Dangerous

by ELG

Summary

Logan begins to forge a friendship with Scott, but is Jean quite herself?

Logan awoke too early with too much to think about. He was still jangled by everything that had happened last night. Still trying not to think about the way Jean had smelled so different, a singed scent like timbers after a fire, or the way she had info-dumped him without so much as a by-your-leave and then banged Summers just the way she wanted to while Summers lay there and let her.

He got up with the sunrise and started searching the mansion for unexpected ways in, searching for Mystique’s scent and finding only that faded sniff of her from where she had gotten in before.

It was a surprise to run into Xavier in the corridor, the man with his head tilted, a frown creasing his forehead. “Logan – can we talk?”

“About?”

It felt like a searchlight just glancing over his mind and he took a step back, holding up a hand. “What is it with you people stepping in where you’re not invited?”

“You mean Jean also…?”

Xavier opened a door without waiting for his answer and ushered Logan in to his office.

“I have a workout in your stupid…Danger…place,” Logan pointed out.

“This won’t take a moment. I heard about your dream.”
There were too many scents in here from too many kids – bored kids and curious kids, either fascinated by those parabolas on the blackboard or wanting to be outside, running or playing. Logan still felt a little caged by this house, despite its size. He had been living by his own rules for so many years and suddenly he was having to live with several different people’s rules at once. The Xavier House Rules and the Cyclops Mission Rules and the Jean Grey Rules For How You, Logan, Can Interact With Scott.

He wanted to say Heard from who but there was only one person who could have ratted him out so although he was hurt, he shrugged. “Just a dream.”

“Please – I would very much appreciate it, Logan, if you let me…take a look at it.”

“Just as a matter of interest, Prof, is there any adult in this place who isn’t a total frickin’ control freak?”

“Logan, I’m not playing hall monitor with your unconscious mind. I am paying a compliment to your perception.”

Xavier smelled jittery, like a man keeping too many secrets on the simmer, afraid that one or more of them was about to boil over.

“My perception?”

“The onlooker who sees most of the game. You have enhanced senses….”

“So does McCoy.”

“But Henry knows us. Believes he knows us, anyway. You just know what your instincts are telling you. Your instincts may be comprehending things that our knowledge is helping us to miss.”

Unease prickled through him. “You think Mystique is really here? In the mansion? You think she has it in for Scott?”

There was that look on Xavier’s face – the same one he’d seen on Jean’s last night. Like he’d disappointed them both by not being able to make all those crazy lateral mind leaps they seemed to be doing.

“I think your dream will reveal to me what you have subconsciously realized but not yet processed. I would like some…confirmation. No, I would like to have my suspicions—”

“Confirmed?”

“No, Logan. I would hate to have my suspicions confirmed. May I?”

He gave in, because the guy was wigging him out and he still felt uneasy and like there was danger prowling, that damn stupid dream still much too vivid.

A brief unpleasant sensation, like someone had decided to take a feather duster to the inside of his head, and then Xavier was sitting back in his chair looking like a man who had just received bad news.

“What? What did you get from a stupid nightmare about Mystique…?”

Xavier looked unusually grim. “That you believe Scott doesn’t look for danger in people whom he trusts. And that a powerful woman could do him real harm before the rest of us were any the wiser.”
“Is that all?” Logan demanded harshly.

Xavier met his gaze. “Did you think I would find some proof in there that Mystique is hiding out in our basement? Or that you are a danger to Scott?”

“Is she? Am I?”

“She might be but there is nothing in your dream to suggest it. And you are a danger to everyone if you cannot learn to rein in your temper and keep in your claws. That’s one of the things we teach here – to those who want to learn: control.”

“Pity you didn’t teach Summers to stand up for himself in the bedroom,” Logan retorted, because the thrust had gone home.

“Now who’s over-sharing?” Xavier responded. “Jean should not have gone into your mind without your permission, or shown you the content of Scott’s, but does that make you spying on her and Scott any more acceptable?”

He could smell it on the air and hear it in the guy’s voice; Xavier was rattled. Logan was rattled, too, he just didn’t know why. Maybe that was what living in a world with shape-shifters in it did to the nervous system.

“I have to get to that stupid workout before your anally retentive leader boy starts handing out demerit points for tardiness.”

Mildly, Xavier said, “We have actually tried to stop him doing that.”

There was clearly going to be no explanation forthcoming on what the guy had found in Logan’s head or what it meant. Supposing it meant anything.

“You don’t want me to do a circuit? Have a sniff around for Mystique?”

“I think it would be better for everyone’s nervous system if you endeavored to arrive at the Danger Room before you are too late for the session that Scott has planned.”

It felt important not to act differently around Scott. Not to go soft on him. The guy was still annoying. Logan was still Logan. Gruff was an acceptable way to go. He growled at him and spoke in bitten off words. Scott was maddeningly patient and Logan thought that behind his visor Scott was darting uncertain looks his way, some of that perfect surface of his eroded by…something.

Scott said quietly as they made their way into the Danger Room, “We need to learn to work together, Logan. The X-Men work as a team. You need to learn to trust my orders.”

“I don’t,” Logan snapped back.

Scott didn’t even look hurt. He just offered a small, tight nod in return, but said, still quietly: “Try.”

“Put out the cigar, Logan.” Scott was only keeping his temper with an effort and, as the doors from the Danger Room into the wide gray corridor swished closed behind them, he suspected that behind his visor there was a light flashing a brighter red than usual. A morning’s frustrating workout against hard-light bad guys with the Wolverine could have that effect on a man. Even one who prided
himself on his self-control. Scott pointed to that prominently displayed No Smoking sign. “Now.”

