

**Chapter 4: Downtime**  
**April 2, 2013****Tasha's Tale**

Tasha faced the window, letting what little sunlight soak in. She wouldn't necessarily consider herself a shut in, but after the pointing and staring the last time she left the house since it happened. And the fresh air only made the symptoms worse. Her skin was tinged green, and she could see tendril like vines growing out in place of hair. What made it worse was that she could see what were likely tiny flowers and leaves in her hair. She didn't really feel like it, hence she settled for water and sunlight three times a day with the odd cup of ramen noodles she had stocked up in her one room apartment. She worked at the She only wore her nightgown these last few days. She definitely needed to wash that sometime. Somehow the place just smelled nicer than it used to, it was probably the new air freshener she bought. The apartment itself was a mess, until two days ago when she finally started cleaning it. It helped take her mind off the part where she turned into a plant...She didn't want to say vegetable, that had horrible implications. And just returned to cleaning.

Heidi was never one for discretion, not when you could be direct. It made her a good representative at the salon. As such, she was very direct when she went to see the other person who disappeared as of late. She pounded on Natasha's door in an unlady like fashion. "Hello!"

"Ack, no...Heidi", Tasha thought. "Please, please, please don't come in.", she thought. Either way Tasha did not relish the thought of Heidi finding out about well, it wasn't easy being green. She waited to open the door. "Now's not a good time...can whatever this is wait? Please. I'm not feeling very well.", she said to Heidi faking a cough.

**Bluff: mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $14 + 5 = 19$

"Then open the door! I got first aid training," Heidi said, not to be deterred.

"I'm not sure first aid training really helps here...", Tasha said to Heidi. But she did her best to hide her viney hair and cover up. Then she opened the door. "Um, hey...Heidi.", Tasha said, knowing that she looked wierder wearing a heavy coat over her nightgown with her hood up to try and cover the viney hair. "Now isn't really a good time, I've got something very strange...it's not something first aid can really cover.", Tasha followed up with.

"Never know until you try," she said, bustling past Natasha with easy as if she had been invited into the room. "You ever try opening the windows?" he said in comment to the room as she cast her practiced eye around. "Though, open shades don't really support your shut in image. Been a few days. Missed a few classes. And the party we sure supposed to go to."

"Ack, that...I'm so sorry, but I'm kinda dealing with a lot right now...", Tasha said to Heidi inviting Heidi inside. She didn't know how long she'd get away with the overcoat.

"Have the people in this city are," Heidi said, dropping into one of the seats around the room. "You got to get out. Hidding out doesn't do anything."

"That's the thing, the growths didn't stop until today...I thought the pain on the first day after the con explosion was the end of it", Tasha said, she really didn't want to remember it, " Then it only got worse...It only really stopped after I locked myself inside yesterday.", Tasha said, she figured it may not be so wrong to just show Heidi the extent of the problem.

"So? Deal with it!" Heidi said frustrated. "Like a quarter of the city is a meta of some point right now. Pretty sure running and hiding isn't going to help you much."

"I have been dealing with it. Don't you see, I was in too much pain to leave the house recently...Alas, okay...okay, no more hiding.", Tasha said removing the overcoat, revealing her green skin and viney hair. She shrugged nervously and then a sweet fragrance filled the area around her in her nervousness.

"I see... that nightdress really is hideous," Heidi said. "Is it time for an emergency wardrobe intervention? Is Heidi going to have to strip a girl?" She raised her hands and got an honestly concerning glint to her glare and leer.

"I don't think that will be necessary and strip a girl, what are you...ohhhh...ummm....", Tasha asked clearly very confused by her reaction to plant girl. Unfortunately that meant the fragrant scent didn't stop exuding from the tiny flowers in her hair. She could almost feel the trellis as another limb, though she wasn't sure.

"Alright then. We need to hit the mall. Do some shopping. You know you look all flowery, right? We should get you some summer and spring dresses," Heidi said.

"Spring dress then, flowery or something, anything to take my mind off the last two days pain....How can you think of just shopping, I've turned into a giant plant thing.", Tasha said, her fragrance was still sweet smelling but she didn't know how to stop it. Regardless, she was happy the nightmare is over. Still Heidi seemed much more calm than her about this ordeal.

"Hmm...you don't think I look like a freak now?", she asked, a tinge of concern, but less fearful.

"You do, not going to lie. Green skin, and you look like you go lost in the forest," Heidi said, not lying for the sake of false comfort. "Doesn't change anything. Might as well just get it over with. I heard that most meta's stop by that doctor guy. Did you?"

"Lost in a forest? and not yet, I couldn't even leave the house till today...", Tasha said to Heidi, "I'll find time to find that doctor." Tasha flipped the vine trellis hair out of her eyes.

"The head of vines thing," she said. She pulled at her own hair as an example.

Tasha unconsciously did the same, just like yesterday it felt like a vine from a tree rather than her hair. She didn't dare cut it. "Hmm...yeah...but I guess you're right, no more hiding...we should go out...mall sounds good...then I think I will need to go see the good doctor. Or we can do this in the opposite order.", Tasha said sitting down on her bed and tried to work out a definite plan for the day. The sweet fragrance was slowly fading now.

"Didn't you agree fast," Heidi said with a trace of surprise. "The last person I tried to get out had already disappeared for about a week. And they had pretty awe- Right! Did I tell you I'm a meta too?"

"No you didn't, and I only agree, to take my mind off of this, I don't know if further sunlight will make things worse...so far the open window hasn't hurt me, but I dunno.", Tasha said.

"Uhuh..." Heidi said, fiddling with her phone. By the time Tasha finished talking, she raised ti and snapped a picture.

"And that's for facebook I guess.", Tasha said as she raised her hands to hide her face a few seconds too late. "Tell me, you at least got a good picture." Mutant terrorists, huge explosions, bugs running around, she didn't want to deal with that, pictures she could handle.

"Average," she said, looking at and saving it.

"And with that the secret is out...everyone now knows I'm a green skinned freak.", Tasha sighed as additional sweet fragrance wafted out from her filling the area in her nervousness.

"You're kinda dumb at the moment, aren't you?" Heidi said lightly as she put her phone away. "Why would I put a picture of you on facebook? Not till you get out of your reclusive funk anyway."

"Okay good, and I've kinda recovered from that since being stuck indoors yesterday, only kinda, still worried about all the crazy things that have happened though.", Tasha said falling back in bed. She figured it might be nice to go out now.

"You can't exactly hide from it, you know," Heidi said, waving her phone in an accusatory manner at the girl.

