

THE ADVENTURES OF

MW

Mark Wills' greatest challenge yet ...

Raze Erupts

REXFORD RICH

Mark Wills:
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Raze Erupts

Rexford Rich

Part 1: Resurgence

Mark's Residence; Manhattan, NY

All of us stand outside in our backyard. Alex and his girlfriend, Andrea, are still inside; in Alex's bedroom. I throw up my hands, ready to attack Intex if need be.

Intex looks at me and chuckles. He looks at the ground and shakes his head. He steps off of his ship and onto the ground before us.

"I'm not going to fight you," Intex says. "I ... I've had two years to myself ... I am not in the mood for that."

"So it would be a perfect time to kill you," Nick says. "You're not in the mood."

"Don't Nick," I tell him.

"Why not?" Intex asks me. "Do you feel guilty for having killed me already?"

"I ... uh. A little to be honest."

Intex nods and makes a little smile. "That's good ... that means you are truly a good person. You have a conscience."

I pause and puzzle at why Intex seems different ... seems so much nicer than before. "What happened to you?"

Intex smiles again. "I've have had two years to think to myself. That's how long the ship ride took to get here."

"From where?"

"Rexton."

“Rexton? Why'd you go there? There's no life.”

“I didn't have a choice; I just appeared there.”

“You teleported there?”

“No.” Intex sighs and holds back a yawn. He stretches. “Do you mind if I come inside? I promise I won't dismantle your house.”

I look at the rest of us and see a few heads shaking. No one wants him inside. I take a long good look at Intex. I still can't get over how young he looks. “I don't know ...” I say.

“I haven't had good food in about two years,” Intex says. “Two and a half years. It's been too long. I wouldn't mind having some breakfast.”

I see Nick frown. He would not want Intex inside our house. But it's my house; I decide the rules. I take another look at Intex.

“Why do you look young?” I ask him.

Intex laughs. “I promise you, I will tell you everything inside.”

I shrug my shoulders. “If only you promise that you will not destroy the place.”

“I promise,” Intex says.

“Alright, come on in.”

Everyone, including Rachel, jerks their heads towards me, their jaws dropping; they disapprove.

“Your friends don't seem happy,” Intex says.

I don't say anything and just walk back into the house. Intex comes in after me, followed by everyone else.

“What was that big noise?” Andrea asks coming out from the hallway. She sees Intex standing in the kitchen and freezes. “You're that one guy.”

“Everyone knows about me?” Intex asks me, turning his attention to me.

“Yup,” I reply to him. “The truth about you is out.”

Slowly, Alex appears at the end of the hallway, taking his time entering the kitchen; he walks trying to keep his back as straight as possible. He stops once he sees Intex. He is astonished to see Intex here, in my kitchen, just standing here.

“Intex,” Alex exhales. “You-you're alive!”

Intex smiles at Alex. “Yes I am. Alex ...” Intex says. “You don't look too good.”

“Yeah, thanks to you!” he exclaims.

I turn to Intex. “Yeah,” I say to him. “You left us quite a mess. That gas that you released in all of Manhattan gave random people abilities. Some of them used their powers unwisely. There was a huge fight among them. It didn't end well. Now Alex is still recovering; it has been six or seven months.”

Intex looks back at Alex. “Sorry about that.”

“Sorry?” Alex asks back in reply, confused. “And ... why are you sorry?” Alex asks.

Everyone seems tense. Bruce and Mara return to their frying pans, continuing to cook breakfast. Mara scrambles hers eggs and Bruce flips his bacon. Intex walks around the table and sits down at a chair so that he faces all of us.

The rest of us stand. Nick stands quite a bit a ways. Brandon looks afraid, not wanting his old personality to switch back on. I understand how he feels about that. He does not want to be Blade again. I wouldn't either.

"I'll explain everything," Intex says. "For starters, Mark did in fact kill me. But as you may not know, Rextonians have the power of resurrection from death, but only after being in contact with the Milky Way's energy."

"How come I didn't know that?" I ask. "My father, Bart, didn't tell me about that."

"He didn't know. Most Rextonians, Masonians and Trexians don't know about that. Any one of them can be resurrected from death once infected with the Milky Way's energy. I knew that you were going to kill me, Mark ... my precognitive friend confirmed it to me. He told me exactly how it happened. You would use a metal rod to stab me. I tried to change it, but it still happened. In a way I caused for it to happen. I made you stronger. I tried to kill you first, but it made you stronger."

Anger that had died off from me was starting to come back. Intex had created creatures, sent to kill me, but I had survived from them all.

"Why'd you go to Rexton?" Bruce asks out of the blue.

"I didn't intend to. When a Rextonian dies, he will be resurrected from death to the place where they have been most of their lives. Me? I was on Rexton for most of my life; for about seven-hundred years. I prepared for this. At the time that I was living on Rexton, I knew that it was dying. I got my ship ready for myself, but then I was caught and banished to Earth for my crimes. I wasn't too worried about leaving my ship there; because once I died I would appear right back there.

"You stabbed me Mark and in the next minute I woke up in my laboratory at Rexton. I almost died again. When I gasped for air there wasn't any. All of the plant life died off from that horrible virus. I had to

quickly run to my ship that I had hidden in my lab, down in the basement. My skin burned; there wasn't enough air to contain my body. My skin started to swell. I had to turn on the ship that hasn't been run for nineteen years. It took a while to start, but when it finally started I had passed out for not having any oxygen. I woke up a few minutes later; the ship had activated the oxygen distributor. I immediately flew it towards Earth, having nowhere else to go. I had no reason to go to Mason or Trex. Another reason to go back to Earth was so I could get my powers back. I needed the Milky Way's radiation to heal."

"But what about resurrecting? Can you be resurrected again even without being in the Milky Way?" I ask.

"Once a Rextonian has been in contact with the energy they don't need it again to resurrect; they have that power forever, until they lose the will to live, then they can die."

Alex slowly walks towards the back door. Andrea helps him with every step. He is in so much pain from the muscles in his back. They still haven't grown back. His back still has two holes in it, but they are not as deep as they first were. Intex watches Alex walk, but he shows no expression so I don't know what exactly he feels for him.

Alex sees Intex's ship and his jaw drops in amazement. "You flew all of the way to Earth from Rexton in that?" Alex asks Intex.

"Yeah, I did. She's a nice ship. Nice and cozy."

"Sweet," Alex says, admiring the ship. Then he frowns; this is Intex's ship he's talking about. Intex: a cruel, cold person, who, right now, is not. He's being strangely calm and kind.

Alex slowly turns and about fumbles, almost falling over forward, but Andrea quickly grabs him. He groans in pain because of slightly bending his back. Andrea quickly supports him, standing him straight up.

"Thank you," Alex tells Andrea.

Bruce pulls the finished bacon off the frying pan and puts them on a ready plate. He throws more strips into the pan. Mara puts the finished scrambled eggs onto another plate for everyone to scoop off from.

Mara turns off her burner and takes the pan off. She grabs both plates and takes them to the table. She walks to the cupboard, opens it, and grabs ten plates. She sets them on the table. Bruce walks to the table with the forks and sets them down.

Intex looks up at me, smiling. "You don't mind if I help myself?" he asks.

"Go ahead," I tell him.

Intex grabs a plate and fork for himself. He uses his fork and scoops up some eggs onto his plate. He takes a few strips of bacon, putting them on his plate. He immediately starts eating, taking his time to enjoy it.

"Wow! I haven't had a nice home-cooked meal in so long. This is delicious!" Intex exclaims. He looks at Bruce and Mara. "Thank you."

They look at each other, bewildered with how nice Intex is. I look around at everyone. They are all confused with Intex's changed personality and look.

"Intex?" I ask. "Why don't you look like your old self?"

Intex finishes chewing the food in his mouth. "When you get resurrected, you go back to being the age of twenty-five, but only if you have lived to be that old; otherwise you would resurrect at the same age you were when you died." Intex pauses to take another bite of food. "So now I look about twenty-five." He looks at me. "You are probably about what? Twenty?"

"I'm almost twenty-one," I tell Intex and he nods.

I look around at everyone. They still can't believe this, neither can I.

Andrea grabs Alex's pain killer and antibiotics pills from the cabinet and hands them to him. Alex takes them down with a glass of water. He set the cup down on the counter. Alex continues to stand; it is hard for him to sit down without taking so long. He takes every step very slowly.

Brandon and Nick stand close to each other, furthest away from Intex. Grace and Rachel stand next to each other not as distant. I am the standing the closest to Intex. No one sits at the table.

Intex looks at all of us and his eyes stop on Brandon. He looks back and forth between Nick and Brandon. He looks at me for a second, raises an eyebrow then returns to look at them.

"Since when did you guys become friends?" Intex asks. "I thought you guys hated each other."

Brandon speaks up, "Blade hated Nick. But Brandon is a nice modest person."

"Brandon?" Intex asks then nods. "You're not Blade any longer, huh?"

"Yeah, once you died he served no purpose, so I pushed him away and found myself again. My old memories came back to me ... Intex," Brandon says, getting serious. "You killed my family, my nice family. You took them away from me."

Intex doesn't change his expression and says nothing at first. Instead he grabs another bite of his food. "So, are your powers getting stronger?" Intex asks me once he's done chewing, turning his attention away from Brandon.

I look at Brandon, who is furious now. Intex ignores him. I suddenly start to hate Intex all over again. He has done very many bad things and a lot of us can't just simply forgive him, especially when we aren't sure he's changed. Now I can't believe that I just let him into my house.

“Well?” Intex asks.

“What? My powers?” I ask and Intex nods. “Yes, well ... my accelerated healing has progressed.”

“So really, its rapid cellular regeneration.”

“Hmm.” That would make sense, since some injuries that I have gotten heal so fast and without any scabs or scarring. Mara's accelerated healing is not as fast and she gets scabs and scars.

“Many Rextonians get rapid cellular regeneration ... as well as Masonians. Every Rextonian, Masonian, or Trexian gets different powers though. Masonians are a bit different somehow. If they die, they get a power resulting from the thing that killed them. It's called power resurrection. You get your powers once you get infected with the Milky Way's energy. If you leave it, you will still have your powers, but they won't get stronger and you will not gain any more.”

I haven't left the Milky Way, so I would not have experienced that. Except for going to St. Reynolds; the land of the ogres in this universe and in a parallel universe it's the land of the dragons. I had my powers there, but only because I have been getting them from being in the Milky Way.

“If you stay on Rexton, Mason, or in the Trexus Zeta Galaxy, you don't get any powers. You still have them, but they don't get triggered or released because of not having the Milky Way's energy to un-tap them. You know ... you're healing power started off the same as with me. I started with accelerated healing then it strengthened into rapid cellular regeneration.”

I nod, but do not really show any interest. "Intex," I say. "Why are you here?"

Intex chuckles. "You let me into your house."

"No, that's not what I mean. What's the real reason to come back to Earth? I'm sure you could not have changed just like that." I snap for fingers for emphasizes.

Intex smiles, nodding, acting like he understands how I feel. "I have changed, Anthony. I've had two and a half years to change."

I look at Intex and narrow my eyes. I focus on his mind and try to read it. But I can't find anything. I search for any thoughts going on in his head, but I can't read him at all. I know that that means he has some sort of mental block against my telepathy. That could only mean that he doesn't want me knowing what's going on in his head, which could only mean one thing; he has a plan and he hasn't changed. I don't have to read his mind to know that he's lying.

"I don't believe you've changed," I tell Intex. "I think you are still the same person."

Intex still smiles at me. "I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. I've changed."

It is silent for a few moments. No one believes Intex, nor do they want to. Everyone in this room has experienced the old Intex and he is not friendly. This new Intex is so ... suspicious. What's even worse, I cannot read his mind, so I can't believe him nevertheless.

"So ..." I finally say, breaking the awkward silence. "You don't have your powers?"

Intex nods. "That's correct; when you killed me, all of my powers were stripped." I see his mouth tremor just a tad; it looks like he's angry,

but the moment he makes the expression he gets rid of it and goes back to smiling. "Now that I'm in the Milky Way I can start over."

I can't believe Mark let him in here, I hear Rachel think.

He's powerless, Alex thinks, seeming excited. I glance at him, but he remains expressionless. Now would be the perfect time to kill him again; make him go all of the way back to Rexton!

I smile, hearing Alex's thoughts. I look back at Intex. "What if I were to kill you again?"

Intex doesn't control his expressions this time; he frowns and his eyebrows arch. "I would end up back on Rexton and that would not be good for me," Intex replies. "Because now my ship is here; I don't have one ready for me anymore. So you better not kill me again. Please." He suddenly starts smiling again.

"So what have you really been doing on your journey to Earth?" I ask. "What have you been doing in your ship?"

"I've been —" Intex stops himself, careful in what words to say. "I've been thinking about how to change for the better, how to make things right. So that brings me to this: Mark ... about killing me ... I forgive you."

I contain myself and hold back from scoffing. I doubt that Intex really means that, especially with the anger he just recently displayed; he hates me having killed him.

"What about my father?" I ask. "Was he really a bad person?"

Intex smiles. "He worked for me ... so yes, he was bad." Something about his smiles infuriates me; it's evil-looking, malevolent. Suddenly his smile changes to a pleasant one, a forced pleasant one. It makes me not want to believe him about what he says about my father.

"I don't believe you," I tell Intex.

Intex doesn't hold back at all this time. "Fine." He says simply. His expression completely changes. His scowls and he induces anger. "I've tried to be nice, but you don't want to accept it."

"Because of that," I say. "You haven't really changed; you just want us to believe you have. You could've gone to some other planet, but you decided to come back to Earth. Why? To retaliate against me or to try in succeeding in your plan once again?"

Intex jumps from his seat. He exhales through his nose and clenches his fists. "You will regret letting me live again." Intex's body abruptly starts to shake unnaturally and the air around him ripples. His body fades and comes back, flickering. In a second he disappears, leaving from all of our sights. He teleports, but it is not as smooth as it was before. Maybe it's not fully developed yet.

All of us look around at each other, not sure what to think. Intex has returned, which can only mean that something is about to go down; hopefully not us.

“I can't believe that he's back,” Grace says.

“I can't believe that you let him into our house,” Rachel says, practically yelling at me.

I sigh, looking over at her. “Yeah, I don't know what compelled me to do that.”

“We should have stopped him just now,” Alex says, “because now he's going to cause hectic.”

I nod. Perhaps he's right. I can only assume right now that Intex will try to go about with his original intentions. Obviously, this time, he will try to use different tactics.

I turn my attention to the ship outside, looking through the door.

“Yeah, what are we going to do about that?” Bruce asks.

“Destroy it,” Alex says.

“Let's go check it out,” I say.

I walk to the back door and step outside, after opening it. Everyone else follows, with Alex in the back, taking his time walking. The ship is a decent size, not too big or small. There is no opening. I would assume that it's on this side; the side that Intex came out from. I walk to one of the sides and place my hand on it.

Suddenly my hand feels warm and I pull it away fast. I look down at my hand; it is burnt, but after a few seconds it heals up.

“It made your hand hot,” Rachel says, stating the obvious.

I nod. “It sure did,” I reply. “It’s as if I’m not allowed to open it, so it ... rejected my hand.”

Nick walks up to it and places his hand on it. After a second he pulls it off. He nods.

“It made my hand hot,” he says, “but I pulled it away before it burned me.”

Rachel reaches out her hand and I try to stop her, but she insists. She places her hand on it and unexpectedly seams form around in a square like a door. A door is formed and it opens upwards.

I am puzzled. Why could she open it?

“It looks like Intex likes you,” Brandon says.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Rachel asks just before I was going to ask the same thing; she beat me to it.

“I don’t know. Why could you open it, but Mark and Nick couldn’t?”

“Maybe Intex did not program the rest of us,” Mara says.

“Maybe,” I say.

Nevertheless, I am the first to step inside. The inside looks completely bigger than from the outside. Alex comes in after me, despite his back being in pain still.

“This place is huge!” Alex exclaims. “Wow!”

“This is impossible,” Grace says, walking in as well as the rest of us. “How can it be this big in here?” She looks up at the ceiling. “The

ceiling's got to be at least one-hundred feet up, but from outside it's at forehead-height." She shakes her head in disbelief.

All of us walk through his ship. We are standing in what seems like the main room of the ship. There is one huge window that you can see outside with, but from the outside you can see in. Advanced technology.

There is a chair with a column that comes up from the floor in front of it. Coming off from it is the steering wheel. It is not a full circle. It has two semi-circles on both sides, but they do not meet up to complete a circle. Instead they only touch by a metal brace that holds the together, which is where it connects to the post going into the column in the floor.

The steering wheel or handles are thick and rounded at the top by get narrow at the bottom and make a point at the end. The brace in the middle is curve a little. Come to think of it, the whole steering wheel, along with the metal brace, makes it look like the letter M. I look around for anything that would resemble the letter: I, which would be his initials, but I do not see anything.

To the sides of the column in the floor are control panels with all sorts of functions. They all look high tech, advanced, and foreign; although it is from the same planet that I am from, so it shouldn't be foreign, but it's not what I'm used to. Lots of it looks like touch screen panels.

After a few more minutes in this room, looking around, we move on to the next one; the nearest one. There's a bathroom, a kitchen, then we reach his bedroom. It looks very clean and tidy. There's just his bed and a table. The rest of the room is empty.

Mara gasps and her face gets pale. I run up to her to see what's wrong. I can tell Grace already knows. Rachel and Andrea walk up to her as well.

"Are you alright?" I ask her.

“It’s that smell,” she says, panting.

I smell it. The smell in this room reminds me of Creative Works. The smell of chemicals. They were the same smells that Intex used to make his experiments; his sick experiments.

I look around the room. It seems strange that it’s completely empty; only a bed and a table.

“I bet you anything,” Nick says. “Intex was still working with his experiments on the way over.” He points at the table. “He used that as his lab table.”

“You’re probably right,” I agree. “He hasn’t changed a bit. He still wants to make his experiments.”

“That may be about he could teleport,” Bruce says. “He said that he lost all of his powers, but he still teleported. He must’ve created a serum with that power while in here.”

I nod. “Maybe so, or he was just lying about losing his powers.”

“But ... it did seem a bit ... rusty,” Rachel says. “His teleportation. But ... think about it, if he could still teleport, he wouldn’t need his ship. He could have just teleported back here.”

“Ah. This means that he may have just recently created the serum, and then he tried to make it work in the house. Maybe it seemed ridged because it wasn’t in full effect yet; he just forced it to work.”

“Can we get out of here,” Grace says. “This place is creepy.”

I nod and exit the room. Everyone follows me outside of the ship. I began to wonder if anyone has noticed it yet. Surely they must’ve heard it. All nine of us leave the ship and step back from it; Alex is the last one out, taking his time stepping down. He refuses for any of us to help him. The door closes by itself.

“Now what?” Brandon asks.

Alex creates fire in his hands. He throws a ball of fire at the ship and it just fizzles out and doesn't do any damage at all.

“It's fire-proof,” Andrea says.

“I see that,” Alex says.

“It's a special kind of metal, that's for sure,” Bruce says. “It's alien.” He looks at me to see my expression, which is blank. He shrugs his shoulders as if consulting with his thoughts.

“Somehow we have to get rid of it,” I say. “I do not want that to stay in my backyard. Someone will see eventually. Especially in this busy city.”

I take a look around, looking at the neighbors' houses; no one seems to be watching, but that doesn't mean they aren't. Just a minute ago Alex used his power, so he risked it. Hopefully the fence around my yard protects us.

I think about what to do. I could try to destroy it, but I'm not sure that I can. This ship belongs to Intex. When he was here before, he's stopped at nothing to try to kill me. He wanted me dead once he found out where I lived. He planned on transforming all of the Earth into human-animal hybrids (parahumans), but failed; not getting very far. Now he's back and I am certain that he intends to do the same thing again.

Intex being back angers me. What angers me more is the fact that I let him into my house. Maybe it was because I felt guilty for killing him. Now I take it back. I wish he stayed dead. It was more peaceful, despite the aftermath of his doing of dispersing that virus or radiation.

I throw my hands out and concentrate. I focus on the ship and will it to be destroyed. My green matter-creating energy forms and parts of

the ship start to deteriorate, actually rusting. Some parts seem to crumble to ash, as if some sort of acid were eating it. I don't care if Intex still wants this ship. He left it in my yard, so therefore I decide what happens to it.

Gradually I succeed in destroying the whole ship. There are only small traces of ash and shards of rusted metal. I smile to myself, happy with my achievement.

Andrea gasps. "Wow, that was amazing," she says.

I forgot that Andrea was still here. I just used my powers in front of here. Alex spilled the beans about our powers practically when we first met. She has been coming over regularly since Alex was injured. I guess we haven't been that worried about using our powers in front of her.

"That ship definitely seems smaller on the outside now," Alex jokes.

Yeah, it's now only a pile of ash and metal shards.

Astoria, NY

Resting on the couch, Dawn sits, enjoying her slow, easy-going morning with Stuart. Tristan is away at work. She feels calm and at peace. It's a beautiful day outside and the sun shines right inside through the window.

Dawn takes a look at Stuart. He is barely awake; clearly he's not a morning person. Dawn has the news on to hear the morning reports and weather.

Ever since Oliver has been gone and assumed to be dead, she has felt at peace. She hasn't had to worry about him for several months. Everyone saw the fight at the mall, they showed live cameras. Everyone saw Oliver get shot five times in the back. He practically died right there, but then disappeared. There's no way he survived that.

They decided not to move, since there was no reason to. Now Oliver is gone, so he can't threaten or harm them. Finally they are at peace. Dawn's *curse* is gone and so is Oliver. Nothing to fear.

Stuart takes a look at his mother, wondering what's on her mind. He is happy to see her like this; she's so peaceful. When she was depressed, it made everyone in the house feel the same. Now he is happy, because his mother is happy.

In these past months Stuart has drawn closer to Tristan, welcoming him more and more. To him, Tristan is starting to feel like a father. He always calls him by his name, but a few times Stuart has felt like calling him dad. He doesn't call him that though, because of fear of making his mother, Dawn, think back to her husband; his father. Stuart

was young when his father died so he doesn't remember him much, but his mother does. Stuart is careful to talk about him, because he doesn't want to pain Dawn with his memories.

Stuart redirects his attention to the TV, watching the cartoon. He has nothing else to watch, so he watches this. There is nothing else of TV at this time of day. Dawn doesn't care what he watches and she watches it with him, although not really paying attention to it. Mostly all Dawn does is think about stuff.

Dawn grunts and gets up from the couch. "Stuart, honey?" she asks. Stuart turns towards his mother, raising his brows. "Would you like some eggs for breakfast?"

"Sure," Stuart replies. "That sounds great."

"Okay." Dawn starts walking towards the kitchen. "How would you like them? The usual?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, scrambled it is."

Outskirts of New York

Intex smiles, looking around at his new place. Everyone, people are running around, motivated; working for him. He smiles, knowing that Mark has no idea about this place.

All of these workers have been preparing for his return, keeping this place running all of the while. Intex sits in his office, before a desk. The room has a huge window that shows him the whole view of the place. All of the experiments, chemicals, and anything else is right there in front of him. He can see it all right there. All of the prison cells are behind him, down a hallway. The thing about this building is that the only doors to outside are before him, from entering the large open area.

Intex starts to hear a low rumbling sound and not a second later at the end of the very large room the wall opens up. Now the room is open to the open skies. Within seconds three ships that were identical to Intex's land inside, all making a nice landing.

Intex gets from his chair and walks out of his office and into the large room. He meets the ships. Three people come out of the three different ships, all men.

"Finally we are here!" one of them says.

They all look around at the large area.

"Nice place you have here," another one says.

"Yes," Intex replies. "Welcome my fellow Rextonians. Or do I call you Masonians, now that you are from Mason?"

They smile and one of the replies, "We are still Rextonians, like yourself."

Intex just gives a small nod. "I'm glad all of you could join me here. We have a lot in store and I am going to accomplish so much more than I did on Rexton. I am going to achieve what I failed to do before. But I am going to need your help."

They all nod to Intex, willing.

"I will be doing a great deal of things so in order to do all of these things I will need some distractions. Will you guys be willing to do that for me?"

They all smile. "Of course, Intex," they say.

"Thank you, Jackson, Darrius and Morris. You will be very helpful."

"Anything for you, Intex," Darrius says.

"Meanwhile I'll be working on my distractions."

These Rextonians' loyalty reminds Intex of Bryan. He knows that they will not be a disgrace like Bryan was; they will make him proud. He knows it, because they proved faithful to him on Rexton and will now.

"So ..." Morris says. "Where's *your* ship?"

Intex laughs for a second. "I wanted to give Anthony a startle so I landed it in his back yard."

They all laugh.

"Wait," Jackson says. "He's not going to think you're going to try doing the same thing you tried before, is he? You know, taking over the world and with the replacement of human beings."

"Well they already know that, but they don't know how it's going to go down. They have no idea what's in store for them. This time I will succeed. This time they will not stand a chance."

Mark's Residence

Someone knocks on my front door. A few of us practically jump. Some of us are scattered-brain; Intex is back.

I get up from my seat and answer the door. I recognize this person from somewhere.

"Hello," the woman says. "I live next door to you." Oh. That's where I've seen here. Yeah I don't really chat with our neighbors. "Um ... I ... uh. How do I say this?" she begins.

I start to get a tad bit nervous. She's *got* to be talking about Intex's ship.

"I heard something crash and it came from your backyard." She pauses, as if for emphasis. "I looked over and saw a huge spaceship. I know you've seen it, but ... when I went to look at it a few minutes later it was gone. It's nothing but ash. I'm just ... curious about it."

I took a moment to figure what to say. "A spaceship, you say?" I ask.

"Yes! Don't tell me you didn't see it."

By that remark I know she didn't see me destroy it with my power.

I slowly shake my head. "I uh ... I was out."

"It didn't look like you guys left the house."

"I mean ... I was out of it; sleeping."

“You slept through that crash?”

“I guess so. You say it’s in the backyard?”

“Yes. Well, now it’s just a big pile of ... ash.”

I really do not want to give anything away to this woman. She can figure it out; we are The Avians. I try to play dumb so I don't give myself away.

“Umm,” I say, thinking. “Come on in, I’ll walk you to the back door.”

She steps inside and sees all of the people. “Oh. I didn’t know you had guests.”

I smile and don't say anything. Thankfully no one else says a word. At least I hope they won't. Normally I'm worried about Alex slipping something, but he has not been very talkative lately, not since he got injured.

I walk her to the back door and open it up. We, obviously, see the pile of ash sitting there.

“What on earth is that?” I ask, acting like I was oblivious to it being there. “So ... that used to be a spaceship?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what it looked like.”

“Like a spaceship-spaceship? With aliens?”

“Yes there were as many aliens as you guys ... but they all like look humans.”

She must've seen us meet Intex outside. Somehow she thinks that we were the aliens and we came from the ship as well.

“Well where'd they go?” I ask.

“I don't know. I went to get my camera and they were gone. The ship was still there, though. I got myself ready to come here and ask you about it and looked a second time and the ship was down to ash.”

“So aliens huh?” Alex asks behind me. He tries to hide that his back hurts, but he can't help wincing at all his little moves.

The woman notices his pain, but doesn't ask about it. “So,” she says. “Do you think they are like The Avians? Their leader is an alien. A Rextonian, I think that's how you say it. But so was ... that Intex. I hope they aren't like him.”

I don't want to say anything, because she'll suspect something, but I want to tell her that there was just one alien, other than me. I also did not want to tell her that she was right; it is someone like Intex, in fact it is Intex. Intex's returned.

“I agree with you ... but I have no idea,” I say. “I don't know why it would've landed in my back yard though.”

“Well ... maybe it saw that your yard is the biggest in the area; so a perfect place to land.”

“Maybe so.”

“You know, you're lucky to have a yard this big in New York City.”

“I know. I'm grateful for it. It's nice to have sometimes. Just now, I'm going to have to get this ... cleaned up.”

“Well ...” I could tell the woman felt awkward. “I better let you go.”

“Okay.”

“I'll see ya.”

“Alright, see ya. Bye.”

“Bye,” the woman says, waves and walks back to her house.

“Close one, huh?” Bruce asks me.

“Yeah,” I reply, walking back into the house.

Just a second before I enter back into the house I notice the woman look back. My eyes narrow; she may have been playing dumb with me too. She may have known that it was us out there with the alien all along.

“Something doesn’t seem right about the woman,” I say. “Give me a second to read her.”

I stop at the table and rest a hand on a chair next to it. I close my eyes and take in a breath. I open my mind, expanding its reach to the woman’s house. I cannot see a thing, except her mind moving. I can feel where her presence is. I feel her close to a window. Everything that is not a mind is a shadow to me.

I enter her mind. I see what she's thinking. She is replaying the memory of seeing the ship. I can tell that she saw us all with vividness. She was playing dumb. She knew it was us all along. I gasp. She also knew that it was Intex. She probably has the wrong idea that we are working with Intex.

I sent my thoughts into her brain. *You do not remember anything about a spaceship. You do not know that Intex is back. You did not see us out there. You do not remember any of it. You do not remember this morning and everything that has happened so far. You just recently woke up and are now going about with your day as normal. Now you are taking a look outside to see the morning sun.*

I let those words go to work. I feel the mind of hers go blank for a few seconds. Momentarily she is dumbfounded, but then she looks at the sun as if that was the reason she intended to look outside. She closes the curtain and backs away from the window.

I leave her mind, open my eyes and bring myself back to our kitchen. I smile. She doesn't remember it now.

"Did you take care of it?" Bruce asks.

I nod to him. "Yes. She won't remember it."

"So she did see it, but she was acting like she didn't really know?"

"Yeah, she saw it all, but not to worry; I made her forget the whole morning."

"Good."

Rachel perks her head up. "The whole morning?" she asks.

"Yes," I reply.

Rachel makes a disapproving look.

Mara gets up and walks to Bruce. "I don't know if it's good," Mara says, referring to what Bruce said. "Intex's back; that's not good. I have a bad feeling about this. He's returned and that only means that he's going to try harder to go about with his plan."

"Do you think he still wants to take over the world and replace all humans with hybrids?" Bruce asks.

"I believe so," I say. "Intex hasn't changed."

"Can't you reset him? You know ... with your telepathy?"

"No." I shake my head. "He still has some sort of block. He claims to be powerless now, having to start over with his powers after dying; only able to get them back since he's now in the Milky Way, but then he teleported. I'm not sure if he's telling the whole truth."

"Well we all know who Intex is," Grace speaks up. "He's a manipulator and a liar. He's bound to be lying about this too."

“Maybe he was just starting to get his teleportation because he's been in the Milky Way for some time,” Alex says. “After all, it took him two years to get here.”

“Hmm,” I consider. “But how long of those two years was he in the Milky Way? How far away is the Experimental Galaxy?”

“Who knows?”

“You know, not to be rude or anything,” Brandon says. “But what kind of name for a galaxy is *Experimental*?”

“That’s a question for Rexford and Mason,” I tell Brandon. “But I do like their galaxy that they were born in; Trexus Zeta Galaxy.”

“Okay,” Grace says. “Like I said, we do know Intex. This means that he's got to be in another building of his, experimenting, preparing. We need to find out where.”

I nod to her. “Grace is right. Intex is going to be somewhere in a new Creative Works. He has to be. He wouldn’t be anywhere else. Now ... where?”

There is knock on the front door. I wonder if it’s the woman again, but I thought I just erased her memories. I fear maybe someone else saw me out there with the ship. Hopefully not. All of our thoughts are answered when letters come through the mail slot on our door.

I let out a sigh. I walk up and pick up the letters. I find that most of them go to me, but some are addressed to Alex Russell, not Rush, one is for Rachel Stanbury, which upsets me, because now her last name is Wills, one letter is for Mara Lively, and one for Grace McGovern. There is another letter that I know is junk immediately, but it is addressed to Nick Gladney, so I’ll let him decide what to do with it.

I take all of the letters and hand them out to her they belong to and collapse on the couch to read mine.

Outskirts of New York; Intex's Building

Smiling, Intex watches all of his workers run around. It is so peaceful for him to see all of this. All of these loyal workers. But of course, most of them are only loyal because of being brainwashed.

Really the only ones not brainwashed and loyal are his fellow Rextonians. Intex gets up from his chair from his office and enters the big room.

Intex walks right towards one of the lab tables. He starts grabbing all sorts of chemicals, knowing exactly what he needs.

“At last,” Intex says. “I have the right resources again.” He smiles, grinning from ear to ear. “This time, I will live forever with this young of a face!”

One of the chemicals Intex pulls out has *Dermochelys coriacea* written on it, which is a type of sea turtle. Intex lifts his head to make sure his workers haven't stopped working. He smiles; they work around him. They know Intex is there, but they do not slow their rate of work at all.

Intex nods to himself with pleasure and resumes mixing up his chemicals. He puts them into a container. The chemicals start to make smoke as they react to each other. With a few more finishing touches, Intex finishes the serum. From the counter, Intex grabs a needle and he draws some of the serum into the needle. He quickly stabs a vein in his arm and injects the serum into his bloodstream.

Intex closes his eyes and opens them back up, feeling it go to work. He doesn't feel much, but he knows now for the rest of his life he

will stay this age. Last time he did this was on Rexton when he was about forty years old, so he stayed that age until he was killed when he was about eight hundred years of age.

Jackson, Morris, and Darrius walk up to Intex after checking out the place. They notice the needle in Intex's hand.

"Experimenting on your own self?" Morris asks.

Intex smiles at him. "No," he replies. "This is not experimentation, because I know what I'm doing. This is the final result of a longevity serum, made from a *Dermochelys coriacea* DNA, also known as sea turtles. But I added more to the serum to perfect it; so I can never die of old age."

They shake their heads in astonishment.

"Can we have it?" Jackson asks.

Intex narrows his eyes. "You guys have to live up to your word."

They nod. Morris starts shaking his head.

"You know?" Morris starts to say. "I just can't believe how young you look now. You look like your twenty-five."

"Yep," Intex replies. "And I feel like it too. I will feel like this for the rest of my life." Intex turns to a worker. "Save this serum and store it into some vials. Label them: Longevity Serum - *Dermochelys coriacea* DNA."

"Yes sir," the worker says and immediately gets to work.

The Rextonians follow Intex to another lab table. Intex pulls out some bags of hair. Some of the hairs have red on them; blood.

"What's the hair for?" Darrius asks.

"They are for just in case ... it's a part of my plan."

“Hmm.” That didn’t really answer his question, but he doesn’t press on.

Intex grabs ten hairs in all; five long and five short hairs. He places them into a machine. He walks away from the machine and to another lab table.

“Wow. You're getting right to things,” Morris says.

“Yes,” Intex says. “I'm setting the plan in motion. I must get started right away.”

“So ... we are supposed to get powers?” Darrius asks.

“Yes. With your inner Rextonian energy combined with the Milky Way’s energy you will develop powers. It’s a pretty thing.”

“But you lost all of yours.”

“Yes, but I will gain them back faster than you guys will get yours, because I have already been infected by the radiation once before.”

“You can teleport already?”

“Yes, but not very well. It’s still developing. It started forming once I entered this galaxy. It’s a shame that it’s four million light-years away. There are so many empty galaxies around here that are within one to two million light-years away, but, like I said, they're deserted — empty. The Trexus Zeta Galaxy, the lame-o Experimental Galaxy, the Kairos Alpha Galaxy are all four million light-years away from here.”

“The Kairos Alpha Galaxy?” Jackson asks. “Those Aeonians are a creepy species.”

“You’ve got that right,” Darrius says.

“We better be careful what we say about them,” Morris says. “They may be listening to us right now.”

“You know ... word is,” Darrius continues. “That the virus that killed Rexton’s plant life is really an Aeonian.”

Intex continues working with some chemicals at this table, while he and the Rextonians talk.

“There’s also St. Reynolds’s Galaxy,” Intex says.

“Yeah,” Morris says. “That’s four million light-years away from here as well, but it’s also two million light-years away from us.”

Intex picks up a scalpel and purposely cuts his finger, just to test his power. His finger starts gushing out blood. He wipes the blood off onto his shirt. He looks at his finger, waiting for it to heal. About twenty seconds later it finally starts to heal, but it starts scabbing up. A minute later the scab falls off to reveal nice healthy skin underneath.

“Wow that’s amazing,” Morris says.

Intex nods. “It’s slow.”

“Slow?” Darrius exclaims. “That was fast!”

“It’s supposed to be as fast as healing within seconds, and without scabbing. I guess it should take some time.”

“In seconds?” Darrius pauses. “That’s amazing. I can’t wait for that.”

Intex scoffs. “You will probably have to wait a few months for that, maybe longer. Anthony didn’t get his until he was fifteen or something. But you guys are well past that age. That’s why I’m making serums, so we can quicken the process or bypass it for the time being. We are not going to sit around and wait for you guys to get powers.”

Manhattan Penitentiary

Richard looks over at the only two other inmates in this prison; Victor and Drake. He is still angry for siding with them about seven months ago. He stood no chance against The Avians, but he chose them anyway and he still ended up in prison.

The two of them look the same as they always do; bored. Richard is bored himself. He looks away, looking at the many prepared cells that they have for other metahumans. This prison was specifically built for people with super powers. All of the cells were made of a strong man-made metal with rubber around them to prevent electricity.

In every cell and on every wall are VAS': Villain Abilities Suppressers. Richard thought the name to be stupid, but not that it mattered; they work. None of the three of them can use their powers. It's nothing like having superiority to the other inmates like it was in White Plains.

Drake is lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling. Richard sometimes wonders if he could get his powers to work, he could burn a hole in the ceiling if he keeps staring at it.

None of them do anything all day. Normal prisons all the inmates to have time to roam around either inside or outside, but not here, especially not outside. Outside they cannot contain their powers; they'll escape. And if they were to let them roam around inside, then they could try to destroy all of the VAS.

Richard often wondered about that Oliver. He showed up for the last part of the fight, but he was the one that got the most injured. There

was no way he could have survived, but he did get away; he teleported. Still his body was not found anywhere. He still hasn't shown up anywhere either, so he must be dead. And he's not here.

Victor is sitting up on his bed, writing graffiti on the walls with a stone that he found. It is a very small stone, so the guards let him have it.

The guards had given them cards to play with, but they can't really together, because they are never allowed out of their cells. When they play cards, they usually play games that they made up themselves.

There is nothing for them to do all day. At times Richard has wanted to kill himself, but there is nothing he can use. He cannot suffocate himself; his natural instinct is to breathe. There's no way of dying in here.

There's only one thing any of them do here and that is think of ways to escape. None of them actually talk to each other about escaping, because they do not want to alarm the guards. It's not like they would do anything anyway; it's practically impossible to escape from here.

Richard looks around the whole prison, just like he always does. There's gotta be an escape route somewhere. He has already noticed some cracked ceiling tiles, but the rest of them are sealed tight. Every day all of them look for ways to escape. All they can find are cracks in some ceiling tiles and the cement. There seems to be no way of escaping. Then there are the guards that stand outside of the cells. They are always on patrol.

Then out of the blue, Richard thinks of something. The VAS creates a gas that negates their powers. When they breathe it in, their powers are suppressed; the gas gets to work once it enters their lungs. But what if Richard could filter the air and only breathe in oxygen? Even if he could, how far would he get?

The only thing Richard could think of is placing his face down in his pillow and trying to take small breaths, only breathing in oxygen —

hopefully, for him. Richard also thinks about how he's heard that the gas dissolves or disperses outwards if there are no walls or if the doors are open; but not here. This whole place has them every ten feet. There is no chance of that happening. That aspect diminishes Richard's hope of breathing oxygen through his pillow, but he decides to give it a shot.

Richard lies down onto his bed, on his belly. He throws his face into the pillow, acting like he's tired, bored, and frustrated with not having anything to do.

Richard breathes like this for ten minutes, taking as small of breaths that he can take. Every once in a while he has to take a bigger breath, because he cannot get enough oxygen. He tries his electricity, to see if this works. He holds his hand close to his face, away from the sight of any guards or cameras. With all of his power, he tries to create a spark of electricity. A single spark jumps between his two closest fingers, but it is so small.

Richard smiles. This gives him hope. It isn't much, but it is something. It may be just a little spark of electricity, but if he kept this exercise up, he could save up enough energy to get out of here.

The Skies

All eight of us fly through the skies, overtop of Manhattan. We are all determined to find the building Intex is staying at. We all know Intex well enough to know that he has a place of headquarters.

Rachel, or Angel, uses her super hearing, listening for anything that sounds like Intex or his experimentation. So far she's heard nothing. It's kind of difficult to try to listen to everything. She has to tune in her hearing to one thing at a time. In this case, Angel pitches her hearing in tune to all of the buildings.

I try to search the minds of people in every building, looking for one that match that of Intex's. Vortex replicates either one of our powers to help out. I'm not sure which one he's using now, because his expression looks the same when he replicates my telepathy and Rachel's super hearing.

None of us have found anything. We have been flying around for hours. Alex has been flying and running around, searching for anything like a building of Intex's. But we got nothing.

"Man this sucks," Grace says. "We are going to be in for a surprise if we don't find that building soon." Grace, Swift, pauses for effect and to give us a moment to ponder that. "Intex is going to be prepared by the time we find his building ... if we ever."

"We'll find it," I encourage. "Eventually," I mumble under the wind.

My electronic wings flap as the rest flap their real wings, except for Brandon. They often complain about their wings and backs getting sore. As if on cue one of them complains. I think I am starting to guess when they complain. I am getting to know how long it takes for them to ache.

"Man, Mark!" Alex complains. "My wings are killing me." Alex shutters them, trying to shake the pain out, but it doesn't help.

"Sorry, there is nothing that I can do," I tell Alex. "But when I'm wearing my suit, my name is Avian."

"But, what if there is something you can do?" Vortex asks.

I can tell that that means his wings ache too.

"What can I do?" I ask.

"I don't know," Nick replies.

“What if you create something?” Mara asks. “You know, with you matter power.”

“Like what?” I ask.

Rachel smiles big enough for me to look over at her. “I got it,” she says. “You make messages for us.”

“What? Messaging chairs or something?”

“No, better yet ... make them into jackets. Make messaging jackets.”

“Really?” I stopped to think about it. “You know ... that actually sounds like an idea, but ... we don't wear jackets anymore; we wear suits.”

“Then put them into our suits,” Alex says.

“That’s where I was getting at.”

Alex closes his eyes to think about that, picturing it in his head. Amazingly he continues flying in a straight line. He, along with the rest of them, is skilled in his flight. They have had years of training with their wings. Rachel and Bruce have had less than that, but they are great at flying as well.

“Make them now,” Alex begs.

“Well, I'm not sure how. I would have to study messaging mechanisms first. I have no clue how they work right at this moment; I have to already know how it works before I can create it.”

“Aww man ... you're killing me Mark!”

“Avian.”

“Man, whatever!”

“Let’s not forget what we are doing up here,” I remind everyone.

“But we've been up her for hours,” Mara complains. “We cannot find any building that would belong to Intex. I'm not sure he's in Manhattan.”

“Maybe you're right.” I nod, not that anyone is looking. Everyone is watching the ground below, the buildings, and where they are flying so they don't bump into each other. “I have a feeling that Intex's building would be in a remote place ... I'm thinking that he wants to change things up a bit.”

I honestly don't see how we could find the building here. We have been here in Manhattan, searching for most of the morning. We have not found any building of Intex's at all. We practically searched every building. I am certain that it must be elsewhere; not in the city ... something more rural, more remote.

3 Weeks Later. Mount Vernon, NY

Hank sighs, watching the TV in his room. It upsets him to hear about all of the news reports about the crime. A lot of crime has been rising because of metahumans. The Avians are out there, stopping a lot of them. They are trying their best, but still some get away.

Metahumans are on the rise. Many of them are making the wrong choices and challenging The Avians.

Hank looks down at the tablet on his lab. He has one new email. He strokes his fingers on the tablet and looks at the new email. Hank sighs; it's another request to make more VAS. The FBI is using him to distribute VAS to many different police departments and penitentiaries.

Hank closes his eyes and concentrates. The sound from the TV slows down and then stops. Hank opens his eyes. He hears nothing. He gets up from his seat and sets the tablet down on the chair. He sees a faint image of himself sitting on the chair with his eyes closed; light hasn't moved since time's frozen.

Suddenly Hank gasps for air; he has already used up the air in front of his face. Since time is suspended, the air cannot circulate; if he wants to continue breathing he has to move a little bit out of that space and breathe from the air elsewhere.

Hank walks into his lab and to his computer. He remembers that his computer is not going to work if time's motionless. He resumes time and slows it down instead. He can now hear the TV from here, but it plays very slow and he can't understand it.

Hank opens a cupboard and pulls out ten empty VAS devices. He places them all inside a gas chamber machine.

On the computer, Hank types in some things and clicks a few buttons. The program gets right to work and into the machine it registers; an arm moves down from the top of the machine and into an opening on the VAS. It emits a gas into the device. The devices turn on, but are not activated. They detect the gas inside of them and study the elements to regenerate when it runs out.

The machine and computer seem to be running kind of slow, but really it is fast, because Hank has time running slower.

Hank made these VAS devices to regenerate the gas. They are advance devices that can replicate whatever gas is put into them. Once a gas, other than oxygen and carbon dioxide is put into it, it'll automatically turn on and wait to be turned on.

The machine moves on to the next one, then the next and so on. It finished all ten on the VAS and Hank pulls them out of the machine. The email had requested for one hundred VAS devices, but this machine can only do ten at a time, because that's all that can fit inside it. So Hank pulls ten more out of the cupboard and put it in the machine.

The machine gets right to work. Hank sees that there are only three VAS devices left in the cupboard. He goes to another machine and types in three hundred. The machine gets to work, mixing up some chemicals inside of huge cartridges. This machine creates the VAS devices themselves. The other machine puts the gas into the VAS.

Hank waits for the machines to get to work, but then just speeds up time instead. He hates waiting.

Mark's Residence

After days of studying, I have finally got it. I successfully created back massaging in the suits. A person could look at the back of the suits and would not notice a difference.

I studied a back massaging chair and the vibration. I finally figured out how to put them into the suits. Basically I made them Nano-size, but made them everywhere. Yet again, I have them triggered by will-power, but they could only be triggered by being worn.

Alex put on his suit and sighed. I could see his face *ahh*. Alex's back has seemed to heal from what Victor had done to him, but still his muscles are not the same as before. His muscles are not as strong. He's been rebuilding his muscles by working out in the basement and by flying. But he's been stressing them out so much that they ache. Andrea is constantly telling him to take it easy, but he insists on speeding up the process; he's all about speed.

"This is very nice," Alex says to me.

I look at his suit, searching for a hint of it vibrating. I have to squint and I can barely see it moving. It's so small of a movement, but it definitely is moving, because Alex is feeling it.

"It's great!" Alex exclaims.

"I'm glad you like it," I tell Alex.

My mind starts to drift. Alex continues talking but I don't understand him. These past few weeks have been upsetting. We have looked in all sorts of places in New York, but we have not found any building that would match the description of Intex's. It's not like last time where Intex had *Creative Works* written on it; this time Intex is doing this in secrecy. He knows that he is a wanted man.

Also last time Intex had his building in the middle of New York City. He definitely doesn't this time; we've searched all of New York City. It angers me that Intex is out there, preparing for something. He is getting ready for something big, I just know it.

I had a bad feeling since he's shown up. Grace said it herself; Intex is planning for something. He's in his building right now, getting ready ... *experimenting*. That sickens me.

It was strange to see Intex return and how he tried to act like a changed man, but I know that he's the same old Intex; although he looks like he's twenty-five.

"Hello?" Alex asks me, finally getting my attention; waving his hand in front of my face. "Where did you go off to?"

I don't reply. I just look at Alex. I am still not all here, still thinking about Intex.

"Oh," Alex says, knowing what's on my mind. It's been on everyone's minds; Intex. "We will get him, Mark."

I nod to him. "We must. I just ... I fear that he'll do something far worse than he did last time. I'm afraid that he'll go above and beyond." I pause. "That's why we must find him right now."

The doorbell suddenly rings. Alex's face perks up. It must be Andrea. Grace gets the door and sees Andrea standing on the back porch. Grace invites her in and she meets Alex in the living room.

"Hey, babe," she hugs Alex, gently.

"Hey," Alex replies, hugging her back. Alex doesn't squint from any pain; it seems that his back is getting better.

"Why are you wearing your suit?"

Alex smiles. "Mark added a massaging mechanism into it. It's great!"

Andrea looks at me and raises her eyebrows, and then she turns back at Alex.

"So, does it vibrate your suit very much?" Andrea asks. "I'm meant ... does it look funny?"

Alex chuckles. "Not at all. It's working right now, it's on."

"Really?" Andrea looks at his back, looking for any motion. She squints and nods. "Ah, I see it now. It's so subtle."

"Well it works; just you can't really see it."

Andrea looks at me again. "Nice work, Mark."

I nod at her and smile. The doorbell rings again. Andrea and Alex look at each other, and then at me.

"I wonder if that's Tabatha," Alex says.

Andrea squints, not sure if it would be here.

"Or maybe it's Reye," I say.

I get up; ready to grab the door, but Grace beats me to it. She opens it, but instead of seeing any other of our normal visitors, we see three men dressed in dark suits. FBI.

"Hello," one of the agents says. They look right past Grace and looks at me.

"Hello, Mark," Director Gustavo Morgan of the FBI himself says. "Can we come inside?"

"Sure." I am a little nervous, but I know that I should not be. The FBI has been supporting us, commending us for our efforts and for making up for what they've done to us.

The director steps inside first followed by the two other agents that I do not recognize. I invite them to sit at the table and they do. Everyone else either stands or sits in the living room, or at the counter here in the kitchen, gawking.

“Do you know why we are here?” Director Morgan asks. I don't answer him right away so he continues. “We have reason to believe that Martin Intex is still alive.” He pauses, waiting for my reaction.

I smile and let my head fall down. I look back up at him. “Yes, I am aware of this.”

“You knew this?” He nods at me understanding, although he looks a tad upset. “It's not like he came back to life, because his body is still burnt up and in a morgue. He came back by ship, am I right?”

“That's correct.”

“We are still searching for his ship, but we have failed to find it.”

“And you will continue to fail to find it,” I tell him. “Because I destroyed it. Intex landed it in my backyard. I had to dispose of it before anyone noticed that it was there.”

“He landed in your backyard?! So you saw him?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you fight him?” Suddenly the director seemed anxious, excited.

“No ... we just talked. I regret doing that, but ... he was trying to act like he's changed, but then he disappeared on me. He teleported. I fear ...”

Gustavo narrows his eyes. “He's out there now, taunting humans, running his experiments. Is that what you fear?”

“I fear he's doing worse.”

“What's worse?”

“Going far beyond that; creating an army.”

“And you let him get away.”

I start to feel lowly. Guilt pains my chest again for letting Intex go. We shouldn't have talked with him, but should have tried to stop him; he was powerless. But now? He could have already created serums for himself, giving himself so many more powers.

“We have to expect the worst,” Gustavo says. He shakes his head. “You should have let us know right away.”

I scoff. “Intex would love to hear you say that,” I say, but regret it immediately.

“What does that mean?” Gustavo asks, demandingly. He scrunches his eyebrows.

“I mean ... what can you guys really do? Intex is powerful.”

Gustavo nods, understanding now. “Not to worry. We have VAS.”

“Oh yeah ... that. VAS. Those are what Hank's made.”

“Yes. We are having him make them to put in as many places as we can. We are focusing on New York and expanding from there.”

“But, you guys would have to bring him in first before the VAS would work. I don't think you have the ability to do that.”

“We'll tranq him.”

“What if he's invulnerable?”

“Mark, we would not have had to worry about any of this if you would have turned him in. He's a wanted fugitive. He's a serial killer, a torturer ... and you let him go.”

“Well, we teleported. I couldn’t really stop him from doing that.”

“I could lock you up for aiding a fugitive.” Gustavo grew stern.

“Do that ... and we will never stop Intex. My intentions are to bring him down; you will need my help to do that.” I pause. “Instead of searching for his ship, you guys ought to be searching for his building. He's bound to have set one up somewhere, but not in the city; we’ve checked.”

“I see. We are working on it. I have my people already looking for him.” He gets up from his seat and the two agents copy. “If you find out anything more, be sure to let us know.”

I nod. “Sure thing.”

They leave through the door, but I know things would not end well if Intex went into the FBI building. He would be giving full access to the government. He would be sure to bring them down. There would be no stopping him. Intex would find a way to get past the VAS. After all, the VAS’ are based off his design.

Manhattan Penitentiary

Richard smiles to himself. In these past few weeks he has saved up some energy and creating bigger sparks in his hands. The guards hadn't noticed, however Drake caught a few glimpses, but said nothing; he wanted to escape too.

Victor is lying on his side, facing away from Richard and Drake. Richard looks over at him, wondering what he's doing. It looks as if he's twiddling around something in his hands.

Drake watches Richard, waiting for him to create a spark in his fingers. He's noticed that Richard has been breathing through his pillow, acting like his twiddling his thumbs when he creates sparks. It's as if the pillow is filtering out the VAS' gas.

In these past few weeks Drake has been trying to do the same, but not wanting to act just like Richard. The guards might suspect something if they seem them in the same stance; both breathing through the pillows. They could catch on. Instead, Drake rests his chin on his hands and cuffs them over his nose, acting like he's bored. The guards don't suspect a thing.

Victor continues lying there. He suppresses smiling. He just created a spark in his fingers. He's caught on what Richard and Drake have been doing. It's amazing none of the guards have perceived it. Victor would rest his head on his hand while lying on his side, cuffing his hand around his nose, like Drake. He has been breathing with the smallest breathes he could do, but having to take many in order to oxygen, but not getting much of the VAS' gas.

The thing that makes Victor want to smile even more is that he has a more likely chance of escaping than the rest of them do. He has the ability to phase through anything. That will come in handy with escaping. Victor thinks about the security here. It is heavily guarded. There are always guards roaming around in here, so outside it must be worse.

He determines himself that he will escape. It shall be that difficult. He could just take over one of the guards' bodies and try to escape with the guard. The other guards would know what he would be doing, but he could just move onto another guard if he was gunned down and so on. Victor can't be shot when he's in his misty form, getting ready to take control of a person; it's like he's intangible then.

Victor wraps his fingers around each other. He pushes his index fingers together tightly. He succeeds in phasing his fingers through each other. He smirks but quickly suppresses it and pulls his fingers apart. Victor figures: one more day of this and he can escape.

"Hey!" suddenly a guard yells. Drake is the first to look up. The guard is looking at Richard. "What's that in your hand? A lighter?!" he demands.

Richard slowly rolls onto his back and sits up. He raises his hands, showing that he has nothing in them. He shakes his head. "Where would I get anything in here?" he asks. "I've got nothing."

The guard looks at him suspiciously. "Well, I saw something. What was it?"

"I don't know what you saw, because I don't have anything in my hand."

The guard looks up at the VAS in his room. He blinks to indicate that it's working. He looks at others around the whole facility. They're working. He looks back at Richard, narrowing his eyes.

Richard scoffs and rolls back onto his stomach. Having talked for that little bit, Richard breathed in a lot of the VAS' gas. He is not going to get his powers working now. For the past few weeks, they hardly talked, all saving up their energy for their powers and breathing in mostly oxygen.

Richard could taste the gas in his mouth. The smell of it was different. It wasn't a strong smell, but it was definitely different than the air he breathed through his pillow. He hadn't really breathed it in lately.

The guards look back at Richard and Drake. They noticed Victor and to them it looks like he's as bored as ever. They wonder why Drake jumped so much when the one guard shouted at Richard. It was as if he was hiding something; jumping in fear of getting caught. They looked at Drake, searching for anything that he may have on him.

"Hey," another guard says. "Do you have anything in your hands?" he asks Drake.

Drake pulls his hands away from his face, not breathing. He shakes his head, not wanting to speak and breathe in that gas directly. He puts his hands back where they were and the guard loses his interest.

A light bulb blinks overtop of Victor's head; he gets an idea. He holds back from smiling, not wanting to reveal anything. But he suddenly gets an idea; one way better than the other ones. He knows a way to get them all out, with the full strength of their abilities.

Victor sighs and rolls onto his back, resting his hands behind his head. He plays the role of being bored as ever. He notices a VAS from across the hallway, above a cell. He looks away from it the second he sees it. He looks up at the ceiling. He closes his eyes, acting as if he's resting, but really starts concentrating. He holds his breathe, conserving his oxygen, not allowing the VAS gas in.

The VAS that he eyed suddenly stops blinking, but no one notices except for Victor. He opens his eyes and takes a quick glance at it when

the guards aren't looking directly at him. The VAS doesn't blink; the gas doesn't disperse from it then. Victor closes his eyes again, concentrating on the rest of the VAS.

One by one, skipping over several at a time, Victor deactivates the VAS. He decides the program the VAS to still blink, acting as if they are still working, but in fact aren't; only the LEDs are working. Victor goes back and deactivates the ones he skipped over, only allowing the LEDs to blink.

Finally all of the VAS' are disable and Victor breathes. He can smell the difference in the air already. The VAS's gas is clearing up already, but there is still some there. He just breathed in some, so his powers are suppressed again. He will have to wait for the gas to dissipate, which shouldn't take long at all; it will disperse somewhere. The oxygen will overpower it.

Victor waits for ten minutes; just because he wants to be sure that he has full power. Richard and Drake noticed that Victor must've done something, because he's breathing like normal. They doubt that he just gave up.

Drake tries to test his powers. He sits up on his bed and holds his hands together. He starts to heat up his hands with ease and stops it at that. He felt as if he could have created a flame right then and there. Victor definitely did something to the VAS. The Drake remembers; Victor has technopathy. All he needed was to filter his breathing and focus his technopathy on one at a time.

Drake smiles to himself, realizing that they all have their powers. His smile attracts a few guards attention. One guard steps forward towards Drake, looking at him attentively. Drake looks up at him innocently, acting like he only been sitting and doing nothing else.

"Why are you smiling?" one guard asks Drake.

“Can I not reflect on funny memories to life my spirits?” Drake asks in reply.

The guard scoffs. “What funny memories?!”

“How about these?” Victor asks, jumping from his bed, alerting all of the guards.

The guards all get on edge, raising their weapons, even though Victor hasn’t done anything.

Victor smiles. “What?” he asks. “I have even done anything. I'm just trying to scare you. Looks like it worked ... you know I'm hopeless with all these VAS’ around.”

The guards look about, seeing that all of the VAS’ are blinking, indicating that they should be working, but in reality they are not. Some of the guards calm down, but the rest are still on alert and a few still keep their guns up.

Victor asks as if he goes to sit back down on his bed, but as he lets himself collapse onto it, he just falls through it; phasing through his bed and through the floor.

Suddenly all of the guards dart towards his cell. Searching for Victor. He demonstrated his intangibility. Victor disappeared, having phased through the floor, out of sight.

“Check the basement!” the captain yells to some guards. “Hurry!” he sounds angry.

Suddenly, without any of the guards’ notice or even Drake and Richard’s, Victor comes up from the floor and into the captain’s body.

As the Captain, Victor starts commanding all of the guards. “It doesn’t look like he's coming back up anytime soon,” Victor says inside the captain’s body. “So ... everyone, down to the basement!”

“But what about Richard and Drake?” a guard asks and some other ones nod.

“Don't worry. I will stay here to watch them. I don't think they have their powers; Victor is the powerful one.”

Still Richard and Drake do not know that Victor is inside of the captain, but they look offended and as if they want to break out and attack him at this moment.

“But just in case. You, you and you, stay with me,” Victor points out a few guards. The rest run out of the big prison room to head to the basement, going on a wild goose chase.

When all of the other guards are gone. Victor looks at the three guards with him. He points at the front of the cells, telling the guards to stand there. He backs up behind the three guards. Victor looks up at Drake and Richard and winks, smiling. They look puzzled and the guards look back at their captain. Victor is still smiling and they too look puzzled.

In a split second, Victor throws his hands up and electricity jumps at the three guards, shocking them. They shake until Victor stops shooting them with his electricity and they fall to the guard.

Victor jumps out of the captain's body, turning from his misty form and into his own body within a millisecond. He throws a punch at the confused captain's face. The captain backs up a few feet and Victor throws a vortex above his head, sucking him in. He closes it immediately.

Victor turns and faces Richard and Drake. “Let's get out of here.”

Mark's Residence

I jump to my feet. I hear the police scanner blaring. All of us are still thinking about the FBI's appearance here, but they immediately move on.

The police are reporting an escape of the three prisoners from the Manhattan Penitentiary; Drake, Victor and Richard. I run in between the living room and kitchen, standing underneath the skylight.

"Come on, everyone!" I yell. I jump up and shoot straight up, through the skylight, and materialize my suit over top of me.

I fly towards the prison as fast as I can. Down below on the streets I see a blur of red dash towards the prison; Alex, actually Whirlwind. I look behind me and see Angel, Vortex, Shift, Swift and Psych. Everyone is here, except Brandon or Tyke. I look back down and see a wild animal running in the same direction as us. I take a closer look and see that it's Tyke; his in his wolf-form; his lupus-human form.

Within another minute, we all make it there. Alex was the first there, but he looks disappointed. We all land next to him, and Tyke stands tall next to Alex, barely panting.

Alex looks at all of us. "I hate to break it to you," Alex says. "But we're too late. They're long gone."

"Darn it!" I exclaim.

"Victor and Richard have electric powers," Bruce says. "They must've run off in a second, taking Drake with them."

“But how in the world did they get past all of those VAS’?” I ask myself, frustrated.

I run up to the front entrance, and open the gates; the guards let me past. I tuck my wings in by thought. I make it to the building’s front door and open it. I immediately meet the captain and the warden.

“What happened?” I ask.

They shook their heads in disbelief. “Somehow they escaped,” the captain said.

“Obviously,” I say.

“Somehow they got their powers working. Victor phased through the floor and went inside of me without anyone noticing. He fooled all of the guards to run to the basement, using my body. I'm sorry. I don't know how their powers worked.”

“Let me see the cells.”

“This way,” the warden says, walking me to the large room. I immediately look for all of the VAS, ignoring all of the guards. All of them are blinking. “See? They’re working; the lights blink.” He pauses. “I don't understand how they could use their powers!”

Behind me the captain and the rest of my team come in. Tyke is still in his lupus-human form. The warden looks at Tyke, seeing that he is still in his wolf shape.

“Do you get your powers the same way?” the warden asks Tyke

“Pretty much,” Tyke replies in a raspy voice.

“But you’re still a wolf.”

“The VAS’ don't work,” I say.

Psych testing his telekinesis and succeeds in tearing one of the VAS' off of the wall. He brings it to his hands. He turns it around in his hands, looking at it.

"It's not on," Psych says. "Shouldn't it vibrate just a bit when it emits the gas?"

I nod to him.

"Well it's not."

I take it from him and spin it around. I smile and shake my head. "Somehow they turned them off. Victor did. He has technopathy. He turned them all off, but kept the lights blinking. Somehow he got his power working in the first place."

One of the guards speaks up, "I noticed that they have been cuffing their mouths with their hands and pillows."

I scoff. "They were trying to filter the air. They only breathed in oxygen not the VAS' gas. They found the VAS' weakness."

I look at Angel and she seems upset with herself. She notices me looking at her. "I wish I heard them before they escaped. We could have stopped them," she says.

"This is not your fault," I tell her. I smile at her. "Nothing is ever your fault."

I look back at the captain and warden. A couple guards behind them look at each other after hearing what I said to Angel. I can tell that they are wondering if we are together; *we are*.

"What are we going to do about this?" the warden asks me, expecting me to know.

I look at him, trying to think of something smart to say. "Honestly ... I wish I knew. If these VAS' have that weakness, then any metahuman

villain can escape. At least if they can hold their breath long enough to escape, because I'm sure most do not have technopathy. That's how they really escaped; Victor held his breath long enough to disable each of the VAS until they had their powers without any problem.

"I guess I'm trying to say that the only flaw is having someone in here that has technopathy. Otherwise, I'm sure no one else could escape, unless they can hold their breath for a while, or enable their power that could be extended breath.

"Maybe you ought to keep track of any metahuman villains' powers of those who come in here. You could get a list of powers that are risky with VAS. But don't worry for now; I will take care of this. I can contact the FBI about this. Or they will contact me."

They nod at me and I start to hear sirens coming from the front of the building. This ... is a catastrophe. Intex is on the loose and now so are Victor, Drake and Richard.

We all take off in flight, leaving the police and the guards behind. We head home, taking our usual flight patterns to confuse onlookers as to where we're going. When we make it home I see that a black sedan car is parked in front of my car. We land in through the skylight.

The same FBI agents and the director himself are sitting at my table. They all look at me.

"We didn't get that far and we heard about the prison break," Gustavo says. "It's too bad, but I hear the VAS' failed."

"That's the word?" I ask. "How in the world did you hear about it so soon?"

He points at the news on my TV.

