

I rub the sleep from my eye, yawning and attempting to wake myself up further. I half expect to look outside and see the countryside passing by, but there's no such thing. Instead, I stare back at the features of a small town. Tightly packed old-style brick buildings, many which seem to have seen better days decades ago.

"Glad you're awake," Kalypso says, offering me a warm smile.

"What are we planning?" I question, trying to recall what we had agreed upon before but failing. The car was only a step up from the outdoors when it came to sleep. A full car was not ideal for stretching one's legs, even if the seats were far more comfortable.

"We're going to check into a motel and discuss it further," Katrina tells me, turning the corner to a more populated street. I notice that some of the others are awake and peering out the window. I fail to remember that most of them had been attending the academy for years. The outside world had become foreign to them.

"A motel?" I question, "is that a good idea?" My question comes too late, seeing that as soon as I ask, she turns into the parking lot of one.

"I'm tired, and I want a bed," Trenton growls from behind me. His posture and attitude remind me of a kid who had just been told no and was preparing for his second temper tantrum.

"Yea, to be honest, I have to agree," Jordan settles, his head popping up from the rear, "this trunk does not help my wings."

#"Yea I guess a motel would be nice."

I think about how sleepy I am, in need of a bed instead of some hard surface that I can't get comfortable with, "yea, I guess a motel would be nice."

#"This is dangerous."

"This is dangerous guys," I point out, hoping I didn't have to spell out the reasons why.

"Everything is dangerous," Jordan points out in irritation, "we've literally escaped a burning building while guys were shooting at us. Call it what you want, but I think we're lucky, lucky and sleepy." Majority of the group mumble in agreement.

#"Whatever."

I look between the two of them before waving them off, "whatever." I don't care what we do, as long as I wasn't being chased by crazed folks with guns for no reason.

#Stay quiet.

After Jordan agrees with Trenton, I find no further use to argue or question our plans.

The worst part about our plans was that they could change at any minute because of circumstances. Despite agreeing back at the Commander's base, many of us were still unsure about what we wanted.

The Heroes were still on the 'let's go after the Commander' train, but as Chelsea reminded us countless times, we should find her parents for help. No one, not even Katrina believed that to be a good idea. Jordan's first and only priority was finding Keno, while Reese slowly but surely wanted to find out where her parents were. The Outcasts wanted to find out more about the wristbands and learn more about the serum. Katrina was the only one who didn't really have any idea about what to do, mostly because she didn't want to have unwanted attention brought to her.

#I want to go speak to my parents.

#I want to finish the investigation.

#I don't care what we do, as long as we don't die.

Katrina cuts the SUV off, turning to speak to us, "I'll go in there and get us a room."

"With what money?" Leto snorts in amusement.

"I'm going to talk to them, tell them what's going on and ask if we can make some sort of deal." The entire car grows silent, each of us staring at her in either astonishment or as if she was crazy. She catches on and sighs, "not everyone is against mutants."

"Yea whatever you say, Katrina," Jordan chuckles, "so what's the real plan?" We all begin throwing out ideas, the majority of them not making it past a sentence of brainstorming. After throwing out two pointless ones, I grow quiet and try to think about all the possibilities.

"Come on team, trust me on this," Katrina begs, pleading with us with her eyes.

#Let Katrina talk to the motel clerk.

The others continue to throw out ideas, all of which seem pointless. My eyes travel back towards Katrina who's biting the inside of her cheek, nervously looking at all of us.

"Alright Katrina," I say loud enough for the others to hear me and to stop their constant bickering. Not one of them like my words, not counting Katrina of course. "Let her prove herself." My team still don't look persuaded, but it was done, and Katrina was already making her way inside.

"We're going to be sleeping in the car tonight," Jordan grumbles, shooing Trenton out of the way so that he can get out. The rest of us follow, each of us curious to see if Katrina was successful. I peek inside the motel's lobby, attractive for a motel that rests in the middle of nowhere. I half expected to see mold on the ceilings, an unkempt floor, chipped

wood, and stained furniture. Instead, I find myself admiring a clean carpet, new and modern looking furniture, and a plump, attractive woman walking towards us.