"Easy for you to say, I mean whatever your meta power whatever is, you aren't a human plant.", Tasha said to Heidi.

"Yeah, I suppose it is," Heidi said. "But it's not like it's likely to change anytime soon, so moping isn't going to help."

"I guess you're right...um...we still on for shopping?", Tasha asked, "I think I need to be able to hide that I'm a plant girl, I look like a freak of nature...literally..."

"Even if I have to take you kicking and screaming so go get changed," Heidi said happily.

"Alright then...", Tasha said, perking up a little, it was good to know someone cared for her still even if that someone was still threatening her. Tasha ducked into the closet and put on one of her plainer outfits, a pink dress with flowers on it over that she wore the same overcoat in order to

hide her viney hair and the skin that showed on her shoulders. She came out, "I need to wear this to hide the plant bits.", she thought to herself.

"You know, you are pretty obvious for someone trying to hide," Heidi observed, taking note of the floral dress.

"It's the coat isn't it, who wears a coat in this weather right...", Tasha said to Heidi, "And I thought you said to stop hiding...and I only have so many outfits to wear to the mall."

"The dress, the dress!" Heidi said, lounging in the chair. "Also, you aren't much a host, are you? I'm here all this this time and you didn't even offer me a glass of water or something."

"Sorry, sorry, I wasn't expecting guests.", Tasha said, "Dammit, first day I'm not bedridden in horrible pain and already you barge on in expecting me to be able to get up and go." Tasha sighed She removed the coat, "The coat is too bulky, let me see if I have a scarf or something I can use to hide the vine hair.", Tasha said then and offered Heidi a glass of water to placate her wrath.

"I was actually talking dress. And do you really think pink goes with the green skin and hair you have rocking?" Heidi asked, sipping on the water.

"No...but wearing the green dress is like camoflaugue or something.", Tasha said to her, "Isn't the outfit thing, what we're going to the mall for anyway? And in your opinion, think I need to cover up the hair? I probably should huh...I think there's wildflowers and leaves in those vines?"

"Ooo... we could look for some night hats and bonnets!" Heidi said, spilling a bit of water in her new enthusiam. She mused contemplatively. "I mean, they aren't exactly high fashion in general, but they have been getting a bit more popular with everything that's happening (did you know that a couple people have gone bald or gotten really bizarre looking hair in this month?) and we can find some cute ones, I bet!"

"We'll see.", Tasha said and quickly rushed to grab the green plain dress and went to the bathroom to change. She was done fairly quickly. "Or do you think the all natural hair works...if I style it right my head will look like a bouquet...yeah that's a horrible idea.", she said trying to get out of her depressed rut.

//Question: wouldn't people who do cosplay take there time getting dressed so they don't ruin the carefully and personally made outfits?

//yeah probably

"You probably shouldn't mess with those. Vines are connected. You might bleed out if it breaks," Heidi said.

"Yeah figured as much, well a nice bonnet would work.", Tasha suggested, "Though figure the more green I wear the more I can camoflaugue."

"Whatever floats your boat out that door," Heidi said, examining the room a bit more intently, looking at the pictures and decorations her friend choose to put up since her last visit, if any.

Tasha hadn't decorated anything since the last time she saw Heidi. "So far I've been a bad host, by the way did you drive here?", she asked.

"Of course I did. You don't excatly live next door. Neither is the mall."

"So I can ride with you to the mall, that's great, I figure it'd be good to get out after what happened the last two days...just dunno if more sunlight will make my err...condition worse.", Tasha said to her.

"Then experiment. That's what my friend in bio says. Experiment to find out your answers," Heidi said. Maybe she should invite Jez...

"Guess I can't find out until we go out...to the mall then...you're driving.", Tasha said to Heidi.

"What? You thought I would let you drive *my* car? Do you even have a license?"

"Yes, I was just asking if we were taking your car or mine?", Tasha said to her and lay down on the bed.

"Mine of course. That way, you'll be under my power."

"Um...okay, that wasn't the reason I was thinking of but that's okay.", Tasha said.

"The day that happens is one I'd be sick or something. Now enough lazing around. We have shopping to do."

"Yeah!", Tasha said getting more excited about getting out of the house finally. She did prefer to just laze around, but a day at the mall could help her readjust to the brave new world.

It might not have been hardcore, but they did eventually get down to Heidi's car. A 2007 red jetta. She examined her reflection in the side mirror, toying with her dark blonde hair. "Would do you think? I could use a bit more brown highlights, couldn't I?"

"Couldn't hurt. Least you can still discuss styling your hair...I'm worried cutting mine will kill the vines.", Tasha said to Heidi clamoring into the car.

She combed her fingers through her hair a few times, and soon hints of brown could be seen until she had the intensity she wanted. "Better." Heidi n nodded then got in. "Now; shopping!"

**ἄρετή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 3

**ρετή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18

"Oooh, that's an awesome power.", Tasha said witnessing Heidi change her hair color. She attempted to comb her fingers through her hair and only managed to febreeze up heidi's car.

**mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18

**Look! A few hours in the *Future*~**

[You guys can turn up. Since it seems like Trev's stalker is getting serious. I forsee punching.]

Eventually after insane amounts of boredom curbing, when the time agonizingly came by, Jezelle with Two and Three rocked up at Trevor's porch a few minutes before 6 as they'd agreed upon, and she airily knocked a little tune on the door.

There was a moment of nothing, and her knock had to be repeated, then her phone started ringing.

Jezelle frowned a bit, attempting to lean about and peek through any available windows while she dug out her phone, checking the ID.

[Insert whatever you have Trevor's number as here]

A little confused and suspicious, Jezelle hit the connect button and put the phone to her ear. "You know I think it's rude to leave a lady waiting on the doorstep," Jezelle said a little tartly more as a greeting than an actual complaint.

"Hey Jez. How are you Jez? My Saltfish fritters are burning Jez. Please use the side door Jez," Trevor said, sounding on the crossroads of harried and annoyed, with the turn off for flustered avenue just ahead. She would know the side entrance, the one that led directly into the basement flat Trevor paid for.

Again a little confused, Jezelle just shrugged and led the trio around the side as bidden went to enter the basement flat.

Oddly enough, the door was open. [roll notice]

**Jez** Notice rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $16 + 6 = 22$

[[You notice the faintest sensation that you are pretty sure is one of his boxes tugging at your clothes.

There was the sound of frying coming from the kitchen alcove, not to mention the unmistakable hint of burned food in the air. "... How many of you are around today?" Trevor's voice called out.