"Oh. That's what the news reporters are making out of this? All they did is hold their breath and filter their breathing so they hold

breathed in oxygen and not the VAS gas. Then Victor disabled all of them with his technopathy.” I pause. “I glad you're here actually. I want you to see if Hank can make these VAS’ stronger somehow. Make the gases as thick as oxygen. Make it impossible to hold your breath and use powers. That’s the flaw. It needs fixed.”

Gustavo Morgan smiles. “I came back here, hoping you could shed light on this; tell me what needs done. And there, you said it.” He nods and gets up from the table. “I will concur with Hank about this; we will perfect these VAS devices.”

I nod back at him and he leaves out the front door with the agents. I look at all of us standing around. There are no words to say at the moment. I just hope that Hank can perfect the VAS’.

Last night was difficult to get to sleep. I had so much on my mind. My thoughts raced from Intex and the three villains' escape. This morning I wake up tired. I didn't get enough sleep, but I have to get up for work.

I get my shower and get dressed. I walk into the kitchen, seeing that Bruce and Mara are making breakfast. Alex is sitting in the living room. He used to always make breakfast, but since his injury Bruce and Mara kind of took over. Alex seems to be doing a whole lot better now.

Today Bruce and Grace have to go to work as well. Bruce is helping Mara because he still has time. It is about seven in the morning and none of us have to leave any earlier than seven-thirty.

Grace walks out of the hallway behind me, already dressed and ready. Everyone else is still in bed. I'm actually surprised that Alex is awake; he has no reason to be ... unless he's expecting Andrea.

I look at what Bruce and Mara are cooking up; the usual: pancakes, eggs and bacon. Original, but tasty. The eggs are about done so I grab a plate from the cupboard to get some. Abruptly the police scanner starts blaring.

We've got a bank robbery in progress on the corner of 43th and Irving Place. Be advised, the robber is a metahuman and he's quite agile. We need backup now! Avians, if you are listening to this, we need your help!

That is all I need to wake me up. I threw my plate on the counter, making a loud clattering now but not breaking it. I jump up and fly straight through the skylight. I look to see who follows me; Alex as

Whirlwind, Bruce as Psych, Grace as Swift and Mara as Shift; all of us who are awake.

We all fly towards the bank, heading straight towards the sound of sirens. We are not sure what to expect out of this metahuman, but he is threatening the police.

Within a couple of minutes we arrive. We land right on top of the roof of the bank. The police are surrounding it and the robber is inside. With all of my strength I stomp my foot down and force a hole in the roof. I jump through it and force it bigger with my hands as I fall through. Whirlwind, Psych, Swift and Shift follow behind.

We land, startling everyone here. We spot the robber immediately. He already has a bag filled with money in his possession. I take a split second to study the situation.

I take a look and see that there is some sort of stringy stuff holding all of the doors shut. The stringy material is holding the doors and attaching itself to the walls around it, just like a spider web.

Quite a few of the hostages are tied up with the same material and some have their mouths involuntary closed with the stringy substance.

I turn back to the robber a second later after studying the sticky situation. In one hand he is holding the bag of money and with his other he holds out, as if he's going to shoot something out of it; possibly what his power is. I am just about to speak to him with the substance shoots out of his open hand, directly at me.

I am not fast enough to try to dodge it, but I try anyway. Somehow it misses me when I am knocked over by someone, moving too fast to see who. I recover and see that Swift is on top of me, she saved me from the webs. It is obvious that the substances are webs because the way it holds on the wall behind where I was just standing; it holds itself, clinging in every direction; just like a web.

I quickly go to my feet after Swift gets to hers. Psych telekinetically draws the bag of money towards him, but before it even gets three feet away from him, the robber throws a web out, grabbing the bag and pulling it back to him. He holds it tightly now and Psych tries again to attain it, but fails; this robber has profound strength; just like that of a spider proportioned to his size.

“Drop the bag and release these hostages!” I demand.

“Why would I ever?” the robber asks, scoffing.

“If you don't, you'll regret it.”

The robber laughs uncontrollably. “Wow, Anthony. You have no idea what's in store!” he laughs some more. The robber knows my name! Obviously this is Intex's creation. I just hope that he doesn't mention my first name.

I shake my head at him. “Maybe I should be telling you the same thing.”

Psych telekinetically lifts a chair from behind the robber without his notice.

“Everyone's blood will be on your hands, Anthony,” the robber continues. “And there will be nothing you can do to stop it.”

“Stop what?”

“Our dominance. We will strive and you will fall.” He pauses. “My name is Super Widow, your adversary.”

“Wow!” I scoff. “*Super Widow*? Is that the best you can come up with?” By “you” I mean “Intex.”

The robber, Super Widow, just smiles at me. Very quickly, he throws a web at me, pulling me towards him. Psych chair gets thrown down to the floor where Super Widow stood a split second earlier; he

just missed it, quickly jumping out of the way. Shift throws a ball of nuclear energy at Super Widow, but he dodges it and it hits the counter behind him, burning a hole in it. Super Widow pulls me to his chest and throws webs over my mouth.

I learn how horrible the webs feel, covering my mouth. Super widow attempts to cover my whole body in webs, starting at my feet. He shoves me and I start to trip backwards, but I am caught by Whirlwind. He zips around Super Widow's back and throws a fist out, but at the last probable moment Super Widow ducks and hits Whirlwind's side. Whirlwind falls to his knees, gasping for air.

Super Widow kicks Whirlwind in the face, sending him backwards. Swift darts towards Super Widow, throwing a punch at him. Super Widow quickly dodges it and throws a fist back at Swift, but she does the same. The two of them go back and forth for a few seconds, missing each other with every swing.

I strain and pull my feet apart, tearing the surprisingly strong web. I reach up and pull the web off of my mouth quickly, feeling some skin being pulled off in the process, but it promptly heals.

Shift walks around Super Widow as he attempts to fight Swift. Shift transforms her hand into that of a bear's. She strikes at Super Widow, but as if sensing it he jumps forward, flipping over Swift. Shift swipes the air, missing him completely.

Psych throws another chair at Super Widow as quick as he can, but the Widow catches it in a web, shooting it from his hand, grabbing it with the web and throwing it back at Psych. The chair hits Psych square in the chest, knocking the wind out of him.

I start to get very angry. I put my feet in a stance and propel my body in flight, charging straight at Super Widow. He starts to expect me coming, sensing my danger. In all of these short milliseconds, the Widow

attempts to jump out of the way, but I succeed in grabbing him and pinning him to the ground.

I immediately grab both of his hands by the wrists and hold them together with just one of my hands. I punch him, socking him in the nose repeatedly. He struggles to break free of my grip, spinning webs in his hands, but they fail to shoot out at anything only clogging up in his hands. I tighten down my fingers around his wrists, cracking his bones.

The Widow lets out a cry. He persists to thrash away from my powerful grip but fails miserably. Although he is very strong and I actually struggle a bit myself to keep a hold, his strength is still no match for mine. His hands are clogged up in webs as he tries to ... do something, I don't know what.

“Super Widow,” I say, spitting in his face. “You tell Intex that he chose the wrong superhero to threaten.”

I am about to knock him out, but he smirks, getting ready to say something.

“You are nothing but words,” he says, spitting blood from his mouth. “Our plan is already in the works.”

Suddenly I hear an explosion so deafening. I cannot hear for a few seconds. The Super Widow is laughing, but I don't hear him. He breaks free from my grip, because I am sidetracked. We both jump to our feet and I quickly punch him in the face as hard as I can; he drives towards the wall and impacts it limply, knocked out of consciousness.

Everyone around moves their heads in fear, searching for the source of the blast. I see a cloud, looking through a north window. In the distance I see Central Park. The cloud of smoke comes from there. I realize that everyone has fallen down from the explosion, thrown from its shockwave. I am now the only one standing.

I am eager to see what Intex's has done. Finally my hearing returns. I notice that the windows are broken. I hear the police sirens outside. I turn for a second and a few of them start running inside, looking through the north entrance to see what the explosion was.

My team gets to their feet and I wave them to follow me. I dart out of the north entrance, forcing the doors to break open, ripping the webs closing it, even though we could walk through the broken glass. The five of us head towards Central Park.

"We need to see what Intex has done!" I yell to my teammates.

They all nod, following me keenly. I expect the police to handle the situation at the bank.

As we fly towards the park a booming voice is heard throughout all of New York City. It is Intex's voice; he must've hacked into all of the sound systems everywhere.

He starts out with a sinister laugh. *"I am Martin Intex!"* Intex booms. *"Have I got your attention? I hear that I have left quite a name for myself. It's funny how some people get more famous when they die. But now I am back. Since everyone already knows about me I am just going to be refreshing your memories. Your life as you know it no longer matters. You will drop everything and bow down to me or you will die! Anyone who tries to defy me will suffer the consequences. You all think that I'm such a bad man, but you will soon see that I am looking for the best interest of everyone. You will soon see that being genetically changed to be a stronger being, equipped with whatever species' powers you desire, is everything you ever wanted. I am not the bad guy. Instead, I am your savior. If you don't agree, you will find out how misguided you are."*

The words make me boil inside. They are so twisted. We make it to Central Park within a few more seconds. We land, looking everywhere for Intex. All we find is a huge black spot in the center of the zoo. All of the trees and plants are blown over, facing away from the black spot. The animals in the surrounding exhibits are all dead. There are people lying on the ground ... dead.

The sight of it all pains me. My heart sinks for all of those innocent lives, just for some lame announcement of Intex. I expected to find him here, but this explosion was only to get people's attention. Intex is nowhere around here.

"I'm sure you all know about the spectacular Avian, but I will tell you the truth about him. He is not so great. He is the very him who

murdered me, but yet he got away with it. Your very hero got away with murder. Why put all of your faith and hope in a fraud? How about putting your faith and prosperity in me? I will give you everything you've ever wanted." Intex continues.

I can feel steam coming out of my ears. I look at the rest of my team to see that they feel the same. I fly straight up into the air, scanning all over for Intex. He's nowhere around here.

"You may think that Avian will stop me, but he will not. And you will not want him to. The Avian wants to tear away all of this freedom that I wish to give to you. Avian wants to take it all away. He wants you to keep living with such poor, weak bodies. I can save you from that. I can make you all stronger, healthier beings. Then you can say, 'this is the life!'" Intex's voice gets stronger, louder and more powerful as he continues to speak, from ... wherever.

"I can't stand THIS!!" I yell at the top of my lungs. My voice distorting device fluctuates and makes my voice sound strange; it doesn't work well with loudness. I spin around in the air, determined to see Intex somewhere. I pan my mind across New York, in search of Intex, but I fail; all I feel is the panicked minds of all of the citizens. "Where are you, Intex!!!!?"

I have never felt so angry in my life. I am hot. If I were like Alex I'm sure I would burst into flames right now.

"I'm sure that right now Avian is trying to find me, wanting to kill me. But he will not. His is the most misguided any person can be. He thinks he knows what is best for you people, but he is not, I am. I can provide to you what is best for you all. I will provide you with everything you need, everything you want. Trust me, have faith in me, you will want to become such a stronger being; to be equipped with any mixture of any species DNA. The combination of whatever you choose will make you stronger indeed. You will soon realize how weak your human bodies are. You will never feel so alive!"

I left behind my team, flying as fast as I can. I soar over the buildings all over in Manhattan. I zip around everywhere. Anywhere I go I hear Intex's voice booming. I leave Manhattan and got to Bronx. After a few moments of searching I move on to Yonkers, but with no such luck. Intex continues to ramble on, annoying the heck out of me. I fly back south and reach Brooklyn. Again there I cannot find Intex. I look in Kings, but still can't find him. Everywhere I go, Intex is not.

I head back to Manhattan when Intex finally finishes his lame speech. Hopefully no one agrees with it. If they do, they probably only would out of fear.

"Lastly," Intex finishes off. "I will tell you this: You can expect this freedom to be accessed in any of the big buildings in you cities. We will spread throughout them all. All of our scientists will be there to give you what you need. Goodbye and have a nice day!"

What?! All of the big buildings? I see my team and fly right to them. Rachel, Nick and Brandon have joined them. They are up now, obviously. No one could have slept through that explosion and Intex's booming voice.

"Guys," I say, angry, but not at them. "Let's check out the Frequent Journal. That's a big building."

They immediately follow me towards the building, determined as me. We reach it in a minute. I notice that Whirlwind doesn't lag in his flying; his is ignoring his pain in his back. I would too if I were him; we don't have time for dwelling on our problems right.

We plow through the windows of whatever floor this is. There are empty desks. All around there are empty cots, ready to have people laid across them. We storm throughout the whole building, finding it empty. Obviously, Intex has already been here and cleared out all of the people and workers, preparing it.

"Alex," I say. "Torch this building."

“Really?” Alex asks. “But this place makes the news.”

“Not anymore. Intex has already emptied this building. It’s ready for experimentation, which we do not want. Destroy it. No one’s here to get hurt.”

Alex creates a tall flame in his hand and throws it outward at the beds. He shoots a glimmer of fire at the walls and floors, igniting everything.

We all jump out through the broken windows, leaving the building behind to burn down. Suddenly Rachel cocks her head, hearing something.

“Where is he?” I quickly ask Rachel.

“It’s ... not a person,” Rachel replies.

We continue flying, not exactly heading to a specific place, just the next biggest building. We are not concerned about the buildings at the moment.

“I hear ... rumbling ... no ... thumping.” Rachel pauses and looks at me. “It’s something big.”

Just then, out of nowhere. Something big down below appears. It is a humanoid shape, but it looks like it is only made out of muscle. Its skin is a dark gray, which looks like the same texture as asphalt and is covered around with spikes. It wears nothing but ripped pants, more or less shorts. Spikes bulge out of its shorts from its knees. This thing is a beast. It sniffs, trying to smell something. It locks onto the smell, but then looks up and spots me; it smelled me.

The beast jumps straight up at me. It surprises me that it can jump this high up, as high as the Frequent Journal. Before I have any time at all to fly out of the way it grabs and pulls me to the ground — fast.

I fall and hit the ground hard. My head spins and I get dizzy. The beast then flips me over onto my back and punches me hard in the stomach. I grunt and can't breathe. I throw my hands up to push the beast off of me. The beast grabs my hands with just one of its very large hands and squeezes them together easily. I barely manage to groan; the bones in my hands break. The beast punches me in the stomach over and over.

The team land behind the beast and attempt to pull it off of me. The beast doesn't budge nor does he acknowledge them. Alex throws fire at it and Mara throws a ball of nuclear energy. The beast doesn't react at all.

The beast grabs me by the throat and picks me up, holding me high in the air and squeezes my neck. His black irises and pupils expand, making his whole eyes black. I try to pull his arm away, but fail to do anything. This beast is no strong and I seem puny against it. My vision starts to blur and I see a figure walk up.

"Hello, Anthony," the figure says. I recognize the voice from anywhere to belong to Intex, but I cannot see him very well.

I cannot breathe, cannot see and I feel like I'm going to pass out. No, I feel like I'm going to die. My vision gets so blurry until I cannot see at all. I hear a muffled voice screaming, but I cannot see who it is. I cannot move. Suddenly I lose all of my feeling in my nerves. My arms fall to my sides. No doubt my face is purple ... or worse.

My head spins. I feel something. I feel relief. But I still can't see nor breathe. Something flat is touching me, something cool. My head spins faster now and I feel like I'm going to fall off the edge of the world.

I suddenly feel like I'm thrown upwards. My face is warm. I still can't see nor move. My whole body is limp; I am useless.

I wake up, finding myself in a chair. I feel fine now, except my throat does still hurt. I can feel my whole body. I can see. I lift my head, but barely, finding that it takes more energy than usual. I am in a room, chained to this chair at its sides.

I am not alone. I see seven other people strapped in chairs. They're my team. They are all awake and acknowledge me waking up.

“Mark!” Rachel exclaims.

I turn to see her and barely gasp. My voice is very raspy. Her hair is a mess. Her suit is shredded. Everyone looks the same. Nick, Bruce, Alex and Brandon all have scruffy, rough looking beards. If I could I would feel for my beard, but I'm chained down to this chair. They all have bruises.

I tug at the chains with all of the energy I have, which isn't much at all. But they do not budge; they barely even move.

“Don't bother, Mark,” Bruce tells me. “Even if you were one-hundred percent, you wouldn't be able to break those chains. We're powerless here.”

I look around the whole room. It's pretty empty except for us. It looks like it is big enough to hold twenty people.

“I'm so glad you're alive,” Rachel says, crying. “I ... I was afraid you'd never wake up.”

“I can heal, Rachel.”

“Not in here. You've been out ever since that day when The Destroyer choked you practically to death.”

“Ever since that day?” How long have I been out?”

Rachel lets the tears roll down her face. “None of us are exactly sure, but it’s got to have been about four months.”

“What?!” I exclaim, my voice sounding horrible wrong and scratchy. I cough. “What has happened? What has Intex done?!”

“Oh ... it’s awful,” Rachel cries. “Mark, he’s taken over all of New York. He ... he killed the governor. He’s killed so many people. Many have tried to defy him, but those who gave in were experimented on. They ... they were ... uh infused with animal DNA. Many people are becoming hybrids. People are trying to hide, but they get found sooner or later.”

“We gotta get out of here!” I exclaim, coughing.

“We can’t,” Nick says. “We’re powerless. Plus, this place is completely surrounded by all of Intex’s creations, along with The Destroyer.”

“The Destroyer’s the one that choked me ... four months ago?”

“Yes,” Nick nods.

“I don’t understand. How could I have been out for four months?”

“That’s a good question.”

“Mark,” Bruce says. “You were in a coma. Intex was keeping you alive through that tube in your arm.”

I look down and notice it for the first time. There is a tube going into the bend of my left arm. I follow it with my eyes and it goes onto the floor and up into a hole in a wall.

“What’s in it?” I ask, suddenly worried.

“Some kind of nutrients.”

“Why didn’t Intex just let me die?”

“I think ...” Bruce pauses. “He wants you to see what you failed to stop.”

I look around at my team. They all look defeated. I have never seen them look so discouraged. They have no hope in them.

“Come on, guys,” I say. “We gotta try to get out of here.”

“Mark,” Brandon says. “There's no getting out here. We're stuck. We have been here four months; there's no possible exit. We can't even break out of these chains.”

I look down back at the tube in my arm. I feel like crying. It has been a long time since I've cried, though, but I contain myself. My team needs someone strong, someone to give them hope.

“How are your guys alive? How do you get fed?”

“Intex has workers that come in here and shove disgusting food into our mouths,” Bruce replies. “They do not dare unchain us.”

“Guys. We will get out of here. We must. We cannot let Intex win.”

“But he's already won,” Rachel says in a soft, defeated voice. It pains me to hear her like this.

“NO!” I yell. “I refuse to believe that! Intex will not win! We have to get out of here! We have to!” Everyone looks at me with no hope in their eyes. I can tell they want to believe me, but they don't. “Come on! We just need to find out what's making us powerless. Are there devices or something?”

Nick chuckles to himself.

“What? What is it?” I pause and gulp. “Don't tell me he injected us with power negating serums.”

“No, no. It’s not that,” Nick replies. “The power negation ... stuff is in the floors, in the blocks and bricks. It’s in the ceiling. It’s in the paint on the walls. It’s everywhere, Mark. There’s no escape. We are completely powerless.”

“Then how can hybrids guard this place?”

“That’s the thing, Mark,” Bruce says. “It only reacts to our DNA. It is made to only negate our abilities.”

“Then there is hope. Someone will free us.”

“I’m not even sure if anyone knows we’re here,” Mara mumbles.

For the first time in a long time I feel defeat. My team is not giving me any hope and their attitude is wearing onto me. I can’t blame them for feeling like this. What are we supposed to do? We are completely helpless. A tear rolls down my cheek before I can try to hold it back. Another rolls down and it stings a cut on my cheek that I didn’t know I had. It’s been a while since I’ve cried, but now I’m going to have to start over a new streak.

If I could, I would wipe my tear away. I look up at Rachel. She has crusty purple make up going down her cheeks. It’s from the makeup she wore last when she was being Angel. She couldn’t move her hands, so she couldn’t wipe away her tears either. Looking at Rachel like this only made me cry more. My team has never seen me like this before, but it’s not like it made them feel worse. They were already feeling helpless before I woke.

A voice comes back to me. *Everyone’s blood will be on your hands, Anthony. And there will be nothing you can do to stop it.* That was what Super Widow told me. I am definitely feeling it now. The pain in my chest increasing, knowing that so many lives have been taken away. I wish I knew what to do. Normally my team looks up to me, but I don’t see that in them now. They look helpless, hopeless. There is no hope. There’s ... nothing.

A week has past. Every day, only once a day, workers come in and feed us. The food, whatever it is, tastes worse than plain oatmeal. Somewhere inside of me I feel hope. I just can't give up.

I still can't believe to be truly powerless. I just don't feel it, but every time I try, I cannot break free from the chains. It's not that they're tough; it's just that I'm powerless; I don't have the strength.

Intex had workers install a TV into our room. The only channel it plays is a news channel. A nervous wreck reporter constantly gives the news about the rise of the hybrids. There is always footage being shown of hybrids fighting each other for fun, people with large muscles engrafted with animal DNA. Some people's bodies look un-proportional.

I force myself to look away from the TV. I can't stand to see what I failed to stop. The cities everywhere are dumps. People beg for mercy. People are forced to be experimented on. Those already experimented on are turned into hybrids, and they are enjoying it. They are siding with Intex. They actually thank him. It's sick.

It pains me to see this to continue on. Intex will only ... prosper, in his way of prospering. He will branch out. He desires to rule the whole world. Right now he's got all of New York at his fingertips. He has full control.

Even if we can get out of here, we would have to fight past all sorts of hybrids, but firstly the army surrounding this room. I wish I would've stopped Intex the moment he came back, the moment he set foot in my house. I could have killed him again right then and there.

I guess my father was right the first time. Intex needed to be killed. I remember back to the first time I killed him, my father's voice spoke in my head: *whacking him won't do much; you need to penetrate his skin*, my father had said in my head. He said that I needed to stab him. *Kill Intex.*

That last part repeated over and over in my head. *Kill Intex.* I did, but now he's back. It took him two and a half years to get here, but he's back. And he's gotten a lot further with his plan. What to do, what to do. I have no idea. There is no hope. My team only seems relieved that I'm alive, they don't seem hopeful now that I'm conscious; they have no faith in me ... but what can I do anyway?

Astoria, NY

Tristan thought that hiding underground would not work, but here he is with Dawn and Stuart. The three of them had found a place in an old storm shelter. There were plenty of canned foods down here, mostly fruit. Whoever this storm shelter belonged to before, they were going to be prepared. Except they aren't here.

Dawn had at one point been relaxed and happy at home, but now she is back to her panicked self. Intex is far worse than any villain in her life. First it was her curse, her disintegrative touch, and then it was Oliver, threatening their lives. But now it's the dreadful Intex. The one and only.

The three of them are constantly in fear. Tristan always sits out in front of them, nearest to the shelter doors. They are always closed. They always sit as deep in the shelter as they can.

They jump when they hear a loud crashing noise outside up above. Hybrids are fighting again. Usually it's the ones who've decided to have animal DNA of big animals; like gorillas, elephants, lions and bears. People chose the basics, but Intex gave you any possibility. If you don't choose, Intex will give you one that he chooses.

Every day the three of them hope for The Avians to save them all ... but there seems to be no hope. They disappeared the very same day Intex gave that speech. Everyone grew very fearful that day. They heard Intex's speech and then realized that The Avians were nowhere around. They were last seen fighting the Super Widow, who now stands besides Intex at his headquarters in Manhattan.

They all hold each other closely in the corner of the shelter. Afraid that they may get discovered. The idiotic hybrids above continue to fight for another ten minutes. Someone goes down, groaning and yelling out in pain. Then he abruptly stops yelling; he is killed. Sadly, things like this have been happening every day.

They all jump when there are several bangs on the doors of the shelter. It stops as soon as it began. They sit in fear, waiting for the doors to open, but they never do. One of the hybrids must've just walked over it. They wait for another ten minutes, but it is very quiet and the doors don't open. They let out a sigh and relax.

Saxon Woods Park, NY

Andrea sits in a big, heavily leafed tree, waiting for a text message. She has been in contact with some of her friends: Sofia, Tabatha, Kathrine and Reye. They text her every day to let her know how they are doing. Chandra hasn't replied to any of her texts and none of her other friends have heard from her. She worries that she's been killed. She can't help it but think the worse.

It pains Andrea every day to think about Alex. She believes that he is dead, along with the rest of The Avians. Everyone believes that. They disappeared that day of Intex's speech; everyone assumes them to be dead. Anyone's hope has been put to the government.

The government has tried certain things, like a full head-on assault, shooting, bombing, and any sort of trapping Intex, but everything failed. All hope is lost. Everyone just tries to survive now.

Andrea's phone vibrates. She anxiously opens it up. She reads the text: *Sofia and I are still alive. It's Tabatha. We found some food from a dumpster today. We are hiding out in a basement of some old house, but it's risky. Let us know about you.*

Andrea misses them. She wishes they could be together, but there are so many threats out there for people to travel. She replies: *I'm surviving. I'm in a tree with lots of leafs. No one can see through. I just ate a doughnut a cat was gnawing on. I stole it from him.* She clicks send.

A few minutes later she gets a text from Kathrine. *I'm fine. Hiding out. Gotta go.* That text worries her. Kathrine is in trouble, having to flee from something. She wasn't able to complete her thought. Every day they worry about each other. Somehow they still have enough minutes. Andrea looks at her phone; she's down to one-hundred thirty seven point two minutes. They could go fast if she texts like she used to, but they have to be smart and conserve on their texts.

Reye texts Amanda and everyone else; they all text each other at the same time, always sending to each other, so everyone can know how they're all doing. *I'm fine. But now I'm worried about Kathrine, leaving like she had to.* She leaves it with that. Not much depth about where she is or what she ate.

Again that is everyone except Chandra. Still no word about her. They all expect the worse, but they don't want to accept it. They all hope she's still alive, just out of minutes.

Mount Vernon, NY

Hank freezes time. There is a tiger over top of him, suspended in the air; a human-tiger. The man looks hungry. Hank pulls the man-tiger down to the floor in his room.

The guy must've smelled Hank from outside and found him in here.

Hank walks to his cabinet and pulls out a power negating serum and he immediately injects it into the man.

He has done this to so many different hybrids. Then he's taken them to his secretive basement. They actually thank Hank for freeing them, explaining that they've had no idea what got into them. It is as if they can't control their feelings.

Every day Hank wishes that he could rewind time with ease. So far he's only been able to rewind back a few minutes, but then time would spring back forward to the present. It's as if time is elastic or spring-loaded, fighting against him. He hasn't been able to figure it out.

Hank puts the empty syringe on the counter. He lets time regain its motion. The man slides on the floor, his momentum continuing. He gets up, confused as to why he abruptly appears in a different room. He gets up and suddenly his muscular figure starts to shrink down. His hair sheds. He groans as he shrinks to a regular size man.

He looks up at Hank with a puzzled look. "What'd you do?" he asks Hank.

"I negated your powers," Hank replies.

The man looks at himself and sighs. "I got my body back!" He smiles. "I can't believe it! Thank you!" he pauses and lets out another sigh. "I never wanted to go in that line but once Intex ... gave me tiger DNA ... I don't know ... I felt powerful. It was great, but ... you saved me,

man. That ... tiger ... it wasn't me. I wasn't ... I'm not a tiger ... I'm not a vicious ... person. I ... made ... killed ...”

“Hey. Don't worry now. I cured you.” Hank pauses and waves his hand to follow him. “Come on. I have a place you can stay at.”

“Really? Save from ... outside.” He cringes, knowing because of how vicious he was there are others like that out there.

“Yes, come follow me.”

Hank leads the man down to his basement. Hank had a bookshelf that was knocked over, but despite that he pulls a book from it and something clicks. A seal opens up in the floor and door opens. Hank leads the man down through the door in the floor, down some stairs. He meets with the other people down in the basement.

They see the man come down with Hank and they welcome him. They have all sorts of foods that Hank has gathered for them. All he Hank had to do was halt time and find food.

The man joins the people and they offer him a bed and some food and water. The man quickly becomes acquainted. It makes Hank feel great to be helping people, but still it is chaotic out there and it seems that it could never be stopped. If only The Avians were still around. Deep down inside, Hank knows they're still alive; he just wishes he knows where.

Central Manhattan. Intex's Building.

You know that tired feeling you get when you sleep in too long? You feel like you didn't get enough sleep and you feel weak, but in reality you got too much sleep. That's how I feel right now. I have been asleep for nearly four months. I feel weak and tired. My mouth taste yuck and my breathe smells and that does not seem like it will go away easily with the food that we're eating.

I look up at my team. They do not seem much like a team right now. Everyone is chained to a different chair; all of them slouching, looking hopeless.

I think about how I am feeling. Do I feel hopeless? Right now, I just feel ... I don't know. I am still having a hard time believing all of this. I just can't believe that four months have passed and Intex has taken over New York. But I don't feel hopeless; I feel that there is some hope. Somehow we will get out of here. I just know it. We have to. I'm not sure if someone would come in and save us, but I feel that we may save ourselves.

We all have just finished eating that disgusting food that Intex's workers fed us. They don't even bother unchaining us; they fed us by themselves, shoving the food into our mouths.

Suddenly a thought comes to me. Nick says that the things that make us powerless are everywhere; in the walls, floors, ceiling, and paint. Bruce says that it only reacts to our DNA. Personally I think that would take a lot of work, but knowing Intex he wouldn't mind doing that. But also knowing Intex, he lies. What if the real thing that negates our powers

are in the food, but I don't dare say that out loud; not when a worker could hear us.

Just then the door opens up. Instead of seeing some workers, Intex himself walks through. He looks at me and smirks.

“I heard that you were awake,” Intex says, still smirking. “So, did your *‘team’* tell you the news? That I’m the great and powerful ruler of New York?”

I nod, not hiding my anger.

Intex laughs. “You are pathetic, Mark!” he exclaims. “I understand that you’re angry, but you look retarded. You are so weak! You are nothing to me!”

“Then, why do you feel the need to come in here and prove something to me?” I ask him, furiously.

Intex chuckles softly. “I don't need to prove you anything; you already have your proof. So, what, you don't want me to come by and visit?”

I don't say anything.

“Don't hope of getting out of here, because it’s not happening. There is no escape from here. You can count on that.”

I start clenching my jaw in anger. “What I don't understand Intex, is how could I have been out for four months by being strangled?”

“Oh!” Intex laughs. “No, you were out because of being strangled. That’s just one of The Destroyer’s ability. He has a poisonous touch. I always wondered how long it would knock someone out. Now I know.” He pauses. “You team filled you in on who The Destroyer is right?”

I don't say a word.

“The Destroyer is my best creation.”

I dare a look at Brandon and he meets my eyes. Brandon then looks at Intex.

“The Destroyer is —” Intex is interrupted by Brandon.

“You know, Intex, back when I was Blade you said that I was your greatest creation.”

“You were ... back when you *were* Blade.” Intex frowns. “Now you’re a disgrace, working with Mark!” he scoffs. “You made poor decisions.”

“You killed our parents! How do you expect us to work for you?”

Intex scoffs and shakes his head. “I don't need you guys. You're weak and pathetic.” He looks back at me. “You want to know why I came back here to see you, Mark; it's not that I have anything to prove, it's just that I wanted to rub this in your face.” He pauses for effect. “I have taken over New York, fulfilled the start of my dream and there is nothing you can do to stop me!”

“Like you said yourself, Intex, don't get your hopes up. We will stop you.”

Intex scoffs and starts laughing. “That's funny. You're pathetic, chained up, powerless, and surrounded by my greatest creations. There is no chance of escaping!”

Intex continues laughing and leaves the room, slamming the door shut behind him. This disgusts me.

I look at the floor; there is a drain right at my feet. I am placed right in the lowest part of the room, where all of the water, if any, will go to. No one else has a drain underneath them, but we all do have holes underneath our chairs for going ... you know; when you have to go.

I dwell on my hatred of Intex as much as possible. I think about all of my team's parents that he's killed. I think about all of the experiments

that he has done. I try to make myself as sick as possible. I lean forward, my mouth over the drain, and I puke up all that I have just eaten.

My team looks at me with curious eyes. Rachel looks worried.

“Are you alright, Mark?” she asks me.

I smile at her, finishing throwing up. “I’m fine,” I reply. “It’s just that Intex disgust me so much.”

If it is in fact the food that makes us powerless, I will try with all of my strength to puke it up. I look down at the floor to see that the runny, disgusting puke drains, almost leaving no trace of it left. Within a few more minutes it will leave no trace at all.

I almost puke again from the unpleasantness of it, but control myself. I use my tongue to clean up my mouth. I cannot tell my team my plan, because one of Intex’s workers is bound to know about it. I don’t see any cameras or microphones, but I’m sure that they’re there, somewhere. I can’t dare speak about my plan, but maybe my team will catch on.

My throat starts to burn from the stomach acid and I try to swallow it back down, building up saliva. It calms it down a little bit.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Rachel asks me. “It looks like there something you’re not telling me.”

I smile for a second, Rachel knows me too well for me to hide something from her. I try to use my telepathy, but it doesn’t work. I look up at her, already calming my anger. “I’m just mad at Intex, that’s all.”

Rachel nods at me, understanding. They are all mad, but they are also hopeless.

“Mark?” Alex asks. “Did you really mean what you said?”

“About what?” I ask Alex, looking up at him.

“Did you mean that we will get out of here?”

For the first time since I woke up, I see hope in Alex. “I meant what I said, Alex. Mark my words, we will get out of here and stop Intex. Be sure of that. Intex will be stopped and we will be the ones to do it.”

Alex nods and lets his head drop down. He does not believe me, but he does seem more hopeful than before. I wonder if he thinks about Andrea; probably every day, just as Nick does about Reye. I'm not sure if Brandon has a girlfriend too, but I don't want to mention it; I would probably just make him worry about her.

It upsets me that in so little time since Intex has been back, he's already gotten this far. It pains me and makes me feel pathetic, like Intex said. I wonder what the citizens think about me. The great Avian, defeated so easily by Intex. But, I'm not defeated yet. I will stop him, I must. I just refuse to believe that all hope is lost.

Knowing Intex, I don't believe that the power negating substances are in the floors, walls and ceilings. He wants us to think that, but I won't dare say that. I believe that it's in the food. Hopefully.

Baisley Pond Park, Queens, NY.

Noelle has rarely been a bit a ways from home, that being Manhattan. She did not intend ending up this far from home, but every now and then she was chased by human-hybrids, and now she's found herself here.

Noelle Dowling looks around her, reading signs. She already knows that she's in Queens, but now reading the signs she knows she's in Baisley Pond Park. For now, it seems decently quiet. She knows that any time this peace could halt abruptly.

She finds a large tree, one that looks like you could hide in. She looks around the whole park, not many places to hide, so she chooses the tree. It takes just a little bit of time and energy, but she manages to climb it and find a spot to sit.

All this time, Noelle can only think about how her family is doing, as well as Brandon. Most of her family lives in New Jersey, but her father and brother lived with her. Her father ... disappeared. She fears that he's dead. She cries for him every day, along with her brother, but she already knows what happened with him.

He was found. Her brother was taken in and turned into a hybrid. He found Noelle and explained to her how exciting it was and recommended for her to do the same. She ran. She ran as fast as she could.

Her brother is turned into a hybrid of an eagle. He has great vision, ears and can fly with wings that are similar to The Avians.

Sitting in the tree, thinking about her family she can't help but cry. The rest of her family is in New Jersey, but there's no way of reaching them. But every day she wishes to find Brandon.

The two of them were never really boyfriend and girlfriend, but amongst the group of friends that they hung out with, they were the closest together. If she was asked to tell the truth, she would say that she loves him, just like any girl would say for their boyfriend. She hopes Brandon feels the same way.

She worries that something's happened to him. She fears that he's been taken too and turned into a hybrid or worse ... but she pushes that thought away. She smiles for a second, thinking about how strong he is. She always loved to see him standing somewhere, looking for her. Sometimes she would just stop and take one long look at him. He is so muscular and built. She ... just wishes that they never left each other the last time that met. Now she has no idea where he's at, having no clue at all that he's part of The Avians, locked up at Intex's building in Central Manhattan.

Suddenly, Noelle stays as still as possible. She hears something below. It starts with sniffing and then she sees it below her, at the trunk of the large tree, sniffing. A man with a muscular figure and full of fur, almost like Tyke with The Avians, but he obviously is different. He looks more like hybrid of a house dog.

He looks up suddenly, scaring Noelle. She knows she's gave away herself, obviously jumping in the tree. But then she hears a hissing of a cat. She turns and looks at a tree branch away from her and sees a regular house cat. She's shocked that she didn't see it there before. The cat hisses at the dog/man. To the cat, it smells like a dog, so it's a threat. Noelle starts to calm down when she realizes that the man is staring at the cat, rather than her.

“Come on, cat!” the man yells. “Get down here! I want to have some fun!” He barks, sounding kind of funny. Most of the bark sounds like a dog’s, but just a hint of it sounds human, giving a ring to it.

Noelle feels awful, but she wishes that the cat would jump down, just for her safely. She normally wouldn’t feel this way, but nowadays you have to fight for yourself. She would always choose herself over a cat.

She waits in the tree, while the cat does the same.

“That’s it!” the man exclaims. He starts climbing a tree.

For whatever reason he did not climb the tree in the first place. Maybe his dog instinct was to stay down and bark at the cat, but his human mind told him to just climb the tree to get the cat.

Noelle tightens up. The man climbs the tree, getting closer to her and the cat. He is just a few feet from the cat and its hair stands straight up and it hisses.

“Come here, you little pest!” the man exclaims.

He reaches for the cat and it whacks at him, scratching his arm.

He looks down at his arm, seeing it turn red already and start bleeding. “You’ve done it now, cat!”

He about grabs the cat, but stops and looks up, directly at Noelle. She gasps, now obviously being discovered.

“What do we have here?” the man asks Noelle, losing interest in the cat. He turns back to the cat and barks. The cat jumps, falling from the branch and landed on one just below it. It runs down the tree.

“Get away from me!” Noelle screams. The man just smirks at her, his grin getting bigger. “Don’t touch me!” she cries.

“Oh, but I’m not going to hurt you.”

“Get away!” she screams.

“Come here. I just want to play.”

He starts climbing up, getting closer to her. He laughs at her quivering in fear. “What's the matter?” he laughs at her. He barks at her and Noelle jumps, but doesn't let go of the tree branch.

She starts to climb up the tree branch, not really having anywhere to go. “Just leave me alone!” she screams. “I haven't done anything to you! I don't deserve this.” She starts crying.

“Aww, it's okay. Come here. I'm not going to hurt you.”

Obviously, Noelle doesn't trust him. She tries to get further away, but reaches as she can go on the tree branch before it would give way. The man climbs up the branch, getting within a few feet from her.

He starts to growl at her and a chill runs down her spines. She can't help but scream at the top of her lungs. He barks, hating her high-pitched screaming and prepares to launch at her.

Unexpectedly, they hear the sound of screeching. Noelle knows that sound. It's an eagle. The dog-man doesn't think anything of it and about pounces on her. He jumps forward at her when suddenly the eagle flies through the tree, avoiding all of the branches and grabs him with its feet. The eagle is a hybrid. The eagle throws the man, letting him fall all of the way to the ground.

The dog-man immediately lets out a groan when he lands. Hearing cracks when he landed, Noelle knows that he obviously had his bones broken. The eagle-man lands its feet on the branch and turns around to face Noelle.

“Are you alright, Noelle?” the man asks. The eagle-human hybrid is her brother.

She nods.

“I saved you, Noelle. Everything's okay now.”

“But ...” she can't come to find any words to speak.

“What? I'm not going to let anyone hurt you. I promise. I'm going to protect you.”

“Why? I ... I'm not going to turn into any of you.”

“I'm going to protect you, because you're my sister. But don't worry. I'm ... I've been thinking about you. You have your right to decide which path to take. You don't have to become a hybrid if you don't want to. And that's fine with me. No matter what you will always be my sister.” He folds his wings in so tight until the seep into his back, going through holes that have already been made in his shirt. He opens his arms. “Come here; give me a hug, my sister.”

Noelle climbs back down the tree branch, closer to her brother. She reaches him and embraces him in a hug, squeezing him hard. She realizes now how much she misses him. She can't help but cry all over his shoulder, weeping.

“I love you, Noelle,” he says. “I will never let you near any danger again. I will protect you.”

“I love you too, Lon,” Noelle says and continues weeping.

Intex's Building

My puking up of the food does not go unnoticed. That proves my theory about there being hidden cameras. Just two days have passed and I've been puking up my food. My team has asked if I was alright and I tell them that I've been sick to my stomach.

Now a worker is standing in front of me, demanding to know why I'm not eating. He looks as furious as Intex would be. "Answer me! Why aren't you eating?" he demands.

I sniff, trying to act sick. I look up at him, directly in the eyes. "I'm not used to this food. It's disgusting and makes me sick," I say. "I can't help throwing up."

"Then ... why don't you puke when we feed you? Huh?!"

"Because the sickness comes a few minutes later. It's not immediate." I pause. "Why do you care anyway? Don't you want us to suffer?"

The worker changes his expression for a second, considering something; his face calms, then looks unsure of what to say. The anger returns to his face. "Just eat your food!" he exclaims and storms out of the room.

"What was that all about?" Alex asks when the door shuts.

I don't want to let anything slip, because then the workers would know for sure the real reason I'm not eating. "I guess that don't understand what it means to be sick," I reply. "I'm meant it; this food does not agree with me."

Just a few minutes later the workers come in, storming towards me. They don't say anything, but just pull the tube from the floor that goes into the wall, which was in my arm before. I watch them bring it to me. I know that the power negating serum must go through the tube as well, because I didn't have any powers then either.

The power negating serum must be in the food if they are this upset. If I let them put that in my arm, I would never get out of here, because of being chained; I will have no way of taking the IV off. I can't let them do this.

“Okay!” I exclaim. If my hands weren't chained I would've held up one of them for emphasis. “Okay. I'd rather eat the food than for that to go into my arm again.”

The workers look at each other and nod.

“Very well,” one of the workers says. “Then you'd better eat your food.”

They leave the room, letting the tube drop to the floor. I let out a sigh, but try not to show it too much. Somehow I cannot eat the food without them notices, which is impossible. They noticed me puking it up, how can I not consume it otherwise?

The team looks at me, concerned; well most of them are concerned ... well maybe just Rachel, Grace, Mara and Alex. The others don't seem to care; they just stare at the floor, having no hope. I know now that I'm right. The power negating serum is in the food, but now I have to find a way to not consume it.

A thought comes to me. I have been two days without the food and I have gone ... you know, done my business in the hole underneath my seat. I wonder if the power negating serum is out of my system by now.

I test my super strength, but without trying to draw attention. Very slowly, I pull my hands apart, testing the chains. I move my hands even slower, pulling at the chains. For the first time, I feel something. The chains start making a creaking sound and I stop pulling my hands apart for a second.

I wait for a few minutes, making sure no workers notice. Nothing happens. I pull again and the chain creaks some more. I slowly let my head drop and I slowly look down at the right side of the chair at my right hand. I take a look at the chains, although my head is centered to my body, I just move my eyes. I don't want to give any hint that I'm looking at the chains.

I hold back from gasping. I don't even move from the position I'm in. But I know that I'm getting my powers back. I smile to myself, not actually, but in my head. The chains around my right hand are actually split across some links. They were creaking alright! That's for sure. I'm definitely getting my super strength back.

I think about my chances of escape. I would need the rest of my team. But I know that the workers are bound to feed me soon, at least by tomorrow. And I haven't thought of a way to not consume the food. So it has to be today. I have to escape. But I know what this means. My team is still powerless, and I will not have time to help them escape as well; I have to escape ... alone. I have to desert my team.

About a few hours have passed. I have studied all of the walls, slowly looking around. The ceiling looks to be made out of metal, so I'm definitely not breaking out through that.

I have been slowly tugging at the chains. On both of them, links have been cracking open. I tugged until it would break if I tugged anymore, so I leave it alone until the right moment to escape.

I will have to break out through a wall. I start to feel strength. My powers are returning to me. My healing ability is returning my strength and energy. I haven't felt this great in about four months, even though it's only felt like a week.

In just a few minutes I am already feeling better. Suddenly, things are openly up. I am feeling something else. It's my telepathy. I'm starting to feel everyone around here. I slowly close my eyes, pretending to get sleeping, but in reality it's to concentrate on the minds around.

I start to find seven minds in this room. I can feel the workers of Intex right out of the room. There are three guards at the door, but they don't feel separated from us. It feels as if there aren't any walls between us; of course, my telepathy can work through walls, so I don't see the walls, not unless I enter someone's mind and see what they see.

I move past the guards and find the minds of the workers in a room not far from this room. There are seven of them and they are all looking at something. It feels as if they are concentrating. They are definitely looking at monitors; the hidden cameras in this room. One worker suddenly sits up in his seat, as if suspecting something with one of us; me. He leans forward, looking at his monitor. I can just feel it, he's looking at me.

I make a snoring sound, then take a deep breath and snore a little quieter now. The worker leans back in his seat, relaxing. He fell for it, thinking that I'm asleep. All the while I keep my eyes shut.

I start to feel more people. I seer past that room and find what seems like the entrance of this building. These minds feel powerful. They are hybrids and experiments of Intex's for sure. It feels as if half are standing outside and some inside.

I pan my mind across the rest of the building. No one else is here. Intex isn't here, not in this particular building. The best way to escape in through the wall behind me.

I smile to myself, knowing that the workers will be incredibly surprised with my escape. I'm not one-hundred percent, but it's as good as I'm going to get. I take a long deep breath ... it's time.

So quickly, I pull with all of my might and break the chains so easily. I already feel the minds of the workers go on alert. I open my eyes and jump up, breaking the chains at my feet. My team looks up at me, all wide-eyed. I look at them and smile.

"I'm sorry," I tell them. "But I don't have enough time to save us all."

I turn around, and jumped over my chair. I run straight at the wall that I had my back turned to the whole time. I brace for impact and plow right to it. I find myself in another large room, but this one is totally empty. I smile when I see the windows.

Behind me, through the hole and into the other room, I hear stomping of feet. It sounds like a stampede. I jump into the air and take flight towards the windows. I fly right through one, breaking it with ease, as if it were just water I am flying through.

For the first time in four months I breathe in fresh air. I fly straight up towards the sky, leaving the building behind me. I feel bad for leaving my whole team behind. I will go back for them, but I will have to come up with a plan.

I look back, seeing the hybrids in the front of the building. They just now find out that I've escaped, but I am already high in the sky. They run inside, oblivious to me being in the air, above them. I fly towards my home.

Within seconds I make it there, flying at full speed. I am actually surprised that it's still intact. Most houses are intact, though, and so are the buildings, despite there being crazy hybrids running rampant everywhere. Mostly, debris is just everywhere and many things are trashed. Some houses are destroyed, but most aren't, same with the

buildings. But don't get me wrong, there is a lot of damage and there will be work needing done when this is all over.

I'm not sure what I'm planning on doing here at home, but I take a look around my room. It's just the way I left it ... somehow. I know I can't stay here long; Intex will probably look here first.

Now that I'm out, I have to think of a way to help my team out. I have to come up with a plan. Or I will have to make my way through all of the hybrids guarding the building, but maybe I'm not cut out for that. Am I that powerful? Maybe not.

Lighthouse Park, NY

Victor, Drake and Richard get into fights, but for some reason they have stayed together for this long. They have taken over this little park here, taking it all for themselves. They hang out in the manmade lighthouse here.

Richard always feels like the odd one out. He seems to not have a say with what they think. He's not even sure why he's stayed with them for this long, it's just that he has nowhere else to go.

Drake and Victor have been getting mad at themselves. Angry that they have let themselves get into prison in the first place and for not having won that fight at the mall eleven months ago. They seemed to have carried that anger with them over everything. But they are proud with themselves to be more powerful than most hybrids. They have fought the right to own this little park.

When they escaped four months ago, they didn't expect Intex to rise up and take over everything. They wanted to be the ones to take over New York, which may add on to their reasons for being angry. But whatever the reason, these people have been angry for a long time, ever since they lost their loved ones and chose the wrong things to do.

Right now Richard sat at a chair, furthest apart from the group of three. Victor and Drake were sitting closest, at a table. The table wasn't originally there; they had stolen it and put it there. On the table is an unfinished game of chess. The game has been there for several days.

Drake leans back in his chair, his head facing the ceiling, but his eyes closed. Victor leans back in his chair, arms crossed. Richard just sits in his chair, his chin resting in his hands.

Drake speaks, but keeps his eyes closed. "If only Intex didn't take over," he says. "We could be the stars around here."

"You mean *you* could be?" Victor says.

"Why does it matter?" Drake opens his eyes and tilts his head down and looks at Victor.

"All you want is to be great. You want to have all of the glory."

"Well yes, of course I do. But Intex's the one with it all."

"Why? Why do you want attention? You'll get yourself killed."

"No I won't. I can replicate powers; I'll replicate what I need to survive."

"I've never wanted fame," Victor says, sighing. "I just wanted The Avians to stop pestering us."

"I did too, but now it's become more than just that. I want to be better than The Avians. Well ... I already am, but the world needs to see it."

Victor scoffs. He's heard this before, many of times. Drake wasn't always like this, but he's developed a showy attitude.

"You know what, Victor?!" Drake exclaims. "I'm tired of you disagreeing with me!" He pauses. "Why don't you want to be famous?"

"I don't know. I just don't have the desire, alright?" Victor replies. "I'm not sure why you do, but it's not happening, not with Intex around."

"Oh yeah?! Well I'm going to prove you wrong!" Drake jumped to his feet.

He looks like he's about to fly off, but something stops him. "I was just about to leave, but I am forgetting something that I have wanted to do for a long time," Drake says. His eyes glow bright blue.

Victor jumps to his feet, knowing what Drake wants. He wants Victor's powers.

"I'm not going to let you do that," Victor says.

Richard sits up in his seat, but is afraid to butt in, since this is not his fight.

Drake charges at Victor, but Victor quickly zips around his back and kicks him from behind. Drake anticipates this and jolts himself forward, barely missing Victor's kick. He spins on his heels and traps Victor in a telekinetic hold.

He walks up to Victor with his eyes glowing.

"Drake, don't!" Richard yells, jumping to his feet.

Drake throws Richard into a corner, holding him down too. Drake places his hand on Victor's head. Victor struggles to break free of his grip. He zaps Drake with electricity, try to push him away, but he is so stubborn that he ignores the pain.

Drake keeps his hand on Victor head, already starting to absorb his powers. He starts to lose focus on his telekinesis, replicating Victor's powers. Victor takes this chance and kicks Drake in the groin. Drake suddenly pulls his hand away and falls to his knees. Victor shocks Drake with electricity and Richard falls to the floor, having Drake letting go of him.

Victor kicks Drake in the face, while shocking him. Drake suddenly gets up, but still in pain. He seems to be immune to Victor's electricity. But instead of finishing his job of replicating all of Victor's powers, he just flies out of one of the broken windows, leaving the park.

Victor sighs and recollects himself. Richard walks up to him.

“Are you alright?” Richard asks.

“I think so,” Victor replies. “I feel fine, but ... Drake.” He shakes his head. “He replicated at least some of my powers, if not all of them. That ... loser. That was the one and only rule we ever had in our friendship, and he broke it.”

Some friendship, Richard thinks, but doesn't say it out loud. He remembers when their friendship was a decent one, but more lately it wasn't much of anything at all. They always argued and got mad at each other. Now, there is no way they are getting re-acquainted.

Mark's Residence

Things seem so dull around here. My team is not here with me and things were left alone for so long in this house that it has lost life. I look at our workout station here in the basement. All of the weights are ready for use. The punching bag is ready. I could train myself, but it's not like it would make a difference. I can't let this prolong; I have to bring Intex down soon, it can't wait.

I am not sure of what to do. I need my team, but they are going to be locked in that building, surrounded by the hybrids. I'm not sure that I, one man alone, would be able to fight them all off. I most certainly couldn't the first time when it came to The Destroyer. But I wasn't prepared either. But the ... fight ... wasn't even that long at all. Can I really take him on?

I think about my team. If I don't save them, they'll be stuck at the Intex building forever and Intex will only prosper and spread his hybrids throughout the rest of the world. If I don't save my team, the result would be devastating. Just the thought of Intex taking over the whole world ... Rachel comes to my mind. The last I've seen her she was beat up and dirty. Knowing Intex, he would only do more harm to her because of my escaping. The thought of Rachel getting hurt triggers something inside of me.

I find myself bolting up the stairs and taking off through the skylight into the air. I can't even stop myself from flying towards Intex's building. Anger builds up in me, but all I can think about is the safety of my team and Rachel.

Within seconds I land right in front of the building. There are two guards standing outside; one cat-like man and one gorilla-man. They see me and immediately prepare themselves. They charge towards me, ready to attack.

I run towards them and the cat-man pounces at me. I stop short and he lands right in front of me and I kick him in the face, hitting him into the gorilla-man. The gorilla throws the cat-man off of him and charges at me. I punch him in the gut, but he just grabs my fists and pulls me off of the ground. He squeezes my fists and gets ready to throw me into the ground; I can just see it coming.

I fly higher, taking the gorilla-man off of the ground and kick him in the gut, harder this time. He loosens his grip on my hands. I kick him three more times, all of them hard blows. He groans and the cat-man jumps up, landing onto my back and penetrating its claws into my skin.

I let out a cry. I materialize rock around my fists, forcing the gorilla's grip to weaken, not having large enough hands to hold, despite him having big hands already. I fly towards the ground and flip my backs towards the ground, sliding the cat-man across the ground, burning him from the friction; like a carpet burn, but in this case a concrete burn.

The cat shrieks and meows loudly. The gorilla lets go of my fists and I kick it in the gut as hard as I can, now having the ground to push off with, adding more strength and power. I kick the gorilla through the air, rising and then stopping once it hits Intex's building. I spin on my heels and face the cat. It is now just getting to its feet.

I materialize a large rock hammer, coming off of my right hand. I bring the hammer down onto the cat's head, knocking it out. I spin around and face the gorilla. It slowly gets to its feet, groaning from the pain in its guts and back from hitting the wall of the building. I charge up to it, not waiting for it to recollect itself. I plow the hammer down onto its head and it collapses to the ground. I hit it again to make sure that it's out, if not dead.

The front doors fly open of Intex's building. Out of the building come three hybrids; a very muscular man with a dragon head and tail, a girl with fiery-colored hair that flashes fire from it in the wind, and a moderately muscular sized man with electric pulsing from his hands

The three hybrids hurtle at me. The dragon-man slashes his tail at me, but I dodge it and grab it, immediately throwing him through the air. The girl with fiery hair runs at me and throws fire from her hands. I get hit and my skin immediately burns. I fly straight up to avoid the next ball of flames and put the fire out of the top of my suit. My skin heals.

The man with electricity throws out three fingers and a ball of electric shoots towards me. I just let myself drop towards the ground and it misses. Suddenly the electric man disappears and reappears right below me. It's not like he teleported or anything, it's that he ran so fast that I couldn't see him move; he reminds me of Victor, and Richard.

The dragon hybrid sprouts out dragon-like wings from its back, after getting up to its feet, and flies up towards me, flapping. It opens its mouth to bite me, but in the air I spin in a circle and its mouth goes right past my shoulder. I kick my foot up into its stomach. It is winded and falls to the ground to try to catch its breath.

Electric man throws a bolt of lightning at me, hitting me this time. I fall a few feet before I catch myself in flight. Fiery-hair girl throws fire at me immediately afterwards. She hits me again and I drop to the ground and pat the top of my suit to put the fire out. My skin heals a moment later.

One the ground I rush towards the fire girl, but am yanked off of my feet and thrown, with the touch of electricity on my sides. The electric man had zipped behind me. I land on the ground some thirty feet away. I quickly get up as if I had only tripped. The electric man runs up to me, ready to break out into a fight. I smile, ready for this.

The electric man throws a few punches at me, quickly. Somehow I miss one, but dodge the rest. I return fight blows to his face, all making contact. Although he is fast with speed, he is not with reflexes, but I am. I am more skilled in combat than this man is.

The man backs up to recollect himself, but I throw my foot out and kick him square in the chest, making him fall backwards. The fire girl runs towards us and I jump and flip right over top of her. I quickly kick her in the back before she can even turn around. I hastily grab the electric man's leg and wallop him into fire girl, but don't let go. I whip him in the other direction, hitting him into the concrete. Again, I whip him by his leg and hit him into the fire girl. Both of them groan and I hit electric man into the concrete again, making sure to hit his head hard.

He knocks unconscious and I use his body like a bat and hit fire girl like she's a baseball, sending her through the air to land hundreds of feet away.

I spin around to see that the dragon guy has just gotten to his feet. He pants, trying to get enough oxygen to his body. I run towards him and he unexpectedly jumps at me, like the cat-man had, and I slide underneath him. I whirl around and kick the dragon in his back once he lands. He falls to his knees and I jump and pounce down my feet into his back again.

He collapses to the ground and I hear something snap. He lets out a roar, obviously in great pain. I jump and land back down onto its back and he roars again.

The fire girl suddenly runs back. Apparently with her anger, her hair is nothing but made of completely fire. She jumps at me, kicking her foot out. I quickly jump back, off of the dragon. I let her get right in front of me with her foot straight out and I grab her by the foot, throwing her to the ground, head first.

Still holding onto her foot I yank her back around and throw her down onto the dragon. They groan and I run towards the front doors of Intex's building.

Once inside, I face The Destroyer, a hybrid with snakes coming out of his mouth, two more gorilla hybrids and Intex himself.

"What?!" Intex exclaims. "You defeated them already? Eraken, Phoenix and Static?"

By the name Static, I knew that meant the electric man. Phoenix must've been the fiery-haired girl and Eraken is left to assume was the dragon guy.

I smile at Intex. "Yes, I did," I reply. "There wasn't much to it."

Intex scowls, steam blowing out of his ears. Then it seems as if light suddenly goes into his face. "Oh. But you do remember The Destroyer, don't you?"

I nod. I remember him being the reason that I was out for four months and being locked up. The hybrids all get in an attacking stance. The Destroyer stands back while the two gorillas and the snake guy stands in front.

"Meet Python," Intex says referring to the guy with snakes.

Intex doesn't introduce the gorillas, probably because he's got tons of hybrids like them and doesn't care to name them. I already defeated a gorilla outside the entrance.

I just stand there and let the gorillas and Python run towards me. Intex smiles, but I can tell that behind that smile there is confusion; why I am just standing here.

The hybrids make their way to me and the gorillas try to make the first move. One gorilla-man throws a fist at me but in the last moment, I materialize a solid rock wall in front of me. The gorilla punches it, not even so much as breaking the wall. The other gorilla runs into the wall, obviously not expecting it to be there.

Python runs around the wall, with his slithering snakes as tongues hissing at me. I smile at him and wave for him to come at me, which makes him angrier and runs faster.

I materialize a metal chain from the floor and wrap it around Python. With the speed and momentum of him running towards me, he whiplashes and is pulled to the ground from the chain. Red marks are immediately created on his skin from the chains. I materialize more chains, eight in all, all pinning Python down to the floor. Python struggles to break free but fails miserably.

The gorillas run around the rock wall and face me. They absorb in the sight of Python pinned to the floor. They look puzzled and then I notice the fear in their eyes.

I smile at them making them fear me more. One charges at me and I materialize a huge boulder over top of his head. The boulder falls down on top of it, immediately shoving the gorilla to the floor, smashed underneath the rock. He doesn't even so much as twitch. I assume I killed him.

The other gorilla freezes and looks at the gorilla under the boulder. The Destroyer plows through the rock wall, breaking it down like nothing. He and Intex take a look at my surroundings, shocked because of not being able to see what was happening when the rock wall was up.

The other gorilla considers running away, but looks at Intex and changes his mind. He charges at me, suddenly changed, filled with anger again, not fear. I transform my fists into huge rocks and he hit the gorilla right in the side of the head, sending him to the nearest wall.

I hit him so hard that he is knocked unconscious immediately. The Destroyer roars and bolts towards me. I do not smile at him, knowing that he will be harder to defeat than the others. I sneak a look at Intex to see that he is way angrier than a minute earlier; he hates seeing how easily his *creations* are being defeat by one man — me. I smile at Intex, but I don't feel the strength I had a moment earlier; The Destroyer is powerful and I fear him.

Nevertheless, I stand strong. The Destroyer comes at me and I dodge out of the way, but he whips his hand around and hits my back. I am thrown face first to the floor. I try to quickly get to my feet, but The Destroyer yanks me up and throws me back down onto the floor. I let out a loud cry with the impact. The Destroyer throws me in the other direction into the floor again, and then time something snaps in my neck and back.

I groan loudly and Intex laughs. The Destroyer chuckles in a low-pitched voice with Intex. He forces me up and grabs me by my neck like he did four months ago. He squeezes immediately and my vision starts to fade. He punches me over and over in the face.

I cannot see anything at all and I fear if I let another second past, I will be out for another four months. Then I picture Rachel in my head: she's crying, looking at me unconscious. Intex is laughing at her and me. Then he walks towards me, unconscious and in a chair. He pulls out a

knife and stabs me. He laughs and walks to Rachel, stabbing her next, laughing the whole time.

It's a horrible thought, but somehow it gave me strength I never knew I had. Somehow I kick my feet out and punch The Destroyer square in the face, without seeing a thing. My neck and back heal.

I feel my feet make contact with the floor when I land. I still can't see, but all I can feel is adrenaline pumping throughout my whole body; I do not feel weak.

I hear and feel the stomping of feet running towards me; powerful feet. At the last second, I rocket upwards and kick my feet out, making contact with what feels like The Destroyer's nose.

A huge hand grabs onto my foot and pulls me straight down to the floor. I am temporary paralyzed and The Destroyer picks me back up, throwing me into a wall behind him; the wall that separates this room from the room that my team is imprisoned in.

I fall to the floor and my vision comes back in a flash. I am almost blinded by the sudden light, but I recover quickly. The Destroyer runs at me, with his feet stomping away. I see that Intex looks concentrated. He fears that I might defeat his greatest creation. That very thought fills me with excitement. For some reason, I believe that I can defeat him.

I jump to my feet and yell out with a battle cry. The Destroyer runs at me and I fly sideways out of the way. The Destroyer clearly misses me and plows through the wall, breaking it and startling my teammates who are chained to the chairs still. Being at the north side of the building, I jump a foot in the air and fly towards The Destroyer with my fists out, shoving him into the wall across the prison room, to the south side. I catch a glance at Rachel; she has bruises all over her face.

Suddenly I get so hot. Intex runs into the room to see what's going on. The two of us get to our feet and I grab The Destroyer's hand and throw him into the east wall, away from my teammates. Intex looks

furious, but not even close as much as I am, after seeing the sight of Rachel.

I run towards The Destroyer, but he quickly gets up and jumps at me. He about lands on me, but I stop short and he lands right in front of me. I charge at him and quickly start punching him repeatedly. He tries many times with punching me, but I dodge and weave, missing them all and blocking some, throwing his fists out of the way. It may look strange, seeing a huge beast with beastly fists being dominated by a regular sized man, but none of us are concerned about that.

“Come on!” Intex yells at The Destroyer. “Kill him!!”

“Not happening!” I yell back at Intex and continue punching The Destroyer.

The Destroyer suddenly dodges a few of my punches and zips around to my side. He grabs one of my fists and squishes it. I hold back from letting out a groan, which would only make The Destroyer feel stronger and give him motivation. Instead, I jump up and kick him in the face with all of my strength. I send him flying straight into the east-side of the building’s ceiling, forcing him to release my fist.

My fist heals, returning the bones back into place. Before The Destroyer even lands onto the floor, I fly into him, shoving him into the wall. I keep a hold of him and I fly straight to the floor. But just ten feet short I stop in midair and let The Destroyer clash into it, creating a crater in the floor.

I land and pick The Destroyer up by one of his feet. I throw his body around, smashing him against the floor, whipping him over my head. The Destroyer roars at me, but has nowhere to go and just keeps being whipped about, hitting the floors all around me, creating craters.

Intex screams. “Do something!” he yells at The Destroyer.

The Destroyer miserably tries to release himself, but fails. I continue whipping him around, letting the sight of Rachel keep me motivated.

The Destroyer suddenly starts to scream in pain. He screeches; it sounds horrible, but it only strengthens me. I stop whipping him around and pull him into the air. I fly up high and rocket towards the floor and lash him back down onto the floor, head first. I come down, landing on top of him.

With one hand, I hold his hands together, keeping them from going anywhere. I grip them firmly and do not let go, despite his great strength to break free. With my other hand I hit him hard in the face, over and over, hitting his nose, cheeks, lips, head and nose again.

His nose cracks. His face cracks and cuts from my blows, and a dark red liquid flow out of them. I punch faster now, punching his nose over and over, hitting it straight on.

The strength The Destroyer has in his hands, weaken. I only squeeze his hands harder and punch harder repeatedly. I stop for just a second to material a hard rock around my fist and I continue punching him.