He literally couldn’t remember the last time a training session had gone that badly or that he had got hit that hard that often and there was only one person he could blame. Himself.

Bobby and Rogue filed past, big-eyed, while Jean and Storm sent him sympathetic looks as they also walked towards the showers, taking Colossus with them. He thought they were wise. Logan was worse when there was an audience. Logan was being a provocative asshole with him because… because that was the way Logan had decided to be with him from Day One and apparently Scott was kidding himself if he thought things were ever going to improve. Logan was committed to his assholery and there was nothing Scott could do to change that. It was just something else he had to put up with, like the ever-present-threat of the Mutant Registration Act and having force beams that flowed out of his eyes.

“You know what I really want to do with this cigar right now, Cyclops? Shove it up your pretty boy ass. Except it probably wouldn’t fit on account of the stick you’re already keeping up there!”

Scott didn’t pretend to be all…up with people, but he knew what genuine frustration sounded like and he was hearing it in Logan’s voice. At once his own anger dropped down a notch. Closing his eyes firmly, he slid off his visor, pinched the bridge of his nose until his own headache reached bearable proportions and then slid the visor back on.

As he opened his eyes to the usual red, Scott said, “Logan, you are the only person in this school who expects a guy who has been working alone for years to suddenly be fine with operating as part of a team. No one else thinks this should be something you can pick up in five minutes without a single misstep.”

The look on Logan’s face did surprise him a little. So did the way, Logan petulantly snatched the cigar out of his mouth and stubbed it out on the wall. It might not be done with any grace but it was still a concession and he appreciated it.

Scott continued as patiently as he could, given how much his ribs were hurting: “I’m still trying to find the best way to factor someone with your particular skillset into a team strategy scenario. I’m sorry if you feel like I’m not utilizing you to the best advantage yet. I have to observe your strengths and weaknesses against different kinds of enemies in different locations before I can work out the best tactical way to use your assets.”

Logan said, “I’m used to working alone.”

“I know. And I appreciate that you need space to do your own thing. Believe me I am trying to find a way for you to do that within a team dynamic that doesn’t compromise our safety or yours or any innocent bystanders. You just need to give me a little longer. Kitty and Bobby and Rogue don’t have perfect control of their powers yet so there are a lot of variables to factor in. I know patience isn’t exactly your middle name – ”

But Logan was already holding up a hand. “I get it.”

“I know you don’t trust my leadership yet. There’s no particular reason why you should, but I meant what I said before about teamwork. If we’re going to work together, you have to trust the people around you. And you have to trust my leadership or else someone is going to get hurt in a situation where there aren’t safety protocols in place.”

Scott really didn’t want to be an asshole here. He was all too aware that whereas when he and the others had come to the mansion they had been teenagers who knew as little about life as they did
about fighting bad guys, Logan was a grown up. He was older than Scott and even if he hadn’t exactly shown many signs of being wiser, he probably had literally forgotten more life experience than Scott and the rest of the original team had put together. He couldn’t just be handed orders without explanations.

Quietly, Scott added, “I’m sorry if you feel like I was riding you too hard in there. It’s how I was trained and it’s what I know. That doesn’t necessarily make it the only way to go.”

When he wasn’t showing off in front of Jean or trying to provoke Scott to…to whatever it was Logan kept trying to provoke him to, the guy was more vulnerable than he looked. Scott wasn’t great with nuance but through having to see the world in red he had got better at reading body language, and Logan seemed downcast to him. He guessed when you were faster and stronger and fitter than almost everyone you ever met, it was difficult to be confronted with enemies you couldn’t just claw your way through. Logan hadn’t made a great showing in there today because it hadn’t been a set up where a lone wolf would shine. It had been set up for a team of well-oiled machines who all knew each other, and that, Scott realized, had been unfair to Logan. He told him as much now.

“What went wrong in there wasn’t your fault. It was mine. I didn’t make enough allowances for how new this was to you – and you can take that as a compliment, because without you being part of the team on Liberty Island, we were all screwed. We worked together so well there that I forgot we haven’t trained together before. Maybe it might be easier if you and I have a few practice workouts together first rather than with the whole team? Try to get a better handle on how we can utilize each other’s strengths?”

Logan was prowling restlessly, reminding Scott uncomfortably of a penned wolf. The corridors around the Danger Room felt suddenly sterile and confining for someone like Logan. Perhaps the whole mansion felt too tame to him, too cozy and too safe. Scott probably did too.

“You don’t want me around Jean and Ororo or the kids—is that what you’re saying?”

“No. I’m saying we’ve been on exactly one mission together, where I got beaten up by Toad, nearly murdered by Mystique, and then taken out by Magneto. Not to mention that I would have been ripped apart by Sabretooth if he hadn’t been too busy trying to kill you. So, I get why you don’t trust me to give the orders in there but it really would be safer for everyone if you could learn to. So, why don’t you and I try training together in the Danger Room, just the two of us, and see if we can make that work before we try incorporating your skills into a team strategy?”

Logan glowered at him horribly and muttered something that might have been acquiescence. He was still obviously angry and Scott wasn’t quite sure what he was angry about. It wasn’t as if his people reading skills were that good on a day even when he wasn’t hurting in too many places to count.

Logan said abruptly: “Were you a circus acrobat before Xavier took you in?”

Scott was nonplussed. “Charles isn’t Batman.”

“I know that. Batman’s taller. I’m just saying—all those back-flips and somersaults—”

“It’s necessary to be flexible when people keep trying to kill you, at least if you haven’t got healing factor. Maybe you can afford to get your ass kicked by Sabretooth but I wouldn’t walk away from that.”