"Just the three," Jezelle replied with a hint of concern, half walking through the threshold backwards as though wondering what that was, making a full spin as she went, "Someone else has been cooking huh?"

"You insinuating that I can't cook?" Trevor said, leaning so he could brandish his oil damp egg lifter at Jez.

The truck rumbled down the street of Trevor's residence. He had made this drive countless times for their game nights and he hoped that this would be just like the old times. He had not done much since he got home from the library. He updated everything in his notebook and then proceeded to place it under the massive oven of his apartment. There were many groups out there now and did not feel like handing them all his hard earned information. He then threw all the clothes that he bought from the thrift store into the wash. He had enough clothes for the night but he needed the shoes. He slipped them on while they were still warm and a little ill fitting from the drying. It didn't matter though as they would settle. He grabbed the bags of chips and set off.

He parked the truck on the side of the street and killed the engine. He grabbed the bags of chips in one hand and shut the door with the other locking it. He then walked up to the house and pressed the door bell.

"Be nice to have a normal night for once." Henry said out loud to himself.

"You have a better nose than I do, you tell me," Jezelle commented to Trevor with a smirk, tapping her nose, "I made two pies, a lasagne and a cake."

Two and Three stepped out to be visible with a cooked good in each hand.

She glanced off up to the side at hearing the doorbell, figuring Trevor was busy and she herself was not, scooted off upstairs to answer the door in his stead, Two and Three looking for places to put the baked goods.

As could be expected, Jezelle was at the door in a heartbeat and opened it with much curiosity, peering around the door as she opened it.

"Thank you," Trevor said when he noticed the clones going to get the door. "And you can put the stuff on the table," he added, motioning to the little table in his kitchen/dinning area.i

"Oh, hello. I thought Trev would be answering his door. I'm not late am I? Thought I left with enough time." Henry said looking around.

"Not late as far as I know, but my sense of time is completely screwed; come on, we're in the basement," Jezelle said easily, thumbing the direction and opening the door, standing aside to let Henry pass.

Henry made his way down to the basement with the chips in tow. Once he was down he put the chips on a table or what ever surface he could put them on.

"Chips are here!" Henry bellowed. "Where is everyone? . . ." Henry thought on that for a moment. "Wait a second how are we going to do this with one of the group in a holding cell. And is Marina going to break out of her house again? And did anyone call Alex?"

"I called him," Trevor said. "Marina is in enough trouble as it is, and..."

"Looks like it will be a small group then today. At least we will have plenty of chips." Henry said looking at the bags he brought.

"Yeah... I'm thinking of starting a new campaign. Try to get stuff back to normal. As normal as possible, anyway," Trevor said, turning off the burner and moving the pan so that the oil could cool down.

"So we making new characters tonight then?" Henry asked.

"I... didn't think about that," Trevor admitted, acknowledging Henry's point with a finger.

"Kaaa... which you think is best?"

"If the game doesn't work out there is always movie night. Find the worst movie we can and mock the snot out of it. We have the food for it. Either way we can have a good time." Henry offered.

"So it will all work out, no problem-o!" Trevor said with somewhat more optimism than might have been called for. "We could probably keep the same characters for now... Make things far less difficult. Though character gen is fun, it would just take all evening. And night."

"Like I said. Movie night." Henry repeated.

"For *you* guys it might take all night," Jezelle began a little dejectedly as she waltzed down and sat reverse on a chair so she could rest her arms and head on the back, "I did the math, and I discovered I move roughly five times faster. Ya have any idea how quickly you can get bored like that?"

"Ooo! I wanna make a character!" Two said excitedly, bouncing on the spot.

"Probably not the best idea," Three advised, motioning to hold Two still, "We were just here to carry the food."

"I played you guys in smash brothers... it would be cheating if you all played your own character..." Trevor pointed out.

"Awwww!" Two protested with exaggerated pout, giving the puppy eyes until Three ushered her away.

"Anyway I thought this was to be a normal night? Won't be normal if you are using your powers. This is our time to relax and enjoy our time. We have had enough junk going on for a normal persons life time. I just want to take it slow and enjoy the now." Henry said this as he flopped down on the couch. Just a normal evening with normal friends. No explosions, no people getting killed, no one getting robbed, no one turning on their friends. Just a normal junk food eating, mind rotting good time.

"Heh..." Jezelle murmured with only a slight jovialness, her eyes gone a little distant with idle anxieties and lingering doubts. Trying to be normal again? The concept sounded so far from



normal it hurt Jezelle's brain just thinking about it, but at the same time she couldn't help wanting the blissful ignorance if only for awhile.

She'd gotten so used to the dozens of voices in her head, the different perceptions, the habit of thinking of distance in terms of teleporting like walking... she kind of wondered if that was 'normal' for her now, and this restraint wasn't.

Either way, call it pining nostalgia, a reminder of what used to be normal surely couldn't hurt; as such her copies just disappeared with a wave and stuttering of their image.

"Well I'm up for whatever," Jezelle said easily.

"All right then! I can tell you about the campaign! I found a new book hidden in all the folders I got with the superpack and never looked at it before. Demon hunters," Trevor said. "Even have free equipment for you."

"All right then. This is going to take me age to get done. Can we at least start on the food?" Henry asked with a grumble from his stomach.

Ring ring went the doorbell, for the another kitty cat has arrived.

"And that's the door... I shall return," Trevor declared to Henry and Jezelle. Everyone going to the other door... He sighed and headed out to fetch him. There was an odd package on in his mail slot, so he grabbed that, turning it this way and that as he headed around to the front yard.

"Oi! Albie," Trevor called as he turned around the corner. "Wrong door."

"Looks like the whole group will be here now. Wonder if that means we can eat." Henry said eyeing the food again.

Alex blinked and waved his free hand, his another hand having a satchel with something smelling of meat (roll "chicken identification" to identify the stuff there as some dem tasty chicken legs). "Wrong door?"

"Wrong door," Trevor repeated, sniffing. Aside from the food Alex apparently brought with him, there was another scent he recognized... He'd get back to it later. "My part of the house has it's own door. Now come on. We have a game to start."

Alex nodded and went in, "Di-twelve game?" he asked Trevor.

"Twenty. Hunting Demon blooded. And I got a big table of loot for you all," Trevor said over his shoulder since he was turning away and heading back. "And I think Henry's hungry."

"With his mass..." Alex added, clearly intending for Trevor to finish the sentence in his mind, "Demon blooded? That's quite cliché. Although loot sounds fun, do you have catnip there?"