My brain catches up with my other senses, and I immediately backpedal, tripping over Reese and Kalypso in the process. The door opens, and the woman from earlier, along with Katrina stare at us. The woman's eyes land on Jordan and Chelsea, both who had glaring mutations.

She turns to Katrina and nods, ushering us into the lobby area. I pick myself up, fixing my clothing before giving them smirks.

"Told you this was a good idea." We follow in after them, keeping quiet as Katrina did most of the talking. Besides a few things, she sticks to the truth, and the truth seems to be working.

#Break into the rooms we need.

Doing this the legal way was going to get us nowhere. Instead, I come up with and voice the idea of sneaking into the rooms we need. Only a handful disagree, the majority agreeing with my plan and all too eager to execute it.

I lead the others to the back of the motel, Leto aiding the mission by telling me if there was anyone in the room. After that, and after some heavy persuading, we encouraged Chelsea to transform to check the room for things. If there were no personal items, then the room was deemed unoccupied, and we claimed it.

We claim three rooms, luckily all on the same story though not right beside one another. Katrina parks the SUV to the side and unlike the rest of us, rents out a room. She claims that if the staff saw her then perhaps they would just believe us to be with her.

#Distract the motel clerk and send Kalypso and Ezekiel to hack the computer.

"Or," I say, taking a step toward Kalypso and Ezekiel and turning towards the others, "we can distract the clerk while these two geniuses break into the computer."

*if s_intellect = true "You say that as if you don't have the intelligence to do it yourself," Ezekiel smiles warmly. I wave away his compliment but beam nevertheless at him taking notice.

*if s_tech = true "\${name}, I'm pretty sure you can hack into that computer too. Ezekiel and I aren't the only tech savvy folks on this team," Kalypso points out. I wave away her compliment but beam nevertheless at her taking notice.

"I think it can work, question is, how do we distract the clerk enough to leave her post?" Timmi questions, all of us quieting down as we think that part of the plan over.

“The few of us the better,” Chelsea adds in next, “if the clerk sees us all walking around one day, I’m sure she’ll catch on that something’s wrong.”

“And since we don’t want her knowing about our powers then Jordan and Fluffy Butt can’t be seen,” Reese states, ignoring the unamused look that Chelsea sends her way.

#Have Trenton and Timmi fight.

I turn towards Timmi and Trenton, who are already on opposite sides from one another.

“If you two make a scene, then that should be all we need,” I start, thinking I would need to persuade them more but Timmi looks like my idea is the best she’s ever heard. She shoots a large grin towards Trenton who sighs dramatically, but he agrees. The rest of us get back in the car, while Kalypso and Ezekiel hide behind a pillar to the left of the entrance. Timmi and Trenton begin.

“We’re lost, congrats bro! You always were a Class A idiot,” Timmi immediately starts as they walk in view of the dingy glass doors. She pushes him, and only due to Trenton’s quick reflexes, does he avoid running into the side of the brick wall.

“I’ll say it again,” Trenton growls, opening the door, “we’re not lost.” He slaps Timmi’s hands away and points an accusing finger into her face, “and don’t you push me again.”

She antagonizes him further by doing so, smirking, “or what.” Trenton turns to her and I can see the clerk rise up, nervously looking between the two. Timmi pokes his shoulder, only repeating the action when he swipes her hand away violently.

Either the two were great actors or this fight was getting serious. My thoughts are confirmed when Trenton pushes her backwards and she trips and falls over her own feet.

“About time you grew something akin to balls,” she snorts, shooting towards him. From the angle that she tackles him, the two are back outside. Timmi manages to get Trenton to the ground where the two of them wrestle, neither looking to have the upper-hand. The clerk shrieks in fright, darting outside and towards the fighting duo. As she tries to calm them down, Ezekiel and Kalypso sneak in.

Now we just had to wait.

The twins do an excellent job of keeping the clerk’s attention, long after Ezekiel and Kalypso are done and out. When they finally promise to stop, and she walks away, they come to us.