“Is that guy always that creepy?”

Logan was still blocking his way to the showers. “In my experience, you saw him on a good day.
Can I get past, Logan?"

Logan moved aside but said inexplicably: “You shouldn’t assume I’m not flexible, Summers. I’m damned flexible.”

“With all that metal in your bones? I’ll take your word for it.”

He had hoped Logan might head off elsewhere but Logan had obviously decided to be a team player just at the time when Scott would have preferred him to go with the lone wolf thing. Either way, they were both hitting the showers, it seemed, which meant he was going to have a prowling, scowling witness to how much getting undressed was going to hurt.

He ran the water hot, wanting some obscuring steam, and managed to peel himself out of his uniform without any audible whimpering, but then Logan was there anyway, completely failing to respect his personal space.

“Shit, Cyke.”

“There’s nothing broken. It’s just bruising.”

Scott couldn’t help flinching in anticipation but Logan’s fingers were unexpectedly gentle on his ribcage. He felt for a break with the impersonal kindness of a man who had found an injured animal by the side of the road and was trying to find out if it was just winded or needed a vet, and it was okay until it suddenly wasn’t. The moment when Scott became acutely aware that he was naked with another naked guy who was touching him with warm, practiced fingers, taking particular care not to make the places that hurt on him hurt worse. He hadn’t been touched enough with kindness by men in his life for that not to mean far more to him than Logan was intending.

Logan was still doing his…Logan thing; treating Scott like a preppy brat, but apparently even preppy brats, however much they deserved to be smacked down and jeered at and have their girlfriends seduced under their uptight noses, didn’t deserve to get physically hurt, because Logan was anxiously turning him to look at his back, and hissing concern under his breath as his much-too-warm fingers traced the outline of every impact mark.

“You see?” Scott managed with difficulty. “No breaks. Just bruises.”

“I’m sorry,” Logan said.

“For what?”

“Getting you hurt.”

Scott went to protest that every bruise was his own responsibility and then realized that it might ultimately make Logan a more useful team player if he wallowed in some irrational guilt for a few minutes – he sincerely doubted that Logan could summon up the energy to give a rat’s ass about Scott’s bruises for longer than a few minutes, after all, given their usual antipathy.

“I’m fine. I just need to shower, Logan. Which I’m not very comfortable doing with you…in here with me.”

That had the desired effect. Logan stopped touching him. He missed the warmth of his fingers as soon as they were withdrawn, missed his encroaching too-close body heat, his intrusive cigar-scented breath on his skin. Scott felt something yawn in his gut, panic that he was feeling wrong things for the wrong reasons. He knew what was at the core of it, too many years when there hadn’t been a good touch to be had from any of the male things he encountered, and what Logan had just done had
decidedly been a good touch.

Breathlessly, he heard himself saying, “Thank you, Logan.”

Logan paused in the steam fog, still looking like some wild creature that might vanish back into the mist. “For what?”

*For touching me like I mattered.* “For checking I was okay. I appreciate it.”

Logan growled something incomprehensible and smoldered off broodingly to shower far away from Scott.

Alone in his room, Logan tried telling himself that he was angry with Summers. The problem was that he wasn’t. He was angry with Logan. Everyone else had been in synch in that crazy Danger Room and Logan was the one who couldn’t trust that model boy mutant to run the fake mission. He could look back on every occasion when Logan had argued or intervened or not done as Summers told him to do and each time it had made the wheels come off the mission plan and led to Summers taking the brunt of what the Danger Room was throwing. And Summers, just to make things worse, hadn’t said word one to Logan about getting hurt because of him. He’d apologized for not planning a strategy around Logan being an asshole in quiet, sincere tones while clearly blaming himself for everything that had gone wrong. Then, in the showers….

Logan grimaced and chugged down another beer. His room felt small and confining, even though it was neither of those things. It wasn’t even the bruises that were bothering him – although the bruises had been ugly. It wasn’t the way Summers wore the bruises the way people wore an old, familiar coat, his body so used to being hurt that it just worked around it, the way Logan worked around his healing factor and the metal on his bones. No, it was that moment of shattering vulnerability Summers had displayed when Logan briefly seemed to give a shit about him, the surprise, and the disproportionate gratitude licking over his high cheekbone, that brief parting of his lips. He hadn’t just seen it, he’d felt it under his fingers, smelt it on his skin. The spoiled, preppy, rich boy with the garage full of souped up sports cars hadn’t just been shocked by Logan being nice to him, he’d been marrow deep surprised by any man touching him with warmth.

There had just been an instant in their copper-walled torch prison as Logan was cutting him loose when he had seen the same expression on Summers’ face. Even though Logan had been rough about it, Summers had still been grateful to be cut free. There was a cold, trickly feeling down his spine that he tried to tell himself was just the metal, but however much his memory might have failed him, he could trust his own instincts. His instincts were damn good. Before he had been this: adopted son of doting billionaire, Summers had been something else and whatever he had been before hadn’t been exactly smothered in nice things.

How little kindness did someone anticipate from life before Logan, of all people, could outstrip his expectations?

Jangled and churned up inside, Logan stormed out to borrow Cyclops’ bike again. It needed gas so he would get it filled up. Bringing it back empty had been a dick move anyway. He had thought that Summers really needed more dick moves in his life but as taking a beating from fake giant robots seemed to be something he just took in his stride maybe he had enough crap to contend with at least for today. Perhaps he might need his bike later.