"Things are cliché because they are good," Trevor said, waving dismissively, then turned to raise an eyebrow at Albie and he descended the stairs back into his place. "... What?"

"...what? Is joke, if you are about catnip," Alex replied, shaking his head.

Trevor still looked skeptical when he got back in. "I got Albie and he's got more chicken," he announced to the other two people hanging out in his place, the parcel held casually in his hand.

"So that is everyone." Henry said this and move for the food. he tore open one of the bags of chips and started eating. Between mouthfuls he tried to ask trevor about the game they were going to play.

"So how hard is this going to be to pick up?" He managed to say around a mouth full of chips.

"See?" Trevor said, nudging Albie in a 'I told you so' manner. Then he addressed Henry.

"Hopefully not that much. I actually roughed up designs for about a dozen or so targets and set it up like a mercenary thing," Trevor said, counting off on his fingers and even looking thoughtful. He snapped his fingers. "Oh! Right. You guys can roll some die to determine what free demon slayer tool you get!"

Henry swallowed the chips and thought on that. He didn't know what this was but they would walk him through it. They always seemed to grasp these things way before he did. But it always ended up fun.

He carried the bag over to the table and reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of dice and tossed them on the table.

**necar** rolled a die. The die showed: 3

**necar** rolled a die with 4 sides. The die showed: 2

**necar** rolled a die with 10 sides. The die showed: 1

**necar** rolled a die with 12 sides. The die showed: 5

**necar** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 12

Jezelle raised an eyebrow at Henry at first, glanced at Trevor for a response but inevitably shrugged as she dug into her bag for dice and did the same.

**blazinvire** rolled a die with 4 sides. The die showed: 2

**blazinvire** rolled a die. The die showed: 1

**blazinvire** rolled a die with 10 sides. The die showed: 10

**blazinvire** rolled a die with 12 sides. The die showed: 11

**blazinvire** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18

Trevor looked over the dice, not telling them which one he was looking at, nodding a few times.

"Alright.." he picked up his large envelope of DM notes and fished about in it for a set of index cards bound with an elastic band. "Lets see..." he said, humming to himself as he picked out two cards. "Jez, you got the Makai Stones, Henry, you have the Penitent Touch."

"A patented touch? How in the name of god does someone get a patent for a touch?" Henry said all confused.

"Penitent. It's a touch attack magic item. Sort of like the whelm spell," Trevor said. "Only it's actually lethal. And does more damage to evil characters."

"That is pretty cool. So I am a magic user then. One that punches things. That should be interesting." Henry said thinking about how that would work.

"The heck is a Makai?" Jezelle asked with mild perplexation.

Alex didn't roll as much as everyone did, just a d6 and d20. Lazy little cat.

**Irbynx** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16

**Irbynx** rolled a die. The die showed: 2

"A makai is a place where ghost and demons and other such other worldly critters live," Trevor said, breezily in response to Jezelle. "A Makai Stone is a ranged weapon that acts like a banishment charm on weaklings, damage on strong ones." He flipped through his cards. "And yes, you are, Henry. Should be awesome, actually." True, it was originally supposed to be touch affect, but he could rule that a punch could trigger it, either at less effect, less charge or a feat. "Right, the Points of Purification for you Albie."

He checked a few things, nodded a few times. "Alright!" he declared. "I think this is ready to start! I sorta ripped out a few table top concepts and put them together. I've got five kinds of encounter cards, a stack of critters, a world map I pieced together," he pointed to a stack of typing sheets, "and a big end. Campaign by progress."

"All right!" Henry exclaimed. He was ready to start even though he hadn't a clue what they were doing or how it was going to go. But, He had food and was going to have fun. Good old fashion non meta fun.

"Don;t worry, it's basically the same, just with more random element to it. You and your party are in the town hall, the mayor's aid nervously hovering by the door..." The encounters went fairly well, aside from a few places where Trevor got confused with his own set up, and others where one of his predefined cards were a bit too much to handle, and the evening was mostly a success (he at already curbed the targets that were too close to current effects. Like the Belzebug spawn. And the rampaging beasts) but still.

It was another hour, during a snack break, that Trevor decided to check his mail, starting with the obvious bills (he really needed to start job hunting. His savings wouldn't last forever), a credit card offer (which he was delighted to realize he could shred himself without need of scissors or tearing) and an interesting one from Allied. "No way..." he said after skimming it twice.

"Is it one of those house lottery things. Because you can fill those out left and right and no one ever wins. They just send you more stuff to sign up for and by god do not put your number down. The amount of calls you will get. . ." Henry said to what ever Trevor just opened. He had to change his phone number after the first time he filled one of those things out.

"I... I got a job offer..." Trevor said, still slightly shocked.

Henry crossed his fingers and hoped. *Please be Meow Mix. Please be Meow Mix* he kept chanting in his head.

//now that's just mean :p

"A job offer from whom?" Henry asked hopping that he knew the answer.

"From... Allied Security," Trevor responded, unable to say anything more at the moment as he read through the letter fully this time.

"Thats right. Ben did say that he would be offering you and Jez there a job as well. It have the orientation date in there or is it the crazy packet you have to sign?" Henry asked.

Trevor looked up at Henry with confusion. "Um... b-both... There's a stack of stuff to read and sign, and date to show up at their office.... Ben?" he said, most of his confusion coming from that part. Henry was on a first name basis with them now?

"Didn't I tell you about them? Ben is a agent of Allied that used to be in the military. He has helped in a number of things. Finding you, he was the one that tipped me off about Red Dawn, and showed me the holding place. Our actions at the con has shown some merit for a meta force to counter meta threats. We are going to be trying out for the team. Allied has a lot of fun stuff and have been in the field for a long time." Henry added in looking to see if there was any food left.

"Um... Okay? Ah... Yeah... that makes sense... but... um..." Trevor was having just the slightest bit of trouble processing all of this. He scratched at his temple to buy a bit more time before holding up the papers and shaking them a little, his expression wrinkled in confusion and worry. "It's fine, cool even and all, but... how do you know all that?"

"I know this because I talk to Ben Davis. I have been working with him for a few weeks. Have helped them out and he has helped me. Works out for both of us." He replied. He had thought he explained some of this. Then again he had been losing time with the whole no sleep thing.

"Hmm..." Jezelle murmured a little thoughtfully as her mind was halfway between the game and the conversation, slightly reserved about both.

"A superhero job sounds all fun and stuff, but I think I'd kind of prefer to keep my head down," Jezelle said a little thoughtfully, eyes distant.