Intex screams at me and throws a bolt of electricity at me; he's got that power back now. I just flinch, but I do not release The Destroyer. I stop punching the dreadful beast and jump off of him. I keep a hold of him and I slam him into Intex, driving them both into the floor, creating a large crater.

The Destroyer lets out a long breath of air and Intex moans. I pick up The Destroyer and bang him down on the floor behind me, making that the harder blow that I gave to him. In the crater in front of me, I see Intex lying down, groaning in pain. I grab Intex by the ankle and throw him as hard as I can, towards the east wall. I expected Intex to hit it and

fall to the floor, but instead he crashing right through the wall, breaking it and falls onto the streets outside.

I look back down at The Destroyer to see how lifeless his body looks. When I threw him into Intex he let out a long breath. I wonder if he's dead.

“Wow,” Alex says behind me, still chained to his chair.

I spin around to see my team. They all look the same; beat up. I run up to them and start breaking their chains off with ease. I break Rachel free and hold her close to me. I kiss the top of her head.

“Thank God you’re alright,” I say to her.

She cries in my shoulder. “Mark ... what you did,” she starts, “that was amazing.” We pull apart and I rest my hands on the sides of her head and stroke her hair. “You are strong, Mark. You're ...” She is speechless.

“That’s why I'm perfect for you,” I say. “You don't have your powers do you?”

She shakes her head and I look at the rest of my team. They all shake their heads too.

“I was hoping you could listen for a heartbeat of The Destroyer, to make sure he's dead.” I pause. “The power negating serum was in the food. Did you guys figure that out?”

“Yeah,” Nick says, “once you left. We knew that since you puked up the food, you restored your powers.”

“Why did you leave?” Rachel asks.

I smile at her, knowing that she must've felt abandoned. “I didn’t want to leave you, but I couldn’t help you all escape at that moment. I

didn't have enough strength, but I came back. Now we can leave and we all can get our energy back."

They all smile at me. "Thanks."

"Thanks, Mark," Grace says.

"You were right," Alex says. "We are escaping from this awful place."

I nod to them. "Please do not doubt me again," I tell them. "No matter what, we will succeed. Intex is made to fail; it's in his blood."

A few of them laugh.

"Now," I say. "Let's get out of here and go home. I'll you guys from anything on the way."

I know that they aren't going to be able to fly home, which means they would have to walk, because I can't carry them all. It isn't until now that I finally feel weaker from all of that energy that I used in that fight.

"Mark," Bruce says. "That was epic."

I smile at him.

"Of course it was," I say to him. My whole team smiles as we leave.

But I know that this isn't over. Intex will try again to attack. The only choice I have right now is for my team to recover and get their powers back.

We make it home safely. To my surprise we do not encounter any hybrids. My team is surprised to see all of the damage that the hybrids have made, just as I was a few hours earlier.

After all of us get washed up, we immediately feel like making something, surprisingly; sarcasm intended. None of us liked that food and we wanted something real to eat. Alex, Mara and Bruce get together to whip up some pancakes, even though it's not morning, but who cares?

A few of us kept watch for any hybrids or for Intex, standing close to the windows and doors, only peeking through the closed blinds and curtains. Nick, Brandon and Grace keep watch. I stand guard, beside them. Rachel stands close to me.

Rachel and I look at each, so happy to be back together, being out of that building.

"I can't believe what you did back there," Nick tells me.

I look at him and Brandon, realizing that they shaved their beards. Nick looks at me, nodding.

"What you did was amazing. I don't know how you could put up a fight against The Destroyer."

I shake my head. "It was difficult, yes, but I was determined," I reply to him. "That's what we need. It doesn't matter how powerful these villains are, we just need to be motivated. We have to think: we cannot let them win."

Nick nods and looks back out of the window, peeking through the curtain. Brandon nods at me, understanding, looks at the ground for a moment to think, and looks back out of the window.

Bruce, Mara, and Alex continue making the meal of pancakes galore.

Grace suddenly looks at me, shaking her head. "It is so unbelievable, Mark," she says to me. "What you did back there was amazing, indeed. You came back to consciousness for about a week and in that time you got us all out. We were all giving up, but you wouldn't and because of you, we escaped." Her eyes start to water and her voice cracks. "I don't know what we would've done if you never woke up. We would definitely still be there ... We were already hopeless. You tried to give us hope, but we doubted you. I'm sorry." She lets a tear run down her cheek. "Mark ... thank you so much."

I walk to her and hold out my arms. She comes forward and embraces me in a hug. "You're welcome," I tell her. "But, I don't blame you guys for being doubtful ... it's because you were in there four months, you thought that all hope was lost. But don't worry about that now. I'm here, so nothing like that will ever happen again." Grace nods in my shoulder — barely, since she is a foot shorter than me, literally — soaking it up with tears. "We will stop Intex."

Grace releases herself and pulls away from me, nodding. She sniffs and wipes her tears. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry."

Grace turns back to the window to keep watch and Brandon puts an arm around her for comfort. She leans into him and sighs. Bruce, Mara and Alex pause for just a moment to see Grace, but then continue working.

I realize in this moment that everyone is wearing regular, casual clothes, not their suits. Obviously, their suits are ruined. Apparently they must've used up all of their spares, or perhaps they didn't.

"Hey everyone," I say, not having a problem getting everyone's attention, unlike before, about four months ago. "Do you guys still have your spare suits left?"

Mostly everyone nods. Alex, Mara, and Brandon shake their head.

"So, just you Alex, Mara and Brandon don't have any suits left, huh?" I ask and they nod. "Okay." I pause. "I can make you guys' new suits, but I was thinking that this may be a time to redesign if anyone wants to."

"Yes, actually I do," Mara perks up. "I've been brainstorming new suits. They should be in my notebook, right where I left it." She looks over the couch and at the table in the living room. Her notebook sits on the table. "Yup, it's still there." She pauses. "And I did redesign everyone else's suits as well. I like the new designs."

"Hmm," I say, walking towards the table. "Let's take a look, then."

I sit down next to the table at the couch and grab the notebook. She has it nicely organized; a tab sticks out for suit designs. I open the notebook right to the suits, using the tab. The first one is hers.

She's made it where she wants the whole top, but the collar, stripes down the arms, the sides, and the forearms to be brown. The rest be green. The top goes down to the thighs where they start up green again, and then they stop at the boots, which are brown. She slightly changed her symbol, adding some faded abstract-looking energy going around the "S." Again, inside the "S" are an eagle and a wolf.

I flip the page to see the suit she's made for Grace. For Grace the suit is the same design. The main part of the suit is green with a small tint of blue, which being all but the legs, sides, forearms, strips on the arms,

and the collar; those are blue. To Grace's suit, Mara has added gloves, which are green. The symbol is the same, except for an added set of abstract wavy lines.

On the next page, Mara has drawn out my suit. I stop myself from drooling. To me, it looks like the best suit she's drawn out yet. Maybe she wanted mine to look the best, since I'm the leader. But I don't say anything.

My suit has blue throughout. The main color is San Juan, being everything but the sides which merge into the collar and the sides of the legs. Gloves are added to it. The rest is a darker blue with a hint of purple; Catalina Blue. This time she's added more stripes. There are wavy stripes coming from my symbol, which is now that Catalina Blue. There are two stripes on both arms near the hands, and four strips on the legs. On my back is the team symbol, made out of a Rextonian "A" and a pair of wings. I can't help but smile at the way it looks.

I go onto the next page to see Bruce's suit. His has its main color as blue; or a Chathams Blue. The arms, sides which merge into the collar and the sides on the legs are purple; or a Bossanova. Added to his suit are abstract waves at the end of the "P" and very faded trails of smoke coming from the top of the "P."

Rachel's is now golden. It has the same basic design as the rest, but the main color being golden and the other color being purple and pink. Now added to the suit are ribbons or laces coming from the sides of the suit, and she also has gloves, which are golden.

Nick's main color is purple, with the other colors being a bluish-green; a Sherpa Blue. Added to the symbol is what looks like a nebula, just made out of lines, not a whole lot of detail, so there is nothing that stands out. Inside the "V" is a vortex.

For Alex's his boots come up high and are like a dark sky blue or Regal Blue. The whole top is reddish-orange, but has pads of sky blue, or

Air Force Blue, divided throughout it. Gloves are added to his suit as well, which are that reddish-orange.

Brandon's suit is a greenish-brown color, or a Saratoga color. The shoulders and arms are brownish-red (redwood), and the sides and the sides of the legs are reddish (nutmeg). On top of the right leg is a furry orange tail. A wolf head is on the left side of the waist. A "T" is on the right side of the abs. For his feet, there are slits for his claws to come out when he transforms.

I finish looking at all of the designs and look up at Mara and smile. "They all look very nice, Mara," I tell her. "They look really good that I want to make them at this very moment!"

Mara chuckles as she hands Bruce the pancake batter. I look around the room. Mara is starting to get livened up and I hope giving the rest of us new suits will cheer all of us up.

As Bruce, Mara and Alex make our meal, and Brandon, Nick and Grace keep on the watch, while Rachel sits next on the couch, I start to create the suits. I study each suit, starting with Mara's going a page at a time. I make sure to get everything all nice.

I start materializing Mara's suit when they get ten pancakes done. When I'm done with Grace's they finish the rest of the pancakes. I pause and start to eat with everyone. Mara and Grace go to check out their suits, obviously thrilled with them. Just seeing them so happy livened up everyone. It's funny, because Mara's last name is none other than Lively.



I finish five pancakes and get back to work. Taking about another half hour, I finish everyone's suits. Everybody is thrilled to try their suits on. I take a look at everyone and myself with our suits on. We look marvelous.

As if on cue, Nick, Brandon and Alex start to get their phones. One of them got their phone and the rest copy. They immediately start calling their friends, making sure that they are fine. I can't blame them; I would want to know too.

Nick and Alex make their calls and seem pretty calm. They make concerned faces, but in the end, it looks as if things are okay for them. However, as for Brandon, he looks more worried. He looks terrified with what he's hearing on the phone. Finally he calms down when he realizes that whoever he's talking to is alright.

Once they are all done with their phone calls, they immediately want to go see them. Brandon gets into some normal clothes.

"Why you changing?" I ask him.

"I uhh ..." Brandon starts. "Noelle does not know I am Tyke."

I nod. I look at them all. "I know you guys are very desperate to see them," I say, "but ... what's going to protect you from hybrids?"

"What about our friends?" Alex asks.

"They are in more danger than we are," Nick says. "They have been out there longer."

"Exactly," I say. "They have been out their longer and they have survived. They know what to do to keep them alive. They should be alright for a couple days until you guys get your powers back."

"What?!" Alex exclaims.

“We have Intex being mad at us, so he's going to be searching for us. And with you guys powerless, you are exposed to danger that you are not ready for. Your friends are already prepared for it.”

They all scowl and shake their heads at me.

“If Intex is coming after us,” Brandon says. “This is the first place he’ll come to. So ... right now we are in danger, if that’s your point.”

I consider what he says. “You're right, Brandon,” I say. “Intex would look here. And right now ... I am the only one that can protect any of us. So ... if we are outside hiding, it would be better than Intex bringing his army here.”

Their face light up and they are surprised with my sudden change of decision. But, I never considered how much danger I am putting my team in.

“Okay, then,” I say. “I guess we can go see your friends, but ...” I interrupt their cheers. “We all go together. I don't want anyone getting hurt. Alright? Do we understand each other?”

They nod.

“Alright, who's first?” I let them decide.

Nick, Alex and Brandon look at each other. Brandon is usually humble and Alex is impatient and Nick ... I would say is patient. Surprisingly Alex points at Brandon, not voting for himself.

“Let’s go see how Brandon’s girlfriend is doing,” Alex says.

Brandon looks at Alex, surprised that he humbled himself. “She's not my girlfriend,” he says.

“Oh whatever.”

“She's just a friend.”

Nick laughs. "You guys were always together," Nick says. "You wouldn't call that dating?"

"We never went out."

Everyone got serious for a moment, because it has been so long since they've been with them. All eight of us get ready and head out the door. I keep my eyes peeled for any hybrids, or for Intex.

"So, where is ..." I start to ask Brandon, but trail off. I don't know his friend's name.

"Noelle. She's in Baisley Pond Park; in Queens, with her brother," Brandon replies. "Her brother's a hybrid, she says. But he's cool. She said that he protected her from a dog-man. He's a hybrid of an eagle."

"Oh." I raise my eyebrows and lower my lip. "Is he like us?"

"I'm not sure. She didn't say much."

"Well, let's go find out, shall we?"

Everyone changes into regular clothes, but keep their suits on underneath. I'm the only one with my suit on, because I figure I am going to using my powers, so I want them to think that I'm Avian, not Mark. Unless my secret is out, which would only mean that Andrea would be the one to have reveal my secret, but ... we'll see.

Underground Shelter, Lower Manhattan

It has felt like they have been here forever. Cops have run this shelter for any who fled from Intex. This place is huge and is packed full of people. They have been having trouble feeding everyone.

Above them all, hybrids run around, tearing everything apart and assaulting whoever. There are many up there, but it seems to the cops that there are more survivors than hybrids.

This place is huge, taking up some old subway stations and tunnels. People have been thankful for this place, being away from the hybrids above. A few brave people, including some cops, will go up every now and then to try and find more runaways. They know that there must be more people up there, waiting for them.

People have sort of made this place their home. Everyone gets along, knowing that this is better than being upstairs, or outside. But lately the cops that found that this has been hard to come by with food. Some people have been complaining. So the cops decide to split up into groups that they the cops can give their announcements, because this place is too big to announce to everyone all at once.

“I'm sure you're all aware of how we are doing with food,” one cop says to his group. “It has been getting hard to find. We hope to turn this around by gather more volunteers to hunt for all of us down here. We all know how dangerous it is up there, but a few of us have risked gathering up food, but we have lost some people. Now the number of people gathering food is low. We are calling this meeting to ask for any brave souls that are willing to go outside and gather food.” The cop

pauses and looks throughout his group. Very few people raise their hands.

“Now,” the cop continues. “I want all of you to give it some thought and time. When you feel that you have made your decision, you can meet anyone of us cops that stand near the exit.” He pauses. “I’m sorry that those of us who have been gathering food haven’t been gathering much, but it’s ... difficult. You have to understand, the food supply is going down and so are our helpers. So we just need a few more people from every group to volunteer to help gather food.” The cop pauses, wrapping up that thought. “Now,” he continues, “We have also heard of your concerns about beds. We understand that some of you don’t have some and some are falling apart. We will strive to go out and find some more beds to bring here.”

The cop pauses, thinking of what other things to talk about. “Do we have any more concerns?” the cop asks. Suddenly, at least four hands pop up from the hundred-something sized group. The cop sighs, preparing for a long day of questions and concerns. Whenever they do these meetings, he feels like he’s being interviewed by a bunch of reporters, but those were the olden days.

Baisley Pond Park

On the way, we encounter just two hybrids. Most of the hybrids fight each other and others watch for entertainment. I easily fought off the two hybrids; a hybrid of a moose and a bull. They were fierce hybrids, but they were really only teasing us, so I got right down to business.

New York sort of seems empty compared to what it was like before. It definitely isn’t crowded anymore. Many people have disappeared. I’m sure that they did not all die; they are somewhere though. But even though it looks empty, you always hear distant roars and cries of hybrids; you also hear fighting.

Brandon runs in front of us, looking for Noelle. The eight of us look around the park, looking in all of the trees. Rachel and I walk up to the biggest tree here and just the way Rachel perks her head, I know this is the one.

“Brandon,” Noelle’s voice says, coming from the large tree.

Brandon runs up to the tree, cutting in front of us. I stop in my tracks to let him past. Noelle practically screams once she sees Brandon. I look up the tree as the rest of the team runs up to the tree.

Brandon immediately starts climbing the tree, which doesn’t seem that hard to climb. I see Noelle’s brother sitting above her. He doesn’t have his wings out and it looks as if his wings act the same way those of us who have wings do; they seep into his skin. Where they come out exactly, I’m not sure. I’m guessing his back.

Noelle’s brother asks her if these people are alright and she tells him they are. He sits back and lets Brandon climb up the tree. Brandon reaches her and the two of them embrace each other in a hug. They pull away, but do not kiss.

“I’m so happy you’re ... alright,” Brandon says.

“So I am,” Noelle says with her voice breaking. “I ... I was so worried you were ... dead.”

“Yeah ... me too. But ... here we are.”

“Yep.” Noelle starts crying with joy and she pulls Brandon towards him, hugging him again.

Noelle’s brother just sits there, looking expressionless. We all stay down here, standing guard at the bottom of the tree. Alex and Nick act as if they have ants in their pants, anxious to meet their girlfriends.

Bored, Noelle's brother jumps from the tree and in a flash he spreads his wings, coming out of his bare back, right through his already torn shirt. He lands next to me and smiles.

"You're Avian, right?" he asks me.

I nod. "Yes, I am."

He looks at me, studying me from head to toe. "You changed your suit ... what are you planning on making an appearance sometime soon?"

"Uh ... yeah. I'm planning on taking down Intex."

He nods slowly and glances up at his sister. "Well ... where have you been?"

I smile at him. "I didn't just now decide to take down Intex; I've wanted to do that from the start. We couldn't, because Intex had us locked up in one of his buildings, powerless."

"But ... you have your powers, right?"

"I do now, but the rest of my team doesn't yet. I found out what made us powerless sooner than my team did."

"What was it?"

"It was the food they fed us."

"Oh." He pauses, getting ready to say something more. "You know ... um ... You were my inspiration," he says and looks at his wings. I nod, understanding. "I was nervous to become a hybrid, but Intex ended up finding me anyway. I told him that I wanted to be a hybrid of an eagle. I remember him narrowing his eyes at me and hesitating to run the experiment on me. But he did it anyway. He knew that I must've wanted wings to be like you guys."

"Well," I tell him. "You made a great choice, but I understand if you didn't want for this to happen."

“Well ... I'm alright now. But ... I wish Intex never came back.”

“Yeah, me too.”

“When Intex finished his operation on me, I felt different. I felt ... like ... as if there was something different inside of me; a dark feeling. I felt like no one could touch me, but ... I knew that wasn't my normal feeling. It took me a long time to realize that. I knew that that wasn't me. Intex had altered my personality. It took a while, but I tweaked it out of me. I just met my sister today, but I have been watching over her for a long time. She didn't want me around until I had saved her from a dog-man; that guy was ridiculous.”

I nod and clench my jaw with anger at Intex. “We will stop Intex, I promise.”

He nods to me.

“By the way ...” I say. “What's your name?”

“I'm Lon,” he replies. “What's yours? Besides Avian.”

I smile. Normally I wouldn't give it out. I look up at Brandon, remember that Noelle does not know that he's Tyke, but I wonder if he is telling her now. By the look on her face, it looks like he is. She looks stunned with what Brandon is telling her and her jaw is dropped. So I decide to tell her brother my name. “I'm Mark.”

“Nice to meet you, Mark.” He reaches out and grabs my hand.

Lon looks at us all. “Are these people you saved?” He asks, but pauses when he sees Rachel. “Except her ... she's ... your girlfriend, right?”

“Wife. But ... yeah, these are people I've saved.”

I assumed that he thought that this was my team, but now I realize that he thinks these are just people I've saved. He doesn't know

that Brandon is Tyke, because Noelle didn't know. I look back up at Brandon and Noelle; trying to make out if he's telling her the truth about himself. I reach my mind out to Noelle and read her thoughts.

I realize that Brandon did not tell her about being Tyke. He told her a made up story about how he survived, living off a dumpster for food. He lied to her, saying that he lost his phone and just recently found it. She asks him about how he smelled good, like he got a shower.

Brandon stammers. "I ... uh." Brandon looks down at me, realizing that I'm looking at him. I can't hear him, but I am reading their minds to know what they're saying. *Tell her that you found a house with running water*, I say into Brandon's mind.

Brandon tells her that and she buys it. A few minutes later Brandon and Noelle climb down from the tree.

"So," Alex asks Noelle. "Do you understand now?"

"Understand what?" Noelle asks.

Brandon shakes his head at Alex, discreetly, trying to tell him that he didn't tell her the truth yet. But Alex doesn't see him.

"About where we have been."

Lon looks at Alex, wondering where he's going with this. Alex didn't hear me talk to Lon, so he doesn't know that I didn't tell him the truth about all of us either.

Noelle shakes her head, not understanding.

"I told her," Brandon speaks up, stopping Alex. "That I have been eating out of dumpsters and stuff. I just now found my phone so I contacted her. I told her I found a house with running water to wash up."

"Oh," Alex says, realizing that he did not tell her the truth yet.

“Wait,” Noelle says. “I thought that these we just some people that Avian has rescued along with you.” She pauses. “But it seems like you know him.” She refers to him knowing Alex. She looks at Brandon, demanding he explain it. She looks back at Alex, then sees Nick and puts the two together. “Wait a second! I remember you two now. You guys always hanged out in the mall together, with Brandon. That’s why you know each other.”

“Yeah,” Brandon says.

The awkwardness stops now when Noelle and Lon come to an understanding. I lead the group, with Noelle and Lon, towards Saxon Woods Park, where Alex’s girlfriend is at; Andrea.

I explain to Lon and Noelle that Alex’s phone was water damaged and it finally dried up so he learned where Andrea is at. I tell them that I found him several days later.

“Andrea!” Noelle suddenly exclaims, as if recalling her name. “I think I do know her.” She pauses. “Is she friends of Chandra; the redhead?”

“Yes, she is.”

“Okay, I’ve seen her before.” Noelle looks at Nick. “And I think I know your girlfriend. Her name is Reye, right?”

“Yes,” Nick nods. “It’s a small world after all.”

“Yes, it is.” She pauses and looks at me. “Now, let’s go find Andrea, shall we Avian?”

“We shall,” I say, continuing to lead the way.

Saxon Woods Park, NY

It took us a long while to get here, especially when we are trying to avoid getting involved with other hybrids. It may have been about six hours for us to arrive here, but we finally arrived, and now it is dark. All we have for light is the moonlight and some street lights a bit away.

Yet again, we have to search this park for Andrea. We figure that she is in one of the trees. Nick had gotten a text message from Reye, saying that she would meet up with them here, at Saxon Woods Park. Nick has been worried since, afraid that she wouldn't make it alright.

I start to hear some distant talking. I look to Rachel, but for right now she has regular hearing, until she gets her powers back. The sound of talking comes from higher up; a tree.

I look at us all, and I signal them to follow. I look at the number of us in our group for the hundredth time; we have gained two to our eight. "Come on," I say, "but be watchful."

I walk up to the tree that the voices are coming from. It sounds like more than two people, at least. I look up the tree and see girls; four of them. I spot Andrea. I look back at Andrea and smile.

"She's here," I tell Alex.

Alex's face beams up in the moonlight. He runs toward the tree as fast as he can, with normal speed, since his powers haven't come back yet. If he did have his powers, he would probably use them, despite keeping the truth from Noelle. She only knows about me.

Nick runs forward, hoping that Reye will be up there.

“Andrea?!” Alex exclaims, but just above a whisper.

All of the girls whip their heads down, seeing a faction of people below. Andrea spots Alex.

“Alex!” she exclaims, about at the same level of volume as Alex.

She begins to climb down, but Alex starts to climb up and she stops, staying where she's at. Alex climbs up, struggling to maneuver around all the thick branched filled with leaves.

“Is Reye up there?” Nick asks, straining to see through the branches.

“No,” someone replies. To Nick, it sounds like Katherine's voice. “But she says that she will be here soon.” It definitely sounds like Katherine now. “Is that you, Nick?”

“Yes, it's me,” Nick replies. “How long ago have you heard from Reye? I'm afraid to use up her minutes.”

“About a half hour ago. She's got to be a few miles away by now.”

Nick sighs and turns around, looking to see if Reye will show up. I look around at all of us down here. Noelle sits down, close to the tree's trunk, crossing her legs. Brandon sits down next to her.

The temperature starts to drop even though it's summer. The sun must've set a couple of hours ago and now the coolness is setting in; or should I say the heat is leaving. Mara, Bruce, and Grace sit themselves down to rest, just a little bit from the tree, but still sitting underneath its branches.

Rachel stands next to me and grabs my arm for comfort. We look at each other, our faces illuminated by the moonlight. We both smile at each other. We both say something with our faces, both understanding each other; we both know that a battle is going to take place soon. We will fight Intex, and bring him to an end. It is what we have to do.

I look back up the tree to see if I recognize any of the other girls. I know for sure what Andrea looks like for sure; she was always over at our house, until Intex took over New York. I recognize two of the other faces. One I recognize to be Tabatha and the other to be Kathrine. There is one other girl up there with them. I try to think back, to remember who she would be. It must be Sofia; she's the other friend of Andrea's. But then there's Chandra; but Alex mentioned she was not making contact. So, we don't know where she is at.

Nick is waiting for Reye. He paces around, not wanting to sit like most of us are. Rachel and I are still standing, though. But because of our human nature (even though I'm Rextonian) we tend to copy other people. Rachel and I sit down, along with everyone else, except Nick.

I began to wonder if these girls met up, knowing that I was going to meet them. By the way it had sounded, Alex made it seem that they were not together when he first contacted them. But now they are together, so they must've known that I was coming. That means they know I'm Avian, obviously when I'm wearing my suit, but now they know that I'm Mark; a beacon of hope for them to gather together.

This means that my secret is not safe with any of these girls. Andrea spilled the beans with them for sure. She must have. But right now, I don't see why it matters. Perhaps everyone will learn my secret, but they won't care; because we will put an end to Intex. Everyone will thank us.

The sound of leaves rustling grabs my attention, as well as Nick's. I spin my head around towards the direction of the sound. Nick stops pacing and looks up for Reye.

I hear a low rumbling sound and I jump to my feet. Rachel jumps to hers, readying to run up the tree.

"Nick," I whisper. He acknowledges me, but doesn't come my direction. "Come here. We can't be certain that it's Reye."

“It has to be,” Nick says.

“Just get closer to me, just in case.”

The sound comes closer. The sound of two footsteps at a time. It’s not Reye, but Nick would like to think that it is; so do I, but I don’t believe it’s her. I hear another low pitch sound, this time it’s louder; it sounds exactly like an animal growl of some kind.

“Everyone,” I whisper to those of us on the ground. “Climb up the tree now. There may be danger.”

Everyone runs up the tree, Nick being the last one up. Lon stays down with me. The girls in the tree already, who are with Alex, are on alert now.

I prepare myself, putting my body into a fighting stance. The rustling of leaves grows louder and I hear heavy footsteps. Just then all of the sounds stop. I focus my eyes and see a silhouette of some sort of animal on all fours. I look back to make sure everyone is in the tree, but Lon. The creature suddenly roars and runs towards me.

The creature gets closer, running around some trees and coming into view. It becomes clear that this is a person who was not fooling around with what kind of animal’s DNA he wanted engrafted into him. He looks exactly like a bison and a rhino combined. He has two horns on his head and one above his nose. His body is seriously un-proportional. He almost doesn’t even look human.

The bison-rhino man charges towards me, not surprisingly rather than Lon. But Lon does stand further back. Everyone climbs higher up the tree.

He snorts at me, running at full speed, which is a decent speed. He comes within three feet from me and I jump up in the air, throwing my feet higher than my body. As he runs underneath me, I throw my arm down, lower than the rest of my body, and grab him by one of the horns

on his head. I land and he runs past and his body lashes past his head, which is stopped by my hand.

Keeping a hold on his horn, I whip his body around and smash him down on the ground, letting him go. He lands on his side and groans. He works on getting up, but I kick him hard in the ribs, forcing him to roll over a few times. Before he even starts to get back up, I run up to kick him again, but this time he head-butts me in the shin. I fall forward, landing on top of him. With his head he throws me into the air.

Before I crash into the ground, I stop myself, levitating. I land. He gets completely up on his feet and charges at me, but I jump and flip in the air, landing my hands on his back. With my strength, I keep my body straight with my legs in the air. The man strives to run around, knocking me off of him, but fails. He starts to buck his feet out, but still fails.

With all of my strength, I push down towards the Earth, shoving the man's back legs into the ground. I bog him down and he stops running. I whip my legs down fast into his face. I kick off my feet from his face and land besides him. I grab him back his whole head and lash his body from side to side, clashing him into the ground. I throw him into a tree in the opposite direction of everyone else. Lon just stands back, watching in amazement.

I run towards the beast and he is just slowly getting to his feet. His legs fail him and he falls. He looks up at me in fear. I stop before him and tease him, pretending to kick him and he quivers. It's a strange sight to see a monster like this quiver in fear of me, who looks like a normal human.

"Just leave us alone and I won't kill you," I tell him.

Suddenly he quickly gets to his feet and runs away from me, fearful. I hold back a smile. I watch him to he escapes from my sight and from the moonlight.

I walk back to the tree everyone is in. Lon stands at the trunk of the tree.

“That,” Lon says, “was amazing!” He shakes his head, disbelieving. “You are the bomb! You're so strong!”

“Is everyone alright?” I ask, not caring to gloat about.

“Of course we are!” Lon says.

I look up the tree to see everyone looking relieved. I fought off a beast right in front of them all. They must've have been shaken up from seeing the battle, but it doesn't look like it now; they're all calmed down.

Everyone nods; they are all fine.

“Nick?” Reye yells out in a terrified voice.

“Reye!” Nick yells back. “I'm here!” he practically runs down the tree.

Reye runs towards us, Nick jumps down the rest of the way from the tree and runs up to her. They collide into each other and embrace in a hug. They pull apart a little and kiss for a long few seconds.

“I was worried for a bit there; I heard some roaring,” Reye tells Nick.

“Oh, we're fine,” Nick replies. “Thanks to Avian.”

Nick looks back at me and Reye does as well. The two of them walk up to us all. The only one who is not with us is Andrea's friend, Chandra.

For the night, we all sleep in the tree, which is heavily leafed; it's big enough for all of us to sleep in. Thankfully we sleep all through the night with no interruptions.

I am the first to wake up. This tree isn't that comfortable. I look at the girls that have lived out here longer; they seem to be comfortable, or maybe just used to this. However, that is not why I wake up early. I just have too much on my mind to sleep.

I sit up, stretching my back out. It is sore from the awkward position that I was sleeping in, but once I straighten my back it feels better instantly; my ability of rapid cellular regeneration in the works.

Everyone in this tree looks so peaceful; more peaceful than they will be when they wake. I try and listen to the sounds around me. I hear birds chirping, getting ready for the sun to rise. It is only beginning to rise, showing little light. I hear a very distant, faint roar of a hybrid. That is not supposed to be a sound to hear in the morning.

Normally in New York, what you hear in the morning is birds chirping and car roaming around. But now, there aren't any cars; just the birds and now the hybrids roaring around at each other. Somehow New York is not crowded like it was which can only mean that not everyone was turned into a hybrid. It makes me wonder where all of the people went. How did they escape Intex? Where did they escape to?

Rachel moans next to me. I look at her, seeing how peaceful she looks asleep. She shifts her body a little bit, obviously not comfortable, but still sleeps. I stroke her hair very gently so as to not wake her. They need their rest and hopefully they will get their powers today.

Intex angers me all over again when I see Rachel cuts and bruises. When I escaped yesterday, Intex immediately beat up Rachel, as if she had something to do with it. But that's Intex; he hated me for escaping so he took it out on Rachel. I wonder if he wanted to do something worse

with Rachel to draw me in. But I immediately went back and help my whole team out, saving them from any more injuries.

More and more I want to end Intex. I remember when my father, Bart, had first asked me to kill Intex. I had contacted my ship and somehow my father's voice came from it and into my head. He told me to kill Intex. I did, but now he's back. What can I do? Kill him again? If I do, he would probably end up back on Rexton, being that that's where he has been most of his life. I have been here all of my life, so if I were to die I would come back here. Hopefully that doesn't happen in the first place.

I think about what we are going to do. When we all get our power, we have to go after Intex. The only way to do that is go through his hybrids first. He will have an army. There is no other plan of action except to attack head-on. I now that I am equipped for it, but what about the rest of my team? I hope so.

Rainey Park, NY

Drake doesn't go too far from Victor, just southeast. He sits in a swing. Drake is mad at Victor for not agreeing with him. Victor just wants to be well respected and known by all of the people. He wants to be feared. Victor doesn't feel the same way.

Drake pants in the swing out of anger; he is not out of breath. He wish Victor could understand how he feels. They, like everyone, have been hiding out by themselves, while the hybrids take over everything. He hates living like this and wants to take a stand. He doesn't get why Victor doesn't feel the same.

Before Intex even took over, Drake had only wanted to stop The Avians from pestering him. Then he was put in jail, escaped and planned to become feared, to terrorize out of anger at The Avians. But then Intex took over, ruining everything.

Drake broke the rule he had with Victor; never replicate his powers. He broke it. Drake knows now that they will never be friends ever again.

Drake knows that he didn't get every power of Victor's, but he at least got his electrokinesis. He doesn't even want to use it now. He feels awful for retaliating against Victor.

He shakes his head, trying to push it away. He tries to tell himself that Victor just doesn't understand. He doesn't get it and deserved to be betrayed. Victor is not going to get anywhere if he keeps doing what he's doing. So Drake tries to tell himself to move on.

Suddenly Hank pops up in his head. He knows Hank McDonald to be the scientist responsible for making the VAS. If it weren't for him, he would've escaped long ago and maybe could've seen Intex coming. Frustrated and angry, he decides to go after Hank.

Drake tries to remember where Hank lives. He knows he lives in New York. Somewhere north of Manhattan; mountain something. Drake thinks about the cities up north. Then it comes to him: Mount Vernon. Drake jumps from his swing and takes off into the sky. Out of anger, he does not really know who to go after, but for now he will go after Hank.

Lighthouse Park, NY

Richard wakes Victor up. He has been moaning all night and it has driven him crazy. Victor rolls over on his bed.

"What?" Victor asks Richard. He grabs his head immediately.

"Are you alright?" Richard replies to Victor after waking him. "You have been moaning all night. It doesn't sound good."

"I have a horrible headache." He groans, touching his head. He starts massaging it, trying to make it feel better. "Ahh!" he yells out.

“That Drake! He did something to my head!” Victor closes his eyes.

“Man!”

Richard is unsure of what to do. He didn't agree with Drake, just as well as Victor. Then Drake went and did this. It makes Richard angry at Drake.

“Do you need something to help?” Richard asks. “Like ... ice?”

“Where ... ahh!” Victor pauses, groaning. “Where would you find ice?”

“I don't know. I just want to help. I hate it that Drake did this to you and I sort of let it happen. I'm sorry. I want to make up for it and help you.”

“Richard,” Victor says plainly. He scoffs, still rubbing his head. “Don't blame yourself. This ... is not your fault. This is ... all on Drake.” He groans some more. “I think I want to go back to sleep.”

“I don't know if that's a good idea. You could never wake up.”

Victor scoffs. “I won't die.”

Richard shrugs.

“Just ...” Victor sighs. “I don't know ... give me a jolt or something to knock me out.”

“Is that even possible with you? You are already electric.”

“It'll work. Please, just ... do it. I want ... to ease the pain!”

“Okay,” Richard replies.

Victor lies back the way that's most comfortable. Richard holds his hand out above Victor's head. He flicks his two fingers at Victor and a jolt of electricity jumps from them, hitting Victor in this forehead. Victor jerks for a second and stops moving and his eyes are closed.

Richard leans in and hears him breathing. He rests his hand on Victor's chest and feels his heart beating. He sighs; Victor is still alive. But he worries that with this bad of a headache, something might happen to him when he's asleep.

He's heard of people who have had concussions who fell asleep and died. He fears that this might happen to Victor. He will just have to keep an eye on him to make sure he continues breathing.

The Shelter

Among the crowd, the man in the baseball cap stands against a pillar in the old subway station. He keeps his head down, staring ahead at all of the cops running this place. He has to give it to them; they are doing a good deed trying to help all of these people. But ... the one cop shot him.

He had found the video footage of the battle in the Mall eleven months back. He saw the cop that shot him five times. This cop was highly trained. They had called him to do this job.

Now he is looking right at him. The cop who had shot him. He still feels pain, especially now leaning against the pillar. Somehow he got away. It is all a blur to him. He doesn't remember teleporting away. He just remembers waking up in a bed at a woman's house.

He doesn't know how he met the woman, but she helped him. She had got the bullets out of him and stitched him up. She put ointment on his wounds to help him heal. He doesn't remember how he got there or where he first teleported to.

Oliver still doesn't really know who the woman was, but she's gone now. She helped him and left, disappeared. He has no idea where she had gone. Once Oliver had healed well enough to talk, to ask questions, she left. She had kept him energized, having an IV going into

his arm for nutrients. The room he was in was very clean and white. He left that place when he had enough energy.

To this day, Oliver doesn't know why the woman helped him. Why would anyone help a criminal like himself; a terrorist, a murderer? He knew that the woman must've done wrong herself, otherwise why would she have helped someone who had done wrong as well.

Oliver was to first to come to these old subways, trying to get away from everyone. But then the police led people here for shelter, to get away from the hybrids. If Oliver was himself, he would steal the hybrids' powers, but he just can't. He doesn't have enough energy.

But right now, he is looking at the cop responsible for the state he's in now. It's the cop who almost killed him. A trained shooter. Every bullet hit him, going into his back.

Once he gets enough energy, he will go after that cop. He will let him know that he is still alive, make sure he learns that it is him, and then he will kill him. Oliver grins at that thought. He would like to do it now, in front of everyone, but he is too weak. At least he is still alive, fortunately for him, all thanks to the woman; the unknown, strange woman.

Saxon Woods Park, NY

A few moments later, everyone else starts waking up, all at separate times. Rachel wakes up and already starts to be on the edge; readying herself for anything unexpected. The peace she had when she was asleep is gone now; being on alert.

All of us start to climb down the tree. Lon and I just jump down, flying on the way; him with wings and me without. This suit still has the retractable wings, but I don't feel like extending them out for a short jump down. When I am flying with my team I extend them.

I wonder if my team will start getting their powers back, but I doubt it. It took me two days — barely. It's only been a day for my team.

“What's for breakfast?” Alex asks, breaking the morning silence.

Everyone looks at each other. Those who have been out here for all of this time had to find food somewhere other than their own house; they must've used that up already.

“Alex,” Andrea says. “We have to find food first.”

He nods, understanding. He sighs. “I wish it wasn't this way. I can only imagine how hard you have struggled to ... live.” He voice starts to break, but he stops to strengthen it. “I'm happy you're alive.”

“Me too,” Andrea replies.

I look at everyone, knowing what I can do. Everyone looks depressed. I can tell that they are hungry. We didn't really have a supper and I know that those here who had been hiding from hybrids haven't been eating well.

“Hey everyone,” I say, immediately getting their attention. “Do you know who I am?”

Most of them look at me puzzlingly.

“You're Avian,” Tabatha replies in a “duh” response.

I smile at them all. “What can I do?”

I let that linger on for a bit.

“Ooh!” Alex exclaims. “I know!” it would be funny if he raised his hand, but he doesn't. “You can create food.”

Everyone gasps in realization and calmness goes over them.

“Let's have an all-you-can-eat buffet of breakfast!” I exclaim.

Everyone is already gathered around; it's not like I have to get them together or call them here. I put my hands and the green matter-creating energy forms as a ball in my hand. I start materializing chairs and one large table. I create glass plates and forks for everyone, and create dishes of food; scrambled and over easy eggs, bacon, sausage links, fluffy pancakes, waffles with strawberries, hash browns, bacon, egg and cheese sandwiches, along with sausage, egg and cheese sandwiches, toast, blueberry muffins, bagels with cream cheese, French toast, cold cereal, apples, bananas, oranges, toaster pastries, cinnamon rolls and a bottle of syrup with a small plate of butter.

The table is *full* with food. I create whatever breakfast food that comes to mind and ... I can think of a lot of breakfast food. Everyone drools at it all.

“Wow!” Sofia exclaims as she starts to cry. “This is ... so ... great,” she tells me. “Thank you, Avian.”

I smile at her. “You're welcome,” I tell her. “Now, go ahead everyone. Go. Eat.”

Everyone sits down at the table; the very large table. My team allows all of those who have been starving longer to sit down first, although I believe that we deserve good food as well; Intex fed us crap.

Things fall into place as if we have been together all of our lives, like one big family—a family of fifteen. Everyone starts dishing out the food and passing it on to the next person. Once everyone fills their plates they start eating. I am the last on to fill my plate.

I actually surprise myself with all of this food. All of it tastes delicious. I just can't believe that I could create all of this in one setting. I have never created this many of things at once, except for when I create our suits, just like I did yesterday.

A few of us start moaning with joy of the taste. None of us have had great food like this in a long time. I smile when I see that everyone's face is filled with happiness. I haven't seen anyone this happy since ... before Intex showed up.

I look at Rachel, loving to see her so happy. Food brings us all joy. Rachel still looks beautiful when she eats. Sometimes people don't look all that great when they eat, but Rachel does; at least to me. She always looks beautiful to me. I sigh, enjoying the food and looking at everyone being so happy and eating. Out of the blue the small hairs on the back of my neck stand up and a chill runs down my spine.

Someone is watching us. I can just feel it. I don't know how, but I can. I try to not look concerned to anyone and smile. I casually turn my head, pretending to take a look around at the birds. I look directly behind, but see nothing. Maybe I am making myself fret for no reason.

But then I hear something snort and sniff. I look back at everyone at the table. They are oblivious to the sound. I pretend to stay calm and close my eyes, smiling. I pan my mind out, feeling everyone here. I pan my mind behind me. I feel someone there. I enter into his mind and realize who it is.

The person is crying and sniffing as she watches us all eat. *I wish I could join them*, she thinks. I sigh; I think there was a hybrid or a beast of some kind out there, but instead it's a girl who looks to be thirteen years old.

I turn around and look right in her direction and I know she sees me. *It's alright*; I send a thought to her. *I am Avian. You can come over and eat with us. I don't mind at all. You deserve to have a good meal.*

She gets up and slowly walks over. Finally she comes into a better view. Those at the table notice her; a few of them are startled. She looks nervous and I wave her over.

"Come sit here," I say, pointing to the ground next to me. I materialize a chair where I point.

She walks to the chair and sits down as those of us here already watch her. Her face starts beaming when she sees all of the food. I materialize a plate and fork for her. She hesitates to start eating.

"Don't hold back," I tell her. "By all means, dig in!"

She lets a smile show on her face and starts scooping out dishes of food onto her plate. Everyone starts to welcome her, realizing that she is in the same situation as them. They start passing the dishes around, allowing her to take a portion from whatever ones she wants.

"I'm thirsty," Tabatha says.

"Oh!" I exclaim. "I completely forgot about drinks!"

I materialize glasses in front of everyone and then make bottles of orange juice, apple juice, milk and water scattered about around the table. Tabatha grabs an orange juice bottle and fills her glass with it.

After about an hour of almost continuous eating and no more interruptions, things start to settle. They are full. I'm sure if we were to travel, they would get cramps.

The girl looks up at me. I smile down at her.

“Are your parents alright?” I hate to ask her that if they aren’t, but it’s too late; I already asked.

She doesn’t say anything, just shakes her head.

“I’m sorry,” I tell her and give her a hug. “That bad guy, Intex, is responsible for your parents. But don’t worry ... I will stop him now that I’m back.”

She releases herself from me and nods. “Avian?” she asks sweetly.

I smile at her. “Yes, hon?” I ask.

“Do you know where the shelter is?”

“The shelter?”

“It’s where everyone is hiding, but I don’t know where it is. I was there ... but I wanted to see some birds and squirrels, but I couldn’t find my way back.”

“A shelter?” I ask again. “So that’s where everyone went.” I pause. “Don’t worry. I will help you find it again.”

“Thank you, Avian. Umm ...” she continues. “The people at the shelter are starving. They are running out of food.”

I nod. “I will make food for them too.” I look up at everyone. They all seemed relieved to hear that there’s a shelter. “Okay, everyone,” I began. “When we are rested enough to walk, we will go to this shelter.”

Everyone nods, liking the idea. Since everyone is hiding at this shelter, Intex and any hybrids do not know about it. I hope for my telepathy to be a help in finding this shelter.

The Shelter

Still standing against the pillar, Oliver looks out back at the cop. The man's presence angers him. He wants to gut him. He wants to kill him in front of his family. And most of all, he wants him to know that he would be the one to kill him. He wants him to know it. He would look at him in the eyes.

Oliver slightly shifts his back on the pillar and groans softly to himself. He can hardly move with hurting himself, so there's no way he could kill the cop now. The wounds in his back are cold, not getting blood circulation the same any more.

Out of his peripheral vision a person walks by, but the way the person walks catches his eye. It's the same movement of the woman that helped him; he could recognize it anywhere.

He painfully pushes himself away from the pillar, running around it to catch the woman. He painfully takes the few steps to find that no one is there. He spins around in a circle; no one is near the pillar. It is as if no one even walked past him. Everyone here is sitting down with their families against the wall, at tables, or by other pillars. Oliver stands alone at this pillar. He swears he just saw the woman, but somehow she disappeared.

Oliver's vision starts to blur, but he shakes his head to keep himself from passing out. He catches himself on the pillar. He hopes that he isn't attracting attention. He straightens himself out, painfully stretching the muscles in his back. He slowly leans back against the pillar and slowly, sneaks a few looks around him. He sighs; no one is looking his direction. If they did, they don't care to notice that he's in pain.

Oliver is sure that he saw the woman. He must've. But ... somehow she just disappeared. What, does she have teleportation as well? He wonders. If he really did see her, why did she walk past him? Does she want to tell him something, just not in front of everyone ... or what? Oliver begins to question seeing her when he gets a little dizzy.

He sighs and takes nice, small breaths. He tries calming down and closes his eyes. He slowly opens them back up, no longer dizzy. Hopefully, for his sake, this is body trying to heal.

Oliver adjusts his baseball cap, making sure that it is covering his face. He squeezes his eyes shut and takes deep breaths. He hears a wind pick up, although they are inside. He realizes that he's doing it with his aerokinesis. He tries to stop himself, but the wind continues to blow around, getting stronger by the second.

He snaps open his eyes and looks around. He tries again to stop the wind, but it doesn't. He looks down at his hand and places it on the pillar. He tries to make it blend in with the pillar, but it doesn't; his camouflage fails him.

He jerks his head around the station, wondering how it can be windy if it's not his power. His powers are failing him, so he can't possibly be the reason for the wind. Looking around, he sees no one who can fit the description of a person with aerokinesis. He would be the only one. He concentrates again and this time the wind stops. He opens his eyes, seeing that everyone is puzzled about the wind; its sudden appearance and ceasing.

Oliver places his hand back on the pillar and blends it in with ease. He's powers are back. He's only had this happen a few times; where his pain would overpower his abilities. When he was only being alive because of the woman, he couldn't use any of his powers. It angers Oliver to not be complete; still healing.

He sighs with frustration, although trying not to show it too much. He wishes for this phase to end. He hates this more than anything to be this way; to be helpless, useless. That's how he feels: useless.

He moves his head down, using the baseball cap to hide his face. He looks at the floor, but thence closes his eyes. It only he could find someone with an ability to regenerate quickly. He has already sensed a few people here with abilities; but is not sure what exactly. If he knew what, he can determine whether to still it from them or not. But right now, he feels too weak to go after anyone.

Astoria, NY

Being down in this storm shelter has been boring and terrifying at the same time. They feel as if there is nothing to do. Above they constantly hear hybrids fighting each other and they always fear for the worst; they may discover them.

To them, it seems as if most of the hybrids are around here. Somehow, though, they made it down here unnoticed.

They are gradually running out of canned food down here. Canned fruits and vegetables are diminishing. They have empty canned jars collecting across the floor.

"Tristan," Dawn asks. "What are we to do about food?"

Tristan sighs, knowing that at some point he will have to go outside.

"I hate to say it," Stuart says, "but you have to go outside."

"How can I possibly?" Tristan asks them both. "The minute I go out there, a hybrid will discover our hiding spot."

“It’s amazing they haven’t smelled us yet. Or heard us,” Dawn says.

“Tristan,” Stuart says, comfortingly. “You can take them on, don't worry about that. You are strong and always have been.”

Tristan gives Stuart a little smile. “I know you're trying to encourage me, but I don't feel strong. I don't think that I'll be able to take on a hybrid.”

“I'm sure you can, Tristan. I believe in you. Remember when you took on Oliver?” Tristan nods at Stuart. “You put up a good fight. You can do the same with one of those hybrids. Or maybe ... you can just stun them. Like, throw fire in their face and run away fast. They would be astounded and blinded for a second so they won't know to follow you.”

Tristan nods, but it’s not assuring.

“Come on, Tristan,” Stuart continues. “We need food. We can't starve to death.”

Tristan sighs. “If only The Avians are still alive.”

Stuart shakes his head. Tristan is starting to become like his mother, giving up hope. His mother, Dawn, always seems so negative; thinking only the worse. Now here Tristan is starting to do this.

“The Avians are alive. They are not dead.”

“How can you even be sure?” Dawn says. “The Avians vanished right at the moment Intex arrived.”

“Intex couldn’t have just killed them that quickly. He must've locked them up. They are still alive. I know it.”

“Hon,” Dawn says. “They aren’t. Just ... you have to let them go. They aren’t going to save us.”

“DON'T say that!! I refuse to believe that! The Avians must be alive.”

“But ... they aren't.”

“Yes they ARE!! They have to be. Where there's mayhem, good shall emerge to triumph against it. Always! Evil never succeeds!!”

“Stuart ...” Tristan shakes his head. “This is not a fairytale. This is real life. If The Avians were alive, they would have appeared by now. They're dead.”

Stuart shakes his head. “Just you wait ... they'll come back. They will.”

“Stuart.”

“Just ...” Stuart sighs. He wants to tell them to shut it, but he stops himself. “You guys are so disheartening. You should be trying to give me hope.” He looks up at his mom. “You should be telling me The Avians will come back. As a mother, you should be trying to comfort me. Instead you, both of you, are diminishing all hope and shoving aside any good thoughts. You are dwelling on nothing but negative.”

Tristan and Dawn realize that they should try to be positive with a boy Stuart's age. He's right; they should be encouraging, striving to provide him hope. But ... they just don't feel it. They aren't hopeful.

Stuart sighs and closes his eyes; angry with his parents — well, parent.

They all hear a grunting sound from outside. They all jerk their heads up to look at the closed doors. They hear footsteps, although they don't sound big. The doors start rattling.

Suddenly they are forced open. All they see is the feet. Red, hairy feet. The feet step into the storm shelter and not a second later the three of them see the arms; long arms.

The hybrid appears, fully into the shelter. She is most definitely a girl. A girl human-orangutan. She looks at them, not showing any expression. Her cheeks come out like that of an orangutan's.

She studies the three of their faces; they are all scared. She gets down onto her hands and feet, then sits, keeping her distance. A smile forms on her face; it looks like a friendly smile. But they are hoping it's not a hungry smile.

She speaks. "It's okay," she starts. "I'm not going to hurt you. I just wanted to make sure you're alright."

Surprisingly her voice sounds normal; like a normal girl's voice, or a woman's. She may be in her twenties or thirties.

Stuart slides away from his parents, closer to the hybrid. Dawn tries to pull him back, but he shakes his head at her. Stuart has a theory he wants to test.

"Do you know The Avians?" he asks her, trying to catch her expression. If she were to scrunch her eyebrows or something, he would know that she's bad.

Instead she smiles and nods. "I know them ..." She looks down at the floor, letting her head drop. "Though I wish they were still around." She pauses and looks back up at them with a sincere face. "I never wanted to become a hybrid and I didn't think of what to turn into ... so ... Intex picked something for me; orangutan." She holds out her arms. "Now look at how long these are. I am ... so hairy. I ... wish I were back to normal. It's not like I can control my figure. I can't. I'm stuck like this."

It's not like she looks completely like an orangutan. Her face still looks like a human's. She still has mostly a woman's figure, but her arms are longer and she is covered in red hair. Her cheeks are like an orangutan's. But Stuart agrees with her; he would want to have the ability to change back and forth, to not be stuck looking like that.

"I'm sorry," Stuart tells her. "But, don't you worry ... The Avians will come back."

"I hope so."

"They will. I believe it."

The woman looks at Tristan and Dawn, seeing that they are still cowering away. "I understand that you fear me and I will respect the distance between us," she tells them. "I'm going to stay right here."

"Um ..." Stuart says, smiling. "Do you mind doing us a favor?"

"Sure, not at all."

"Um ... I was wondering if you don't mind getting us more food."

She smiles. "It's no problem. I can do that for you. I understand that you must be afraid to go outside. I can get food for you."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome." She gets up, alarming Tristan and Dawn. She starts to walk back towards the steps. "I can get food for you now if you like."

Stuart nods. "Sounds good, thanks."

She nods at Stuart, and walks back up the steps. She stops at the last one. She ducks her head back down to look at Stuart. "By the way, my name is Kyra Gist."

"I'm Stuart."

"Nice to meet you, Stuart."

"Nice to meet you too."

She smiles and walks outside, closing the door behind her. Her footsteps fade away. Stuart walks back to Tristan and Dawn.

“How can we trust *her*?” Dawn asks, sternly.

“I trust her,” Stuart tells them. “She's going to help us. She'll get food.”

“We don't know that.”

“What if she gathers around more hybrids to come get us?”
Tristan asks.

“She won't,” Stuart says.

“You don't know that.”

Stuart shakes his head. “You adults do not understand how much children can see through people. Children can read people better than adults can sometimes.”

“She's not a person,” Dawn says.

“How can you say that?! She never wanted to be a hybrid. Intex found her and forced her to be one. She heard us down here and wanted to help us. It's genuine.”

Tristan and Dawn disapprove.

“We have to leave now,” Tristan says. “She's going to get more hybrids to kill us.”

“No!” Stuart yells, not holding back his voice.

“SHH!!” Dawn says, cowering down. “You're going to attract attention.”

“Shut up! If she was planning on killing us, she would've. She's more than capable.”

Tristan frowns. “Then what was that talk about me taking on any hybrid?”

“I was trying to give you hope, but now we have a way out. We have a hybrid that can help us. We don't have to go out there and endanger ourselves. Kyra can help us with food. She can protect us. You just need to trust her.”

“Well, we don't,” Dawn says.

“Give her a chance.”

“I don't want to risk it!” Tristan whispers.

“Tristan!” Stuart exclaims. “We would put ourselves in more of a risk if we try going out there to look for another place. We are better to risk this with her.”

Tristan gets up, ready to leave.

“We have to go.”

“No!” Stuart exclaims. “I'm staying here!”

“Stuart, we cannot trust her.”

“Her name is Kyra.”

“She was trying to deceive you by telling you her name,” Dawn tells Stuart. “She's evil. She lied to try to get you to believe her.”

“You ... *people!* You adults think you know everything! If you think you're so good at reading people, then tell me this: what have I been hiding from you guys?” Stuart asks them. They look at each other, not understanding. “You guys can't see through *me*, your own son! You can't even read me; it's no wonder you couldn't read Kyra! Do you want to know what I've been hiding?” Stuart looks at them, reading their expressions. “You guys are thinking that I am not really hiding anything.”

“Well ... *yeah,*” Tristan says.

“See? I can read you!” Stuart sighs. “I have a power. That’s what I’ve been hiding. I can sort of take on any ability after touching an object, but only one object at a time; the power of that object. Like ... object mimicry.”

“Say what?” Tristan asks.

Stuart pulls out his pocketknife from his pocket. “See I’m touching this?” He puts it down on the floor. “Now I’m not, but watch this.” Stuart holds his index finger out and walks up to the nearest wall. He scratches the wall with his fingernail, clearing cutting into it. “That’s a power developed from the knife, but once I concentrate and touch something else, that power goes away.”

Tristan and Dawn are amazed.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Dawn asks.

“I wanted to see if I could keep it a secret. Turns out I could. Now do you guys trust me; do you trust Kyra?”

They don't say anything about it, but Tristan sits back down. After about a couple minutes he speaks.

“We’ll wait it out.”

Stuart smiles.

Lower Manhattan

I decide to start far south and work my way up Manhattan, searching all over for this shelter. I walk now with fifteen following me; sixteen would include me.

I use my telepathy, searching for minds of many people. I try to pan my mind downwards, knowing that the shelter must be underground. I find many hybrids' minds; panicked, evil, confused, rage, and happiness. These hybrids really do not know what to do. Whatever hybrid minds I find, I lead us around them.

I start to hear something, although it's in my head; it's not sounds close enough to hear with ears, it's through my telepathy. I feel many minds of people, all their voices scrambling over each other, all unclear and indistinct.

Rachel leans close to me, knowing that I am getting close. I close my eyes to concentrate, blocking out the sound of the wind and scattered bird chirps. The world starts to open up to me. The voices sound stronger in my head. I start walking towards it, feeling where it comes from. Rachel grabs onto my arm, making sure I don't run into anything.

I walk blindly towards the feel of the minds of all of the people in the shelter. Everyone follows me. I walk straight towards it and Rachel pulls me hard.

"You're going to run into a wall," Rachel says.

I open my eyes and see that I have entered an alley. I am almost at the end of the alley, right before a dumpster.

“No,” I say. I walk to the dumpster. I slide it away with ease. There is a hole in the concrete. I look at everyone with me. “This must be it. I can feel everyone right down here.”

“Are you sure?” Tabatha asks.

I look at her and give her a reassuring smile. “I’m sure. Trust me.”

“Well, then let’s go down there.”

I step down into the hole, walking down a ladder. One by one, the rest follow; Rachel right after me. The feeling of all of the minds of the people of Manhattan grows stronger. I must be heading in the right place. Suddenly I feel two panicked minds, coming our way.

“Who goes there?!” they yell from below us. A door shuts behind them.

I make sure my voice distorter is activated. “I’m the Avian,” I tell them, my voice pitched low. “Is this the Shelter?”

“Avian?!” they exclaim. They see me more clearly when I come further down. “It is you!! You’re here!!”

I make it down all of the steps and land in front of them. I see that these guards are cops.

“Yes, I am here.” I smile at them. Behind me everyone gets off of the ladder, one by one. “Can we enter?”

“Yes, most certainly, but I have to let The Lieutenant know you’re here.”

“By all means, do.”

The cop spins around and does a certain knock on the door. Someone behind the door looks through a peephole and opens the door. He immediately sees us and gasps with amazement. His face beams up.

“Can you get The Lieutenant?”

The cop nods and runs. He returns with another man, The Lieutenant.

“Avian?” The Lieutenant asks.

I nod to him. “I was hoping to have a place for these guys to stay,” I tell him.

“Yes, please. Come on in!”

The doors open wide and we see the huge crowds of people inside. The inside looks like they are old subway stations. People are segregated into different groups, nothing particularly separating them.

We all enter. With my presence many of the people get up. Hope shines from their faces.

“We are so pleased that you are here,” The Lieutenant says.

“Please,” I tell him. “I am here to help.”

“Don't mind me asking, but, where have you been?”

I smile then I let it fade away, getting serious. I sigh. “Intex had us locked up since he first appeared. I'm sorry it took me so long to escape. But, don't worry, I will stop him.”

The Lieutenant raises his hand. “Do you think you can give a speech?” he asks. “You know ... just tell this to everyone. They all need hope.”

I nod. “I sure can.” I look at the large crowds. “Will they be able to hear me? There are tons of people here, I'm not sure if I can cast my voice out that far.” I consider my voice distorter. Right now it is lower my pitch, but it would not work if I spoke loudly.

“Well, we have been having meetings, a few cops talking with each group, saying the same things. That may be what we have to do.” He pauses. “Maybe you could write a script for us.” Sounds like a play.

My team, their friends and the girl walk past me, finding a group to sit with. They are exhausted. I can tell that Rachel wants to stand with me, but knows that it would only make people assume that she's Avian's wife: Angel.

The girl walks back to some certain people and sits down with them. They hug her and start crying. They must be some people she's grown attached with. A girl about our age runs up toward Alex, Andrea and her friends.

Andrea and her friends scream with joy. It's Chandra. They all take turns hugging and they all cry. Alex hugs her last, letting the girls go first. They start talking to each other, pouring out all that's happened.

“Avian,” The Lieutenant begins again. “We have been having trouble with food. Do you —”

I cut him off. “I can help you with that,” I tell him. “I can create food out of thin air.”

“I know. That's kind of what I was implying.”

I nod to him. “I most definitely will help out with that, but at some point I will have to leave and go defeat Intex.” And my team will have to secretly leave, so no one suspects that they are the people that came in with me.

The Lieutenant nods, understanding. “You must know how desperate all of us are to see Intex dead.”

I look at him. Just like my father once wanted, this man wants as well. He wants Intex dead. I look out to the crowds. They must want him dead. Of course, with all that he's done to people of New York, most

people probably want him dead. The government must want him dead too. If Intex were caught by them, his punishment might very well be the death penalty.

I nod at him, understanding. I look around, seeing that all of the cops from the police department are here. There must be hundreds of them, all scattered about the place. This place is huge, each station being separated by large hallways. Thankfully, everyone can see everyone and everything; they can see me all the way at the front.

“If only we had a sound system,” I say.

“Well ...” The Lieutenant says. “These are old subway stations. They have sound systems. If you can somehow control them, you could do your speech that way.”

I look up at the ceilings. I see that there are speakers scattered about.

“I have an idea,” I tell him.

Right in front of me, I hold out my hands and the green matter-creating energy forms. I materialize a stand with a microphone. I create two large speakers on either side of it. I propel my body through the air and create speakers hanging from the wall throughout the whole place. I return to the front.

I tap the microphone and hear the tapping sound echo throughout the whole place. I smile at the crowds; they already have my attention.

“Can everyone hear me?” I ask. “Can we all sit down so we can all see, please?” Everyone sits down, even the cops. It is amazing to see such a large crowd, all listening to me. “If you can't hear me you might want to speak up. Although you won't know that, because you can't hear me.” I hear a few scattered laughs. “Anyhow. If you can't tell from way back there and didn't just see me flying around the whole place, I'm Avian. But

I'm sure all of you already know that. I don't have to bring you guys all to reality; you all know what's going on. Intex has taken over all of New York. He has had my team and I locked up and just recently we've escaped. Now ... we will take him down. Soon, Intex will be stopped. You all have my word. It pains me to see what Intex has done, but I promise you ... I will strive to change things back to the way it was. It will take a lot of work, but believe me, we will succeed.”

I get a few claps and just as the applause starts to die out people bring it back to life; soon everyone is clapping. After ten more seconds they finally stop clapping.

“Don't lose hope. I am here to give you hope, but I will not let you down. My team had lost faith in me, but I never gave up and I broke us out of Intex's small prison! I am here now to break us all free of this prison of Intex's rule! We will bring Intex down!” the crowd begins to cheer. “We will bring Intex down to the ground!” the crowd roars. I start to fear that the hybrids above would hear and discover this location. “We will bring Intex lower than our level!! He! Will! Be! Stopped!!”

I have never heard such a loud crowd. I can't even hear my ears ringing, but I know they must be. I know that this loud cheering must be heard from above, but hopefully not.

The crowd cheers on for another minute. I look at my team. They are cheering with them, blending with the crowd. I can see that I even gave them more hope. I look at Rachel and she gives me the thumbs up. I smile at her. It almost makes me cry seeing how much I have livened up these people. When I first entered they all seemed down, but they are no longer; they are the complete opposite. Finally the cheering and clapping stops.

“I will come up with a plan to stop Intex, but in the meantime I will attend to you people. I understand that food is hard to come by, but that will not be a problem any longer; not with my presence. I will create tables upon tables full of food. But please ... if all of you could, please

going about getting food in an orderly fashion. I do not want anyone to get hurt. I understand that you all must be anxious to get food, but let's all get it patiently, okay? We do not want anyone to get hurt over food. I will also provide plenty of water if need be."

I look around and see just a few drinking fountains. Right now there are quite a few people near them. I'm sure that at times there would be lines of people getting water; unless they're out of water.

I see a few people crying with joy. People are so delighted to hear about all of these wondrous things that I am telling them.

I lean away from the microphone, towards The Lieutenant's ear. He leans in to listen. "Do we have water down here?"

"We do," he replies. "But constantly have long lines. The bathrooms are always filled with people."

Thankfully we have bathrooms.

"Are we going to need more bathrooms?"

"If you could."

I nod and return to the microphone. "I now understand that there are limited bathrooms. I will make more bathrooms for us all, because as we all know, there are many of us here. If any of you need something, please feel free to consult with any of the cops, they are the ones that are running the place. But if I need to be ... made aware of something, surely the cops will let me know. Now, I hope you all understand that I would prefer not to bombard with people. Please understand that. I know that most of you would love to meet me, but not that I don't want that, I am very much like you and can get claustrophobic." I get some laughter out of people. "Thank you. Now I will go about with making the food and water. Please be patient and let's go about this with ease. And lastly please do not give up on me; do not lose hope."

I get one last huge cheer from everyone. I step away from the microphone, turning it off. People respect me and do not run towards me to meet me. I smile to myself, so amazed with how well they obey me. I step towards the center of this station and materialize the biggest table I have ever made, even seen.