As he started up the bike, he saw Summers in the shower again, not just the bruises but the body beneath them. The face had looked so young when Cyclops was trying to hide how shocked and
shyly grateful he was for Logan being kind to him, but the body…the body looked like something out of a painting or a sculpture, broad shoulders, smooth planes of muscle, narrow waist, narrow hips, small, pert ass.

Logan opened the throttle and made the engine roar as he streaked past fall-golden trees. The guy looked like Michelangelo had chiseled him out of marble. Grimacing, Logan wondered if Cyclops had reason to think that when an older guy got in the shower with him nothing good was going to follow. He hadn’t smelled scared of Logan, just surprised a guy was being nice to him, and he hadn’t been wary about a naked guy being nice to him when he was naked either. So either no one had ever made that kind of move on him, or they hadn’t been nice about it, or…or Scott didn’t have bad associations with naked men being nice to him when he was naked.

Bobby had said something about Hank and Warren being in the mansion in the past, along with Storm and Jean and Scott. Everyone seemed in agreement that Hank and Warren were good guys, so had Hank and Warren taught Scott that the only things that happened in the shower were things that Scott liked? Was it possible that stick-up-his-ass leader boy was less of a goody-two-shoes than Logan had assumed?

He was thinking about this way too much. Waaay too much. He roared around a bend and the speed was crazy and exhilarating. There was nothing safe or sensible about this bike. Cyclops could claim all he liked that he had modified it because a mission might just happen to demand this much speed but Logan didn’t believe a word of it. This was an adrenalin-junkie’s motorbike. Buried under his stolid surface, Cyclops wanted to rush into the speed-blurry darkness so fast it tore the breath straight out of his lungs.

But…damnit, now he wanted to know…surely if bad stuff had happened to Summers, he would have been warier? Less moved by being touched? More braced for bad touches or straight up pain? But then the guy seemed to think pain was just something that happened to him anyway. It bothered him, the way Summers had just ducked under the pulses and punching metal fists, shouting to Bobby when to use his powers, to Kitty when to phase, Colossus when to metal up, grateful for the puff of wind from Storm she used to carry him above a pile-driver, throwing her a sweet grin and then sending his beams to break up the crushing metal fist headed for Logan, who wasn’t where he was meant to be, and in the process getting caught unawares by a vicious blow from a sentinel. Despite being knocked ass over teakettle himself, there had been raw anxiety in Scott’s voice when he saw Logan was about to get hit by something that sent out lashing electrical whips like an air breathing man-o-war. He had added insult to injury by calling to Jean: “Keep the voltage away from Logan – the circuitry could fry him!” Because new guy had a metal skeleton and it was Scott’s job to keep him safe.

He’d barely bothered to wipe the blood from his mouth before diving back in there, mentoring Bobby, protecting Logan, trying to rejig his strategy to accommodate the way Logan wasn’t having anything to do with it and was concentrating his efforts on protecting Rogue. Except Scott had already given Storm the job of protecting Rogue so Logan had just fucked things up for the rest of them, and Scott had given Logan Jean as a body guard which had left him an adult down when protecting the kids and, damnit, nothing had gone right in there. Logan had felt like the wrench in the machine, when back on Liberty Island they had gone with his plan and everything had flowed perfectly. He guessed after that win, he had been due for a loss, and today he had had his ass handed to him by the Danger Room. And quietly-spoken, reasonable Summers would no doubt have reminded him that it was better by far that they made mistakes in a training session with all the safety protocols switched on than out on a mission where the enemies were real.

Summers had told him that before he switched on the hard-light bad guys, along with a whole lot of other guff about teamwork and listening to each other and following the plan and looking out for
each other, that sounded as if it came straight out of the Boy Scout Handbook: This is why we train, Logan. It’s because it isn’t easy. It’s because we all of have to learn to be better than the sum of our parts."

Yeah, after the damn fiasco in the Danger Room, that little speech had sounded a lot less lame.

Logan let the road take him, the way it wanted to, blacktop to rubber, harder and faster, leaning in to every screaming wind-wild bend.

He kept seeing Summers weaving between savage hostility as if it was all he had ever known, just taking the blows when they landed and rolling to lessen the impact. On another day, Logan would have admired his athleticism, the way he threw himself into flips and rolls, with none of Logan’s extravagance but with equal determination. Cyclops had a gymnast’s grace, even under pressure, and even when hurting. Today it had bothered him how Cyclops just took what the Danger Room handed out with a sort of unwavering stoicism, as if this was what life was – a place where the walls would try to kill you sooner or later so you might as well learn how to duck.

They were back in the Danger Room, him and Scott and something like a jungle steam-simmering behind them, the cries of foreign birds and the whirring of paper wings. Scott’s costume was half-ripped and his hair was disordered, a smear of dirt across his forehead. Logan kissed him hard, like he was punishing him, and Scott opened his mouth hungrily, yielding and needy at once, sucking at Logan’s upper lip. He tasted salty and Logan realized his lip was bleeding, licked off the blood, licked in deeper, pushed his tongue in hard to his hot, eager mouth, his finger in harder to his hot, eager ass. Scott was firm and flexible under his fingers, hard planes of muscle and sharp edges of bone. He lifted easily, fitting himself to Logan’s hips, and when he slid in, Scott gave a choked moan of wanton pleasure that went straight to Logan’s cock. They went at it against the wall, hot and hard; a wall of mortared bricks that cracked beneath their weight, letting out thin coils of smoke; went at it hard and needy, sweat-slicked and moaning, panting and biting, as Logan drove into him and Scott willingly took every inch—

That was when a flame-licked hand seized him by the hair and hauled him off, hurling him away savagely, while a voice he barely recognized cried: “Scott is mine!”