"Not really a super hero job. More like a police job or SWAT. They plan and then take down the bad ones. Kind of like what we have been doing but with planning and pay. Worth a look since I am in need of a job and all. I can't eat into my savings for ever." Henry relied to Jez.

"Well yeah, sounds perfect for *you* at least," Jezelle said pointedly, weighing the idea with her hands.

"If they ask, I'd take it," Trevor admitted. "It was hard enough job hunting before I got a beard," he said half smiling, trying to make light of it.

"My sports scholarship was going to get me into a sports career -at least it was before the Bang," Jezelle said easily though ending on a bit of a gloomy note, as the thought dredged up a depressing reminder.

"My career was already set. Being a custodian is not all its cracked up to be. I wanted a change but not this kind. But if this is the hand that is dealt to me then I am going to play it. We can help. We stop a bug invasion today. How many other people would have died if we didn't step in? Plus it will be interesting to see who else they are pooling for this group." Henry said as he found a piece of chicken that no one had eaten yet.

"I'm with Henry on this. I don't know what sort of things I can do now. Maybe with my degree I could offer some basic, real basic help to researching the history of these things, human geography and all, but I don't hold out much hope for that," Trevor said, carefully folding his letter and putting it back in the envelope for now. "But considering... the amount of stuff we've gotten caught up in, even when we aren't off looking for it like superman here," he thumbed Henry. "I don't know if it's horrible, *horrible* luck, god's giving a sign or general destiny. But yeah..."

"From what I have seen they have the research side covered by some pretty smart people. I think we will be better used for stopping meta problems or things that pop up here and there. Like the bugs. Plus you both can stop things from happening to people. Teleporting them out or putting a box around them. Plus I don't know how many of these other people will have had as much opportunity to work together as we have. We know what each other can do and know the limits more or less. I think we have a real shot at getting hired." Henry said enthusiastically.

"Great... not he's Superman wannabe AND he's starting a Justice League," Trevor laughed, the humour and tone taking any potential bite out of it. "Honestly, I admit, a chance to help people would be fun. It was why I was working at the Y in the first place."

"Ugh... you two are starting to make me sound selfish," Jezelle complained, "I don't really have that hero spark in me -a sports idol, but not some crazy person going off to save the world." The whole idea just left Jezelle a little unsettled, as much as she did kind of appreciate the new options her mutations had given her, when it involved other people she wasn't so sure she wanted to think about the responsibilities. Hell, she wasn't even sure her teleporting was entirely safe...

"I'll look after my friends, but... really, my dream involves gold medals and a stadium of cheering crowds," Jezelle said a little helplessly.

"You know. . ." Henry tried to figure out how to bring this up. "That they are going to look at sport way more closely now for metas. You think performance enhancing drugs were unfair and people were getting banned now they will have people with powers playing. That whole field will change." Henry said laying out that little fact. He knew this first hand. Henry was a very good football player in high school. Very good. There were always rumors and he had to get

tested more than once even though he and his coaches all knew that the results would come back clean. People took their sports pretty seriously. Well, most did. There were those that waded into the gray area.

Jezelle slumped on the table in defeat, letting out a mournful whimper.

"Don't remind me how screwed my dreams are now," Jezelle sighed sadly, "Superspeed has already destroyed my enjoyment of the game -I can't go all-out without revealing my meta-ness - and that was the whole reason I loved sports!"

She let out another grand sigh and grabbed fistfuls of her hair in frustration.

"When your blood's on fire with the adrenaline pumping, going as fast as you possibly can, not a single care in the world beyond hitting a ball, with the crowd's cheers energizing you, making you want to push yourself even further," Jezelle said wistfully before letting out another elongated sigh.

Henry knew that exact feeling. He had gone through the same thing but instead of M E T A his down fall was G P A. You can dwell on it all that you want but that isn't going to change the fact. Spend to long complaining about something you can't change and you drive yourself into a rut. Then a whole load of other issues come out.

"Only way around that is to either start the first first meta league or switch gears. Other wise worrying about it will eat you from the inside." Henry said from experience.

"Oooo, there's an idea. You think we could?" Trevor asked. "Start a meta league, I mean. I don't know what goes into something like that, but it could be useful and fun, right?"

"Setting a bunch of people with lethal powers into a sport for all people to watch. I am pretty sure there are laws agaisnt that." Henry said with a little shock.

"Yeah now..." Trevor said defensively, thought shrinking a little under Henry's look. "Not every power is lethal. Making invisiboxes it's lethal. Or growing fur. But it's more so meta's can still take part in some organized sports. What's wrong is that?"

"Nothing. We have just seen people who can shoot lazars, take over peoples minds, turn into man eating bugs, torch gas stations, turn into the hulk. I don't think I need to go on. We are dangerous. They would have to check for those things. No one wants to play basketball and have a guy launch a lightning bolt in your face because he is a poor sport. I mean a normal throws a fit and he looks like a fool and people think less of him. A meta throws a fit and people get sent to the hospital and the police get called. Just saying that it seems dangerous. What we need is some kind of place where a meta can let off some steam. Target range, gym or something of the like. That way they could push their powers and not kill someone on accident." Henry tried to show his point. It would be great to have a pick up game of some kind but the people's powers he has seen made him second guess that.

"I'm still not convinced. What about that Sammy girl. Er... guy. Friend? That friend of yours?" Trevor asked, unsure of how to refer to her/him in the situation. "She (he?) seemed normal

enough. Considering. And those groups of anthros. Most of them seemed normal too. I mean... aside from the fur and stuff."

"Sam? That was someone you all introduced me to. I knew Ben and he could barely control his lightning with out that machine. And the pack was less then friendly to those of the not fured. I mean take us for example. How much damange could we do to a place or person? Jez took down like fifteen men in less then a second, you can freeze things or lock them up in an air tight box, Alex has lazars. Those are just the ones we know. We are trying to do good with ours or atleast just trying to survive as of late. But some of us do not have very house friendly powers." Henry said as he pointed out the people in the room.

"Now I am not saying that we need to be locked up or tagged or anything like that just we need to rethink how things are going to work. So many powers that are out of a comic book has been dumped on the city in such a short time. We have been living it and I am still trying to figure out how this all works. But, I am telling you. You make a place that they can let out some of that power in a safe way and you will be sitting on a mint." Now if only they knew how to do that. He would be interested to know just how much he could do with out destroying something.

"Ya know... Allied probably has meta-proof stuff like rooms and whatnot since they're in the business of containing them," Jezelle remarked idly, "Could be an interesting business proposition for them, heh."