I immediately start creating all sorts of food. I turn towards the crowd.

“What do we want?!” I exclaim; arousing the people up to tell me the type of food they want. “What food?”

I get many different voices overlapping, all throwing ideas of food. I materialize the food on the table when one voice makes sense to me. It doesn't take long and I fill the table up with tons of food and water, along with carbonated drinks. I extend the table, and make metal plates with silverware on it. I leave the huge table full of food and watch the people all get in lines. That makes me smile.

I going all around this station and create tables and comfortable chairs for people to sit at. As I walk to the next station and through the huge hallway, I materialize as many comfortable chairs as I can, setting them along the walls.

I reach the next station and go about with the same process. I look back at the first station to see the cops keeping the people organized and in lines. They are helping me keep everyone safe. I wonder if people would get greedy, but ... who cares. I can create all the food they want.

It takes me quite a while, but I fill each station with a huge table of food, drinks, plates and silverware, along with tables to eat at and chairs to sit in.

Instead of walking back to the first station, which would take forever to go through these crowds, I fly over everyone and make it there in a matter of one second.

Oliver watches Avian. He drools for his power of regeneration. He very much appreciated it being a patient line, because he had to move slowly, being in so much pain.

Now he eats, sitting down at his pillar. He is in the first station, where Avian is. Avian is talking and laughing with some people. He surely has brought some life into this place.

Oliver thinks about his pain. He desperately wants Avian's power, but he doesn't want to kill him. Not now. Oliver doesn't want Intex around, so the Avian and he have a mutual enemy. So he knows he cannot try to kill Avian for his power; he wouldn't stand a chance either. The Avian is powerful, but also a cop would probably stop him as well.

Oliver wishes he had thought of a way to replicate someone's power without killing them first, and without stealing it from them. He's never done that, because he's not even sure if it's possible. He's never tried it, because it would have been too complicated for him. But now he, never thinking this before, he wants to be able to replicate Avians powers without killing, nor stealing them. He never would've thought he wanted him alive, but he knows that he's the only one to stop Intex.

For now, he has to wait. But he hopes somehow he'll figure out a way to just replicate his power, like that of Drake Williams. He hopes that it's possible, even though his power is in fact called power vampirism. He will have to cheat his power. But then there's one thing he almost forgot; Avian has telepathy; somehow he would have to get past that, without the Avian discovering him.

Oliver's mouth waters with this delicious food of all sorts. He smiles to himself, thankful for Avian to be here. Never would he have thought to be thankful for the Avian.

He looks back up to see the woman. She stands against another pillar. He stops in mid-chew, gawking at her. He knows that it is her. He will not forget that figure. She realizes that she's been spotted, but Oliver doesn't want to get up and run to her; he just sits there, gazing at her.

She just looks right back at him and ever so slowly she starts to disappear. Oliver blinks his eyes wondering if he seeing things. But he sight does not fail him. The woman turns invisible. Now it makes sense to him. She has the power of invisibility. That's how she disappeared. But now he cannot see her at all and most likely she walked off somewhere away from that pillar.

He thinks of something. If he could somehow replicate the woman's invisibility, then he could turn invisible and replicate Avian's power. But then again, he is back to figuring out how to replicate without killing or stealing powers.

He looks away from the pillar and continues eating. He thinks about Avian's speech. He wanted to scoff at it, but he ended up agreeing with it. Just like everyone else, Oliver wants Intex gone. He doesn't want him dead exactly, because if he could steal Intex's powers ... that would be something, but he knows that he's too powerful to go after. But he does want Intex stopped.

Oliver just remembers something. One of the girl Avians has accelerated healing. It's either Shift or Swift. He thinks about it and remembers that it's the animal lover; Shift. She's the one with accelerated healing. He knows that the Avian would not desert his team, so his team members must be among the people that came in with him. Only a few of them would match the description on his team. Somehow he's has to figure out which one is Shift. He figures that if he kills her for her power, it would not be that bad. But there's still a risk for him.

He still thinks that he has to figure out how to replicate abilities without stealing it or killing the person. He's never done it that way before, but it must be possible.

The wounds in Oliver's back start to warm up. They have been cold and probably purple if her were to look at them. Now they are getting warm; it is from the new energy he is eating. The nutrients and food he is eating is warming him up.

Lighthouse Park

Victor's situation has only gotten worse. Richard tries to take care of him, but is uncertain what to do. What *can* he do? Victor's headache has gotten worse, but he is still asleep, groaning.

Now Victor is sweating like crazy and has been starting to cough a couple hours ago. Now his coughing is getting worse. Drake really messed him up. As time lingers on, it seems that Victor keeps getting worse.

Richard tries to make him feel better with the lighthouse. He turns on the light and draws the electricity completely from it so it doesn't even light up. He absorbs all of the energy from it and projects it into Victor, hitting Victor's hands. Richard isn't sure if it's working. Victor still looks horrible. But, at least it isn't making him worse.

Victor suddenly gets up, panting. Richard is already by him.

"Are you alright?" Richard asks.

"What happened?" Victor asks. "I suddenly was feeling a little better." He notices that the lights on, flashing. His voice sounds stuffy. "Why is that on?"

"I turned it on so I could draw the electricity from it to put into you, hoping it would strengthen you."

“I think it’s working,” Victor says, but still rubs his head; his headache is still there.

Victor holds out his hand and draws all of the electricity from the light, making it so dim you can't tell that it's on. He sighs, already feeling better; his body regenerating from the electricity, but his pain is still there. The electricity is just calming him down. Victor coughs and sniffs.

“Argh!” Victor exclaims. “I'm getting an awful cold!” he coughs again, still drawing electricity from the light. “My sinuses are plugged up! Man! I hate Drake more and more!” Victor exhales. “At least this electricity calms me down.”

Richard calms down a bit himself now, seeing that Victor’s pain is at a standstill.

“I'm hungry,” Victor tells Richard. “Umm, if you don't mind, could you find some food? I think I'll be alright by myself, as long as I keep drawing electricity.”

“Okay,” Richard replies. “I'm getting hungry myself.”

Richard electrifies his body and dashes down the flight of stairs, leaving the lighthouse. He goes out in search of food. There are no stores available with food anymore, so he has to search for some animals to kill. It makes him wonder: why have they stayed here? They could have easily left New York, but they stay here. Is it because of being with Drake at the time? Drake has wanted to stay here, for whatever reason; maybe because he has been here all of his life.

Mount Vernon, NY

Hank desperately tries to find food. He has about twenty people hiding out down in his basement. He has gathered a lot of food, but he knows that it'll run out soon. He has halted time for himself and now takes a look at the surroundings of his basement.

He has people he has saved and people who were vicious hybrids that he has negated their powers of. There are beds and bowls of food at the tables. He knows that soon they'll run out of it, though. He just doesn't know where to find more. Food is getting hard to come by. But to the people down here, it seems that Hank finds it easily, because he gets it in a flash. Really, he ceases time and searches for what seems like a very long time, but what actually takes no time at all. You could call it virtual time that passes for Hank.

Hank wishes that things were not like this. More and more each day food gets harder to find. He can't simply just go to the stores and buy food. Normal people had worked at the stores, or any business for that matter, and were either taken for transformation to some kind of hybrid or they ran away. Now Intex has all of New York in his hands.

An idea pops up in his head. With his ability to freeze time he could stop Intex once and for all. He could have time halted and kill Intex while he stands still. The thought runs a chill through his body. His heart starts beating fast. He doesn't think that he has it in him to kill, even if it is Intex.

The Shelter

Sitting with the officers and The Lieutenant, I look over at Rachel. It still pains me to see her bruised and cut up. I look at the rest of my team; they mimic her injuries.

I wish to join them, but if I am to do that I have to hide. If I start to hang out with my team, while they are not in their suits they would start to piece it together. I decide that I must hide, because I must join my team. But if I change back to myself, to Mark Wills, the Avian would have disappeared. People would be worried.

I neglect that idea. If people need me to return, I'll return. I can easily blend in a large crowd, so it wouldn't be difficult to alternate my identities.

Rachel glances up at me and smiles. I smile back at her, too late realizing that it looks like a husband smile. Hopefully no one notices my smile at her, or just figures that it's a friendly smile to some random citizen. I look away from her, pretending that I don't know her.

I look down, pretending to think to myself; instead I send a thought to Rachel. *Hey, Rachel*, I think to her. *I'll meet you in a few moments.*

How? You can't see me dressed like that, Rachel thinks back to me. *People will suspect that I am part of your team.*

I'll hide and switch back to myself. Okay. I'll see you soon.

I lift my head and turn to The Lieutenant. I stand and speak to him. "Excuse me," I say, walking towards the bathroom.

I don't have to explain to him where I am going, because he understands immediately, seeing the direction I'm heading. I make it to the bathroom at the right time, where just a few people are using it. I get into a stall and close the door behind me.

I try to think this through. People have seen me walk into this stall as Avian; I cannot just walk out as Mark Wills. I sigh, scratching my head. What do I do?

The stall next to mine empties and no one enters it. The door slowly shuts close by itself, bounces once and then shuts again. I peek down and look underneath the stalls. There is one man in another stall in the other direction, and another man washes his hand.

I slide underneath this stall and into the empty one next to me. I degenerate the suit off of me, back into my regular clothes that were already underneath. I don't have to worry about making them look dirty to match everyone else's because it is already. I realize that people are going to think that Avian entered the bathroom and never came out.

In a way, I still feel trapped. I was locked up and trapped at Intex's building. Now I am here in this shelter, trapped; in the bathroom. I had a plan to escape from Intex's building, but I don't have one here to escape from this bathroom. Never before did I think that I needed one. Who would ever think of a plan to escape unnoticed from a bathroom? Anyone? I don't think so.

I decide to wing something; well basically I am winging this from the start. I create a sticky note out of thin air with writing on it: *I will be back. I have some business to attend to. Do not lose hope. — Avian.* I slide back underneath the stall and paste the stick note there. I slide underneath the stall again and leave it.

A few men are waiting by the bathroom entrance. I look at them and purposely make a confused expression as to why they are waiting there.

"We are waiting for Avian," one of them tell me.

"Oh," I nod. I go to the sink and wash my hands. I look at the stall that they think the Avian would be in. I point at it and look at the men standing outside the room. They nod.

I walk past them. “I think it may seem a little weird for me to wait in the bathroom myself,” I say, “so, I’ll just wait with my friends.”

They don't really respond and I continue walking towards my team. I sigh, escaping the bathroom without any inconvenience — thank goodness, right? Ha.

I walk towards Rachel, who sits nearest to Andrea, Alex, Mara and Bruce. She smiles at me.

“Lost them, huh?” she asks, still smiling.

“Yup. I left a note in the stall and slide underneath into another one,” I reply. “They are going to waiting there for a while and realize that I'm gone; or the Avian is gone. They'll see the note when they try to find Avian.”

Rachel chuckles and then sighs. Our smiles fade and we both know what we are thinking. We still have to take care of Intex. We are going to have to muster up our energy to go to war with Intex, essentially. Hopefully my team will get their powers sometime soon.

Suddenly all of the chatter goes quiet. I look at the bathroom entrance, wondering if they discovered that I am not in there, but that's not it. I hear a roar from above. Some people must've heard it and spread the word fast, because now it is dead silent; so awkward.

Now everyone starts to look at the bathroom, hoping Avian will come out to go confront the hybrid from above. But of course I do not exit the bathroom. The men standing outside run inside and pound on the stall door. They open it and find the note.

He's gone. I'm gone; well not really, but they are going to believe that, because I made a note. Now the people assume that I am already up there, fighting on the hybrid, but I am not. I hope that either the hybrid moves on or I can think of a way to go outside.

Part 2: Disarray

“Where is the Avian?” The Lieutenant asks the officers next to him.

The cops look at each other, not really sure. Not sure at all. One cop speaks up.

“I think I saw him go to the restroom,” he says.

The men that were standing by the bathroom run up to The Lieutenant. They immediately spill the news.

“Avian’s gone,” one man says. “He left a note.” He hands the sticky note to The Lieutenant.

“I will be back. I have some business to attend to. Do not lose hope. — Avian,” The Lieutenant reads. “Well I hope that business means the thing roaring up there, because it would be bad if it discovers this place.”

“Well ...” a girl officer starts to say. “He said not to lose hope.”

The Lieutenant nods at her. “Yes. But he's been gone four months. I have just to put faith in him.”

From a distance, sitting with my team, I struggle to read The Lieutenant’s lips. I’m not skilled with lip reading, but it looks like he just said something about not having faith in me yet. I exhale deeply. I must give him something to put faith in. If only I had the power of invisibility, or teleportation.

With just my luck, Alex tells me something hopeful.

“Mark!” Alex whispers. I turn my head at him. “Look at this.” He holds out his index finger, moving it back and forth so fast that it blurs.

I can't help but smile for a second.

“Can you move your whole body that fast?” I ask him.

“I can try. Why?”

“I need you to run me outside and for you to return without anyone noticing.”

“Well people might notice you disappearing.”

“Well, that would be all I want them to notice. Can you do it?”

Alex gives his body a little shake, as if he just suddenly got cold. He nods at me. I nod at him, giving him the cue. Suddenly I am outside on an abandon street and no one is around me.

I get light-headed and dizzy. I quickly recover, though. I materialize my suit over top of me. I hear the roar more vividly now. It is directly in front of me, over the center of the subway stations down below.

“I can smell you, bird,” the monster says in a menacing voice. It is the same monster that I beat up; the beast, The Destroyer.

He looks at me right in the eye. I narrow my eyebrows at him; he called me bird instead of Avian. He roars again and starts running towards me.

I run towards him and can't help but notice a slight limp in his step. I would laugh, but I am too focused. He runs at me and jumps, but I slide, ducking underneath him. I quickly spin myself around before The Destroyer can. I jump up to pound my fist right into him, but he suddenly cartwheels, completely avoiding my blow.

I land and he is already on top of me, but not literally. He shoves his knee into my face before I have any time to react. I am thrown through the air.

Before I even fall to the ground, The Destroyer jumps up to kick me, but I fly straight backwards and miss him. I am still in the air when The Destroyer quickly jumps straight up at me.

At the last second, I let myself drop and he flies over top of me. I land before he does. We both turn around to face each other again, back to where we started. He immediately runs at me and I run at him. Once we get close enough I come to a halt and he starts to run towards me still; not jumping or sliding this time, as if anticipating I would stop.

I quickly materialize five walls made out of solid steel. He plows through the first three and just dents the fourth. I destroy the walls and laugh at The Destroyer when he falls to the ground.

I enhance my fists by materializing a foot of metal around them. The Destroyer quickly gets to his feet and runs at me. I throw out one of my large metal fists and sock him in the mouth. He barely even moves and still plows into me.

Instead of just hitting me outward, he head-butts me; I am sent backwards, but he quickly grabs me by my suit and throws me to the ground, ripping part of my suit because of having exerted that much force on it. Before I even try to get up and pounds his feet down on my head, straight into the pavement.

I feel like I'm going to pass out and my vision blurs. I cannot feel my face. I can start to see The Destroyer's eyes grow completely black. Last time this happened he was choking me and I was knocked out for four months. I definitely do not want that to happen again.

I quickly kick my leg into his crotch, shoving him off me and I jump to my feet. The Destroyer is only immobilized for a second. My vision starts to clear, but I am still dizzy. I try to stand still and punch him but he

hits me so hard in the chest that I am thrown into the nearest building wall, creating a crater inside the wall.

I can't move for a second; the bones in my back are broken. I can already feel them start to heal, but The Destroyer is already on top of me. He jumps at me and pulls me out of the wall, yanking me around. He throws me onto the ground then swings me over his body, throwing me into the ground on the other side of him. This is just like what I did to him.

My head spins. I can hardly see a thing. Bones are braking in my body every which way.

The Destroyer holds me by my feet. While he swings me over his head I fly straight upwards with all of my might. I pull The Destroyer up with me as he still grips onto my feet. With his other arm he tries to hit me, but his body swings around too much to aim. I feel better once all of my bones go back into place and heal. It's as if a weight has been lifted, even though The Destroyer weighs a ton.

The Destroyer pulls with all of his might while in the air, and yanks me to his level. He tries to throw a punch at me but I rocket upwards, completely missing him. He falls to the ground, forgetting to grab a hold of me to save his fall.

I watch him fall all of the way down. He hits the ground with a great thump and his legs are bent awkwardly. I smile, seeing how pathetic he looks. He pulls his body up using his arms and sits. He starts straightening his legs. To my amazement his legs start to heal. Now I am furious. How in the world could I stop this guy? Intex has given him rapid healing.

It doesn't take long and he gets to his feet. I fly away, seeing if he'll follow. Sure enough he does. He jumps high up and lands on top of a building, coming my way.

I look ahead of me; I am heading north, towards central Manhattan. The beast jumps onto another rooftop close to me. He jumps from the rooftop towards me, coming right at me. I let myself drop and he flies over me, landing onto another building that is lower. I continue to fly north, trying to get away from The Destroyer.

“Coward!” The Destroyer yells. “Where are you going?!” He roars at me.

I look down below and catch sight of a news team. A muscular built man is control the team, telling them what to say. They are still making this same reporter give the same old news to the rest of the world; the hybrids are spreading. I feel bad for this reporter. She is being forced to say what they want, but thankfully they didn’t turn her into a hybrid; but knowing Intex, he would turn her into one later.

I decide that the rest of the world ought to know that I am not dead. Whatever it is that they think of me, I have to correct. The Destroyer gains on me. I let myself drop and land a couple blocks away from the reporter, her team, and the muscular man ruling over them.

The whole crew looks my way. I see the camera point at me. I look away and watch The Destroyer come down at me fast. He is going to land right on top of me, but I run forward so he lands behind me. I spin around just as he spins and we charge at each other.

I materialize solid metal around my hands and punch him hard as he runs at me. I don't hold back nor stop. I punch him several times more, but he swings his arm out to throw me back. He charges, this time his momentum isn’t stopped by my fists and he makes contact with my chest.

I hit the ground and slide down the pavement. The Destroyer runs towards me and jumps, intending to land on top of me. I propel my body further away by my flight, sliding on the pavement.

The Destroyer lands and I quickly jump to my feet. I run at him and duck as he tries to punch me. From behind him I kick him as hard as I can. He is thrown thirty feet until he slams his face first into the pavement.

I run towards him and jump, pounding my foot and metal fist into his back, hearing a crack. The news crew is getting all of this on camera. I'm surprised that the hybrid ruling them is allowing them.

The Destroyer tries to push me off of him, but I punch him hard again, keeping him shoved into the pavement. I pound my fists down on his head over and over as hard as I can. I jump off of him and create a large boulder the size of small house and throw it down at his head.

The huge rock slams down into The Destroyer's head, breaking into several pieces. The Destroyer groans, but doesn't get up. I take the pieces of the boulder and throw them down on his head again. I materialize I long metal rod. I use it and shove it through The Destroyer's back and into the pavement.

The Destroyer grunts and can't move. He screams in pain and his voice starts breaking. He groans, unable to do anything now. He tries to move, but his arms and legs fail him. He can barely even move his head. With one of my metal fists I pound down hard on his head, shoving it into the pavement again.

I back away and eradicate the metal from my fists. I look to see the camera focusing on The Destroyer, then turning to me. I walk up to the reporter. I look for the hybrid ruling them and see that he cowers back, away.

I smile at the reporter and meet up with her.

"Avian?" she asks.

I nod and look from her to the camera. "Yes," I reply. "I am Avian." I look back at her and point at the camera. "Is this live and for the whole world to see?"

She nods.

I look back to the camera. "Hello world. I am Avian; I'm back. Intex has had me locked up, but my team and I have escaped. You can expect him to bring an end to Intex and to his hybrids. We will stop this madness. You have my word. It won't be easy, but have faith in me. I will stop Intex; he will not reign any longer."

The hybrid that is responsible to rule this news team runs towards me. He shoves me away from the camera, but the cameraman turns it and keeps us both in the shot.

"You're a dead man," the muscular man yells. "You are full of yourself to think that you can stop us. You have been asleep for too long!" This man knows that I have been asleep four months.

He raises his fist, about to punch me, but I materialize a block of and let it drop down on his head. His legs fail him hopelessly and he falls limp; immediately knocked out.

I look up at the reporter. "What kind of hybrid is he?" I ask her. "He looks human."

"Well ... I don't think he's a hybrid, really. He's just really strong."

"He's a gorilla," the cameraman says from behind the camera. "But he doesn't have the fur or the distorted face."

I nod, understanding. I am already looking at the camera. "Remember," I tell the world. "Have faith in me that I will stop Intex soon. My team and I will put an end to all of this. Don't doubt me."

The reporter finishes off the live report and the cameraman sets down his camera to rest his arms. The reporter and the cameraman stay close to me, feeling secure.

“I can't believe it,” the cameraman tells me. I expect he's excited to see me. “You ... you killed The Destroyer!” Oh. He was referring to him.

“Yeah,” I tell him. “Just yesterday I had stopped him, but somehow he recovered.” I pause to look at The Destroyer; he is still lying on the pavement with the metal rod going straight through him. “He shouldn't be able to recover from that.”

“You got that right!” the cameraman exclaims.

The reporter looks down at the muscular hybrid man that had been controlling them. I notice her gaze and so does the cameraman. He starts to get serious, immediately understanding what the reporter is feeling. I can see it too, just by reading the expression on her face. That man was very controlling, obviously because he worked for Intex.

I look down at him; the man is still completely out. I look up at the girl.

“What's your name?” I ask her.

“Kara,” she replies.

Kara. I remember her from some news reports on TV. She had also interviewed me shortly when I first started as Avian. She had also been the one to reveal the truth about Intex. It seems so long ago.

“Kara,” I tell her. “Don't worry about him anymore; I promise that he

won't hurt you anymore." I pause. "Do you guys know about the shelter?"

"Shelter?!" Kara exclaims. "Where is it?"

"I just came from there," I tell them. "It's not too far from here."

"Intex doesn't know about it, right?" the cameraman asks.

"No. You guys didn't even know, right?"

"Well ... kind of," Kara says. "And Intex does, but they do not know where it is. They know that people have fled but they know not where."

"Well, I do and I can take you there."

"Oh, please. Thank you!" Kara says, running up to me and clinging to my arm.

Kara is already to have me fly here there. As for the cameraman, I just know recognize to be Luke; a photographer and cameraman from the Frequent Journal, while Kara is a journalist from there. Luke walks up to my other arm after grabbing his camera. We could have use for it at the shelter and I'm sure that they are already thinking about it themselves.

I grab onto both of them and take off slow towards the shelter. We reach the entrance to the shelter down in the ground. I start to turn the door handle and open it.

I open it more and suddenly cops are standing and pointing their guns. I don't even have the door open all the way yet and a cop shoots at me; he shoots several times.

I throw my arm up to protect myself and shove Kara and Luke behind me.

"Hey!" I yell through the door, causing my voice distorter to fluctuate. "It's me, the Avian! Don't shoot!"

The shooting stops. I feel stinging in my arm and chest, blood starts to come out. I look at Kara and Luke; they seem alright. The door opens all of the way and the cops see us three.

They immediately let us in and the cop apologizes. I don't tell him he's alright.

“Don't be sorry,” I tell him. “You could have killed these people that I just rescued! Next time, make sure it's a hybrid before shooting!”

My arm and chest heal just then and the bullets pop. The cops run up to Kara and Luke to welcome them in. Suddenly Kara starts to gasp. I spin as quickly as I ever have and immediately see blood gushing out of her chest, on her right side; it hit her lung.

“Oh god!” the cop responsible for it exclaims.

I run to her and hold her up. I slip and use his name. “Nick!!” I exclaim.

Nick immediately jumps to his feet and runs towards me. The cops look at Nick, wondering who *he* is. Kara gasps in front of Nick, in pain.

“I don't know if I have my powers yet,” Nick tells me.

The cops look puzzled between me and Nick.

“You gotta try!” I tell him urgently.

Nick places his hands over Kara's chest and closes his eyes. Nothing starts to happen. Nick keeps his eyes closed, struggling to jumpstart his powers. The cop that had shot Kara runs his hands through his hair, so upset with himself, clearly.

Nick staggers his breathing and shakes a little; he's nervous that his powers will not start. It's only been a day; it took me two days without that power negating food.

“Are you —” a cop about ask Nick, but I wave my hand at him to be quite. Nick needs his concentration.

What are we to do? Nick’s power is obviously not going to start, not like Alex’s did already. I close my eyes, not that it’s going to help Nick. But maybe I can help Nick. What if it’s a mental thing? Maybe his mind can reject the power negating serum.

Nick, I sent a thought to him. You can do this. The power negating serum is in your system, but it doesn’t affect you. You can use your powers nevertheless. You’re immune to it. Your powers work. Your vasokinesis works. You can heal Kara. Heal Kara, heal her.

Kara starts to fade away. She slowly closes her eyes. “No,” I say softly. I look at Nick; he still is closing his eyes. I look at Kara. *Hang on. Don’t die. Live. We need you, I need you. Kara you must not die, you can’t. Allow N—Vortex to heal you. Vortex will heal you, you must help him. Stay alive.*

Nick still tries to heal her, his power not starting yet. Kara still has her eyes closed. People are starting to gawk. I can tell my team looks anxious.

Come on, Nick! We cannot let Intex — Nick interrupts with his power working. Kara’s wound starts to heal. The blood clears up. I see something shining inside her wound. I leave one arm to hold Kara up and with my other I reach into her wound, quickly pulling the bullet out. Nick continues to heal her, and her wound closes up.

Kara looks completely healed, but she doesn’t wake up.

“Her lung collapsed!” an officer exclaims, a girl.

I quickly lay her down and start blowing into her mouth. I do CPR on her chest three times then I blow into her mouth again. I go back to doing CPR and she gasps for breath, sitting up and starts coughing.

When Kara recovers she feels her shirt for her wound, but finds that it's not there; only the blood is left.

"What?" she asks. She looks at Nick. "You healed me?" she tilts her head as if remembering something. "You're Vortex?"

Nick nods to her.

"That's what I was thinking," a cop says.

I turn to the cop. "No one needs to know that he's Vortex," I tell him. "We like to keep our identities safe, if you would please understand."

The officer nods at me.

"I heard ... your voice," Kara says to me.

I smile at her. "Yes," I tell her. "I told you not to die. You listened."

I chuckles softly. "Thanks," she says to me and Nick, but Nick first.

Luke takes Kara and himself to a spot to sit down. Nick turns to look at me.

"You spoke to me too," he says. "Didn't you?"

"Why are you asking?" I ask him in reply. "Didn't you hear my voice?"

"I ... uh. I don't know. I just got the feeling that the power negating serum had no effect on me. Like ... it couldn't stop me."

I nod. "Yes, I told you that."

"Hmm ..." Nick considers. "Do you think you could tell the rest of them team that to jolt their powers?"

"I can try for sure."

“So,” The Lieutenant says, coming up to me. “Did you stop that hybrid that was roaring above?”

“Yes I did,” I tell him. I pause, considering if The Destroyer would somehow survive from that metal rod stabbing him into the pavement. “But ... maybe I ought to check to make sure.

He tilts his head. “What do you mean? He's not dead?”

“Oh he should be. But I want to be sure. I'll be right back.”

I run back towards the door, opening it. I have to make sure that The Destroyer is dead. I would have done that, but I had to take care of Kara and Luke.

I look back at Kara; she is fine, thanks to Nick. He got his powers back. I notice people eyeing Nick, knowing that he healed Kara. I wonder if they are figuring it out that he's Vortex. Or maybe they figure that he's just another metahuman from the result of Intex's virus.

I leave the shelter, run back up the ladder and out of the hole. I push the dumpster out of the way, get out of the hole and put the dumpster back. I turn around suddenly facing Intex.

“What's with the hole?” Intex asks.

I inhale through my nose. I can't let him know that this is the shelter. I don't respond quickly enough, so Intex tries to guess.

“Is that the shelter?” he asks

“You know,” I start to tell him. “I was going to say that, figuring that you wouldn't believe me anyway. But the truth is: it's not the shelter.”

“Really?” Intex pause, not believing me. “What is it, then?”

I try to think of something to say, but come up with nothing. I know that I wouldn't be able to fool him with my telepathy, but I try anyway. I try to enter his mind, trying to force my way in. I try so hard that my head hurt and my head rings, as if someone had hit my head hard making my ears ring.

Intex scoffs. “Are you trying to go into my mind?” He shakes his mind. “So that must obviously be the Shelter.”

“No,” I tell him, recovering. “I was just trying to control you.”

“Well that'll never happen.”

“No, that hole is just where someone had been storing some food.”

“Well then I need to find out whom.”

“Whom? It's one of your hybrids.”

“Yeah? Which one?”

“One of the ones that you have running around rampant.”

“Why don't I believe you?”

“Well you should, because I didn't even know about any shelter until you mentioned it.”

“That doesn't sound convincing, especially when you be lingering it on for this long. You're lying.”

“You lie!”

Intex tries to walk past me, towards the shelter entrance. But I throw my hand out and grab his shoulder. He slaps my hand off of him, hitting it hard. He has gained strength for sure. I throw a fist out and he dodges it.

In turn Intex tries to fight me. The two of us go back and forth, hitting and dodging each other. Intex starts using electrified fists, throwing bolts of electricity into me with each punch, slowing me down. He makes more contact with his fists and I cower down, shielding my face.

I propel my body upwards and kick my foot out, smashing it into Intex's face. His body thrusts backwards, hitting the wall of a building in this small alley. Intex quickly pushes himself off of the wall and I land. He jumps at me, sending a fist at me. I back up and he misses.

I create my metal fists and start to take it all out of Intex. I create a large metal rod from behind Intex and thrust it at him. I back up so it won't hit me. Suddenly Intex disappears, teleporting. The metal rod's momentum continues and penetrates into my chest. I gasp. I just stabbed myself. I look around; Intex is gone.

I quickly pull the rod out of my chest, throwing it on the ground and it heals in seconds. I fear Intex teleported down into the shelter. I run to the dumpster and shove it out of the way. I drop down the ladder, not

bothering to climb down. My ankle cracks and I limp to the door, hitting it open. The cops throw their weapons up at me. I lose the limp in my foot and run inside.

“Where is Intex?” I ask The Lieutenant.

“Intex?” He panics and jerks his head around.

Intex is nowhere around. “I thought he would be here,” I tell him. “He just fought me outside and asked about the hole under the dumpster. He appeared out of nowhere.”

I can't believe that he didn't appear here. He knew that this was the shelter down the hole under the dumpster. We fought and he disappeared; he must know. This can only mean that he is here.

I look among the crowds, trying to look out for Intex. He got to be here.

Suddenly I hear his voice. “What's with the hole in your shirt?” he asks. He stands at me eleven o' clock. He just teleports there. He smiles. “That's from the metal rod that you tried to stab into me.” He burst out in laughter. “Instead, it stabbed you!” Intex pauses. “So this is the shelter, huh? I've found it.”

I am furious. He is not supposed to know where this shelter is at, but yet here he is. I have to somehow get him out of here. Suddenly cops throw up their guns and shoot at Intex. One cop shoots with superb accuracy. Intex teleports and some the bullets hit the floor. I fear they might shoot someone else, but most of the people keep their distance from the entrance by habit.

Intex is behind me now. The cop with the incredible accuracy quickly moves his gun, pointing it right at Intex in a heartbeat. He shoots and the bullet hits Intex right in the head.

Intex smiles at the cop, actually congratulating him. The bullet had only touched his head and it falls to the floor.

“Nice aim,” Intex tells the cop. “But nothing is going to get through me.”

I run towards Intex, but he teleports out of the way. I turn to face Intex. He is now behind me.

“There's no point, Anthony,” Intex tells me.

I'm not giving up that easily. Suddenly Alex is standing behind Intex in his Whirlwind suit. He grabs Intex and shoves him in front of me. I quickly materialize my metal face and punch Intex face as hard as I can. Intex teleports out of Alex's hold, hoping I would hit Alex, but I don't.

Intex stands next to us, grinning away. Alex steps away from me and yells. He bursts his hands into flames. He runs at Intex with lightning speed. Intex teleports several times, but Alex is already on top of him, punching and throwing fire in his face. Intex is defenseless, unable to even touch Alex.

Failing, Intex tries to punch or even kick Alex. I have never seen Alex move so fast. Alex disappears. Intex and I spin around to see where he went. Alex returns with a bloody metal rod; it looks like the one that I had used on myself by mistake.

Alex charges at Intex. Intex teleports, but Alex expects and runs right into Intex's where he is now standing on the floor, stabbing the him right through the chest. The metal rod goes right through him, despite what he had said a moment earlier.

Intex gasps and falls to his knees. He looks up at Alex and curses him. He teleports. We all look around, seeing that he has left the area; gone.

The Lieutenant gathers himself and looks at me as I look at him.

“You better live to your word and put an end to Intex now,” he tells me. “He just discovered where this shelter is at. We don't have much time left.”

Astoria, NY

Just as Stuart had suspected, Kyra returns with food. Somehow he had convinced his parents —his mother, Dawn, and his adoptive father, Tristan — to stay here. Good thing they did, because now Kyra brings a feast.

“Thank you so much,” Stuart tells Kyra.

Kyra smiles at Stuart and he feels at peace. Stuart looks at the food that she puts out before them. She brings all sorts; food that looks like it's from restaurants.

“Where on Earth did you get this food?” Stuart asks her.

Kyra smiles again. “Not from New York.”

“You mean ... you left the state?”

“No, it was shipped her.”

“What?” Tristan asks.

“Intex has the food shipped here for his ... *hybrids* and *creations*,” she scoffs at the words. “He wants us to feel great and honored to be one of his people, but food is not going to make me feel it; I know who he is on the inside. He's a monster.”

Stuart nods. He looks back at the food, falling in love; both with the food and Kyra. To his surprise Kyra is beautiful, despite being a hybrid of an orangutan. But he is almost fourteen and she is in her thirties.

“What are you guys waiting for?” Kyra asks. “Go ahead and dig in.”

Stuart doesn't hesitate, but Dawn and Tristan do. They look as if they want to stop Stuart from eating. Stuart does stop to look at his parents. He makes a “what” gesture in his face.

Kyra looks at them and smiles comfortingly. “There's nothing to worry about,” she tells them. “The food hasn't been tampered with. Trust me.”

“Well that's just it; I don't,” Dawn says.

Stuart shakes his head. “Please mom,” Stuart tells her. “This food is great.”

The two of them watch Stuart for two more minutes until they start to eat; realizing that Stuart seems to be fine. The food is not poisoned. Kyra sighs once they start eating.

“There. Feel better?” Kyra asks.

To Stuart's surprise they nod. He continues to eat just as his parents do, but he is so surprised that they finally give in. Kyra smiles looking at them all eat. Soon she joins in, eating with them.

It is silent, but nothing needs saying anyway.

Finally Kyra breaks the silence. “You guys seem like a nice family,” she says. “You are great parents; trying to protect your son like that. I understand that you don't want to trust me. If I were in your situation I would probably feel the same way.”

Tristan nods, seeming to finally give in to her.

Kyra studies their faces. “I want to help you guys out. I don't want you to continue to live with this struggle. I can help you. I can continue to provide food for you and protect you.”

Tristan nods again, followed by Dawn.

“I think ...” Tristan starts and trails off, giving it a lot of thought. After a minute he finally decides. “That is a good idea. Thank you.”

Kyra doesn't stop smiling. “It's not a problem, really; I want to help.”

“Thank you,” Dawn says.

Deep down both Dawn and Tristan know that they need the help. Kyra is right; they can't continue to live without her help.

Seton Falls Park, NY

The name of the city comes to Drake when he enters it. Hank is in Mount Vernon, where Drake is at now. He has no idea where Hank lives, though.

Drake yells out in frustration, wanting to find Hank for some reason. He wants to take his anger out on someone. Hank made the VAS, so he's the reason for breaking his friendship with Victor; since he made them get stuck in prison in the first place. Drake blames Hank.

He has no idea where to start looking. He appears at the park because he seems like a great place to stop for a break. He has been flying around, thinking of the places to go; now he's found the right city, he just needs to find the right house, for his own convenience. But ... he has no idea which house to look for; there are tons.

Drake decides to figure out which one looks like a scientist's. It must be a big house; one that has room for a lab to be inside, because ever scientist has a lab in their house, right? Drake assumes Hank does. There are quite a bit of large houses in the area, so Drake tries to find the ones that look occupied. Of course, in these times, people will be trying to live discreetly.

Most people are not even around; Drake has no idea where they have gone. If you are caught, Intex will turn you into one of his experiments.

Drake flies from house to house, breaking in without any care. Each house he tries turns out to be empty. Finally Drake comes to one

that is occupied. He finds a woman inside that looks like a hybrid of a cat, possibly a cheetah.

She snaps her head at the door, looking at Drake. He smile and waves at her. For a minute she just stares at him before speaking.

“What have you done to my door?” she yells, sitting up straight now.

Drake now notices the house; it is very clean — spot clean. She keeps on top of this house. It is nothing compared to the rest of town, or the state for that matter.

Drake doesn't speak at first to prevent himself from stuttering. “I'm looking for someone,” Drake replies. “Hopefully you can help me find him. His name is Hank ... McDonald.”

“I have no clue. Now. Get out of my house or I'll kill you.”

Drake nods, but can't help but see her brain. He can see the part of her brain beaming red; the part of her brain where her powers come from. He starts to smile, gawking at her brain. She throws her hand up to her head, as if to wipe something off.

“What are you looking at?” she yells, realizing that there's nothing on her head.

“It's ...” Drake trails off, gawping at her brain again.

“What?!” She gets up on her back feet, ready to jump across the room and ready to pounce on Drake.

“Your brain,” Drake says in awe. “It's ... amazing.”

She touches her head again. “You ...” She's not sure what to say. Drake doesn't look away from her head. “You can see it?”

“Oh yeah.” Suddenly Drake starts walking forward.

“Stop where you are!!”

Drake doesn't listen; he continues walking towards her. She thrusts off her back legs, pouncing at Drake. She is just about to land on top of him, but he throws out his hands, telekinetically hindering her in mid-air.

“Put me down!!” she screams.

“I need your power.” Drake says dryly.

Drake pulls her to him and throws her on the ground, spinning her body away from him. He faces the back of her head. He looks at her brain, which now turns blue to his sight. His eyes glow blue and he starts to replicate her powers, mimicking her brain.

“Let me GO!!!” she screams again.

“I'm ... not ... going ...” Drake trails off until he's done, “to let you go.” His eyes return to normal and he stops gawking at her brain.

Drake lets go of his grip and allows her to jump to her feet. She spins and slashes her claws at Drake, but he moves out of the way with lightning-fast reflexes.

The cat girl drops her arms, knowing that Drake shouldn't have been able to move that fast. She doesn't know that Drake already had agility, from Grace. She comes to a realization.

“You-you copied my powers!” she exclaims. “But how ... you ... you're not like me. You don't have fur! You don't have spots! Or whiskers!”

Drake smiles, a grin going from ear to ear. “I replicated your powers, not your genes or DNA.”

“What ... How did he do that? How come he didn't do that with the rest of us!!” she starts to sound angry. “Why do WE have to look like animals and you don't?!?!”

“Well actually. Intex didn't create me. Or, I mean he didn't run experiments on me. I got my powers from the virus that went through New York City.”

She nods, understanding more. “So ... Intex never captured you?”

“Never.” He remembers what he was here for. “So, you don't know who Hank is?”

She recalls back to when he first asked that. She shakes her head. Drake just turns around and leaves; just leaving it at that. The girl is still confused, but Drake doesn't care to fill her in. She stands there, scoffs and clueless with what to do now. She has to fix her door somehow.

Drake runs off and takes off for the air. He looks for the next big house. He looks down at his hands, wanting to have claws like a cat's, but he doesn't. He only replicated her powers, not her DNA. Basically all he got from her was her powers of reflexes, speed and possibly her cat vision, hearing and smell.

He proves this to himself right away. He realizes that now his vision is combined with his new cat vision. He blinks as if to help with his eyes to adjust. It seems strange now. He can see colors just fine, his human eyesight helping with that. But now he can see a wider field of vision. He can see clearer what's at his side, unlike before.

Drake flies to the next big house, trying to see if he notices any different with his hearing. He can tell that his smell is enhanced once he lands at the porch. He can smell what's inside the house; mold. He's sure that he would not have been able to smell that before getting these powers, not at this distance.

Drake bangs the door open, seeing that this one looks abandoned. He jumps from the porch and flies towards the next house. He sighs, realizing that this is going to take a long time.

Drake wishes for an easier way about going this. He thinks about what he intends to do. He's not even sure. He wants to be mad at somehow and Hank comes to his mind; Hank made the VAS. Drake allows that to motivate him. Hank is the reason he stayed in prison for that long. Hank is the reason.

Drake lets that anger motivate him to keep searching for Hank. Drake wants to hurt him, make Hank understand what he caused to happen to him.

The Shelter

Oliver figures out who The Avians are. He already knew which one Avian was, because he came in with his suit. The shortest boy that came in with Avian— about five-ten, whereas the others are about five-ten and a half to eleven and six foot — had been called by Avian and healed the reporter, Kara.

Avian had called him Nick. Oliver will not forget that. But he knows which superhero Nick is; Vortex. Vortex is the one who fits the height and is the only one who can heal others. Oliver keeps a smile to himself, knowing what else Vortex has; juxtakinesis: the ability to replicate the powers of those near to you. That's something Oliver could use. He could steal Vortex's power and replicate Avian's to heal.

But Oliver doesn't like the idea of killing Vortex, not when Intex is still around. Oliver wouldn't care to kill Vortex, but the timing is bad; all of The Avians are needed for taking down Intex. Oliver wants Intex stopped just as bad as everyone else. He would like to steal all of The Avian's powers, but he would like Intex to be stopped more so.

Oliver now returns to trying to figure out how to replicate powers without stealing them, and without killing them. He doesn't have a clue. He might have better chances if he were outside; to steal a hybrid's power. But none of the hybrids he can think of that he's seen have a healing ability. All they have are powers of animals.

Oliver looks at the cops and The Lieutenant. They are all running around, panicking. Everyone knows that something bad is about to happen; Intex just discovered this location. He's going to do something. Oliver suspects that Intex might just kill them all.

Then there's that. Oliver could try to go for Intex himself, but being injured he discards that idea. Even if he were healthy, he doesn't think that he could take on Intex.

The cops continue to fright and talk with Avian. They try to come up with a plan. Oliver wonders what they really can do. Avian walks back to the group that he came with; his team. They don't seem thrilled about what's going to happen. He tries to listen in, but does not have super hearing; instead, he tries to lip read.

Intex HQ: The Rehabilitation Center; Central Manhattan

All of Intex workers scam about like ants. Jackson, Darrius and Morris look through the window in the room that sits above the huge lab. Below all of the workers act frantic. Daily they find another wanderer outside to bring in to modify.

The workers do a good job and make Intex proud, although it didn't seem that way at first. Of course now things have calmed down since there are as many people being worked on at once. The numbers have gone down.

Jackson, Darrius and Morris aren't really sure where Intex went, but he intended to find Mark. As if on cue with their thoughts, they hear the sound of the air whooshing through the room; Intex just teleports in.

"Did you find Anthony," Darrius asks as they turn to face Intex.

They see that Intex is bloody and has a huge hole through his shirt, but other than that he looks fine.

"Yeah, I found him," Intex says.

"What happened?" Morris asks.

"Alex. He used a metal rod that Mark had tried to use against me and stabbed it through me."

"Alex is the fast one," Jackson says, stating the obvious.

Intex blows out through his nose, obviously filled with anger.

"They are at the shelter."

“You found it?!” Darrius exclaims.

“Yes, I did. We are going to go there and kill everyone.”

“What?” Jackson asks, questioning what he just heard.

“We have to kill all of those people at the shelter. They are all rebellious for not turning themselves in to me.”

“Kill them?” Jackson asks, not agreeing. “Why can't we just turn them into hybrids?”

“Because they are no longer worthy.” Intex pauses. “Why are you questioning me?”

“Sorry.”

“Are we ready?”

“Ready when you are,” Darrius says.

“More than ever,” Morris says.

Jackson hesitates to nod. Intex narrows his eyes at him.

“We need to kidnap Mark's team,” Intex says.

“Wait,” Morris interrupts. “Why not kill them too?”

Intex looks at him with a face that silences him. “Do you not remember my plan?”

“Oh yeah I almost forgot.”

“Really?” Intex scoffs and shakes his head. “We kidnap them and kill the rest. Now ... let's go!”

Intex teleports and the three Rextonians are right behind him.

Darius smiles and creates a ball of what looks like lava in his hands. He is preparing to use his powers. He closes his hand and the lava disappears.

Instead of teleporting themselves, they jump into the hole in space, or a rift, created from Intex's teleporting. Since they can teleport, they can jump through it.

The Shelter

The cops all are grouped around, hoping The Lieutenant will come up with a plan. The Lieutenant talks with me, trying to get me to help out. I really do not know what to do.

I realize that we are killing time. Knowing Intex, he will be back soon. I hope the rest of my team can get their powers going ... right now. We all will need to be a help.

"Where's the rest of your team?" The Lieutenant asks me. "We need their assistance too."

I nod, understanding. "They came in with me," I reply.

"You mean ..." He looks at my team. "They're not stragglers?"

"Some of them are." I pause. "We escaped from Intex's prison and found some of our friends. They didn't know about this place, and neither did I until I found that little girl."

"Okay, well gather them together."

I nod. I am reluctant to tell him that they don't have their powers yet. What good would that do but diminish everyone's hope?

I walk away from the police and towards me team. I sit down next to them, not as discreetly as I have been doing.

“Guys,” I tell my team. “We need to get our powers working right now. All of us.” They all nod, but don't look reassuring. “Intex will be back. We cannot let him do anything.”

“But how are we going to get our powers back?” Mara asks.

“Alex and Nick have gotten their powers back,” I tell them, “so, the rest of you should as well. Hopefully sooner than later.”

Rachel looks at me and her eyes water, but she does not look away.

“Mark,” she says. “I ... Thank you for being so brave, but ... I don't think things are going to go well. We aren't prepared for Intex to come here. How can we possibly protect all of these people from Intex? We are only counting on you, Nick and Alex.”

“Then I guess that we will fight hard,” I tell her.

Rachel looks down at the floor. “You are very brave Mark ... and strong. We are going to need that.” She pauses. “But ... I don't know Mark.” She pauses again. “Something just doesn't feel right.”

“I know, but we have to try to fight Intex. You're right; we can't let him harm all of these people.”

“No, I mean something doesn't feel right. There's something in my chest that hurts.”

“What?” I suddenly very attentive to Rachel. “What's wrong? Why does your chest hurt?”

“I don't know.” She pauses. “But I've been feeling since we broke out of that building. I thought that it was just because of not having been running around and walking enough, you know not getting enough exercise. But I don't know.”

I nod, but I am starting to get worried. What if Intex actually did something to her? “Hang in there, babe; you’ll be fine. I’ll protect you.”

“Mark,” Bruce says. “What can we really do? We can't save all of these people.”

“But we can try.”

Intex suddenly teleports into the shelter and steps aside from where he just came from. He appears in front of the cops. The other Rextonians suddenly appear from where Intex just teleported from; they come from a hole in the air that is left from Intex’s teleportation.

The cops throw their guns up at Intex and his fellow Rextonians. The highly trained cop jerks his gun back and forth, shooting each Rextonian right square on their foreheads. Like Intex, the bullets stop once they touch them and fall to the ground.

“Let’s get this party started!!” Intex yells out with insane joy.

Things get hectic. Intex and his Rextonians immediately run towards the people, ready to kill them. I am already at my feet and charge at Intex.

“STOP!!” I yell at him demandingly.

Of course Intex doesn't listen to me. He continues to run towards the crowds. Suddenly it's as if all hell breaks loose and everyone in the shelter jumps to their feet all at once, running away from the Rextonians. All I can hear is screaming.

One of the Rextonians' holds out his hand and telekinetically lifts a person, choking her. I run at Intex, duck from the swing of his arm, and grab a hold of his shoulders, shoving my knee into his stomach. I thrash my elbow onto his temple and shove my knee into his nose.

Bruce runs towards one of the Rextonians and throws a punch his face. He swiftly avoids it and tries to hit Bruce in return, but he misses Bruce. Bruce takes a step back and throws out his arms, waving for him to fight. The Rextonian scoffs. He comes at Bruce, throwing his fists around, missing Bruce every time. Bruce blocks all of his punches and slaps his hands out of the way. He rhinos his knee into his gut, stomps on his feet, elbows the side of his head, and punches him over and over in the face.

To our surprises the Rextonian groans and backs up in pain. So ... they are not indestructible.

Intex throws his arm around my neck and swirls me around, over his head. He slams me down into the floor. I see stars for a few seconds as Intex stomps his foot down on my stomach. I groan as I bend forward

as if to relieve the pain. I roll away and my vision clears from the blow to my head.

I jump to my feet and face Intex.

Nick charges at one of the other Rextonians, mimicking his strength and speed. The Rextonian seems to be fast, but not like Alex. Nick fights the Rextonian, but doesn't do as well as Bruce and I. Nick gets thrown across the floor and the Rextonian heartlessly shoots a blast of what looks like lava at some people.

"No!!" I scream and get socked in the face by Intex because I lost focus.

I duck the next swing that Intex throws at me.

The people scream and fall onto the floor, rolling in pain. The cops run up to them as if they can try to help in some way.

I face Intex, furious. I quickly grab Intex's head and force it down into my knee. With my strength, I throw him over me, turning him around so his back is faced to me. I shove my foot out into his back, kicking it as hard as I can.

I hear it crack and Intex's back bends to far backwards, looking unnatural. He falls onto his knees. I jump up and kick his back again, forcing him to fall forward onto his hands.

Intex pushes himself off of the ground and back to his feet. His back heals within seconds and it straightens. I shake my head, furious that he can heal like I can. He obviously can when you see that he's wearing the same shirt he wore when Alex stabbed him; the shirt has a hole in it, on both sides.

Rachel fights the third Rextonian, who doesn't seem too motivated. Rachel seems to be fighting him with ease and only gets hit a few times but barely reacts. Rachel punches him in the face repeatedly

until suddenly, she hits him so hard that he flies clear across the whole subway station; her powers are restored. She smiles.

Alex runs around, punching each Rextonian, knocking them forward.

Bruce uses his combat skills on the Rextonian he fights. The Rextonian doesn't seem to have any skills in combat, so tries to use his powers against Bruce, which would be his strength and telekinesis.

Most of the crowds have run as far away as they can. The cops are trying to protect of the people in front. Looking at the people in fear motivates me to keep them alive.

I grab a hold of Intex, fooling him into thinking that I would shove my knee into him, but instead I push myself off of him, flying upwards. As I fly up I kick Intex in the nose several times and he teleports away. I land and Intex hits me from behind. I spin around and duck from Intex, who had just teleported behind me again.

I throw myself forward onto my hands and kick my feet up behind me and hit Intex in the chest. He doubles back and I spin around and punch the top of his head. I charge at him and hit him hard in the stomach, nose, temple, stomach again, block his arm, dodge his kick, and hit him in the stomach once more.

All of the Rextonians get together and fight my team. Half of my team is powerless and defenseless. Bruce, Nick and Alex do most of the fighting. Brandon comes in next, trying to use whatever combat skills that he had developed on his own, from doing his own training back when we were all living at home, not Intex's building.

Suddenly a wind comes out of nowhere. A man weakly starts walking towards the chaos. The man wears a baseball cap. He reminds me of someone.

The man throws his hand out at the Rextonians and the wind becomes powerful, blowing them off of their feet. The man looks like — it can't be ... But it is. The man is Oliver. The wind lifts his hat up a little and I see his face. It is Oliver Matthews; he's alive. My team realizes it too.

It looks like Oliver is trying to fight the Rextonian. Oliver may be evil, but it looks like he doesn't agree with Intex. We have a mutual enemy.

Oliver walks to the Rextonian that was fighting Bruce; the one with telekinesis. The Rextonian throws a punch at Oliver's face, but the blow only ripples Oliver's face. Oliver doesn't show any pain from the punch, because he just absorbs the energy. Oliver pulls a knife out of his back pocket and thrusts it at the Rextonians face, using the same amount of energy he just absorbed.

The knife slashes the Rextonian's face, cutting it. The Rextonian backs up in pain and holds his face. Blood pours out on his hands.

"Morris!" the Rextonian that was fighting Nick yells; the one with the lava projection.

The Rextonian runs at the one called Morris, wanting to save him from Oliver. Oliver teleports behind the Rextonian with lava projection and stabs him in the back.

"I don't mind killing you both," Oliver tells them, surprisingly his voice is strong.

The Rextonian's back heals from the stab wound. Oliver teleports behind Morris and wraps his arm around his neck, choking him. The other Rextonian runs at him, but Alex runs out before him, puts his foot out, and trips him.

The Rextonian falls face first smashing into the concrete floor.

Morris face heals, but now he tries to release himself from Oliver's grip. Oliver uses his knife and drives it into the back of Morris' head. Morris gasps in pain, but is still choking.

Oliver tilts his head and scrunches his eyebrows, amazed that Morris is still alive; he just pierced a knife into his brain. Oliver jerks the knife, slicing open a bigger hole in Morris's head, cutting parts of his brain.

The other Rextonian screams. The Rextonian that Rachel punched across the station just now gets to his feet. He stands there, watching Morris getting killed. He doesn't seem to be as caring as much as the other Rextonian is.

"Darrius, do something you idiot!" Intex yells at him.

I punch Intex in the mouth. The two of us continue to fight each other as Oliver begins to murderer Morris.

Suddenly Bruce screams. "Yes!!!" Bruce exclaims.

I spin my head to look at Bruce. He is telekinetically lifting the other Rextonian, the one Intex called Darrius. Bruce got his powers back.

"No!" Intex yells, avoiding one of my punches. "You're ruining my plan!" he yells at Bruce and Oliver. "Come on!" he yells at the remaining Rextonian. "Jackson, kill them all!"

Jackson seems like the least enthusiastic one. He runs towards Oliver but, Nick throws his hand out and telekinetically stops him, replicating Bruce's power.

Oliver shoves one of his hands into Morris' head, wrapping his fingers around Morris' brain. Morris grunts and throws his limbs around aimlessly. Thankfully Oliver doesn't pull his brain out. Suddenly Oliver's eyes glow purple; bright purple. A misty purple energy comes out of

Morris' brain and into Oliver's hand. The veins in Oliver's hand and arm turn purple absorbing the energy. Morris shakes.

I can't believe that we are allowing Oliver to do this. When all of the purple misty-like energy leaves Morris' brain, completely going into Oliver, Morris' body goes limp and lifeless.

Oliver takes his hand out of Morris' head and lets him drop to the floor — dead. Darrius is held by Nick and cries, looking at his dead friend.

Darrius looks up at Oliver. "I hate you," he says.

Oliver's eyes return back to their normal color. He takes in a deep breath and sighs. He forsakes his slump posture and straightens up. He smiles, feeling renewed.

"WOW!!" Oliver exclaims. "Man I feel great!!!"

Oliver runs around, jumping. No longer in pain from the bullet wounds that he had gotten from the well-trained cop. Suddenly I realize that the cop is here. He's the cop that tried to kill these Rextonians by shooting them in the heads. Oliver may want to kill him for having shot him at the mall so long ago.

"Nick!" I yell. "Trust me and let that guy go!"

Nick lets Darrius go and immediately Darrius jumps up, charging at Oliver.

"Intex wants me to kill everyone," Darrius yells at Oliver. "So I'm going to start with you!"

Oliver stands there and lets Darrius run at him. "I'm going to show you the proper way to use these powers," Oliver tells him.

Darrius runs up to Oliver, about to tackle him, but Oliver throws his hand out and stops him right where he's at.

"You are no match for my strength," Oliver tells Darrius.

Oliver thrusts a fist out at Darrius' face, knocking him off of his feet. Oliver slams a foot down on Darrius' gut.

Intex suddenly teleports away from me, appearing in front of Oliver. Intex grabs Oliver and throws him down to the ground, hard. Oliver laughs. His body ripples from the kinetic energy.

"That doesn't hurt!" Oliver exclaims. "This is awesome! My back feels great!"

Intex grunts, seeming that he suddenly hates this man more than me. Intex punches his fists down on Oliver's face. Oliver starts to get hurt, so then he teleports behind Intex. He grabs Darrius, lifts him up and throws him down onto Intex.

Intex's knees bend and he collapses on the floor. He teleports, standing beside Oliver.

"I know how you can follow someone by going through their teleportation rifts," Oliver tells Intex. "So try and follow me now!"

Suddenly Oliver starts teleporting all over the place, going all around the subway station. Finally Oliver teleports and completely leaves the shelter. Intex goes through the rifts, or the holes created in the air, trying to follow Oliver, but he doesn't find the right one that took Oliver out of the shelter. He isn't fast enough and the rifts close up.

Intex gives up and teleports back to us. "Very well then," Intex says. "Back to business."

Darrius gets to his feet and stands next to Intex. Jackson teleports to Intex's side. The three of them prepare to fight us to get through to the people.

So quickly, Intex, Darrius and Jackson fight us. They seem very well motivated now. I fight Intex, but this time with more difficulty. Nick goes after Darrius. Rachel and Bruce start to fight Jackson.

It seems as if Intex didn't bring enough people. He probably figured that most of us didn't have our powers yet, but we are getting them back; one by one. Intex also didn't expect Oliver and neither did I. He came out of nowhere and took down one of the Rextonians. It was ... dumbfounding.

I take a blow to my face just to get hit again and again. Intex is gaining up on me, using quicker swings of his fist. I put my fists together, lunge them upwards, blocking Intex's arms with my elbows and hit Intex square in the nose with both fists. The blow forces Intex backwards.

Intex teleports behind me and shoots electricity at me. I shake a little and Intex kicks me hard. I fall forward onto my hands and knees.

Darrius suddenly kicks Nick hard in this face, surprisingly swinging his foot up like that. Nick is sent down onto his back. Darrius jumps up and lands his foot down on top of him.

Nick suddenly is standing behind Darrius; Alex stood him up at lightning speed.

Bruce telekinetically throws Jackson through the air, causing him to almost land on a crowd of people, but before he can stop him, Jackson teleports out of the way. Jackson teleports in front of Bruce.

Rachel hits Intex as hard as she can in the back, making him stumble forward. I jump to my feet and kick my foot out to trip Intex.

Intex teleports behind me and tackles me to the floor, scraping my face across the concrete.

Rachel darts forward and kicks Intex off of me. Intex teleports away from us both, getting on his feet.

“This is getting ridiculous,” Intex says. “PLAN B!!!!” Intex suddenly yells very loudly.

I look around at the Rextonians, wondering what that means. Suddenly my sight is drawn to Rachel. She is frozen. She doesn't move. My attention directs to Bruce; he is frozen too.

Nick and Alex look around as puzzled as I am. The other Rextonians gather themselves and stand tall. Mara and Grace get my attention as they look at Brandon; he is frozen as well.

Intex yells in Rextonian now saying the same thing, “ᄇᄇᄇᄇ ᄇᄇᄇᄇ”

Suddenly Rachel, Bruce and Brandon come to. But right away I can tell that they are different. A minute earlier they looked angry at Intex, but now they look calm. They look to Intex.

I look at Rachel, but she ignores me.

“Rachel?” I ask her, trying to get her attention.

Intex looks at me. “She won't respond to that anymore,” he tells me.

“What about all of these people?” Jackson asks.

“We'll kill them later,” Intex says.

Suddenly Intex and Jackson are teleporting us all to Intex HQ. Apparently this is part of plan B. We are no longer at the shelter. Apparently they are going to spare the lives of those at the shelter.

I suddenly find myself in a huge prison room. I am already chained to a chair with my teammates, excluding Rachel, Bruce and Brandon. Intex is the last person I see to leave the room. Darrius and Jackson left the room a second before, teleporting away. Intex teleports on after them.

All so quickly we are in the Intex HQ building. We are powerless again. I look around see devices mounted on the walls everywhere. I see that the walls and floors are painted with a dark red paint. Below our chairs are vents.

I look to see all who is here again. It's just Alex, Nick, Mara and Grace. Rachel, Brandon and Bruce are not in the room. Intex has done something to them. He made them freeze, and then he made them react to his voice, calming down.

We all gather ourselves, realizing what all just happened. We all were quickly thrown into Intex HQ prison.

"Mark?" Grace says after about a minute. "What ... where's Rachel, Brandon and Bruce?"

I look down at the floor before looking at her. I feel defeated. "I don't know," I tell her. "But he definitely did something to her — them. They ... I don't know. They ..." I trail off. I don't know what happened.

"I'm scared," Mara says with her voice quivering. She starts crying.

I feel like crying with her. So quickly things turned around for the worst. Somehow we are all chained to chairs and have lost some team members.

I start to fear the worst about Rachel. I think about what Intex said: *She won't respond to that anymore*. I had called her name and that's what Intex told me. She won't respond to her name, Rachel. I look down, knowing that whatever Intex did to her, he altered her mind. She didn't even look at me when I called her name. Her mind is changed.

She's no longer Rachel. Bruce and Brandon are no longer themselves either.

We are forced to wait in these chairs, being chained, for a whole day. Finally Intex stops by for a visit. He doesn't use the door, he just teleports inside; his powers work just fine inside this room. He smiles right away.

I scowl at him. "What have you done with Rachel?" I yell at him.

"Just Rachel?" Intex asks me.

"And Bruce!" Mara yells. Her face is red from crying so much. I feel like I've been selfish, not thinking about how Mara feels.

"And Brandon?" Grace completes it.

"Ah," Intex says. "Well ... to simply put it ... I altered their personalities. They now are loyal to me."

"What!?!?" I yell at him. Steam blows out of my ears. My eyes water. "No."

"Yes."

I don't want to believe this, but I know it's true. "H-how?"

"I thought you might ask. You probably don't know, but my plan has been in effect ever since you first killed me. I knew I would appear back on Rexton, so I already had a ship prepared for me; that part you know. My Rextonian acquaintances were alerted and immediately left Mason at the same time. When I got back here to Earth, I left my ship in your back yard, knowing you guys would all enter it. So, I had a gas prepared inside for Rachel, Bruce and Brandon. Once they breathed it in, all I had to do was say those two words in English and Rextonian. Since I have *experimented* — as you call it — on them before it helped with the

gas. I tried to give you a hint by making it only possible to enter the ship by using Rachel, Bruce or Brandon's handprint, but you didn't get it." He pauses. "Which one placed their hand on my ship?"

I close my eyes and answer quietly. "Rachel."

Intex chuckles. "You didn't think that was significant?" he scoffs at me and shakes his head. "You are blind. You had no idea what you were in for when you entered my ship. Then you destroyed it. I figured that as well, but that doesn't matter."

"Did you kill all of those people at the shelter?" I ask, hoping to find some good in all of this.

Intex smiles at me. "We spared their lives ... for now." Intex lets it go silent for a few minutes. He watches us all mope and look at the floor. "Perhaps you'd like to meet them."

Intex teleports away and reappears with Rachel, Bruce and Brandon. Right away I can tell it's not them. They all wear scary smiles, coming from them. They look eccentric. They look ... dark and fierce. They smile nastily. I look at Rachel and she shakes her head at me. Seeing her like this scares me.

"Let's meet each other, please," Intex tells them.

Rachel looks at all of us. "I'm Rhonda."

Bruce speaks. "Bryce."

"And you all know Blade, right?" Intex asks.

I look at Brandon. He definitely reminds me of Blade from so long ago. I thought I would never see his face again, but here he is. He looks so much like Blade. We have been getting used to have Brandon around, but now he's back to Blade. He can't be Tyke now. Instead he's just werewolf Blade. Blade, Bryce and Rhonda.

I look away from them. It pains me to see them working for Intex.

Intex's Office

"Jackson," Intex says to him, shaking his head.

Intex has just left the prison, taking Rhonda, Bryce and Blade back to their rooms. He allows them to go where they like though.

"I am not happy with how well you fought at the shelter!" Intex exclaims.

"I'm sorry," Jackson says.

Darrius sits in a chair against a wall. Jackson sits in front of Intex, who is sitting at his desk.

"You have been defying me lately, questioning me. Now ... you were not showing initiative in that fight. I blame you for Morris' death!"

Darrius sits up in his seat. "Yeah!" he yells. "You've could've saved him, but you let him die!!"

"I couldn't have done anything to save him!" Jackson tries to defend himself. "Those Avians would've stopped me, like they stopped you, Darrius."

"But you didn't even try," Intex says. "Why didn't you?"

"I ... I don't know." Jackson pauses. "I just ..." he trails off.

"You just what?" Intex demands.

"Nothing."

“You just WHAT?!” Intex yells. “You just don't agree with me? Is that it!?”

Jackson looks at Intex in the eyes. After a minute he answers. “Yes, that’s it.”

“Explain,” Intex says surprisingly calm.

“I don't agree with you wanting to kill everyone at the shelter, so because of that ... I didn’t want to fight Mark and his team.”

“I thought that I could depend on your help.”

“I'm sorry. I'll do better.”