We claim three rooms, luckily all on the same story though not right beside one another. Katrina parks the SUV to the side and unlike the rest of us, rents out a

room. She claims that if the staff saw her then perhaps, they would just believe us to be with her.

#Have Chelsea use her powers.

I get the idea to send Chelsea in, seeing that she can turn into whatever animal she chooses.

“Chelsea, if you turn into a dog or something and go inside, drawing her out, we might be able to get in.” Chelsea taps her chin, thinking my words over before agreeing. The rest of us get back in the car, while Kalypso and Ezekiel hide behind a pillar to the left of the entrance. Chelsea morphs into a dog breed that I don’t recognize before darting into the lobby area.

In less than no time, Chelsea has the lobby in an uproar. The clerk chases after her, trying to grab onto her tiny fast frame. The clerk becomes even more hectic when Chelsea grabs a thick folder on her desk, stealing it and racing outside before the clerk even knows what’s going on. The clerk shrieks as she chases behind Chelsea, giving Ezekiel and Kalypso the perfect window. While they hack into her computer, Chelsea runs the clerk around the parking lot, ignoring her pleas.

It’s only when the two come back out that Chelsea drops the folder and sprints out of sight. I watch as the clerk gathers the folder and then marches back to the building, grumbling about her large disdain for animals.

We claim three rooms, luckily all on the same story though not right beside one another. Katrina parks the SUV to the side and unlike the rest of us, rents out a room. She claims that if the staff saw her then perhaps, they would just believe us to be with her.

All that was left was to decide who would stay with who.

“If I may,” Katrina begins, clearing her throat, “I’m still your instructor, and I think you guys working as a team is even more crucial than before. Perhaps we should do the rooms randomly, so we can all spend time with others that we normally wouldn’t.” The idea wasn’t bad, it reminded me of the Cops, Robbers, and Civilian game we played. The problem with the idea was that random meant we had no idea who we would be put with. I can already see Trenton and Jordan killing each other. But again, maybe this would allow them to talk it out. Or perhaps they wouldn’t even be placed in the same room together.

#Go with your usual groups.

“No thanks,” I start, “we need to keep a low profile and trying to kill each other because of your random group idea won’t help that.” The others nod in agreement, though I would be kidding myself to say that they didn’t appear curious to Katrina’s way.

#Let Katrina randomly give out the room assignments.

No one says anything at first, everyone looking to the other for their thoughts.

"I'm in, seems like a decent idea," I state and from beside me, Kalypso agrees. One by one the others grumble their agreement, and the floor is given back to Katrina. She takes out her tablet and begins fiddling with it, needing Kalypso's help to set her up with the motel's Wi-Fi first.

"Alright Chelsea, Timmi, Reese, you'll be in one room." I glance over at them, Chelsea was the only one who seemed deflated by the randomness.

"Just keep that squirrel away from me," Timmi snorts, eyeing Chuck who currently rests on Chelsea's shoulder.

"\${name}, Leto, and Trenton, you'll be in room two. Leaving Kalypso, Jordan, and Ezekiel in the last."

#Well crap.

#This was fine.

It wasn't late, far from it actually. But the majority of us were all tired and looking forward to sleeping on some kind of plush surface. We split up and go into our designated rooms.

*if randomway = true Once in my own room, I look at my two roommates, trying to figure out how we would do the sleeping arrangement. There were only two beds and while any other day, we might take turns sleeping, this wasn't that day.

"Correct me if I'm wrong but we're all sleepy, correct?" Trenton questions.

"Definitely," I answer while Leto just grunts to confirm.

Trenton gazes between both of us and nods, "then you two can sleep in the beds. I'll take the floor, just hand me a pillow." Without much argument from either of us, we both hand Trenton a pillow as we get into bed. We close the blinds, lock the door, and turn off the lights, allowing the silence to whisper its lullaby to help us sleep.

#Only I couldn't, my mind on Trenton.

I squirm from where I rest, unsuccessfully getting Trenton off the forefront of my mind. I reposition myself, as if my current position would allow me to steal a peek at him. I finally wiggle my way to the end of the bed, gazing over the edge at Trenton's still form. His back is to me and I can barely see the rise and fall of his chest.