It was Jean and not Jean; a thing of flame and light and anger; the shattered wall lying in fallen bricks about her feet. She hovered like a death bird, red as blood.

“I will consume him before I will share him with you, Wolverine!” The voice came out lapping with fire and water, and he stayed frozen on his knees as the flames licked like wings around her. When she turned on Scott, he didn’t run away, he opened his mind and his body to her, and she burned him up like air.

Logan came to gasping for breath. He felt feverish and frustrated at once, heart pounding and hard as a poker. Closing his eyes, he tried to recapture the taste of Scott’s bitten lips, the slick tightness of him as he pushed in, and jerked off guiltily, one part of his mind focused on pleasure, the other thinking: Jean Grey is not a firebird. She would never set Scott ablaze.

He rinsed himself off when he was done then sneaked along the corridors again to listen outside Scott and Jean’s door. He could smell sex and hear something stifled, and eased open the door like a sneak-thief, to see Scott naked on his back and Jean summoning her discarded stockings with her mind—they wrapped around Scott’s wrists and bound him to the bed. That quick shame-faced spasm
of pleasure from Scott as he was restrained went straight to Logan’s softened groin. Jean rode Scott like they were on the last lap of a race, leaning forward to drag his head back by the hair, as she slammed her hips down, harder and faster, she bit his neck with something like savagery—Scott cried out with pleasure as she drew blood and came with an arch of his spine and a flex of his hips that sent Logan spinning to lay his head against the wall, pressing his spine hard against the paneling as want hardened in him. Jean was still fucking herself on Scott—Logan heard him cry out again, this time in something more like pain, and he wondered if she was forcing him to get hard again or not allowing him to soften.

Scott moaned, “Jean…”

“I know all your thoughts,” she breathed as Logan clutched the wall and stayed absolutely still.

“Jean…?”

“You were thinking of him again.”

“Please…Jean… Ah….” A strangled gasp, and a stifled moan.

“Isn’t that what you want…to feel him inside you…?”

Logan risked a quick glance, torn between fascination and horror because whoever this woman was he wasn’t sure it was the Jean Grey he had first met. Certainly, he doubted that what she was doing to Scott right now was anywhere in the Ethical Telepath’s Manual. She was still straddling Scott, riding him at her own rhythm, but he was twisting away in something between pain and pleasure as the stockings tightened around his wrists. His head went back further and his neck was long and elegant and it occurred to Logan that Jean could snap it with a thought, that was how strong she was these days; there was a bruise already darkening at his throat where her teeth had bitten it; he arched again, thighs opening, toes curling. Scott seemed to be both liking the way she was playing with his mind and shame-racked by her knowing his thoughts.

“I’m sorry…” he gasped.

“No need to be sorry, Scott.” Her voice was a purr that made Logan bite down hard on his knuckles to stifle a moan of his own. “I always wanted you to get a little dirty, remember? I’m the one who wanted to mix things up in here… You’re the one who was always too busy playing in the Danger Room to come here and play with me… I can bring anyone and anything in here with us and make you feel its fingers inside you…” A moan from Scott. “Or feel it licking you with its long, hot tongue….” Another tortured moan. “What do you want, Scott? Animal? Vegetable? Mineral? Something savage? Or something kind?”

Another spine arch and cry from him and Logan wondered how the hell he had never known that the boy scout had it in him to look this sweaty and wanton, clutching at the bars of the bed, twisting his head from side to side as his wild wife mind-fucked him deeper than a dream.

She was radiant in there; a woman pulsing with power, her red hair flowing as if the air was water, crackling light fizzing its way along the heavy folds of the drapes, breasts high, nipples erect, her spine a perfect curve, ass clenching as she rode her sweat-drenched husband. He realized this was the Jean he had first met, after all, she had always wanted this—she had just never admitted it until now. Something locked up inside her had been set loose and it was beautiful and terrible and it was doing incredibly invasive things to Scott Summers right now while he writhed and moaned and panted but never once said ‘Stop’.

Walking back to his room was going to involve advancing at a shuffling crouch like a fourteen-year-
old boy on sport’s day but he was only human, fuck it, and even though he was half-horrified, he
was also all the way turned on. Risking another glance, he watched Jean rock herself to a climax as
she telepathically toyed with Scott. She stiffened, gasped, flung her head back and then pulled off
him. He waited for her to keep the feeling going with her fingers, but of course she didn’t need to
touch herself—she could touch herself with anything in just the right spot with the power of her
mind. One of the stockings unleashed itself, and Scott was flipped over face down and his wrist re-
lashed all with a careless flick of her mind.

Scott panted, “Jean—I have to supervise the kids’ breakfast.”

“You’re young and healthy, Scott. I’m sure you can do without a few hours’ sleep and still get up in
time to pour out the oatmeal.”

When he looked over his shoulder at her—her bound captive—his expression was wry; awestruck
and amused and perhaps a little frightened but still incredibly turned on. “What are you going to do
to me?”

Jean began to kiss her way along the knots of his spine like a boa constrictor. “Terrible things, Scott.
Beautiful, terrible things.” And she turned her head to look directly at the cracked open door.

Her voice sounded in Logan’s mind: I know you’re there. Come in or go away. Don’t be a Peeping
Tom.

The urge to go in there was almost overwhelming—but was that urge coming from him or from her?
And did Scott really want him or did Jean just like the idea of watching Logan fuck her husband’s
perfect butt?

He thought back fiercely: I don’t think telepathy and free will mix as well as you think they do, Red.
I think they mix perfectly—like sex and pain.