Intex isn't pleased. He shakes his head at Jackson and puts his head in his hands, sighing.

“I'm sorry,” Jackson says again.

Intex shakes his head at him again. “Just get out of here! Go to your room! I don't want to see you for a week!” He pauses. “Man, I sound like someone’s mother.”

Jackson gets up from his chair and leaves the office to go to the room he sleeps in. Intex looks at Darrius and sighs.

“I don't know what I'm going to do with him,” Intex tells Darrius. “But hopefully he can turn himself around.”

“He cost us Morris’ life,” Darrius says.

Intex nods to him. “Yes, true. But we are not going to kill him. We can still use him. But ... if he doesn’t get his act together, let me handle it. Okay?”

Darrius nods.

“He used to work alongside me at my labs back on Rexton,” Intex says. “He was always loyal. I don't know what he's doing now.”

Mount Vernon, NY

Drake flies to another huge house. This one looks peculiar. It certainly looks like a rich man's house. He lands down on the front porch. He looks to his side to see a long sidewalk go around to the garage and the driveway.

He pounds on the door, but this one doesn't easily break in. Drake hits it again and it falls inward. He gathers what he sees once he steps in. The place is mostly kept up; just a few things are knocked over. He starts to smell something. It smells like chemicals; he's sure he has the right place.

Suddenly the man walks in the room. Hank. He just looks at Drake, waiting for him to do something.

"Hank McDonald," Drake says.

Hank looks at the door at Drake's feet, and then back up at Drake.

"I don't know how many times I fixed that door," Hank says.

"Don't you know who I am?" Drake asks Hank.

Hank nods. "I know who you are. You're one of those three that were locked up in Manhattan."

"Yes. And you're responsible for that! Because of your VAS devices, we were locked in there for a long time."

"You guys escaped ... you did something to my VAS."

"Yes we did. But since we were locked up, Intex took over and we didn't have our share in the say. I could have been the one to rule New York, but I am not because you had us locked up! Now you ruined my friendship with Victor!"

"I am not responsible for your actions. You got yourself in prison, not me."

“No,” Drake exhales. “You are the one that kept us in there, because of your VAS.”

“Good.”

“What? Really? Now you asked for it!”

Drake runs towards Hank and throws a bolt of electricity at him. Somehow it misses, but Hank appears a foot further away to the right. Drake doesn't realize it that Hank moved, he just assumes he missed. He gets inches from Hank and throws his hands out to grab him. Suddenly Hank disappears and Drake grabs the air.

Drake stops and looks around. He turns and finds Hank standing behind him.

“What the?” Drake asks.

Hank smiles at him. Drake holds his hand out and telekinetically pulls Hank towards him. Hank disappears again, escaping from Drake's grip. Drake scoffs and turns around again, facing Hank.

“How ...” Drake starts.

“You can't figure it out?” Hank asks.

“You can teleport?” he asks. Excitement enters his face. “Like Oliver and Intex?” He easily has lost interest in retaliating against Hank. Now he's keen to find out what Hank just did.

“No,” Hank replies. “Not exactly.”

Drake focuses on Hank's brain and smiles in awe. It glows red to him; the part in his brain where the powers are.

“It's beautiful,” Drake says as he stares at Hank's head.

Hank tilts his head down and taps his hand on it, feeling for something. He looks at Drake, confused. “What?” he asks.

“Your brain,” Drake says.

“You can see it?”

“Most definitely.” Drake pauses, practically drooling but doesn’t.

“What are your powers?”

Hank is reluctant to tell him. “I will never tell,” Hank says, staying where he’s at. “How can you see my brain?”

Drake smiles, holding back from laughing with eagerness. “I can understand how anything can work. Just like the brain, but I can use it to understand how to manipulate my brain to replicate your traits. I can replicate your powers.”

“Well then. Whenever you’re ready come and get me,” Hank teases.

“Okay.” Drake smiles, grinning from ear to ear.

Drake runs at Hank with electric speed that he hasn’t used before; he just uses it with instinct. He runs behind Hank and grabs a hold of his head, placing his hand on top of it. His eyes glow blue and the part of Hank’s brain that appeared red to him now turns blue.

Hank ceases time. He takes Drake’s hands off of him and steps away. He turns around to face Drake. Hank can see a faint image of him still standing there in Drake’s grip; light hasn’t gone through yet. Drake grins malevolently, eager to get Hank’s power. It disturbs Hank to see his eyes are brightly glowing blue.

Hank gathers himself. He feels fine, getting away from Drake before he’s done anything. Hank walks into his lab, already looking for the power negation serums.

He thinks about what Drake said. Drake can understand how anything can work. It takes Hank a few virtual seconds to figure out which power that would be; it’s intuitive aptitude.

Hank scrambles through his stuff, not able to find any power negating serums. He looks through his cabinets and in his closets. Nothing. Hank shakes his head, not believing this. He had plenty of them. He recently made more; preparing himself for any new coming hybrids.

“What the heck!” Hank yells out loud, his voice fluctuating without the proper air circulating being that time is at a standstill.

Hank just doesn’t understand it. He had prepared himself for the worst. Suddenly he sees it. A briefcase is sitting on the floor, on its side. It had fallen off of a counter.

“Ah.” Hank says, grabbing it off of the floor.

Hank opens it up to find nine power negating serums, already in needles ready to be injected into a metahuman or hybrid. Hank smiles, relived with himself. He pulls out a needle and walks up to Drake.

He brings Drake’s arms down to his sides. He shakes his head, looking at Drake horrible grin. With his fingers, Hank shoves his smile down, adjusting his face to make him look like he's constipated instead. Hank would laugh if he weren’t nervous. Drake’s past posture is still there faintly since light hasn’t gone through yet; though the sight of him now is stronger.

Hank rolls up Drake’s sleeve and readies the needle. Suddenly his arm jerks, moving away from Drake’s arm. His vision blurs and suddenly his head is throbbing.

“Ahhh!!!” he can't help but scream in pain. His voice is distorted because of time’s motion still being stopped.

He drops the needle and it shatters on the floor, but freezes immediately. The glass doesn’t go far before it freezes in space. The liquid doesn’t even leave its shape of the needle, suspending in the air above the floor.

Hank falls backwards onto his hands and feet, like doing a crabwalk. He rests his body down onto his bottom to collect himself. After what seems like ten minutes, but not even a millisecond, Hank's headache goes away. He looks up at Drake, who stands still, motionless.

"What did you do to me?" Hank asks, yet again his voice sounding indistinct.

Hank gets to his feet, feeling dizzy. He breathes in and out, taking big breaths. He walks back to his lab and finds an empty syringe. He takes it with him, back towards Drake. He opens it and swoops up the serum suspended in the air. He closes it and lets it go, letting it fall two inches and stop in midair. He gathers up the broken glass and throws it away.

Hank returns to Drake and grabs the syringe from the air. Drake's sleeve is already rolled up and he takes the syringe to inject into Drake. Hank looks into Drake's glowing blue eyes.

Suddenly his head throbs again and he clenches his fists, squirting the syringe right towards Drake. He takes a moment to see that the serum is heading right towards Drake's eye. His head throbs again and he groans. Hank decides to let the serum go into Drake's eye and he runs downstairs, through his secret entrance.

He doesn't even commence time; it regains motion itself. His ability to keep it suspended fails him. His freed people immediately see him in pain. They go to help him.

Intex HQ

I exhale, fed up with Intex. It's still just me, Nick, Alex, Grace and Mara chained to chairs. I am getting tired of these same prisons. Intex has been making them harder and harder to break out of; I'll give him that.

But what's worse: Rachel, Bruce and Blade are manipulated. My cheeks are red from crying. I'll admit it. I haven't been weeping though; just tears. I can't help it. My wife, Rachel, is not there. She is *Rhonda*. I scoff at the name. Intex angers me more each day.

Bruce is Bryce and Brandon is back to being Blade. I can only imagine what Intex intends to do with them. It pains me to think about it. I just can't believe that Intex basically snapped his fingers and changed three people into slaves of him.

For the first time I feel hopeless. Before it was my teammates, but this time it is me. We are locked up again, powerless ... hopeless. This time what makes us powerless is not food. It's actually those original gas devices Intex's used those times before, and possibly the paint in this room. Surely these gas devices are improved, and obviously they do not work on Intex himself; he teleported in and out of here.

I look at my team. They aren't giving up. Alex is bouncing in his chair, struggling to break free. Nick does the same, hoping to bestow strength. Mara looks as if she's trying to trigger her nucleokinesis to melt the chains. Grace is striving to take control of the chains with her metal manipulation.

It feels like I have been here forever already, but it's really only been a few hours. I think about my team. They aren't giving up hope. They want to get out of here; they want ... It hits me. They have their friends at the shelter. Intex plans to kill them all. No wonder they are desperate to escape; they want to save them.

Suddenly Intex appears in the room. My team just slowly lets their hands fall. Intex looks at them as they do it.

Intex smiles. "I know you are trying to escape," Intex begins. "But I'm not afraid; you won't escape this prison." He pauses, still looking at the rest of my team and not me.

I look at my team. They all look very angry at Intex. I am too.

"Why hate me?" Intex says. "You're anger for me won't help you escape. So why bother being angry?"

That very statement angers me more. How can he say that and expect us to let our anger go? None of us let up on our anger. We all continue to look at Intex with stern faces.

"Very well," Intex says. "Let's see if you still want to be mad at me in a few minutes." He pauses. "Let me ask you guys," he looks only at the rest of my team. "If you would like for me to give you back something, or *someone*, what would you like back?"

"Give us back our parents, you twerp!" Alex exclaims.

"You know ... I thought you would say that." Intex nods. "So ... just to prove to you guys that I'm not all that bad as you think I am, I will reunite you with your parents."

"You killed our parents, you nitwit!" Grace exclaims.

"Ah," Intex says, holding up a finger. "But I didn't."

"You killed them right in front of us!" Nick exclaims.

“None of it was real.” He pauses, shaking his hands. “I’ll prove it to you.” Intex breaks again. “You guys really do not appreciate what I am doing. I am giving everyone a chance to become something great, but none of you can see it.”

“You disgust me!” I yell at him. “You’re sick. You are not doing anyone anything *great!*” I scoff.

“Just a second, now,” Intex continues. “You guys want your parents back, you can have them. You see I never killed them. So ... without further ado, you can have them.” He pauses. “If ... you side with me. Your choice.”

“Never!” Nick yells.

“You’re bluffing!” Alex yells at him. “Our parents are dead.”

Intex shakes his head, sighing. He teleports, leaving the room. He reappears in the room with eight adults. Four men and four women. I look at my team; all of them are speechless, their eyes lit up and their jaws dropped. They *are* their parents.

I scoff. This is ... impossible. They had all witnessed their deaths.

Intex smiles at the sight before him. “I’ll allow you guys to catch up.” With that, Intex teleports out of the room.

“Wha ...” Alex says.

The parents all run up to their children; my team. The parents embrace them all in hugs.

“How are you alive?” Alex asks after letting both of his parents hug him while he couldn’t hug them back.

“We really don’t know,” Alex’s mother says. “Intex about killed us, but saved us.”

“He had put us in cryonic sleep,” Alex’s father says. “We were awoken five months ago.”

Alex starts crying. Nick, Mara and Grace cry along with them and their parents. All of the parents crouch down next to their child, keeping them close.

“I hate seeing you like this,” Nick’s mother says.

“I’m just happy you’re alive,” Mara says to her parents. They surely look Hispanic like her.

“You’re English,” Mara’s mother begins, “It’s fluent.”

Mara nods.

Grace talks as she cries; her voice unclear. She calms down to repeat herself.

“Why ... How did you ... what did Intex do to you,” Grace breaks out in tears, crying her words out.

“Oh dear,” Grace’s mother says, wiping her tears away.

“Grace,” her father says. “Intex only kept us asleep. He's done nothing else.”

Grace looks up at his bruise on his face. She also sees the expression he wears. “I know ... you're lying.” She pauses. “Intex hurt you.”

Grace’s father rests his eyes for a moment before opening them again. “It doesn’t matter. We’re together now.”

Grace sniffs, letting the tears to continue running down her face.

I cry, watching them all cry with joy to be with their parents.

“I don't get it,” Alex says to his parents, looking at his father. “I watch Intex shoot you both.”

His father looks at him. "I know," he tells Alex. "It felt real to us, but the bullets only knocked us out; they were rubber bullets. Intex ..." he exhales deeply, "had his workers put us in cryonic sleep afterwards."

"But ..." Alex begins again. "There was ... blood."

"But we're here with you, Alex, hon," his mother assures. She smiles at him. "We've missed you so much."

"Me too."

If I weren't powerless I would be using my telepathy to read their minds, making sure they are really their parents; but I can't, I'm powerless.

Intex appears back in the room. "Okay," he says. "Parents come hither!"

The parents all walk back to Intex, obeying him with fear. They are afraid of getting hurt if they don't submit him. Intex has them conjoin hands and he just touches one of them, teleporting them away. Intex comes back in a second, by himself.

"Alright now," Intex says, clapping his hands together. "So, what's it going to be?" he asks my team. "You can choose. If you want to be with your parents from here on out, you can, *if ...* you join me, if you work with me. *Or ...* you can stay here and rot. Your choice." Intex pauses. "I'll give you guys the night to decide."

Intex teleports, leaving the room to ourselves. I look to my team. They all wear clueless faces. I know they all want to be with their parents, but they most definitely don't want to work for Intex; even though Intex said to work *with* him. Intex really means to work for him, not with him.

I hope they all make the right choice. I am afraid to hurt any of their feelings to say anything right away. They have all night to decide; I can tell them not to side with Intex later.

None of them look up at me. None of them look to me for guidance. They all stare into space or the floor, considering. It pains me to see that they are actually considering this. But ... I have to give it to them: they just found out that their parents are alive.

It seems impossible, though. All of the parents were killed before them. They all recall that as being their last memory before waking up from cryonic sleep. But ... they were so really. Since they are not *my* parents, I am questioning their existence.

Are they real? My team wants them to be, and so do I. I just wish it wasn't under these terms.

Lighthouse Park

Richard has managed to find some kind of food. He's found fish from the bay surrounding them. Richard electrified the fish to cook them, burning a few of them, but it's not like they care.

Victor continues feeding off the lighthouse light.

The two of them finish of the fish in a matter of minutes. They were both starving and the fish filled them up. They both could use water now.

Richard gathers up some bowls. He runs across the bay a short distance to the Manhattan shore, running as fast as lightning so he doesn't sink through. He runs down to the East River Park and back, with water filled in all of the bowls from the park's drinking water.

Victor and Richard both drink out of the bowls, quenching their thirst.

Victor is still in pain. His head throbs; the electricity helps him a little. Every once in a while the light goes so dim because Victor will draw too much energy from it, not relieving enough of the pain. Richard wishes to not see Victor like this. He feels for Victor. He has gotten in this situation because of having lost his daughter. He's grieved since then and it's led to this. Richard can't blame him, especially now when he's in pain.

Victor sits up to sneeze. His sinuses are building up now, clogging him up. Victor wipes his nose on his sleeve.

Richard sends Victor a beam of electricity, in a continuous stream. Victor immediately relaxes. Richard eases Victor's pain. Victor still draws

the electricity from the light by habit, but now with Richard energizing him, the light glows bright; going through Victor.

Victor sighs with relief. Richard would hate to stop pulsing electricity to Victor because it gives him so much liberation; he doesn't want to rip that away from him, even if it drains his energy. Right now, Richard has quite a bit of energy, having just eaten.

“Richard,” Victor says, resting his eyes. “Thank you. This feels great. I appreciate it.”

“No problem,” Richard tells Victor. “Anything else I can do for you.”

Victor opens his eyes and looks up at Richard. He shakes his head. “You're doing enough for me right now.” He pauses. “You're definitely a true friend; more than Drake ever was.”

Richard smiles at Victor then looks at the floor. He hates what's become of Drake. Richard wishes it wasn't this way. He hopes things will go smoothly with Victor. He can't imagine doing this for the rest of his life. Hopefully Victor will overcome this ... strange problem resulting from Drake's power; he screwed his brain. It angers Richard just as much as it does Victor.

The Shelter

All of the cops and the Lieutenant stand around, quivering with fear. Intex has taken their only hope away and now they feel alone. It had sounded like Intex wants them dead, but that he would hold it off for now. The Lieutenant only assumes it's a matter of time before he fulfills that goal.

He thinks about doing another speech, to take advantage of this sound system Avian created, but ... he doesn't know what to say. What hope can he give the people? They are stuck.

They don't have any place to go to. Intex knows they are here and most expectedly will be back to kill them all for having defied him. Where can they hide? There are thousands of people down here. It's not like they can all go back outside and hide up there; they would be out in the open.

Oliver stands outside, staring at the dumpster that covers the hole; the entrance to the shelter. He's happy to have these new powers that he had gotten from Morris.

The cops from the shelter had taken Morris' body up here, throwing him out in the streets.

Oliver is thankful for Morris' power of regeneration. His pain that he's had for so long is finally gone. It's relaxing. He feels great; untouchable.

He thinks about the cop down below in the shelter; the one that almost killed him; the one with great training. He angers him. The cop is the reason for him being out of shape for all of this time until now. He could go down there and easily kill him. The cops could shoot at him, but it wouldn't make a difference, not with his impermeable skin. He considers it, but ... if it weren't for that cop ... he wouldn't be where he is at now. Would he still have gotten Morris' abilities? Maybe, maybe not.

Oliver thinks about how much the cops have done for everyone. They have provided a roof for all of those people, including him. They took him in with a group of people so he could blend, but they still supported him by giving him a place to stay. Oliver could have been killed on the streets, being weak. Or ... he could have been taken in by Intex

and morphed into a hybrid. Oliver thought he would have liked that, but for some reason he decided against it.

Oliver continues to stand in front of the entrance. Something holds him back from going in to kill that cop. He can't figure out what it is. Maybe all of this time he has lost his touch; he has softened up. Maybe he's developing morals. He doesn't feel guilty of anything, though, he just doesn't feel he needs to kill that cop. So he decides not to.

Oliver turns his back to the entrance. He walks away from it, heading towards who knows what. He walks away, not knowing where to go. Just ... away, allowing the cop to live ... at least for now. Maybe Intex will kill him anyway.

His new morals bug him again. *Maybe Intex will kill him anyway.* Something inside of Oliver doesn't like that idea. Intex wants to kill everyone at the shelter. Even as malevolent as Oliver is, the idea of all of those innocent people being killed pains him.

Oliver walks out of the alley and sits against the building wall. He sits to think. What does he do next?

The Shelter

Andrea and her friends Sofia, Kathrine, Tabatha, Chandra, Noelle, and Reye are getting to become scared. Their hope has left the shelter. People all around are beginning to give up; The Avians are gone and Intex knows where they are.

Lon sits next to his sister, Noelle, holding his arm around her. She leans into him, missing doing it for so long. He has always been kind and Noelle had let herself cloud her judgment when he was transformed into a hybrid. He hasn't changed; he's still her loving brother. Just having her brother gives her some hope. He's been around some danger, so he's more equipped than her.

The reporter, Kara, sits near them. The cameraman or photography, Luke sits next to her. They are fairly traumatized from Kara getting shot ... by a cop. Vortex, or as Avian called him Nick, had healed her.

Word is going around about what The Avians' identities are. Andrea already knew about Alex as well as her friends. They hadn't exactly known that he is Whirlwind, but they had the idea because of what happened when they first met.

The first time they all met Alex had created a ball of flame in his hand at Central Park and he panicked. Andrea kept a secret from her friends that she has cryokinesis, but she told Alex. She still keeps that secret from her friends until this day.

The group of friends knows now that Alex is Whirlwind. They know now that Nick is Vortex, as well as many people now. Avian had slipped and used his name when directing him.

People had the hint that the group that had come in with Avian were The Avians themselves. They especially had the idea when Avian talked with them after informing that Intex knew the shelter's location.

The word is going around about the team's identities, but that is not the main concern. People are talking about how they were re-captured and now are exposed like an open nerve. Intex is bound to return to kill them all like he had first intended. That's what people are talking about now; Intex's return. Having Intex find out this shelter's location has been everyone's worst fear; now it has come true.

The cops panic, trying to come up with some kind of plan.

Very few people still have faith in The Avians. Avian had told them all not to lose faith in him and that he would save them all, stop Intex. Now people lose hope, believing that he won't escape from Intex this time. Still, though, people continue to have faith that he will succeed. Everyone wants to believe in The Avians, but most people do not; they feel that they can only dream.

Mount Vernon

Drake smile fades. He hands are at his side and one of his sleeves is rolled up. He eye colors return back to normal. He blinks, wondering what just happened.

He spins around, looking at the whole room. Hank is nowhere to be found. Drake runs into the other room; a lab. Hank is not in there either.

“Where are you?!” Drake exclaims. Excitement still courses through him, eager to get Hank’s power, even though he's not really even sure yet what it is.

Drake runs around the whole house, checking this whole floor of the living room, kitchen, bedroom and lab. He checks the upstairs as well, but only finds two empty bedrooms that don't even have as much as a bed, just dust and cobwebs.

He runs back downstairs, into the living room. Drake yells out in frustration, angry to not have found him. Hank claims to not have teleportation, but it’s like he teleported away. Drake spins around once more, still not finding him. He checks the closets again but fails to find him.

Sighing, Drake sits down on a couch. He thinks about what Hank’s power really could be if it is not teleportation. Surely it looked like teleportation to Drake, but Hank denied it. So what could look like teleportation? Something that involves moving with a second going by. Drake ponders on it. An ability to move with a second going by ... without time going by ...

Drake figures it out. It’s a power to move from one point to another by stopping time. That’s Hanks power; halting time, at the bare minimum. Drake presumes that Hank has the ability of time control. So Hank moved, but to Drake it seemed as if he teleported, because to Drake no time had passed.

Drake tries to think of some other ability that it could be, but comes up with no other one. He thinks about it for around ten minutes, still coming up with Hank’s power only being time manipulation. It doesn’t make any sense to be anything else.

Drake sits on the couch for another hour and loses patience. He jumps from his seat to have a look around. He decides to see what Hank

has in this place, not caring about ransacking the place; hoping Hank will show up sooner or later.

Astoria

Eating another delicious sandwich, Stuart looks at Kyra. She sits, laying her back against a wall, resting her eyes. Tristan and Dawn sit against the back wall, keeping three feet between them. Stuart occupies the corner, eating his sandwich.

He smiles to himself, loving what Kyra has done for him — them. Stuart finds himself just staring at her. Somehow he is falling in love with her, despite the fact that she is twenty years older. Kyra has been sweet to him, respecting him, but Stuart knows that she just wants to help; she couldn't possibly like him.

Stuart looks down at his sandwich, just to force himself to look away from her. He takes a bite and then looks down at the floor. He looks over at Tristan and Dawn; they are beginning to fall asleep, resting their eyes as well. Stuart had just gotten hungry for a sandwich and isn't tired.

Stuart begins to think about their age differences. He guesses that she thirty-five and he's about fourteen. In four years he will be eighteen. But in four years, Kyra will be thirty-nine, if she is thirty-five now. She would be almost forty. Stuart doesn't like the idea of that number. But ... he still can't simply push away his feelings for her.

Most people would think it wrong, strange, or weird to be with someone twenty years older than you. However, some people do that and get married to each other with that age difference. Stuart wonders about that with him and Kyra. He figures that it would never happen. Kyra doesn't even feel that way, as far as he knows. How could she anyway?

Stuart begins to wonder why he's even considering this. He needs to be with someone his age, not just the first girl that comes around, or the first girl that comes to help. Once The Avians save them all from Intex and when things go back to normal, then Stuart can find someone to be with.

Stuart smiles at that thought. For all of this chaos all to end. He wishes it will end now. He still believes that Avian will return and put an end to Intex. Tristan and Dawn have lost hope, but Stuart still believes. He always has. He just wishes his parents would too.

Lighthouse Park

For the past hour, Victor has been free from electricity. He hasn't drawn from the light and Richard hasn't beamed his electric at him. Victor feels fine.

Victor nods at Richard. "I'm telling you," Victor says, "I feel great. I must be healed. I haven't needed electricity for this long."

Richard smiles, happy to be seeing Victor recover. "This is good," Richard says. "Hopefully it won't come back."

"Well I feel fine right now, no pain whatsoever. I think the electricity finally paid off. Thank you Richard for helping me."

"Anytime, Victor." Richard pauses and shifts in his seat. "So, what do we do about Drake?"

Victor nods, knowing what it comes down to. "Drake has made the worst mistake he could ever make. He tried to replicate my powers. I'm not going to just let him get away with it." Victor pauses. "I am going to find Drake and kill him." He pauses again, studying Richard's face. "Are you with me?"

Richard is not sure what to think right now. He looks down at the floor and then back up at Victor. "I am with you to take down Drake, but ... I don't know about killing him."

"Richard. Think about it. If we don't stop him, he'll continue to find metahumans and replicate their abilities. Who knows about many people's brains he'll ruin. And ... he wants to be better than Intex. Intex has created a mess around here, yet Drake wants to do worse. We have

to stop him. The Avians obviously aren't around, so we have to be the heroes this time around. We need to stop Drake once and for all."

Richard nods, agreeing with every word. "You're right. Drake will only get worse and will hurt more people." Richard nods with Victor. "I'm with you. I will help you bring down Drake, but I won't help you kill him. If you want to kill him yourself that's your prerogative."

Victor nods. "Deal."

"Deal."

Both of them have had their share in killing someone, but Richard has killed two people. Victor killed the crane operator that killed his daughter, but Richard has killed his parents' murderer and wife. Richard feels that he's reached his quota per se. Apparently Victor is willing to reach his quota of two people. Not that there is a quota.

"Okay," Richard starts again. "If we are going to be heroes and stop Drake, then what about Intex? Who's going to be the heroes to stop him?"

Victor stops to think about that. "I don't know. Maybe if I can get close enough I could just suck him into my vortex."

"Hmm. There's an idea. Couldn't you just do that with Drake?"

"I could, but I'm not going to. I'm going to kill him for what he's done to me." He pauses. "Now let's go get him."

"Wait," Richard says. "I think it's best that we stay the night here. Give it another day just in case you are not fully healed. We don't know if you'll have a sudden headache."

Victor sighs and finally gives a nod. "Good idea. We will give it one day, but then we immediately go after Drake."

"Okay."

It takes it forever for the sun to set. We can at least see outside through one small window on the far wall. I wonder if Intex intended for it to be there. But it's not like we can get to it or anything.

Grace, Nick, Mara and Alex all are in a haze, thinking about the choice that Intex has given them. I am thinking to myself that I would decline Intex's offer in a heartbeat, but I don't know how they feel. I haven't really lost my parents. I sort of lost my biological parents, but have never even met them, so I have grown attached to them. My adoptive parents in Ohio haven't died, so I don't know how my team feels.

I know they must know for it to be wrong to work for Intex, but they desperately want to be with their parents. I hate seeing them so ... faceless. They all are in a horrible haze, all zoned out. I try to see if I can get them to relax.

I sigh softly. "How are we doing guys?" I ask calmly.

Mara snaps out of her haze first and slowly looks at me. A few seconds later the rest of them snap out of it, one at a time.

Mara looks down at my feet, slowing blinking her eyes. She shakes her head at me. "Mark," she starts to say. "I ... just ... I can't ..." she trails off.

I give her a few seconds to start up again. I give her a comforting smile.

"I wish I could say that I know what you guys are going through," I tell them. "But I really don't. I don't know how you guys are really feeling. I could say that I do, because my parents are in another galaxy, but it's not the same. I've never met them and never become attached to them. I want to encourage you guys, but honestly I don't know how to say it without hurting you guys."

Grace looks up at me, making an understanding smile. Her cheeks are still red from crying. "You're okay, Mark," she says in a soft voice, though strong. "You ... you can tell us anything you want."

I smile at her, still afraid to speak my mind. I want to ask them the question I know they all *must* be thinking. I can't read their minds right now, but I just know they considered this.

"What do you guys think?" I start to ask them. "Are these really your parents?" I pause, letting that sink in. "You guys all told me long ago about how you remember them dying. You remember the blood."

Mara snaps her eyes shut, squinting. She shakes her head, trying to push the memories away. Tears run down her face impulsively.

I continue. "It was all very real to you guys. They were all killed in front of you guys. They were very dead. Now ... how could Intex possible bring them back to you? I'd say it's highly unlikely that it was an illusion. I doubt that they even survived that. I hate to be telling you guys this, because I know you want them to be your parents. I do too. I wish it didn't have to be like this, though. But ... How about this?" I pause to clear my throat, swallowing. "Did they appear to be your parents? Did they act like your genuine parents?"

Most of them nod. Alex doesn't nod at first, but after a few more seconds he does. I wonder if they really believe them to have acted like their parents in front of them, or they wanted them to have seemed to act like their parents. However, they couldn't have gotten much out of their parents, because it was a short moment; all with crying and hugging; not much time to determine if they were really their parents, although they could remember how affectionate their parents were before and compare it to now.

They all look nervous. They all want their parents back, but they don't want to work for Intex. They have to debate it with themselves

what they want more: Intex stopped, or the reunion with their parents; New York's salvation or themselves, which is not even guaranteed.

"Consider this," I say, "If you do in fact go with Intex to get your parents back, will you even be certain to be united with them? Or will you be locked up with them?"

Suddenly a pulse of electricity pulses through my chair from the floor. I shake involuntarily and let my head drop down. I look at the floor to see a last spark jump between the chair legs and the hole in the floor, giving me a last jolt.

Intex's voice beams into the room from a sound system. "You cannot decide for them, Mark. They must decide for themselves."

I breathe heavy because of just having been electrocuted. It still hurts; feeling like my chest is being pressed in. I feel achy and my nerves tingle.

I want to tell my team that this is the real Intex that he'll treat you like this for life, but I decide against it. I do not feel like having electricity go through me again. That is painful and the pain still streams through me.

Suddenly I feel sleepy. I look up at my team and shake my head, trying to tell them that Intex is ruthless. I get another shock of electricity to go through me. I jerk in my chair and breathe hard.

"No sign language either, Mark!" Intex's voices booms throughout the room.

After a few minutes of gathering myself together I take a look around the room. There aren't any cameras that I can see, so Intex's must have microscopic cameras of some sort.

My nerves calm down again and my tiredness returns. The day has ended and night has arrived. I let my eyes close and I fall asleep.

Mount Vernon

Down in the basement, Hank keeps himself from screaming at the top of his lungs. He has never felt such a headache. He has never even had a migraine in his life, but he's sure if he were to have one this headache would be worse.

Hank fears Drake might still be upstairs, so he holds back his screams. The very people he's saved are now helping him. They let him lay on the couch and they hold a bag of ice on his head, trying to do what they can.

Hank barely explained what had happened, so they do not understand what happened. They do know, though, not to go upstairs.

Suddenly Hank's headache stops. He sighs and sits up, taking the bag of ice off of his head. But he looks around to see the people all frozen in space. He concentrates, trying to resume time, but he fails. He tries again, but time remains halted.

Above, suddenly something seems different to Drake. He was just throwing things around, looking for whatever. But it suddenly seems quiet to him. He lifts his head up and looks around. Something doesn't seem right.

Drake looks around the whole room. Something right behind him is stuck in mid-air; it's something he just threw off of the counter. He steps away from the counter to look around. He drops his jaw when he sees a faint image of himself bent over and in the throwing position. It's where he was just standing at.

Everyone is frozen in space. Drake figures it out; time is at a rest.

Drake didn't think he had gotten Hank's power. He concentrates to see if he can resume time, but he is unsuccessful. So he didn't halt time himself. He knows he could have, especially when he didn't get a chance to really even see how Hank's brain actually worked; he had only caught a glimpse of it, not enough to understand it.

The Shelter

Andrea jumps to her feet, quickly backing away from her friends. Her heart races. Her friends are all motionless. It is frightening to her to be the only one to be able to move.

"Hey!" Andrea yells at her friends, but her voice fluctuates.

Next to Noelle, Lon gets to his feet.

They both notice how suddenly it is quiet and no one but the two of them are moving. They look at each, both confused. The two of them take a look around the whole station, spinning in place. They see faint images of themselves where they were just sitting.

"What happened?" Andrea asks Lon. Her voice sounds as if she's talking into a jar.

"I don't know," Lon replies with his voice sounding just as distorted. "It's like ... time's frozen."

"That's ... not possible."

Andrea and Lon can barely understand each other, but somehow they manage. It is a scary sight to see so many people all around, all frozen in time.

"What are we supposed to do?" Andrea asks Lon.

“I don't know,” Lon replies. “Why is this even happening?”

Lon knows that he's the only hybrid in the shelter. He wonders if being a hybrid has anything to do with this.

“Hmm,” Lon starts. “I'm a hybrid ... and everyone else isn't ... so they are not frozen. But ... are you a hybrid?”

“No, but,” Andrea starts, “I do have a power.”

Andrea demonstrates and crystalizes her hand into ice. Usually she'll cause the air around her hand to drop in temperature, making it to steam, but it doesn't. The air isn't circulating.

“It seems different, though,” Andrea says.

“Wow, that's amazing,” Lon says. “Cryokinesis. All I have is wings.”

“Well ... wings are more amazing than my ice power.”

“It depends,” Lon says after turning his head to look around.

“What?” Andrea asks him. “I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you.”

“Hmm?” Lon turns back to Andrea. “You couldn't hear me?”

“Now I can,” she replies. “You turned your head away and said something, but I couldn't hear you. But now I can.”

“Well, I just said, ‘it depends.’ You know, about how powers.” Lon pauses to determine what happened with their voices. “Hmm. It must be that since this air isn't really circulating that we must be facing each other for the sound to travel. Our voices must be strong enough to travel through the air in front of us.”

“Must be,” Andrea says, trying to visualize it, but not really understanding.

They suddenly find it hard to breathe. Both of them as a reaction gasp. Lon backs up and takes in some air. Andrea steps towards him and can breathe in the oxygen now in front of air.

Lon nods, understanding what's happening. "The air is not circulating," he says. "So, we have to be the ones to circulate. The air won't move for us to breathe normally. We have to move around ourselves." He talks, making sure to face Andrea so she can hear.

Andrea nods, understanding what Lon meant.

"So," Andrea says. "How long is it going to be like this?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," Lon tells her.

Lighthouse Park

"Do you hear that?" Victor asks Richard, his voice sounding muffled.

"Whoa," Richard says. "Your voice sounds funny ... my voice sounds funny."

"What's going on?" Victor looks around. "I was just going to say that it suddenly got quiet." He pauses. "I don't hear any wind, or birds, or other animals."

"Yeah, me neither."

"And what's with our voices?"

Richard shakes his head, not knowing what in the world is happening. He looks at Victor, puzzled. It looks like he has a third arm, but it's faded.

"What?" Victor asks, lifting his arm.

Now Richard can see a faint image of where he had just had his arm at. Victor looks down and sees it.

“What the?” Victor asks.

Victor sets his arm back down to feel it, but his hand goes through the faint image of his arm. He gets up from his seat and sees a faint image of his whole body sitting there.

Richard jumps up to see it, but since he gets up so quickly he starts to float a quarter inch above the floor.

“Whoa,” Richard says, sliding across the floor.

Slowly he stops and Victor looks at him, wondering how he's doing that. Victor sees the faint image of Richard sitting where he was just at. Richard stops sliding on the floor and his feet gently land back down. He turns to see the faint image of himself, sitting.

“This doesn't make any sense,” Richard says. “What is this?”

“I don't know,” Victor replies. Their voices still sound like they're speaking through pillows.

They look out of the windows, seeing some birds in the middle of the air, not flying anywhere. They are stuck in place. Down below they see crabs not moving. They look out to the water; there happens to be one fish jumping above the water, frozen in midair. There's a flock of seagulls crowded by the shore. Every last one of them is frozen. Some of them were about to land, some walking, and some about to take flight, but all of them are frozen.

Victor says something while his head faces outside, but Richard doesn't hear him, he only sees his lips move. He taps Victor.

“What'd you say?” Richard asks Victor.

Victor turns to him. "I said, 'this is strange.'" Victor replies. "Why, you didn't hear me?"

"No," Richard replies. "I saw you talking, but not a sound came out."

"What? I heard myself, though."

Richard shrugs.

"All of this is so strange," Victor says. "Things are frozen in midair. Our voices sound funny. We have to face each other to hear ... it's like ... time's frozen."

Richard nods. "That's it. That must be it! Time is frozen."

"You're right; it must be ... but how in the world is it?"

Outside the Shelter

Oliver still leans against the wall of the building, right outside the alley. He snaps open his eyes, looking all around him. The wind has stopped and it is dead silent.

He throws his hands out quickly, feeling as if he just pushed away thick clouds, but nothing is there. He creates some wind, but it quickly fades, losing momentum.

Oliver tilts his head.

“That’s impossible,” he says, his voice sounding dampened. He's shocked by the sounding of his voice.

Oliver gets to his feet. He looks all around and spots a bird stationary in midair. There is something dropping from it about twenty feet straight down from it; bird poop. The bird had pooped, but it is frozen in the air as well.

Everywhere Oliver looks, it is frozen. He sees scattered papers and other trash completely and impossibly motionless. He looks at the wall where he sat against. He's see the faint image of himself sitting against it with his eyes close. He jumps back, frightened by it.

“What the?” he says to himself, his voice still sounding strange and stifled.

Oliver is confused. He teleports onto the rooftop. He looks out across Manhattan. Looking out, he sees things stuck in space. There are tons of birds, all of them still. He tries to look for anything moving. Nothing catches his eyes; everything is still.

Oliver decides to put his new power to the test; to see how invulnerable he is, not afraid to; he knows that the healing factor of his would take over if need be. He jumps off of the roof. He falls about ten feet and then slows down to a stop. He is fifty feet in the air still. Oliver shakes his head in disbelief and teleports down to the ground, onto the pavement.

Intex HQ Office

Intex leans back in his chair when everything goes quiet. All of the loud noises of the machines running stop.

“What is going on?” Intex yells, looking through the window. His voice sounds muffled and he puzzles at it.

Intex wonders what in the world happened when he looks to see that all of his workers are looking around puzzled at each other. Intex turns to look at Darrius and Jackson. They are just as bewildered.

Intex gets from his seat and takes a closer look through the window. He turns around to face Darrius and Jackson, but notices the faint image of himself leaning in the chair.

“Ah ...” Intex says, realizing what happened and making sure to face the two. “Time is frozen.”

They are still confused, but that clears up most things they puzzle about.

Intex turns back to the window. “But ... how?” he wonders aloud, not worried about the other two hearing him; they won't. Intex understands the laws of time ceasing. “Someone out there must have that ability. But it doesn't make sense how he can halt everything but the people.”

Intex stands there for what would seem like minutes, but in reality not even a second; virtual minutes. He uses all of that time to try to make sense of this. He considers everything.

He comes to a conclusion with himself. All of his workers have powers. They are not halted in time. One way to test this is to see if Mark and his pals are frozen. They are powerless right now so should be motionless.

Intex teleports into the prison, finding Mark, Nick, Alex, Mara and Grace; all frozen in time. None of them move. He smiles; they have no idea he's here. Intex looks up at his power negating devices and smiles.

"I love you guys," he says to the devices, his voice sounding distorted.

Intex teleports back to his office, facing Darrius and Jackson.

"Time's at a stoppage," he tells him. "It seems to be halted for only metahumans and hybrids. Mark and his companions are stationary in time while we linger about."

"How? Who is doing it?" Darrius asks. Jackson looks at Darrius and then at Intex.

"I know someone had to have done it ... unless someone invented a machine, but I haven't the slightest idea who. The only person I can think whom had any ability concerning time was my friend the precog. But ... he's long past."

They nod at Intex.

"What if your friend has come to the future at some time in his life?" Jackson asks.

"That is possible, but I don't see why he would have any reason to at this particular point in time." Intex pauses. He starts to talk, facing the window, but stops himself. He turns back towards Jackson and Darrius. "I

could use a device that I have gotten from my friend. It's a chronokinetic detector. Like a seismometer that finds an earthquake's epicenter, the device can pinpoint where the chronokinetic person is coming from." Intex pauses. "Of course I don't know how to use it though. My precog friend, or really my chronokinetic friend, always used it. He gave it to me for safe keeping, but I never learned how to use it."

"Well," Darrius says. "If time stays motionless like this, we would have all of the time in the world."

"Now that," Intex exclaims, his face beaming, "sounds nice!" Intex pauses and thinks of what to do.

After a brief virtual moment of silence, Darrius speaks. "So, what are we going to do?"

"Well ..." Intex starts. "We are not even sure how long this will last. But in the meantime that it does, let's try to figure out that chronokinetic detector."

Mount Vernon

Pacing around the floors, Hank tries figuring out what to do. His power fails him every time he's tried to set time in motion. He doesn't see how he could possibly fix this without his power. Time is frozen and he can't do a thing.

He is sick of seeing all of the people he's rescued trying to help the faint image of him lying on the bed. All of the people are frozen in time.

Hank sighs and rolls his head back, looking at the ceiling. Suddenly he hears a creak in the floor of the upstairs. Curious, he tilts his head down and the sound stops. He tilts his head back up and immediately hears the creaking of the floor again.

Drake. He's up there, walking around.

“How?” Hank asks himself, his voice sounding muffled again.

Drake is somehow moving around in frozen time. Hank didn't think Drake had absorbed his powers, because he hadn't given him a chance to. But, perhaps he did. But, then again, wouldn't Drake have just let then? Drake would've been long gone, and testing the power; time should be resuming and stopping or slowing down and speeding up. But it just remains halted. That makes Hank wonder. Drake must not really have his power, then.

But ... Hank thinks ... How can Drake be moving while everyone else isn't? The only thing Hank can contemplate with is that the people down here are all powerless now, but upstairs Drake is not. If that's the reason, then Hank has somehow ceased time for only metahumans and possibly the parahumans as well, also known as the human-animal hybrids of Intex's.

“Oh,” Hank says aloud, but it still sounds muffled. “This could be bad.”

Outside the Shelter

Still confused, Oliver roams around, trying to decipher this. He checks many streets and finally at this one he finds a live hybrid; it's in motion, not frozen in time like the rest of things.

The hybrid looks to be a lizard. Large bumps go down its hunched back. It looks to be a man, thankfully. He has reptile-like skin of scales with large claws on all hands and feet. His mouth is wide and its tongue long.

The lizard sees Oliver and snarls. Oliver shakes his head and scoffs at it. He teleports behind him and the lizard immediately spins around, almost hitting Oliver with his tail.

Oliver holds his hands up. "I just want to ask you something," Oliver says with his voice sounding muffled.

The parahuman pauses, questionably.

"Do you have any idea why time is frozen?" Oliver asks the lizard.

The lizard doesn't respond right away, but after a few more virtual seconds he shakes his head. "I ..." he croaks, his voice sounding low and raspy. "I don't know why."

Oliver pauses. An idea comes to him. "Is it Intex?"

"I don't think so."

Oliver nods. "Okay. Are you one of Intex's?"

The lizard-human shakes his head. "No, I'm one of those who Intex captured and transformed into a hybrid." He pauses. "I chose to be a hybrid of a lizard. It was the best I could think of at the moment. I feared for what Intex would have chosen for me."

"I understand," Oliver tells him.

Oliver looks at the lizard, wondering if it would be possible for him to steal his power. He's never done it on a parahuman, just metahumans. Oliver stares at the lizard for too long, making the lizard snap at him, slapping his tail on the pavement. The sound would seem to echo, but it is stopped as if dampened; like hitting a drum without letting the sound ring.

"What do you want?!" the lizard yells, but he really meant, "*Why are you staring at me?*"

"Nothing, I'm sorry," Oliver says. "I just was zoning out, thinking." Oliver doesn't really mean to apologize; he just doesn't want the lizard to think he means trouble.

Oliver tries to not look directly at the lizard to feel for his power. He can sense people's abilities, so he tries to do so with this man. He concentrates, causing the lizard to look at him confusingly. Oliver ignores him and pretends to go back into a haze. The lizard shrugs it off, though feeling awkward. Oliver finally succeeds in feeling something with the lizard.

He concentrates, feeling powers of speed, agility ... regeneration, strength. But he doesn't feel the man's DNA of the lizard, which means to Oliver that he cannot steal his powers of being a lizard, because that would entail stealing his DNA; that is not a part of Oliver's ability to steal others' abilities.

Oliver looks away. "Sorry, I zoned out again," he tells the parahuman, although again he doesn't mean it sincerely.

The lizard scowls at Oliver. “Who are you, really?” the lizard-human asks.

Oliver smiles at him. “I’m no one, *really*,” Oliver mocks.

Oliver thinks of the man’s abilities he could steal if he wanted to; speed, agility, regeneration and strength. The only thing he could really use it the speed and agility. He doesn’t need the other two powers.

“*No one?*” the lizard asks. “Then I suggest you leave me alone before I hurt you.”

Oliver can tell that the man doesn’t really want to hurt him, but will if Oliver pesters him. Oliver smiles at him. “You can’t hurt me,” he tells him.

“You have no idea.”

“Actually I do. I know what you capable of, since you’re a lizard. But actually *you* have no idea. You don’t know what I can do.”

“I saw you appear behind me.”

“It’s called teleportation.”

“Yeah.”

Oliver waits for him to say something else, but he just trails off. “You really do not know, man.”

“Do you want to find out?” the lizard-man exclaims.

Oliver pisses the lizard off. The man swings his claws at Oliver, attempting to scratch his face and knock him off of his feet. Oliver doesn’t even move and allows himself to get hit. The lizard hits Oliver, but doesn’t even cut him and the amount of force is just absorbed into Oliver after his face ripples, absorbing the kinetic energy.

The lizard lets his jaw drop in awe. Oliver can't help but laugh at the look on his face.

“How'd that work out for ya,” Oliver asks, continuing to laugh. “You didn't believe me ... wow!”

“How did you ... do that?”

Oliver looks down at the ground, shaking his head. He looks back up at the lizard. “It's a long story and I'd rather not tell it.”

“But we have all of the time in the world.”

“Good point, but it won't sound as interesting the way I tell it; you need a great story teller. But trust me,” Oliver starts nodding his head, “it is a very interesting story. It would knock your socks off.”

Oliver maintains to keep this lizard so perplexed. Oliver decides to just let the lizard live, feeling sorry for him. He teleports away, leaving the lizard alone again.

Intex HQ

Intex, Darrius and Jackson huddle around Intex's desk. Before them on the tabletop is the detector of chronokinetics. Intex has managed to figure it out somewhat. It is searching with a one-hundred mile radius.

It looks high-tech, but it is actually like a low-tech radar sensing device. Intex believes that it has it on the wrong setting, because he claims he remembers seeing his old acquaintance use it differently and with ease.

The device seems to be scanning randomly around the area. It hasn't even found an exact location of the pinpoint where the chronokinetic person would be at. They decide to take a break and let the

device go to work. Thankfully Intex's old friend had designed it to work in halted time.

The three of them just sit down in their chairs when the door opens. It doesn't really make a sound like it normally does, since the air does not circulate in ceased time.

It appears to be Rhonda walking into the room.

"What's going on?" she asks them, making sure to face them; she already knows to not face another way when speaking, apparently learning that when communicating with Bryce and Blade. "Why do our voices sound funny and why is everything frozen?"

Intex smiles up at her. "Rhonda," Intex starts. "It appears that a metahuman has halted time and that there device on the table," Intex points to it, "is working on tracking down the person responsible for it. My guess is that the person is not in control of his power."

Rhonda nods. "Time is halted. You mean it's frozen?"

"Yeah, that's another way of saying it."

Rachel nods, looking at the fainted images of their bodies in here; those of Intex's, Darrius' and Jackson's.

"Would this explain those ... replicas of us," she asks, referring to the fainted bodies.

Intex nods. "Yes. Light isn't bending or going through with time being stopped. Also, air isn't circulating and gravity doesn't work like normal. So, just be wary. Don't stay in one place too long or you'll breathe in all of the oxygen."

Rhonda nods. "Okay, thanks boss."

Intex nods to her and she leaves the office, heading back to the room they stay at.

Suddenly the device beeps at them, surprising them because they are not facing the sound. Just then they hear the sound of the machines running outside the room, through the glass.

Intex jumps up and looks through the window.

“Time has recommenced,” Intex says.

The three of them gather around the desk. The device had beeped because it failed to track down the chronokinetic. Time starts up again, so it can't track the person down.

Intex curses and is aggravated that it did not work. Not that it is that big of a deal. This is not according to plan.

“Not to worry,” Intex says. “We’ll try this another time.”

Mount Vernon

Hank wanders around, walking towards the people again. They are still frozen in time.

Suddenly Hank head feels like his head explodes and he falls hard onto his knees. Hank doesn't even notice the pain in his knees, since his headache's pain is tremendous.

Time is resumed and the people realize that Hank is lying on the floor besides them, no longer on the bed. To them, no time has passed at all and Hank just suddenly appears on the floor to their sides, still in pain.

Hank tries his best to not scream from the pain, not wanting to allow Drake to hear him, despite this room being fairly soundproof.

Intex HQ: Prison

The next morning — at least I believe it is — I wake up. Intex opens the door and steps in; the door closes by itself behind him. I look around, to see that the same people are left in here. Rachel, Bruce and Brandon are ... gone, not in this room.

“So, have you guys made your decisions?” Intex asks those who he's returned the parents to, or supposedly had. I still don't know which to believe.

I look at my team to see if they really are considering it. Grace and Mara look at each, as if communicating through each other's mind, even though they are powerless and don't have that ability presently. But, they both seem to have made their decisions. They look at Intex and shake their heads.

“We choose Mark,” Grace says, firmly.

I look at Intex. Somehow he remains expressionless, but I'm sure he's angry inside. He moves on, looking at Nick and Alex.

Alex looks down at the floor, thinking. He seems to actually be considering this. Nick looks at Alex — the only one remaining besides himself — then he looks at Intex. Sadness enters Nick's face, but only once he looks away from Intex. He obviously starts to think about his parents and how much he's missed them.

I sigh, hoping they make the right choice. Intex looks at them and smiles.

“Please,” Intex says. “Choose wisely. Pick your parents and side with me to rule the world. Live in peace and with freedom. You can have anything you’ve ever wanted. Or ... choose Mark; being locked in this prison forever. Your choice.”

“While in reality Intex destroys the world,” I add on.

Intex darts his head at me, scowling. “I’ve already told you, Mark, you can’t choose for them!”

For a second I thought he might shock me, but restrains from doing so.

I turn back to look at Alex and Nick, fearing the worst. Alex looks up at Intex, ready to tell him his decision.

“I choose ...” Alex starts, his voice croaking with nervousness. He looks at Intex, not looking my way at all. “My ...” he gives a long pause and exhales deeply. He forces his eyes shut and squeezes them, thinking. “Parents,” he breathes out and lets his head drop.

All life drains from my face and I slowly shake my head. Alex ... just chose Intex. This shows how well I knew him and how well my friendship was. Intex’s face beams with joy. He looks at Nick.

Nick looks up at Intex and looks at me.

“Remember, Nick,” Intex says. “This is your choice not Mark’s; you don’t need to look at him.”

“Actually,” Nick says as he turns back to Intex. “This is the not a choice. The Earth will always need our protection and we can’t abandon it, no matter what you give us; even if it is our parents. So ... I choose to side with Mark.”

I smile, happy with Nick’s decision as well as his speech. Intex scowls again, but he walks up to Alex, allowing joy to reenter his face. He places his hands on Alex’s chains; something on the chains makes a beep.

The chains fall right off. Somehow they work with his touch, maybe his fingerprints.

Intex nods at Alex and Alex stands up, avoiding looking at our faces. "You made the right choice, Alex," Intex tells him. "Come with me, I will take you to your parents."

All of us watch in anguish as Alex walks out with Intex. We have lost another team member. I have a feeling that Intex is trying to bring us down, one by one. First with Rachel, Bruce and Brandon by changing their personalities, now by giving those of us back our parents. What's next?

I sigh as the door shuts, leaving the rooms to ourselves; myself, Nick, Grace and Mara. We exchanged looks at each other, all knowing what just happened, but we don't know what to say for encouragement. How can we possibly lighten up this situation?

"Can you promise me something?" I ask them. They all are already looking at me and they nod. "Never side with Intex. No matter what. *Please*. Like Nick said, this world will always need our protection; we cannot give up on it. We must fight to the end. Promise?"

"Promise," Grace and Mara say as Nick says, "I promise."

I nod to them. "Let's keep our spirits up, okay?"

They all nod and after a few minutes we all look at the space in front of us, zoning out. All we can think about is what just happened with the loss of our teammates. Intex is surely planning on branching out, farther than just New York. So he will need us stopped. In just four months he has gotten New York, and he's in the hang of things; without us stopping him, it shouldn't be long and he will prosper.

After a few hours, the doors open up. Unlike before, when the doors opened the power proof gas would leave the room giving us our powers back, the power proof gas from the devices stay in here, keeping

us powerless. Workers storm into the room, shoving plates of colorless food in front of our mouths.

We all apathetically go for the food, eating it with regret. The workers feed our faces. Just then, Rhonda, Bryce and Blade step into the room, letting the door shut behind them.

Rachel, or Rhonda, looks at me, scoffing. She shakes her head at me with disgust. "You look so petty," she says.

Those words break my heart in a second. It pains me to hear those words from her, even though it's not really *her*. I finish chewing.

"Please," I tell Rhonda. "Don't ... insult me like that. Not from you."

She scoffs again, but this time laughing. "Wow!" she exclaims. "You really are wretched." She pauses. "So, you want me to not insult you with this body?"

I nod, not smiling or frowning, but pain is in my face. Rhonda scoffs at me and walks up to Blade. Rhonda smiles at him and Blade smiles back at her, lifting his head towards her. Rhonda wraps an arm around Blade, lovingly, and starts rubbing his chest.

"Ooh," she says, mocking me. Blade goes along with it, acting as if he enjoys it, perhaps he does.

I look away, jamming my eyes shut. Agonizing pain stabs my heart. My chest aches and I can't breathe right.

Rhonda laughs and I feel the worker of Intex's try to open my mouth to feed me, but I don't budge.

"Say, Blade," Rachel says. "How would you like to go out with me?"

I don't look up to see Blade's reaction; I keep my head down and my eyes clamped shut.

"I would be more than happy to," Blade replies. He laughs. It's that same dreadful laugh he had long ago when I first met him; when he was Blade, not Brandon.

Rhonda and Blade both laugh horribly wrong, menacingly. I wait for them to leave the room before I let the worker feed me again. I chew the food even more miserably, but this time I do not taste it. The pain in my chest hurts so much that I do not feel or taste.

The workers finish feeding us and leave. If I were not chained, my arms would still be at my side, because I am so glum. I could be either sad or mad. I am choosing sad, not intentionally though.

"Mark?" Nick asks.

I force myself to look up at him. I only just now realize that I have been crying. I give up on trying hiding that from Nick. They all know anyway.

"Remember what you told us?" Nick says. I nod to him. "Can you promise us the same thing? Choose the Earth's protection, not the reunion of Rachel for that would result in siding with Intex."

My heart skips a beat. Nick is already thinking ahead. We all know that Intex will try to get us all to go down. Nick has figured it out. Intex may try to get me to side with him by giving Rachel back to me. Then somehow he would get Rachel to stay with him.

I continue looking at Nick, but all I can think about is getting Rachel back. My heart sinks. I have to choose between her and the Earth's protection. I have to be prepared to face this, because Intex would no doubt give me this choice.

“Nick,” I tell him, my voice breaking. I have never felt so weak in my life. “I love Rachel so much and it pains me to see her like this.” Nick drops his head; hope leaves him. “But ...” Nick looks back up, to see where I am going with this. “No matter what, like I told you, the Earth’s protection is the most important thing. I will never side with Intex. Ever. I will get Rachel back another way.”

Nick sighs and nods. He smiles; hope returns back to him. “Good, Mark. For a second, you had me going there.” It would seem like he would laugh at this moment, but he doesn’t, not even a small chuckle; not with this situation.

“Trust me, Nick,” I say to him, but also to Mara and Grace, looking between the three of them. “I will never side with Intex. It’s like it’s in my blood. We do not agree at all.”

Lighthouse Park

Richard and Victor are still confused. Time has gained motion, but they are not sure how it even stopped in the first place. Suddenly everything had returned to normal, sounds suddenly coming back to life.

“Do you think Intex had something to do with it?” Victor asks Richard.

Richard shrugs. “I really don't know, but I'm thinking that may be it,” Richard replies. “I mean it would make sense.”

“But why? What is he planning on doing with time frozen?”

The two of them ponder over it. “Well,” Richard starts up again. “What if it were actually someone else, not Intex?”

Victor tilts his head. “Who?”

“No idea.”

“What would anyone hope to achieve by granting everyone the freedom of being in frozen time?”

Richard stops to think about that. “Good question.” Richard considers it with himself. “What if only a certain people were able to perceive this frozen time?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that ... what if only people like us were frozen in time, while other people, normal people, were oblivious to it; stuck in frozen time?”

“Hmm,” Victor considers if. “How did you come to think of that?”

Richard shrugs. “I'm just trying to think of all of the possibilities. Because ... obviously time wasn't frozen for all signs of life, just us.” He refers to the animals being frozen outside. “Both of us have something in common; abilities. All other things were frozen.”

“What if it only worked on people? Perhaps only people could observe this frozen time.”

“Maybe. That seems more logical.”

Victor shakes his head. “Let's think about the most important question,” Victor says. “Who is responsible for this? Intex or someone else? Was it really a person or a machine?”

Richard nods, agreeing. “How are we going to find out?”

Victor rubs his chin. Neither one of them are certain.

“Well ... first things first. Let's get out of this lighthouse. I am feeling fine now, thanks to you Rick. It's time we leave this place.”

Mount Vernon

Drake exhales loudly, grunting. He still waits for Hank to appear somewhere. He paces around, back and forth. Time has returned back to normal, so ... well, Drake's not really sure what to think of it. But, surely, Hank must still be alive.

He checks the house everywhere once again, but finds no one. This place is vacant.

Suddenly a sound of someone screaming reaches his ears. Drake spins around towards the sound. It comes from the bedroom. Drake practically runs into the room. He sees that there are three windows in the room and for a moment he thinks the scream may have come from outside, which wouldn't be surprising.

He hears it again. It comes from the floor. Drake looks down to see a carpet. He telekinetically throws the carpet out of the way. He sees a wooden floor, but something stands out. He gets closer to it and realizes that there's a door edged out in the floor.

Drake chuckles and shakes his head in disbelief.

"I found you," Drake says to himself.

Drake throws the door open and starts heading down the steps. He immediately hears the screaming of someone trying to suppress himself, but fails.

"Who's there?" someone else's voice asks.

Drake looks down at the person. He's never seen him before.

“Who are you?” Drake asks the man.

“No one,” he says. “But you can't be down here.”

“Says who?”

The man doesn't say. “You still haven't told me who you are.”

“Neither did you.”

The screaming sounds again.

“I'm sorry, but you have to go.”

“You're not sorry,” Drake says. He raises his hand and telekinetically throws the man over, walking down the rest of the steps.

He fully enters the basement, seeing a small crowd of people, most of them crowded around the screaming man. A few of them look away from the man to look at Drake, giving Drake a clear view of who the man is; it's Hank.

Drake looks at Hank perplexedly. He doesn't understand how Hank is suddenly in pain.

Hank grabs his head and looks up to see who is here. He gasps and for a second his pain leaves; he sees that it's Drake. Hank sits up, but the people around him stay where they are. They can tell that Hank does not like this man, Drake.

“How'd you find me?” Hank asks, surprisingly strong.

“I found your ... secret entrance,” Drake replies. “Your screams led me right to it. What's wrong with your ... head?”

“You did this!” Hank exclaims, rubbing his fingers against his head as if to help.

“What? How could I do that?”

“You did something to my ... brain.”

“I was going to replicate your ability, but you froze time and escaped.”

“I wasn’t going to ... simply ... let you ... have it,” Hank says staggered in between major pains in his head. “I can't think straight.”

Drake understands and nods. He gets an idea. “What if I replicate it now? Maybe it’ll heal your brain.”

“No!” Hank exclaims rather quickly. “I would never allow for someone like you to have my power!” Hank pauses to gather himself. “Now, please leave!”

Drake scoffs and shakes his head. “I want your power.”

“You don't need it and I'm not giving it to you. Instead, I’ll just inject you with a power negating serum. How's that sound?”

Drake’s heart skips a beat. He would definitely not want that.

“You could try to copy my ... power, but ... I would cease time so you wouldn’t be able to, then I could ... inject the serum into you.”

“No,” Drake says pathetically.

“Then, I suggest that you leave me alone.”

That triggers something in Drake’s head, and he turns around towards the steps. He starts walking up, fearing that Hank might just do it anyway. Drake runs the rest of the way up, knowing how easily Hank could do it; it wouldn’t take Hank any time at all and Drake could be powerless.

Drake doesn’t want to risk that so he leaves. He exits out the front door, which is just an opening now since the door is still knocked down. He exits the house, debating on what to do now. Drake’s not even sure what he wants to do. He had wanted to retaliate against Hank, but that

plan quickly extinguished. Now Drake has to decide what to do next; find someone else to replicate their powers of, or try to compete with Intex. He is still mad that Intex is the one ruling New York and not him. He debates on trying to test Intex and go about the same route as him.

Intex HQ

Alex feels guilty for going with Intex. But, Intex does take him to his parents. First, Alex waits outside their room. Intex opens the door and then lets him go in after leaving them.

Alex walks into the room, finding his parents getting up from a couch. They let Alex run up to them, with lightning speed. Alex has his powers back in this room.

They all embrace in a hug, glad to be together again.

“Alex,” his mother says. “I love you so much.”

“I love both of you too,” Alex tells them. They retract from each other and Alex looks at both of them in the eyes. “What has Intex done to you guys?”

“Nothing,” his father replies. “Why do you ask that?”

“Because ... Intex has ... he's evil and done so much, so I wonder if he's done something to you guys.”

“No,” his mother confirms it.

“He's only had us locked up since we woke from cryonic sleep.”

Alex looks around this room. It looks like a small apartment.

“In here?” Alex asks.

“No,” his father replies. “We have been in prisons. But don't worry about that son. We are together now.”

Alex smiles, but he doesn't feel that happy to be with his parents; he knows he betrayed Mark.

"Why aren't you guys locked up now?"

The parents look at each other then back at Alex. "We are giving the freedom of this room because of you, Alex," his father replies. "We will never be in a prison again now that you are with us. That's what Intex said."

Alex still hates Intex, but he's happy that he didn't kill his parents. He hugs them again. "I can't believe how much I missed you guys. If only we could get back to normal in a second."

They smile.

"We can try," his mother says.

They are silent for a few moments. Alex has been without his parents for so long that he doesn't even know what to talk about with them. Now, he has to work with Intex to keep his parents.

"Mom, dad," Alex starts. They look at him, smiling. "I'm happy we're back together."

"We are too," his mother says.

"But I wish it weren't like this. And not under these terms. I made a mistake. I shouldn't be working for Intex just to get you guys back."

"Alex, don't," Alex's mother urges. "We just got together. Don't pull us away. Don't let Intex take us back to prison."

"Okay," Alex says, feeling for them.

Inside, Alex feels guilty for having made this choice. He chose to work for Intex; the man who had supposedly killed his parents. He looks at his mother and father; they are just like his parents down to every detail. Even though no one really knows what to say, Alex can tell that

these guys are their parents for sure; there's no doubt. They act the same way. Their faces tell it all; they are his parents for sure.

Alex sits down at the couch, letting them sit with him. The silence is killing him. "What did we talk about when we were all together all those years ago?" Alex asks.

They smile at him and his father chuckles.

"Well," Alex's mother says. "Just normal chitchat. But sometimes we would just sit together and watch TV."

Alex nods. "Sometimes I wished you would stop trying to talk to me while I watched TV, but now I regret it."

"Don't, honey. You were being just like any normal kid."

Alex nods. "I didn't realize how much I have missed you. Even though I thought that you were so annoying for always trying to talk to me about what I thought was nonsense, I realize that I ... I missed that. I missed being together, even if it is just to talk."

"We missed that too, son," his father tells him. He wraps his arm around Alex's shoulders. "And guess what?"

"Huh?" Alex asks.

Alex's father points at the wall to their left; there's a TV mounted on it. It looks to be about sixty inches.

"Wow, that's a big TV!" Alex exclaims.

"We can watch if we want," his father says. "We can watch it together, just like old times."

"Really?"

“Yeah. Intex said that we could do whatever with whatever’s in the room.” His father pauses and chuckles softly. “He even said we could break anything if we really wanted to.”

Alex scoffs, and then nods. “Let’s watch TV then,” he says.

His father reaches over and grabs the remote off of a nice, polished, finished oak-wood coffee table. He presses a button and the TV powers on. It turns on right to a sports station. His father looks to Alex for advice as to which station to switch it to.

“Well, dad. What do you like to watch?” Alex asks, wanting it to be just like old times. When dad got home from work, he would want to watch his own TV.

