there is the dragonfly on my spine; an important creature as it shows the wisdom of transformation and adaptability in life, after all, those that never change never stay for long, you must change and adapt to your situations. Something you might want to think of learning to do Bond; there have been times I nearly had to put you in a half-Nelson to get things done. You can't just barrel on through and hope your way works; you realize Domino was more attracted to me than to you right? She is a bi-sexual female who prefers her own gender, something Largo didn't mind so long as she was available, but because you beat him at the tables and then flounced his mistress in front of him, he got on to you far too soon."

"You know, I'm not the only one stubborn here; Alec is stubborn too!" James defended himself as Alec snickered.

"Not exactly; Alec is an instrument that takes a lot of damage before making his move; he lets you think you are winning, but after you have tired yourself out and let your defenses drop, he sucker punches you and you are left wondering what the hell just happened. You take the punches because you think you have to, and though you may win, you are left in far worse shape than Alec who does the same thing. You and he may think you are the same, but he is earth where you are air." James and Alec glanced at each other at the comment and wondered about what she meant, but decided to leave it.

"Back to your previous question, why not the horse? It's an animal that is difficult to break, and if I remember represents power, grace, beauty, nobility, strength, and freedom; all traits you were showing when Fiona tried to mock you, and you looked a damn sight better than she did." Cassie blushed at the praise and James gently pushed a lock behind her ear; it was getting longer and the boys were hoping she would let it grow out to reach her shoulders at least.

"Also, many cultures associate the horse with all four elements; an animal that runs on the land made by a God of sea, looks like it could almost fly at its top speed of running, and as its hooves strike the land, it seems like sparks of fire come up."
“You know James, there are times when you amaze me.”

“I am getting tired of insulting you due to my ignorance, so I am doing my best to learn what I can about your culture to stop insulting you. Speaking of which, is there anything you need us to bring for your Samhain ritual?”

“If you want to help me set up, I have to determine which ritual to perform; there are different ceremonies you can use on Samhain. But you don't have to partake if you don't want to.”

“Samhain is important to you, notice how I take effort to pronounce it correctly? Sa-wain instead of Sam-hain, like how many pronounce it? We are your friends and we want to celebrate it with you. And why don't we perform a general ritual with one that focuses a bit more strongly on honoring those we have lost?” James asked and Cassie smiled as she removed her glasses.

“Well, well, well, you have been studying haven't you?”

“Well, I know I must have been trying your patience every time I mentioned stereotypes, Halloween, and things like that; I assure you I have no desire to see you finally lose control like you did with Wilson. Now, what do we need?” Time passed and it was soon October 31st and everyone at Jaeger apartments were excited. Cassie had found out from Antoine and Otto that whilst the apartments did house many families with children who were the age for trick or treating, many parents either didn't feel safe letting their kids out or were just too tired after work to take them, so the suites did up special candy bags for them. Cassie found this to be a lousy solution so she offered a better solution; a Halloween party in their recreational area. The kids could dress up, carve pumpkins, play all kinds of games, get lots of treats and if the younger ones wanted to take a break, a special part would be secluded so they could watch Halloween cartoons. She had even set up a special ward to make sure no one tried to ruin the fun or damage anything; if you had ill intentions, you could not enter the hall. Cassie was busy making their special masks for their ceremony when her doorbell rang. She wiped her hands on a cloth and watched as Rai opened the door.

“Thanks... Rai? Cassie? How is Rai able to open the door?”

“There's a button that, when pushed, deactivates the deadbolt on the door; just in case I get caught up in my work.”
“But how do you know who is friend and who is foe?”

“Simple; there is a camera located on the door that measures your heart rate and studies your brainwaves. It's not infallible but it should stop 90% of those who mean me harm.” James and Alec then appeared, in their best suits, as promised, in the room Cassie had designated for her rituals and ceremonies.

“Did you guys remember the photos of your loved ones I told you to bring?” James showed the picture of him and Tracy took on their wedding day whilst Alec held up one of the few things he had of his parents; a picture of their wedding and a photo of his sister as a baby.

“Good, here are the masks I promised you two; remember, during the ceremony do not remove your mask, as the spirits will be here among us. Wearing these masks will protect us from them as they will think we are one of them.” Cassie then handed Alec his wolf mask, James his raven mask and picked up her own panther mask. Each was handmade with intricate, tribal designs and a work of art, like her tattoos. The table that was their alter was mostly made up of Cassie's ancestors' stuff, but James had no wish to honor his parents and Alec didn't have much left. Alec smiled when he saw the Russian flag along with the flags of France, Germany, Ireland, Scotland and there was even an Italian flag. There was also a picture of a young girl holding a cat.

“For my aunt Isabella; she may have been my aunt through marriage instead of blood, but she cared a great deal about me. And the cat is Aurora, a cat I had as a child for a few months, before Corvus. My great-grandfather thought that a cat was a ridiculous pet, so he killed her; when he tried to do the same to Rai and Zumi, I slashed his face.” Cassie explained as she noticed him eyeing the Italian flag and the picture. James had a sympathetic look in his eyes, which made Alec wonder what had happened but knew better than asking.

“The sun will be going down soon; it will be time to start the ceremonial dinner. I set up 9 plates along with our three; one each for my great-grandparents, one for my grandfather, my aunt, one each for my parents, one for Tracy, one each for your parents Alec and one for your sister, did I forget anyone?” Cassie asked as she left the room to put on her best dress for the ceremony; a sky blue saree with gold trim and flowers, which had been gifted to her by a dear friend in India after she saved the life of her three children that four different doctors had all said was incurable.

“No that's everyone, do you want Alec and I to bring the food to the table?”

“Would you, please? And Alec remember; the guest plates get served first, even before your 'snacking’.” James chuckled as Alec pouted; it wasn't his fault their unofficial roommate made such yummy delights. As they set about getting the table ready, they laid out honey wheat bread, a kale salad, Brussel sprouts with bacon, some squash dishes along with lots of potato dishes, and a lot of both pumpkin and apple dishes.
“Cassie, did you really make apple dumplings and a pumpkin... is that a pumpkin trifle?” James asked, smacking Alec's hand for the third time.

“A pumpkin-butterscotch gingerbread trifle and yes, do I look alright?” Cassie asked as she stepped back into the room and both men felt their jaws drop at the sight of her; she was beautiful.

“I know, my hair is getting way too long, my great-grandfather would be furious.”

“It barely reaches your shoulders and besides, I imagine you could easily make up a spell in which someone grabs your hair, they get electrocuted or you get medusa hair. The long hair suits you, you should really keep it.” Alec replied and Cassie smiled at him.

“You still need to wait until the ceremony starts before you can try anything.”

“Fine, what are these little cakes though?”

“Soul cakes; they are meant specifically for the spirits and were originally given out to vagabonds, who in return would offer up prayers that would help the owners get into heaven. Now, ready?” Cassie asked as she put on her mask whilst the other two did as well. She raised the candles, and said a quiet but clear voice,

“These candles we light to remember those that came before us, those we have lost, those we remember and those we never knew, but without whom we would not be here today. We do this deed on October 31st, the night in which the barrier between our world and the land of the dead is at it's thinnest and we are closest to those who are no longer of this world. As we light these candles, name the person who you are remembering and their connection to you. Keagan Michael Collins Jaeger, father.”

“Tracy Draco Bond, wife.”

“Alexei Trevelyan, father.”

“Melanie Liliana Jaeger, mother.”
“Vera Trevelyan, mother.”

“Cornelius 'Conner' Marcus Collins, grandfather.”

“Natasha Viktoria Trevelyan, sister.”

“Dolphus Maximilian Jaeger, great-grandfather.”

“Colette Diana Moreau Jaeger, great-grandmother.”

“Isabella Maria Esposito Collins, aunt.” As Cassie lit her final candle she glanced at James, who opened the link for the three to share. /Remember Alec, as the eldest amongst us, you have to recite this next part, but if you get stuck, I will help you./

/ Right Cassie, but I have memorized what I have to say. / Alec replied before speaking.

This is the night when the gateway between our world and the spirit world is thinnest. Tonight is a night to call out those who came before us. Tonight we honor our ancestors. Spirits of our ancestors, we call to you, and we welcome you to join us for this night. We know you watch over us always, protecting us and guiding us, and tonight we thank you. We invite you to join us and share our meal.

Each bowed their head before going to the table with the food. Alec followed the parameters of the ritual Cassie taught them and served the ancestors plates first, then Cassie as the youngest, then James and then himself, though they did not pour the cider yet. They spent the dinner talking about old stories of their pasts and their ancestors that they knew of. James stilled when he felt someone whisper in his ear, someone that sounded a lot like Tracy.

“Do not fear the spirits James, this is your first lesson in your 'ghostly' powers, listen to what they say, but keep an open mind, as they may pretend to be something they are not.” Cassie explained and James listened, something about Cassie's past, helping her heal from it.
“The spirit is asking about something that happened to you in '98, before your twelfth birthday, sometime in... August? No, early September, you had a late training session with your great-grandfather and something happened.” The men could only see her eyes and chin, but they saw how pale she became before she sighed.

“He had decided that my purity was a liability, so he removed it.” James and Alec had to fight the growl that wanted to erupt.

“He raped you?”

“He could barely look at me, and the only time he touched me was to hit me; he had someone else do it, but he watched.” James and Alec could feel their dinner start to disagree with them, and James thought he could hear other voices now, expressing their outrage.

“Do you know who did it?”

“No; I am no wallflower who would forget something like that, but no matter how hard I try, nothing comes through, except what he said.”

“What did he say?”

“Please, stop.’ and 'Don't make me do this.’” This confused James and Alec greatly.

“*He* was begging to stop?”

“I don't remember much, but I do remember he did not want to be there, but neither of us could resist. My great-grandfather has the rather distasteful ability of pain manipulation, I don't find the ability itself distasteful, but how he uses it is; he is a bully who, if you do not do things his way, would induce levels of pain that would make even the most stalwart agent beg and cry like a child. I remember my fellow victim and I were both screaming at the top of our combined lungs as we both fought his control of our bodies and failed.” Both men fought for control as Cassie told her story when James noticed something emanating from his hand, a strange, transparent, cloth-like material.

“You must be truly angry right now James; that is your first noted manifestation of ectoplasm. Now
that you have had your first manifestation, you may be able to summon it again, and learn to work with it, as it would be useful to have an energy source that can react somewhat negatively with the energy of this world.” James nodded before asking,

“Did any of your relatives know what happened?”

“Matteo does, and Cody, his boyfriend. Matteo called Cody and the two took me home where they cleaned me up and the three of us vowed to never tell anyone about what had happened.”

“Why not tell anyone? Even with his ability, surely there must have been a way to subdue him.” Alec asked, doing his best not to make it sound like he was blaming her.

“He made mention that what happened to my aunt may not have been an accident after all and that the same thing could happen to Matteo. I couldn't take the chance that he would do it, not only would it hurt me beyond imagination, but my uncle Killian would never have survived it, and neither would my grandparents, so it became our secret.” When Cassie made no move to continue, both men sighed and accepted that that was truly enough, so they stood up from their chairs for the last part of the ceremony. They filled a goblet with the cider, and James started as he had the least desire to remember his ancestors.

“I am James, son of Andrew, son of Malcolm, son of Monique, daughter Francois.” When he finished, he took a sip of the cider and passed the goblet to Alec.

“I am Alec, son of Alexei, son of Vera.” As Alec knew less about his family than James did, he was even shorter before he took a sip and passed the goblet to Cassie.

“I am Erika, daughter of Melanie, daughter of Colette, daughter of Dolphus, daughter of Keagan, son of Cornelius, son of Cornelia, son of Brendan, son of Clodagh, daughter of Owen, daughter of Bedelia.” Cassie took her sip before placing the goblet on her great-grandfather's plate, as he was the eldest amongst the dead, older than Alec's father who had committed suicide at 39, whereas Dolphus had lived until his late 80's, early 90's. She then recited the last part of the ceremony.

“This is the cup of remembrance. We remember all of you. You are dead but never forgotten, and you live on within us.” All three bowed, and as they stood, the doorbell rang.
“Well, that is more than a little creepy,” Alec remarked and Cassie laughed.

“Miss Jaeger? I hope I am not interrupting, I waited as long as I could after sundown.” The three all heard Antoine call out after Rai let him in.

“We are in here Antoine, but let us come out to you.” Cassie led the two out of the agents out of the protected circle to Antoine who was waiting in the parlor dressed, surprisingly, as a pirate.

“Everything alright? Anyone causing problems?”

“Only one person, a woman who called the party an act of ‘Devil-Worship’ and Otto has already taken the appropriate action.”

“Which is?” James asked.

“Termination of the lease and she has one week to vacate the premises or police shall be called to help evict her.” Both agents were shocked.

“These apartments and hotels were started before the second world war, and my grandfather could see what Hitler was doing, so he hired his fellow Jews to work in them. When France was invaded, the soldiers used them as a base of sorts. These were all new soldiers who did not know my grandfather, so though he was identifiable as a German, he was not identifiable as a Jew. It killed him to treat his own people the way he did, but it kept him alive, it kept his wife alive, and it kept his staff alive. Because of what he did, they actually allowed him to be buried in the Holy land when he died. Anyways, when the war ended, they included a special clause in the lease; 'And the undersigned understands that, whilst they have the freedom to think what they will about other people's religions, skin color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical handicaps or mental handicaps, they do not have the right to discriminate against these parties either verbally or physically. Any discrimination, persecution or maltreatment of any kind against other tenants of the establishment will result in disciplinary measures as fining or use of facilities shall be rescinded. Continued discrimination or maltreatment of parties shall result in termination of lease and shall be given one week to vacate premises or authorities shall be notified.' When my mum took over, she included post-humans as those who can't be discriminated against, since more started popping up in my mum's generation than my grandfather's. Now, Antoine, since Otto took care of the malcontent, I assume you came up for another reason?"

As it turned out, the parents were so thankful that their children could celebrate Halloween safely and still be able to relax in their homes and wanted her to come down to the party, see how much fun the children were having, and thank her in person. Cassie, James and Alec all enjoyed the party and as
they went to bed that night, Cassie was left wondering when those two had become her unofficial roommates. As such, being her unofficial roommate, Alec felt wholly justified in his concern for her when he awoke the next day and saw her very upset whilst looking at her laptop, not fully crying, he wasn't sure she remembered how to cry, to be honest, but her eyes were wet. He looked at the laptop and saw that someone (cough, Scarlet, cough) had sent her a file containing numerous articles concerning the witch trials and what had been done to those accused.

“I can't read the words but the pictures attached to them are self-explanatory.”

“What do you mean, you can't read the file? Do you need your glasses?” Cassie looked ashamed and Alec was baffled until James came in and asked a rather delicate question,

“Cassie, do you have Dyslexia?”

“Dyslexia is as good a name for it as any other I suppose, I can read other languages... I can read French, Italian, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Nordic Runes... I can read bloody Sumerian but I try to read the bloody morning paper and it looks like bloody gibberish!”

“Has it been this way since you were a child or did it develop?” James asked in a soothing voice, Alec knew it well.

“My mother tried teaching me words with blocks like some parents do, but I never put them in the right order. My father then used the letters to write ‘Vater’, which is German for ‘father’; I pointed to him, and they were eventually able to determine the problem. My great-grandfather often called me a dummy because of it, blamed my mother of course, and Scarlet is the same way.”

“So those two have a nasty disposition in common? I imagine your great-grandfather looks a damn sight better than Scarlet; you should have seen her before her ability developed, she makes Frankenstein look handsome.” Cassie chuckled as Alec joked with her.

“Well, I will not allow that woman to ruin one of my favorite holidays, and we better grab something to eat as Major Boothroyd has informed me that a new 005 has finally been chosen.” As they drove to MI6, in Melanie’s beautiful left behind Rolls-Royce Phantom III, James and Alec learned that Cassie's electronic abilities deciphered electronic information for her and, when she had to read paper documents, she wore her glasses, which had been a gift from her 'Nonno', who, despite being Matteo's maternal grandfather, had always insisted Cassie call him 'Nonno', just as he called her Kiara because, despite all the gloom she saw, she was still a bright, clear star. It had been something of a shock that Abramo Esposito who, apart from having ten children (nine sons but only one daughter, her aunt Isabel), was also a Mafia Don. As they pulled into MI6, James and Alec were
both wondering how MI6 had thought it a good idea to take this girl away from her parents and put her with terrorists and criminals. They made their way down to the newly remodeled gym where Cassie had first been introduced and Wilson had departed, and saw the other 00's standing around, talking to one another, though James noticed Scarlet and Charles were standing away from the others.

“Hey James, Alec, Cassie, how did the celebration go last night?” The other four knew that James and Alec had celebrated Samhain with Cassie, and had done their best not to get in any trouble that would warrant their Quartermaster-to-be to be called in.

“Before we get into that, Cassie dearest, do you know who has been chosen?” Franklyn asked but Cassie simply replied,

“Major Boothroyd thought it best I learn with the rest of you.” As Scarlet opened her mouth, no doubt to spout something derogatory, she found herself unable to speak.

“Sorry love, but your voice really grates on my nerves so I removed it.” A new voice suddenly said, and was joined by a displacement of the air. James groaned as he realized what they had been saddled with,

“A speedster; wonderful, just what we need.” Alec knew full well that James really did not like speedsters.

“That's really nice of you to say 007, you know not everyone can admit when they need something.” Again another displacement of air and the two went to use their abilities to stop the speedster, only to find themselves unable to. A quick check in with Raoul unnerved them further; this was not one of their men, and there was very little data on the one who had been chosen.

“Not only a speedster, but also sense manipulation; you took away Williams' voice and now you are in a sense cloaking yourself from our senses. I imagine that Alec's seismic sense would also yield no results?” Cassie was a little surprised at the rose that suddenly appeared in her hands.

“Right in one love, so the question is, can the little sorceress that I have heard so much about stop what she cannot see?”