"There meta proof stuff has things that prevent you from concentrating on your power. A lot of sonic stuff. They have reinforced rooms but I think anyone of use can get out of one of those." Henry told them.

"You know, I accept the fact that the potential risk factor associated with us and all, but you don't have to say we can't have fun because of it," Trevor sighed, setting the letter carefully aside and looking again at the strange package.

"Great time for handling the messages, eh?" Alex said, playing around with lights, wondering if he could cause the "FOLLOW THE RED DOT" reflex in cats and metacats now that he has The Shining, waiting for the game to go on, "And I've thought we are doing this to get rid of the meta-stuff in our system at least for a while," he said and then stopped the light show, realising that he was tad hypocritic at the moment.

"My point was that Metas in sports would not work. Not that we can't have fun. We were having fun just a bit ago." Henry said holding up his hands. He turned to Alex. "We kind of are. This is just a discussion. No powers being used. All started with the Allied letter really. We can blame the post on this one."

"How urgent is the letter?" Alex asked, "Doubt it can't wait till a later time."

"The dastardly post!" Trevor said melodramatically, shaking his fist in a vague direction. That out of his system, he picked up the last package. The plain one without any stamps or anything

on it. He cut it open again with his nifty utiliclave. As he did, he mused a bit. "You think I could file and shape a claw into a useful tool? Like a lock pick or something?"

"You could but why would you? Then you would have a jacked up nail all the time. It would get snagged on shirts and what not." Henry said now with a mental image of Trevor working on a nail with a file.

"I dunno... just because?" Trevor admitted lamely.

"I hear you can buy those on line. I haven't the foggiest idea how to use them though. Called a locksmith once to unlock my apartment door. Guy had it open in a few seconds." Henry remarked. "Sooo... what we doing now?" Henry asked as Trevor went through his mail.

"We can always load up a movie," Trevor said, tearing the package open a bit. His ears twitched when a new fragrance joined the smell of food and junk food in the air. "That's perfume, isn't it?" He dug out the contents. And found a few stapled pages and flipped through them. "... what?"

"Movies. I haven't seen one in ages." Henry said and ran over to the movie collection and started going through them.

[Yeah, there isn't anything recent in there. The most recent one is probably back from 2002 or so. And most are burned.]

"... What? There's some crazy lady stalking me..." Trevor said slowly. It was a bit too incredulous to muster up proper indignation at the moment. "And she broke into my house this morning... tried to..."

"You think it might be one of the people that kidnapped you earlier? Those people are bad news. Although, why would she send you something? Is it blackmail or something?" Henry asked.

"She... sent an invitation to dinner... and money..." Trevor said, still taken aback by the incredulity. "And a comic... Albie's in it too..."

"What? No cheese? That is the most obvious trap I have ever heard. Giving you money and asking you to place. I would be careful if I was you. That sounds. . . creepy as all." Henry said with a scowl marking his face.

Trevor just shook his head and offered the home made booklet to Henry for him to assess for himself. "As if I wasn't getting worried enough about the dozen other things that have been happening."

Henry took the home made book and flipped through it. It wasn't that long and it was a story all about Trevor and had a bit about Alex. As he read he felt his face get hot. A little long and his vision started to blur. It was getting harder to read. When he finally finished it there were tears streaming down his face.



"HA HA HA HA HA HA HA" Henry bellowed and had to sit down. "HA HAHAHA!" He looked at Trevor to respond but he couldn't stop laughing. "HA HA HA HA she drew a comic of you HA HA HA. Trevor has a girl friend stalker HA HA HA! And she is a criminal to boot!" Henry tossed the book to Jez. "You have got to read this!"

"Hey! You wouldn't be laughing if this was about you," Trevor muttered, though he had to admit it was maybe one part funny to three parts creepy. In any case, there was some truth to the whole 'laughter is the best medicine' thing. Henry's reaction was helping Trevor's earlier tension ease a little. "I'm not taking the locks down though."

"You are going to find this lady in your shower when you come home one day. It is going to end terribly. That and I think she is taking this a bit far. Be careful around that one." Henry warned finally after catching his breath.

"...I wonder if this stalker has seen me cut myself..." Alex said, meaning that one time he clawed himself while doing undescrivable things. That hurt.

Jezelle had a mixed expression after hearing Henry, catching the book and looking through it with slightly concerned curiosity.

"This is pretty fuckin' creepy," Jezelle remarked at first, looking a little wide-eyed as she browsed before snapping the book up and dropping it aside, "But it's not like stalking Trev or Alex is going to end well: she either gets fried or put in so many boxes she'll miss daylight immediately. Still... I'd have issues sleeping after this..."

"That depends. She is a meta too so who knows what she can do. She already put in there that she has done illegal things. What is your plan for this Trev? Ignore it or confront it?" Henry asked. His voice had an edge of concern. He did not like it when his friends were put in potentially dangerous situations.

"Boxes," Trevor said, raising a hand. "I vote boxes. So many boxes that she misses daylight immediately."

"Then what? What are you going to do with her once you have trapped her?" Henry asked.

"Jail, obviously?" Jezelle prompted, "I hear Allied is oh-so-good at subduing metas. That or figure out how to discourage the crazy woman, I'm sure she's fixated on something in particular since she hasn't actually met Trevor."

"Allied would want proof. We just have a creepy stalker case. Need to catch her doing something worst. That and Allied kind of only wants to hold the really dangerous ones. You know, the ones that kill people and cause massive property damage." Henry pointed out.

"I just want to know what it is about me that attracts the creepy ones..." Trevor muttered. He pointed at Henry. "Actually, us. You have your own weird lady. Or had. Is she still showing up or did she give up?"

"Last I saw her I broke her arm and beat her man with a refridgerator. I don't know if she is going to come back or not. I think she might think twice about it though. And haven't you noticed the common thing about all the people in your book? They are all cat people. She is a cat person." Henry said completely missing the pun that he just made.

"Are you implying she's a crazy cat lady that hoards cat for her amusement?" Alex asked not seriously.

Trevor cast a suspicious glance at Henry. "I can't tell if you did that on purpose or not..."

"Say what now?" Henry asked a little confused. "Like you look like a cat, and Trevor looks like a cat. It seems that she does too." Henry explained.

"I swear to god, if either of you two get kidnapped again I'm going to start breaking things," Jezelle grumbled.

"I get the again part with me, but who kidnapped Henry?" Trevor said, suddenly very interested. "When did that happen?"

"I meant Alex you idiot, though I suppose Berkins thought it was 'rescuing'," Jezelle corrected blandly.