“Don't you want to watch something though?”

“I want you to pick, please.”

“Okay.”

His father flips through the channels, looking for the one he wants. The channels are different than the TV he was used to. He flips passed on, but then flips back. It’s a crime stopping show.

“You want to watch that?” Alex’s mother asks.

Alex smiles; that’s exactly what his mother used to act like.

“Yes,” Alex says. “Let’s watch that. It reminds me of back then.”

“Okay,” his mother gives in.

The three of the sit back and relax, watching the show. His father does not know the show, since it is new and he's been gone for a while. They try to laugh at the funny parts, but it’s going to take a while to get used to; they are still on the edge because of what's happened lately with Intex.

Alex tries to enjoy his time with his family, but he knows that Mark, Nick, Mara and Grace are still locked up in prison, sitting in those uncomfortable, metal chairs. He feels guilty for betraying Mark again, but he looks at his parents and guiltily enjoys being with them. He's missed them so much and doesn't want to be without them, but ... he still hates for having to betray Mark to be with them.

Alex looks away from the TV for a moment to check out the room. It all looks pretty nifty. It's all fancy here. It's just like a fancy apartment. They have everything they could possibly need. It makes Intex wonder where he's gotten it from.

There's the huge TV with a nice sound system, a couple couches, two coffee tables, one big table between the couches, a table and counter in the big kitchen, a nice-looking stove, oven, a big refrigerator; possibly filled with food, and all of the chairs around the table are fancy as well. There are two computers at the end of the living room, and three king size beds to sleep on. There are dressers near the beds and night stands for whatever to put on.

Alex shakes his head at the sight of these things. Does Intex want them to feel at home, or what? They are only granted with this freedom if Alex lives up with his promise to work for Intex. Alex is sure that Bruce, or rather; Bryce, Rhonda and Blade all are living in similar apartments like this.

Alex sighs. Intex has everyone here brainwashed; possibly his parents too; they don't want Alex going back to Mark, because it would mean that they would be locked up too. They don't want to go back to prison, but neither does Alex. He also doesn't want to work for Intex. But ... he does like having the time to spend with his parents. He sighs again. Is he going to continue to live like this?

Intex HQ: Rhonda's, Bryce's and Blade's Apartment

"So, Rhonda?" Intex asks her.

Intex has just come into the room to check up on them. Rhonda, Bryce and Blade all sit at separate chairs. They are all watching a football game on the TV. Bryce and Blade are really getting into it. They start yelling at it, getting mad at the team they are rooting for.

"How did it go with your visit with the prisoners?" Intex asks Rhonda.

Rhonda laughs. "It was funny," she replies. Rhonda looks at Blade, but he's too busy watching the game. She scoffs at him. "I was insulting Mark," Intex starts smiling, "and he told me not to, *not in this body*," she mocks, shaking her head, thinking about how pathetic she thinks he is. "I was pretending to flirt with Blade and he couldn't take it! It was hilarious!"

"Huh?" Blade turns his head away from the game upon hearing his name.

"I was just telling boss about what we did to Mark."

"Oh." Blade nods. He smiles and looks at Intex. "It was so funny. He was starting to cry when we left." Blade laughs and then returns his attention to the TV.

Intex nods at Rhonda, laughing and smiling. "Good. I want you to downgrade him as much as possible, because I know that he'll never work for me. He thinks he so *gifted*. He'll never work for me. So I want

him to feel as miserable as possible. Drain all of the hope away from him.”

“Will do,” Rhonda says.

“You're doing a good job already.” Intex pauses. “For that ... you deserve ... I don't know. What should I give you?”

Rhonda scoffs. “What's to give?” she laughs. “You've given us so much. Don't worry about it, boss. We have plenty to enjoy here.”

“Hmm,” Intex nods. “How about I get you guys some more entertainment. How about a pool table and a football table.”

That grabs Blade's and Bryce's attention.

“Sure,” Rhonda starts, “for the boys? What about for me?”

“What? You don't like sports?” Intex looks on the TV. “It looked like you were watching the game with them.”

“Well, what am I supposed to do? There's only one TV.”

Intex smiles. “Well then, I'll just get you a TV of your own.”

“Oh. I didn't really think of that. That sounds great, boss.”

Intex nods at her. He thinks of what else to get. “Hmm, I guess that'll do for now.” He pauses. “I'll be back soon with those things, maybe more.”

Rhonda smiles. “Thanks boss, we owe you.”

“Oh, you don't owe me anything, hon. Just keep doing what you're doing and make me proud.”

“Sure thing, boss.” She puts her hand up to stop Intex from leaving. “Thanks for saving me.”

“Anything for you, hon.”

Intex smiles at her and leaves the room, letting the door shut behind him. Intex is proud of what he's done with Rhonda. He's made her hate Rachel and she refers to her personality as a salvation; an escape of Rachel.

Rhonda looks back at the game, catching up on the new score. Bryce and Blade are calming down a little now that their team is in the lead.

Rhonda sighs. *This is the life*, she thinks. She leans back in her chair and rests her eyes. It sounds peaceful just to listen to the game and let serenity dwell. A soda sounds good for right about now, so she gets up, grabs one from the fridge and returns to her chair. She opens the can, takes a few sips and then sets it down on the coffee table besides her. She leans back to rest her eyes again.

The Prison

Sadness has been building up inside of me, but now it is anger. I have been letting Intex win by feeling sad with Rachel. I can't let him win. I start to think about how Mara feels, though, about Bruce.

I look at Mara. She is a strong girl. She looks out into the space in front of her, surely thinking about Bruce, but she doesn't show it. She doesn't seem as sad anymore, not that she's given up; she's just trying to stay strong.

I wonder about how I should be feeling for Bruce. He has been my friend growing up and I can only think about Rachel? I am sad that he's gone as well, but I don't feel as sad as I think I should be. Things have been so much different between us, ever since we've grown up, became superheroes, and lived with six other people in our house. We just haven't spent as much time together as we used to.

I have been so close to Bruce, feeling as if we were brothers. Now ... he feels only like a friend again. I feel guilty for not feeling worse than this. I should be devastated that he's gone. But I feel for Rachel more.

Mara looks at me, realizing that I'm looking at her. I realize it too, forgetting that I was staring at her. She smiles weakly at me, though she keeps her cool. She looks like she's calm, but I know that on the inside she is sad.

I look away from her and look at the space in front of me. I continue dwelling on my anger for Intex; hopefully it will help me escape. Just a moment before I felt so broken hearted. Rachel was flirting with Brandon. But neither one of them were themselves. I continue trying to tell myself that. They are not the people we know them to be. Intex has made them that way.

I refuse to give up on them. They are still there. Our friends and my wife are still in those minds. I know so, because of Blade. He had started out as Blade, but changed to his old self that I hadn't known at the time; into Brandon, and then now he is back to Blade. We can get them back. Perhaps if I had my telepathy I could summon their old selves back.

Intex will not be able to bring us all down. Those of us remaining are not giving in. We will keep our stand. Hopefully Alex will come to his senses and come back ... surely he will. I know he means good in the end. He just needs some time with his parents for now.

We must be able to get our whole team back together at some point. I realize that Mara is looking at me again.

"Mark," she says. "Don't worry. We will get Rachel back. This is not permanent."

I smile at her. "I know," I tell her. "I was just thinking about the same thing. We will get our whole team back. We must. Intex will not win."

Nick nods at that, following by Grace's nod.

"Just think about Brandon," Nick says. "We first knew him as Blade, but he changed back into himself as Brandon. Now he's just back to being Blade. He'll come back. They all will. We will all come back together and take down Intex."

I nod at that. "We surely will," I respond. "Let's keep our strength to stand strong. We can't give up hope."

Mount Vernon

Drake wanders around the area of Hank's home. He paces down the streets a few blocks away from Hank's street. He is angry to not have gotten Hank's power. He had desperately wanted it once he saw Hank's brain, but he fears for knowing what could be so easy for Hank to do; inject him with a power negating serum. That would be the worst thing ever to happen to Drake.

Something tells Drake that all of the people down in the secret basement of Hank's are people that Hank's saved. Possibly some of them are those hybrids of Intex's. No doubt Hank has negated all of their powers, keeping his own.

Drake shakes his head at that. Hank is selfish; keeping his powers but negating everyone else's. Or, that's how it seems to Drake. Really, Drake is just angry with it all.

Drake wants to just leave, but doesn't at the same time. He knows he won't be able to replicate Hank's powers. He could even sneak up on Hank, but the moment he starts to replicate it, Hank would halt time and escape. Drake sighs and decides that he must leave the area. He has to go somewhere else.

He thinks about the position Intex is in. Because of being locked up for so long, he hasn't been out an about. He wishes that he could be in Intex's position, not Intex himself. He wonders why he feels that way. He never thought to have wanted this when he first got his abilities, but now he does.

Drake jumps and takes flight into the air, heading straight into the skies. He looks out to the large city below. Everything looks trashed. So much as changed in New York. Things are broken and scattered about everywhere. He looks closely and here and there he can see hybrids running around.

He thinks about that cat girl. She was panicked. Drake laughs about it. She hardly knew what Drake was doing and he had already replicated her powers; thankful for him he didn't replicate her appearance.

Astoria

Stuart jolts himself awake; he was able to fall to his side, leaning against the wall. Kyra smile at him, seeing that he's awake now. His mother is awake, but Tristan is sleeping, leaning against the wall. His head is titled, but he doesn't lean his body.

"Nice nap?" Kyra asks him, speaking quickly enough so Tristan won't wake.

Stuart nods at her. "Yes," Stuart replies to her, speaking with the same volume.

Kyra had fed them well with delicious food and it had caused them to get sleepy. They hadn't eaten that great of food in so long. Now it is morning, which would normally be time for breakfast.

Stuart looks around and realizes for the first time that there is more food here. He sees that it looks like to be days' worth. During the night Kyra had gone out to get more food.

"Whoa," Stuart says, seeing all of the food.

Kyra smiles. "I'm not stopping you from eating whenever you like," she tells Stuart.

Stuart looks at Dawn. She smiles at him, giving him the approval, although it looks like she hasn't eaten yet. She may have just wakened up recently herself.

Kyra suddenly perks her head up. Stuart is about to eat, but he realizes why Kyra is suddenly looking towards outside; he's hearing the same sound that she hears: helicopters.

Stuart just to his feet the same time Kyra does. Dawn follows their lead and wakes Tristan up.

"Huh, what?" Tristan says, quickly jumping to his feet, waking up. "I'm up!" He looks at them and then hears the helicopters next. "What's going on?"

"Don't know," Kyra replies. "We just heard them." She pauses. "I'll go check it out."

She heads towards the door and Stuart follows her from behind.

"Stuart!" Dawn exclaims, whispering. "Don't!"

Stuart ignores her and Dawn just follows. Tristan sighs and follows all of them towards the steps of the storm cellar that lead up and out. It doesn't take long and that pinpoint where the sound of the helicopters are coming from. They spot five of them.

The sigh when they read the sides of them; they say *FBI* all over them. One helicopter lands in their area, but the others continue,

stopping at different places. One seems to be heading straight to the southern part of Manhattan.

Kyra runs out towards the helicopter, having to weave through several blocks. Stuart, Dawn and Tristan follow her. Kyra reaches the helicopter, getting thirty feet from it.

“Stay right where you are!” a voice booms over their speakers.

Kyra screeches to a halt and throws up her arms. They can tell that she's not a normal human right away. An agent opens the side door and jumps out. He's fully armored and equipped. He's trying to determine if Kyra is bad. He only aims the gun at her.

“Please don't shoot me,” Kyra says, her voice breaking. “I didn't choose to become this!”

“Yes, please, don't shoot her!” Stuart exclaims.

The FBI takes a glance at Stuart and then returns his attention back to Kyra. He's still not sure. “Now ... I want you to give me the quickest response you can give. Tell me how you feel about Intex,” the agent asks.

“I hate Intex!” she exclaims, very quickly. “He's taken everything away from me; my home, my looks, my world, this city, and my ...” her voice starts to break. “My fiancé.”

The FBI agent lowers his gun. Stuart looks at Kyra, feeling pity for her. He had no idea she was engaged. He looks at her left hand, but sees no ring. She reaches into her pocket and pulls it out. She holds the ring in her hand and then shows it to the agent.

“See?” she asks. “This is his ring. It doesn't fit right now, so I can't wear it.”

That explains it. The agent waves at her, telling her she can put it back in her pocket; he believes her. She puts the ring back into her pocket, sighing and shaking.

“Okay, I believe you,” the agent tells her. He waves at the other agents in the copter, assuring them that Kyra is alright. “We are planning on taking down Intex, along with Avian’s help.”

“Avian? He's ... here?” Stuart asks, even though he believes that he has been all of this time.

“Yes, we have gotten video footage of his speech while he was in the shelter.”

“Shelter?” Tristan asks.

The FBI agent nods slowly, reading the expressions on their faces. “Ah. You guys didn’t know about that.”

“Avian’s alive!” Stuart exclaims, so happy to be right.

“Yes. We already have our men going to lower Manhattan to meet him at the shelter. We will have to see how he intends on stopping Intex.”

“Where has he been?” Dawn asks; seeming a little frustrated with him being gone.

“He has explained that he was locked up for four months in a prison at Intex’s headquarters. So he had found the shelter to make sure the people there are doing alright. He explained that he plans on stopping Intex right away. We are here to help him, because we know we surely cannot stop Intex by ourselves. So, we are going to need his help. And ...” he looks at Kyra. “We could use all the help we can get.”

Kyra looks at the agent. “I can't fight,” she says, shaking her head. “I am not skilled with ... any training or anything.”

“Okay,” the agent says. “That’s fine. You guys can come with us then. We will take you to the shelter so we can get you to safety. Stick together and take care of each other. Do not get involved in the battle.” He pauses.

The four of them look at the agent with anxiousness.

“Don't worry,” the agent tells them. “We will put an end to Intex and stop him once and for all. You guys will be safe.”

“Come with me,” the other agent says.

They follow the agent into the helicopter. The agent who they have been speaking to stays on the ground, searching for other people to save. Another agent jumps out to assist him.

The helicopter takes off into the air and heads towards lower Manhattan. At last the four of them feel calm. To the three, Kyra has always seemed calm to them, but she had wanted them to think that; really she is a wreck on the inside. Now they know about what happened to her. No wonder she was eager to help them.

The Shelter

It doesn't take long and the four of them make it to the shelter. The FBI drops them off and takes off to go back for the other agents. The four of them find the entrance; a hole in the ground. Right beside it is a dumpster on its side.

They all climb down the steps, hearing all of the commotion and chatter below. They reach a set of doors that are already open. They are greeted by some agents and cops.

The cop looks at Kyra, not sure to let her in. The FBI agent nods at the cop, though.

"She's been cleared by the other agents," the FBI agent tells the cop.

The cop nods and lets them in. Kyra takes a glance at the FBI to see that he has a radio strapped to his belt. He, too, is heavily armed and protected.

The four of them walk towards a crowd of people. Stuart starts looking around for the Avians, but fails to find them anywhere. He notices how panicked the FBI are starting to look. Several agents are talking with the cops and one that looks like to be overhead of them all; The Lieutenant. The Lieutenant talks with what must be The Director of the FBI; he's actually out in the field.

They all look panicked. Stuart figures out why. The Avians aren't here.

"What's going on?" Dawn asks.

“Look around,” Tristan says. “Where are the Avians?”

Tristan’s figured it out as well.

“But,” Stuart says. “They must've been just here.”

“Yes,” Tristan replies. “Otherwise the FBI wouldn’t be. But, I don't think they just left, not by the looks of this.”

Tristan looks at the FBI and cops. Stuart sees them too. They are too anxious for The Avians to have just simply left.

“Intex,” Kyra says. “He found out about this place. He must've taken The Avians back.” She pauses. “But, it’s strange that he didn’t take all of these people here to his building to ... experiment on.”

“Yeah,” Stuart agrees.

He just realizes that. All of these people here ... thousands. So many people ... Stuart spots blood towards the center of the floor. He points at it.

“Look,” Stuart says.

The other three follow his gaze, spotting the blood.

“Something bad happened here,” Tristan says.

“Please don't say that The Avians got hurt,” Stuart says. “It must've been someone else.”

Stuart looks back to The Director of the FBI. He looks a more calm now. The Lieutenant must've said something to calm him.

Lower Manhattan

Puzzled, Oliver looks up at the skies. Helicopters are coming out of nowhere. They all same *FBI* on the sides. Oliver shakes his head. They must've seen the video of Avian making his appearance at the shelter.

Oliver scoffs. What can they do? They are going to be in for a surprise when they find out that the Avians were just re-kidnapped by Intex. Oliver begins to wish that he did something about it. If the Avians can't stop Intex, who will; himself?

Oliver realizes that he is strong now, having the abilities of Morris. Oliver has tested his powers already, finding out that the supposed power of impenetrable skin is not really impenetrable; just very durable, which explains how he could stab a knife into Morris' head. It must mean that Morris' powers were new to him and were still developing. Opportunely, Oliver also has the ability to regenerate rapidly now, so his injuries healed with ease, leaving no scars.

Shaking his head, Oliver watches as all of the helicopters all come down, stopping. They are all knew the location of the shelter. They must've told each other about the news of The Avians; they are all locked up again. Oliver is sure they are depending on The Avians' help.

Just then a big moving object catches his eyes. Oliver spins his head and sees The Destroyer charging towards the shelter. Oliver teleports in front of him. He can't let The Destroyer tell Intex that the FBI is here; Intex would kill them all in a heartbeat.

The Destroyer growls at Oliver. He attempts to run right into Oliver, but he stands his ground. The Destroyer hits Oliver, but he doesn't budge.

The Destroyer looks at Oliver, confusingly. His eyes light up when he realizes who his is.

“You killed Morris,” The Destroyer says in the ominous voice of his.

Oliver smiles at the beast, which only encourages him. The beast throws a fist at Oliver, but he quickly dodges it; teleporting behind him. Oliver jumps and kicks The Destroyer, knocking him off of his feet. Oliver telekinetically grabs The Destroyer, throws him high in the air and drives him into the ground hard.

The Destroyer quickly gets to his feet, not seeming to be in much pain at all. Oliver freezes his hands, cooling them rapidly. He cools the air. The Destroyer runs at Oliver, hitting him this time, but Oliver’s face and chest just ripple as he absorbs the kinetic energy. With his ice-cold fists, Oliver grabs The Destroyer’s neck and squeezes hard with his new defined strength.

Choking, The Destroyer falls to his knees. Oliver doesn’t let go. It face would be red if he didn’t have the appearance of asphalt, though his face does seem to turn blue from freezing.

Oliver starts smiling, jeering at The Destroyer. He loves how well these new powers are working for him. The Destroyer throws out his fists with spikes sticking out at Oliver. He hits Oliver, but again his body just ripples while absorbing the mobile energy. The Destroyer does manage to cut him with his spike, but Oliver’s skin easily heals.

Oliver jumps and whips The Destroyer’s body around himself and thrashes it into the ground, while holding him by his neck still. Oliver finally lets the Destroyer go and stomps down as hard as he can on his chest, breaking all of his ribs that he touches.

The Destroyer gasps immediately. He continues gasping, having trouble to breathe. His ribs stab into his lungs. Oliver stomps down on his chest again, just as hard this time, shoving the ribs deeper into the lungs and breaking the remaining intact ribs.

Oliver smiles. He starts wonder if he could take on Intex now. He just killed his most glorious creation. Oliver scoffs at it. He looks at the Destroyer's head, realizing he could take its powers.

Suddenly The Destroyer starts to get to his feet, breathing normal again. He snarls at Oliver, very anger. Steam practically comes out of his ears. He has healed; not dead at all.

He charges at Oliver, determined to kill him instead of vice versa. He plows into Oliver, which would be enough force to send him flying as far as a football field, but Oliver stays in place and his whole body shakes, absorbing all of the blast.

The Destroyer is so puzzled with what Oliver is doing. Oliver smiles at him and points his index finger out at him. He takes all of the kinetic energy he's absorbed and releases it in one blast at The Destroyer. The kinetic blast sends The Destroyer flying through the air; the length of a football field and a half.

The Destroyer lands with a great thud and Oliver gets there in a flash, teleporting to his side. The Destroyer groans, unable to move at the moment. Oliver knows that his time is short; The Destroyer will soon regenerate just as he does.

Oliver stomps his foot back down onto The Destroyer's chest again, breaking his ribs once again. Differently this time, Oliver telekinetically yanks The Destroyer in the air and throws him down at the ground, head-first. The Destroyer hits the ground with such great force that he is knocked unconscious immediately.

Oliver grabs a hold of The Destroyer and sits him upright, while he is still unconscious. Oliver looks at his head, wanting to get inside his brain. Oliver pulls his knife out and stabs it into The Destroyer's head.

Immediately The Destroyer wakes up. Oliver's hands glow purple as the purple energy in The Destroyer's head stimulates. The Destroyer

tries to break free, but Oliver keeps him held telekinetically. The Destroyer's brain glows purple.

Oliver sticks his hand into The Destroyer's head, preparing to steal his powers. Like Morris, The Destroyer is still alive at this stage, which is not normal, but the two of them have had rapid cellular regeneration.

Oliver lets his guard down when he considers what The Destroyer's powers are; he already has all of them, except for a poisonous touch, enhanced smell and the appearance. The Destroyer breaks free from Oliver's grip and kicks Oliver off of him.

Oliver scowls at him; he has never been stopped from doing that once he started. He feels weird to him to have gotten that far just to be pulled away. He's never experience that.

The Destroyer stumbles for a second, but then his head heals, closing up. The Destroyer jumps into the air, towards a building top, wondering how he can escape Oliver.

Intex HQ

The four of us remain determined to not give up. Nick has comforted me. I am starting to feel like giving up on all hope for Rachel, but I know that it would mean that I am letting Intex win. I can't allow that.

I rest my eyes. Immediately images of Rachel flash through my head. I think about how caring and thoughtful she is. She's always been so warmhearted. I think about how she would wake up before me, but would stay in bed until I wake up, to be there to greet me. She is always so considerate of others.

Abruptly I am pulled away from my own thoughts. The door flies wide open. I snap my eyes open to see Intex standing there, expressionless.

“How are things?” Intex asks.

“Never better,” I reply. “Thanks for asking.” I scoff. What kind of question is that?

Intex chuckles. “Great. Well ... I've decided that since the rest of you have chosen not to work for me, then you will all be killed.” Intex says, bluntly. “This will be easily enough since you are all powerless.”

“Coward,” I tell Intex.

Intex scowls at me. “I'm not going to be the one doing it.”

Bryce and Blade walk into the room. The two of them look at the four of us, smiling viciously. Blade transforms into his werewolf form. He smiles, looking at me. He decides on leaving me for Bryce.

Blade charges towards Mara, slashing her face without hesitation.

“NO!!” I yell. “STOP!!” I tug at the chains, but they obviously do not budge.

Blade laughs hysterically, and does not hold anything back. Mara screams out, defenseless to Blade whacks. Blade slashes her over and over. Bryce runs towards me, just as Blade slashes Mara’s throat.

Suddenly, adrenaline takes over in me and I snap both chains. I run towards Blade and hit him as hard as I can in the head. The chains still wrapped around my wrist hit his head as well. He backs away from me to regain himself, though his is confused. So is Intex.

“How'd you get your powers back?” Intex asks me demandingly.

I look down at my hands, seeing the chains hanging from them. My wrists start throbbing in pain from yanking so hard. My heart is beating so fast and feels like it’s in my throat. I feel on the edge, like electricity is running through my veins. I am running off adrenaline; it had given me strength I didn’t know I had without my powers.

“I didn’t,” I tell Intex. I am still powerless. I spin towards Mara, crouching down at her feet. “Mara.”

I rip part of my suit off and wrap it around his neck to try to stop the bleeding.

“You can't let her bleed to death!” I yell at Intex.

“Actually, that’s the plan,” Intex tells me.

“Well, well,” Rhonda says from behind me. She must've just entered the room. “Look who broke out of his chains.”

I turn to face her. She looks at Intex, wanting to know how I could have broken out of my chains if I am powerless. Intex shrugs at her.

“Kill them,” Intex tells Blade, Bryce and Rhonda. “Finish the job.”

“No! Stop!!” I yell.

None of them listen. Bryce walks towards Nick, already telekinetically choking him. I run at him to try to stop him, but he shoves me away like deflecting a fly. Blade roars and runs at Grace, getting his claws ready.

“NOO!!” I yell again.

Mara is already losing it and I can't let Grace be next. I run towards Blade, trying to stop him. I throw the chains out from my wrist, tripping Blade's feet.

Blade quickly gets to his feet, angry with me, but he doesn't fight me. He turns back towards Grace. I ready myself to pounce on him, but I am tackled to the floor by Rhonda.

She smiles at me menacingly. I try to push her off of me, but I am pinned. Sitting on my back, Rhonda starts choking me, keeping me pinned.

I can't breathe. Rhonda starts laughing now; the same way Blade did a minute earlier.

“Rachel,” I barely manage to say, but hoarsely.

She squeezes harder, but then suddenly stops. I gasp for air. Suddenly her touch is gentle. I blink away the stars I see. She gets off of me and I jump to my feet. I look at Grace to see that she is slashed at her face. Blade hasn't gotten her throat yet. Nick's face is purple and Bryce is still telekinetically choking him.

Rhonda suddenly charges at Blade, grabbing his hands by the wrists, squeezing hard.

“Rhonda!” Intex yells. “What are you doing?!”

Rhonda whips Blade's body over her head and hits him into Bryce, knocking both of them down to the floor. Nick gasps for air and slowly the blood drains from his face.

"Rachel?" I ask her.

She turns towards me with that face of hers. She looks at me with warmth, but nervous for this situation. "Mark," she says with that soft voice.

She's back.

Rachel runs at me and embraces me in a hug. She quickly releases from me.

"Rachel?!" Intex yells. "How? You're supposed to be Rhonda!!" He pauses. "Rhonda!! Rhonda!" he yells, trying to summon her back.

Rachel remains herself.

"You saved me, Mark," Rachel tells me. "You brought me back."

Intex runs towards Rachel, ready to hit her. I quickly throw my fists out, hitting him square on the nose and Rachel ducks from getting hit by Intex. Intex backs up, trying to recover from the blow to his face.

Bryce and Blade get to their feet, furious. They look at Rachel, realizing that she is no longer Rhonda. All of that malevolent has left her face and posture. After all she just hurled the two of them into each other.

"Mark," Grace says.

I spin my head towards her. She is looking at Mara. Mara's head is bobbing. She's losing it. She's already lost so much blood.

Intex hits me hard in my nose. I fall backwards, landing on my back. Rachel kicks Intex as hard as she can, knocking him over. Rachel quickly pulls me to my feet. I grab my nose, it is already bleeding. Intex

teleports behind me, but somehow I anticipate it and duck. Intex's fist misses me. Rachel kicks her foot out, hitting Intex hard in the temple, sending him over.

"Mark, I'll take care of Intex, save the others!" Rachel exclaims.

Bryce and Blade look at Rachel and me, scowling. I look at Mara again. She's almost dead.

I jerk my head towards Bryce. "Bruce!!" I yell at him. "Look at Mara!!! Your love! She's almost dead! Save her!!"

Bryce responds to me, responding to Bruce. He looks at Mara, still scowling. He scoffs at her and Blade scoffs along with him.

"So?" Bryce replies to me. "Why would I care? She's bleeding!" he scoffs.

"Yes, Bruce. She's *bleeding*! Your girlfriend is bleeding!"

Bryce still shrugs his shoulders, without a care in the world.

"Bruce!" I yell at him.

I look back at Mara, she looks like death. Pain hits me hard in the chest. Bruce is not coming back and he will let Mara die.

"Bruce!!" I yell again. "Mara is going to die!"

Intex scoffs at me, and then gets socked in the face by Rachel. I would smile if this situation weren't so awful. I try to think of something that only Bruce and I would remember.

"Hey Bruce!" I pause. "Remember that great friend of yours? What was her name ... Lucy? Yeah that's it. She always called you Bruce, back we you had braces. I know just how much you loved to hear her say that, right?"

Suddenly, Bryce snaps and I immediately can tell that he is back to normal.

“No! I hated that!” Bruce exclaims.

Bruce gasps and his expression changes as sadness enters his face, followed by fear. He runs towards Mara without hesitation.

Blade watches Bruce run towards Mara. Like Rachel, his real personality took over, pushing out Bryce.

Bruce immediately telekinetically breaks the chains off of Mara’s wrists. He grabs a hold of Mara in his arms. Tears already are rolling down his face. He spins his head towards Nick.

“Nick,” Bruce tells him. “Save her.”

“I can't,” Nick says, croaking. His throat is still sore. “I'm powerless.”

Intex gets up and teleports behind Rachel, kicking her hard in the back. She falls down to her knees.

“No!!” I yell and whack my chains at Intex’s head, hitting him hard.

Intex holds his hands up to his ears; apparently they're ringing inside his head. A chain would do that. I kick my foot into his temple. Intex saves himself from falling over, throwing his hand out to catch himself.

Bruce looks up at the power negating devices on the wall. With his mind, he collapses them all, one by one.

Suddenly I feel strong. Energy strengths my adrenaline pumping through me. Intex lied about how the paint in this room negated out powers; it was just the devices mounted on the walls.

Intex gets to his feet and readies to punch me, but I quickly hit him hard in the nose. I don't wait; I punch him in the cheekbone, and then in the temple again.

Nick replicates someone's super strength and breaks out of his chains. He runs towards Mara and puts his hands gently on her neck, already trying to heal her.

Grace still sits there, chained up, but doesn't care. She's concerned about Mara's wellbeing.

Rachel gets to her feet and Blade runs up to her. Blade thrashes his claws out at her, but she grabs his wrists and tilts her head back, avoiding them.

"Brandon, stop!" she yells at him.

He is still Blade. He continues struggling to scratch her face. Rachel keeps his hands away.

"Brandon, think about Noelle!" she yells.

Still Brandon is Blade, trying to claw her up.

"Brandon! Plan B is over!!!"

Suddenly Blade stops struggling.

"What?" he asks Rachel. "What'd you say?"

"Plan B is over."

"Intex never said that."

"Well, it is now. So Brandon, come back."

Blade is still there. He looks at Intex and then back at Rachel. He knows Rachel has turned back to herself, so he doesn't take her word for it. He is still loyal to Intex.

He tries again, trying to break from Rachel's grip and cut her up.

Intex tries punching me, but I dodge every fist he throws. I continue punching him though, hitting him in all of the weak spots; his temples, ears, ribs, sides, gut and stomach. He teleports, but I still dodge him, anticipating every move.

Nick starts panicking, afraid he won't be able to heal Mara. Suddenly his hands start tangling. He ignores it at first, but it gets so bad that it feels like needles are piercing all of the way through them and he pulls his hands away.

Bruce about yells at him to put them back on Mara, to heal her, but they both notice that Mara is healing on her own. Mara's power of accelerated healing is starting to work. Mara's cut on her throat is closing up, scabbing. Color starts returning to her face.

Nick shakes his hands loose and they stop tangling. He puts them back on Mara to speed her healing process, placing them on her head and chest. Mara's wounds heal quicker, skipping the scabbing process. She gasps for air.

Bruce laughs with liberation and kisses her on the forehead.

"Oh my god," Bruce sighs relief. "You're alive! You're alive!"

Grace looks down at her chains, concentrates and it crumbles like hardened mud, falling to the floor. She gets from her chair and hugs Mara.

Mara looks up at Bruce, realizing that he's no longer Bryce. Something brought him back. Mara realizes that Rachel is back as well, but she's holding back Blade. He's not back yet.

Intex attempts to punch me, but I grab his wrist. I now whip his body around me and over my head, throwing him into the floor like I did The Destroyer. Intex groans, but I know he will recover.

I spin around to see my team. Everyone is back and with powers, except for Brandon and Alex. Brandon is still Blade and Rachel is holding his wrists. He struggles to claw Rachel.

I smile; I have telepathy now. *Hey Brandon.* I say into his mind. *Push Blade out of your mind. He is not the real you. He's something Intex put there. Intex is the monster; he killed your parents, taking away everything you are. You are Brandon. You're not Blade. You're Brandon. Come back, Brandon.*

He stops struggling and smiles at Rachel. She slowly lets go of his wrists and he lets his hands drop to his sides. He looks up at me.

"Thanks, Mark," he says.

Intex has already gotten to his feet, but was in awe, watching us all.

"I don't believe it!" Intex exclaims furiously.

Suddenly, Alex runs into the room, right on time. "Are we back?" Alex asks. "I heard all of the commotion and couldn't help but find out what is going on?"

Alex sees that we are all out of our chairs, all back to our old personalities, our real ones. He's sees that Intex is furious. Yep, we're back.

Alex runs up to us.

"Alex!" Intex yells. "What are you doing?"

"I'm returning to my team!" Alex exclaims.

"You can't do that!"

"Too late."

"Well, then say goodbye to your parents!"

“I already did.”

Intex puffs out air, practically growling, obviously angry. Intex teleports in front of Alex, but Alex just throws a ball of fire in his face before even getting a chance to get punched. Intex grunts.

“Ahhh!” Intex yells, his face burning. “Just ... get out of here!”

We all take that to heart. All eight of us, back together, run towards the wall that would lead to outside. I run out in front punching it with my fists, making a hole for us to run out through.

We all take flight, heading towards the Shelter. Brandon is flying by means of his attachable wings that I engrafted into his suit. The shelter is the only place for us right now. Yet again, we have to build up some strength to battle Intex.

While in the air, I materialize my suit, fixing it up. One by one, I look at my team mates, re-creating their suits over top of them as we fly.

“Whoa,” Rachel says. “I hear something rumbling.”

I don't like the sound of that. I turn my head back, looking at Intex's building in the distance.

“No it's not coming from there,” Rachel says, following my gaze. “It's close to the shelter. It sounds like ... helicopters.”

“Helicopters?” Alex asks.

I look at Alex, still thinking about how he gave in to Intex, for his parents. He's already forgiven. “It's the FBI,” I say. “Who else would have helicopters, right?”

Everyone wants to agree with me. After all, why would Intex have helicopters?

We fly for a few minutes in silence, all except for the wind blowing in our ears. We all are trying to believe what has all happened in such a short time; getting back together, escaping from Intex, returning to normal, and where the helicopters are coming from.

“Mark,” Alex says. “I'm sorry for betraying you.”

I shake my head at him. "Don't apologize. Please, no one apologize to anyone. We are back together and that's all that matters right now," I say. "We need to stay together and build up our strength. We have to put an end to Intex soon."

Everyone nods.

"I just ..." Alex continues. "I wanted my parents back, but ... it's just not the same."

"It's alright, Alex," I tell him. "All is forgiven."

He smiles at me. "Okay. I told my parents that I have to go with you. I have to save the world. They told me that they understand, but really I knew that wanted to stay with me." He pauses. He sighs, but I don't hear him over the sound of the wind that we fly through. "Now Intex is locking them back up."

I nod to Alex, wanting to support him. "You did the right thing," I tell him.

"I know I did, but ... I just feel ... I missed them so much. If only Intex hadn't ... locked them up in the first place. Now they have to go back to their cells."

"Don't worry, Alex. They'll understand."

Alex nods. "They said that, but really I know how they felt; they wanted me to stay." He pauses. "But ... I do not feel as bad as leaving them as I left you. I'm sorry."

"Alex, don't apologize, please."

Alex looks at me for a second and nods.

We fly the rest of the way towards the shelter in silence, all except for the wind. If it weren't for the wind, it would seem awkward. This is relaxing compared to what's been happening all around us lately.

We just are flying through the wind, flapping our wings like it's a normal thing to do on a summer day.

We make it to the shelter and notice all of the helicopters around. They all have FBI labeled on the sides. It obviously is the FBI; I am right.

When we land at the alley, I see the barely noticeable vibration on Alex's suit. He is using the nano-tech back massaging mechanism.

"Thank you, Mark, for making this suit for me," Alex says. "This back massage feels great."

"No problem, pal." I pause, heading towards the entrance. "Let's see what's going on."

We walk to the hole in the pavement, where the dumpster sits beside and climb down. I reach the door first, since I take the lead. I knock on it and wait for an agent to open the door. He realizes who I am and gladly lets me in.

We step into the shelter, immediately drawing in the situation. Everywhere, everyone is panicked. Everyone knows that Intex has discovered this location. The Avians had left them, or really Intex took us away, but here we are; back. The FBI is here to assist with the cops.

I don't understand it though, why did they wait until now to appear? Does Intex know they're here?

My sight catches Director Morgan of the FBI. He is already looking at me, as well as the other Avians. He urges us to meet with him. We walk up. The crowds' anxiousness is lessening already, seeing that we have arrived.

"We are so relieved that you are here!" Gustavo says to me. It seems that he is speaking with all seriousness.

I feel like asking him what I just thought to myself; what took you so long to get here and why all of the sudden?

“Avian,” Gustavo says. “We had heard your speech, thanks to the reporter from The Frequent Journal and her cameraman; they had put it on live TV. We came immediately, wanting to help you with taking down Intex. But, we didn’t realize that Intex had captured you again.”

“Well ... we escaped,” I smile at him. “Don't worry, we will bring him down, but ...” I pause. “I'm not sure that you guys should get involved. You are going to get yourselves killed.”

He gives me a look. “We’re the FBI. We are skilled with a lot of training. And we are devoted to protecting this country.”

“Please consider this,” I take a look at everyone here at the shelter and then back at The Director. “Intex knows about this shelter. He had planned to kill everyone here, but we had played a factor is stopping that plan for the time being. It’s only a matter of time when he decides to take back up on that plan. All of these people need your help Director Gustavo.”

Gustavo Morgan takes it into consideration.

“You should have everyone here taken to safety. You should evacuate them.”

“Hmm,” he replies. “I agree ... but what are you going to do about all of those hybrids on the loose?”

I immediately think about Lon; he is not one of the bad hybrids.

“We will stop them,” I say. “But ... please hear me when I say this; not all of the hybrids are bad. Believe me. Some of us have come from Intex; we are not bad. Tyke had some history with Intex, working for him. But once Intex was gone, he had changed. It’s not that he turned good, he just returned back to being good.

“Intex had brainwashed him. I believe that all of these hybrids that are the evil ones are just brainwashed, but yes ... maybe some of

them are genuinely evil, those we will stop. Firstly, we will stop Intex, getting through whatever hybrids that we have to go through, but we will stop Intex. Then we will worry about the remaining hybrids. The hybrids left to stop will be few, because most of them will have been brainwashed.”

Gustavo nods. “You believe that?”

“Yes. I am certain. I have seen some of these hybrids; they act like animals. Obviously they aren’t themselves. These hybrids were normal humans before, adjusting their DNA can't just simply change their personalities; Intex had altered that.” I stop myself from telling about what happened with Rachel, Bruce and Brandon.

“Okay,” he says, agreeing with me. “I think you're right. We will take care of these people, while you stop Intex.” He pauses. “Now, what are you doing here at this moment?”

I almost scoff. “We can't stop Intex at this moment. We have to recover. We had just escaped from him and do not have the strength required to stop him.”

“Ah. I see ... Well, you might as well rest here, or where ever we can move these people to.”

“That’s the plan.”

Gustavo nods. “Alright, then.”

The Lieutenant nods at The Director, agreeing with me as well. The Director looks out to the crowds of the shelter. He shakes his head in awe of all of these people who have survived. He can't believe it that all of these people have escaped Intex’s wrath.

Lower Manhattan

Oliver works his way further from the shelter. He is still fighting The Destroyer. He is surprised at how well this beast is keeping this fight. They have been at it for a while. Oliver had started so that he could stop The Destroyer from telling Intex about the FBI arriving, but now it's about staying alive.

The Destroyer grabs a hold of Oliver, yanking him from his feet and whips him around him, thrashing him in the pavement on either side of him. Oliver teleports, escaping from his grip.

He appears behind The Destroyer and takes a moment to recover. He is dizzy and bleeding. He wasn't focused enough to have had absorbed the kinetic energy. It takes a few seconds until he completely recovers and heals.

The Destroyer spins around to face Oliver. At first Oliver had thought about taking his power, and then he started thinking he didn't need it. Now, he feels that he wants it again. The Destroyer is powerful. It must be that he just attacked The Destroyer at the right time when he cut open his head moments before.

The Destroyer charges at him, ready to kill Oliver with one strike, if Oliver were normal. Oliver teleports out of the way. He telekinetically trips The Destroyer, as if using an invisible rope. The Destroyer lands face first, throwing his hands out a moment too late.

Oliver doesn't wait. He teleports onto The Destroyer and repeatedly hits his back. The Destroyer cries out in pain. Oliver tests his new strength against the Destroyers. He yanks The Destroyer to his feet

and whips him over his head like The Destroyer did to him. He smiles when he realizes how easily it is. It feels as if he is whipping a small rope from side to side.

Oliver throws The Destroyer up in the air and lets him fall down onto his head. The Destroyer slowly gets to his knees. Oliver kicks his back, shoving The Destroyer falls face first to the pavement. Oliver jumps down on top of the Destroyers back, making it crack. The Destroyer cries out again.

Oliver stomps his foot down onto The Destroyer's back, just as soon as The Destroyer extends one of his spikes out of his back, piercing right through Oliver's foot.

Oliver's foot starts bleeding immediately. He groans in pain and teleports in front of The Destroyer, before his head. He waits for his foot to heal so he can kick The Destroyer. Instead, The Destroyer jumps to his feet; apparently his back's healed already. The Destroyer quickly heaves his fist out, hitting Oliver's nose directly, knocking him over.

Oliver lies down, not getting up. The Destroyer jumps up and lands down hard on Oliver's stomach, knocking the wind out of him. The Destroyer collapses down on top of Oliver, pinning him to the pavement. He punches Oliver, repeatedly. This time Oliver absorbs the kinetic blows to his face; his face ripples absorbing it.

The Destroyer's eyes turn pitch black and he growls. He stops punching Oliver and then just starts choking Oliver instead. Oliver grabs The Destroyer's wrist, trying to pull them off, but he already is weakening, not getting oxygen and losing strength because of The Destroyer's poisonous touch, which Oliver is unaware of until he senses The Destroyer's ability that he is currently using.

Now The Destroyer starts punching Oliver in the face, over and over. This time, Oliver's face doesn't ripple, absorbing the energy. Oliver

grunts trying to stop the Destroyer, trying to absorb the moving energy, but his power falters him.

The Destroyer knocks Oliver out, but continues punching him. Oliver's face bleeds everywhere that The Destroyer punches with his metal spiked fists. He spits at Oliver and scoffs, sounding like a grunt of a bear.

To The Destroyer, Oliver seems dead. He gets off of him and stares him down. He smells him and snorts; disgusted with Oliver's stench.

"Smells like defeat," he grunts.

The Destroyer looks back towards the direction of the shelter.

"The FBI," he mutters in a raspy voice.

The Destroyer starts heading his way back towards Intex HQ. He seeks to inform Intex about the FBI's arrival. They must be planning something.

Intex HQ

Intex sits in his office, disappointed with himself. Darrius and Jackson sit in their seats. Intex rests his chin on his hand. He shakes his head to himself.

"I just let them go," he says. "I let them go, so easily. I can't believe that I was ... so ... stupid. They easily left. I didn't really even try stopping them."

Jackson and Darrius look at each other. This does not sound like Intex at all.

"Intex," Darrius says. "What's to worry about? We will stop them."

Intex nods. "But ... I let my beauties go. I let her go."

"Her?" Darrius asks, narrowing his eyes.

"Rhonda." Intex pauses. "I let Rhonda, Bryce and Blade leave. Somehow, Anthony had so easily brought them back. I think that the gas I put into their systems weren't efficient enough. They should've have returned back to themselves that easily, but ... I just let them go." He pauses, jerking his head up at the two. "Where were you guys!?"

"We were here," Darrius replies. "We had no idea that that was happening. It had happened fast so we didn't know to be there in time."

"But what about Alex? He had left his room. How did you guys not notice that?!"

They shrug, feeling lowly and guilty. Intex just nods, forgiving them, which surprises them.

"But, Intex, boss, why did you only mention Rhonda firstly?"

"Huh?" Intex asks.

"You mentioned losing them, those three, but you mentioned Rhonda first."

"Oh," Intex replies. He gives himself a moment to think. "I liked her the most. She was the most enthusiastic. I started rewarding her for her efforts. I was about to practically give her an apartment of her own within that apartment, giving her everything she needs. But then, she returns to Rachel; returns to Anthony."

"You could've just given her a separate apartment as her own; we have, like, literally nine-hundred." Darrius pauses. "So ... you like her efforts."

"Well, yes," Intex says. "But ... I liked her."

Darrius looks at Jackson and smirks; Intex catches him.

“What's that look?” Intex asks, demanding.

Darrius smiles at Intex. “Do you understand what you're feeling towards Rhonda?”

“What do you mean?”

“Love,” Darrius says bluntly.

Intex scoffs. “I am not in love with Anthony’s wife!”

“Well you just suggested that. You said you liked her more than what she did for you. You liked *her*.”

Intex pauses, feeling embarrassed, which is unlike him. “I guess ... it’s just that I haven’t felt like this in a *long* time. I haven’t been this young in ... forever.” Intex pauses to think about it again. “I definitely feel twenty-five again. Wow, I’m so young! Now I understand why Anthony married her.”

“Intex, you don't want her now,” Jackson says. “She's Rachel again, not Rhonda.”

“Well, I can change her back to Rhonda at any moment.”

“Oh. That true.” He pauses. “Is it?”

“Yes, I can. I don't need to use the gas. All I have to do is inject her with a serum to trigger her Rhonda personality.”

“Well, that should be simple enough,” Darrius teases.

“Well, yes. It should be.” Intex pauses.

He thinks about how he had just recently fought Rhonda as Rachel. She was just so loyal to him and quickly switched it around. Intex hated fighting her and feels bad for doing it.

Intex sighs and drops his chin back into both of his hands. He is so confused. He doesn’t understand how this could be happening.

“Intex,” Darrius says. “I think you need to relax. And, what helps you to relax best besides experimenting?”

Intex looks up at him. He jumps up from his chair. “You're right! I need to perk up. Experimentation it is!”

Intex runs from his office and down the big set of stairs that lead into the creation room; the biggest room in the whole building. He walks past the table he had used recently on the hairs he had pulled out four months ago.

He walks up to another table, finding some unfinished chemicals and such. Intex pulls out a file from the table and reads the papers inside. He gets right to relaxing and finishing this experiment.

Just then The Destroyer plows in through the front door, putting Intex and only a few workers on alert. The workers are trained to continue working without letup and to not allow room for distraction; so they go about continue working.

The Destroyer runs up and meets Intex. He keeps a straight posture and should seem to be out of breath, but is not at all.

“The FBI,” The Destroyer says in a calm, scratchy voice. “They have arrived at the shelter.”

“Really?” Intex asks. “How stupid can they be? The government knows better than to enter my territory!” Intex pauses and looks at the table before him. “Though I would like some excitement ... perhaps I can let them linger for just a little while longer, then I will execute them all.”

The Destroyer nods at Intex. “As you wish, boss.”

The Shelter

We meet back up with the friends of Alex, Nick and Brandon; we are still wearing our suits. The FBI are preparing something, putting a plan together to change this shelter's location.

Andrea embraces Alex without hesitation, not thinking about how Alex is in his suit. Reye walks up to Nick, smiling at him. She embraces him in a hug.

"Everyone knows," she tells Nick.

Nick smiles. "You mean my identity, right?" Nick replies.

"Yes. Avian slipped when he called your name."

"I know." Nick pauses. "But that's not important now."

As Tyke, Brandon walks towards Noelle, but stops himself. She did not know that he is Tyke, but does know. He's not sure how she will react. Noelle stands by Lon, looking around for Brandon. Brandon smiles; she is not concerned about that.

Brandon walks up to Noelle and waves for her attention. Noelle looks at him, while he's Tyke.

"Brandon," Noelle whispers.

He nods. "It's me," he tells her.

She smiles and hugs him. Nick laughs to himself; Brandon claimed that he and Noelle were not together, but that is not what that hug says.

Brandon hugs Noelle back firmly. Brandon realizes now that the term of whatever this relationship is not important.

“You're okay with this?” Brandon asks Noelle.

“What, you being a superhero?” she scoffs. “What's wrong with that? As long as you're yourself and not ... whatever Intex did to you.”

Brandon sighs and forces a smile. *Hopefully that doesn't happen again*, Brandon thinks to himself. “That's not going to happen again, as long as we have Avian with us. He always keeps us strong and together.”

Noelle shakes her head with amazement. “Wow. This is so awesome, Brandon. You are a superhero! You're one of The Avians. Tyke.” She smiles.

Noelle jumps, grabs a hold of his arms, and kicks up one of her legs for a second. Noelle lands back down and forces herself from screaming with joy.

“I haven't changed, Noelle,” Brandon tells her.

“I know, but ... you ... I ... oh, I don't know. I just, Brandon ...” she sighs, smiling. “I lo-love you.”

Brandon leans forward. “Say ... what?”

“I mean it Brandon. I love ... you. More than just a friend.”

Brandon smiles and dares a look at Nick; he shakes his head at Brandon, in an I-told-you-so look. He looks back at Noelle. “I love you too. Maybe when all of this calms down ... we can ... get something going with each other. Sound good?”

“Yeah, a date; sounds like a plan.”

Director Gustavo taps on the microphone; the one that I had materialized and installed into this place. He clears his throat.

“Hello everyone,” Gustavo starts. “If you do not know, I am the director of the FBI, Gustavo Morgan. Recently, Intex has discovered this location and it’s only a matter of time that he will return to attempt with ending your lives.

“Surly, The Avians are planning and building up strength and energy to stop Intex. In the meantime we must leave this place. We cannot stay here any longer while Intex knows where we are. He is bound to kill us all.

“We must leave this place as of now. Please, stick close to your family and we will assist in the departure. Take your beds with you as well. We will need them where we are going. We want everyone to exit in an orderly fashion. There will be a cop and an agent with each group. Please wait for their instructions and approval to leave. We want this to go smoothly as possible, so we must ascend the ladder in an organized line.” Gustavo gives a break and then gives the cues to the cops and agent in front. “Now let’s get started. Please follow your cops and agents of your group. We are starting at the front and working our way back.”

We are in the first group of people. The cop and agent lead us to the entrance and exit of this shelter. We climb the ladder, one person stepping onto it at a time, since it is not wide enough for even two people. We exit, finding ourselves outside with the cop and agent leading in front. After a while of walking and them making sure that no one is around, we make it to another building just northwest of the subways.

We get situated while a different group at each hour arrives. It takes all day for the transfer of the thousands of people.

This building is huge inside, and is nice because of its basement. Most of us go into the basement of the building. It looks as if this had been one of the buildings Intex had used for the experimentation of making you hybrids, since it is one of the bigger buildings. Four months ago Intex had said that any of the big buildings would be used for the

transformations into hybrids, or parahumans. Apparently this building is shutdown from that ... *program*.

Finally, probably the next day, at two in the morning, the FBI finishes transferring everyone. Most of the people they have already been here are asleep.

Rachel, Grace, Mara, Andrea, Noelle and Sofia lay on the beds that were brought here. While the rest of us lay on beds that I had made for as many people as I can. I have grown tired and gave up on making beds for the day an hour ago. People aren't complaining though.

I lie on the bed, staring up at the ceiling here in the basement. I look over at Rachel, she seems like she's asleep, but I'm not sure. Alex is awake, as well as Nick, Noelle, Lon and Bruce.

I see the reporter and the cameraman just a bit a ways from us; Kara and Luke. I look to the right of them and see a kid who looks to be about fourteen or fifteen with his mother and father ... or actually older brother? Whoever he is ... and a young woman with hairy arms next to them. She looks like she is a victim of Intex's experimentation. She appears to be a hybrid of an orangutan.

I can't help but think about all that has happened today — or yesterday actually, because today is early the next morning. I can hardly believe that I have brought my team back together and already escaped from Intex's prison. It's amazing, really. I think about how Alex had declined to stay with his parents. Surely he did not want to work for Intex. I got Rachel, Bruce and Brandon back to themselves. All in a day's work, right? Ha. But now we have to work on saving our strength and energy to stop Intex once and for all. This chaos has been going on for far too long and most of that time I was blacked out, so I don't even have a feel for how long it's been.

The New Shelter

Rachel lies on her bed, trying to sleep. She breathes and rests her eyes, but she is not asleep. She can't push Rhonda away. She remembers everything that she did.

She keeps her eyes closed, recalling the things she did. Slowly she starts falling asleep, dreaming. She dreams her memories. Rachel recalls to when she scoffed at Mark, mocking him. She had flirted with Blade. She moans in her sleep, shaking her head back and forth.

Rachel dreams the memories over and over. They repeated in her head. She remembers the words she used for Mark: *petty, wretched*. She moans in her sleep more, hating having called Mark that. She hates it more that she had flirted with Blade. She remembers all of it, but had no control over it.

Something changes in the dream. She starts reliving Rhonda's viewpoint. She's sitting in her chair at Intex headquarters. She is in the apartment with Bryce and Blade. She smiles, enjoying the peace of sitting there, watching the game of football. She is pondering over the things Intex promised her; a huge TV, bigger than the boys, her own furniture and appliances. Her own apartment.

Rachel starts drooling in her sleep and moans, but this time she doesn't hates it. She starts enjoying this part of the dream.

She visualizes the new apartment. All to herself. Her own place, away from Bryce and Blade. She flirted with Blade, but she didn't really feel anything towards him. She isn't really sure who she is feeling for. Intex is giving her all of this. She begins to wonder why. Intex seems to

like her. He wants her to feel it too by giving her all of these new things. She realizes that she likes that idea. Intex and her ... together. Intex is young now, just a few years older; mature. She smiles.

Suddenly she wakes up, quickly opening her eyes. She still can see her dream playing in front of her, overlapping the sight of the ceiling above. She stays lying on her back and the dream slowly fades. Partially dreaming, she sees Intex walking towards her and she flirts.

She sighs, enjoying the latter part of the dream. She has already forgotten the first part of the dream. She thinks of Intex and smiles. She imagines the two of them together and doesn't hate the idea. She lets her smile fade and she turns her head to see Mark. He is staring up at the ceiling, wide awake. Suddenly her mind clears and she is brought back to the present.

Rachel looks away from Mark quickly. *What am I thinking?* Rachel thinks to herself. *That's Rhonda's thoughts!!* Somehow Rhonda's personality and mind had come to her while she dreamt. She was thinking about her own apartment; that was Rhonda's thinking not Rachel's.

Rachel rolls onto her side, turning away from Mark. She feels guilty for what she was just thinking. She wasn't thinking, really; it was Rhonda thinking, dreaming, not her; not Rachel.

What is happening to me? Rachel thinks to herself. *I hope Rhonda is not coming back.* Rachel fears that it's already happening; Rhonda's thoughts are intertwining with hers. Rhonda interrupted her thoughts and dreams. Rachel started feeling what Rhonda feels, agreeing with it. Now guilt pains her chest. She had agreed with Rhonda's feelings towards Intex.

Rachel rubs her head, hoping that Rhonda won't take over again. She hopes more that Rhonda will never even interrupt her thoughts.

Intex HQ

Intex stands at his table, finishing his experimentation. He holds the result in his hand and smiles. It's a ring. He slides the ring onto his finger and shakes his head.

"Piece of cake," he says to himself.

The ring has a crystal-like substance on it, which is colored blue and looks like a class ring in a way. The blue crystal has the ability to negate The Avians' powers, sensing their DNA. Intex examines the ring on his finger, loving it already.

"I could fight Mark with this while he would be powerless, hopeless!" he exclaims to himself.

Intex imagines fighting Mark, killing him. He thinks of Rachel. Right now she is with Mark, but if Intex kills Mark Rachel will be his. He smiles, thinking about how she is when she's Rhonda. He must get her back. He's never felt like this before, not really. But he feels ... wonderful when he's around Rhonda, or when he was. He feels that he must get her back.

Suddenly the front door opens up. Out there stands someone he's only heard about. Intex's read about him being one of the four men that fought The Avians at the mall about seven months ago. Intex tries to recall his name but goes blank.

The man's hands start electrifying and he walks fast towards Intex.

"Who do you think you are?" Intex yells at him.

The man continues walking towards Intex.

"I am Drake Williams," the man replies. "And you, Intex, you ..."
he shakes his head, obviously angry. "You took over New York, but that's

something I wanted. So I'm here to take it all away from you. I want it instead.”

“What?!” Intex scoffs and laughs. “That’s ridiculous. You?! Well, let me tell you this: this will end badly — for you.”

The man, Drake, makes his way to Intex and throws the first punch; an electric punch. Intex falls backwards, but quickly gets to his feet, now angry.

Drake creates a ball of flames in one hand and a ball of electricity in the other. Intex scoffs at him. He creates a ball of electricity in one of his hands as well. He charges at Intex, attempting to hit him again, throwing fire at him.

Darrius and Jackson run down the steps and into the room. They run towards Drake, but Intex throws his hand out to keep them back.

Intex ducks at the punch and takes the hit of fire. He hits Drake hard in the gut, sending him off of his feet. Drake lands some ten feet away.

Quickly, Drake gets to his feet, but is still obviously in pain. He seems puzzled for some reason. Drake throws his hand out and attempts to telekinetically choke Intex, squeezing his fingers together, but ... nothing happens. Intex just stands there, raising an eyebrow at him.

“What are you doing?” Intex asks Drake.

“I'm trying to choke you!” Drake exclaims, upset that it’s not working.

“With telekinesis?”

“Yes! Duh!”

“Let me guess,” Intex scoffs. “You got that power from Bruce?”

“Who?”

Intex rolls his eyes. “Psych.”

“How'd you know?” Drake asks. “Wait! How'd you even know that the power is not mine?”

“I'm not an idiot. I know things like that. Obviously you did not acquire all of those powers by yourself, you moron.”

Intex looks down at his ring. It's working on Drake. Apparently at that mall fight, Drake had absorbed some of The Avians' powers. Now none of them work. Except ... his fire ability works, which could only mean that he didn't obtain that from Alex.

Drake gives up on trying to use his telekinesis. He proceeds towards Intex, throwing a punch at him. Intex teleports out of the way and sneers at Drake.

Angrily Drake spins around, facing Intex. He growls. Intex lets him throw a ball of fire at him again, because it does nothing to him. The fire dissipates, hitting his face. Intex face burns a little, but heals with ease.

Suddenly Drake seems to be in a haze, staring at Intex's head. Intex is not clueless as to what he's doing. Intex teleports behind Drake, knowing that if he gave Drake another second, he would've replicated one of his abilities.

Behind Drake, Intex holds his hand out and starts choking him, turning his hands hot. Intex starts creating lava in his hands that are wrapped around Drake's neck.

Drake starts gagging and squirming from the heat. He has an ability to create fire but is not heat resistant, which proves that he does not have pyrokinesis, like Alex does.

Drake struggles to break free, but Intex doesn't let up. Intex grins, shaking his head at Drake.

“I can't believe you thought you were good enough to compete against me,” Intex scoffs at Drake. “You're not even a challenge! Come on! Throw something at me! Make it difficult for me!”

Intex scoffs as Drake continues gagging and struggling to break free.

“You're pitiful!”

Intex drops his hands and lets Drake fall to his knees, gasping for air. He kicks his foot out into Drake's back, cracking some bones. Drake falls onto his front and Intex stomps down onto his back again, breaking some more bones and some of his ribs. Intex yanks Drake by an arm and hurls him through the air. Drake clashes with a wall and falls to the floor.

Intex laughs at Drake. He just moans, lying on the floor. From the distance, Intex notices the burn marks on his neck healing, but not as fast as his own regenerative power. Intex approaches Drake and his neck stops healing. The power has come from Mara. She's the only one with an accelerated healing factor besides Mark. Mark's ability is like Intex's; rapid cellular regeneration. What Intex witnessed is not Mark's healing ability; it's Mara's. Intex's ring suppresses Drake's ability.

Darrius and Jackson meet up with Intex.

“What do you want to do with him?” Darrius asks.

Intex narrows his eyes at Drake. He lies hopeless and in pain. His neck is still severely burnt and bones in his back and chest are broken.

“You made a poor decision coming here,” Intex tells Drake. Intex looks to Darrius. “What do you think we should do with him?”

Darrius resists shrugging; he knows how that would disrespect Intex. “I say we,” he starts, choosing his words wisely, “either throw him in prison or kill him.”

Intex smiles. “I think we should kill him.”

Drake grunts, trying to get up. He can clearly hear them. He obviously doesn't want to be killed. He coughs, still recovering from being choked by Intex. He moans, struggling to get to his feet but falls back down on his chest, yelling out in pain. His back hurts worst at the moment; the pain of the burns on his neck only adds to the pain of his broken bones.

Intex scoffs at Drake. "What a disgrace," he tells Darrius and Jackson. "And to think ... I am the reason you have abilities," he tells Drake. "Because of me, you have abilities *Drake*. I am responsible for the distribution of the virus that spread through New York, which gave certain people abilities. You are one of them and this is out you pay me? Ridiculous! So disrespectful. That's why you're being killed."

Intex kicks Drake in the side, flipping him over onto his back. Drake groans, wishing his ability to heal quicker than normal would work. Intex holds his hand out over Drake, holding it above his chest.

"Any last words?" Intex asks Drake.

"R-rot in ..." Drake struggles to speak. "H-h ..." In so much pain, Drake can't even completely his sentence.

Intex scoffs. With his hand over Drake's chest, he heats it and lets the lava shoot from it, burning through Drake.

Drake screams out loudly, but his voice fails him and he cannot even blow air out. He tries gasping for air, but his lungs fail him. Intex grins, as he shoots the lava right through his chest, creating an actual hole.

Drake blinks his eyes rapidly, trying to stay conscious, but his lungs fail him, as does his heart. His chest is completely burned, disintegrated. Drake's eyes stay open, but don't move. His body goes limp, lifeless.

Mount Vernon

Throughout the whole day and this night Hank continues to be in pain. He still has this monstrous headache of his. The people Hank's saved try to get some sleep while two of them stay awake to support Hank.

Hank lies on a bed with two men at his side. Everyone else is lying on their beds, either asleep or trying to get to sleep. The men hold ice on Hank's head, trying to help.

Hank groans loudly, wishing the headache would leave, obviously. He hates it that Drake had ruined his brain. Drake had done something to it. Hank wishes he could figure out why and possibly put together a formula to suppress it, but he can't possibly in this state.

His head throbs, the pain seemly to worsen, but in reality it remains the same as it has been.

Hank tries to cease time, realizing that the only time the pain went away was when he has halted time. He concentrates, willing time to come to a stoppage.

After a few moments he succeeds. Time halts, but his headache continues. He notices the people around him are frozen in space; time is stopped. Slowly it seems as if his headache lessens until it finally goes away. He sighs, feeling ease.

Hank wonders now which he did: cease time for just himself, or for all metahumans.

Lower Manhattan

Oliver gasps for air, finding himself lying on his back on the pavement. He tries to breath in air, but can't. He sits up and grasps that he can breathe in air now.

He gathers himself, feeling his face. He has healed, but he was knocked out by The Destroyer. He was poisoned. His power to regenerate saved him.

He gets up to his feet and a familiar silence bugs him. He looks around and realizes that time is halted once again. Everything around him is frozen. Oliver looks at a distance and makes out a newspaper suspended a foot in the air, although it is hard to see in just the moonlight.

Oliver knows that this is just like before; time is halted for just metahumans. He smiles, realizing that he could use this time to gain more abilities. He could go out and locate other metahumans and steal their abilities.

This time around, Oliver decides to go about and do that. Besides, he can't stay in one spot for too long; otherwise he would breathe in all of the oxygen in the area. He has to move around, otherwise he'd suffocate.

The silence is deafening. Sound is not traveling well, so Oliver is not sure if there are any metahumans around. He takes a stroll down the streets, jumping from street to street. Every street so far is found empty.

Mount Vernon

The girl remains in her house, still frightened from the man with the devious smile and blue eyes. His face clings in her mind. She sits in her chair, rocking and licking her hand.

Cat girl felt hopeless. The man did something to her without her being able to do a thing. She was stuck in place. Then the man left. Somehow he had replicated her abilities. He could see her brain. It seemed that he had gotten what he came for. Hopefully he won't come back.

Suddenly everything stops. She jerks her head around, looking for the sound she heard. She realizes that there actually isn't one sound. It's just like before, everything is frozen in time, except her.

"Why is this happening?" she asks herself, expecting her voice to sound as distorted as it does in halted time.

The girl gets from the chair and walks into the kitchen. She tests this ceased time and grabs a pan off the counter. She lets the pan drop and it only does a foot until it stays suspended in the air. She grabs the pan again and sets it back on the counter.

She looks back at her chair. A transparent image of her is sitting there; worried-fret about the man. She walks to her room and takes a look at the surroundings. She has left some clothes on the floor; dirty clothes. Her bed is made, though. Her dresser is well-kept.