“Are you kidding? Finding I cannot see was one of the first things I learned how to do!” Cassie handed the rose to Joanna before slapping her hands together and then slapping them to the ground.
Lukas and Emily had to stop themselves from laughing as Scarlet had trouble keeping her balance on her heels as the ground turned to very slippery ice. They all turned at the sound of a yelp and then a thump, and saw a very handsome young man on the floor who, thanks to sudden lack of friction, ran into a wall; as he stretched out, they saw that he was almost as tall as James, with a tan complexion and blonde hair that gave him something of a surfer look. Joanna, Scarlet, and even Emily had trouble hiding their smiles at the sight of him.

“Found you.”

“Have you found me, or have you simply found an illusion?” The man spun like a twister and melted all the ice and everyone's vision blurred for a moment and when it cleared, suddenly there were a dozen of the young man standing around the gym, and again Alec couldn't tell which was real and which were fake.

“Don't worry about it Alec, there isn't much you can do about this; he has manipulated your hearing into thinking that there are multiple heartbeats coming from the illusions and I imagine that he has also removed his scent as it can be tricky to give this many illusions a scent. But, there is one thing he can't fool; {Aura colors, reveal who is true and who is false!}” Suddenly they all lit up like a Christmas tree except for the illusions who were a pale bluish gray. Before anyone could do anything, the agents all suddenly became dizzy and nauseous.

“Vertigo inducement is a sub-power of mine and one I'm rather good at if I do say so myself. You see little sorceress, just as you are full of tricks, I have quite a few up my sleeves.” /James, use your ectoplasm./ Cassie mentally told James. /And just how do I do that? I only summoned the stuff last night!/ James asked back. /Now that you have manifested it, you can summon it. When it touches something of this world, it's like being covered in ice-cold cobwebs; the sensation should be enough for Dominic to lose his focus!/ James did manage to summon the ectoplasm, though he was rather disturbed that it came from his mouth, even as it shot out towards the speedster; apparently, when you have a target in mind, ectoplasm acted like a sort of homing missile.

“That is not exactly what I had in mind, but I won't complain about the results,” Cassie said as she and the other agents all stood up slowly. The new 005 was shivering as he removed the ectoplasm from his body.

“N-no f-fair, n-nobody told m-me that Bond could use ectoplasm.”

“Last night was a spiritually powerful night, Bond opened his senses and was able to summon ectoplasm in a moment of anger. He will need to learn how to control it better, but the point is he can now summon it.” After that, the new 005 was introduced as Dominic Ross, abilities obviously super speed and sense manipulation, apparently from Scotland. Scarlet tried flirting with him but he showed far more interest in Joanna, which had both her and Franklyn fuming, though Frankly
couldn't understand why he was so angry. Further introductions had to be held off as M apparently had a mission for 005 that would also test how well he would work with Cassandra, with her leaving strict instructions not to mess up her apartment or she would disembowel them whilst keeping them alive with her magic, to also remember feeding Matches. As the two went to get briefed on their mission together, James finally had an opportunity to wonder, if Cassie hadn't of known who the new 005 was, which he later confirmed, then how did Cassie know Dominic's name? And why did she call him Dominico?

A/N: I swear, I was ready to commit murder on this stupid chapter; three times I had to write the section after Samhain because the stupid computer kept deleting what I wrote! To the point that I was so paranoid, I was saving the bloody document every five minutes! Anyway's, what did you think? I got the ritual off of a very informative site, with a few of my own flairs thrown in for fun. I am sorry about the mentioned rape scene, it and the Dyslexia shall be talked about later on. I know she might seem a little blasé over the incident, but it's to help add dimension to her; she is a strong person who has had to deal with a lot, but the incident so traumatized her, that she can't remember just who it was that was raped with her (I don't think it's fair to call him an attacker when he was forced too.) And just who is the mysterious new 005? And how does our weary Cassie know him? Find out next time! And will a chapter of this story ever be under 10,000 words? I have to admit, it doesn't look it will happen any time soon.
A Funeral, A Birthday, and a Kidnapping

Chapter Summary

Cassie goes back to Ireland, she gets some gifts for her birthday, and oh yeah, she gets kidnapped.

Chapter 5

It was with a somber air that Cassie, along with James, Alec, and Dominic were all riding a ferry to Ireland, where they would take their cars to the town where Cassie had been raised. It was only a week until her birthday, to which she kept telling most of the agents and almost all of Q branch that she didn't want anything, but her grandmother had sent news along that one of Cassie's few childhood friends had died, although to be more specific, she had been shot. M had agreed to let Cassie go to the wake, so long as at least one agent went with her, James and Alec had just come back from a mission so Q had volunteered the two to go with her, and Dominic had volunteered himself, M hadn't of been fond of having three agents go, but Tanner convinced her. Her name was Miriam Kelly, she was a couple years older than Cassie, younger than Matteo, but most importantly, she was Cody's younger sister.

“005, just why are you coming with us?” James asked as the shores of Ireland came into view.

“What? The two of you have the exclusive rights to be with Cassandra when she's hurting?” Dominic had only been an agent for two weeks, but he was as tight-lipped as a nun and seemed to be overly protective of Cassie, never letting anyone have too much alone time with her. What was stranger, though, was that Cassie only seemed to view him as an over-protective guard dog, instead of something dangerous.

“Dominico, I've told you, you can tell them, they know the truth about me after all,” Cassie said listlessly as Corvus sat on her shoulder.

“Are you sure little one? My instructions were to be as inconspicuous as possible.” Dominic asked.

“Well, acting like my personal pit-bull after having apparently only known me for a couple weeks, hasn't done you any favors in that regard. Imagine how they would have reacted if they had seen how excited Rai and Zumi were to see you again?” Dominic nodded as he contemplated that.
“So, who are you then, really?” Alec asked and Silva was interested as well.

“My mother's maiden name is Ross, and I was born in Scotland, but whilst visiting my father's homeland in Italy, he died suddenly. Can't say as I miss the bastard, but once I presented as a post-human, my mother started hating me too. As you know, speedsters have a higher metabolism than norm's, so I needed to steal in order to keep up my strength, one day I made the mistake of stealing from Don Esposito, but instead of killing me, his wife, Aria, insisted that maybe I could be of some use. He listened, I was trained and I became part of his mafia, and I never bothered to look back on my origins; he treated me much better than my father ever did, and Aria was much sweeter than my mother even before I presented. When Kiara and Matteo started visiting us during Ireland's winter months, I was assigned to make sure the two of them stayed safe and teach them anything they wanted to know. Then, when your government unfairly labeled her a cyber terrorist, he looked for an opportunity to place one of his men on the inside and make sure no one hurt his nipotina, though we weren't hoping for the opportunity that presented itself. By an amazing coincidence, my real last name is close to Ross, one might even say it's the Italian equivalent; my birth name is Dominico Ailbeart Rossi.” Many questions were going through the two agents minds as they pulled up to the shore, but before they got into their cars to pull away, Alec had to ask,

“Ailbeart?”

“It means 'bright nobility' in Gaelic, and I didn't pick it, just like my grandfathers didn't pick Dominico or Ailbeart before them.” Dominic then got into Cassie's car, she had bought a Toyota 4runner that was outfitted with a special nozzle so that, if she had to go through water, the engine stayed dry. James and Alec went in the Aston Martin DB5, and Silva filled them in what he had found on Dominico Rossi, who had been named Streak Plague by the authorities, was good at robberies, intimidation of witnesses, could literally run circles around any who tried to kill him, which made him a lethal assassin of Abramo Esposito, but as no one had seen him, no one could identify him, and, as no one knew even his true name, MI6 had nothing to find on him until someone high up in the Poliza de Stato (a certain Lorenzo Esposito), backed up by the Minister of Economy and Finance, who was in control of the Guardia di Finanza, (this one a Salvatore Esposito) had invented records on a Dominic Ross for their offices in Italy. When Cassie stopped at a small town and got out, James stopped his own car and got out with her, watching as Dominico helped Rai and Zumi get out of the backseat. Alec once again had Matches on his shoulder. As they walked through the town, James couldn't tell who was getting more hateful glances; he, Alec, Dominico, or Cassie. What happened next was a bit of a blur; someone tried to grab Cassie from behind, only for her to grab them and send them sailing into a nearby barrel where the fellow started flailing to get out, but as Dominico went to interrogate the one who grabbed Cassie, another jumped out and brandished a gun in Cassie's face, speaking fast Irish Gaelic, only for her to disarm the person and hold them by the neck.

“Hi to you too, Ellie.” Cassie's eyes, which had started to bleed orange, suddenly focused.

“Matteo?! What in the nine circles of Hell do you think you are doing?” Cassie asked as she released a man who was 6’ 2”, had red hair with highlights of blonde, a tan complexion, and remarkably
appeared to have heterochromia, with one green eye like his cousin, and one brown.

“Just giving you an IRA welcome home; that's what the British think we all are, right? Gun-toting crazy men, who attack anyone who's not Irish? I mean, those bastards couldn't even send you here to grieve for my sister on your own, you got three watchdogs.” The man in the barrel explained as Dominic pulled him up and out.

“Cody, if it wasn't Miriam that I was here to honor, I would skin you. Now knock it off with that sort of talk, or don't you recognize Nicki?” Cody looked at Dominic and did indeed seem to recognize, but he still sneered at James and Alec.

“What about those two Tan's*?”

“Hardly; this one is from Scotland, and the other is from Russia, and they are part of MI6 to protect people from the likes of the real terrorists like S.P.E.C.T.R.E. Cody, we are no longer at war with Britain, and you never held much hatred for them in the first place, what is wrong now?” Cassie asked.

“What is wrong?! You are a prisoner and forced to work for the people who killed your athair*, and my sister had to be-”

“CODY! This is not the place to be talking about such things.” A woman suddenly came into the conversation, with three young men behind her. The woman was elderly, but she looked lethal with that cane of hers. James and Alec recognized her as Cassie's grandmother, and, with the three men all having characteristics in common with Matteo, they guessed that they were more men of the Esposito family, most likely the twins Marco and Rocco, along with the youngest male of the family, Dino, who had all come with Isabella when she came to Ireland with her new husband. Many had thought they would move back to Italy after her death, but they had felt that just as Isabella had needed them as her older brothers, Kiara and Matteo needed them as their uncles. Dino stepped forward and hugged his niece before kissing her on the cheek, before embracing Dominic, who gripped back tightly. Marco then motioned to the two agents to follow him into their bar.

“Apologies for my brothers; Dino speaks Italian, Swahili, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and a little Welsh. Marco meanwhile speaks Italian, Polish, Russian, Arabic, Romanian, Japanese, and Gaelic. My father believed it important that we know many languages, and my mother believed that if we were interested in a culture, we should learn the language attached to it; I myself speak a multitude of languages, including Zulu. Now, the wake for Miriam is the day after tomorrow and I think it only fair you know the truth.” Rocco explained as he leads the way to the back of the bar to some private rooms. James noticed the tables had different numbers hanging over them, the lower numbers were in green and the higher numbers in red.
“Rocco, tell Marty that tables 5 and 12 are at their limit; they either switch to water and soda or leave,” Cornelia told Rocco as she noticed that said tables had started flashing.

“Sì mamma, Marty! 5 agus 12, athrú nó a ciceál*!” The head bartender nodded at his boss and looked to the two bouncers to be on standby.

“So that’s what the numbers and colors mean, low numbers in green mean you can keep serving them, high numbers in red mean it's best to cut them off,” James said.

“Yes, and if the numbers turn blue, it means that they may be able to have a few more drinks, but they need something to eat. It was my brilliant cousin’s idea, the tables each have a rune carved into them that takes into account a person’s tolerance and if it seems like the person is getting a little tipsy, Mary and the other servers know to push more food and virgins than Arnold Palmer's and Zombies. Proved to be helpful legally as well last year; a guy claimed to have been given plenty of drinks, well over the legal limit and then he went out and killed some guy in a 'drunken rage'. But these runes record these numbers and when we showed them to the Garda, it proved he only had a Highball and an Old Fashioned, and no Irishman worth his salt gets blind drunk on two drinks, especially not a baby drink like a Highball.” Matteo expounded as he hugged his cousin as they came into Marco's office.

“Now, what happened to Miriam?” Cassie asked as they all sat down.

“Miriam wanted to get you away from MI6 and was prepared to do anything in order to get you back. From what we found out, she was doing some gun running and there was talk about her trying to hold someone important hostage to get you away.” This confused Cassie greatly as she looked between her grandmother and her cousin.

“But why? I know we were friends, but when I was taken, I implicitly said that no one was to intervene for fear of greater reprisals.” Matteo and the others all sent Cassie a look.

“Roxy, I know you never notice matters of the heart but didn't you notice Miriam would get more than a little excited when you were around?”

“Not even your own family calls you Erika?” Alec asked.

“Erika was Aunt Melanie's name for her, Roxanne is the name I gave her; she was born at dawn, so I
named her after it, even if it is a Persian name. And don't you be throwing around the name Erika, it was Melanie's name for her, not you two.”

“Easy Matteo; Alec and James are my friends, they celebrated Samhain with me. But even if Miriam did have a crush on me, I told everyone not to take any sort of action.”

“Roxy, if it was Matteo or me, and we had told you not to take any sort of action, you mean to tell me, that you would have followed those orders?” Cassie had to admit that she probably wouldn't have.

“The point is Miriam came dangerously close to breaking the treaty that saved hundreds, if not thousands, of lives when Michael signed it. It's bad enough that Brendan puts us in danger every time he opens his mouth, Miriam listened to his talks, and felt that if she got you away from the filthy murdering swine, first the British, then him, you would look at her and see her.” Cornelia stated and the three visitors finally clued in.

“Miriam was killed, to protect the treaty, wasn't she?”

“Not like we had a choice, either she died or she put hundreds, if not thousands, of Irish lives at risk.” Cody finally said, and Cassie heard what he wasn't saying; in her state, Miriam would only have let Cody close enough to kill her. Before she could say anything, Rai and Zumi started growling with their teeth bared and their hackles raised. James and Alec turned and saw a man that just looked mean and cruel. His eyes were green, but they weren't as warm as Matteo's or caring as Cassie's, they didn't even hold the same cautious optimism that Cornelia's had held when Cassie mentioned she had not spent Samhain alone. No, these eyes were cold showing too many years of war, but they were mean also, telling that their owner enjoyed all the pain that could be visited on another person. His mouth showed that he seldom ever smiled, naturally curling into a sneer or snarl of rage, probably smirking when he found sick amusement in perverted things. He may have similar features to Keagan and Conner, but the resemblance was so distant, he might as well have been a long lost relative, rather than Conner's father, Keagan's grandfather, and Cassie's nightmare of a great-grandfather, who had taken the last of his great-granddaughter's innocence, not to mention her purity and virginity, and tore them to pieces.

“Come back to see the damage you caused, eh?”

“Miriam's death was not Roxy's fault, old man,” Matteo growled standing between his cousin and their great-grandfather.

“You watch how you speak to me, boy. And it was her fault since if she hadn't of been retarded
enough to get caught, good Irish stock would not have had to be killed, by her own kin, no less.”

“One, my granddaughter is not retarded, two, Miriam was already unstable when she was taken away, and three, if you hadn't of given Miriam the means to be a gun runner, then she wouldn’t have to have been killed!” Cornelia showed her own fierceness then as she too stood up, looking at her father-in-law with pure hatred.

“Miriam was a proud Irishwoman and was willing to fight the British and completely claim back that which is ours, unlike my own family, who had all gone soft and weak. Like that little bitch over there, just as useless as her mother and father.”

“Don't talk about my parents that way!” Cassie yelled as she jumped up, and James and Alec were happy to see their spitfire friend back in action, even as they and Dominic stood with her.

"And you have no right to talk about my sister like that! You didn't care about Miriam until she started talking about ways of freeing Roxy from MI6, then you used her crush and her instability to hopefully get what you wanted! The war with the British backup and running! Roxy did what she thought best! Protecting the lives of thousands of Americans, even though she doesn't like them, and then protecting all of us when MI6 came here with trumped up charges, even though we weren't what she had needed!” James and Alec noticed that all the electrical items started flashing as Cody yelled louder and louder.

“Save your breath Cody, this heartless bastard would cuss out St. Peter if he could.” A new voice joined the fray, and for James and Alec, it was like the photo had come to life, but not in a good way. Gone were the happy green eyes sparkling with mischief, replaced by haunted eyes that had had all the life, love and joy removed from them. The laughter was gone from both his eyes and his mouth, not to mention he looked a great deal smaller, sitting in his wheelchair. It was plain for any to see, that Killian Collins had lost much of his will to live.

“And now my crippled, useless grandson joins the conversation! God has truly cursed me with this lot!”

“I may be a cripple, but I'm sill enough of a man to not torture a little girl who came here looking for family and understanding, and found distance, fear, and hatred. Especially from the bastard who should have felt at least some warmth for her with how she had a few of my grandmother's features.” Brendan's face looks even uglier as his dead wife is mentioned.

“That abomination looks nothing like my wife!” He moves as if to strike Killian, but Cassie moves and she is glaring at Brendan.
“If you had just left me alone, I would not have been hacking the CIA for one of your stupid lesson plans and I would not have seen that attack. Despite you putting me through so much pain, I fought against the hacker and I beat him, but because you hit me with your cane, breaking my collarbone, I was unable to finish hiding myself and MI6 found out what I had done. They found me, because of you, they tortured me, because of what you taught me, my FATHER DIED BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T LET THE WAR FUCKING END!” James and Alec had never heard Cassie scream like this and it was apparently for a good reason; she could apparently act like a banshee, though that thought was replaced when Brendan backhanded her so hard that one of his rings cut her cheek, and made her fall into her uncle, who immediately grabbed her and held her close, whilst glaring at his grandfather.

“Bastardo!” That word and it's equivalent rang throughout the room, but Alec had had enough; Cassie was his friend, she was a strong person that had suffered too much for not even being on this earth for three decades and she had only come out of it bitter that she had lost her family, but she was not a fanatic like the beast who had just struck her, nor was she broken like the man who was clutching her tight to his chest.

“So, you act like you're this great fighter for a cause, and yet you care so little for your own flesh and blood. You touch Cassie again, and I will twist your body into such knots that everyone will call you the crooked man.” When Branden raised his own cane to strike Alec, the thing snapped like a twig and Cassie's aura was flaring to life as she looked at her great-grandfather with hatred, and James noticed all four of her animals were barking, hissing, cawing like mad, and all four sets of eyes were glowing red. Brendan swung around and faced his great-granddaughter.