"Hmmm. Well the one good thing going for you is that you know that someone out there is after you. The fact that they want to meet in a public place is also interesting. Could meet this person to find out what is going on. Have a group shadow you in case something goes wrong." Henry offered.

"Have Henry on Punch Duty? That's a good idea," Trevor said approvingly. The thought of Henry waiting to punch someone from the shadows was both amusing and reassuring.

"But if they're a cat, won't they have like, really good sense of smell and hearing and stuff? Would be kinda hard sneaking up on that," Jezelle pointed out.

"If it is a public place then there would be a million smells and what not there. Plus that books just ahd Alex and Trevor in it. Not you or me. That and you can change your look in case she did see you before." Henry added in.

"It's really hard to focus on picking out one person in a crowded place," Trevor agreed, nodding. "Just like how it's hard to pick out a voice in a rabble. Too much people moving, things in the air, things they stepped in," he waved a hand vague in the air. "If you knew the person was there, sure, or were familiar with them, but it's not that easy. And it only has Alex's name in it. Which... is still pretty bad."

"Hey I'm not the one with the super nose, I was just saying; I still remember you finding someone who was invisible," Jezelle said with a careless shrug.

"That was in an empty parking lot we were in for a while, expecting someone," Trevor explained. "I had a chance to get used to the smell of the place, and when someone knew showed up moving and all in the basically still place, I noticed. It's like seeing someone walk into a class vs seeing someone... actually, that's a horrible analogy... um... think of a soup bowl. If you drop a cracker in it, you notice. If your soup bowl was the size of a bath tub, you won't unless you were specifically looking for a new cracker."

"Uh... I don't really care... I was just saying. If you say it's all good then cool -if we get caught I'll punch you in the nose, this is all old news," Jezelle said in mild exasperation, trying to wave the subject away.

//still a horrible analogy, the soup :p

Trevor reflexively covered his nose with a hand. It was always the nose with people. "Hey, it's Henry's idea. Punch him."

"No, I'll break my hand," Jezelle said chidingly.

Trevor moved so that Henry was between himself and Jez. "So only punch bad people. Like weird stalker chicks that put home made comics in mailboxes"

"That is just if she has other plans for you. Though she has shown that she has robbed a place if that is true. Wonder if we turn her in if we could get a reward. A boost in funds would be nice." Henry mused.

"I don't know..." Trevor said thoughtfully. "Might be a tad hypocritical with Miss Break-n-Enter, here..."

"Why is everyone so touchy about that!?" Jezelle burst out in frustrated exasperation, "I don't do anything bad -I do have morals you know!"

"Stalker lady apparently thinks she does too," Trevor said innocently. "We must stop you before you start stalking people and breaking into their house to leave comics."

"Stalking is creepy," Jezelle said flatly, pointing an accusatory finger at Trevor, "If I knew she was only breaking into people's houses to help out or due to concern... and I don't break in, doors just don't keep me out."

"We could point out that we all were trespassing yesterday when we broke into the sewers to rescue Erin." Henry chimed in.

"Except we left a broken door..." Jezelle said a little gingerly.

"Like the door was the only thing that we broke down there," Trevor muttered.

"Technically..." Jezelle said pointedly in contemplation, but snapping out after a moment, "Anyway! If we've sorted out what we're doing about this stalker, we should get back to having fun and kick some more Makai in their stones."

"Yeah, sure," Trevor said with a distracted chuckle. He set the concurring parcel aside (pocketing the money. He was keeping that. Sue him. Actually, no... that cost money.) "Alright everyone, back to the table! I believe that the Prince of the Fourth Ring's attendants were just about to attack the kindly townfolk that gave you shelter and medical attention before..."

Henry put the movies down that he had picked up. He thought they said they were going to watch one but it seemed that he had miss heard them. He headed back to the table to complete the story.

---

### **Another Day with Heidi...**

Heidi was in the kitchen munching on her cereal when Jezelle got down for her breakfast, looking somewhere between half asleep and enthusiastic.

"Ugggggh..." Jezelle bemoaned, practically falling into the dining room and catching herself, like she was too lazy to stand but didn't want to fall over either.

"Heiiidiiii! I'm borrrreed!" Jezelle whined as she made her drunken restless lazy swagger over to Heidi and partially crash-leaned against the kitchen bench.

Without frequent athletics and sports practice sessions, Jezelle found she had even more spare time even without trying to make the most of it with superpowers, and it was quickly driving her nuts.

"Well, cereal isn't entertaining... but how 'bout you come hang with me and Tash today?"

"Who's Tash? A friend?" Jezelle queried, swaggering up beside Heidi, "Or a 'friend'? The friendly type?"

She leaned in like it was juicy gossip, doing a bit of a Heidi impression trying to glean secrets.

"The type that does friend things? The friend kind of friend?" Jezelle swooped about to the other side and loomed over Heidi, "That you go shopping with or that you 'go shopping' with?"

Jezelle more or less ended up in a bit of an awkward-but-impressive handstand on the table in front of Heidi staring her in the face upside-down.

"I-am-so-fucking-bored-I-don't-care; when-do-we-go?" Jezelle said in a more serious but desperate tone, looking strained like she was ready to explode from anxiety and restlessness.

Hiedi giggled and pushed her over. "Nah, just a friend friend. The one who does that webcomic I showed you. I'm bringing you along to help in my meta-guru attempt."

"Augh!" Jezelle flailed at first as her balance was compromised in an already precarious position, but artfully turned it into a neat controlled fall onto the table where she laid spread-eagled for a bit. Before she snapped up into a bit of a super model pose with her head propped up with an arm, laying on her side looking at Heidi in slight perplexation.

"Meta-guru attempt?" Jezelle queried a little suspiciously.

"It's my new life calling," Heidi said solemnly.

Jezelle's response was merely raising of one eyebrow with twice the suspicion, continuing to stare at Heidi.

"Get some food in your if you are planning on coming."

"Not hungry, so I'm just gonna keep staring at you," Jezelle said flatly.

Heidi reached over and snagged a dish towel, which they then spread over Jezelle's face.

Jezelle huffed and puffed to try and blow the towel off without moving, but was failing miserably.

"...Did I mention I'm bored?" Jezelle said conversationally with the cloth still on her face like it was perfectly normal.

"Then come with me," Heidi repeated.

"I-already-said-yes-when-are-we-going?" Jezelle streamed, teleporting off the table leaving the dish cloth behind and spinning about on the spot like a ballerina.