“Trenton?” I whisper, not knowing if Leto was asleep or not, and not wanting to wake him.

“What \${name}?” he growls quietly. Oh, so he was still awake.

“Are you sure you’re comfortable down there? I mean this bed is big.”

“No, it’s not,” he replies, turning to face me with irritation in his eyes.

“Okay you have a point but that really doesn’t look comfortable.”

“I’m fine \${name}, I’ve slept in worse areas and conditions than this.” I continue to stare at him, despite him not being pleased by it. “What now?”

#“Does the tough guy act get boring?”

“Does the tough guy act ever get boring or no?” I question, propping my head up on my hand.

“It’s not an act.”

“Oh, so you’re just a natural born tough guy?” I ask playfully, and he sneers up at me.

“I’d like to think so, yea.” I roll my eyes and head back to the head of the bed, plopping down with a loud sigh. The room is once again quiet, when I hear Trenton whisper something before I fall asleep.

“Thanks for checking up on me.”

#“I’m sorry about your past.”

“I’m sorry about your past,” I say abruptly. Though I knew what I was saying, my words cause him to do a double take, looking at me in confusion.

“Um . . . thanks, I guess.” Trenton fiddles with the pillow, pulling out a loose thread and wrapping it around his finger. He shrugs and shoots me a wide smirk. “It wasn’t all bad. Half the life lessons I learned have been instrumental, I’m glad to have them.”

“Even despite everything that you had to go through and lose?” This catches him off guard as well, his eyes falling to the side in thought. He never answers my question and so I head back to the head of the bed, plopping down with a loud sigh. The room is once again quiet, when I hear Trenton whisper something before I fall asleep.

“Nothing is worth what I lost.”

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*if ((gender = "male") and ((preference = "both") or (preference = "men")))
#“You’re cute when you’re annoyed.”
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I cock my head to the side and offer him a small smile, “you’re cute when you’re annoyed.” Much to my surprise, Trenton laughs at my words, only quieting himself when we both hear Leto shift in his spot.

“So, always?”

“Basically,” I chuckle quietly, “though, I wonder what a genuine smile would look like on you.”

“Join the club. I don’t remember the last time I actually smiled, not much to smile about.” He trails off while saying the last part, but I hear him regardless.

“How about to good company?” I test, knowing that the percentage of him actually taking my words seriously was almost zero.

He snorts as he turns his back to me once again, “I’ll smile when I finally come across it.” It was a low blow, but one I anticipated. I sigh with a small smile, crawling back up to the head of the bed and collapsing on the pillows there.

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#Yet I was still awake, my eyes on Leto’s back.
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I was unable to fall asleep, no matter how many times I clench my eyes closed and wish for sleep to overtake me. Instead, I find myself staring at Leto’s back.

“Go to sleep \${name},” I hear him growl into his pillow, his back still facing me.

“What? How?”

“You constantly forget that I can hear your heartbeat. And it slows down tremendously when an individual is asleep. Yours is still racing for some reason.”

“It’s been a long week.”

“Indeed. Which is why I don’t understand why you’re still loud and awake.”

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#“Does everyone have a unique heartbeat?”
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“Does everyone have a unique heartbeat? I think I remember you saying that you can tell heartbeats apart.”

Leto growls and mumbles something underneath his breath before answering, “yea. Trenton, his is . . . weird. Sounds kinda similar to Timmi and I don’t think it’s because they’re twins, sounds like they’re just breathing

slowly instead of sleeping. Jordan's has a twitch to it, not an unhealthy one but it's there. Uh, the softest I've ever heard is Kalypso's. I could probably go to sleep from just listening to hers."

"Does that translate over to when they're awake too?"

"Mostly yes, everyone's beat is basically the same besides just getting slower because of sleep. Now, can you just go to sleep?" I don't fight the yawn that escapes, humming as an answer.

#"I'm scared."

"I'm scared, well perhaps scared is the wrong word to use. I don't know, I just don't like our odds. We have no money, no idea what's going on, and we're winging all of this as we go." Leto is quiet for a moment, and since his back was still to me, I'm not sure if he had stopped listening or if he was just thinking about my words.