“What's happening?” Alec asked as he noticed Cassie's aura flickering madly.

“Whatever the two of you are to my niece, she has engaged the bastard on the astral plane, no matter how strong she is, he's always beat her there and he's ripped her to shreds. I don't know how well she can fare now, being with you lot.” Killian said and James surprised almost everyone when he stepped up and stood by her, placing his fingers by her temples, and the others were shocked when his own aura, a golden yellow, flared and joined hers.

“If you won't play by the rules, then neither shall we.” As James said this, Brendan was thrown back.

“You little-”

“Finish that sentence and I will lock you in your own mind forever. Now leave.” James looked ferocious as his eyes glowed yellow whilst Cassie's glowed red until their aura's dissipated as
Brendan limped out.

“You know, there may be more to the two of you than meets the eye; not many can make that man leave when he doesn't want to.” Cornelia pronounced, eyeing the two agents who had just defended her granddaughter quite ferociously; not even Conner had had the strength to protect her that way. She was not surprised when her granddaughter started to collapse and seize, fighting on the astral plane was never an easy thing, even if this time she did have back-up, but the man who had helped her quickly gripped her and held her up, before the more muscular, russet colored one came and took her, holding her like a baby as she shook in his arms, the brunet quickly putting a previously concealed oxygen device on her face.

“You can bring her to my place; her room is always kept neat and tidy, and our spare room should be large enough for the two of you,” Matteo said but Cody started to argue,

“Mattie, -”

“Cody, if they were what we thought they were, what possible reason could they have for protecting Roxy? And they weren't shocked at all by the seizure, they were ready for it and she calmed down the fastest I have ever seen her.”

“Protecting an asset?” Cody sneered, but Cornelia had had enough.

“Nicodemus, you know as well as I, that she would not have celebrated Samhain, of all days, with people she did not at least trust. Now, I know you have issues with what happened, but that is no reason to take it out on these two, so just stop.” Cody was silent as Matteo lead the two agents in James car, Dominico staying behind, promising to look after Cassie's car, to his home. It wasn't overly large, big enough for two people who let friends stay over often. James and Alec decided to rest along with Cassie, and when they awoke, Cody was sitting in the living room, nursing a beer.

“You know, my mom had been obsessed with Keagan, and though he only saw her as a friend, and married Melanie instead of her, she figured that she was inadequate, that if Keagan chose Mel over her, then Melanie was special, and she wasn't. That didn't stop her from being thrilled when I became friends with Killian's son, or from trying to be something to Keagan's daughter, from replacement mother to pseudo-aunt, she would have content as a confidant and Miriam followed her lead, eventually becoming as devoted to Roxy as my mom had been to Keagan. When Rox was taken, it was the straw that broke the camel's back.”

“MI6 left me for dead, and my partner just about killed himself bringing me back, so we weren't there when she was brought in, and we only found out about her situation almost two months ago.
When we found out, we and four other 00’s became friends with her and protected her; one tried to kill her and two just plain hate her, but the six of us, along with a good portion of Q-branch, work very hard at keeping her safe, as well as looking after her when she has her seizures. It's hardly a great life for someone like her, but at least she doesn't have to face it alone.

“And sometimes, that's all we can hope for; someone to stand with us in the dark times,” Killian said as he wheeled himself in, causing Cody to jump.

“Cody, Maggie may or may not wake up soon, but I'd prefer it if she didn't hear what I had to say, so go make sure she stay's asleep, OK?” Killian asked, and Cody just nodded and obeyed his technical father-in-law.

“So Maggie is what you call her?” James asked as he and Alec sat down.

“It's what Keagan called her, but not Margaret, no he preferred Margo, much classier he would say, though if you like your anatomy the way it is, I suggest you keep on calling her Cassie; I'm the only one in all the world now who calls her Maggie.” Killian sighed as he looked at the two who hours ago defended his niece from his own grandfather. He held out an old plushie that was, of all things, a hippogriff.

“You know how most parents give their children a teddy bear when they first arrive on this planet? Not my brother; he had to be different and give his child a hippogriff, though I guess it's appropriate, all things considered.”

Because she turned out magical?” James asked and Alec scoffed as he took the plushie; James could be very smart with certain areas, and very dumb in others.

“That is one way of looking at it, but only the surface. The hippogriff is a combination of a griffin and a horse, mortal enemies that see each other as predator and prey, much like extreme I.R.A sees any member of the British empire as an accepted casualty. You see, the hippogriff symbolizes an impossible thing, and is related to an old medieval expression 'Jungentur jam grypes equis' which means 'To cross griffins with horses', roughly equal to 'When pigs fly' of today. The hippogriff is, therefore, a symbol of impossibility and love, and that is what my niece is; she should not be alive or as in a perfect health that she is, but she is. You see, symbolism aside, Maggie just shouldn't be alive; there was a reason she was born the same year as Chernobyl happened. An aspect of weak force manipulation, is radiation absorption so when Chernobyl started reaching critical, the Russians were screaming for assistance, and Melanie went to help and she, along with three other radiation absorbers, the only ones who came, absorbed as much radiation as they dared before they had to pull back. Two of them died a month later, the third's abilities grew too quickly for them to control, and it also warped their body into horrible contortions. Melanie was declared sterile.”
“That doesn't make sense, though; we've seen a picture of Melanie and Cassie has many of her features,” James argued, but Alec had a strange contemplative look.

“And I was there when Melanie went into labor and produced a healthy 2.2 kg baby girl, no extra limbs, no fused limbs, cranium a healthy 30 cm, and body a normal 44.4 cm. No surrogate was used, no medical procedures nothing; Melanie gave birth to the first female born to the Collins clan in over 300 years, a little small perhaps, but alive nonetheless.”

“But wait, those measurements can't be right; Cassie told us she was born in November, her birthday is only a week away. I know that some babies can be born prematurely, but she would be much smaller than that.”

“Curious isn't it? She is born just barely 7 months after she was conceived, and yet, apart from being just a touch too small, she comes out fully developed. Little wonder MI6 was interested in her, hmm?”

“But MI6 attacked Keagan.” Killian looked at James for a long time before he said,

“Maggie was there you know when they came.” James and Alec looked at him, and Alec quickly alerted Silva.

“Yeah, only 5 years old, MI6 came and went after Keagan, then Melanie came home. When Keagan was attacked, Maggie came running out of her room and one of your agents grabbed her, that was the scene Melanie came home to; her husband pinned to the floor by five men, a sixth holding her daughter. When she tried to run and help Keagan, a seventh, previously unseen agent hit her hard in the gut with his rifle. When the bastard took aim at her, Maggie unleashed her full power for the very first time. Before that, simple levitation was all she had managed; now she shot fire at the man who was ready to kill her mother and electricity burned through her body and badly electrocuted the man holding her. Instead of running to safety in her mother's arms, she ran to try and help her father. One agent grabbed her by the throat and started choking her, tried to squeeze the life out of her; Melanie melted him into a puddle of ash. It was all in vain, however; they injected Keagan with a virus that destroyed his system. Maggie learned the meaning of rage then as she formed fluorosulphuric acid in her body and shot it at the man holding the needle; it was so concentrated that it ate through the man's bone and took his head off. She was knocked unconscious after that.”

“And then Melanie's accident two years later,” Alec said, trying to understand why MI6 had not been better prepared, had not made sure that wife and child were gone before attacking Keagan unless they didn't care who they had to kill in order to get to Keagan. Killian looked at him strangely.
“It wasn't an accident that killed Melanie; that was suicide.”

“But Cassie said—”

“Maggie was the one who made it look like a suicide; after the power flickered, she knew her mother had done, but instead of calling someone right away, she cleaned up the scene, made it look like an accident, hid her suicide note, and then called for help.”

“Why on Earth would she do that?” James asked, perplexed.

“For Catholics, suicide is the ultimate sin and some churches won't allow suicides to be buried in consecrated ground. She hoped that, if she made it look like an accident instead of suicide, the church would allow Melanie to be buried next to Keagan and, perhaps, St. Peter would allow the two of them to be reunited in the afterlife.”

“But, but she's a pagan,” James said, as Alec was in shock at what a 7-year-old had done for her parents.

“True, but her father was Catholic and her mother Jewish, and she loved the two of them too much to let them be separated any longer than they had been simply because of a difference in religion. Only I, Mattie, Isabella and Gareth knew what she had done.”

“Gareth?” Alec asked.

“Keagan's best friend and Maggie's godfather, Gareth Mallory.” James practically fell out of his chair.

“Gareth Mallory, one of the biggest politicians in all of Great Britain, one of the few people who has higher clearance than the head of MI6, the biggest advocate for post-human rights, is Cassie's godfather?!”

“Why didn't Cassie go to Mallory when Melanie died if he was her godfather? No offense but a man like him must have been a better candidate.” Alec asked and Killian's face turned ugly in anger.
“My grandfather hates my niece and couldn't stand the idea of her being in any way happy, so he threatened Gareth; give up custody to my father or he reveals Gareth's secret.”

“What secret was great enough he would give up his own goddaughter?” Killian squirmed before saying,

“Gareth Malory always preferred finding... companionship... in his own locker room, as they say.”

“Gareth Mallory is gay?”

“A single, gay politician during the early 90s? People were a bit more accepting, but not enough to let him have custody of a child; small minded bible-thumpers would call him an unfit guardian because he would corrupt her or sexually abuse her or some such bullshit. Also, he would be kicked out of his job as a number of people would be uncomfortable with a gay politician. Gareth would lose his job, which he has since used to overturn a number of laws that went against post-human rights since his best friend was one, and he wouldn't even get custody of Maggie; it was a lose-lose scenario no matter what. The best way for Gareth to protect Maggie was to give her up; it's hard raising a child in exile, especially as the British government would be after them non-stop.” James wanted to argue but he knew it was wrong to argue; it was thanks to Mallory that that law from two years ago regarding intangibles was overruled at the last second. He almost jumped when Alec said

“Of course! Mallory is the government official who has been doing his best to protect her since she came back to England!”

“Aye, he couldn't protect her when she was a child, so he's trying to protect her now. Though it's obvious he does it more for Maggie and Keagan than Melanie.”

“What has Melanie got to do with anything?” Killian did his best to lean in, knowing that despite everything, his niece would be waking up soon.

“I don't know everything, it was never talked about, just like Marco, Rocco and Dino don't talk about their family business around myself or Matteo, but Melanie used the fact that she was mute to her advantage.”

“How?”
“Well, you have to admit, do you watch what you say around a person who is mute?”

“Are you suggesting that Melanie was involved in some illegal doings?”

“Like I said, I don't know everything, but from what I've learned as the years have gone by, is that with what Melanie and Isabella were up to, Keagan and I were practically choir boys by comparison!”

“Then why go after Keagan in the first place?” James asked, and Alec had a feeling he wouldn't like the answer by the look on Killian's face.

“Tell me, 007, don't you think it would have been easier to get rid of my brother, who loved to tinker, in a more nonchalant episode such as a faulty wire, whilst tinkering with one of many gadgets? Or Melanie, who was a very athletic person, to tragically be hit by a car one day, whilst out for a morning jog? Instead, they come in guns blazing whilst there are only two people in the apartment?” Alec and James both felt sick at what Killian was implying.

“You're saying that they weren't after Keagan, a suspected terrorist, or Melanie, a woman who became friends with the daughter of a mafia don.”

“They were after a five-year-old girl, who still had all her baby teeth, couldn't read a lick of the English language but could read Aztec of all things, and whose favorite toy was that plushie that she named 'Blue boy' due to the coloring. They were after a little girl whose only crime, was that at six months old, she could levitate things and change the color of her stuffed animal; she loved turning the bloody thing every color you could imagine; from hot pink to emerald green.”

“Do you have any proof?” James asked, as much as he had lost faith in his government before Cassie even came into their lives, he just couldn't believe this; the youngest person they had ever gone after, was a fifteen-year-old bomber, who took three agents with him when he blew himself up. Five years old; Cassie the definition of an innocent baby.

“I don't, but Melanie did, and before she died, she entrusted it to the one person she knew would keep it safe.”

“Isabella or Mallory?”
“Nay, the animosity between Gareth and Melanie came from both parties; they only tolerated each other for Keagan's sake. And whilst my wife and Melanie were great friends, there was someone else she trusted even more than her own half-brother; a business associate that she named as Maggie's second godfather.”

“Do you remember the name?”

"Aye, t'was the man with the golden gun; Francesco Scaramanga."

“THE ASSASSIN?!” Both men shouted; no one had seen Scaramanga and lived to talk about it.

“Aye, Melanie kept... interesting... company to say the least. Have fun at the wake; a good old Irish wake is always something to see.” As Killian got ready to leave, James remembered something else he said.

“Killian, one moment more of your time; you said that Cassie was the first female born to your clan in 300 years, isn't that a bit of an exaggeration? Surely there must have been other females.”

“Any female that was part of this clan before Maggie was an adoption, legal or otherwise. Look, there is a dark secret attached to this family, a curse, that has affected the first born sons, causing the parents to murder their own children. My father, my grandfather, and so on, all second sons.” James and Alec were again shocked.

“If they murdered their sons, then why was your brother alive for so long?” Killian gave James The Look and if the moment wasn't so serious Alec would have laughed; so that was where Cassie had learned that look.

“Have you met my mother? Do you think she would allow anyone to hurt either of us?”

“So then they weren't driven to kill their sons?” Alec asked

“No, they were killed to 'protect the populace', even though they would only attack murderers, hardly a crime if you ask me.”
“I just don't understand, why only the firstborns? And why would they attack killers? And if Matteo is your only son, why was he allowed to live?”

“Matteo is alive for the same reason Keagan was; no one was going to take Isabella's baby from her, and with her pure muscle brothers, no one could force her. As for the rest, I'm afraid you just aren’t ready to know it; not even Maggie knows it since it should have no reason to affect her. Matteo doesn't have it, Maggie is female and that's the end of it!” Killian then wheeled himself away and Alec groaned.

“How can one person be so bloody mysterious?! We take one step forward only to take three back! MI6 was trying to kill her, not her father, she made her mother's suicide look like an accident, something a seven-year-old shouldn't be able to comprehend, let alone perform! Her godfathers are the politician and post-human hero Gareth Mallory, and the infamous assassin, Scaramanga! MI6 worried about a pair of supposed terrorists in Keagan and Killian, whilst apparently not bothering with mob daughter Isabella Esposito and possible blackmailer Melanie Jaeger! For crying out loud, if MI6 had just left her alone she would never have been in a terrorist environment, to begin with!”

“And why is she the first biological Collins in 300 years? What is this 'curse' on their family that made parents commit infanticide, and only the firstborns? Why didn't this curse affect Keagan or Matteo? We get an answer to one question, and a hundred others pop up to take its place!” The four attended Miriam's wake and many made sure Brendan kept his distance from Cassie. James and Alec were also introduced to Marco's wife, Sophie, Rocco's wife, Penelope, and Dino's wife, Thalia; three lovely ladies from Greece who had come to Ireland for a visit and stayed for matrimony. When James and Alec saw Cassie, they almost did a spit-take; she was in a short dark green dress that ended just above her knees, a dark red belt around her waist, knee high black leather boots. Her bangs had been braided to form a sort of crown that lead down to a larger braid, with small white flowers placed here and there throughout the braid. She looked like a maiden of late spring; there were still elements of spring, but it didn't have the naivete of new spring. A week later found the agents all back at MI6, and James and Alec both laughed as they saw Cassie's desk with different sized packages wrapped in different colors with different designs.

“Was I unclear when I told people not to bother with my birthday?” Cassie asked as she tried to reach her desk by sorting her presents.

“Well it's your own fault; you have shown signs that when you take over as Q, you will be a firm but fair overlord. Or is that overlady in her case?” Alec asked.

"Overlady is not a word, so I imagine overlord is what you'll have to call me when in one of your juvenile moods. From what I have seen, people have given me an assortment of candy, toys, and treats for Rai, Zumi, Matches, and Corvus, clothes, video games so I imagine I'll have to get a
console for them and a number of books in different languages. I imagine Scarlet was trying to make me feel bad by giving me a magazine filled with women with breasts so large, if they actually tried cooking, they would burn the silicone as they leaned over the stove." James and Alec burst out laughing at that.

“And are you at all treating yourself for your birthday?”

“Well there is a – no it's a silly thing to do and a waste of a day,” Cassie said as she rolled back to her uncluttered portion of the desk. James then used his own telekinesis to roll her back to them and made her stick.

“What?” Cassie looked between the two men and, knowing they wouldn't leave her alone, presented them with a flyer. Alec unfolded it and saw that it was a flyer for a cinema near Cassie's apartment. 'COME SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CINEMA! MASTERS OF HORROR MARATHON! LON CHANEY! BELA LUGOSI! BORIS KARLOFF! VINCENT PRICE! PETER CUSHING! CHRISTOPHER LEE! MICHAEL GOUGH! BRING YOUR FRIENDS! Take this coupon and get a bag of popcorn and a medium soda for half off!'

“You want to go to this cinema and see these actors?” Alec asked and Cassie fidgeted as she pushed her glasses up her nose.

"I found out from Antoine and Otto that it was my parents' favorite cinema to go to whilst they were dating and later on their date nights. Apparently, their respective fathers were my alternating babysitters and they themselves my alternating playmates. Because the cinema often has these 'special nights', they distribute these flyers at hotels, apartments, grocery stores, any place where large amounts of people gather."

"Yeah, but with pirating, Roku, Netflix and everything else, less and fewer people are going to cinemas. You really want to spend money to go see these movies?" James asked.