When Scott cried out, he felt like a hostage, and Logan wondered if all of this was for his benefit—a
show she was putting on to fuck with him that would stop once he was out of the way—whereupon
she would kiss it all better and reassure Scott that she was still the nice, kind Jean he loved. Except,
he wondered if Scott loved this Jean even better, because what Scott secretly wanted from a woman
was for her to do crazy fucked-up things to him in bed.

Goodnight, Jean, Logan said, and turned and began to walk back to his bedroom. By the time I close
my eyes again you can make me think this was just all part of my dream, but I promise you a part of
me will still remember.

Jean said only: Sweet dreams, Logan….

He shuffled crab-wise out of earshot, hoping he didn’t meet one of the kids while he was poking
uncomfortably out of his boxer shorts, but his ears still caught the echoes of Scott’s hitched little
gasps. It was and wasn’t real, after all. She wasn’t really putting animals in the guy’s bed; not really
forcing him into threesomes or foursomes or sixsomes in there, except wasn’t that reality for
telepaths? Wasn’t what happened in the mind as much reality for them as what happened out of it for
the rest of them. Perhaps from Scott’s perspective, as a non-telepath, he was just being teasingly
coaxed into indulging in some vivid fantasies that wouldn’t leave a mark upon him. But from the
perspective of a telepath perhaps what Jean was becoming was something strange and dangerous.

That was when he finally got what Xavier had been looking for in his mind that morning—the thing
that Logan knew that everyone else loved Jean too much to notice. There was someone in the
mansion now, who looked like a friend but could so easily become an enemy; someone who might kill Scott in the night when they thought he was in a place of safety; but that someone wasn’t Mystique and never had been. It had always been Jean Grey.

Logan woke to a vague sense of unease. He felt as if he had had a nightmare but try as he might he couldn’t recall it. Something about him and Scott in the Danger Room—misplaced guilt for that yesterday’s session—no, probably something hornier. He had seen the boy scout naked, after all, and aside from the guilt about the bruises, it was impossible not to notice that Cyclops had a body that looked pretty damned...lickable. Had there been something about Jean? No, he didn’t think she had figured at all. Just him and Scott in the Danger Room getting a little…sweaty. Well, that was mildly embarrassing but also kinda hot. Maybe the best way to get a rise out of stick up his ass boy was to try the dommy asshole route. For all he knew, they might both enjoy that…

Going in to breakfast, it was all Logan could do not to whistle and wondered why Xavier was looking so damned anxious. As he passed him, he had that weird sensation he got around Xavier sometimes and flinched. “Are you in my head, Chuck?”

“I assure you, Logan, that no one wants to deal with your subconscious before breakfast.” Xavier wheeled himself off and it took Logan a few minutes to realize that there hadn’t—strictly speaking—been an answer in there.

In the kitchen, Scott was trying to persuade the children to eat healthily while they ignored him and went for whatever sugar-frosted crap the kitchen cupboards could provide them with. As Scott was yawning, he was probably not fighting his corner as well as he should have been, and was mostly leaning against the stove in the manner of someone who could barely keep his eyes open.

“What were you up to last night?” Logan demanded, waiting for Scott to blush like a teenage girl in a way that would clue him in that he and Jean had been at it—which would annoy Logan on several different levels, but, still, he wanted to know.

Scott however just shook his head. “Nothing. We had an early night. I was reading and then…I guess I must have fallen asleep.” He looked a little perplexed but not embarrassed.

Colossus kindly but firmly removed Scott from his leaning place and propped him against the sink instead, explaining that he needed to fry eggs upon the stove.

“If you’re supervising breakfast, Piotr, can you stop them putting chocolate spread on their toast?” Scott asked.

“Nyet. This is not vozmozhnoye…possible. But if I can I vill stop them throwing knives.”

“Let’s call that a win, then.” Scott poured himself another coffee, elbowed himself off the cupboards and moved towards the doorway.


“I feel as if I got two hours’ sleep.”

“You must be going down with something.” Logan felt his forehead and sniffed him and he mostly smelt of shower gel. “You don’t seem feverish.”

“Must be old age catching up with me.”
“That would be slightly less hilarious if you were old enough to drink.”

“I’m a quarter of a century old, Logan. In America, we consider that ‘vintage’.”

“What does that make me?”

Pyro, elbowing his way past them, said, “Just really, really old, Logan.”

“God, I hate kids.” Logan moved Scott out of the way of the barging stream of them trying to cram into the kitchen, apparently lured by the pied piper scent of Colossus cooking bacon. “You do look like crap, you know. Go back to bed.”

“I can’t. I have a lesson.”

“Is it accountancy?”

“No. Because when I offered that as an option, nobody signed up for that class. It’s practical physics. Hank does theoretical physics because I don’t understand it and it makes my head hurt.”

“When you say ‘practical physics’ do you mean you demonstrate how potential energy can be transformed into momentum and all that crap?”

“Kind…of…” Scott clearly didn’t want to commit himself until he knew what was coming next.

“So someone could teach that class by showing the kids how a bike engine works, right? You’ve done that before, haven’t you?”

“Because it was that or show them how the x-jet works and they leave little sticky fingerprints all over my engine housing.”

Firmly treading down a nascent desire to leave some sticky fingerprints on Scott’s engine housing himself, Logan persisted with what he felt to be saintly patience: “So bike maintenance could be a physics class?”

“Well, I suppose that might edge more into…engineering…but apparently it’s important not to be anal about setting lesson boundaries…”

Logan tried not to be amused by the way Scott said that as if it were something he’d been taught by rote. “So, I could take a motorbike apart and get the little squirts to put it back together and we could say they’d learned something about physics, right? And you could go back to bed until you look less like deep fried crap?”