She walks to the dresser and lifts up a picture of herself. She flips it over to see some writing on it: *Tori Alcalá, 7/15/09*. It's from two years ago. She, Tori, sets it back down on the dresser.

Tori, the cat girl, looks out the window in her bedroom. She considers going outside, though she feels nervous to at this time. Everything is frozen, unexplainably. Tori fears that that man may be out there.

Tori begins to wonder if she is responsible for time being halted. It doesn't make any sense to her. She can't possibly be doing this. She wonders if anyone else is experiencing this. She decides that the only way to find out is to go outside.

Eastern Manhattan

After searching everywhere all night, Victor and Richard decide to rest on finding Drake. They want him stopped so he won't harm anyone else, but they cannot find him anywhere.

Time is halted again and the silence deafens them. It is not peaceful and they wake up from rest.

The two of them look at each other, realizing what has happened. They look out to the ground below from the building top they stand on. They notice that there is no wind. They see some birds, suspended in air.

"It's happened again," Victor tells Richard, his voice fluctuating.

Richard nods. "What if this is Intex doing this?" Richard asks Victor.

Victor ponders on that. Then another idea hits him. "Remember how Drake was being jealous of Intex?" Richard nods. "Drake wants Intex's position and fame. Drake, for whatever reason, wants to rule New York instead of Intex. What if Drake went to fight Intex and Intex froze time?"

"Hmm ..." Richard thinks. "That sounds believable. You may be right about this."

"There's only one way to find out; we have to go to Intex HQ: The Rehabilitation Center."

Richard smiles weakly at the very name. "What if he isn't there? Then what? We would have to confront Intex ourselves."

"Nothing bad should happen. We just explain to Intex that we are looking for someone."

"Yeah, and *he'll* understand. *Right*. No, Intex will take us in for experimentation. He'll morph us into hybrids."

Victor nods. "Oh." He pauses for a minute. "What if he doesn't? You don't think he's done that to every citizen of New York? We don't see millions of hybrids running around, just a few here and there. Where are the rest of the people?"

"I don't know. In Intex's prisons?"

"Hmm ... maybe. Or ..." Victor wonders where he's going with this. "Maybe ... they were never brought in."

"Yeah right. Where would everyone go?"

"In hiding; underground."

"Underground?"

"I don't mean literally. Underground can mean someplace secretive or unknown. But they could have gone to a place literally underground, which would be underground in both aspects."

"We don't even know if people are hiding. Either they are in the prisons, or ... they all killed each other after being transformed into hybrids."

"Do you want to find out? We have to go to Intex Headquarters. It's the only way to know."

Richard sighs. "Let's rest up first."

"Of course."

The Shelter

Everyone is frozen. I suddenly wake because of how everything had gotten so quiet. What just happened? All of my team, along with Andrea, Lon, a man, a boy and the orangutan girl are awake and moving with me. But ... everyone else is frozen. It's as if ... time is frozen.

"What the?" Alex asks, his voice sounds funny; distorted.

Andrea makes sure that Alex is facing him before she speaks to him. "Time is frozen," Andrea tells Alex. Her voice, too, fluctuates. "This has happened once before."

I can't hear her, but I read her lips.

"How?" I ask, but I realize that no one heard me.

I think about this for a second. Time is frozen, so nothing is moving. Nothing. The air isn't even moving. Ah, that's why no one heard me. My voice isn't traveling through the air.

I walk close to everyone that's awake and conscious of this halted time.

"How?" I ask Andrea. This time she hears me.

"We don't know," Andrea replies.

The only thing I can think of is Hank. "Hank McDonald. He has time manipulation. He must be doing this. Although ... I didn't know he could freeze time for us."

"Why would Hank be freezing time?" Bruce asks.

“Good question,” I say, pausing. “Maybe I ought to ask him myself.”

“Do you remember where he lives?” Nick asks me.

“Yes, I do. Mount Vernon.”

I look at everyone, and then I pause, realizing something.

“All of us that are not frozen have abilities,” I say.

I look at the man, boy and girl who is a hybrid of an orangutan. They must have powers too, but they don't seem to be hearing us.

“Somehow Hank has frozen time for just ... metahumans,” I continue. “I am going to find out why and how.” I pause again, realizing something else. “Andrea, you said that this happened once before, but my team and I don't remember it. It happened when we were captured by Intex, right?”

Andrea nods.

“When we were captured, Intex kept us in a power proof room. Since we didn't have our powers at the time, we were frozen in time while you guys weren't.” I pause. “I must figure this out by meeting Hank. I will be back in a little bit ... or ... maybe in no time at all, since time's stopped.”

I walk to the front door and try opening it, but it doesn't budge. It feels like there's something holding the door shut, but I know there isn't. I use all of my strength and shove it open. I exit the building and look back at the door. There is nothing behind it. The air isn't moving so it was pushed against the door, keeping it closed. I push the door back closed.

I jump into the air and starting flying upwards. It feels harder to fly while time's frozen. It's like I'm flying through water instead of air. I can breathe alright, though.

It takes no time at all to get to Hank's, because time's halted, but it feels as if it took an hour to get here. I land on his front porch, noticing the door. It's knocked down. Suddenly I am on alert. Hank's in trouble.

I run into the house, looking around for Hank. I run from room to room, but find him nowhere.

Oh no, I think to myself. Intex must have kidnapped him.

Wait a second. I notice something in the floor in this room, the bedroom. A carpet is pushed aside, wrinkled up. There are seams shaped into a square in the floor. I kneel down and pull up on it; it's a door that leads to steps. It reminds me of the shelter.

I step down into the hole in the floor. I make it all of the way down and see quite a few people. All of them are frozen in time except one; Hank.

"Hank!" I exclaim, my voice sounds strange. He hears me.

Hank is already looking my way and walks towards me.

"What's going on?" I ask him.

Hank shakes his head. I see past him and find a faint image of him on the bed, not moving. It's as if he were lying there recently.

"I don't know," Hank says. "But ... you're alive!"

I smile at Hank. "Yes, I am. Intex just had us locked up at his place. We escaped, twice."

Hank shakes his head with amazement. "This is wonderful."

"We are building our strength to stop him." I pause. "But why can't you control your power? What happened?"

"It started with Drake."

“Drake?! He came here?”

“Yes,” Hank replies, sighing and shaking his head. “The idiot tried to replicate my powers, but I froze time and walk away from him before he could. Doing so, he somehow corrupted my brain. I was going to inject a power negating serum into him when somehow I let time regain motion. I had finally made Drake leave by threatening to freeze time and inject him with the serum. But ... I'm getting headaches now.”

I take a moment to process this.

“My head feels fine when I halt time, but when I'm not it gets worse. My head feels like it'll explode. Drake ruined my brain. I'm ... worried I don't have much time.”

“Don't worry,” I immediately tell Hank. “We'll get you better.”

I look at all of the people here.

“Who are all these people?” I ask.

“Those are people I've saved. Some of them were hybrids, but I injected power negating serums into them so they returned back to normal. All of them thanked me for doing so. Some of them had their personalities altered and were grateful for me saving them.”

“There's a shelter.”

“Shelter?”

“There are thousands of people from Manhattan and the surrounding areas there. They are all people in hiding. Now the FBI is there with them. Just recently Intex discovered the location so we moved. I can take you there and N—Vortex can help you with your brain.” *Hopefully*, I add to myself. I pause. “Where is Drake now?”

“I have no idea. He's outside somewhere, probably looking around for other metahumans.” Hank pauses, realizing something. “And

I'm making it easier for him. Now all he has to do is find someone who moves and he will have discovered a metahuman!" Hank gulps feeling guilty. "I have to resume time."

"But you will get your headache back."

"Everyone else lives are more important."

I realize that Oliver is out there as well. He could be searching for metahumans and parahumans as well, wanting to steal their abilities.

Hank concentrates, trying to continue time back up.

"Hank?" I ask. "Can you wait until I get you to the shelter, at least?"

"No. Take me there when my head hurts. I can't let Drake have this opportunity."

Hank concentrates and then suddenly starts screaming. His voice does not sound fluctuated but normal. I look around and see that the people here are moving again. Hank resumed time.

Everyone wakes up. The two men by the bed run over to Hank. Everyone notices me in the room, next to Hank.

"Avian," one man says in awe.

"Hello everyone," I say, as Hank tries to suppress his screams. "Please come with me. There's a safer place that we all can go to. The rest of my team is there. It's a shelter where people have escaped to."

I look at everyone; there are about fifteen people in all. I think about how I can get them all there quickly.

"First of all," I start up again. "We have to get outside. From there ... somehow we must all grab a hold of each other and hang onto me, okay?"

Everyone nods. The two men next to Hank help him up the steps. I lead and all of the people follow. We walk up into Hank's bedroom. I leave it and head outside, with everyone following. Hank suppresses his screams down to moans.

I walk outside and levitating a few feet off of the ground.

"Okay, everyone," I tell them. I want five people on each side of me, and hang on to each other. I need the rest of you to hang onto my feet."

Five people go to my left side, joining hands. Five other people go to my right, grabbing each other's hands. Three people, the two men with Hank, go to my left foot. The two people remaining go to my right foot. Everyone holds on to each other.

"Alright. Now grab onto me and hold on as tight as possible."

Everyone grabs onto me; my feet and hands. I fly upwards, lifting everyone off the ground. At first everyone dangles directly under me, hitting one another.

"Just a moment ..." I trail off.

I take flight towards Manhattan, building up speed. Gradually everyone fans out from each other, letting the air lift them up. Now we look to be the shape of a triangle.

Within minutes, instead of hours, I make it to the building. I maneuvered around central Manhattan, not wanting Intex to discover me.

I take my time landing, letting everyone land first. The first people land and step backwards, letting go of the person above them. I lower myself and the next people land, back away and let go. I lower down, letting the next people land and so on. We all land and I open the door of the building.

FBI agents and cops start guard at the entrance. They have been expecting me, knowing that I was missing. My team must've explained it to them.

They let us in and I take Hank to Nick, who is in his suit as Vortex.

“Vortex,” I tell Nick. “Hank’s brain is ... corrupted. Drake tried to replicate his ability but Hank pulled away, so now he has a massive headache and his powers are going haywire. You have to try to heal him.”

“Okay,” Nick says.

Hank crouches down at Nick’s feet, grabbing his head. He moans with pain, on longer screaming, but his head still feels horrible. Nick places his hands on Hank’s head and immediately tries healing it.

Hank’s pained expression on his face fades away in a minute. He no longer groans. Nick notices this, but keeps his hands on Hank’s head, knowing that Hank could just be feeling fine from a partial healing. Nick wants to be sure to completely heal Hank’s head.

Intex Prison

The Parents of Alex are joined back with the other parents, locked up. They begin to regret letting Alex go. They already miss him.

All of the parents are chained to metal couches. At least they're not in chairs. The prison they are forced to be in is huge. The parents look at each other, knowing they all feel the same way. They all have recently came back to be reunited with their children, only to realize that their children wouldn't choose them. They wonder how they can remember dying and waking up being told that they were in cryonic sleep.

A few of them woke up screaming, thinking they were still in pain of dying. But here they are, very well alive. They are confused as to how it is possible. Intex claims that he never killed them.

Once they saw their children they were filled with hope. They hugged and embraced them, but realized that their children wouldn't want to be with them if it meant working for Intex.

Alex actually went as far as being with them, to work with Intex. That didn't last long. Alex came to his senses, leaving his parents. They told Alex that they understood, but they still didn't want him to leave. They wish to stay with their children forever.

All of the parents realize that their children are grown up. They moved on. Of course if it weren't under these circumstances they would probably stay with them.

The parents of Brandon were not even reunited. Intex had told them that he was returned back to Blade so he wouldn't want to see

them. They are aware of Blade and he pains them. They know that Blade is not their son; Brandon is. They are devastated.

Intex hasn't come back in to tell them that Blade is returned back to normal. Intex isn't the kind of man to give hope to someone.

The parents continue sitting — really with no other choice — and think of their children, hoping they escape and prosper. They don't know that they already have escaped. But they keep on hoping. They hope for them to take down Intex, knowing that they are capable.

Suddenly they are paid visit by Intex, much unexpected. Intex never visits them. Intex opens the door and smiles at them all.

“How are we doing?” Intex asks with a snide smile on his face. He points at the space in front of them. “May I stand here?”

A few parents scoff and roll their eyes, while the others don't say a word. Intex walks to the center and continues smiling, giving the parents dread; whatever gives Intex happiness gives them fear, dread and misery.

“Well,” Intex starts. “The status of your children has changed.” He looks to Alex's parents. “Your son, Alex, is back to being locked up with the rest of his team. Tsk, tsk. Poor decision of his. But ... he'd rather have everyone locked up instead of giving you and himself freedom. Oh well. But, I do have news for you all. I don't know what kind of news you could call it; maybe shocking news.”

Intex pauses dramatically.

“All of you,” Intex starts up again, “remember dying, right? I told all of you that it wasn't real, even though it felt so real for all of you to die. Well, let me tell you this: it was real. I really did kill you all. There was no cryonic sleep. I made that up.”

The parents start looking puzzled. They wonder how they can be alive if they really were killed.

“No, you guys are no ghosts. In fact, you're not even your real children's parents. You are all clones. *You're* children's parents are still dead.”

Now the parents are shocked. A few of them let their jaws drop. They realize that they never lived before waking up in prison.

“You all remember everything that you're supposed children's parents remember because I took the real parent's DNA and brain cells, in simplest terms, and made them into you guys. Now you all feel as if you are their real parents, but you aren't. You guys were merely a back-up plan for getting your children to work for me. I didn't think it would work anyway, but it was worth a shot.”

Intex lets them ponder on that for a few minutes. The parents meditate on it, processing it.

“You mean to tell us,” Nick's father says, “that we are clones?” It's more of a statement than a question.

“Correct you are,” Intex replies.

“We're not real!” Grace's mother exclaims, saddened.

“Well, you are real. But you are not the children's real parents. You're real because you are living beings.”

“But,” Grace's mother continues. “We are not their parents.”

“No, you're not. You're right about that.”

Grace's mother lets her head drop down to look at the floor with misery. All of the parents feel even more disheartened, finding the truth that they are in fact clones.

“Really,” Intex says, “you're not even *Mrs. McGovern*. The only real McGovern left alive is Grace.”

Grace's mother, or clone of her mother, lets it all loose in an outcry. She doesn't hold back.

“But ... I feel like I am.”

“And you always will, but ... you are not her.”

Intex starts laughing malevolently and hysterically. He leaves the room, laughing on the way out and letting the door slam shut. He leaves the parents feel worse than before, knowing that they aren't really the children / Avians parents. They are merely clones.

The Shelter

It is about five in the morning and I am still up. I know that I really should be sleeping. I should be saving my energy, but I do not feel tired at all. Besides, do I really need to save my energy? Really, it's my team that needs to store energy.

Hank is now asleep with the people he's saved sleeping close by. They feel loyal to him having since Hank saved them. Having saved those people makes me feel proud of Hank. He's done that all on his own. If I wasn't locked up for four month I would've checked up on Hank, but it seems that he did a fine job on his own.

I look to Nick, he is fast asleep. Nick completely cured Hank of his horrible headache. Somehow Drake had found Hank and intended on replicated his powers, but failed in the process, leaving Hank brain damaged. Now Nick's cured him. Hank is grateful.

I look all around. There are few people awake, including most of the FBI, The Director, cops, The Lieutenant and, the young boy who I found to be named Stuart.

The boy, Stuart, notices me looking at him. He gets up and runs towards me.

“Hey, Avian,” he whispers, excited to meet me.

“Hello Stuart,” I say to him.

“You know my name?” he asks.

I smile at him. “I just overheard it. So ... how are you doing?”

“I'm doing fine Avian, now that you're here. You know, I never gave up hope for you. I mean, I knew you weren't dead, I knew you were around. I knew you would reappear. I know you will take down Intex.”

I nod to him. He makes me feel good. “Keep up that attitude and I will not let you down.”

“I know you can do it. I have faith in you.”

“That makes me feel real good, Stuart. Thank you.”

“You don't need me to tell you that, Avian. You are good on your own.”

“Please ... I am merely just like you.”

“No ... you're a superhero. I'm just a boy.”

I smile at him. “I was a boy once too.”

He smiles, realizing that. “But ... yeah. I uh ... I know that, but now ... you're a superhero.” He pauses, so excited that he doesn't know what to say. “I've always wanted to meet you, just not with this ... situation. I wish Intex weren't here, but I have faith that you'll stop him. But ... umm ... can I have your autograph?”

I smile, stunned. “Really?” I ask and he nods.

Since I do not have any paper or pen I just materialize one out of air, really transforming the air into paper and pen. I make the paper a picture of myself with my team as The Avians. I throw in the symbol of our team; a Rextonian letter A with a pair of wings on each side of it. A for Avians. On the bottom I use the pen to sign: *Avian*. I hand it to Stuart.

Stuart grabs it with delicacy. "Thank you so much. You have no idea how much this means to me."

"Please," I tell Stuart. "Don't worship me. I am no different than any other human."

"But ... you're not a human; you're a Rextonian."

"Wow, I wouldn't expect you to know that." I smile at him. "But ... thanks again for not giving up on me. Continue those good thoughts and I will not let you down."

Gustavo Morgan walks up to me.

I look to Stuart. "Sorry, I have to talk with The Director of the FBI."

"No problem," Stuart replies. "It was very nice meeting you!" He walks back over to his mother, and his friend who is fifteen years older than him.

I look at Gustavo, wondering what he has to say to me at this hour.

"Avian," he says, sitting down next to me. "I know that you and your team are mustering up energy to take down Intex, but what is your plan, really?"

I shrug. "I plan on taking down Intex. Simple as that really," I tell him.

“That’s not good enough.” He pauses. “You need an actual plan. You can't just simply attack Intex or he'll kill you or lock you up. You need a plan of attack. You need a way to break in secretly.”

“There will be Intex’s creations of his standing at all entrances; his hybrids.”

“You must be able to stun Intex, catch him off guard. Intex is known to use sly talk, so you must be prepared to ignore that; do not listen to anything he has to say.”

“I know Intex more than you do.”

“Or so you think. Out of all of the times you’ve fought Intex, how many of times did he escape or it result with you being locked up? Think about that. Intex has many times escaped from your grasp. Like four months back, when Intex reappeared. You let him go, because of his canniness. You fell victim to it and let him go. Foolish. You *must* not listen to anything he has to say.” He pauses. “Now ... you say you plan of stopping him, what do you mean?”

I'm afraid to say that I plan to kill him, but I really don't know. I realize that I don't even have a plan. All I know is that I have to stop him, but I do not know how I intend to do it.

“How to you plan on doing it? Killing him or bringing him in?”

I hesitate to answer. “Which do you prefer?”

Gustavo shakes his head. “You don't know this, but Intex already has the death sentence, so however you want to do it we are okay with. Just, if you decide to turn him in, be sure that he is powerless when you give him to us.”

I nod.

“Just remember: you need a plan. Plan something, be devious in breaking in, catch him off guard, and ignore his canniness.”

Mount Vernon

Tori Alcalá the cat girl is still around outside, having seen how things were in frozen time. But, now time is back to normal, resumed. She looks at her porch from a distance. She is sitting in a tree, getting away from some dogs; three Labradors. Her instinct was to run up a tree. Now the dogs are sitting on her porch, somehow knowing that she wanted to go back there, which is where she lives. She doubts the dogs know that.

Being up here for several hours she starts to get sleepy, despite the soreness of sitting in a tree. She notices that the dogs are starting to get sleepy as well. Being as crafty as a cat, Tori slowly works her way down the tree. The dogs don't move a muscle; they are fast asleep.

Tori gets all of the way down the tree, but isn't sure where to go next. She didn't think this far ahead. She thinks about Manhattan, it's quite a bit of a walk, but she feels that she needs to get out of here.

Manhattan is where Intex lives. Intex has made Manhattan the new capital of New York. Tori knows that The Avians must be still around somewhere and if they are they are in Manhattan. Maybe she could try to find them, but she knows those chances are slim. Despite every thought tell her against it, she heads southwest towards Manhattan.

About an hour in her walk, long gone from her house and away from the dogs, she starts hearing something. It comes from a house with no one in it. The house has one light on as well as the TV on. She hears it playing the news. She peaks through the window and her face beams up. On the news is a video of the Avians. The report says *file*, so it is a

replayed video. She listens closely to find out that it was taking two days ago.

Tori sighs, realizing that The Avians are alive. They are aggregating their energy to take down Intex. They are going to need it Tori supposes.

Seeing the report gives her new profound energy. She walks towards Manhattan with determination now, walking faster and stronger. She no longer feels tired.

Suddenly she starts off running, first on two legs, and then down to all fours, building up speed like a cheetah's. One of the good things about being a cat is that she doesn't have to blink as much, so the wind doesn't bother her when she runs at this speed.

The Shelter

Mark is talking with the FBI. Rachel pretends to be asleep. She has been waking up constantly and gave up on going back to sleep. She can't keep her thoughts straight.

Let me in, a voice screams in her head; Rhonda's.

Rachel shakes her head, trying to push Rhonda away. She doesn't want her in there. Intex ruined things. Mark thinks that he brought Rachel back. Rachel thought that he did as well, but now Rhonda is trying to fight her way back. She is struggling to break free and take over Rachel.

Rachel feels the urge to tell Mark, but not at this moment. He must talk with the FBI and she cannot interrupt them. They are determining how to go about defeating Intex, which is important to Rachel.

Rhonda wants Rachel stop Mark. Rachel doesn't want to alarm Mark, knowing that would be what he would in fact do, because he loves her so much.

I will take over. I will prosper. You will not go on.

Rachel shakes her head, trying to shove those thoughts aside.

Get out of my head! Rachel yells to Rhonda.

Rachel hears laughter in her head.

I will not leave. I'm not going anywhere.

Rachel avoids screaming. She does not want to wake up the whole crowd of people, nor alarm Mark, the FBI and the rest of the team. Rhonda has been nagging at her more and more, somehow getting closer to taking over.

Rachel decides that she'll tell Mark once he's done conversing with the FBI. He should be able to do something, having telepathy. Rachel believes that he can, which is why she's not doing something about it right at this moment; she feels that Mark will be able to solve this in a heartbeat.

Bad idea. Think what Intex would think.

Rachel listens. Suddenly she feels like she would be betraying Intex. She doesn't want to do that. Intex would hate her. She likes Intex and does not want to displease him. Intex likes her and she likes him. If she keeps this a secret Intex can get her that apartment and things will — Wait a minute!

Rachel shakes her head, endeavoring to thrust Rhonda away. Rhonda is clouding her own thoughts and judgment. Rachel convinces herself that she does not like Intex. She is married to Mark and she loves him. Mark is strong and determined. Intex is a lunatic. Intex is the evil one and Mark is the great one; her husband.

Intex is no good.

Don't you dare say that! Intex is great. He's done nothing but greatness for us. He has given us these fine abilities. He's given us a home.

No! Get out of my head. Intex has done nothing for me!! He's given me powers without my consent. He may have given you a place to stay, but the really reason for that is so that I *was away from Mark.*

That's not true.

I can't believe this! I am arguing with a non-existent person.

I'm real! I'm very real!

No. Intex created you. You are only a personality that Intex put inside of me. You are not your own person. You do not own this body. You are not real! You are a fake! Get out of here! Leave me alone! Leave! LEAVE!!

Rachel sighs, shaking her head as if to shake Rhonda out. Her head starts throbbing; a headache is coming on. At least she's pushed Rhonda away for a little while. Her voice doesn't bother her now.

Rachel looks back up at Mark. The FBI Director seems to be stern with Mark, making sure he understands whatever they are talking about. Rachel wonders about Bruce and Brandon. Are they having problems with their alternate personalities?

One look at the two of them answers their questions. They are both sound asleep. She is not because of Rhonda. Rhonda is keeping her awake, but Bruce and Brandon are sleeping fine. Their alternate characters are not reemerging like Rhonda is inside of Rachel. It is only happening to her.

Don't worry about Bruce and Brandon; they are idiots. Intex cares about us, not them.

Intex cares about you, not me! Now, leave me alone! Go away!

It's not that simple, Rach. I will always be here. There is nothing you can do about it. You ... are out of luck.

Please leave me be. I belong with Mark, not Intex. You told me to think how Intex would feel, well listen to this: how would Mark feel if I left him, huh? Mark would be devastated. I will not do that to him.

I don't care about Mark.

Well, news flash, Rhonda! I don't care about Intex. So give up trying to persuade me!

Lower Manhattan

Oliver wakes up from the caw of a bird, a crow. He looks up to see it on a light pole looking down at him. Oliver scoffs at it, but is already awake. He sits up.

Oliver sighs. His metahuman or parahuman hunt turned out useless; time went back to normal before he found anyone. Oliver didn't find anyone to steal powers from. It makes Oliver think about why he really wants to steal powers. He has enough right now; he is powerful now that he has Morris' powers.

Pondering on that, Oliver begins to wonder what he's planning on doing. He really doesn't know why he plans on stealing someone's powers; it's just the thrill he gets when he does. He tries to think about other people. Intex. Avian. The Avians are planning on stopping Intex. Oliver wonders if they are strong enough to do so, but ... this is not his fight. Or is it?

Oliver wonders if he can do something to help Avian. Maybe he could help take down Intex. But ... Oliver feels that it's not his place. He is not one of the good guys. He's a villain. He always has been. If anyone

knew him before, he was a missing person, but he grew up as a thief, and then he got stolen himself; kidnapped. From his kidnapper he had learned to be more villainous. His parents were a help in that matter, they showed no love towards Oliver, forcing Oliver to vow to do whatever it takes to dishonor them with his villainous acts.

For so long, Oliver has been like this; evil. He doesn't know how not to be. He has created an instinct for himself to be evil. The thought of helping Avian is new to him. He is unsure where it's coming from.

Outside Intex HQ

Victor and Richard look at each other, debating on going in at this moment. It is early in the morning and they are determined to find Drake's location. They have a feeling that Drake might be inside the headquarters.

The two try to muster up the courage to enter the building. Victor wants Drake taken down because of what he did to him, ruining his brain for that short period until Richard helped heal him.

They wonder if Drake really did in fact come here. If he didn't they might be setting themselves up by going here. Intex could easily take them in for an experiment. They try to convince themselves that it won't be easy, since both of them have lightning speed; they can easily escape.

The look at each other.

"It's now or never," Richard tells Victor.

"We can bail. Last chance," Victor says.

Richard doesn't respond. He looks at the front entrance.

Since neither of them argues against it, they head towards the entrance. They don't knock; they just open it and walk in.

They immediately find themselves in the largest room there is; the room where all of the workers are working at their lab tables. Immediately five gorilla hybrids block them from getting any closer.

Near the entrance of the room, where they stand, there is a brunt flesh smell. Their attention is drawn to a black outline on the ground before them. Someone was burned.

The workers around continue working, while the ones responsible report their appearances to Intex by phone. Intex teleports directly in front of Victor and Richard. Intex holds up a hand and the five guards stand down, returning to their posts.

“Welcome,” Intex says, “to the Rehabilitation Center. I am Intex, if you don't already know.”

Victor scoffs to himself because of the politeness of Intex's appearance; it's inspiring. Victor believes for it to be a mask.

“Hello,” Victor starts. “I'm Victor and this is Richard.” He goes along with Intex, being friendly. “We are metahumans.”

“I see. You aren't here to challenge me, are you?”

“No of course not.”

“Good, because that would end badly, for you. I'm sure you're aware that whoever you are does not matter; anyone who lives in New York must become fused with animal DNA, to become a hybrid or parahuman. But as for you two, you will become meta-parahumans. Now that will be an honor.”

Victor nods. He didn't think about what to become. He wonders if Intex would push this issue right away.

“Actually, Intex, do you mind holding off on that for a minute?”

“Sure, for the time being.”

“We are actually wondering if you know any Drake. Has he been here?”

Intex laughs. "Ah. Drake Williams." Intex nods. "Yes, I know the man. I met him just a bit ago. You see that black mark on the floor," Intex points. "That's where I killed him."

They sigh with relief.

"What? You wanted him dead?" Intex asks.

"Well ..." Richard says.

"We wanted to stop him," Victor says. "We were afraid that he would be a problem. His powers were going to his head and he wanted to take you on."

"Oh, he was nothing. He learned that the hard way," Intex says.

"Okay," Victor tells Intex. "That's all we wanted to know. We don't want to bother you, so we'll be on our way."

The two of them turn around to walk back outside, but Intex teleports in front of them, stopping them.

"Not so fast," Intex says. He smiles at them. "You must remember what I said." He allows room for a pause. "So what will it be? Parahumans or death? Or ... I'll give you guys several options. You can work for me, become a parahuman or die. The choice is yours to make."

Victor and Richard look at each other.

"Now, remember. You don't make the choice together; you make it individually. So no need to talk it over with each other. Make your own choice."

Victor slowly nods to Intex. He thinks about Drake and looks back down at the burn markings on the floor.

"So," Victor asks. "You killed Drake." Intex nods. "Where is his body?"

"Do you not trust that I killed him?"

“No, I do. Just where is it?”

“It’s in a spare room of mine where we keep our old chemicals, where it’s cold. Nothing can degenerate in there. The room is conserving of chemicals.”

“Take me there, and then we can discuss my decision.”

“Why must you see him?” Intex asks. “I don’t understand. Were you close to him? Do you hate me for killing him?”

Victor smiles, scoffs and drops his head. He looks back up at Intex. “No, I appreciate you killing him for me, but I wanted to kill him instead. He messed up my brain because he intended to replicate my abilities but I pulled away too soon and he somehow messed it up.”

“I see. Alright, you may see him. But as for you Richard, you do not need to see him as well, do you?”

“May I?” Richard asks.

Intex sighs, still keeping a calm face. “Fine. You may both see him.”

Intex lays hands on both of their shoulder, teleporting them to the room Drake lies in. To the two of them, the world suddenly changes around them. The room is definitely cool; it’s like a huge freezer.

They immediately see Drake on the floor, dead and burned. He looks like charcoal. Victor looks at Drake, tensing up with anger. He exhales deeply. He walks up and kicks Drake’s dead body, confirming that he is very dead.

“Alright,” Victor says. “I’ve made my choice. I will work for you, nothing else.”

Intex smiles at him and looks to Richard. “And as for you?” Intex asks Richard.

“I’d like to work for you as well,” Richard replies.

“Very well, but ... perhaps you guys might want to reconsider. You see, if you just work for me, then you aren’t granted with freedom. You are forced to do whatever I tell you do to, no questions asked and I will expect you to do so. Do you understand?”

Victor takes a minute to think about it. “No freedom?” He’s confused. You would think that working for someone would entitle you to freedom.

“None whatsoever. However, if you choose the path of becoming a meta-parahuman you will be gifted with freedom to do whatever you want. You can even choose to do small favors for me to be provided with a place to stay here in this building.”

Victor thinks about that. Richard reconsiders.

“I’d like to take you up on that offer,” Richard tells Intex. “Just the parahuman offer, not the favors.”

“Very well. And you, Victor?”

Victor looks at Intex and smiles. He thinks about how it would be if he did small favors for Intex. He would be provided with a place to stay.

“What kind of place are we talking here?” Victor asks.

“The best in the world. No lie.”

Victor smiles. “Can’t get better than that, right? So, I will choose to do *small* favors for you and become a parahuman.”

Intex smiles at them both. “You’ve both made wise choices, Victor more so.” He pauses, looking at Richard to see if he will change his mind. He doesn’t. Richard doesn’t want to work with Intex. “So you get the choice of what kind of animal to be fused with.”

Victor and Richard both think about it. They really didn't give it any thought before coming here.

"Can we have time to think about it?" Victor asks.

"Yes. You can have until tomorrow morning. I'll even let you stay in one of our places for the day."

Intex takes them through the building, walking them this time. They leave the cool room, leaving Drake's dead body. Intex intends for them to be awed by walking them through the whole building to get to the apartments.

They are shown the experiment rooms, prisons, chemical rooms, filing room, a dining hall, training rooms, and a large room with a large water fountain in the center of it, large bathrooms for both sexes and finally the apartments at the end of the large hallway.

Intex takes them into more hallways, finally taking them to an empty apartment. He opens the door and offers them to step inside.

"There you are. You have the day to decide. Make yourselves at home while you wait," Intex tells them. "Goodbye."

Intex closes the door and leaves the two of them alone in the apartment. They drop their jaws in awe. They first step through a very short hallway with very nice wallpaper and carpet. They see the huge kitchen with dark tile floors, a huge refrigerator, microwave, oven, stove and the large counter in the middle.

The walk to the fridge and open it up to see that it is filled with tons of food; delicious food and drinks of all sorts. They set foot in the living room in admiration. They see the large TV with the large couches and chairs. There is a computer which is no doubt fast. There is a surround system around the whole room.

They shake their heads, disbelieving this place.

"I can't believe that this is the rehabilitation center," Victor tells Richard.

"I know," Richard replies.

"I'm sure that this is what I want."

"I changed my mind. I'm choosing this place over living on the streets."

"Now just to think of the type of animal to be turned into."

"Yeah ... our toughest choice yet."

From his office, Intex watches Richard and Victor on camera. He smiles to himself, loving the looks on their faces.

"I've got them now," Intex says to himself.

The Shelter

I talk with my team about our plan, which we will go about tomorrow if all goes well. We figure by then we will have been well rested and energized. The FBI will assist us with separating good guys from bad guys, essentially.

Intex has run experiments on millions of people. We need to determine which people are still good inside and which are bad, either their own doing or Intex's doing of tweaking their personalities. Most of that will be a concern after our battle with Intex. We are more concerned about those that are still in Intex HQ building. Those guarding will obviously be the true evil ones.

I work on creating new suits for my team, just to be ready for a new battle. I materialize food for the thousands of people here in this new shelter.

My team and I spend our day so far chilling in comfortable seats.

"Do you suppose to be training or something?" Morgan asks him.

"Yes," I tell him. "We will within the hour. We have discussed this and will go according to plan."

"Very well." Director Morgan returns to his chair, with his agents nearby.

I look at my team. They don't seem to have gotten good sleep last night. Hopefully we can get good sleep tonight, despite us having to train and prepare ourselves today.

I jump from my chair. "I think we better start training now," I say.

“But I'm hungry,” Alex says.

I dart my head towards Alex, who is, as well as the rest of us, in his suit.

“We can't train on a full stomach. Only water will suffice for our training.”

“What?” Alex complains.

No one else argues against me.

“Let's get to it. We have to be ready for tomorrow.”

The team gets to their feet and follows me outside. We are not going to train inside the shelter, because we do not want to harm anyone inside. We train around the back of the shelter, where there are no windows for anyone inside the shelter to see.

We practice our combat skills on each other, while using our powers at the same time. We do physically hurt ourselves, though. I practice, fighting against Bruce and Nick. Brandon fights against Alex. Grace, Mara and Rachel practice with each other.

I can't help but notice how well Mara and Grace already fight with each other. Their minds are practically intertwined. They can communicate telepathically with each other. But ... it seems as if Rachel isn't with us mentally.

Rachel seems to be slow today. It's as if she got the worst sleep of us all. I thought it looked like she got beauty sleep, but I must be wrong. But, it seems at the same time that something else is on her mind.

Rachel blocks an attack from Grace. Mara swings a punch at Rachel, but she doesn't block it. Mara stops herself, just barely hitting Rachel's lip.

“Are you alright?” Mara asks.

“I'm fine,” Rachel says. “Just tired, that’s all.”

“Well, you definitely need to get some good sleep tonight then.”

Rachel nods to her. Rachel throws a punch at Grace, but she blocks it at the last second.

Knock her out!

No. Rachel thinks back to Rhonda. We are only training and this is my team. I will not hurt them.

Rhonda scoffs in her head. How do you expect to fight Intex, then? Hmm?

This training will help. I will fight Intex with the intention of hurting him. My hatred for him will help with that. You can count on it.

Really? Count on this, Rach. By tomorrow, you're done for. I will take you over and destroy you once and for all.

“Mark!” Rachel suddenly yells, alarming Grace and Mara.

“What did we do?” Grace asks, afraid she’s hurt Rachel in some way.

“No, it’s not you guys.”

Rachel calls my name. Nick and Bruce immediately stop fighting and I throw a last punch at them, catching them off guard.

“You have to be ready for that,” I tell them.

I run to Rachel.

“What is it?” I ask her.

She looks nervous. “Mark, I should have told you this sooner,” she starts.

I wait, but she doesn’t continue. She runs her hand through her hair and sighs. She chuckles.

“Never mind, I’m fine,” Rachel tells me.

“You’re fine? But ... what did you want to tell me?”

“I wanted to tell you — nothing!”

“Are you sure you’re okay, Rachel?” I look at her, confusingly. Her voice is quavering.

“No, I’m fine.”

Rachel voice tone keeps changing, reminding me of something dreadful, but it can't be. It’s like she's fighting against herself.

“Mark,” Rachel begins again. “It’s Rhonda, she's not here anymore, so don't worry.”

The latter part sounds of that same tone that Rhonda spoke in. Fear starts up inside of me, feeling like butterflies fluttering through my whole upper body. I don't want to believe it, but I think Rhonda is coming back, taking over Rachel.

“I'm fine, Mark. Really.”

That time it sounded completely like Rhonda. My eyes go wide open. *Rachel?* I ask into her mind.

Mark! Help me! Rhonda is taking over my —

She is cut off and I don't hear here. I search, trying to find her thoughts.

“Rachel?” I ask.

Rachel smiles at me, sinisterly, although it's not Rachel. It's Rhonda.

"Rachel is no more," Rhonda tells me.

Rhonda, taking over Rachel's body, attempts to punch me but I dodge the punch very quickly. She tries again to punch me several times, but I dodge and block each one.

Rhonda, leave Rachel's mind at once! I yell into her head. *You are not real! Rachel belongs in this body and you do not. Rhonda, you are no more. You are not Rhonda, you are Rachel. Rachel, come back. Own this body, Rachel. Come back to me.*

Rhonda bursts out in laughter. "You are pathetic! Give up on trying shoving me away. Rachel is gone; you can't bring her back." Rhonda pauses. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I must be going back to my darling, Intex."

"No!" I yell and grab Rhonda's arm as she turns.

Rhonda spins her head, narrowing her eyes at me. "You better let go of me or you'll regret it!"

"No, I will not. I will keep you here until you're Rachel again!" My voice cracks.

I do not want for this to be happening, especially at this time. We are preparing to take down Intex tomorrow and now Rhonda is reappearing.

"Bryce, come help me," Rhonda tells Bruce.

Bruce shakes his head. "I'm not Bryce. I'm Bruce," he replies. "I'm not helping you."

Rhonda tries to release herself from my grip, but I don't let go.

"Oww! Mark, you're hurting me!"

I instinctively let go of her arm. Her yelling in that body is like Rachel yelling. She scoffs and kicks me in the chest while I let my guard down. Rhonda knocks the wind out of me. She jumps into the sky, throwing her wings out quickly, already flying towards Intex HQ.

“No,” I mumble to myself. “This can't be happening.”

Alex runs to my side. “Shouldn't we go after her?”

“I don't want to hurt her. Rachel is still there, but ... I couldn't get her back.”

“You tried your telepathy?”

“Of course, but it didn't work. She scoffed at me.” I sniffle and tears come down my cheek. “Did you hear what she said?” I ask whoever with my voice trembling. “She called Intex her darling.”

“Don't worry, Mark,” Nick tells me as he walks to my side. “We will get Rachel back.”

I want to believe Nick, but I'm not so sure. It's easy to say, but I don't know. My telepathy worked on Brandon, but not on Rachel.

I don't know what to do.

Part 3: Crusade

“Mark,” Grace says. “We have to go after her.”

“And do what?” I ask.

“We can't just let her go back to Intex. We have to bring her back.”

Grace and Mara both extend their wings from their arms, both in unison. They jump in the air, flapping their wings, readying to take off towards her.

“Wait,” I say.

Grace and Mara land, but keep their wings out. I look around at my whole team. They are all on alert. The rest of them put their wings out. Brandon uses his electronic wings, extending them by thought.

“Are we ready to fight Intex today?” I ask. “Because if ... Rhonda makes it to Intex Headquarters before us, we'll have to face Intex.”

“I'm ready,” Nick says.

“Me too,” Bruce says at the same time Alex says.

“Ready,” Grace and Mara say.

Brandon nods at me. Everyone is ready.

“The FBI; they need to be there to save the prisoners and experiments.”

“Mark, you have to leave now!” Nick says. “You guys go! I'll stay here and tell the FBI.”

“Okay,” I say and jump into the air, flying towards Rhonda.

Everyone takes flight, following me, except Nick who stays behind to alert the FBI.

I am the fastest when it comes to flight. I bolt through the air, making it up to Rach—Rhonda in a few minutes.

“Rachel, wait!” I yell.

Rhonda looks back at me, but continues flying towards Intex HQ.

“I’m Rhonda!” she yells at me. “Not Rachel!”

“No, you are Rachel; my wife!”

Rhonda laughs at me. “Give it up, Mark. I am going to Intex. He is going to do so much for me. We are going to be together.”

“No, you can’t!” I exclaim.

Rhonda throws her fist out at me in the air, but I let myself drop to avoid the hit. I fly back up to her side, dodging her punches. Rhonda scowls at me, angry.

You are Rachel, not Rhonda, I say into her mind. You’re Rachel. Rachel. Rhonda doesn’t exist. Rhonda isn’t real. Rhonda is gone. Rachel, come back. Rachel. You are Rachel.

“Stop saying that!” Rhonda yells at me. “It obviously is not working, so stop. It’s annoying!”

It breaks my heart. Suddenly I stop propelling my body forward and Rhonda flies past. My heart sinks, feeling like it’s falling to the ground below. I just stay there in the air, levitating above all buildings.

I cry until my team catches up to me five minutes later.

“Mark?” Mara asks.

“You let her get away?” Alex asks.

I scoff. “It’s no use.” I pause over the sound of the wind. “She’s gone.”

“It’s not over!” Grace suddenly yells at me. “We will get Rachel back, Mark! Don’t give up! That’s what you always told us. So listen to yourselves; don’t give up!” Grace pauses, struggling to fly in place. “Now let’s go after her!”

Lower Manhattan

Tori runs and runs, trying to find where The Avians might be. She has no idea where the place could be that they are staying at. But she knows that she must be in the general area.

She looks around, block by block, not knowing where to go now. She knows they’re hiding, so she shouldn’t be able to find them easily. She sees someone walking in the distance. He wears a baseball cap.

Tori runs up to the man and gasp when she sees his face. It is Oliver Matthews. Oliver looks up at her, seeing that she is obviously a hybrid of a cheetah.

“Don’t be frightened,” Oliver says. “I won’t harm you.”

“Really?” Tori asks with her voice shaky. “Because ... you’re Oliver Matthews.”

Oliver sighs. He has spent the whole morning, pacing around, hungry and thinking about helping the Avians with taking out Intex. He feels that he can help this person out to prepare himself with helping The Avians.

“I can help you,” Oliver says. “I promise I won’t touch you. I won’t hurt you either.”

The girl looks at him, fearfully. Oliver smiles at her and takes off his baseball cap, trying to show her that he is not scary.

“Are you looking for someone?”

“Yes, the Avians.”

“Oh!” Oliver smiles. “You’re looking for the shelter. They just recently moved the location and the Avians are there. I can take you there, but I will not enter the place. I am not welcome.” Oliver pauses.

“Can you take me?” she asks.

Oliver nods. “It’s not too far from here actually.” Oliver pauses to think. “It may be just a ten minute walk.”

Oliver starts walking towards the new shelter’s location, while Tori follows, keeping her distance from him. She still doesn’t fully trust him, and he doesn’t blame her. He doesn’t look back at her, knowing that it would just make Tori feel uneasy.

Throughout the ten minutes, none of them said a word to each other.

“Here we are,” Oliver says, standing before the huge building. “This is the shelter. Now I will leave.”

Oliver walks past Tori, walking away to who-knows-where.

Tori walks towards the building. When she gets closer, she sees that there are people standing by the door. Once she’s ten feet from the door, she realizes that they’re FBI agents.

She feels relief, but then tension.

They hold their guns up and Tori throws her hands up.

“Please don’t shoot me,” she cries out.

The FBI realizes that she is a parahuman, but can see that she's afraid. They lower their weapons and open the door for her.

“Sorry for the fright,” an agent says to her. “Please come on in. Welcome to the shelter.”

Tori walks through the door, immediately looking for the Avians. But they don't seem to be here. Instead she sees the thousands of people all around. Up front she sees one girl in her thirties who is a parahuman. But something about her catches her attention.

The girl looks at Tori. She sees that the girl is a hybrid of an orangutan. Tori shakes her head in disbelief.

“What a second,” Tori mumbles to herself. “Is that ...”

“Tori!” Kyra jumps up to her feet, running towards her.

“Kyra!” Tori exclaims.

The two of them run together, embracing in a hug. They are long lost friends. They were together before Intex split them off when he ran experiments on everyone he captured.

Tori is used to seeing Kyra with her boyfriend, or fiancé, but she knows what Intex did to him; Intex killed him, taking him away from Kyra. Tori doesn't dare mention his name to fill her with sadness.

“I'm so glad I found you,” Tori says.

“Please,” Kyra says, pointing to a young boy, a man, and the boy's mother. “I want you to meet Stuart, his mother Dawn, and Tristan.”

Intex HQ

Rhonda comes storming through the front entrance. Intex peers through the window in his office from above. He sees her, already knowing that she is Rhonda, not Rachel.

Intex teleports in front of her. "Welcome back, Rhonda," Intex says smiling.

Rhonda jumps at Intex and hugs him. Surprised, Intex slowly hugs her back.

"I found out something, Intex," Rhonda tells him. "I think I'm in love with you."

Intex smiles at her. "I think I am too."

They pull each other apart and smile at each other, no more. Rhonda is aware that Intex has been around for about seven-hundred to eight-hundred years, but now that he has come back from death he appears to be twenty-five, which is not unpleasant to her. She is only a few years younger.

Intex teleports Rhonda into his office, where they can look out to the large experiment room below.

"Intex," Rhonda says, after they sit down at some chairs, peering out. "Mark and his team are coming after me. So ... I think they're headed here. They should be here any minute."

Intex smiles. "What's to fear? We can stop them." He pauses. "Besides, I have been waiting for this for a long time."

The door of the office opens and Darrius steps in. He sees Rhonda sitting in one of the chairs.

“I thought I heard something,” he says, realizing that he heard Rhonda’s voice.

“You could hear me from all of the way back there?” Rhonda asks, referring to the apartments in the rear of the huge building.

“Well, actually I was on my way to the office and I heard your voice then.”

“Ah.”

“Where’s Jackson?” Intex asks.

Darrius shrugs. “He’s still in his apartment, moping or something.”

“Moping?” Rhonda asks.

“Well, I mean he’s watching TV or something.”

“Are you serious, though?” Intex asks Darrius. “Is Jackson really moping?”

“Yes, he has been moping, griping to himself.”

“What for?”

“I don’t know. I’ve been ignoring it.” Darrius pauses, giving it some thought. “I know he’s not happy about something. I was hoping that it is only about grieving for Morris’ death and not something else.”

“Me too,” Intex agrees.

They both think the same thing. They don’t want Jackson to be moping about being *here*.

The front doors fly inward.

“Here they are,” Rhonda says.

Intex smiles at Mark and his team below. “Let’s watch the magic work.”

We waited for Nick to catch up to us before we broke into the Intex building. We all shove the doors inward, running in. We expect Intex to teleport in front of us, but instead five gorilla-man guards run at us, already trying to strike us.

We all pull apart from each other, giving some space, and we dodge the gorillas that come at us all. Three of them fight two of us at a time.

Just then other hybrids of Intex’s come out from the set of stairs that lead deeper into the building. These hybrids are lions, bears, and dogs. All are very muscular and un-proportionally shaped. The bears’ have black fur, like a black bear.

I am not expecting this to be the fight to take down Intex; we have planned for it to be tomorrow. Somehow this is starting to become the fight.

The ugly hybrids run towards us, joining the fight.

There is only one gorilla on me. One lion-man and one bear-man run towards me. The rest, being three more, go after the rest of my team. I look to the gorilla, knowing he's ready to take me out with the help of the lion and bear.

I take a blow to my face first from the gorilla, and then from the lion, slashing me with his claws. The bear tries to slash his claws at me, but I throw my arm out, deflecting his attack. The gorilla tries punching me again, but I dodge my head out of the way and grab his arm.

I yank the gorilla off of his feet and throw him into the lion. I run at the bear, tackling him to the ground. I pound hard down on the bear's chest, knocking the wind out of him. I jump up and slam my fist into his head, which bounces off the hard ground, knocking him unconscious. I grab the bear's body and hurl him at the gorilla.

The gorilla tries to get out of the way, but fails and gets knocked to the floor. The lion jumps out of the way and pounces at me. I materialize a brick wall in between us and he hits it in midair. The lion falls to the floor in pain. I destroy the wall and materialize a spear.

With the spear I throw it at the gorilla that just now pushes the bear off of him. Being unprepared, the spear stabs the gorilla through the chest. The gorilla groans and falls down onto his back, yelling out in pain.

The lion weakly gets up, clearly dizzy, but tries to stand still. I run towards the lion and hit him with my fist upwards into his jaw. I hit the lion with so much force that he neck snaps backwards and he falls unresponsive.

The bear groans, starting to wake up already. I materialize a spear to stab into the bear, but another one of the bears that was fighting my team stops me, knocking me off my feet. The spear slides across the floor and the bear pins me. The bear squeezes me with all of might, cracking some of my ribs.

I groan, but determinedly get on my hands and knees, fighting against the bear. With all my might I thrust the bear off of me, throwing him at least twenty feet in the air. The bear flies straight upwards and lands down on his side, already rolling in pain.

I throw my hand out to materialize another spear, but somehow the spear on the floor ten feet from me, soars through the air and into my hand. I look at Bruce and Nick, but both of them are too busy fighting the hybrids that fight them.

I am dumbfounded. Somehow I just drew the spear towards me, as if I had telekinesis. Or having me had made the spear I have some control over it ...

The bear jumps to his feet, ignoring his pain. I swing the spear around at the bear like a sword. I manage to cut the bear's arm.

The bear-man growls at me, sounding just like a bear. I shake my head at him, giving him a you-are-going-down look. The bear scoffs and runs towards me.

I lash the spear at the bear-man, but miss by an inch. The bear jumps up on top of me, biting down on the spear, snapping it in two. I push upwards on the bear, seeming to shove him off of me. Instead I create a long sword from my hands, piercing the bear through the chest. Effortless I push the lifeless body off of me.

I turn around, facing the wall with the window above it, the direction the rest of the building leads to. I peer through the window, seeing Intex, Darrius and Rhonda looking down at me.

“Rachel!” I yell at her. “Please come back!”

Through the window, Rhonda shakes her head at me. I look at Intex, who remains expressionless, but no doubt is upset that I already took down four of his hybrids.

One of the dog-men runs at me, biting my arm just like a stray dog would. Using my other hand I hit the dog-man's head with all of my force, immediately knocking him out. The dog-man falls to the floor, but looks more than just unconscious. His head starts bleeding and actually as a dent in it created from my fist.

Tally that up as five hybrids that I defeated now. I look up at the window to see Intex showing anger now, no longer expressionless. I smile at him. He looks to want to teleport down here himself, but Rhonda lays a hand on his chest, stopping him. She says something to him and Intex

nods. Rhonda leaves the room, disappearing from my sight. She reappears at the stairs, running down them and then running towards me.

I smile at her like I would smile at Rachel in the morning. Rhonda continues running her way towards me nonetheless. I purposely rub my head, showing a sign of weakness to her, trying to get Rachel to see.

Rhonda still charges at me with a furious face.

You're Rachel, I think to her. *Not Rhonda*.

“Shut up!!” Rhonda yells.

She makes her way to me, punching me hard in the nose and knocking me off my feet. I fall onto my back and she lands down on top of me, landing with her elbow hitting me in the chest. She knocks the wind out of me and then punches me hard in the gut, keeping me from breathing.

I am afraid to hurt Rhonda, so I don't do a thing. I let her to continue to punch me. She hits me over and over in the face and in the guts. I can't breathe because of the wind constantly being knocked out of me. I get lightheaded and some of the pain lessens.

“Come on! Hit me!” Rhonda yells. “Do something! Stop me!”

I continue to lie on my back and not do a thing. Rhonda continues punching me, hurting me, but I can bear with this because of my love for Rachel.

I try to think of something to say to her that would bring Rachel back. I try to imagine a good time Rachel and I had together. I think of our first date. It was at a simple cheap place; *Christenberry's American Express*.

“Rachel,” I say to Rhonda, but she continues hitting me. “Do you remember ... oww? Please. *Christenberry's American Express?*”

Rhonda stops punching me for a second.

“Why should I know about that place?”

I sigh. It doesn't register anything. I try to think of something else.

“Please Rachel, come back to me,” I say.

“Please, just give up, Mark! I am in love with Intex!” Rhonda exclaims.

“Intex is old!”

“He's just like he's twenty five. So why does it matter!”

I can't think of anything else to do ... except this one thing.

Rhonda hits me again in the guts, knocking the wind out of me again. She tries to punch me once more, but I grab her wrists, stopping her.

Rhonda tries to break her wrists free, but I don't let her.

“Let go of me! You're hurting me!”

This time I do not let go of her wrists, knowing that Rhonda is trying to trick me to let go off her. I allow myself to heal. I put my hands together and grab both of her wrists with just one of my hands. Even though she has enhanced strength, my strength is stronger. Using my sleeve I wipe the blood off my face.

I raise my hand up to Rhonda's face and stroke her cheek softly.

“Don't touch me!”

I move her hair behind her hair. I lean upwards, straightening my back, leaving Rhonda on top of me, on my lap. I lean into her, even though she tries to get away. I keep a hold of her wrists with my one hand. I delicately rest my other hand on her cheek.

I lean closer and kiss her lips. Rhonda pulls away.

“Don't you dare kiss me!”

I ignore her and kiss her again.

“Stop—”

She suddenly stops in midsentence and allows me to kiss her again. She relaxes her hands, and stops fighting. She kisses me back and I let go of her wrists. I place my other hand around her head. She wraps her hands around my neck, gently.

We finally pull away and she smiles at me.

“Mark,” Rachel says. “I love you so much.”

I got Rachel back.

“I love you,” I tell Rachel.

We lean together and kiss again. Rachel sits in my lap, but shifts her legs so she isn't shoving her knees into me. We wrap around each other, both happy to be back together.

“What happened?” Intex exclaims.

Rachel and I pull apart from each other. We look at the angry Intex standing before us.

“Rhonda?” Intex asks Rachel.

Rachel shakes her head. “No, I'm Rachel,” she replies.

I look at my team; they are down to two gorilla. Nick hits a gorilla in the face, knocking him out on contact. Now we are down to one.

“Plan b,” Intex says. Rachel shakes her head again. “What about you own apartment?”

“Nope!” Rachel exclaims. “I am not Rhonda. I am not in love with you.”

Intex looks disappointed. He was falling in love with Rhonda, but I returned Rachel back to me.

The last gorilla lands at Intex's feet. I turn to see who through him; Brandon, in his wolf form.

I think about our plans with the FBI, this is not it. We are supposed to go about the battle tomorrow. This is not according to plan. I look at my team and signal towards the door. We came here for Rachel and now we have her.

My team starts towards the door.

“Later, Intex,” I tell him.

“What?” he scoffs. “You're leaving?”

“Yes, and you are going to let us.”

Intex doesn't say a word and just simply let us walk out the door. We jump into the air and fly back towards the shelter.

“I can't believe he just let us go!” Alex exclaims.

“He is heartbroken,” Bruce scoffs. “He won't do a thing!”

“Then tomorrow should go about smoothly,” I say, knowing that it won't go as smoothly as I made it sound.

“How'd you do it, Mark?” Brandon asks me.

“What?” I ask.

Brandon pauses let the wind roar by. “You got Rachel back.”

I nod and smile at Rachel. I turn my head back towards Brandon. “A kiss,” I tell him.

“Really?”

“Yup. Telepathy didn't work and neither did asking her about our old memories together. It was as simple as a good old kiss.”

Rachel chuckles. “It worked,” she says as softly as possible over this loud wind that roars in our ears.

Within minutes we make it back to the shelter. The FBI is waiting for us.

“Where did you guys go to?” Gustavo exclaims. “We looked behind the building and you were gone!”

My team looks to me to do the explaining. “We just went out for a fly,” I say.

Gustavo nods. “I thought you guys might have gone to Intex HQ.”

“No, we just were practicing our flight, that’s all.” I lie. “We will go to Intex HQ as planned.”

“Okay,” the FBI. “We will stick to that plan then. Remember, we will go in quietly.”

We nod to Gustavo and he nods back. We walk back into the shelter to get ready to rest well for the big day tomorrow.

Intex HQ

Intex remains in the middle of the floor, looking at the door. The hybrids all lay down on the ground either dead or knocked out. Intex ignores them. Just a minute later a few workers come by to gather them up.

Darrius teleports next to Intex.

“Are you alright?” Darrius asks Intex, making him come back to reality.

Intex scowls at the floor and then looks at Darrius. “I’m fine.”

Darrius nods. “This may be a bad time to say this —”

“Just say it anyway.”

“Jackson’s left. He left a note.”

Intex looks down at Darrius’ hand to see the paper. Intex grabs it and reads it. It’s a resignation letter.

“Figures,” Intex says. “He never appeared eager to obey me.”

Intex tosses the note in the air and shoots lava at it like he’s skeet shooting. The paper burns to nothing before it even touches the floor.

“Great,” Intex mumbles to himself. “First Rhonda, now Jackson.”

“What?” Darrius asks. He can't hear Intex, since he spoke softly.

“Nothing.”

Intex teleports back to his office. He sits down at his desk. Darrius teleports in after him, sitting down as well.

“I can't believe it,” Intex says. “I just let Mark and his team leave.”

Darrius is afraid to say anything in fear of displeasing Intex. He smiles at Intex, trying to be respectful. Intex looks up at Darrius, bafflingly.

“How did Jackson leave?” Intex asks Darrius.

“I don't know,” Darrius replies. “I just figured he left through the rear door.”

“Hmm, most probable, since we didn't see Jackson walk past us to the front.”

Darrius chuckles. “He could've just teleported.”

“Oh, duh!” Intex chuckles along with Darrius. “I'm just not thinking clearly now.”

Darrius nods sympathetically. It's obvious to him that Intex has fallen in love with Rhonda and her vice versa. But now Rhonda has returned back to being Rachel. His feelings for Rhonda are clouding his thinking.

“Intex,” Darrius says. “I think you should rest; you're not thinking straight.”

Intex looks up at Darrius and nods. “You're right.”

Intex gets up from his chair and teleports into his apartment. Darrius stays in the office for a few minutes to think before he teleports to his own apartment.

Victor and Richard enjoy a game of football on the TV in the apartment Intex let them to stay in 'til tomorrow. They are amazed that Intex has all of this stuff for them to enjoy. They understand that they could only have it if they do small favors for Intex.

They are thinking about what animal to be morphed with, what kind of hybrid to become. They have a few ideas, but nothing they can stick with.

In the meantime they have everything here to entertain them. They are excited to have all sorts of things here, since they have been away from it for so long.

“Isn’t this stuff great?” Victor asks Richard.

Richard turns to face Victor and is smiling. He nods. “It is, but we have to keep our promises to do small favors for him or all of this will go away,” Richard says. “We have to think more about what we want to turn into.”

“I know, but I want to make the right choice.”

The Shelter

Hank sits with the people that he has saved from his house. They still sit near him, feeling loyal to him. Hank watches The Avians get ready to sleep for the big day tomorrow.

Hank keeps looking back at the woman, son and friend with the orangutan-girl and cat-girl. He knows he seen the mother somewhere. It hits him and he remembers, but feels so stupid. Her name is Dawn Brook. How could he forget? He had given her power negating serums. She had the power of disintegration and was cured from it, thanks to Hank.

Hank gets up and walks to them. Dawn looks up, remembering him right away.

“Hank!” she exclaims and gives him a handshake. “Come, sit with us.”

Hank smiles and sits down next to them. He nods at Tristan and Stuart. The orangutan-girl and cat-girl talk amongst themselves, not paying much attention to Hank. Obviously, they are friends.

“Hello, Stuart,” Hank says, remembering his name.

“It’s so nice to see you again, Hank,” Dawn says. “I saw you with Vortex. He was healing your head.”

Hank nods. “Yes, I ... was having a massive headache, making my powers falter.”

Dawn nods.

“It was Drake, right?” Stuart asks, already knowing who Drake is.

Hank nods.

“Drake tried to remap his brain with your brain’s composition of your where powers are stored, but you pulled away too soon for him to be able to. Since then, your powers have gotten out of control and you have been getting headaches, until Vortex healed you.”

Hank smiles. “You’re a smart kid, Stuart. Well said. You’re exactly right.”

Tristan chuckles and pats Stuart on the head. “He sure is smart. He outsmarts me sometimes.”

“Sometimes?” Stuart asks.

“Now don’t get full of yourself,” Tristan warns Stuart.

Hank looks over at the Avians again, inducing Stuart do look as well. Stuart nods, smiling at The Avians.

“I always knew that they were alive,” Stuart says. “I know that they are going to succeed tomorrow.”

Hank smiles, nodding at Stuart. He wants to believe it, but knows how much Intex is to handle; Intex the mayhem of New York.

Stuart’s anger for Intex boils up inside of him. Intex has caused so much hectic in New York, taking everything away from everyone, killing people, and turning people in hybrids or parahumans. He knows The Avians must stop him.

Tori and Kyra laugh amongst themselves. Stuart looks over at them, wondering what they are talking about. He doesn’t know. He realizes that Tori is about the same age as Kyra, just as beautiful. He smiles, looking at her. He knows that they are too old for him. He shakes his head to himself ... once this is all over ... he can find someone for himself.

Stuart looks over at The Avians. Andrea is sitting by Alex who is lying on the bed, sleeping. Reye sits on her legs next to Nick. Noelle sits next to Lon, looking at Brandon who is asleep. She looks sad, worried for tomorrow.

Stuart sighs, feeling for them. All of them are with their dates; worried for them. The Avians are getting their sleep, while the friends sit around them.

I dream. It is peaceful. I see a beach with a beautiful lake. My whole team is there, except they are wearing swimming apparel. Rachel is lying next to me. Both of us lay on a towel with beautiful sun shining down on us.

Seagulls come and go, flying all around, wanting food.

Andrea is with Alex, both playing with a beach ball in the water. Reye is sitting with Nick, laughing and talking. Brandon and Noelle are together, swimming in the water. Bruce and Mara stand in the water, only getting their feet wet. Grace plays with Andrea and Alex.

I look to Rachel and smile at her. She is looking at the water. She doesn't look at me.

"Rachel?" I ask her softly.

Rachel doesn't respond.

"That isn't Rachel," Intex's voice says behind me.

I sit up to spin around and see Intex, sitting and wearing beach clothes; so unlike him.

"That's Rhonda," Intex says.

Rachel finally tears her head towards me. Her eyes are pitched black. She tilts her head at me. I jump away.

“No,” I mumble.

“Rhonda is my girl,” Intex says. “She will never be with you again.”

Intex takes my spot and sits next to Rachel / Rhonda. Rachel leans towards Intex, preparing to kiss.

“NO!” I exclaim.

They reach closer to each other ...

I wake up, sitting upright. I find that I am in the shelter. I look around to see most people asleep. I look to my side to see Rachel, sound asleep and looking peaceful. I sigh and lay back down on my back.

I imagine Intex is my head ... it was only a dream. It wasn't real. I doubt they ever kissed.

It is sometime in the middle of the night. Somehow we have slept all afternoon and were still sleeping, except for me. I have only woken up from a dream. I close my eyes to try to go back to sleep. I immediately see Rachel with black eyes from my dream.

I shake my head, trying to push the image away. *It isn't real*, I tell myself.

Rachel groans, rolling towards me. “Mark?” she asks so softly.

She is partially awake.

“Rachel,” I say.

I turn onto my side and rest my arm over top of her.

“I love you, Mark.”

“I love you too, Rachel.”

Rachel looks at me in the eyes. Her eyes are her normal brown color and not all one color; she still has her whites. She smiles at me.

“Did you ... dream?”

I nod.

“It’s not real, Mark. I love *you*, I am with *you*.”

She knows me well to know what I dreamed. She leans into me, even though we our faces are less than a foot apart. She kisses me on the lips.

“Let’s get back to sleep.”

I close my eyes as does Rachel. I see an image of Rachel in my mind, looking beautiful and peaceful. I sigh getting ready to fall back to sleep.

Outside the Shelter

Oliver sits with his back against a building, looking over at the building that’s now being used as the shelter. He's barely awake, but is thinking about tomorrow, or which is really today.

He knows about what the plan is for today. Today is the day that The Avians go after Intex. They may need some help.

Oliver feels weird about wanting to do this, but he believes that he should help The Avians. He feels that they would let them, though. He’ll have to help them without their consent.

He starts to drift off, falling asleep. Today’s the day Intex goes down.