“I've never been to a cinema before; my grandparents could only show me movies on their television, and even then, neither was that much into horror movies. Then whilst I was travelling, Nonno gave me such an allowance that I could stay in some of the best hotels wherever I went, always have good food brought to me, do whatever I wanted when I wasn't studying, but I stayed at motels, hostels and camped whenever feasible because it was cheaper, and I made my own food, going with lower priced ingredients because in my nightmares my great-grandfather would come and thrash my mind for 'wasting money' on 'luxuries' I didn't even need when I could have just as easily rested my head anywhere whenever my body was too pathetic to stay awake any longer or that frozen vegetables were just as good as fresh (even if they taste horribly of a freezer) when I was too worthless to-” Cassie suddenly stopped as she felt the telekinetic energy from the two agents shatter the glass surrounding Q's office, making the others glance over in alarm, but Q stopped them from
“Never, and I mean NEVER, call yourself pathetic or worthless again, do you understand me?” Alec asked and Cassie flinched at the tone but looked at him.

“Then what would you call me Alec? I know that my great-grandfather has never left Ireland and never shall, and yet I have these nightmares! I could have stood up to him or even have killed him a thousand times and yet I never did!” Before Cassie could continue, James calmly asked,

“Cassie, do you know what C-PTSD is?” She looked at him in exasperation.

“Of course I do, it stands for Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a condition that results from chronic or long-term exposure to emotional trauma over which a victim has little or no control and from which there is little or no hope of escape.”

“Exactly, and do you know those who can suffer from it?”

"Victims of kidnapping or entrapment, long-term exposure to crisis conditions, long-term imprisonment and torture, childhood physical, emotional or sexual abuse among others."

“How appropriate that you would list those that apply to you. Now, do you know the symptoms?”

“I know, I know, I display the symptoms and what I have is a form of Complex Post Traumatic Disorder, but that doesn’t make me feel any better for being so silly.” Cassie looks like she just wants to smack herself and, sure, Alec isn't Mr. Touchy-feely, but Cassie is a victim here, and shouldn't feel so lousy for being one, so he leans down and tilts her chin up.

"A man comes back from Korea and he drops to the ground in the fetal position when he hears a car backfiring, is he being silly?"

"Of course not; he thinks it's a gunshot, not a car. You know, I hate it when you trick me."
"Welcome to my life. Cassie, it's your birthday and your great-grandfather, ass-hole that he is, can't reach you here so if you want to go to this cinema and see these movies, then just so long as an international crisis that requires a computer nerd doesn't pop up, it should be alright." Cassie huffed at James,
“I'm not a nerd, I'm a hacker, you misogynistic dinosaur. And, just to be clear, we're not going to be mentioning this emotional thing to anyone, right?”

“Hell no.”

“Damn straight.”

"Thank the Gods," Cassie said as she went back to sorting her presents.

“Oh, and Cassie, here's my present for you.” Both men said as they pulled out large wrapped presents for her. Cassie looked at both presents before reaching for Alec's first. Both men noticed she was a little timid in unwrapping the gift, but were patient as she opened a personally made box set of books.

“Around the World in Eighty Days, Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea, The Mysterious Island and Journey to the Centre of the Earth? In French?”

"I saw you looking at one of his books so I got you the four that were some of his best, and also made pretty damn good movies if you're interested in looking them up." Cassie smiled before opening James' present and was surprised to see another box of books, though these looked second hand. Alec was about to smack him when Cassie set the box down and hugged James.

“How'd you know?”

"You may be an heiress to multi-million dollar estate, and with the way that old goat Whithers invests your money, it shouldn't be long before it's multi-billion, but you still like simpler things, so I figured you'd appreciate books from a second-hand store with bent backs to show the previous owners loved them, to crisp new books. Don't worry, I thumbed through them and made sure all the pages are intact. I wouldn't want you to get caught up in one of those Agatha Christie's, just for Poirot's conclusion to have been torn out." That prompted Cassie to look through the box at the titles.

“The Invisible Man, War of the Worlds, The Food of the Gods and How it Came to the Earth, The Empire of the Ants and Other Stories, The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Murder at the Vicarage, Murder on the Orient Express, And Then There were None, Death on the Nile, The Bone Collector and Jurassic Park. You really got a lot of bank for your buck, didn't you James?”
“And you've been talking with Wade and Felix, haven't you?”

"Trying to outdo me, James?” Alec asked and he actually looked a little peeved, until Cassie leaned up and kissed him on the cheek.

"I appreciate both gifts Alec and I appreciate the wide selection, James.”

"Yes well, I figured you would appreciate Mystery, Science Fiction and a little Horror over pretty little love stories." James and Alec, unfortunately, had a mission on Cassie's birthday, but they still humiliated her by singing 'For She's A Jolly Good Fellow', and she promised to make both soprano singers when they got back. When James and Alec checked in two days later, it was to disturbing news, that Cassie had gone missing, but M did not believe that she had run away; when Tanner had gone by to see if she was alright, he found Rai and Zumi both locked in a room that was one of the guest rooms, going crazy. There was also a large splotch of blood on the carpet near Cassie's meditation room. When all field agents heard this disturbing news, they finished their missions in record time before heading back, to find that there were still no new leads.

“Who took her?”

“Is it an enemy of MI6 or an enemy of her own?”

“There has to be something you know!”

"Listen to me, all of you! We are doing everything we can, we have even called in a post-human that can talk to animals to see if Rai and Zumi can tell us anything, as well as a number of different kinds of clairvoyants and Q, is trying every method possible of tracking her. As a matter of fact, 009 and 007, you are both to shower, relax as much as you can, and 009 is to head over to her apartment, whilst 007 is to report into Q." Tanner shouted at the seven agents who were panicking. James and Franklyn were a little confused as to why they were singled out but did as they were told. When they were done, Franklyn took off for Cassie's apartment, and James had Alec follow him down to Q-branch, in nothing but a robe. When they entered Q-branch, it was obvious everyone was trying to appear calm, and it was Cleese who directed the men to a door next to the armory. As they passed Q's office, they saw someone they had never seen trying to talk to Rai and Zumi, who were growling at her. They went through the door and saw Q standing next to an odd, enclosed tank.

“007, you are the only agent that has at all touched the astral plane, so I'm afraid that you are the one who will have to test run Cassandra's latest invention.” Q looked deeply troubled by his protege's disappearance, so James automatically asked,
“What is it and what do I have to do?”

“For lack of a better term, we simply call it the Astral Chamber; it is a tank with water which you lie in, and try to reach the astral plane. From there, you will try and find Cassandra's astral signature, and try to make contact, see if she has any idea where she is. The idea being that actually floating, and not connected to the ground, will help your consciousness detach from the physical realm and enter the astral plane, though sadly, Cassandra never got the chance to test it.”

“What can I do?” Alec asked as James removed the robe and stood there for a moment in his boxers before entering the chamber.

“I'm afraid, 006, that your abilities deal in the physical side of psychic powers, and the level you would need to be in order to use your seismic sense is so astronomical, even Cassandra never met such an individual. And until we have even a hint of her trail, you're Enhanced Senses would have you running all over London, and we have no way of knowing if she is even still in London, let alone—” alive was the word that Q could not choke out, but Alec refused to believe Cassie had survived her great-grandfather's abuse, only to be killed in an incident like this. That was when Alec remembered something.

“Q, I am positive that she is alive, but I need you to remember from a month ago; you said that Whithers had a letter talking about how he had to wait until that day to open Melanie's will and reveal Cassie's inheritance?”

“Your point?”

“How did Melanie know exactly when her daughter would need that inheritance? I'm going to go talk to the lawyer, and there is one other person who may be able to help.” Alec took off out of Q-branch, asking Silva if there was anything he could do. I'll do what I can see if I can find the security footage around her apartment. I will also get in touch with some fellow magicals I know, and see if we can find her. I hope you find something useful on your end./ Alec quickly found James' car and took off for Whithers' office whilst calling a number he himself had never called before.

“Gareth Mallory's office, how may I help you?”

“Gareth Mallory is needed right now, on urgent MI6 business.”
“I'm sorry, he's currently-”

“Inform him that his Goddaughter's life may be in grave danger if he doesn't take this call.”

“I don't know who you are, but Mr. Mallory does not have a-”

“Listen very closely if you like your job; go in there, and tell Mallory that Erika Margo Roxanne Jaeger has been taken, and we need any help he can give us in locating her.” The next thing Alec heard, was the voice of the British government.

“Who are you, and what has happened to Phoebe?” Alec had to stop himself from rolling his eyes.

“Do any two people have the same name for this girl? Listen, sometime the day before yesterday, Phoebe, or as MI6 knows her, Cassie, was taken and she may be injured. Whoever took her managed to lock her dogs up and we don't know where her lizard and crow are. I am on my way to Whithers law firm to see if Melanie left any clues as she was prepared for MI6. We have a telepath going to the astral plane, we have clairvoyants and a psychometric at her apartment, and we even have a beast speaker trying to talk to the dogs. My name is Alec Trevelyan, known on record as 006, I am a friend of Cassie's, and I am trying every resource I can think of to find my friend, can you add anything to the search?” Alec asked as he parked, got out of the car, and headed inside.

"I can't get officially involved, but there are a few of Keagan's old friends that are willing to talk to me, and through them, I will try a channel that is closed to you."

“Which channel is that?” Alec as he got in the lift, flashing credentials at security.

"The magical channel," Mallory replied before hanging up. When Alec hit Whithers floor, he ran out and tried to bypass the secretary, only to be knocked on his ass.

“Can I help you?”

“Force-field generation? Never mind, listen, Miss. Jaeger may be in terrible danger, I need to see if Whithers can help in any way.”

"Very good sir, you may go in now." The secretary replied as she went back to her typing. Alec paid
no heed to the odd behavior and simply went in.

“How can I help you, sir?”

“Look, Erika has been kidnapped, and you had a letter from her mother, telling you exactly what day
to get in contact with her child; how did she know not only what circumstances her daughter would
be in, but on what day she would need the help?” Alec asked the lawyer, looking around his office.

“That is simple enough to answer; the late Mrs. Jaeger had a very dear friend who kept a highly
reliable soothsayer with him. When Melanie was unable to go on any longer, she knew what she was
doing could be seen as incredibly selfish, so she had the soothsayer tell as much as she could, hoping
to leave Erika some clues and help on the path destiny had for her.”

“Is there anything about her kidnapping?”

“I will have to check the letters; the gift of precognition is a heavy burden, so Melanie instructed that
certain letters may only be opened when it is pertinent.”

“OK, check the letters, see if there is anything concerning November 14 or 15; it's believed she was
taken on one of those two days, as for the soothsayer, is there any way to get in touch with them?
Maybe they can help.” Alec was ready to try and find Scaramanga himself if he had any information,
even if the only descriptive feature they had of the man was that he had a third nipple.

"Only with a Medium; the soothsayer died two years ago,” Whithers explained as he looked through
a box of letters from Melanie. Alec groaned in frustration at not only being blocked in that regard but
also the text message from Q; James was still in the astral plane and the others were encountering a
psychic barrier, preventing them from reading her apartment.

“Ah! Here we are! A letter dated November 15, 2016, addressed to 'The Green-Eyed Russian'; I
don't mind saying that soothsayer gave me the willies with how accurate she could be.” Whithers
admitted as he handed Alec the letter addressed to him. Alec looked at it before opening it.

* To my daughter's Russian friend,

First, allow me to please apologize for not addressing you correctly, my gateway to the beyond
never gives me names, only descriptions. Secondly, if my gateway is correct, then my daughter is in
great danger. My precious baby, my Keagan's pearl, has been taken from her home by small
minded people who do not see her for the gift that she is. My soothsayer cannot tell me where she
has been taken, but she can tell me who has taken her; a group of post-humans that hate magicals.
Ridiculous, isn't it? The humans hate us for being different from them, and instead of banding
together, some of us hate a different branch of genetics; makes you wonder if people really are
programmed for hatred. But I am rambling, and you need to find my daughter. My soothsayer says
that you and the others shall find her, but I do not believe the future to be set in diamond, and even if
it is, just because we can endure something, doesn't mean we should have to.

They call themselves The Next Step (creative, I know), and on the next page is their headquarters,
but I will give you a description; he is 6' 2'', dark wavy hair, but it looks like he hasn't washed it in a
month of Sunday's, he will have pale, pasty skin, and closer examination of his hands will reveal that
he frequently bites his nails. He is the one who picked her lock, bamboozled the cameras and
managed to lock her dogs up. The other is 5' 9'', blonde hair in a buzz cut, tan skin and walks with a
limp; he is the bastard who actually struck my precious jewel, so when you catch him, break his arm
for me, will you? Be careful and bring heat-vision goggles when you track him down; he has
invisibility, psychic shield, and military training. I don't know how you will do it, but you must make
one of them crack and reveal where my baby is; I am not strong enough to be there for her when she
will need me, but I just can't stay on this Earth without my brilliant magician to keep me grounded. I
am sorry I can't give you any more information, but the soothsayer refuses to tell me anymore. What
has happened and what shall happen to her is beyond cruel, but I am afraid it is all necessary in
order for her to truly control her powers; magic takes concentration, focus, and mental strength, and
I think you will agree that few have the mental strength that my daughter does. And after all, a
diamond is made from coal through stress, a pearl from a grit of sand through aggravation, and
steel is forged through fire.

Please save my little star in an empty night,

Melanie Jaeger *

Alec looked at the second page, read the address, and promptly called Joanna.

"Joanna? Yes I know there is nothing new on Franklyn's end, but I believe that I have a lead; go to
Q, get heat-vision goggles along with some of Cassie's gadgets that are geared towards telekinetics
and Invisibles. Never mind what I'm getting at, just go get that stuff, we'll need it. Oh, and bring
Dominic; I imagine he will leap at the chance, but tell Q to keep James in the tank until we get the
location; I don't know how hard these nuts will be to crack. I'm sending you the address now." An
hour later, Alec and Joanna were bringing Thomas Dumlok into MI6 for questioning, with Dominic
(coming in with a limp after the bastard managed to twist Dom's ankle) bringing in a bloodied,
bruised, and sporting a broken arm, Lt. Charles Dubois. Lukas took Joanna with him and started
interrogating Dumlok, whilst Franklyn and Emily took Dubois.

"We looked up the group you found; they believe that God's planned next step is post-humans that
have solely genetic abilities, and that those with magic based abilities are cursed by the Devil," M
"That is one of the dumbest things I have ever heard of; it's not bad enough we have humans and regular church nuts against us, now we have post-humans believing that those with magic-based abilities are unholy?" M acted as if she hadn't heard Alec and continued.

“We also looked up Dumlok and Dubois; Dumlok is a post-human with telekinesis and technological manipulation, with a weak personality, easily manipulated by Dubois’ alpha personality. Dubois was a valued soldier in the intelligence branch of the army with his invisibility and psychic shielding, until a magical came along, and was able to create Golems with Dubois' abilities, and if they were captured, the magical would cancel the spell and the creature would simply disintegrate; suddenly Dubois wasn't as useful so he was given a desk job. He blames all magicals for what happened, and whenever he finds one, whether their magic abilities are simple candy magic or disease magic. There are over half a dozen assault charges against him, and each victim was either a magical themselves, or, as they call them, a magic lover. One of them or another member of their group could have seen Cassandra use her magic, tracked her down and done whatever they've done.”

“You don't think they've killed her either?” Alec asked.

"The blood puddle I found wasn't large enough to indicate she had been killed there," Tanner informed and Scarlet spoke up from behind him,

"Maybe they took her, tortured her, then killed her." Alec wanted to wipe that smug look off her face, but M beat him to it.

“004, you should think about taking Cassandra's refresher course in reading body language; Dumlok is scared, but he isn't acting like he killed anyone, and his file specifically states he has a severe case haemophobia, which is a fear of blood; I doubt he could torture anyone, even with Dubois goading him, and Dubois would be unable to do much without Dumlok's help. Talk to them, find out what you can.” Before M could leave, Dominic stopped her.

"Wait, M, you said Dumlok has a fear of blood, does he have any other fears? Or Dubois?"

“Such as what, 005?”

“Such as, maybe, mysophobia?”
“Mysophobia?” Alec asked, confused, wondering where this was going.

“Simply put, a fear of contamination and, more importantly, germs.”

"It is not recorded in either man's record, 005," M said and Dom looked dejected before a gleam entered his eyes.

“Then Alec, I hope you have a good poker face.” Ten minutes later, Alec came into the interrogation room, holding a needle.

“006?” Lukas asked, not sure what Alec was doing.

“I'm done waiting for this worm to talk, thought I'd lend you a hand.”

"I'm not telling you where that freak is; it deserves its fate." Lukas stopped Joanna from lunging, though he had to admit he wanted to hit the little prick.

"That's an old technique; don't think of the victim as a person, think of them as an object, it helps the conscience. But let me tell you about Cassandra Knight, better known as Cassandra Jaeger; Cassandra was orphaned at age 7, two years after seeing her father murdered, Cassandra was raised on a farm be her paternal grandparents, Cornelius, though he preferred Conner, and Cornelia its part of where she earned her muscles, working on a farm. Cassandra was given special forces training by her monster of a great-grandfather, and her grandparents did everything they could to keep her humanity, with her cousin Matteo helping as best he could, being only two years older than her. At 9, Cassandra lost her aunt to a drunk driver whilst her uncle was paralyzed, but she was there for her cousin. She was raped at age 12-"

"It's probably dead already!" Dumlok blurted out, but Joanna heard a keyword.

“ Probably? You don't know for sure?"

“ We put it in an enclosed space with not much air, and it would have started panicking, so it's dead.”

“Cassandra Jaeger doesn't panic you little worm, and here's something you didn't know; Cassandra
has bionic physiology, which includes oxygen independence. I imagine once she realized what you did, she remained calm, took her time, managed to break out of the cell you put her in, rescued Matches and Corvus, and has gone to the nearest town to get cleaned up, something to eat, and we'll be seeing her waltz in soon, and I will enjoy watching her kick your ass for touching her dogs. You should have seen what she did to the last guy who threatened them; she beat him up so badly, he lost two teeth and his face swelled up like Quasimodo. Imagine what she'll do to you for actually touching her dogs and keeping her from feeding them for almost two days.”

“Magicals can't break free from iron and it would have to dig through six feet of dirt, hoping her precious pets don't suffocate first!” The three agents were in shock; he couldn't mean what they thought he meant.