"Yea, we're pretty much screwed," he finally says, and I take a sarcastic relieved breath.

"Thanks Leto."

"Well we are. Maybe we come up with some plan, maybe we walk away from all of this, or maybe we'll die tomorrow. Point is, that's a lot of maybes. We never know what might happen, so freaking out now won't solve anything." Of course, there were truth to his words, but they were the last things I needed to hear, and the last I would accept. Regardless, I quiet down and bring the pillow in my arms tighter to my body. I close my eyes and force myself to sleep.

#And I gave in right away.

It's much later in the day, the sun beginning to set when all three of us are finally back up. We meander around the small confines of our room, investigating everything there. Trenton cuts the TV on while Leto and I debate the thought of a shower. The thing was, we didn't have any clean clothes to change into.

Just as I'm about to say to hell with the clothing factor, there's a sharp knock at the door and I hear Timmi's laugh on the other side. Leto is the first there and opens it, Kalypso, Timmi, Reese, and Jordan standing in the doorway.

*if HI = true "What's this?" Leto questions, turning to look at Trenton and me and then back at the group.

“They can hear this, I don’t really care,” Timmi starts with a snort in our direction, “we’re about to check out this bar and we came to collect you.”

“Do you forget that we don’t have any money?”

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” she answers, grinning at Reese and Kalypso who snicker, “just come on. We need drinks.” Leto didn’t need to be told twice, already going towards them.

“Nope! We’re coming too,” Trenton tells them, grabbing my arm and yanking me towards the door, “or else we’re shutting you guys down. I don’t trust any of you to behave yourselves and the last thing we need is attention on us.” The group exchange looks but none of them seem to care much about us coming along. They shrug and then head off. Before we follow, we go and grab Ezekiel and Chelsea, racing after them.

*if HI = false “What’s this?” Leto questions, turning to look at Trenton and then back at the group.

“He can hear this, I don’t really care,” Timmi starts with a snort in his direction, “we’re about to check out this bar and we came to collect you and \${name}.”

“Do you forget that we don’t have any money?” I ask.

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” she answers, grinning at Reese and Kalypso who snicker, “just come on. We need drinks.” Neither Leto, nor I, needed to be told twice, we were already going towards them.

“Nope! I’m coming too,” Trenton tells us, “or else I’m shutting you guys down. I don’t trust any of you to behave yourselves and the last thing we need is attention on us.” The group exchange looks but none of us seem to care much about him coming along. We shrug and then head off.

*if VI = true Once in my own room, I look at my two roommates, trying to figure out how we would do the sleeping arrangement. There were only two beds and while any other day, we might take turns sleeping, this wasn’t that day.

“How do you even sleep with those wings?” Reese asks, playfully hitting one of them.

“Sometimes I sleep on top of them, other times I wrap them around me like a cocoon,” he answers.

“Doesn’t that get hot?” I ask.

“I typically sleep naked.” Both Reese and I clear our throats and turn our attention back to the sleeping arrangement.

"I can sleep on the floor, my wings will provide me with enough cushion," Jordan finally says, smiling as he grabs the middle section in front of both beds, right in front of the TV.

Neither of us provide much of an argument and we collapse in our respectable beds.

It's much later in the day, the sun beginning to set when all three of us are finally back up. We meander around the small confines of our room, investigating everything there. Jordan cuts the TV on while Reese and I debate the thought of a shower. The thing was, we didn't have any clean clothes to change into.

Just as I'm about to say to hell with the clothing factor, there's a sharp rap on the door. Reese is the first to answer it and I find the Outcasts standing there.

"Hey, we need your help with something Reese," Timmi begins, nodding at the rest of us.

"Which is?"

"We're going down to check out this bar we saw on our way into town, thing is we have no money. Kalypso already manipulated some vending machines but there aren't any ATM's anywhere to be seen, so we need more. We were hoping you could phase into some rooms and take a few dollars from each."

"Easy, sure." Reese and Leto walk away to figure out which rooms held either no one inside or had sleeping occupants.

Kalypso looks at Jordan and me, "would you two like to come too?"