Scott looked tempted but then said, “I can’t.”

“Why not? And I need a reason that isn’t about you being an uptight, hidebound, stick-up-his-ass dick?”

Grimacing, Scott said, “It just feels wrong if I don’t do what it says on the schedule. My name’s right there on the lesson plan, Logan!”

“And if there was a mission, that lesson wouldn’t get taught—because you’d be out there saving a world that hates and fears us, right? So, don’t you have an obligation to be mission ready? Isn’t that really the number one priority?”

“Ye-es…?”
“Would you be more mission ready if you went back to bed for a few hours and slept off whatever it is you’ve got?”

There was a moment where Scott visibly struggled between inclination and honesty before conceding. “Yes.”

“So get your perfect butt back to bed, Summers, and let me teach your stupid physics class.”

“Okay.” Scott looked slightly stunned and more than a little touched. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, you dick.” He almost added ‘And don’t smile at me like that’ because that smile could take a man out at the knees better than an optic blast, but he certainly wasn’t sharing that with the class.

Pyro came back out, devouring a bacon sandwich and followed Logan’s gaze. “You hot for teacher, Logan?”

“I’ll set you on fire in a minute, Allerdyce.”

“No need to get all growly with me. It’s not exactly hard to see what you see in Mr. Summers… given that he’s walking away right now and you’re still watching…”

Logan shot him a sideways look. “So are you—and cut it out, right now.”

Stuffing the last of the sandwich into his mouth, Pyro held up his hands. “You gonna make a move on Ms. Grey’s territory, Logan? Because I want to get my bet in now, if you are, because all the smart money right now is on you moving in on her. Seriously—if you’re going after Cyclops, I could clean up. So, if you are, can you like…wink or something? And then not hit on him when anyone else is around so it’s just between you and me? Like hit on him in the showers, when it’s just the two of you…?”

Turning away, Logan marched resolutely towards the garage, throwing out a thought to Xavier to tell Summers’ students to meet him there for physics class. “Why are you following me? Do you want me to punch you?”

“I’m in your practical physics class—and you’re not allowed to hit us. Professor Xavier doesn’t approve.”

“Professor Xavier built a Danger Room for you little rugrats to kill yourselves in. You ask me, he hates kids more than I do.”

“It has safety protocols.”

“Well, I don’t,” Logan snarled. When he glanced sideways at Pyro he saw the kid looked torn between scared and impressed. “You looking for a big bad to latch onto, kid? Because good guys may be boring and tell you a bunch of crap you don’t want to hear, but bad guys—hate to break it to you—are generally assholes.”

“Are you saying Cyclops is a better man than you are, Wolverine?”

The voice was a jeer and he gritted his teeth. “I’m saying the difference between a hero and a villain is that the villain isn’t going to give a shit if he gets his sidekicks killed. The hero is.”

“Heroes and villains? Isn’t that just people with different points of view? Maybe some of us don’t see the guy who’s out there fighting for mutants as a villain. Maybe some of us see him as the only guy
who gets that they’re never going to stop hating and fearing us, whatever we do. The game’s rigged and the humans want us to lose. Maybe we should find a better way to play than rolling over and just letting them win.”

As Pyro ran ahead and Logan followed him sombrely, he thought once again that there was a good reason he stayed the hell away from people. All their complications and contradictions. All the feelings he ended up feeling as a consequence. Punching people was so much easier. Just feel bone crunch, earn the dislike, collect your winnings, drive on to the next know-nothing town. That was a world that made sense.

He was passing a corridor when he caught his own name:

“…did to Logan, Jean.”

A quick glance around the corner and he saw Xavier and Jean thirty yards down the hall. No one else would have been able to catch what they were saying, but he could, if he listened carefully.

“You’re so sure I did something to him?”

“Jean, I know you did. Ever since Liberty Island there is something different about you. You keep… losing control, crossing lines you would never have….”

“And how would you know that without crossing some lines of your own, Professor?”

“Did you make Scott consent to you doing those things to him?”

“It’s in there. If you dig deep enough, it’s all in there. He wants….”

“People are entitled to have fantasies. Other people are not entitled to use those personal, secret fantasies as an excuse to force them to do things they would never choose to do. My god, Jean— what were you thinking?”

“Things just got a little out of hand. It was only telepathy. None of it happened.”

“But you took those memories from him for a reason, because you knew if you left them in his mind he would wake up feeling… soiled, because the things you persuaded him to let you put in his mind —make him experience telepathically—were so far out of his comfort zone that the Scott Summers we both know couldn’t get there with a map and a compass, and you know it. This isn’t you, Jean. Listen to yourself.”

Logan stole another glance in time to see her press a hand to her forehead. “I know… I don’t know what’s happening. It’s as if there’s someone else in here with me and she wants…. She’s so hungry for experience. She wants to devour life every minute of every day. And she wants him in a way I never let myself admit…. Professor, I’m not making excuses, but he’s so….”

“Repressed? Frigid? Unwilling to acknowledge his innermost desires? You knew what he was when you fell in love with him. He was a serious little boy who watched his parents die and then got turned into a madman’s science experiment. He has no idea what normal is and he does the best he can to live with the wreckage Sinister and Winters left behind, but he can’t help being damaged. You used to love even the broken parts of him.”

“I do! I do love him!”

“Then stop manipulating him.”
For a moment, Logan seemed to sense a burning taste to the air, and her voice struggled with emotion. “That’s rich coming from you, Charles.”

“I never set myself up as a role model. I always told you, just as I always told him, that control is everything. The times I have failed to live up to my own standards have only reinforced that for me.”

“You have changed things in his mind.”