“Dig through dirt? Suffocating? You didn't...” Oddly, it wasn't Alec who grabbed Dumlok from the chair and slammed him into the wall; it was Lukas.

"You put Cassie, Matches, and Corvus in an iron casket, didn't you? And then, just in case she managed to show just how strong she is, you buried the casket underground, didn't you? You buried a fellow human being whilst she was breathing, didn't you? You buried her alive! Where?! Where did you bury her?! Tell me, you little shit!” He smirked nastily and said,

“Freaks don't deserve a marked grave.” Alec then jumped into action and held the needle in front of Dumlok's face.

"You might want to re-think that; this is one of Cassie's latest inventions, and lucky you, you get to test run it for her. You see, blood makes many squeamish, not many are as pathetic as you and faint at the sight, but some do, so Cassie came up with a solution. This here will make your blood slowly pour out of your nose, your ears, and your eyes, not your mouth as you could choke that way, but you experience every drop leaving your body without the ability to pass out.” Dumlok lost his smirk and, somehow, looked paler than normal.

“You – you wouldn't!” Now Alec smirked.

“Wanna a bet?” Alec then plunged the needle into Dumlok's neck.

“Now, tell us where you buried Cassandra, or watch your life force actually leave your body over the next 48 hours before your heart finally gives out. I'd be careful though if I were you; panicking makes the heart produce more blood.”
"OK! OK! She's buried in Glastonbury! It's a small market town in Somerset! She's buried at St. Michael's Tower!" Joanna understood the reference.

“Of course! St. Michael's Tower sits on the tor that is said to be home to the Gwyn Ap Nudd, otherwise known as the King of the Fairies!”

“Great, I'll get James!” Alec said as he started to run out of the interrogation room, only to be stopped by Dumlok.

“WAIT! I told you where she’s buried, you have to give me that antidote before I start bleeding!”

“Sorry, but that's the reason you better hope Cassie is still alive; that was only a prototype, she hasn’t gotten the chance to work up an antidote yet.”

**Whilst Alec was getting information in the physical world, James was attempting to find them on the astral plane**

James had no issues admitting (at least in the sanctity of his own mind) that the astral plane made him highly nervous. The feeling of leaving his body was uncomfortable, and the field itself was very topsy-turvy, but he had to try and find Cassie, in case the others couldn't find anything.

“Cassie!” James shouted, only to be surprised by another voice.

“I'm afraid that won't work lad.” James turned and saw a man that could be none other than,

“Keagan Jaeger, at your service lad.”

“What are you doing here?”

"There are no secrets from the dead, so I, unfortunately, know what has happened to my little Maggie. It is easier to enter the astral plane from the plane of the dead than trying to breach the barrier between the living and the dead, so I had to wait until you came here for me to be able to talk to you."
“Then you know where she is?” James asked, only for Keagan to look down.

“I can't tell you that, son; it is beyond me.”

“Your daughter is in danger and you won't tell me-” here, an Italian voice interrupted.

“We would tell you if we could, but we can’t.”

“Isabella.”

“The one and only, dear.”

“Why can't you tell me?”

“I'm afraid that those are the rules; we can give you hints, point you down the right path, but we cannot give you the answers you seek.”

“But Cassie is in danger! Can't you make an exception?”

"Anything worth knowing is worth fighting for." James froze at the new voice.

“It's alright James, it's me.” James turned and saw none other than his wife, Tracy.

“James, if we are to find Cassie, we must find her spirit guide, but we cannot find hers if you don't know your own.”

“But her guide is Corvus, a crow.” Tracy laughed.

“When it comes to magicals, James, you can't trust all that you see with your eyes. This is why you
have trouble with your air capabilities, but that conversation is for another time. Corvus became a part of her, the spirit guide stands beside us when we are born; they know who we are meant to be, and they guide us when we are alone, with a gentle song. You have never heard this song because you have refused to listen to anyone since your parents died. But if you mean to find your little kitten, you must listen now. Close your eyes, and listen." James didn't know what to believe, except that he had to find Cassie before it was too late, so he did as he was told, ignoring the 'kitten' comment. He felt a little silly, but he eventually did hear something. It was hard to describe, so he opened his eyes and followed the sound when he saw his spirit guide, he couldn't help muttering,

“You must be joking.”

“A spirit animal's job is no joking manner, James.” Of all animals out there, a snake was laying there, talking to him.

“My spirit animal is a snake? How can that be when my element is air?”

“Wait until you see my Maggie's; that is a little confusing too.”

“What my brother-in-law is trying to convey, is that our affinity doesn't determine our spirit guide, our affinity is a piece of who we are, but not entirely. For example, among other things, the snake symbolizes resurrection. Something, if I understand correctly, you frequently partake in. Now that you have found your guide, he can lead you to others, but to find my niece, you must focus on her.”

“How can I focus on her when I don't know her true name? I thought it was Erika, but you call her Roxy, you Keagan call her Maggie.”

“And Gareth calls her Phoebe, but names aren't important, not here; you know who she is on the inside, and that is what counts. Focus on who my daughter is, not what she is, and your guide there will find her.” Keagan stated so James again closed his eyes and focused on the girl who looked like a stiff breeze would knock her down, but she had a core of steel. She could appear as calm, cool and collected as a monk most of the time, but the minute you threatened someone she cared about, she became as vicious as a badger. She was already powerful at only 29, and as she grew older, she would only get stronger. Her fire could melt steel within moments and – suddenly the snake's head jerked up and he took off like a shot.

“Whatever that thought was, it helped your snake catch her scent! Now normally, you get pulled along when your guide starts moving, but you only just found each other.”
“So?” Tracy smiled at James' question and caressed his cheek.

“Run clever boy, find your little fire cat, and remember, you have all the time in the world for her, your Russian bear, and your Spanish rat.” James wanted more time with Tracy, but he knew he had to follow that snake to find Cassie. He took off running, and he ran past a tarantula and a shark first, then he was passing wolves, salmon, mice and otters, and a multitude of others until he was running next to his guide, and finally noticed just what kind of snake it was. It was not very big, only about 65 cm in length, had a small, short, wide, pear-shaped head. Its small head made its large eyes appear even larger, it had a slender body and a short, thin tail. The color was a sort of orangish-brown, with lighter brown diamonds framed in medium black lines and the scales looked very rough to the touch. He had no idea what kind of snake it was, but he did his best to memorize it in case it disappeared before Cassie saw him. When it stopped suddenly, it whipped its tail up and tripped him before he could pass it, though, at that moment, he desperately wanted to turn the thing into a snake-skin belt.

“Was that trip really necessary?” The snake was saved from answering by a strange sounding

*HONK* James looked up and saw a swan looking at him like he was the strangest thing in the world. James looked back at the snake and asked,

“Why did you bring me here? We are supposed to be looking for Cassie, but all I see around here is a swan that-”

“James?” James turned sharply at the call of his name.

“Cassie?!” James called back, hoping to see her, but the swan merely swam closer.

"James, if I can hear you, that means that you must be close to my guide, follow her, and she can lead you back to me." James looked at the swan who started flapping her wings and started flying before James could make any comments. James again took off, with the snake moving quickly as well. He ran for what seemed like miles until again, the damn snake tripped him.

“Has it occurred to you simply tell me to stop?” James asked the snake, who flicked his tongue at him.

“I think he figures the best way to make you stop, is to trip you up.” James looked and saw Cassie, she looked dizzy and her body looked burned, but she was there.
“Cassie!”

“I was hoping you would find me soon.”

“Do you know where you are? Why haven't you teleported away?”

“James, I'm in Glastonbury, it's a small town in Somerset, and I can't teleport because I'm encased in iron, it's disorienting me and burning my body, so I mentally left my body and came here, but I don't dare go too far, in case I can't find my way back.”

“Isn't Corvus with you?”

"Yes, he was put in the casket with me, along with Matches, but the iron is bothering him too. Please find us, James, I don't think there is much air left, even for a small armadillo lizard and a crow."

“Casket?”

"Yes James, from what I've seen, it looks like I was buried alive on a tor." James became very angry but said to her,

“Cassie, can you show me where you are?” Cassie reached a hand out to him and focused on where her body was. The first thing James saw was a large tower.

“This tor is believed to be King Arthur's Avalon, so I imagine it was to be something of a slap in the face to me and those like me; a magical spot for my grave, but unmarked, as was the fate of many pagans.”

“Cassie, just try and hold out a little while longer, and we will find you. I promise.” James came back to his body rather suddenly, and gasped out,

“Q! I know where she is!” Q immediately came over, helped him out and James grabbed the clothes left out for him, not even minding it was sweat pants and a t-shirt.
“She's in Somerset!”

“006 is coming to get you, apparently he found something as well. I'll see about trying to get you a means of getting there.” James took off running for the lift, and it might have been a testament to how much everyone was worrying, that none even noticed James’ unusual attire. As he came out, he ran smack dab into Alec.

“Glastonbury!” James said, which Alec followed with,

“St. Michael's Tower!” Before either man could head for their car, Eve came running up to them with Rai and Zumi on her heels.

“There is a helicopter on the roof, the two of you are to take it and find Cassie, get her to a hospital, and make sure she's alright.” As Eve spoke, James noticed Rai and Zumi's mouths seemed to be dripping blood.

“Eve?” Eve looked at the dogs before saying,

“Apparently they sensed when Dubois entered the building and managed to find their way up here; once Franklyn and Emily left Dubois to head out for Cassie, they charged the door, managed to break it down and attacked Dubois. When I got to them, they were tearing him apart; I think they were trying to get at his organs. He's being transported to a hospital; if he makes it, he would make Two-Face sick with how he looks now, and he may need a prosthetic or two. No one else was willing to go near them, but they remembered me.” Alec looked at the two dogs and simply said,

“Let's go bring your mistress home.”

A/N: You know, I had a little trouble with this chapter; it kept starting and stopping until I hit the part of Cassie's abduction, then the words just flowed. As a matter of fact, almost 5,400 hundred words flowed since last night. So, we've met Cassie's family, Cassie had her birthday, she's been buried alive, and our two boys received help from beyond the grave. This is the website I used for the spirit animal info if anyone has a better one, please, link me and I'll check it out; http://onespiritx.tripod.com/magick18.htm (just take the spaces out). Until next time fans, send a little oxygen to Matches and Corvus, won't you?
Chapter Summary

Cassie is now attempting to heal from what happened in the last chapter, and she will find help from a family friend. Later, she will have to offer her own brand of assistance.

Chapter 6

When James and Alec had reached Glastonbury in the helicopter, it was to the sight of two men digging into the ground, with a third wheeling the dirt away. They were waved down by a woman, who explained that their community was very sensitive to ley lines of magic in the area, and someone of Cassandra's levels was the equivalent of a 9.8 earthquake going off, so they had gotten some of the stronger people to start digging. As soon as they had neared the ground in the helicopter, Rai and Zumi had jumped out, ran over, and started digging, trying to get at their mistress. When they hit the coffin, those who had come to help had to back away from the iron casket, so James and Alec used their telekinesis to rip the lid off. When they got it off, Matches scurried out and ran up Alec's leg all the way up to his shoulder and Corvus flew out. Cassie was unresponsive, even when they lifted her from the casket, and both men received a shocking image when Corvus flew right into Cassandra's chest and whatever that had done, it seemed to jump-start Cassandra's consciousness. They had thanked the people who helped Cassie, gotten her into the helicopter and flew to the nearest hospital. Remarkably, Cassie was actually in good health; mildly dehydrated, partially starved, she didn't have to worry about oxygen poisoning, the most troubling thing had been the stab wound in her side, which had been unable to stop bleeding from the remnants of iron in the wound. But she had managed to stem the flow, both with her shirt as well as going into a death-like state, where her heart barely beat.

M had shown up with someone from the psych department, who had gone in to talk to Cassandra, and came running out in tears about ten minutes later, saying she never wanted to see that 'Hellspawn' again. M had, of course, brought a backup since her agents either seduced or annoyed the psychiatrists at MI6, but he only lasted fifteen minutes before the sound of a slap echoed from the room, but before one of the agents could go in and drag the bastard out, he came running out and slammed the door shut to the sound of mad dogs barking like mad, trying to break the door down. Before that idiot could say anything, M calmly told him he was fired, and sent Tanner in, giving him a bag of something, which the agents later found out was a turkey sandwich from one of the best sandwich joints in London, as an incentive to talk. Tanner came back out after a while, and said that, in his opinion as an unofficial psychiatrist, Cassie should take a vacation, preferably somewhere in the country, or at least somewhere where she wouldn't be cramped, as right now work would be an unhealthy escape from her home, which was still being cleaned, and it was also recommended that she not go alone. Almost everyone voted on James and Alec going with her, and Joanna offered a couple of places that were either post-human friendly or post-human exclusive, with little to no chance of a repeat offence.
James and Alec were with M when Cassie was informed of this, who seemed unsure about the idea of a vacation when she should be working, but accepted it. What she had trouble accepting, though, was the idea of a personal assistant helping her mobility, as well as a bodyguard, both of which would be picked for her whilst she was on vacation.

“I don’t want them in the first place, and you are not even going to let me pick my own PA and bodyguard?” Cassandra asked when it looked like she couldn't get out of having them at all.

“No, because you will pick those barely qualified to appease those who proposed this idea, then watch as the PA fumbles important but not vital reports, and show that you are an individual who works best under their own power, without help. As for the bodyguard, you will pick someone with high levels of testosterone, low-level intelligence, then show how easily you can give him the slip, and be shot in a non-vital area whilst under his watch to show that you are safer on your own rather than someone watching you. You will go on vacation for two weeks with 006 and 007, and when you return, your apartment will be put right, and you shall have both assistance and protection waiting for you.” Cassie looked after her as she left before looking at James and Alec.

“How did she know that was what I was going to do?”

“It's you, Cassie. We'll start packing.”

“I don't even get a say in where we're going?!” The two looked at each other before replying,

“No.” They had been at the resort for a day and a half and Cassie was driving them crazy with how she practically refused to actually relax; they had thought that she might enjoy the pool, but she didn't like how guys kept hitting on her, so she refused to use it. There was an area that was especially for pets, but Rai and Zumi refused to be separated from their mistress after what happened, and so kept escaping, and when the resort threatened to keep them indoors, Cassie showed them a picture (never mind how she got it) of the door her dogs broke down to get to the one who hurt her. She also didn't appreciate that she had to rely on others for her meals, appeared to be absolutely miserable and to top everything off, was unable to sleep.

“Cassie, you know that if you don't sleep, your seizures get really bad.” Alec felt the need to remind her as the three were at the bar, and Cassie had taken one sip of her drink before saying it was disgustingly sweet.

“I can't help it if I'm not tired, especially when it's because I'm bored!”
“There are plenty of activities here for you to try.” James offered.

“Yeah, the dancing classes where they try to pair me with someone who keeps kicking me; shuffleboard, which I couldn't care less about; tennis where the people have little to no hand-eye coordination and golf, which would be fun, if we could get James and his libido away from the pool and lovely ladies in bikini's.”

“Why don't you try the spa's or fitness centres?” Alec asked, whilst glaring at James who had the decency to look away.

“They kicked me out of the fitness centre after I had a disagreement with their personal trainer.”

“Cassie, you accused him of steroid use and being a muscle prone idiot whose testicles had shrunken to the size of grapes, as well as only having reached his 'ideal weight' by liposuction, instead of working out and good dieting.” James deadpanned.

“There's encouragement to lose weight, and then there are bullies who get their rocks off by shaming large people. It's not my fault he couldn't accept the truth about himself. And as for the spas, I'm not entrusting my body to strangers.”

“Cassie, we are here so you can relax after what happened, especially since you refused to talk to the psychiatrists.” A dark look crossed Cassie's face, and the lightly clouded sky turned dark and stormy.

“I refuse to talk to some crackerjack doctor, who wants me to talk about how I feel when she has lived a sheltered life with her parents who gave her everything she ever wanted, and only became a psychiatrist so she could pretend to be a humanitarian in an effort to forget the only reason her parents gave her everything was so that she wouldn't notice her father was having an affair with the pool boy and her mother an affair with her piano teacher. Nor will I talk with someone constantly asking me how I feel about being buried alive, when he has become so jaded, he throws himself into his work to ignore the fact that his daughter is dating a punk in an effort to get her father's attention, and his son is such a flaming queer, he sets off fire alarms wherever he goes. And seeing as it was the two of you who brought me here, I would say that whilst you have been attempting to get close to me, for whatever reason, you have not seen the real me, as my mind refuses to shut down long enough to enjoy just lying in the sun and I hate it when people ogle me like I'm a sideshow attraction. I am not a freak and I am not a basket-case about to break down.” Cassie then stormed off, and James and Alec were left wondering just what they had done.
“I thought she would enjoy being looked after instead of always doing things herself,” James said and even Alec had to agree he had thought the same. Then Silva got into the conversation; “But ever since her mother died, I imagine she has received appreciation and acknowledgement for doing hard work for her grandparents and less disapproval and condemnation from her great-grandfather by completing his drills. Even when she is home, have you ever noticed her to sit idly? They had to admit, they hadn't, but James still tried to argue, ‘But she enjoys reading.’

“That is hardly sitting idle James; it is the intake of knowledge, a chance to exercise her mental muscles, to use her imagination to escape her hardships. She enjoys physical labour and expresses herself and her problems in her own time. I fear that bringing her to such a populated area where men would see her as the lovely young woman others see, she would not understand or see it as a compliment. She is a private person, who enjoys your company as opposed to being surrounded by hundreds of strangers; she didn't even want to go to the Samhain party she herself had planned. I believe that she would have preferred a quiet week out in the country, where she could enjoy the two of you enjoying her cooking and an area where she can play with her dogs, crow, and lizard as opposed to this social isolation.”

“We just thought that, after being locked up for over 24 hours, she would like people being around her so she knows she's not still in that casket.”

“People she knows, maybe; people who are strangers to her, not so much. Remember, she is comfortable around Franklyn who she works with and knows despite him having a crush on her, but these men are unknown to her and the idea of them finding her attractive may be unsettling. Now, you have only lost a day and a half, I'm sure that you can find something more in tune with her tastes to help her relax and open up about what happened.” James and Alec then took off after Cassie, hoping to explain and put things right. They found her in the small town that was near the resort, and saw her talking and smiling (explaining why the storm clouds had disappeared to be replaced with the sunshine) with a dwarf who appeared rather enigmatic and charming if Cassie's smile was anything to go by.