"Of course, I need a drink that's 90% alcohol," Jordan laughs, patting my shoulder and moving towards the exit.

"When's the last time you had a stiff one?" I question with a wide smile and he dramatically faints on the doorframe. He doesn't answer my question until Kalypso and Timmi move out of earshot.

"I've had alcohol, but I've never really got drunk before. I mean, I've been in rehabilitation centers most of my life, they don't exactly hand it out like juice." I nod, knowing exactly what we needed to do tonight. We wait for Leto and Reese to come back, Reese grinning wide as she shows them the thick wad of bills in her hands. With money in our hands, we walk down the walkway, laughing as Reese tells us about their little trip.

"Nope!" Trenton shouts behind us, racing out onto the walkway balcony and heading towards us, "we're coming too or else we're shutting you guys down. I don't trust any of you to behave yourselves and the last thing we need is attention on us." The group exchange looks but none of us seem to care much about them coming along. Saying no wasn't really much of an option either. We shrug and Chelsea and Ezekiel leave their room, joining us.

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"Correct me if I'm wrong but we're all sleepy, correct?" Trenton questions.

"Definitely," I answer along with Ezekiel and Chelsea. I watch as Digit flies to a tall cabinet and perches on the ledge, reminding me of a watch dog . . . wasp. Meanwhile, Chuck darts underneath the bed, scratching at the floor and the corners of the room, obviously trying to get at something.

Trenton gazes between the three of us, "then you three can sleep in the beds. I'll take the floor, just hand me a pillow." Without much argument from any of us, we hand Trenton one pillow from each bed.

*if ((gender = "female") or (gender = "nonbinary"))

Chelsea and I agree to share a bed, while Ezekiel gets the other to himself. We close the blinds, lock the door, and turn off the lights, allowing the silence to whisper its lullaby to help us sleep.

*if gender = "male"

Ezekiel and I agree to share a bed, while Chelsea gets the other to herself. We close the blinds, lock the door, and turn off the lights, allowing the silence to whisper its lullaby to help us sleep.

It's much later in the day, the sun beginning to set when all four of us are finally back up. We meander around the small confines of our room, investigating everything there. Chuck joins us, sniffing at everything as he goes and trying to find escape routes. Trenton cuts the TV on while Ezekiel and I debate the thought of a shower. The thing was, we didn't have any clean clothes to change into.

Just as I'm about to say to hell with the clothing factor, Chelsea quiets us down, her cat-like ear twitching as she focuses. She rushes to the door and opens it partly, allowing the voices on the outdoor balcony to come streaming in. The voices are laughing, and I can hear Reese say something about a bar.

"Nope!" Trenton immediately says, pushing past Chelsea and darting down the walkway to stop them. We join him, watching as the rest of the team stops and turns to face us. "We're coming too or else we're shutting you guys down. I don't trust any of you to behave yourselves and the last thing we need is attention on us." The group exchange looks but none of them seem to care much about us coming along. They shrug and then head off.

*if OI = true Once in my own room, I look at my three roommates, trying to figure out how we would do the sleeping arrangement. There were only two beds and while any other day, we might take turns sleeping, this wasn't that day.

"Ugh, I'm too sleepy to think too deep into all of this, I'll take the floor," Timmi growls, collapsing on the hard floor, asking for Kalypso and Leto to throw her a pillow. No one argues her decision as she gets comfortable, throwing us a peace sign and turning her back to us.

Kalypso and I agree to share a bed, while Leto gets the other to himself. The decision was more due to Leto's inability to sleep because of heartbeats than anything else. At least this way there was space between us and him. We close the blinds, lock the door, and turn off the lights, allowing the silence to whisper its lullaby to help us sleep.

It's much later in the day, the sun beginning to set when all three of us are finally back up. We meander around the small confines of our room, investigating everything there. Timmi and Kalypso leave out of the room while Leto and I debate the thought of a shower. The thing was, we didn't have any clean clothes to change into.

Just as I'm about to say to hell with the clothing factor, Timmi and Kalypso come back in. The first thing that catches my eye is the cash in Kalypso's hand and the overwhelming amount of coins in Timmi's.