The Shelter

“Alright!” Gustavo exclaims. “Today’s the day!”

It is now nine in the morning. I’d say we all got good sleep. All of the agents are gathering up together. Only now do I realize how many of them there are; quite a few, like forty men and women.

Gustavo already contacted the government yesterday to explain the plans. The US Army will be here to help us if need be. I had already made sure that they understand not all hybrids are enemies; there are some good, innocent victims in all of this.

The cops will stay here to stand guard, protecting everyone at this shelter.

The FBI agents gather around with us to join them. My whole team already is in their suits, preparing to do this thing. We stretch, warming up.

“Are we ready?” Gustavo asks me.

I look at my team and see anticipation in their faces.

“We are,” I reply to Gustavo.

“Move out!”

All of the agents let us lead out front, exiting the shelter. My team and I are to separate from the agents, which we do. We go about our plan.

We jump into the air, taking flight towards Intex headquarters. The FBI will swing by later. We make it there in a few more minutes. We land just a little bit away, not wanting to announce our presence.

We walk towards the building, but walk around to the east side; the side Intex's office is on. We walk around, quietly. We walk to the proximity of Intex's office inside. We step past it to stand by the next room, which is either another experiment room or a filing room.

We have to fly up, because the only room at the front of the building that is downstairs is the big experimentation room. I concentrate on the wall, eating away it with my matter manipulation and create a hole for all of us to go through. We all stay as quiet as a mouse.

We fly through the hole I made and find ourselves in a filing room. It is completely empty. My team knows the plan and follows me to the door, but stay there. I exit the room, leaving my team. I turn left and very slowly head down the hall to the first door on the left.

The door is already open. I slowly peek into it. Intex is standing up, looking out the window to see the large experiment room down below, and facing the opposite direction of me. I slowly walk into the room, completely seeing inside. Intex is by himself.

I walk all of the way towards Intex, foot by foot until I am right behind him. Intex just stands there, seeming oblivious to my being there. I raise my fist and throw it at the back of his head.

So quickly, Intex spins around, throws his hand out to deflect my fist and grabs my neck, choking me.

Intex lifts me off my feet, by my neck. I grab his hand, trying to pull it off, but fail. Intex grabs my other hand to stop me from hitting him.

"I have been expecting you, Mark," Intex says. "You didn't think you could come in here without me noticing, did you?"

“What?” I choke. “How did you know I was here?”

Intex smirks. “I sensed your presence. I could feel you in here.” He pauses to think of the right words to say. “You have some sort of energy that you emit from your body. Every time you're around I can feel it. I hate the feeling.”

Intex squeezes my neck harder. I can't breathe for nothing. I kick my feet at him, hitting him but failing to have any effect on him.

“You're a disgrace, Mark.”

I look at Intex's neck, wanting to squeeze it in return. With my free hand I punch Intex as hard as I can in the nose. He takes the hit, but it has no effect on him. His nose remains as is, not bleeding.

I wonder if my team realizes that I'm being choked.

My lungs start burning, not getting any oxygen. I feel them tingle, as if healing. Suddenly I feel as if I don't need oxygen and feel renewed. Intex continues choking me, but my lungs regenerate to the lack of oxygen.

I smirk at Intex, catching him off guard. I yank my fist free from Intex's hand and pull down on Intex's head, ramming it into my knee. Intex loosens his grip around my neck and I fly upwards, pulling his arm with me. I whip Intex's body off of the ground and lash his body over my head, forcing Intex to let go of my neck.

Intex lands down on his back on his desk, cracking the wood. Intex jumps up and I land. Intex jumps off his desk, landing before me. He heaves a fist at me, but I dodge and deflect it. In return I throw my fist at him, but he deflects it as well.

I look at the door for my team, but they are there. Intex chuckles and I quickly look back at him.

“Looking for your team?” Intex asks. “They're already dead.”

I knew better than to believe that. The FBI already told me to not listen to Intex's sly talk anyway, but I definitely wasn't listening to this.

"Wow, that's farfetched," I tell Intex.

Intex scoffs and I hear something land on the ground outside the office. I hear grunt and hitting. My team is fighting someone. Intex punches me in the cheek.

I duck Intex's next fist and the one after that. I deflect his fist again, throwing one right back at him. Intex dodges it, but doesn't dodge my next one and the one after that. I shove my knee into Intex's stomach, but it doesn't seem to knock the wind out of him, since he still is breathing fine and doesn't gasp.

Intex shoves me away from him. He falls backwards onto his hands and kicks me in the knees. I fall forward and while he stands on his hands still he kicks me hard in the nose.

I twist to my side and roll away from Intex. I jump to my feet and Intex teleports, landing on top of me. I keep stood to my feet and fly straight towards the ceiling, but stop short already knowing Intex would teleport to the floor.

I land and Intex endeavors to hit me in the jaw, but I knock his fist away. This time around Intex seems to more skilled with combat, as if he became a master overnight. I fight Intex, using my Kung Fu training, while Intex fights just as well. We go back and forth, blocking and deflecting our hits.

I expect now for Intex's friends Darrius and Jackson to come out and stop me, but they are probably fighting my team.

Outside the office The Avians, minus Mark, fighting Darrius. Nick and Bruce already have knocked him down several times. Darrius stubbornly does not give up. He keeps getting back to his feet to fight on.

No matter how many times Bruce and Nick punch Darrius he gets no injuries. His skin is impenetrable. Brandon decides to take a shot at him. He starting fighting Darrius, throwing punches at him.

They hold Darrius off until the FBI get here. The FBI runs right through the front entrance, alarming all of the workers in the experimentation room.

Darrius notices them coming in, especially went some of the run up the stairs towards them all. Darrius teleports behind some of the agents' backs, hitting them and knocking some of them out. The Avians run after Darrius, trying to stop him.

"Spread out!" an agent tells The Avians.

The team branches out as Darrius teleports behind agents. The agents are catching on, quickly spinning around to fight Darrius. With their armor on, the agents absorb most of the energy from Darrius' powerful blows.

I smile at Intex, seeing the expression on his face as he sees the FBI storm into his place. He is angered.

"Just so you know, Intex," I tell him. "This is your day of reign."

"We'll see about that!" Intex exclaims.

He looks as if he's ready to teleport down below to go after the agents. I grab his arm, teleporting with him. My surroundings change into the large experiment room. Intex realizes that I was touching his arm.

He scowls at me and expects to leave me to attack the FBI.

I don't give him the chance. I quickly kick him in the knee. He falls forward and I elbow him in the head. Intex groans for a second, so I know I am using more force now, penetrating through his invulnerability.

Intex spins to face me, angered. He raises his fist to punch me, but I quickly knock his fists out of the way, hitting him. Intex throws a bolt of electricity at me.

I jump backwards and shake a little. Intex teleports in front of some agents, shooting electricity at them. They shake and fall to their knees.

Intex raises his feet to kick them in the faces; I know that he could kill them with one strike. I quickly materialize a metal rod in the air in front of me. I am about to grab it to throw at him, but instead I hurl it through the air without touching it. The rod pierces into Intex's side, knocking him over.

The agents continue shaking, but at least were knocked hit by Intex. Sitting up, Intex yanks the rod out of his side, immediately healing. He looks at me with the most annoyed face ever. I smile.

Intex teleports and I already know he's behind me. He hits the back of my head. I flip through the air and spin around to face Intex in a fluid motion. Intex charges at me, aiming to hit me in the face. I duck, grab his legs, pick him up and slam his back into the floor. I jump and stomp down on top of his stomach.

I get the feeling that this will be a long fight, already knowing how these things go.

Being right about these fights, Intex's creations run out coming from nowhere, and are ready to kill me off. There are gorilla parahumans, bears, lizards, monkeys, rams, rhinos and the legendary Destroyer.

They all run at me and Intex teleports, going after the FBI. I hope my team can fight Intex to keep him from hurting the FBI. The FBI is here to release the people being held captive and experimented on. There are no people here in this large room, but there are in the other rooms.

The bears make it to me first, pouncing on top of me. These bear-men are huge! Their bodies are so built and they have large heads like that of a bear's, but still portray a man's. They are covered in a brown, thick coat of fur, like a grizzly bear's. I wonder if Intex has other parahumans to fight the rest of my team. Three bear-men tackle me.

I kick my feet out, hitting one off me. I punch one bear hard in the trachea. He jumps off me, gasping for air. His throat already turns blue; I know it will kill him.

A gorilla grabs my leg and pulls me up. I dangle and a bear whacks his claws at me. I curl my body upwards like doing a sit-up and punch the gorilla in the nose with all my force. The gorilla drops me to grab his nose and I quickly throw me feet down to land properly.

The bear I punched in the throat falls over. He strives to stay alive, but fails to breathe. He will die any second now.

One bear-man of the two left jumps on top of me again. He slashes his claws at my face, intending to grab a chunk off me. I shove his arm upwards to avoid that, even though I still get cut.

The cut heals in seconds and I heave the bear off of me. I jump into the air, kick a gorilla and land my fist down onto the bear's back, cracking something. The bear yells out.

One lizard of the two tackles me to the ground onto my front. The lizard wraps an arm around my neck. A monkey kicks me in the face. I push with my feet off the floor, whipping my body upwards, having to stand on my hands and land my feet the other way, hitting the lizard into the floor; now I lay on my back, having done a one-eighty.

I kick foot out to hit another monkey in the knees. I jump up and punch the monkey-man in the gut. I force his head down into my knee, knocking him out.

A rhino runs into me from behind, stabbing the horn on its head into my back. I gasp, immediately feeling the pain. Momentarily I can't move.

A ram-man runs into my stomach, knocking the wind out of me. The rhino pulls his horn out of my back, just to stab it back into it, making a fresh wound.

My first stab wound heals. With this stab, the rhino hits in the right spot. I fall to my knees, not being able to move at all. I fall onto my face, wanting to throw my hands out to save my fall, but fail.

A monkey pounds onto my back after the rhino pulls his horn out; a mistake on his part.

Before my back even heals, a ram parahuman jumps, twists in the air and lands his horns onto my head. My face hits the ground hard and my nose bleeds.

Not waiting on my back to heal, I materialize metal spikes around my whole body for this moment; difficult to do, but still doable for me; my matter creating power is progressing.

The monkey pounds on my back, not stopping himself from stabbing his fists into my spikes. He cries out and pulls his fists off, still groaning.

My back heals and I jump up, feeling lightheaded. A lizard, bear and monkey jump at me all at once. I hit the lizard hard in the face, knocking him backwards. The monkey throws a fist at my face, but I deflect it and hit the bear in the temple. I poke the monkey in the eyeball and kick his groin.

A rhino charges at my back, but this time I jump straight up and flip backwards. The rhino plows his horn in the bear, stabbing it in the gut.

I find the metal pipe I created and hold my hand out as if I had telekinesis like Bruce. Somehow the pipe flies through the air and into my hands. Somehow I am getting the ability of telekinesis, although I am certain that it doesn't work the same way as Bruce's does.

With the pipe I whack the head of a rhino, bending the pipe. The rhino has a hard head, harder than the pipe. He smirks at me and charges at me.

A gorilla jumps at me from behind, holding me still to let the rhino hit me. At the last second I throw my lower body upwards and the rhino stabs the gorilla. I detract the metal spikes from my body.

I materialize another pipe to hold in my other hand. I whack a monkey with the pipe. With my other pipe I hit a ram, and thrusts at a lizard. The monkey falls onto his back, knocked out. I stab the lizard through the chest, forcing it through his ribs.

The ram seems to be fine, having a hard head. The pipe can't penetrate his head either.

FBI agents start running past with people with them. The FBI helps them escape.

One parahuman runs after them, a ram. I jump over the ram that charges at me this moment and run towards the other. I kick him in the back of the knees, knocking him down to his face, hitting the floor hard.

A rhino charges at me and I quickly yank the ram up, dropping the pipes. I turn around and shove the ram's body into the Rhino's horn.

"Haven't we learned that move yet?" I ask.

Just a moment earlier I jumped out of the way of a rhino that then stabbed a bear.

A few parahumans grunt at me, furious that they haven't took me down yet. I throw my hands out towards the pipes on the floor and they fly into my hands. I whack at the monkey that jumps at me, cracking his head open. He falls to the ground, already bleeding out.

I stab the rhino that stabbed the ram in the back, using the pipe. The groans aloud.

I look around, seeing that I've taken down all of the monkeys, not including the gorillas.

I spin around in a circle, whacking a gorilla, lizard and the other ram. I thrust a pipe at the last bear, but he backs away. The last lizard jumps at me and I stab him with a pipe, leaving it in his body. I materialize rock around my one empty-handed fist. I immediately put it to use, punching a gorilla hard in the face.

The gorilla steps backwards, trying to stop himself from falling. I whack the gorilla in the head with the pipe. The gorilla falls over, seeming dead.

The last bear jumps at my feet, knocking me forward, but instead of falling onto my face, I levitate above it. I allow myself to turn onto my back.

The bear bites down on one of my feet and stabs his claws around my legs. I'm about to use the pipe to stab the bear, but the last ram strikes into me, stabbing his horns into my side. I punch the ram hard in the forehead, cracking the scalp open, but the ram stays conscious.

With the pipe I whack an oncoming rhino and barely stab the bear in the back, but it's enough to get him to pull off me.

In seconds my legs and foot heals. I jump up and hit the bear with my rock fist.

I look up, seeing The Destroyer staying back, just watching the fight. I shake my head, wondering why he's doing that.

In unison the bear and gorilla jump at me, hitting at me with a fist and with claws. I dodge the claws and deflect the fist.

Irritated with how long this is taking, I shove myself away from everyone. I hold out my pipe, destroy the rock around my fist and materialize a sword. I charge at all the parahumans, hit the gorilla with the pipe, and stab a rhino with the sword.

I pull the sword out of the rhino and slash the bear's neck, cutting it open. I hit the gorilla with the pipe again and he tumbles over, obviously dizzy. He tries to get up, but just falls right back down again.

The ram charges at me, but I jump above everyone, thrust the sword down through the top of his back and out through his abdomen. The ram falls to his knees and then onto his face, shoving the sword back out a little.

I land down on top of the rhino, wrapping my feet around his neck, grab the sword of the ram, whack the gorilla again and stab the rhino through the back of the neck. I thrust the pipe through the gorilla's stomach.

I back away from the mess. All of them are dead or dying. I knocked out two of the monkeys, but consider them defeated.

I look up at The Destroyer and smile. He grunts at me, already running towards me. Apparently he wants to fight me without all of the parahumans getting in the way.

The front door remains open as FBI agents run through, saving people. The Destroyer takes the first swing at me, but I dodge it. I hit him in the chest. He grabs a hold of my arm and hurls me to the ground. He jumps and lands on top of me, hitting me repeatedly.

I throw my arms out to block the hits to my face. The Destroyer no doubt is already bruising my arms, hitting hard. I kick him with a foot, but he does not budge; he stays on top of me, still hitting my arms that shield my face.

Through the open door appears Oliver running in. Of all the people to come through, I didn't expect Oliver to be the one.

Oliver runs towards The Destroyer and kicks him off of me with great force. The Destroyer is sent flying clear across the room.

I jump to my feet and look at Oliver with a puzzled expression on my face. My face and arms heal up.

Oliver smirks at me. I hope he's not here to steal The Destroyer's powers, because then Oliver would be unstoppable, kind of like he already is.

"What are you doing here?" I ask him demandinglly.

"I'm here to help you," Oliver replies. "I know that I'm ... bad, but Intex is worse. You gotta believe me there. Intex can't stay here any longer, so I am going to help you with him, and then I'm gone, unless you can catch me."

I narrow my eyes, but believe him so I nod. "Ok," I tell him.

The Destroyer has already gotten to his feet and jump across the floor, going over desks and tables. He would jump down right on top of me, but I dodge him.

He takes a moment to look at us both. He seems to despise us both. Then he looks at Oliver, already knowing that he was the one that threw him.

“You're here?” he asks with his rusty, low-pitched voice.

“No, I'm not,” Oliver says sarcastically.

The Destroyer growls and pounds a fist into his palm.

“Remember last fight?” The Destroyer asks Oliver.

I spin my head towards Oliver. I didn't know that they fought. Oliver doesn't change his expression, but remains fierce.

“I knocked you out and you had a taste of my poison. Apparently your body healed from it, since you're still here.” The Destroyer speaks slowly enough, emphasizing his low-pitched voice.

The Destroyer charges at us both, jumping to pound a fist on my head. I run forward and bend my body to miss The Destroyer's fist. The Destroyer attempts to kill Oliver, but he teleports behind The Destroyer and kicks him alternately.

Teleportation sure seems like a cheap power; it is so easily to fight with. The Destroyer spins around to hit Oliver, but Oliver teleports to his side he hits him in the ribs. I wonder if this will last all that long.

In the large hallway, the other fight occurs; being near the filing room, spare chemical room, experiments room and another filing room. The experiment room being the biggest in this proximity. Brandon tackles Intex down, stopping him from electrocuting any more FBI agents. Thirty

agents are already shaking down on the floor and finally someone caught the teleporting Intex.

Intex jumps up, shoving Brandon off him. Brandon immediately faces Intex, not wanting him to go after the FBI again, but Intex insists.

The FBI runs around going towards the experiment rooms and prisons to free people. Nick begins to wonder why this was part of the plan; why couldn't the people be saved after taking down Intex?

Nick smiles, replicating Intex's power of teleportation, which is a little hard to pinpoint. Finally he achieves in replicating it. Intex teleports before an agent and Nick teleports behind Intex.

As Intex raises a hand to kill the agent with one punch, Nick grabs Intex head and pulls him backwards. Nick yanks Intex down to the floor and kicks him in the ribs.

Intex teleports behind Nick, but Nick has already spins around anticipating it. Nick dodges a punch, but not the next one. He succeeds in making contact with Intex's nose, but it does no damage.

From behind Intex, Brandon shoves his claws into Intex's kidneys. Intex groans aloud. He tries to turn around, but Brandon turns with him. Nick hits Intex temple with a fist. Alex runs at him and throws fire in Intex's face.

Bruce wonders how Mark is doing; last he knew he is fighting hybrids of Intex's. He shrugs his worry, knowing that Mark is a great fighter and has a lot of endurance.

Turning towards Intex, Bruce telekinetically starts choking him.

The fire burns at Intex's face, singeing his hair. Alex laughs at him, while Brandon slices his claws upwards in Intex's sides.

Intex grabs Brandon's wrists and pull his hands out, crushing down on them. Brandon cries out, pulls his hands away and rubs them

together. Intex throws his hands to his face, creating ice, melting it into water from the fire, and thus putting the fire out. Intex face is burnt but heals a second later.

Intex turns around, kicks Brandon, and then he turns to face Nick to kick him. He throws lava at the nearest person, Alex. It does no effect on him, except burn part of his suit. Intex grunts, feeling stupid. He turns to face Mara and shoot Lava at her, but it stops in flight. Intex looks at Bruce, scowling.

Bruce scowls back. Intex teleports behind Bruce to choke him with lava-hot hands, but Intex is thrown through the air; Bruce already anticipates what Intex tries to do. Bruce spins around, throws Intex down at the ground, but he teleports in the air, lands on his feet, while adjusting with his momentum.

Victor and Drake are curious as to what all the commotion is outside their temporary apartment. They step out of the hallway to take a peek.

They are shocked with the sight they see. All this time they have been thinking about what to be turned into; what kind of hybrid to be morphed with, when here Intex is fighting the Avians. They notice too that the FBI are storming from room to room, working their way down. The Avians are fighting against the Intex to stop him from harming the FBI.

The FBI, they're here. Intex is fighting The Avians. This is their one and only chance to escape.

The two look at each and then look at the exit down the other side of the wall; the north side, not the south side where everyone is.

"Let's get out of here," Victor says.

“Right behind you,” Richard replies.

The two of them bolt out of the apartment, not taking a look back. They forgot to even shut the apartment door. They make it to the exit door when suddenly Intex teleports in front of them.

“Going somewhere?” Intex asks, in the fighting-mood.

Victor looks behind to see the Avians looking around for Intex. They look down the hall to see that Intex is with Victor and Richard.

“Yeah,” Victor replies. “We need some air, peace and quiet.”

Intex shakes his head. “Tsk. I don't think so.”

The Avians make out who they are; Victor and Richard from the fight at the mall. They start running towards the three of them.

Intex raises his hand and shoots lava at Victor's chest, but it goes right through him, phasing through and burning the wall behind him.

“Oops,” Victor says. “You missed.”

“No, it went right through you!”

“Aw, that's too bad.”

Intex scowls, already angry about everything. Victor transform into the misty form of taking possession of people's bodies. He starts to fly into Intex, getting into his body, but can't get through his head. He is forced out, turning back to normal.

“Ha!” Intex exclaims. “No one can take over my mind! Not to mention even reading it.”

“Really?” Victor asks. “Well, in this case I don't need to control your mind, just your body.”

Victor transforms his body back into his murky form and goes into all of Intex, except his head.

“Get out of me!!” Intex yells.

Victor chuckles, with his vaporous, misty-like head still sticking out of Intex’s body. Taking control of Intex’s body, Victor uses his fist to punch him hard in the face, phasing through his own face to hit Intex’s. He uses all of Intex’s strength to punch as hard as he can.

Intex teleports, jumping from room to room, building top to building and then returning to the hallway. Victor still stays inside Intex, punching his face over and over.

Intex’s face bleeds out and there is nothing he can do about it. Victor looks down at the hand he controls of Intex’s. It seems red hot and he looks down at the lava burning the floor. He holds the hands up to Intex’s face, phasing through his, hurling lava at Intex’s face — full blast.

Intex yells out, not immune to his own power. Victor jumps out of Intex in a flash and returns into his normal human form.

“Let’s dash!” Victor tells Richard.

The two of them open the door and are gone in less than a split second, darting off at the speed of light. Intex twirls, running outside, but realizes they are long gone. He teleports back inside and his face finishes healing up. He stands there to meet with The Avians again.

FBI agents run past us, bringing scruffy, scared, excited, deformed, and gracious people out with them. They FBI continuing bringing more and more people out.

While they go past, Oliver and I fight The Destroyer together. More and more it gets harder to fight. The Destroyer seems as if he could fight all day and maybe even in his sleep, but as for me ... I am tiring out. I look at Oliver, but he doesn't look the same.

Oliver takes a punch from The Destroyer, being sent to the ground. Oliver disappears, reappearing above The Destroyer's head. Oliver lands down on The Destroyer, knocking him to the ground. On The Destroyer's back, Oliver punches his head repeatedly.

The Destroyer throws his hand out and grabs Oliver by the head. He hurls Oliver into the floor, almost knocking him out. Oliver new power saves him, keeping him conscious and alive. He broke Oliver's nose, but it heals in a few more seconds.

The Destroyer jumps to his feet, dodging Oliver's punches.

From behind The Destroyer, I kick the back of his knees, but he does not budge.

Oliver teleports behind The Destroyer and jumps up, kicking the back of his head. The Destroyer doubles forward and Oliver telekinetically throws his head down to the floor.

The Destroyer smacks the floor with his face. A bone cracks from the impact but The Destroyer shows no pain, getting right back up.

I concentrate on this new power I am developing. I look at The Destroyer's knees, trying to make them fail him by me telekinetically bending them, but my power falters. So far, my power has only worked on things I have created.

I materialize a shiny sword.

Oliver kicks the Destroyer in the back. The Destroyer takes a step forward and spins to face no one. Oliver has teleported behind him again and kicks his knees. Oliver succeeds in making The Destroyer fall down, collapsing at his knees.

I look at the sword I just materialized and concentrate on controlling its movement. I let go of it and it stands up by itself. I concentrate and succeed in telekinetically lifting it. I know that this telekinesis of mine is resulting from my matter manipulation.

I look at the positions that The Destroyer and Oliver are in. I telekinetically thrust the sword at The Destroyer's stomach. It stabs through, passing by Oliver's shoulder.

Oliver darts a look at me and then back at The Destroyer, seeing that he is stabbed.

The Destroyer groans and places his hands around the sword's handle. He dares to pull it out.

I run up to him and yank it out for him. Still holding the sword, I kick The Destroyer's stomach before it can get a chance to heal. His face is still working on heal from hitting the floor into it. The Destroyer falls onto his back from my kick.

I jump and land down on The Destroyer's stomach and stab the sword down through his chest. The Destroyer gasps and I yank it out. I jump off The Destroyer's stomach and watch him lie there.

Oliver looks at my sword and smiles. "That's my kind of weapon," he says.

I shake my head at him. "Of course it is!" I scoff. "This is what you've used to kill people!"

"And you just used it to kill this beast."

I look at the Destroyer; he gasps air in and out. I notice his face healing and his first stomach wound starting to heal.

"He's not dead yet," I tell Oliver.

The Destroyer grunts and jumps to his feet. I shake my head at this beast; he does not give up. The Destroyer grunts and charges at me, with a whole through his chest.

The wound starts to heal and suddenly the sword is yanked from my hands. I spin around to see that Oliver snatched it from me. My eyes go wide open, being cautious of Oliver.

Oliver teleports in between me and The Destroyer. He smiles and holds the sword out, as if greeting The Destroyer before beginning a sword fight. The Destroyer holds no sword. Nevertheless, Oliver charges at The Destroyer and immediately starts slashing at him.

The Destroyer starts roaring out in pain. The chest wound slows down in the heal process. Oliver creates more wounds to The Destroyer's body to try to heal. The Destroyer's body slows down with all of its healing, not able to keep up.

Oliver slashes The Destroyer everywhere, teleporting around him. The Destroyer roars loudly and falls down to his knees in obvious pain. Lastly, Oliver lunges the sword through the back of The Destroyer's head. The Destroyer stops yelling out in pain and falls to the ground with his body lifeless. Oliver leaves the sword in his head to keep him dead.

Oliver and I look at each other; we are now the only ones in the room, except for the FBI running through. The workers who have been in here moments earlier have already been arrested by the FBI.

We look up the stairs to hear the clashing of my team and Intex.

“Hey Intex!” Oliver yells. “Guess who else I’ve killed!?”

Suddenly Intex stops fighting and teleports into this room. He immediately notices The Destroyer’s body lying dead on the floor. He scowls at Intex, more angered than ever. He looks back at The Destroyer seeing the sword in his head.

I hear the footsteps of my team running through the hallway, towards the stairs.

Intex teleports right next to The Destroyer, about to pull the sword out of his head. Oliver telekinetically throws Intex through the air, but Intex teleports onto the ground behind Oliver.

Intex punches the back of Oliver’s head. Oliver throws his body forward, cartwheeling and flipping his body around. Intex charges at Oliver and throws lava at his face. The lava stops an inch before and is telekinetically shoved back at Intex’s face, burning away.

Intex yells out and Oliver kicks Intex in the jaw.

My team runs down the stairs into the room. I see all of them except for Bruce.

Just then Darrius is thrown through the air, plummeting from the stairs. Bruce appears, running after Darrius. Darrius lands on the ground, not teleporting like Intex would’ve. Bruce telekinetically starts to choke Darrius, squeezing with all of his might. Darrius doesn’t seem to be choking, so Bruce telekinetically yanks him down to the floor, face first.

My team sees that Oliver is here and they look to me. I shrug.

“He wanted to help,” I explain.

My team all look at me, not quite understanding.

Suddenly the sounds of guns go off as the FBI starts shooting upstairs. I hear tons of footsteps all heading this way and sound of roaring animals. Abruptly, some FBI agents are thrown down the set of stairs, about landing at our feet, but Nick telekinetically catches them. They are already dead; they were killed before they were thrown by whatever is chasing them.

FBI agents run down the stairs, skipping some steps. Alex runs over quickly and helps the FBI get down the stairs and away from the line of attack. The hybrids descend, flying down the stairs, charging at my team. We watch in awe as they run towards us; there must be about thirty of them, all after us; lizards-humans, men with snake heads and fingers, scorpion-humans, lion-humans, bear-humans, monkeys, gorillas, dogs, rhino, bulls, rams, and sharks.

Suddenly, Intex pulls the sword out of The Destroyer’s head and thrusts it at Oliver’s chest. Oliver teleports to avoid the stab, but Intex teleports behind Oliver, stabbing the sword through Oliver’s back and out his chest. Oliver gasps. Intex hits Oliver’s head hard, knocking him out.

Now that the sword is out of The Destroyer, I look to see if he is healing; he just lies there and doesn’t. Intex looks at me and the hybrids running at all of us.

“Oh, no, Mark, you will be fighting me!” Intex exclaims.

Alex runs up to my team’s sides, preparing to fight the oncoming hybrids. Intex pulls me away from my team. The hybrids meet up with my team and they immediately start attacking.

Intex teleports behind me and grabs my shoulders, teleporting me into another large room. This room is all empty and very quiet compared

to the main room of this building. This appears to be a training room. I see stairs in the southeast corner. There must be a basement.

Intex shoves me away from him. We stand apart, just keeping distant.

“Intex,” I say. “You really did prepare for this, didn’t you?”

Intex smiles. “Sure did, just like you supposedly did.” Intex pauses, laughing. “I have my whole army out there, and you have the FBI saving people from here. Why?”

“We want to keep everyone safe, just so you don't have a plan to kill them the first chance you get.”

“Sounds lame. But not as lame as your superhero name of yours.”

“What?” I scoff.

“Yeah. You heard me. Your name; Avian?!” Intex shakes his head and looks to the floor. “Why do you even call yourself Avian when you have no traits of a bird? All you have is the power of flight, which you use without wings.”

The warning Gustavo told me replays in my head. I am not to listen to Intex’s sly talk. I try to focus on what Intex is doing rather than what he is saying.

I realize that his hands are red hot. If I were still listening to Intex, I would have not noticed that. I charge at Intex and jump out of the way when he shoots the lava at me. I attempt to hit him in the side of his head, but he dodges it.

I face Intex and attempt again to hit him, but he teleports behind me. I duck and jump forward out of the way. I get punched from the front, Intex teleports in front of me. Intex begins to teleport all around me, hitting me everywhere. I try to dodge the most I can.

“Enough!” I yell at Intex.

Intex teleports and stand a bit a ways, looking at me. He laughs.
“What?”

“You're ... cheating!”

“You sound like a kid. But, I thought that was what I was known for; I fight dirty.”

“Well, stop. Let's fight like men. No teleporting.”

“What, so you're making rules now?”

I tilt my head, suggesting the idea. Intex shrugs.

“Fine, no teleporting. Like I give a crap about it anyway.”

Intex runs towards me and I ready my fists. Intex takes a punch from me and I take one in return. Intex tries again and I deflect it. I attempt to hit Intex, but instead he shoves it away and hits my jaw upwards with both fists.

My neck goes backwards and I smack my teeth together. Intex hits me hard in the stomach and kicks my feet, knocking me over. I land on my back and Intex stomps down on my stomach, knocking the wind out of me.

Intex shoves his feet down again, but I grab it and shove him upwards into the air. I quickly jump to my feet and Intex lands down a second later. We charge at each other. I launch myself at Intex and smack my fist into his forehead, avoiding his arm. I knock Intex over, but he gets up quickly and kicks my feet out from under me.

I land down onto my front. Intex kicks down onto my back, cracking some of my ribs into the concrete floor. Instinctively I throw my hand out to hit Intex away, but I telekinetically throw Intex clear across

the room. I get to my feet surprised with myself. This power is progressing already.

Intex flies through the air and lands on his back. He groans having landed hard. He rolls and gets to his feet. He looks up at me, some thirty feet away, puzzled.

“You have telekinesis now?” Intex asks.

“It appears so,” I reply, surprised as well.

Intex jumps to his feet.

Intex and I charge at each other, both in pain from our previous hits. We heal, though. Intex attempts to hit me in the jaw, but I dodge it. I hit Intex, making contact with his nose. Intex tries to hit me again, but I deflect his fist and hit him in the cheek.

We go at it for several more minutes, but somehow I keep making contact with Intex while Intex can't lay a finger on me. I'm on fire!

Suddenly it feels as if my hands take off without me. Intex tries to punch me. This time I do not feel ready or fast enough to dodge it, but somehow my arm flies in front of my face and deflects it with cat-like speed. My fist hits Intex square on the jaw without me even trying to.

Intex tries again to hit me somewhere, but again I deflect his fist and hit him three times in the face. For some reason it feels as if I am not even trying to move my fists; they are jumping ahead of me.

I keep my fists still, tempting Intex, but then suddenly I hit him right in the temple, knocking him backwards. It feels strange, because I wasn't intending to hit him at that very second.

I try to put my arms down, but they stay up, ready to punch. Now I feel strange for sure. I try again to pull my hands away, but they do not budge. They take control of themselves, hitting Intex in the nose. I don't know what is happening, but maybe I am just so exhausted; maybe my arms are anticipating what to do like my brain is.

I try to relax and not do a thing. I sigh and back away from Intex just a smidge, placing my arms down at my sides. Intex runs at me, panting hard, and suddenly my fists throw themselves up and attack Intex's face.

I shake my head and jump back, away from Intex. Now being distant from Intex, I can freely lay my arms at my side again. Testing myself I walk back towards Intex and my arms seem to throw themselves with in a combat position by themselves.

“What are you doing?” Intex asks, wiping blood from his nose.

I shrug. “Kicking your butt,” I say, even though I am not sure how I am.

Intex barely moves his fist to punch me and my fist takes control of itself and punches Intex instead. It’s as if my body is defending itself without my control. It seems as if my arms are trying to work without my brain. This has never happened before.

My eyes feel dry, so I blink to add water to them, while at the same time Intex starts to punch me, but yet again I block his punch and hit him in return. I surprise myself again, because I didn't even see what I did; I blinked. I test this. I close my eyes completely and Intex scoffs.

I'm not sure what Intex does, since my eyes are close, but somehow my fist hits Intex’s temple and then his nose without my control.

My arms fall to my sides. I open my eyes to see that Intex has backed away.

“How'd you do that?” Intex exclaims. “You knew where to punch with your eyes closed!”

I force a smile on my face. “I am greatly skilled in combat that I do not need to rely on my sight.”

I would like to think that, but that is not the case. Yet somehow I just hit Intex without looking at him.

Intex blows steam from his ears and exhales loudly. He runs at me and I keep my arms at my sides, still wondering what is going on with them.

Intex rapidly tries to punch me, which would be able ten punches a second, but my arms throw themselves up and block each one; thus hitting Intex that many times in return.

Intex drops his arms and I drop mine. He waits a few seconds and quickly attempts to punch me, wanting to catch me by surprise, but my arm flies up and blocks his fist, punching Intex's cheek.

I have a hard time believe this, but in this past few minutes my arms take control of themselves as if trying to defend myself; by themselves. I wonder to myself if I have developed a new power. Suddenly they go to work again, blocking Intex's punch and hitting him in return.

I tell myself that is what happened; I have developed a new ability. It must have something to do with defending myself automatically, without even trying. Maybe an automatic defense mechanism. Auto defense.

Intex backs away from me, wanting to take a break.

"What are you doing?" I ask Intex. "You can't take a break when you fight; especially with this fight."

Intex scoffs at me, having healed a tad. He walks back towards me and we go at it again. Over the next few minutes I succeed in hitting Intex, while Intex fails to hit me at all. My arms take control of themselves, protecting me from Intex.

I smile to myself, figuring it out. I have definitely developed a new ability of auto defense. I don't even have to try now and I can protect myself.

Intex can't take it anymore, so he starts to cheat again. He goes around me, teleporting and trying to hit me now. Intex teleports behind me and about punches me, but somehow my whole body takes control of itself, turns around, dodges the punch, and kicks Intex in the chest.

Intex teleports behind me again, but then my arm deflects his punch, my body turns and I hit his temple. Intex looks surprise for me to have blocked his attempt.

Intex shakes his head. "You have been four months without that experience. You should be a little rusty with your training, not better."

"Better?" I ask. "I've always been this good." I lie. This is new to me; my body taking control of itself for protection; an auto defense method.

Oliver wakes, finding the sword going through him. He looks up to see a storm of creations of Intex's all fighting The Avians. Darrius is among the hybrids, fighting them.

The team is outnumbered, but they are putting up a great fight. Oliver is impressed with how well they fight these parahumans. A few have been knocked out or killed already.

Oliver jumps to his feet and pulls the sword out quickly. He gasps as his wounds starts to close, healing. He breathes in and out, feeling refresh. Among the parahumans, Darrius spots Oliver being alive.

Darrius teleports in front of Oliver. "You killed Morris," he says. Oliver smiles at him, stilling holding the bloody sword. "You're mine!"

"Well then," Oliver says, continuing to smile. "Let's have this fight. But ... a fair warning; you may end up like your friend — dead."

"He will NOT die in vain!" Darrius yells.

“Very well.”

Darrius swings his fist first and Oliver allows it, letting it make contact with his jaw. Oliver smiles and returns one to Darrius. Oliver shakes his head at him, knowing that Darrius can't possibly put up a fight long with him.

Oliver waves the sword at Darrius, trying to scare him. Darrius teleports behind Oliver, but very quickly Oliver spins around to face him and slashes the sword at him; thus cutting part of his cheek, chest and leg.

Darrius heals in a matter of seconds. The two go at each other, punching and kicking away; both teleporting back and forth. Oliver attempts to use the sword on Darrius, but merely tempts him, missing Darrius.

Intex jumps back from me, trying to hide his frustration from me. I can clearly see it, though. For the past few minutes Intex hasn't laid a finger on me.

I smile at Intex. He wrinkles his nose and curls his lips, more angered than ever.

"Do you want to see what I have in store for you?" Intex asks.

I roll my eyes. "Please!" I scoff. "What another creation of yours? I would not be surprised."

"As a matter of fact ..."

"I should've known."

Intex's anger leaves his face and he begins smiling. I start to feel a vibration through the floor. It gets stronger. I begin to hear thudding, pounding on the floor; going through the hallway. Whatever's coming, it is big.

The thudding and shaking of the floor gets stronger yet. I turn around to face the doorway, which is closed. I realize now that the door is at least nine or ten feet tall. The sound of this creation seems bigger than that, bigger than The Destroyer.

Shooting goes off in the hallway; FBI shooting at the creation. I look at Intex; he's grinning away. I face the door again. The shooting stops. "*Fall back!*" the FBI yell at each other.

Finally the beast makes it to the door. Instead of opening the door, the creature runs right through it, breaking the door down and tearing the wall. The beast stands three door lengths tall. He looks like

The Destroyer, but more built and obviously bigger. The Destroyer might have been ten or eleven foot, but this beast ... at least thirty.

I shake my head at it. "Does size matter?" I ask Intex.

The beast snarls at me.

"I give you, The Demolisher," Intex says.

"Yay," I say, dryly.

"I appreciate your enthusiasm," The Demolisher tells me, in a deep, menacing voice; deeper than The Destroyer's.

The Demolisher charges at me, pounding and shaking the floor. I know that I will not be able to fight against his strength, for he obviously will be stronger than me. He runs at me, but I jump away from the connection of his foot as he kicks, hurling to the side.

The Demolisher just misses me. I know it was a powerful blow, feeling the wind push past. I quickly punch the back of his knee, not doing anything to him.

He spins and kicks me, sending me through the air; my arms threw themselves up to block his attempt, but they help with nothing at all. My chest hurts, feeling as if he broke some of my ribs on contact. Being thrown through the air I hit the southwest corner of the wall, but do not stop on impact; my body breaks right through the wall. I hit the wall in the hallway and the fall to the floor.

I land, feeling the least amount of pain from the impact of the floor. The most pain was from being kicked and then breaking through the wall of the training room. I don't even move on the floor, feeling every nerve crying out. I feel no energy in me to move.

The Demolisher jumps out of the room through the hole he's made. He looks me down and charges.

I try to get up, to avoid his next attack, but I cannot move at all.

The Demolisher jumps and lands down on my chest, shoving me through the floor. The floor gives way and The Demolisher stands on top of me as we descend to the basement. I land powerfully onto the concrete floor, with The Demolisher on top of me.

I yell out wheezily in pain. My back feels broken in every place, as well as my shoulder blades and ribs. I try to breathe, but The Demolisher shoves my broken ribs into my lungs.

I struggle to move, hurting every inch of me. My arms stay limp at my sides. I can't move if the world's fate depended on it. I start feeling lightheaded and my vision blurs.

The Demolisher laughs at me, still standing on top of me. He takes one foot off of me, but with his other he pushes my ribs even further into my lungs and shoves my whole body hard into the concrete. He forces my body to crack the tough floor. He shoves me a foot into the floor.

I have never felt pain like this before, feeling as if every bone in my body is broken. I can't move a muscle and just lay in the hole in the floor, feeling dead. I know I am not dead, yet.

"Pathetic," Intex's voice says, although I do not see him.

"Agreed," The Demolisher says in his malevolent, deep voice. "So ... puny."

I groan. My pain turns into numbness. Now I cannot feel a thing, but nor can I move. All I can do is look at The Demolisher, giving him my weakened, pitiful face. I make out Intex's body standing next to The Demolisher on top of me.

I know that I cannot depend on my body to work. I can't depend on my strength. The only thing left to do is use my matter manipulation, but I feel so weak to even do a thing.

“What do you think, Intex?” The Demolisher asks. “Should I kill that one chick next; Rachel?”

Intex scoffs. “Might as well. She is back with Mark.”

Somehow something sparks inside me, although I still cannot move; but I feel profound energy.

“You ...” I groan. “Don't lay a finger on ... my ... girl.” I can barely come to words.

The Demolisher laughs, jeering at me. I ignore him.

I try to see if my new power can come to work. I focus on The Demolisher's center and determine for my telekinesis to go to work. I try to shove him off me, but the first attempt does not work. I realize that every time I've used it, I could only telekinetically control something I created; using my matter manipulation.

The Demolisher raises his foot again to pound down on my chest. I have to be fast.

I imagine The Demolisher to be something I've created, even though he isn't. I convince myself that, after all, he is matter. I will myself to push him off. I focus on him and my telekinesis goes to work, shoving him off me, flying towards the ceiling, diagonally.

He crashes into the floor onto his back some fifty feet away in this very large basement.

Suddenly, now that The Demolisher is off my chest, I feel lighter. I actually start to feel. I feel my pain again, no longer numb. My chest begins to heal first.

The Demolisher roars, jumping to his feet, tremendously infuriated. He jumps, soaring through the air to land directly on top of me again.

I still can't move, fearing that he'll just pin me down again. He comes with three feet above me and I telekinetically stop him in midair.

"What is going on?!" The Demolisher yells. "Let me go!"

Intex mumbles something, but it's too quiet for me to hear.

I feel myself healing. My bones all go back into place, but they have yet to heal completely. Telekinetically I hurl The Demolisher into Intex, shoving Intex to the floor.

Intex was not expecting that for a second and plummets into the floor. He does not get up. The Demolisher gets to his feet, getting off Intex.

I can suddenly move. I jump to my feet, but still am not whole. The Demolisher runs at me and I throw my hands out to telekinetically push him away. He fights it, pushing against me, sliding me across the floor. Before, I could hold him up because of having been able to push off the ground, but now I have nothing to push off of horizontally.

Intex groans and The Demolisher roars at me. I can't begin to discern which animal he originates from.

An idea pops into my head. I have never done this before, but I imagine it to be possible. I wonder if I could transform my body into The Demolisher, taking on his exact form. The only way I have enhanced my body has been to add rocks around my fists, or metal. Never have I actually transformed my body.

I think of what good it would do. I would be an easier target. I wouldn't really give myself any more strength, just more mass. So I decide against even trying. But perhaps I am wrong; maybe I might be able to give myself more strength, increasing my muscle size. I still decide against attempting it.

Instead, I create metal around my whole body; my head, neck, chest, legs and all. My chest, shoulders, and back feels as if they have fully healed.

I let down my telekinetically shield and The Demolisher charges towards me. I run towards The Demolisher, wondering if I will regret this. I exhale deeply, urging all of my strength in my body to go to my neck and head. The Demolisher comes close to punching me, but I head-butt into his chest with all of my might, succeeding in throwing him off his feet.

I smile, surprising myself. Intex groans, getting to his feet. He watches The Demolisher fall over backwards. He looks disappointed and shocked.

I run towards The Demolisher as he jumps to his feet again. I aim to kick his face flying upwards, but he throws his arm out to stop me. Somehow, even in flight, my body flips itself over his arm and my foot kicks his face nonetheless; my auto defense taking over. It felt as if I were doing a jump on a skateboard, jumping over his arm, but in the air.

The Demolisher groans, having that I hit his face hard enough with my metal foot. I really don't even know what kind of metal I've encased over my skin; I just created something that seemed strong to me; a mixture of metals.

I land behind The Demolisher and kick his knees, with a greater force than last time. The Demolisher's legs give way and he falls forward. I jump and kick his back to shove him to the ground faster. He throws his hands out to catch himself.

I run around to his front and kick his face. He throws a hand out and starts choking me. He gets up to his feet, lifting me as tall as he is; some thirty feet in the air.

I stare into his eyes. The metal stays around my skin, but he thrives in bending it around my neck. His whole hand could wrap around my entire head, but he has it around my neck.

“How does it feel to look death in the eyes?” he asks me, since I look right at him.

“I ... might as you the same thing,” I reply.

He coughs, baffled. He shakes his head. “You're puny.” He laughs.

The Demolisher tosses me up in the air to re-grab me, embracing his hand around my chest. He slams me into the floor, cracking the concrete again. I cry out, feeling my bones back again in my back and my head crack open.

“Puny,” The Demolisher mumbles.

Now on the ground, having something to push off with, I shove The Demolisher off me, forcing him to let me go. I jump to my feet weakly. My back and head heal a second later.

The Demolisher lands and runs at me. As an instinct, my body darts out of the way and grabs his arm. I yank his entire body through the air, clashing him into the wall on the east side, clear across the basement. The Demolisher lands onto the floor, feeling pain.

This is my chance. I sprint towards him at full speed. Intex has gathered himself together, but doesn't butt in the fight, letting me charge at The Demolisher; he probably thinks I won't be able to beat him.

The Demolisher gets to his feet, but I telekinetically throw him into the air, hold him there, and then shove him to the floor, head-first. He falls onto his back. Still running towards him, I materialize a huge boulder and telekinetically hurl it at The Demolisher's head, sliding him back to the wall.

The Demolisher roars in pain. His head bleeds. I materialize a long sword into my dominate hand. I materialize a spear and fling it at The Demolisher as he gets to his feet; the spear pierces into his right shoulder and into the wall.

I run up to The Demolisher, jump, and stab the sword into his chest; going through his heart and into the block wall behind him. He yells out, his voice still deep.

Levitating in the air, I punch The Demolisher as hard as I can in the temple, punching some spikes. I ignore the pain in my fist, though.

The Demolisher looks to be gathering himself, ready to attack me, so I act quickly.

I materialize another long sword. I take the sword and thrust it upwards from The Demolisher's jaw. It stabs through his jaw, through his mouth, nose and into his brain. I fly backwards and let The Demolisher fall towards the ground.

He lands onto his front, forcing the sword to pierce further in his chest, but the sword that goes through his jaw and head does not move, being parallel with the ground. The spear in his shoulder breaks, however.

I land down next to The Demolisher. I look for any signs of life, but fail to find any. I materialize another sword.

“Stop!” Intex yells at me, teleporting to me.

I intend to decapitate The Demolisher to assure him being dead, but Intex teleports in the way. I am already swinging the sword, so I follow through and shove the sword down into his shoulder blade.

Intex groans loudly, already trying to pull the sword out. I punch Intex hard in the nose with my metal fist and I yank the sword out of his shoulder blade. I thrust the sword into his chest, stabbing all the way through. He gasps and falls to his knees. I materialize another sword and continue about with my plan and behead The Demolisher, assuring that he is now dead if he wasn't before.

At my feet the head rolls for a second; blood emptying out of The Demolisher's neck. Intex kneels before me, tugging at the sword. I kick my foot upwards into his jaw. Still holding the sword, I swing at Intex, slicing him across the stomach.

"Remember what I said when you first came back, Intex?" I ask.

Intex doesn't respond. He groans, having a sword through his chest, a wound on his shoulder blade and one now across his stomach.

"I said that I wouldn't kill you again," I tell him. "I told Nick not to. You asked if I felt guilty for doing it the first time." I paused. "Well, let me tell you this. Because of all you've done this time around, I will not feel guilty."

I take the sword and thrust it at Intex's head, but he teleports away. I am about to spin around, but a sword is stabbed through my chest from my back, penetrating my metal skin.

"I don't think so," Intex says weakly.

I turn to face Intex, seeing that he pulled the sword out of himself and stabbed it through me. A hole remains in his chest, not even healing yet.

I put my hands behind my back to pull the sword out. Intex throws a punch at me, but my left hand deflects it as my right hand pulls the sword out. My left hand being made of metal still punches Intex in the face. With my right hand I swing the sword at Intex, slicing his neck.

Intex throws his hands up to hold his neck as a reflex.

"Intex," I say. "This world belongs to me now."

I lunge the sword into Intex, penetrating through his eye and into his brain. Intex immediately falls over, lifeless.

I look down at my chest. The wound doesn't close up. I pant, trying to breathe. Suddenly it seems as if oxygen has left this area. I gasp for air and fall to my knees at Intex's body. I let my skin go back to normal, losing the metal.

"Mark!!" Rachel's voice suddenly yells.

She flies down the hole in the floor from above, landing near me. She studies the surrounding.

"Holy crap, Mark!!" she exclaims. "You did all of this, Mark?!" Her face lights up.

I smile at her, nodding. I can still not breathe.

"I ..." I gasp.

I realize that Rachel can breathe just fine, so I know it's only me. Rachel looks down at my chest where the hole is that resulted from the sword that is now in Intex's head.

"Oh, god. Mark."

My hands start trembling. My body goes limp, but Rachel catches me. I feel so weak, so suddenly. I feel dizzy and lightheaded. I feel like I did when The Destroyer first poisoned me, knocking me out for four months; but that was because I was powerless, now I am not.

The Demolisher had squeezed my neck; he must've infused poison into me.

My vision blurs suddenly and I feel weaker than ever; worse than when The Demolisher landed on me when I couldn't move. My healing factor fails me. Suddenly, I see, feel, and hear nothing at all.

"Mark!" Rachel panics.

Epilogue

Epilogue

I wake up and immediately feel my chest. There is a hand on it. I look around me. I am in my bed at home. My house. The hand on my chest belongs to Rachel. She is lying next to me on my bed. I sit up and look at my chest; it is healed.

I feel fine. I feel refreshed.

“What happened?” I ask Rachel.

She smiles at me, taking her time to sit up. “You're fine.” She pauses. “You did it, Mark. You saved New York.”

I force a smile on my face. “I ... did.” I pause. “How long was I out?”

She smiles. “Don't worry; it's not like last time. You have only been out for a day. That other beast like The Destroyer had poisoned you. But thankfully you had your powers this time around.”

“The Demolisher.”

“That's what Intex called him, huh?”

“Yeah ... so how'd things ... go?”

Rachel chuckles. “I was so worried about you; I left my team with Oliver to fight the hybrids, so I could check up on you. But once you killed Intex the hybrids felt clueless. Their desires to want us dead left them. Their will to obey Intex left. You had killed him.

“Once Oliver realized that everything was fine, he left. The FBI was concerned about you, but I knew you would be alright because your wounds healed up. But I was still as concerned as the FBI. We helped

them with rescuing everyone from the prisons and the sick experimenting rooms.” She pauses to give me a cheerful smile. “Everything falling into place, Mark. You saved us all.”

I smile back at her. A series of bite marks on Rachel’s shoulder grabs my attention. There is a patch under her shirt, but the wound is starting to bleed again.

“Rachel,” I exclaim, delicately placing a hand on it.

“Babe, it’s just a scratch.”

“No, it’s not. It’s bad.”

“Mark, we all got pretty banged up, but we will heal ... in time. The FBI will be taking us to hospitals to check us out.” She pauses. “Speaking of the FBI; they’re here.”

“Really?”

Rachel nods. I sigh, trying to calm myself down from seeing her wound.

“They want to see you,” Rachel says, insisting that I see them.

“Alright,” I tell her. “But, Rachel ... I want you to go with the FBI to a hospital right away. Please.”

“Don't worry, Mark. I will. But the nearest hospital is in New Jersey.”

“Oh, but what about Nick? Can he heal you?”

Rachel smiles. “Just go see the FBI; they insist.”

I get out of the bed and Rachel follows. I walk into my kitchen. There are a few agents here, along with Gustavo Morgan and my team along with their friends.

The FBI sits at the table. I walk over and join them.

“How are you feeling?” Gustavo asks me.

“I feel fine,” I reply.

“Good.”

“The United States government wants to thank you for your efforts.”

I smirk. “What, for killing Intex?”

“For putting an end to him. Now, New York is free from his slavery. Thank you.”

I nod.

“We are canvassing New York for any evil hybrids left. We have found most people. Turns out that millions have survived and fled from Intex, going into hiding. Some didn’t manage to flee from Intex’s experimentation, but they still were allowed to join in hiding. Still, though, half of New York’s population was transformed into hybrids. About a third of the ones who were transformed have the evil personality that Intex has instilled into them.”

“You mean they still do?”

“Well, it’s wearing off of most of them, but I haven’t checked up on it since this morning.”

I look at the microwave to see the time; it’s in the afternoon.

“Guess what else?” Gustavo says. “We saved everyone from the Intex building, including the parents of your teammates. They are at the hospitals in New Jersey currently.”

I look in the living room. I see that my whole team is here.

“Why aren’t they with them?” I ask.

“That’s a great question, but I can't answer that. You will have to ask them.”

I wonder about the Intex building itself. “Are we planning on keeping the building?”

“Well it’s still being decided, but I think the plan is to tear down everything but the apartments; New York can use nine-hundred apartments. The rest of the building is a disgrace.”

I nod. “New York could use a lot of things, right?”

“Yes, that’s for sure. But ... uh ... yeah, it’ll take quite a while, but we will get New York back to the way it was. It will take some time, but we will try. We will need your help.”

“That’s why I'm here.”

“I’d figure you'd say that.” He pauses. “We could use your creating power.”

I smile, nodding. “Umm. Can I have a moment with my team?”

“Sure, go ahead. Don't feel compelled to concur with us.”

I nod and I walk into the living room. Everyone, including my team, Rachel, and my team’s friends sit, waiting for me. I smile at them all, sitting down next to them.

Bruce jumps from sitting next to Mara, running to me. He crouches down and hugs me.

“I was afraid that I lost my best friend,” he says. “I'm glad your back.”

He lets me go and returns to his spot next to Mara. I nod at Bruce, feeling the same. I hadn’t had much time to think about how everyone was feeling.

“How is everyone?” I ask.

Everyone smiles.

“We’re fine,” Grace says.

I realize that they are all banged up, except for Mara and Nick. I wonder why they haven’t used Nick to heal them.

“Nick,” I ask. “Have you tried to heal everyone?”

Nick nods at me. “I have, but I just don't have the energy to compel my power to work. That’s why we are going to be heading to the hospital.”

I nod, understanding it now. I look to Rachel, sitting next to Grace. She smiles at me.

“You know what, Mark?” Rachel asks me.

“Yes, hon?” I ask in reply.

“Since you killed Intex, I feel as if a weight has been lifted from my shoulders.” She pauses. “I felt darkness inside of me, from Rhonda. But now she is gone; I know it, because I feel whole again. I feel great now.”

We allow for the FBI to fly us over to New Jersey. Paramedics await us from outside the entrance of the hospital. They take us to the rooms they have prepared for us, near the ones the parents are in.

They treat my team to some stiches. Okay, a lot of stiches. I sigh to myself, knowing that their injuries were to a good cause, not to being stupid. We took down Intex. Things are going to work out for New York. Sure it will take some time, but things will turn out alright now that Intex is gone.

I chuckle to myself. Rextonians resurrect from death to the area that they've been most of their life. For Intex, that place is Rexton, which is a lifeless planet now, without oxygen. This time around, Intex does not have a ship waiting for him. So Intex will have been resurrected there only to die over and over from the lack of oxygen. Intex will never be coming back. That's for sure.

After getting treated, my team visits their parents. All of the friends sit in chairs, watching from the distance. They want to give the team their time and space to be with their parents.

All of the parents sit up in their cots, all close to each other. They are not badly hurt, just sore. They all embrace in hugs.

"Guys," Nick's father says, gathering all of my team's attention. "We have to tell you something."

He gives a long pause, looking among the other parents. They all nod at him. Their children, my team, look at them, eager to know what he has to say.

"We ..." Nick's father continues. "Aren't your *real* parents. We are clones."

I figured that to be the case. So ... Intex really did kill their parents. I look at my team. They don't look too surprised. They all know how Intex was; he was manipulative and lied. I can see some disappointment, though. They wanted them to be their real parents, not clones.

"Dad," Nick says with his voice cracking. "You are just like our parents ... you ..." he pauses, rests his eyes and shakes his head. "You are just like our parents, despite being clones. But that doesn't matter ... I still want to be with you."

"But we aren't your parents," Alex's mother says.

"We still want to be together, though," Mara tells her parents.

“Intex brought you guys into this world,” Brandon says. “We aren’t going to just let you be alone.”

The parents all smile, relieved. A few of them cry, well ... most of them cry.

“You guys have all changed very much,” Grace’s father says. “You're all so mature now.”

“Yep,” Grace says, breaking out into tears. “See? You act just like my dad!”

I see how my teammates look saddened. They want these people to be their real parents, but they still want to be with them; they are the closet to being the real thing. They will not be able to get their parents back, but they will at least have these clones.

I realize that Brandon seems the worst. I think of why that is. I remember how he had a brother. Intex didn’t clone his brother, so his brother remains dead. All he has are these clones of his parents as a family.

Everyone breaks out into tears, all embracing each other in hugs. I cry myself watching them all join together. Andrea walks up to Alex, joining with his parents. Alex introducing her to them as his girlfriend. They smile, having her join in their hugs.

Reye and Noelle join in with Nick and Brandon, with their parents. They get acquainted.

I stand back and watch. I sigh, loving to see them all feel happy. They all feel as if they are their real parents, but they know they truly aren’t. That will probably bug them for the rest of their lives, but at least they’ll will have them rather than not at all.

Three Months Later

The FBI helps us all out with housing. They provide us one big house for us all to live in. They tell us that we have to be together, since we are a team. We don't want to separate from each other anyhow.

The house may be considered a mansion. I was going to turn down the offer, but by the looks of my team and the looks of the house I couldn't. The house has twenty bedrooms and five bathrooms, all with showers. We also have two dining rooms, three entertainment rooms, and two large rooms we can use for training if need be.

Rachel and I share a room. All of the parents have their own rooms to themselves. Everyone else is in separate rooms. But then, we have Noelle, Lon, Reye, Andrea, Sofia, Kathrine, Tabatha and Chandra living in here as well; their homes have been destroyed, all also having finished moved from their parents' houses anyways.

They are allowed to be in this house since they are close with some of us. Noelle and Lon share a room, while Reye and Andrea share another. The rest; Sofia, Kathrine, Tabatha and Chandra get their own rooms, leaving two spare rooms.

All of these months I have been out with the FBI, helping with the restoration of New York. Things have been going well, but it has been difficult. I have to help with repairing buildings. Citizens all over help out with trash. I have been providing lots of people with food, materializing much each day.

Businesses have been opening up. People are getting back to work. Things are very slowly getting back in order. It is hard, but at least the people are working together to get it done. Soon everyone will forget that Intex ever happened — yeah, right.

Just as I expect, I hear the doorbell ring. I run up to the door, already being on the first floor. I open it and find the same FBI agent that

has been coming by, but this time he brings The Director with him. I haven't seen The Director in a couple months.

"Hello, Gustavo," I say.

"Hello, Mark," he says.

We shake hands.

"It's been a while."

"Sure has. Can I come in?"

"Of course."

I let Gustavo come in to a little recreation area in this floor's hallway. We sit at some chairs, each of us getting one to sit in; myself, Gustavo and the agent he's brought with him.

"Mark, I wanted to inform you about a division that we have. They are separate from the FBI though; they have their own director."

"Okay."

"It's called DOS. It stands for Division of Supers. You can imagine what it is by the title. DOS has gathered trained people and metahumans to join in the division. They are working at trying to solve our countries crime problems, like you are. They want me to discuss this over with you."

"Hmm." I nod.

"They want to know if you will join."

"But I'm already doing that stuff here."

He nods. "I know. I told them that you are fairly busy here in New York, as they are aware. They just want me to let you know that it's an option for you whenever you're ready."

I nod. "Well ... we are just getting settled here and I am trying to get New York back in order. So ... I think I will hold off on that for now, but tell them ... that I will definitely join, because I fully support that, since that is what I do around here, but just not right now. It may be a year or two."

He nods. "I will surly let them know. Besides, that's the timetable they were figuring anyhow, knowing that you are caught up in things here."

I nod.

We say goodbye and he leaves. I am allowed for some rest until this afternoon. I walk to the elevator and go to the third floor. I walk down into one of our training rooms.

I have been thinking about something. It has been bugging me for a while.

Since I have been restoring New York, repairing and creating building with my matter manipulation, I have been improving in my power. I decide to give my idea a shot.

What Intex had said to me still lingers around. He wondered why I called myself Avian when I have no traits of a bird. I decide that I will change that.

I look around the room; I am by myself. I pull my shirt off and look at my back, peering over my shoulder. I turn my head back forward and close my eyes. I concentrate on my back, starting to materialize a substance in my back. My nerves pulse with pain, but I grind my teeth to bear through it. The substance starts to make my back bulge out as it slowly begins to transform into a bone structure.

I think about Rachel's wings; they are fairly the same as the rest of my team's, although different than that of Mara and Grace. I have seen Rachel's wings so many times, since I am with her the most, being

married to her. The feel, the texture of her wings envision itself in my mind. The smell ... the feathers ...

The bones began to seep through my back, coming out while being just bones yet. They start forming feather on them. With a little more effort and pain wings are formed.

I extend my new wings to their full. I smile, very proud of my ... improvement to my body; my doing. They feel so natural. I curl them in and run my finger down it. It tickles my wings. I've created nerves in my wings. I made every part of them to be a part of me.

I close them up, fold them and return them into my back, seeping through the skin. I put my shirt back on and go down the elevator. I walk to my room to meet Rachel.

Rachel looks up at me, seeing me grin from ear to ear. She sits on the bed.

“What are you smiling about?” She asks.

I pull my shirt off.

“Oh. Right now?” She reaches for her shirt, even with the door wide open.

“No,” I say and stop her. “Not that. Just ... watch.”

I can't help but smile as Rachel watches me extend my wings from my back. Her jaw drops wide open and her eyes grow big. I spread my wings out as far as they can.

“How?” Rachel asks, still in awe.

“I created them.”

“You did. Wow, they're amazing!”

“Now, I am truly Avian, the leader of The Avians!”

She chuckles, nodding. She jumps up to feel them. I twitch.

“That tickles.”

She laughs. “If you were to do that to me it would tickle as well.”

I nod. Suddenly she drops her smile. “I hear something.” She pauses. “It’s from the back yard.”

“The big yard?”

She nods. Rachel and I run to the back door and open it. I gasp. It can't be. We look to see a spaceship. We fear that it is Intex. But, something is different with this one.

We walk towards it and I read what it says in Rextonian: $\downarrow\Delta Z\uparrow$, $\partial\uparrow\partial LLA \ \cup LLA Z$; Bart, Estella Millar. No ... way. It’s my parents’ ship.

The ship hisses out air and the door opens up. Someone walks down the steps and onto the ground. He immediately looks up at me. A woman follows him down. The man and woman look at me and Rachel. The woman looks at me, knowing right away who I am.

“Anthony!” she exclaims.

“Mom?” I ask.

“Son,” the man says. “It’s me, your father.”

“Bart?” I ask and he nods. I look to the woman, my mother. “Estella?”

She nods. “Anthony.” I run up to them and hug them both. We release each other my ... mother, Estella looks at Rachel. “Who is this?”

“This is my wife, Rachel,” I reply.

“Hi,” Rachel says.

“I thought ...” I begin. “I thought that we couldn’t be together, because of what you did.”

“They said that the only way we could be together is if you died.”

I look up at him. I didn't think I died that day I stopped Intex. I thought I was just knocked out for a day.

“Bart!” Estella yells at him.

“Sorry, I'm just kidding. No ... what really happened is that we were proven innocent.”

“You mean ... you never worked with Intex?”

“Never.” He pauses. “Now, we’re hungry. It took us two years to get here. Do you have anything to eat?”

I chuckle. “Sure do.”

I hold out my hands and materialize apples in both of them. Both my parents look down at my hands, completely flabbergasted.

“What in the world of Rexton did you just do?” Estella asks.

“I have abilities here on Earth,” I say.

“Well,” Bart says. “Looks like we have some catching up to do.”

To Be Continued

After stopping a few villains, Mark is faced with
something much **greater**.

The dangers do not let up ...

Obstacles arise, one right after another.

Now, Mark will face his greatest **challenge** yet.



MARK WILL TRY TO STOP

THE VILLAINS, BUT IT

WILL BE A GREAT CHALLENGE.