“Cassie?”

“James, Alec, this is Mr Nack, Mr Nick Nack, to be exact,” Cassie said and Nick laughed with her.

“My parents had no imagination, but they did teach me that when you see a lovely lady in distress, you should try and cheer her up.”

“Well, I'm afraid that we are the reason she was in distress,” James said as he neared her.
“Then perhaps you will apologise by not struggling too much.” Was the last thing the agents heard before they felt a pinch in their necks. When they woke up, they had been stripped down to their boxers, and the room they were in made their resort room look like a dive. What made both men nervous, however, was that they were unable to access their powers at all. It was during these revelations, that Nick Nack came into their room.

“Gentlemen, a thousand apologies for how you got here, but you did upset Miss. Kali, so we had no way of being positive that you would come willingly.” Nick explained as he looked at them.

“Miss. Kali? I take it you are a friend of Cassie's?” Alec asked, wondering just how many names the girl had.

“Friend? I'm practically an uncle; whenever Melanie came to visit us, Kali loved being around me. I suppose my height had something to do with it; my partner's height can be somewhat intimidating to a full grown man, imagine how it must be for a four-year-old child.”

“You knew Melanie?”

“Indeed, Mr Scaramanga and Melanie often did their business here for its soothing atmosphere.” It took the agents a moment to understand what Nick was saying until it clicked.

“Most people only ever meet Scaramanga when he's been hired to kill them, and we meet him because we are on vacation with his friend's daughter?” Nick handed them both robes and beckoned them to follow him. The home was magnificent and richly decorated, with part of it looking like a cave entrance, and not too far from that, was a very large pool area, with Cassie swimming in it, looking much happier than she had the previous day.

“Mr Nack-”

“Nick, please.”

“Alright Nick, why is it that we can't use our powers at all?”

“Melanie, Keagan and myself all have powers that were rather volatile on their own, and we did not land on the weak end of our spectrums.” Both men turned at the new voice and saw a man that made them look small. He was tall, one of the tallest men they had ever seen, with dark hair, aristocratic
face, tan skin and eyes that seemed to have a hidden fire.

“The man with the golden gun?” Scaramanga smirked at his name.

“I have had three attempted contracts on you, Mr Bond, and two on you, Mr Trevelyan. I assure you, I accepted none of them.”

“Only two?” Alec asked then grunted as James elbowed him.

“Not the time Alec; why didn't you accept the contracts?” A strange look entered Scaramanga's eyes before he answered,

“I was there when our soothsayer explained what was going to happen, and the appearances of a russet, green-eyed Russian with a love of both vodka and explosions and a brunet, blue-eyed Scotsman with a slight drinking and womanising problem, were frequent; I would never do anything to harm my niece.”

“Then why didn't you kill Branden or at least take her away?” Alec couldn't help but mumble; he may be a world famous assassin, but all Alec could see was another potential guardian who failed his friend.

“He wasn't worth one of my bullets; if I could have, I would have choked the life out of his miserable body, enjoying it as I saw his vile soul vacate this Earth and make way for a better soul. Sadly, it is not my destiny to relieve her of that burden; she must do that herself when she is ready. Also, we all feared that if anyone took Kali, whether it was Gareth, myself, or her uncle, Branden would have revealed Gareth's secrets, ruining any chance of post-humans having anything of a good life in England. It's cruel, but Gareth was the only one on the side of post-humans that we had in office and England was Melanie's home.”

“The needs of the many, outweighing the needs of the few,” James said and this was when Nick came back into the parlour.

“Magic requires immense mental willpower in order to be able to use it Mr Bond, and the more you have of it, the more mental strength you need. It's cruel, but Conner and Cornelia gave her the strength she needed, with Matteo being her rock. Mr Scaramanga, lunch is ready, and I think Miss. Kali would like to see you; especially since you're the only one who can actually get her out of the pool to eat.” Scaramanga truly smiled at this and walked over to the pool, where Cassie was so
relaxed, she hadn't even noticed the giant smiling down on her.

“Time to refuel my little swan.” Cassie was so shocked, she floundered for a minute before taking off like a shot for the ladder.

“UNCLE FRANCISCO!” Scaramanga let out a deep laugh as she ran to him, got his outfit all wet, and he had to lean down a little as he hugged her before he picked her up and kissed her on the cheeks.

“Who were you expecting, here in our home?”

“I figured you would be out on a job and had sent Nick Nack as a sign we could stay at your home.”

“And miss the chance to see you again? Never! And I've told you before; this is our home, I only regret not being able to personally greet you last night when you arrived. Now, I do believe Nick Nack has prepared many of your favourites so I hope you and your friends are hungry.” There were salmon croquettes, scallop piccata with sauteed spinach, snapper fish tacos with a lime-cilantro crema, mussels in a tomato-wine broth, jerk-rubbed catfish with a spicy cilantro slaw (Cassie made a very happy sound at the sight of it, so James made a mental note to get the recipe from Nick Nack), a lobster risotto, and for dessert, fried milk dusted with cinnamon and powdered sugar.

“Eat, drink and be merry.” Was all Scaramanga said before sitting and helping himself, indicating the others should help themselves. James and Alec both thought it all delicious, but they found themselves wishing Cassie had made it; her food just seemed to have something extra to it.

“So, how did you know where we were, and aren't you worried about M finding out?” James asked, enjoying his risotto.

“Well, in regards to how I knew, who do you think was the one who gave Kali her first computer when they started making ones that were not the size of a Buick? I gave her her first, and I have kept up to date on their capabilities as they progressed. As for your boss, as far as MI6 knows, you have discovered Cassandra is not enjoying herself at the resort, and so you have gone to a different resort on a secluded island, that only a handful of people know about. Major Boothroyd said he would be more than happy to pass on the message for you since the area has a strict 'no-technology, no-powers' policy, so Cassandra won't be overwhelmed, but it will be very difficult to reach you.”

“You really thought this through,” Alec commented as he tried a croquette.
“I have not seen my niece in at least 6 months; I am not leaving even the weather to chance on this
eendeavour. Now, there are a number of things you can do here on my island; I have scuba
equipment, catamarans, golf, and a number of water sports that the three of you can take advantage of.”

“And I can do my own cooking?” Cassie asked, only for Nick Nack to show up to refill her wine
glass and ask,

“What, you don't like my food, pequeño?” Cassie chuckled as she said,

“You know I love your cooking maestro, but I like doing my own more.”

“One-day pequeño, you must learn to let others take care of you from time to time. But until then, all
I ask is that let me cook breakfast, as you get up far too early as is.” Cassie nodded as she finished
her lunch then tried to sneak back to the pool, only to feel her uncle grip her hand.

“Uncle Francisco...”

“You just ate, you have to wait an hour before returning to the pool.”

“And just what am I supposed to do for an hour?”

“Since I know you won't take advantage of Keagan's movie library and you seem to have too much
energy for my library, why don't you go play some golf? You might want to try and improve your
backswing before you play against Bond; he is quite good at it.” Cassie pouted before heading off
for the golf course.

“Shouldn't you give her some suntan lotion? She's awfully pale, I fear that she is one of those who
burns, not tan.” James pointed out as Alec was looking at a photo on a nearby table.

“Actually, Kali never burns; Melanie and I found that out when the two and Keagan came to discuss
business and whilst we were talking, Keagan had forgotten to put suntan lotion on himself and Kali.
Keagan looked like a sun-ripened tomato, Kali was still as pale as the moon.”
“I suppose her magic has something to do with it? After all, I've never heard of bionic physiology giving a person resistance against sunburn.” Before James could discern Scaramanga's look, Alec threw in a statement right out of left field.

“You loved Melanie.” Scaramanga looked to where Alec was looking and sighed, it was the picture taken at one of Melanie's birthdays and, with Keagan and Mallory holding a baby Cassie, Scaramanga and Melanie were close together, and the look in his eyes was rather unmistakable.

“I won't lie, ever since we met and became partners, I had hoped that we would become partners in a more intimate way, but then she met Keagan, and I knew I could never compare.”

“Even when Keagan died?”

“Murdered, Keagan was murdered, and after that, the vivacious woman I had fallen in love with was broken. She had become dangerously protective of Kali, and I knew that things were getting worse when, whilst cooking something for her to snack on, she zoned out and badly burned herself. Keagan was her molten lava chocolate cake, I was a chocolate souffle; both wonderful desserts, but one was just more her style.”

“I have to ask, why is it everyone has their own name for her? We know her as Cassie, but her mother called her Erika, her father called her Margo, Matteo calls her Roxanne, Gareth calls her Phoebe and you call her Kali.” It had been driving the agents nuts; they were her family, why did they all have a different name for her?

“Well, apart from Cassandra, those are all her names; Erika Margo Phoebe Kali Roxanne Jaeger. It felt like we had all had a hand in her conception and birth, and Matteo was already smitten with her and promised to look after her, so we allowed him to pick a name. She had been surrounded by four powerful post-humans during her gestation, two of whom had magical abilities, so, with there being a powerful chance of she herself having a magical ability, we agreed on it being best if we each had our own name for her.”

“What are your abilities? And how did Isabella feel about Killian being away from her for seven months?” An odd look passed Scaramanga's face at Alec's question until he answered,

“Isabella understood that Melanie getting pregnant at all was a miracle, so Killian staying with us for seven months was understandable to her, after all, Melanie was a dear friend of hers. As for my powers, I have Biological Manipulation and Metal Mimicry.” James and Alec had to fight not to spit
their wine out; neither was a harmless ability!

“So not only can you manipulate your body and transform it into impenetrable metal, as well probably gaining enhanced strength, you can also manipulate life on a cellular level, and do things such as advance or decline healing, change appearance and induce diseases like cancer?” James clarified and Scaramanga smirked as he replied,

“I can also control and choose what metal I turn my body into, taking on the properties of those metals. Still surprised at her power levels? Now, I suggest the two of you get dressed and join her on the golf course before she gives us the slip and heads for the ocean.” As it turned out, there actually were a few things that Cassie wasn't great at; golf being one of them. Like with her insomnia, she had trouble clearing her mind. She wasn't horrible per se, but if she wanted to be anywhere near James' level, it took her five minutes to calculate the angle, wind speed and everything else.

“How are you able to meditate if you can't empty your mind for a game of golf?” Alec asked as they traversed the course.

“When I meditate, I imagine being in the middle of an ocean and as the waves crash over me, all sound is drowned out until all I hear, is nothingness. It is a very good technique for meditating, but not conducive for golf, where I see the ball ending up in a sand trap or a rough patch if I don't focus.” That night, Scaramanga didn't join them for dinner, but Cassie enjoyed playing chess with Nick Nack whilst James and Alec talked about nothing in particular. They thought that all problems were solved until bedtime was nearing, and Cassie showed no sign of going to bed.

“Come on Cassie, time for bed,” Alec announced as he and James stretched and Nick Nack headed off for his own bed.

“I think I'll stay up a while longer and do some reading; Uncle Francisco has quite the library.” Before Cassie could head for the library, James grabbed her by the scruff.

“You guys know I'm not a cat, right?”

“And you know that we are not going to bed until you are sound asleep, right?”

“James, I'm just not tired.”
“Cassie, I don't think you've actually slept since you were taken.” Alec stopped as Cassie looked away and James put her down.

“The truth is I'm near exhausted; I 'slept' after my seizure, but it did nothing to recharge me like it usually does because it was riddled with nightmares. And when I tried sleeping, I would wake up only a few minutes later. The fact is, I can't sleep.”

“I have some pills you could take, I know you don't like pharmaceuticals, but-”

“No, James, I mean... I'm afraid that... if I close my eyes... when I open them... I'm gonna be back in that casket... buried with Matches and Corvus... running out of air... and this time, you won't find us in time. And after everything I've gone through, everything I have put up with, from his cruelty to Wilson trying to kill me, Williams' snide comments, and Evans' outright hostility, I go through all of that, and I don't even to get buried beside my parents.” James and Alec looked at her and had to admit that, from all that they thought that she would want to talk about, the burial site had not been one of them.

“Well, there seems to only be one solution,” Alec said as he looked at his friend.

“You realise that the limit for anyone going without sleep is around, 11 days, right?”

“Then you better spend the night in our bed, between the two of us. You can listen to your radio programs, no problem, and if you wake up, we'll be there and you can wake us up, and we'll stay up with you until you fall asleep again. But if you do wake up, it will be to the feeling of what I'm guessing is astronomically high thread count of Egyptian cotton on your stomach, warm flesh on either side of you, and the smell of the ocean and mimosa in bloom seeping into the room.” Cassie looked at him before smiling.

“You know, mimosa was my mum's favourite scent; her room always smelled heavily of mimosa.” Cassie didn't even realise that they were moving to their room.

“What was your dad's?”

“Jasmine, but he always dabbed lavender on his pillow to help him sleep; he found it highly relaxing.”
“Most people do; whilst we're on the subject, what's your favourite scent?” Cassie blushed as she revealed,

“I actually have three; peaches and cinnamon.”

“That's only two.” James pointed out as the three stripped, and James found himself hoping that Scaramanga didn't find them like this; no doubt they would be drawn and quartered at dawn. He became interested when Cassie blushed and actually mumbled her answer.

“Cassie, I don't speak mumble.”

“I just know I'm going to regret revealing this, but I like your aftershave James; a lot of men use one the is either too strong, or just doesn't suit them, and that can be havoc to someone who has a nose like a hound dog, but yours, is subtle and nice.” Alec was treated to a rare sight when James Bond turned slightly pink before going to his bag, pulled out Blue-boy and handed him to Cassie. Cassie slept the whole night through, and she awoke to Nick Nack serving her breakfast in bed the next morning, looking better than she had in weeks. The rest of the two weeks went by and James and Alec could honestly say that they hadn't had so much fun since Silva's; by day they were out in the sun, participating in all kinds of water sports (apparently, Cassie was not only a powerful swimmer, she could also outmanoeuvre James on a catamaran), and at night, when Scaramanga or Nick Nack joined them, they played chess, but when it was the three of them, they participated in a game that they were fairly even in; poker. James and Alec could read body language where Cassie was still learning it, but Cassie could keep her emotions mostly off of her face and she subconsciously counted the cards. On the final day, Scaramanga pulled the three off to the side before they boarded the seaplane that would take them to Barbados, where they would take another plane back to England. Nick Nack had given them a special formula to give Cassie once they were up in the air, which would relax her body to the point that she would practically be asleep.

“Kali, I know that you have been looking into your mother's past and, whilst I don't want you to get the wrong idea about your mother, I also know that unless we are the ones to tell you, you will get the wrong idea. Not to mention, you are old enough that you deserve to know. To find what you seek, I am afraid that you will have to return to where you lost something extremely dear to you.” Cassie paled as she understood what Scaramanga was saying.

“I have to go back to the apartment where MI6 killed my father, don't I?” Before Scaramanga could answer, Alec piped up.

“No, you tell us where to find whatever it is, and we'll get it.”
“That is a noble intention, but sadly she must go; the files are behind a locked door in Melanie's office and the door can only be opened by a Moreau woman; between Keagan's love of tinkering and inventing, and Melanie's passion for biology, they came up one of the first isomorphic security systems, narrowed down to Melanie's mitochondrial DNA. You, Kali, must hold this key and insert it into the lock, because anyone else who tries it, would receive a terrible shock.” James and Alec sighed as they were told this; Melanie would have to put a system like that in a place Cassie would probably prefer to see burn then go back again.

“I understand... Uncle Francisco?”

“Yes, Kali?” Cassie looked away and squeezed Alec's hand, a sign she was highly uncomfortable with what she was about to ask.

“That... day, was MI6 really after my... father, or... were they... after my mother?” The three men looked at each other, trying to figure out what to say. Scaramanga knew that James and Alec knew the truth, but what was he to say? Blame an innocent man? Blame the only woman he had ever loved? Or blame the child who only wanted to exist in this world, and had no control over how powerful she would become? When he looked at her, he didn't see the young woman, he saw the little girl with a binky in her mouth, with one arm wrapped around Blue-Boy, and another dragging her blanket around, until she realized all the dirt that was getting on it, so Keagan wrapped two of the corners around her neck like a cape.

“Cassie, have you ever heard of the day-care-sexual-abuse scare of the 80s?” James asked, confusing everyone else.

“Yes, I even remember my parents talking about it a bit, calling the whole thing rubbish.”

“And it was rubbish; dozens of people had their lives destroyed, were sent to prison and many other horrible things, all because some people were so certain that children were being used in Satanic rituals, and were coercing the children to tell these things. They condemned these people with no viable proof that anything was happening.” Cassie caught on to what James was saying.

“So if anyone even hinted that my father, at his power levels, was a terrorist, they would jump on it without any proof.” Scaramanga let out a relieved sigh at this; apparently, the Russian was not the only one with a brain.

“Yes my dear; the very organization that condemned you, condemned your father, though if they were going to kill you, they would have needed solid proof, as your uncle Gareth passed a law nearing a decade ago, that any post-human that was to be attacked and killed by the government, had
to have outstanding warrants against them. Now, apart from that key, I have one last thing to give you before you go.” Scaramanga then pulled out a beautiful bracelet that was no doubt worth quite a few thousand pounds, at least.

“That was my necklace as a child.” James and Alec looked from the 'necklace' to Cassie; apparently, her parents had loved spoiling their only child.

“Yes, before her final act, she sent it to me to make sure Brendan didn't try anything with it. Most people see it only for its monetary value, but I trust you remember its true value?”

“The chain holding all the stones is Osmium mixed with Tungsten. Osmium is the metal of endurance beyond reason and strength beyond expectation, whereas Tungsten is a strong and powerful protector, highly resistant to heat and other forms of radiation. It has a core quality of strength in a structure in difficult environments. Then you have the stones themselves; pearls and diamonds with small bits of amber here and there. Amber is said to relieve high fever and help overcome heat exhaustion, something that can be invaluable for a young fire affinitive. It also helps balance the energies in a person's body and brings a sense of confidence and peace, again necessary for someone with such a volatile element.