"What did you guys do?" I ask.

"We raided the vending machines for cash. You guys up for a little bar run?" Timmi questions.

"You mean that bar you pointed out when we were driving into town?" Leto asks, a small already decorating his face.

"Yep. We need some more cash so I'm planning to get Reese's help, otherwise let's go." We're all in, and we leave the room and go to Reese's and Jordan's. Once there, it doesn't take much to persuade them to join and after they go grab some more cash from random rooms, we head out. With money in our hands, we walk down the walkway, laughing as Reese tells us about their little trip into one particular room.

"Nope!" Trenton shouts behind us, racing out onto the walkway balcony and heading towards us, "we're coming too or else we're shutting you guys down. I don't trust any of you to behave yourselves and the last thing we need is attention on us." The group exchange looks but none of us seem to care much about them coming along. Saying no wasn't really much of an option either. We shrug, and Chelsea and Ezekiel leave their room, joining us.

Our walk to the bar is surreal for a number of reasons. One being that half of them have been stuck in the academy for so long that the sight of a small town such as this one peaks their every interest. It was quaint, that much I could admit. But it didn't hold a flame to Davenport's illustrious skylines or Davenport's lively and colorful downtown. Two, in the past, these moments were always shared between just Reese and me. We didn't have anyone else. Yet here I was now walking with a group of kids that were just like me. No matter what side we leaned towards, we all bore the same weight and knowledge of how different we were. But I suppose that was the thing, we weren't that different.

#If only life was just like this.

A life that allowed a group of mutants, wishing to enjoy their day, to walk down the street without fear of repercussion. In an alternate timeline, perhaps so. Perhaps my AU was laughing right now as {he} walked down a street with the same people, though {he}'s known them for years, and they didn't fight for petty reasons.

#This would be short-lived.

Despite the wonder in their eyes, and the fact that they were all getting along, it wouldn't last. It never did. Whether I agreed with it or not, differences and opinions set these guys apart. Those fissures hadn't just disappeared because of some simple walk down the street. They still rested there, and I would bet before the night was up, they would grow wider.

Timmi and Chelsea stops us in front of a closed down costume shop. Kalypso and Ezekiel working on security while we group up.

"What are we doing?" Trenton asks, more relaxed than normal only because Chelsea looked in on whatever it was as well.

"Seriously Trenton? You think we can just walk into a bar with these two?" Timmi asks, pointing her thumbs at Jordan and Chelsea. "I know you don't think I think everything through, but I assure you I do."

"The only other option is to hope that they're mutant allies," I point out as Trenton thinks my words over.

"I'm not testing that option," Timmi chimes in, the doors to the costume shop ding. She pushes them open and waves for us to follow. Trenton doesn't move and neither do I. Whether she wanted to test the option, it was still there.

#Grab some costumes.

I leave Trenton's side, figuring that costumes were best. We could easily lie and say that we just came from a cosplay party as well, and while traveling back home, we decided to stop and party or something like that. We all split up to find basic or extravagant costumes.

I spot Jordan putting on a halo hat in disdain, and on the aisle over Chelsea grabs a feline tail and paw gloves, staring at a catsuit before shrugging and grabbing it. I head down one aisle and look over their selection, patting my chin in thought.

#Go as a witch.

Cliché as the costume was, I've always wanted to go out on Halloween as a witch. Parents never allowed it since, 'why go as a witch when you can go as mutant' was their go to phrase. To this day I still don't understand why it was, Halloween costumes were about dressing up as something you weren't.

I put everything on and admire myself in the mirror. The costume was unisex, giving me a mix of witch and warlock vibes.

#Go as a masked stranger.

I grab the black outfit and cape, the mask, and fencing sword. Thankfully they had one in my size. I test the plastic sword out, snickering as it bends immediately when touching the ground.

#Go as a superhero.

I snicker as I grab the costume and put it on. The exact superhero I was dressed as was unknown, but I can see my parents hissing in disdain.

*if Trenton >=50 Trenton wanders down my aisle and stops to look me over, "you look good as a hero." He throws me a smirk before continuing on, not giving me a moment to think his words over or rebuke them.