“Yes, I have, and I will argue the ethics of my actions with you on another day, but however arrogant and misguided you may think I have been in the way I have raised Scott, I have never manipulated him or anyone else for my own sexual gratification. After last night, you cannot say the same thing. And Logan has already had his mind messed around with—you had no right to take those thoughts from him.”

“He’s wrong! I’m not a danger to Scott.”

“Are you sure?”

The words were cold and Logan shivered from hearing them.

Jean strode up and down, he could hear the sound of her shoes on the parquet floor. “You have always manipulated us!”

“Yes. I have trained and shaped you because I want the world to be a better place and I can’t achieve it alone. I brought in like-minded people and I tried to forge a common philosophy—”

“You took in a damaged teenager who was so desperate for any kind of acceptance, for any facsimile of affection, for any semblance of something approaching normality, that you could tell him the sky was black and he’d believe you! You groomed him to be the soldier you needed for the fight you wanted to fight, Charles. So, don’t tell me you have always had Scott’s best interests at heart.”

“And what could I have done differently to keep him safe and give him a purpose, given that he can never control his own mutation and he will never be safe in a world that hates mutants? You tell me, what would you have done? Because you shared my dream as well, Jean.”

“I still do.”

An uneasy pause where he could hear in their breathing how upset they both were. This was what love did to people—it hurt them like this, because he didn’t doubt that Jean and Xavier loved each other, and more than he doubted that they both loved Scott.

“You crossed a line,” Xavier said quietly. “And I have crossed it too. I have done things that are morally questionable, but, Jean, what you did last night, that wasn’t to safeguard the world from a potentially dangerous mutant or to save someone you love from remembering some traumatic event. You just got carried away and you took him with you. And you can’t keep doing that to him and then just change his memories and pretend that it never happened. How close did you come to inviting Logan into the bed you share with Scott last night?”

“Scott likes him,” she said it in something not much above a whisper.

“Then should Scott admit that to himself and then admit it to you, you have my blessing to act upon it. Not when it’s some…inchoate contradiction buried in the back of his mind of which he’s barely conscious.”

“I would never…!”
“You almost did!” Xavier’s turn to wheel himself up and down a little. “I expect out-of-control hormones with teenagers. I expect the grown-ups among us to behave like…responsible adults. I’m sorry if your attraction to Logan is causing you to become…restless, but either dump Scott and date Logan, or have an affair if you want to, and keep it from Scott, but don’t telepathically manipulate anyone in this mansion into playing out some sexual fantasy of yours. They are not your puppets and you, Jean, were never a puppet master. You are a wise, kind, compassionate woman. Whoever is driving you to act like this…you need to control her, or you need to let me….”

“You are the one who erased what you did. You must have known it was wrong. Can you control it or not?” His voice was cold, almost unrecognizably so.

The anger seemed to go out of Jean all at once. “I don’t know. I…can’t be sure. At the time it feels right. It feels like the right thing to do.”

“It wasn’t.”

“I know that.”

“If I have to, I will take Scott away from you. I will erase his memories of you. I will send him away and it will be as if he never knew you, but I will not let you….”

There was a new note in her voice: “What is it you think I’m going to do, Professor? Am I…? Is Logan right? Am I dangerous?”

“You have to regain control.”

“What if I can’t? What if this…thing inside me, this restless heat, gets stronger and who I used to be gets weaker…?”

“Let me wall her up again. Let me seal her in.”

“No.” Jean shook her head. “I win this fight or I lose it, but I won’t have someone else dry-walling my mind.”

“So, you’ll change Scott and Logan’s memories? Seal up hours of their lives where they can’t find them? But you won’t let me do the same to you?”

“No.” There was an implacable note in her voice. “Because you’re not strong enough to defeat whatever this thing is inside me, Charles, and if you attack her, now she’s so much stronger, I think she might rip out your mind.”

Another strange pause and a new tender note in his voice. “Jean—don’t do anything rash.”

“But we both know it might come to that.”

“You didn’t hurt him.”

“But Logan thinks I will. Logan thinks I’m dangerous. He gets up in the middle of the night and comes to our room because he thinks, in the back of his mind, that I might be killing Scott, and he can’t admit that to himself, so he has dreams about Mystique or about firebirds. And I have been in his mind, and he’s almost an animal in places, he senses what the rest of us can’t even see. He’s wiser than he knows.”
The words felt like a knife-blade and Logan dragged in a breath. Jean sounded like Jean again, a powerful, implacable Jean, capable of any sacrifice.

“When the moment comes, I will do the right thing.”

“Let me find another way.”

“There may not be another way, Charles, and if there is, I am the one who needs to find it.”

A moment later, Logan was still standing there blankly as Jean strode past. She looked magnificent but somehow more unreachable than he had ever seen her. “Is it true?” he asked.

She met his gaze unflinchingly. “Did I mess around with your memories? Yes.”

“Does Scott like me?”

“Ask him.”

“I have a beast inside me, Jeannie. Some days I battle it better than others. If you need any help…”

“You can’t fight this fight for me, Logan. No one can.” She sounded exactly like herself as she added, “Thank you for taking Scott’s physics class. He really does need to catch up on his sleep. Maybe you shouldn’t keep the students waiting?”

It was a dismissal and he went, not sure, even as he obeyed her, if she was making him do what she said; not sure if she even knew herself these days. I went away for too long, he thought. It was as if something irrevocable had happened in his absence that if he had only been here, he might have caught in time.

As Jean moved away, he felt her thoughts escape her, felt the heat of the flame within her flaring too bright to extinguish, and then a wall of blue water that crushed her into darkness and left not a spark behind.

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