Meanwhile, the pearl is considered the stone of sincerity and is a symbol of purity, innocence, and faith. It is believed that they absorb the energy of the wearer, so people would often combine pearls with emeralds as they bring the energy out and disperse it. Some believe that pearls, having come from a living source, are very powerful magically. As for diamonds, they have exceptional power and are considered a king of precious stones. Not surprisingly, it is considered a stone of fire and believed to give its wearer strength, courage, and invincibility in fights. They are believed to reflect negative energy back to the sender, as well as help to keep the mind clear and focused and strengthens abstract thinking.”

“There's also the fact that both diamonds and pearls are made through force; a pearl is a grain of sand that almost kills the oyster to make, whereas a diamond is a piece of coal that withstood stress very well.” James pointed out as Cassie managed to lengthen the chain so that it could again become a necklace for her. James was the one to help put it on her.

“We each had a hand in making you that necklace; Melanie acquired the Tungsten, Isabella the Osmium, and amber chips, Keagan managed to fuse the two metals and form them into a chain, I acquired the diamonds, Gareth personally dived for those pearls, and Killian got this for your necklace,” Scaramanga explained as he held up a pear-cut emerald that was obviously meant to dangle from the necklace.

“Wow,” Alec said as he attached the emerald for her, and her eyes seemed to shine even brighter than before.
“Three of the people who helped with that necklace are gone now, and the three who remained failed you as guardians. Killian was lost to his grief and Gareth and I were more concerned for your future rather than you needing us then and there.”

“I know, but Killian couldn't be blamed for what happened, and neither could the two of you; Brendan had Uncle Gareth backed into a corner and if anyone found out he was a homosexual, he wouldn't have gotten me anyways, and you are a strong believer in destiny, so if someone told you it was not your destiny to get rid of him, you would adhere to it. I know a lot of people would be angry or resentful in my position, but I also know that feeling like that won't change what happened, so there is no point in feeling that way.” James and Alec felt that if anyone deserved a medal for sainthood (or whatever it was for pagans), it would have to be Cassie.

“That actually worries me, Kali.” The three looked at him.

“What does?”

“You don't allow yourself to feel angry or afraid in situations that people would completely understand. As a child, you were, for the most part quiet, but if something made you angry, you let people know you were angry. Then, not long after your twelfth birthday, you just took things as they came, never showing your anger until it boiled over and you reacted violently to a situation.” The three glanced at each other, and Cassie knew that this was one thing Scaramanga didn't know, because destiny or no destiny, he would have done something about it.

“My grandparents were becoming concerned because, unlike other girls around town who, by my age, had started menstruating, I had not. I was taken to a doctor who ran tests, and I received news that, for a person who values life, was some of the most horrible news imaginable; I possessed no ovaries and no womb, and therefore could never have a life beyond myself. Brendan naturally blamed my mother and, as much as I hate to admit it, that was one argument I could never fight; for all intents and purposes, I was healthy when I came out of my mother's womb, but I was still in a radiated spot for seven months. That news almost destroyed me, the idea that I would never have the choice to have a life beyond myself, and my grandfather was the one who said that there are ultimately two kinds of problems in the world; the ones that can be solved, and the one's that cannot be.

I could not change anything about what had happened to me in my life, my father murdered, my mother committed suicide, my aunt killed in a horrible accident, my uncle crippled, me being sterile. So, I could act like a child and moan and complain about what couldn't be changed, or I could find the strength of character that my paternal family was known for, accept my problems, and move on. As I recall, that was also the time Matteo and I started being sent to Abramo, who believed that studies should be done on a sunny veranda, under a shaded canopy, preferably overlooking the pool,
interrupted by breaks, and ended promptly at 3, and if you didn't adhere to that, one of his men came by, picked you up and threw you in said pool. For the first time, in a long, long time, I could have fun and not worry about being yelled at, where I only had to learn something if I wanted to learn it. And I understood, fully, what both were saying; life can be hard, and cruel, but only if that is all you are looking for. That was when I learned the true meaning of balance; it's easy to say darkness and light exist on the same plane, but I understood; I lost my parents, so do hundreds of other kids every day; I can't biologically reproduce, but if I want a child there are thousand of kids out there looking for families. So, yes, I stopped getting outwardly angry, and I know that what I do isn't the healthiest thing in the world, but I am just going to have to find a better way on my own because no one knows what I need better than myself.” Cassie turned to leave when Scaramanga grabbed her hand.

“There are three last things that you should hear before you go, and one request; please go and see Gareth, whilst I have had your trips to Italy to see you these past years, he hasn't seen you properly since you were 7 years old. As for the things you should hear, first is this; we had you tested when Melanie gave birth to you, and you came back as fertile, not sterile. Secondly, you are far too mature and wise for someone who, at your age, should not have to look at the world and find balance and meaning for all that has been done to you. And finally, walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. And I believe you are more fortunate than that; you have two friends to walk in the dark with.” Cassie hugged Scaramanga one last time before the three headed for the sea-plane. When they got back to England, Cassie was reminded of something she had wanted to forget; her new personal assistant and bodyguard.

“There were a lot of people to choose from, but between Major Boothroyd and myself, I believe we found people perfectly attuned to you,” Tanner informed them as they came up to his office.

“Tanner, if this 'bodyguard' of yours either messes up my home or tries to put me under Martial Law, anything like that, I will get revenge on you.” Tanner looked pale for a moment before clearing his throat and opening the door. Inside, there were indeed two people, one was a female who was typing away on her phone, though she did look up when the door opened. She was 5'5", long black hair with, of all things blue streaks running through it, she appeared to be of Asian descent, with blue eyes like water, and a look about her like she knew when to sit back and let you have your way, and when to make you think you were getting your way. Then the man, he was almost as tall as Scaramanga at 6'3", where the woman was lithe like a fox, he was built like a tank, black skin, a scar ran down the right side of his face and he gave off the kind of aura that said if you think you are getting to your target, you are in for a world of hurt.

“Your personal assistant, Darla Kato, and your bodyguard, Zembe Mutema.”

“Nice to meet you, but I almost died for the amount of freedom I have now, you screw with that, or my home, I will end both of you,” Cassie said looking at the two with her 'I'm the quartermaster, I'm the boss' face.
“I assure you, madame, Darla and I are both professionals in our lines of work; if you are just going to the store and do not wish me to accompany you as your bodyguard, then I shall ask to come and help carry your purchases. I shall take a look at your home, but only because it is your sanctum, and you must feel safe, not to be paranoid.” The voice of the man was deep and spoke of his roots in South Africa.

“For myself madame, my whole purpose is to make your life easier by handling annoying matters that you would rather not deal with; when you are here in the lab, I shall be handling tasks such as making appointments, when you need a reminder to eat, I shall be there to remind you, organizing your meetings, making you look more professional than the clowns who organized the meeting in the first place. When you are abroad, I shall handle your bills, make sure your accommodations are at least four-star, when I receive news of our return, it shall be to a freshly laundered house and a full fridge. And that is only the tip of the iceberg of my duties and abilities; you will still be able to do your job, I shall not baby you, but you will not have to deal with menial details and shall have a bit more free time to go to the cinema or watch a movie at home, anything you like.” Darla said all of this without looking up from her phone, which Cassie knew was about two meetings that had taken place whilst she was away and Darla had filled in for her. There was also a memo from her personal veterinarian, stating that both Corvus and Matches had completely healed and were eagerly awaiting her return, which, again, Darla had taken care of. This woman helped a man paranoid of anyone who did not have a magical ability or animal based ability, trust her enough with those she had paid top dollar for their protection, so she was willing to try.

“Alright, I'll try the two of you for a month, and if I'm not satisfied, I don't care what they say, I'm firing you. Now Miss. Kato, I have your first job for me; I need to find the apartment my family occupied from when I was born to when I was five-years-old as I have to pick up something from there. But before that can happen, { Secrets lost, secrets kept, none shall be revealed but to the five in this room! }” Cassie’s hands glowed red as she spoke her spell, and the two knew she had done a variation on a loyalty spell; a loyalty spell bent the will of a person (something she found highly distasteful), but what she cast made it so case-sensitive information could only be revealed to her, the two agents she trusted the most, and the two assistants could only talk about them with each other.

“It shall be done madame, madame?” Darla asked.

“Yes, Miss. Kato?”

“I ask that you call me Darla, and also, would you like this information before, or after your yule celebration?”

“Afterwards; yule is supposed to be a joyful time, and I rather doubt that I will enjoy what you will report.” Darla nodded and left, leaving the three with Zembe.
“Is there any way of making you scram?”

“If my presence is not required here, then I humbly asked to be allowed into your home so that I may assess it and see how I can improve your security, without making your home feel like a prison.”

Cassie nodded and the three were left in Tanner’s office.

“I still don’t feel comfortable with this.”

“I’ve seen worse, so just try and give them a shot, OK? Now, when do we celebrate Yule and how do we celebrate it?” Alec asked.

“Well, the celebratory festivities can really take place at any time since, compared to Samhain or Beltane, Yule is actually rather minute. I celebrate it on the winter solstice because I think that the longest night of the year is the perfect night for having a celebration of life and new hope. So that shall be on the 21st if I’m not mistaken, so we can also celebrate Christmas, and, new this year for me, light the first candle on the menorah all around the same time.”

“Menorah?” Alec asked, same time James asked,

“You also celebrate Christmas?”

“Well, for Christmas, it was the holiday my grandparents, aunts, uncles and Matteo all celebrated with me so it seemed only fair to partake in it, as well as the fact that Christmas was my father’s favourite holiday. And as for the menorah, I recently found out that I was a part Jewish and I firmly believe in honouring my ancestor's traditions. If I remember correctly, the 25th Kislev this year falls on December 24th and ends on January 1st which funny enough, is also the new year.”

“So, for our trio of holidays, what do we need for Yule and Hanukkah?”

“Hanukkah; we have my grandfather’s menorah, my mother's dreidel, though I would like to make my own and if we are going to play, it may be best if you two make your own. I plan to make latke's so we'll need lots of potatoes, dough for sufganiyot, or jam-filled doughnuts, along with wine and cheese. I also believe that roast goose is traditionally served during Hanukkah.
As for Yule, we'll need an oak log for a Yule log, but we need to find it or something, as it's unlucky for the yule log to be bought. This should make you happy James as mistletoe is often used to decorate the home as a sort of protection against fire and lightning. We'll need a Yule candle which should be red, green or blue and decorated with holly. Finally, we'll need ingredients for wassail.” At their bemusement, Cassie looked at them.

“What?”

“You actually make wassail? I haven't seen people make that stuff in years.” James asked, thinking to the last time he had ever had wassail.

“Well, it is tradition, so I make it up. Now, we'll need apples, brown sugar, I suppose you two would prefer hard ale to apple cider, we'll need either dry sherry or white wine, cinnamon, and either lemon peels or ginger strips. Did you two want eggnog as well?” The agents looked at her before looking at each other.

“How about we make the eggnog, as I doubt that you will let us help in anything else.” Before Cassie could answer Alec, James asked his own question.

“Cassie, would the ritual be stronger in a place we call home, or a place that is a more out in nature?” Cassie and Alec both looked confused before Cassie answered,

“Well, Yule is more of nature holiday, so if we had someplace that was more out in nature, that would be ideal, but-”

“Then I have somewhere we can go, also, I know that whilst you hate Halloween, you are not rigid in it, so would you like a Christmas tree?”

“Oh, I love Christmas trees, I see them as a symbol of the tree of life, but I don't have any decorations for one.”

“Easily remedied, leave this sort of thing to us, you be ready to leave on or around December 19 or 20.” The three then parted ways, with Cassie going down to Q-branch and the agents going to report back in. Alec wasn't too sure where exactly James was thinking of taking Cassie, but James had been studying the holidays as they came and went, so he felt that he could trust him. Time passed and it was soon December 18th, Cassie hated to admit it, but Darla and Zembe had both made her life a bit easier.
“--MISTRESS! MISTRESS!--” That was one of the things Zembe had insisted upon; he wouldn't intrude upon her living space by moving in (though he and Darla did take one of the vacant apartments not too far from hers), but he wanted some kind of security in there with her that could not be corrupted or fooled. She was certain he wanted some kind of death-bot or Terminator thing but she was not going to have something like that stalking about her home. Her compromise had been a robotic watchdog that could analyse a situation based on body language and pheromones, and take appropriate retaliation. She had also been the one to design and name him.

“Yes, K-9? What is it?”

“--MASTER TREVELYAN HAS RETURNED! HE APPEARS A LITTLE BLOODY AND BRUISED! SHALL I RETRIEVE THE FIRST-AID KIT FOR HIM?--” She remembered when James and Alec had met K-9; when they had failed to identify themselves (after having come through the window – again), K-9 was ready to blast the two of them. After she had introduced the two to K-9, the two had had a laughing fit over how she had decided to make her watchdog from a Doctor Who character, down to the voice.

“No need K-9, I have no doubt that he will come here which is a good thing; I'm cleaning out the fridge before we leave tomorrow and I want to know if he wants any habanero peppers on his pizza.”

“Gods yes. Make it as spicy as you can.” Alec then came into view, looking like something the cat dragged in. She knew better than to ask him what happened, so she pulled out the kit and passed it to him.

“So what all would you like on your pizza? Anything that can't or doesn't get put onto a pizza will be made into either stew or sandwiches as James has informed me that we are in for quite a drive and the less we stop, the sooner we get there, so the more time we have to set up for the ceremony.” Cassie talked whilst Alec tended his wounds.

“What have you got?”

“Just about anything you could imagine for a pizza; for cheese, we have mozzarella, feta, blue cheese, Parmesan, and ricotta. For veggies/fruits, I'm roasting some tomatoes, habanero peppers for heat, we have a little banana pepper, if you're feeling adventurous we have eggplant, asparagus, arugula, spinach, black olives, capers, pineapple, onion, garlic, mushrooms, and broccoli. For meats, we have pepperoni, bacon, salami, Italian sausage, eggs, anchovies, tuna, a little salmon, shrimp, mussels, and squid. Anything you like?”
“Everything but the eggplant, arugula, spinach, broccoli, and pineapple.” Alec sighed out.

“You know, pizza with arugula, a little spinach, some asparagus and a nice fried egg on top of it is quite nice; it wouldn't kill you. You want a beer?”

“Cassie?”

“Hmm?”

“Come here a minute?” Cassie looked at him before walking over to him. When she stopped in front of him, he gently took her hand before picking her up, placing her on his lap and holding her close. She realised that at some point the mission must have gone ass over elbow for him to be hugging her; she was still uncomfortable with people touching her, but the others had all said that her body gave off such a comforting warmth, that she felt unable to turn them away when they needed it. She felt him bury his face in her neck and she just wrapped her arms around him; Alec could be both a cruel man, and something of a clown, but he greatly valued his pride and he saw anyone attacking someone close to him as an attack on him.

“Do you want to talk?”

“Not right now, I just want you to talk to me.”

“Do you mind if I continue making dinner?”

“Do whatever you want.” Cassie waved her hand and the food continued being prepared, making pizzas, sandwiches and she decided to do up a seafood stew she always enjoyed.

“Well, things are mostly the same in Q-branch, the Major and I tested many of both his gadgets and mine. John's faction of the branch is still a little less than thrilled about me being the next Quartermaster, but I actually have a plan that should satisfy everyone and make them happy, though I want to iron out the details before I say anything. For some reason, Evans is still highly hostile, to the point he flat out ignores my presence just to avoid the major scolding him for the way he treats me. Joanna had her first honey-pot whilst you were away and she hated the sex part, so I was thinking of having James give her some pointers on hypnosis to help her out so that she doesn't actually have to have sex. Before she left for her mission, Scarlet gave me a present and insisted I open it in front of her; the tactless woman gave me a crocodile-skin handbag, which I find highly distasteful but I shall use it if only to spite her. Besides, a simple expansion charm placed on the
inside and I can use it to carry around many magical items around with me, and as both a predator and a potion maker, I do actually kill and skin, but I draw the line at fur; that is a much crueller story. Funny thing is, we seem to have lost contact with her, but from what Tanner tells me that's not altogether an unusual thing, all I ask is that when the rest of you do it, you tell me, as I would rather not worry unnecessarily.”

“He had his kid with him, the scientist I was sent to retrieve. Apparently, she had been his inspiration for the 'cure'; she would unintentionally freeze things to the point that when they came into contact with something else, it shattered. She had been one of those who didn't want her powers and had no interest in learning how to control them, so the cure would have done her a world of good. Her father assured me that the cure would only be given to those who wanted to be rid of their powers, or criminals that showed no interest in being reformed; if they tried to push it on those who were happy with their powers, he would destroy the serum and all record of it.

“He and his daughter, Sonya, were all set to go when I got there so we moved as fast as we could, but we were ambushed by some military fanatics who thought the cure could be weaponized. There was a struggle and I did my best to protect the two, but one managed to fire a shot at me. Sonya thought I was more important in getting her father to safety, so she took the shot. That was when her father's own latent ability became active; air manipulation. After that, it was all kind of a blur, until I saw the guy standing in front of me, holding a gun. He wasn't pointing it at me, he had it aimed at his own head whilst looking at Sonya; I tried talking to him, saying that Sonya wanted him to live. His last words to me were 'I don't blame you.'” Cassie sighed, there was nothing to be said in this situation; there were some assignments that went ass over elbow, and there was simply nothing you could do as it was a law of magic that all but the most powerful (and most foolish) had to obey; once you were dead, that was the end of it. Even necromancy, sometimes referred to as undeath magic, was usually used to contact the spirits of the dead for divination reasons, creating zombies (disgraceful) or using it to absorb the auras of other living things to extend your own life (disgusting). To bring a person back in their entirety, with their soul intact, required massive amounts of power the likes of which only a Mage could muster; she had come across one or two warlocks who claimed they could perform such a feat, but she usually ended up proving them fakes.

“--MISTRESS! MISTRESS! MASTER TREVELYAN!--” Alec cursed as the stupid robo-mutt interrupted them.