*if Trenton <50 Trenton wanders down my aisle and stops to look me over, "you look ridiculous." He rolls his eyes as he passes me, grumbling something before disappearing down another aisle.

Once we all have our costumes, we meet back up outside of the store. Kalypso was dressed as Frankenstein, Leto a vampire, Jordan an angel, Chelsea a cat, Timmi and Trenton surprisingly wore matching Thing One and Thing Two costumes, Reese was a werewolf, and Ezekiel was an evil genius.

"Let's do this," I clap, turning and continuing down the street towards the bar.

#Hope that the towns people were friendly.

"Guys," I start, clearing my throat. I look over at Trenton who nods his head, silently backing me up.

"I think we should try our hands at just walking in there, mutations and all."

"Weren't we supposed to keep a low cover?" Chelsea questions.

“If we were trying to do that then we wouldn’t be here now, we would be at the motel playing bingo or something.” Most of them nod their heads in agreement. “We’re not illegal. Mutants are allowed to exist, we shouldn’t have to hide that. I don’t think I want to drink with people who see me as the enemy anyway. I say we walk in there and see what happens. The worst they can do is kick us out and throw insults, something I’m sure all of us aren’t strangers to.”

One by one, my teammates nod in agreement, though they look every inch of uncomfortable.

“Let’s do this,” I clap, turning and continuing down the street towards the bar. The local bar was crowded with a few patrons out in front, lazily talking with one another. *if costumes = true I fix my costume and surge forward, aware of eyes moving to my group. No one says anything, and the most I hear is some of them compliment us on our costumes. We make it inside without incident, drawing only a few eyes. It would seem that traveling in a group allows us to blend in much more than if only Chelsea and Jordan had dressed up. There are a few who question where we came from and why we were dressed up, a few more throw out hushed compliments, but the majority go back to their life.

“Mission Get Here accomplished,” Reese states proudly from beside Timmi.

“Yea, now Mission Get Wasted commences.” The two of them immediately move towards the bar while Chelsea, Leto, and Trenton wander over to a booth that was out of the way in a corner. Kalyпсо, Ezekiel, Jordan head to the area where others dance in front of a live band. *if costumes = false I fix my clothing and surge forward, aware of eyes moving to my group. No one says anything, and I’m unable to hear the quiet mumbles that go out. I take a look back at Jordan and Chelsea who are both sandwiched in the middle of the group, keeping their gaze down as we go. No one makes a move to stop us, but that could be for a number of reasons. If they assumed all of us were mutants then them acting on any prejudices they might have would be foolhardy.

Once inside, the majority of the bar all look up at us, pausing in their activities to stare. I see a few of them whisper to those closest to them, but otherwise they make no move to intercept us.

“Don’t worry about them,” the bartender says, offering us a small smile, “we don’t get many mutants in town, but you have nothing to worry about, we aren’t going to grab the pitchforks.”

“How reassuring,” Jordan groans.

“What? Did ya’ll come to just stand in the entrance or to drink?” a random guy asks as he passes, hollering the last part. The entire bar cheers with him, everyone going back to

what they were doing. Whether they were allies or not, they certainly didn't seem to mind which was more than I was used to.

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#Go to Timmi and Reese.

I head to the bar with Timmi and Reese, taking the free seat left open beside Reese.

"What'll you have?" the bartender asks, pointing up at the large menu filled with the drinks and snacks that the bar sells.

"Whatever you have that's strong," Timmi answers and Reese agrees. I shrug, going along with whatever they'll have and watch the bartender go off to prepare it.

"Not gonna lie, this feels so weird to me. Last time I was outside those stupid academy walls I was sitting on a park bench," Timmi smiles, though it doesn't meet her eyes.

"Doing what exactly?" Reese questions.

"Being surrounded by agents and heroes. Good times," Timmi chuckles, sighing as she lightly traces the lines on the bar.

"So, if you could do anything now that you're out, what would it be?" Reese questions.

#Go towards Chelsea, Leto, and Trenton.

#Go and join Kalypso, Ezekiel, and Jordan.