“Yes K-9?”

“--MASTER BOND HAS RETURNED! IF I MAY ASK MISTRESS, WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER IF THEY CAME THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR INSTEAD OF THE WINDOW?--”

“I've asked them no less than five times to do as such and they still keep at it, and as Einstein said, Insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. So, until I come up with something
better, I'm going to refrain from asking, as I am not insane.” Cassie tried getting down off of Alec's lap, only for him to grip her tightly. James came in and saw them and Cassie mentally told him Alec had had a bad mission. For the rest of the night, Alec stayed close to either James or Cassie, making sure that the two of them were alright and, as was slowly becoming the norm for the three when one was upset, the three slept in the bed, with Cassie between them.

The next day found the three of them getting off a ferry from England to Scotland, and Alec figured he knew exactly where they were heading. He knew that James wanted to take his Aston, but practicality won out as it was not only the three of them but Rai, Zumi, Matches and all the supplies they were bringing, simply too much for a sports car. So, they had decided to take her 4runner as it could handle all terrain and there was much more room.

“So, after Yule, what is the next holiday?” Alec asked as he pet Matches; it would appear that after Cassie the little lizard liked him the best. Corvus had decided to fly in and was perched on Cassie's shoulder.

“You two realise you are quickly becoming pagans? Has either of you noticed you say 'Gods', not 'God'? Or when you are particularly exasperated, you say 'By the powers', like I do?” Cassie asked the two as she looked out the window, seeing as how James was the one doing the driving as he was the one who knew where they were going. The two men had to admit, they hadn't realised it until now, but they were acting that way.

“Anyways, after Yule we have Imbolc, a holiday that falls on the first of February, marks the first stirrings of spring, and so is a time for purification and spring cleaning. In Rome, it was historically a shepherd's holiday, and among Celts associated with the onset of ewes' lactation, prior to birthing the spring lambs. For Celtic pagans, the festival is dedicated to the goddess Brigid, daughter of The Dagda and one of the Tuatha Dé Danann.

Then there is Ostara, which happens between the 19th and 22nd of March and is also known as the Vernal, or spring, Equinox. The next one after that is far more important though and takes place on the last day of April to proceed into May 1st; Beltane. Just Samhain honours our dead, Beltane is a day to honour the living and the fertility of the Earth. Then you have Midsummer, also known as Litha or the summer Equinox, taking place between the 19th and 23rd of June, one of the four solar holidays and is considered the turning point at which summer reaches its height and the sun shines longest.

Then we have Lammas or Lughnasadh, a festival celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, the fruits of our labours, and seeing the desires that we had at the start of the year unfold so rituals will be centred around this. And the last holiday before the wheel starts again with Samhain, is Mabon, the autumn Equinox, which takes place between September 21st to 23rd, seeing as how the Earth wobbles on its axis slightly. Up until Mabon, the hours of daylight have been greater than the hours
from dusk to dawn. But from now on, the reverse holds true. This is the time to look back not just on
the past year, but also your life, and to plan for the future. In the rhythm of the year, Mabon is a time
of rest and celebration, after the hard work of gathering the crops.” Cassie yawned as she finished
both her little sum up of their holidays and her sandwich.

“Cassie, it will still take us some time to reach where we are going, so why don't you catch up on
your sleep? Alec and I will wake you when we get there.” Cassie just nodded before stretching out
and taking a nap. The last thing she felt made her smile; Alec placed his jacket around her shoulders
to make sure she was warm; she kept telling them she didn't feel the cold, but they kept ignoring her.
Time passed and eventually, Cassie felt a cold breeze pass over her face as her door was opened and
a hand was gently placed on her shoulder.

“Cassie? Wake up, hon, we're here.” Cassie was a little surprised to hear James call her 'hon', and so
she had a little blush. As she slid out of the car, she was surprised to see an old house that gave off a
dark vibe.

“Welcome Cassie, to Skyfall, my childhood home.”

“Has it always given off such eerie vibes?”

“Yes, I'm afraid it has, though I'm certain that our Yule celebration should dispel some of it.”

“Whilst you two are chit-chatting, can one of you help me with the bloody tree?” Alec griped as he
carefully pulled the tree from the roof of the car and held it. Cassie saw some old debris lying around,
so she transformed it into a sled of sorts and had Alec place it there, with Rai and Zumi pulling it into
the house.

“No wonder there aren't many records of you coming here after the death of your parents,” Cassie
said as she came inside, looked around, and desperately wanted to start decorating to rid the place of
such depressing vibes. She was hardly a chipper person (she often found herself wanting to throw
fireballs at those who were), and she rather liked darkness, but there was a difference between
darkness and depression, though, in this place, it was easy to get the two confused.

“Not the most cheerful of places, I'll admit, but it will serve our purpose for a place to celebrate
Yule.” James and Alec both reached for their guns as they heard a voice say,

“James, James Bond.”
“Good God, are you still alive?” James asked as Johnathon Kincade came into view.

“Hah, nice to see you too, you jumped-up little shit. Hello, Alec.”

“Hello Kincade, it is nice to see you.”

“Kincade, I want you to meet... where did she go?” James asked as he turned to introduce Cassie to the man who looked after him, only to find her gone.

“Where do you think?” Alec asked as he moved slightly to the side and revealed Cassie hiding behind him.

“No need to be frightened of me, Lass; I'm certain that one of those dogs of yours could easily take me down before I took a step towards you if I meant any harm.” Cassie slowly came out from behind Alec and took a step towards Kincade.

“Kincade, this is Cassandra Bishop.” Cassie still did not feel comfortable waving the names Jaeger and Knight around so they played off of Knight (King, Queen, etc.) more often than not.

“Well, nice to meet you; are you a Cassie, or a Sandra?” Kincade asked as he shook the young sorceress' hand.

“Ah, Cassie, Mr Kincade.”

“Oh, don't bother with the 'Mr', just call me Kincade. Now, before explanations are had, why don't you three come down to the house for a cuppa and see Pat? She'd like to see you two again, and I know she would like to meet Cassie here.” Kincade said as he turned around and led the three back out.

“Who's Pat?” Cassie asked James as they walked towards a small cottage

“Patricia, his wife. Sorry about the scare Cassie, I wasn't even sure those two were honestly still
alive.”

“Pat, look who I brought home.” An elderly woman, looking a tad on the frail side, came out at the sound of her husband’s voice, and practically squealed when she saw James and Alec, before running over to the two and hugging them. When she tried to hug Cassie, Cassie jumped away and hid behind Kincade, and Kincade held the hand that was clutching his jacket.

“Easy, Lass, Pat ain’t going to hurt you; she’s just extremely friendly,” Kincade explained whilst James said,

“Don’t take it personally Pat; Cassie is nervous around new people and has trouble dealing with public displays of affection,” James explained as Pat wore a look like she had just accidentally stepped on a kitten’s paws. Cassie slowly stepped away from Kincade and Pat stayed right where she was, letting Cassie come to her, like a frightened animal.

“Sorry, I don’t mean to be so silly.”

“Not at all dear, I should have introduced myself before trying to smother you. Now, my name is Patricia Kincade, I welcome you to Skyfall, and may I please have your name?” Cassie never noticed the magic woven into the words as she said


“My apologies, young magical, I did not recognize the signs as it has been many years since one so comfortable with their magic has come around. Know that you are safe here, and with a drop of your blood, you shall be protected from the protections I placed.” James and Alec were shocked just before Kincade hit them with his cane.

“Why didn’t you idiots tell me she was a magical? Their names are important to them and should never be revealed unless in dire emergencies!”

“I didn’t even know that Pat was a magical, how was I supposed to know something like this would happen?” James asked as he slid behind Alec when Kincade raised his cane again. Cassie looked at her hand before holding it out. Pat pricked her finger and was surprised by what she saw.
“No wonder you try so hard to hide who you are child of magic; you must be very powerful indeed to have blue blood instead of red.” James and Alec were both confused until they looked at Cassie’s bleeding finger and indeed, the blood pooling at the tip was blue, not red.

“But we've seen you bleed before and it was always red.” James pointed out as Pat collected the blood and went to add it to those protected from, not protected against.

“That was a simple enchantment to make my blood look red instead of its natural colour. You see, unlike most animals, my blood does not have the protein known as Haemoglobin, but instead has Haemocyanin, which contains copper, not iron. So whilst the two of you have blood like other humans and most animals, I have blood like cephalopods, spiders and certain crustaceans, most notably the horseshoe crab. You see, people already treat me differently because I am a post-human, I don't need other post-humans treating me differently because I have a different colour of blood on the inside.” Cassie explained as the magic surrounding the cottage now accepted her and she was safe from revealing any more.

“No, I guess you don't but why do you, and when did you become a ‘master of Blood Magic’?” Cassie fidgeted before sighing and replied,

“For the blood, all I can tell you is that ever since I was a child, my blood has contained copper, not iron, which as I stated turns blood blue, not red like yours. As for the Blood Magic, all I will say right now is that I have practiced it since I was a child. I will go more into it later tonight, but please don't ask me any more right now.” Cassie turned away from them and bumped into Kincade, making her jump.

“Easy lass, no one is going to make you answer anything you don't want to. Now, if you three, along with two dogs, a crow and a cold-blooded lizard, are going to be staying in Skyfall for Christmas or Yule, whichever, I suggest you gather lots of firewood as that place can get rather cold at night. There's an axe outside, and a dead tree ready to be made into kindling, do you need any help from me?” Cassie shook her head and went outside, calling her dogs, Matches and Corvus to her.

“Now, what are the three of you doing here James, when I know you have no love for the old place?”

“Why didn't you ever tell me you were a post-human as well?” James fired back.

“Answer John first, then we'll answer you,” Pat said as she came out with tea.
“Alright, Cassie is a pagan as you might have guessed and she doesn’t get along with her great-grandfather, so to help deal with her separation anxiety, Alec and I have taken to spending her holidays with her. With Yule coming up, I asked her if she would rather be surrounded by nature instead of being in the city, which she agreed with.” James was straight and to the point, as he wanted to know why one of the people who had raised him never told him she was like him.

“Alright, now dear, unlike other post-humans, who have two abilities, I only have the one and there was just no way of bringing it up. You see, my ability is called ‘Mana Manipulation’.” Here Alec interrupted.

“Cassie used that word once, she said it was like a person's life-force.”

“And in a way, it is, but to be more specific, Mana is a metaphysical sentient form of energy that surrounds living and non-living things. What I am able to do is manipulate that energy with incantations, talismans and spell books, and one of the best ways I use it is to surround the house with a barrier that makes any Magical reveal themselves, which your friend Cassandra felt and responded to.”

“You are going to continue calling her Cassie despite knowing her true name?” James couldn't help but ask.

“I do not have permission to use it, seeing as how she was compelled to reveal it, and I will not hurt an innocent child, no matter how powerful she is.” This confused James and Alec greatly.

“Hurt her? How?”

“In magic, names have power, the power of control; by knowing the ancient names of the clouds, you can use them to cause monsoons of biblical proportions, or banish them so that the droughts are caused. Now, imagine having control of someone as powerful as your friend, since the time you met her, she must have given you an indication of how powerful she is.” James and Alec did think back to what they had seen; she was intensely powerful; she could bypass psychic shields by attacking them with her psychic serpent, she could transform one elemental attack into another, then send it right back at the attacker, the others reported her power levels, both magic and technological, as reaching almost frightening levels, but she always maintained control, and so they didn't report her, though Emily had taken convincing. If anyone knew her true name and took control of her, it would be catastrophic as she was not only a force of nature, she was technology, she could take control of the warheads and fire them, and that was the least of their worries.

“Does anyone else know her true name?” Kincade asked
“Only her family; everywhere she goes, she gives an alias, in Russia she's known as Nikita, in America, she's known as both Jessica and Marie, each country she has a different name,” James replied and the two nodded as Cassie came back in. They spent the rest of the day decorating Skyfall and by the time they were done with dinner, James couldn’t remember the last time Skyfall looked or felt so warm. But that didn’t mean that they could avoid the elephant in the room. Cassie sighed before going to her bag and pulled out seven phials no bigger than a person's thumb.

“Seven phials with red fluid in them and there are seven agents who trust you; why do I get the feeling I know what these are?” Alec asked as he held up a phial with the number ‘008’ on it.

“Blood Magic, after Animal Magic, is what I specialized in, as a matter of fact, I have more natural talent in it than I do Animal. My great-grandfather wanted me to learn the most violent and dark of magics without learning the light ones; doing that would have either destroyed myself or, worse, driven me insane. Once he found out about my per-disposition towards Blood Magic, a magic seen by many as a dark one but it's really more of grey area, he made a bargain with me; for each light branch of magic I study, I study a dark one. As I read more and more into Blood magic, that's when I learned all that I could do with it; not only could it be used to bind someone, or cause them pain, but you could use it to track someone you haven’t heard from and are worried about, or change the properties, making your blood either acidic or have healing properties, or even use it for Liquid Surveillance Communication.”

“Liquid what?” Alec asked as that was an ability he hadn't heard of.

“Liquid Surveillance Communication, the ability to spy, communicate, or do a surveillance using the element of water or any other liquid, in this case, blood.”

“You mean you can spy on us using our blood?” James asked, suddenly very nervous. Seeing his look, she glared before raising her left hand and they saw her magic pool there as her aura became visible.

“I, Erika Margo Phoebe Kali Roxanne Jaeger, daughter of Melanie and Keagan, hereby swear on my magic that I have never used my abilities to spy on any of my co-workers, from my agents to my associates in Q-branch.” Cassie then made a fireball form in her hand as proof that her magic was still hers.

“Here, I'll show you what I mean.” Cassie then pulled out the phial labelled 005, along with a small bowl. She pulled the stopper out of the phial, allowed a single drop to land in the bowl, then her eyes glowed and that tiny drop grew and glowed until they were looking at an image of Dominico, decorating the tree he got his apartment.
“Hi, Nico.” Dominico jumped before looking around.

“Kiara, I am very thankful that I was not entertaining company or this would be an awkward conversation.”

“James and Alec found out today that I can use Blood Magic and I am showing them how I could use it to communicate with people.”

“Understandable, but I must bid you adieu, as I do have to make a phone call to some friends, and I can do that without supervision.”

“Bye Nico.”

“And that's all there is to it” Cassie explained as the bowl went back to normal and she set fire to the blood drop to clean the bowl.

“One last question before we set up to get some sleep,” James asked as he looked at the phial containing his own blood.

“Shoot.”

“Where did you get our blood?” Cassie looked away before answering.

“You know those tests M insists upon when you all comeback, especially from honeypot missions? Well, I have a friend in Medical and, once I explained why I needed the blood, they obtained it for me. These phials are all I need for tracking and surveillance, as I have to be in your presence to change properties or, in a dangerous situation, take control.” Cassie got up but was stopped when Alec grabbed her hand.

“How close are you to the title of Warlock?” Cassie sighed as she replied,

“Another month or so, and I will master Alchemy, therefore leaving the title of sorceress behind me
and assuming the title of Warlock, but you two, Matteo and Dominico are the only ones who will know.”

“Don’t count the others out; Major Boothroyd is your biggest protector, most of the agents care about you like a sister, and most of the Q-branch love you as their future overlord.” James and Alec then both went to turn in as Cassie got a message on the phone Alec pinched for her before they left.

-- DID YOU TELL THEM? FROM: UNKNOWN -- The text read, but Cassie knew who it was as she typed back.

-- YES, AND THEY TOOK IT BETTER THAN I THOUGHT THEY WOULD. --

-- SEE? I TOLD YOU IT WOULD BE ALRIGHT MY LITTLE JINX. --

-- YOUR HUMBLENESS ASTOUNDS ME, COYOTE, BUT YOU HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING FOR CERTAIN HOW THEY WOULD REACT. --

-- HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO OUR GAMES? --

-- I CAN’T NOW, HORUS AND ANUBIS WILL BE WITH ME A LOT OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS. REMEMBER COYOTE, I AM NOT RISKING MY FREEDOM FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT. --

-- FINE, IF YOU’LL ADMIT THAT I AM YOUR DIRTY LITTLE SECRET, I WILL LEAVE YOU ALONE FOR A WEEK AND PUT OUR GAMES ON HOLD. --

-- FINE, YES COYOTE, YOU ARE MY DIRTY LITTLE SECRET. -- A few thousand miles away, Silva smiled into his phone as his little Jinx told him what he wanted to hear. If there was one thing he loved more than their games to see who the better hacker was, it was being a dirty little secret. James and Alec were gaining her trust in the flesh, hopefully soon helping her see them in a sexual sense as he would dearly love to have her power locked firmly on their side, and now he was engaged in his own courtship for her affections. Yes, he was loving this.
My dear and valued readers, I am sorry to get your hopes up only to dash them, but as I am not on social media this is my only way of expressing my grief over some highly distressing news. Today, at approximately 9:48 pm EST, Joan Yvonne Roberts, nee Adair, my grandmother, left this Earth and has joined my grandfather and big sister in heaven. Whilst I am very upset over this news, I am concerned that I am not crying as I did when my beloved dog Rosie died; I loved my grandmother dearly, she was my favorite babysitter when I was little, so why am I not crying? Perhaps because she had Alzheimer's disease and ceased recognizing our faces a year or so ago. So, in a way, we already said goodbye, just now it will be in a physical sense.

To any of you who understand this kind of feeling, whether it's your mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, or hell, someone who has been your best friend through thick and thin, I leave you with these words, words I gave to a man who has been my mother's friend for over twenty years but I personally never cared for, but I gave him this comfort because his mother died of Alzheimer's. They may have forgotten your name and your face, but they never forgot the love that you gave them. Whilst they may have lost the memories associated that inspired those feelings, the feelings remained, so there was always some part of them that remembered you. And though you may forget those exact memories as well, you will never forget the happiness, the joy, the love that they gave you, and so they will never really be gone from you anymore than you were really gone from them.

Goodbye Grandma, say hello to grandpa, Elizabeth and Poppa Webb for me.

End Notes

*mi pequeño fantasma - My little ghost

*mi pequeño - My little one

I use Google translate because I don't speak other languages.

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