"After breakfast. Going to visit a fiend," Heidi responded, having another spoon of cereal.

"Agh! Hurryuphurryuphurryup-" Jezelle despaired impatiently, racing around the room occupying herself with literally anything that came to mind in any given instant. Cleaning things, juggling things, reorganizing things, randomly collecting her soccerball from her room and trying various low-key tricks -even making a duplicate or two to try a game of hacky sack.

"You need to cut down on the coke," Heidi said, spending a bit of time at the mirror making sure her hair and nails wer just right. She even screwed up her face in intense concentration, and somehow managed to do make up. "Ha! I'm getting better!"

"I only drink coke on my cheat days!" Jezelle objected in protest, "A health nut like me knows that stuff isn't good for you."

She broke from her seal-trick of balancing the soccerball on her head to go check on Heidi and frowned a little in concern at the reflection in the mirror, having to walk up beside Heidi and squint at her to make sure.

"Wait, you can do makeup now? I thought you were Keratin Girl with all the nails and hair," Jezelle commented, both surprised and a touch concerned, "Skin pigmentation has nothing to do with hair and nail growth..."

"I hit the school library and did some reading. Keratin is in the hair, nails **and** skin," Heidi said, giving a twirl to show off her hair and make up. "It's extra pigments that make the colour. So I figured if I can change my hair style, I can do more. Took my four hours to figure it out. You like?"

"Huh... goes to show what I know about that stuff," Jezelle admitted looking both idly intrigued and thoughtful, before giving Heidi a more scrutinizing gaze, "Hmm... looks pretty cool -you're a bit of a super-beautician now aren't you?"

When it came right down to it, Jezelle had only been working off vague logic and whatever physics and chemistry knowledge was left over from sci-fi movies and the odd half-remembered science class in highschool.

She didn't really know anything, now that she thought about it.... she really needed to find someone or some book and sit down and puzzle the specifics of her own mutation out.

"On my self, anyway," Heidi said. "But I can at least test out fashions on myself."

"Hmm..." Jezelle was still mostly lost in thought, as much as listening to Heidi, "S'pose I've only really scratched the surface on the whole body-morphing-power thing... anyway. You're dolled up now right? We can go?"

The restlessness was slowly rolling back in at the thought of action again, eager to do something, burn off energy and chill.

"...I wonder if I could run there... could be pretty fun..." Jezelle said all of a sudden, looking awfully intrigued with the idea, a devious posture of thought as she contemplated the variables involved, "Could be a stupid idea, but I can't say that the thought of letting go and running all-out isn't enticing; can't run flat out anywhere..."

"You ever think you have too much power to your name," Heidi said, grabbing her coat as she headed for the door.

"Mood whiplash," Jezelle commented a little blankly as her eyes immediately went distant, even as she followed Heidi. It was but a simple remark but it hit home a lot harder than it appeared. She kind of knew what was normal and what wasn't, and that the kind of stuff she did was pretty crazy as far as the laws of physics and common sense was concerned, but at the same time she was also kind of jaded to it all -perhaps as a sort of coping mechanism? Either way, her world might as well have been turned upside-down for how messed up the Bang had made things.

"I'm kind of a freak, aren't I?" Jezelle said a little thoughtfully, "I don't mean in the mutant-sense, but the mental kind. I find teleporting across the street as casual as someone taking a single step, and having copies of myself doing stuff is like people multi-tasking. It's... normal, for me. That I feel it's normal is seriously fucked up -I mean, just the other day I dived into a nest of superbugs, regardless of the fact I was trying to save a friend, without a second thought I practically threw myself into a situation a normal person would run away screaming from."

"Ah... I don't think you told me that story," Heidi said, hesitating and giving Jezelle a look. "I know you've been getting sorta wild with your power, but what was that about diving into a nest?"

"Oh... right..." Jezelle said, slapping a hand on her face after the realization, "I'll give you the highlights: friend turned into a sort of superbug, got kidnapped by those superbugs, so we charged into the sewers after them and got her back. Throw in a ticking timer after we discover the Allied guys or whatever is going to gas the crap out of the place soon and you've got comic book material right there. Also cue the semi-tragic comic book ending that we managed to rescue said friend, but the bug-ification process thing got a bit out of hand so Allied is busy trying to sort things out."

Heidi just stared at her. For a long while. Jez could almost feel the waves of the unsaid questions radiating from her friend. "Sometimes I think you make this stuff up..."

At that comment, it seemed a lightbulb of mischievousness clicked on in Jezelle's head.

"Did I mention I killed like, 100 of them on my own, there was this big hunky guy, and we all flew home in a magic box?" Jezelle said with the biggest, cheesiest grin ever.

"Now I *know* your making that up," Heidi said with a laugh. "You can tell me the true story in the car."

"That I shall," Jezelle said whilst attempting to stop herself from bursting out laughing, going to head to the car.

[To the Garden!]

### **Another Day to Catch a Date...**

Game night went about as well as could be expected. Which was pretty well, to be honest. There weren't even that many dishes left to take care of thanks to clever use of paper towels and disposable plates. After the rather successful campaign (in the sense that they managed to close the gates to the fourth and fifth rings, though the rest are still around for another day's mission,) the guests retired to their various homes to do their various home things.

The next morning came too quickly for some people. For others, not quickly enough. Trevor called Henry at around 8. And it was surprising that he was actually up at that time. "Pick up the phone, pick up the phone..."

Henry sat cross legged on his bedroom floor. He had zoned out staring at the wall again and started blinking as his phone was going off. The thoughts of the game night faded out as he drew himself back into the real world. He found that not needing to sleep had some benefits and some draw backs. He could get a lot of stuff done but at times he missed being able to skip the night. Now if he wasn't out flying around he would stare at the wall and zone out for long periods of time.

He walked over to the wall and unplugged the phone from its charger.

"This is Henry." Henry answered.

"Morning Henry! Sleep well?" Trevor asked.

"Don't really sleep anymore. Just zone out or something." Henry said shaking his head again.

"Any way. You are up early? Did you need something?"

"You have any plans for the day?" Trevor asked.

"Don't really have anything going on. Did my shopping yesterday and the laundry. We have a day or two until it is the Allied thing so yeah. Not much going on. You?" Henry had a free day? This was unheard of. Nothing exploding, no one acting something. Then again, it was only 8 AM.

"I'm going to see if I can find the crazy stalker lady," Trevor said firmly.

"Did she contact you again? She seems like she is a little mentally unstable from the looks of it." Henry said concerned like.

"She hasn't, but I'm not waiting for her to," Trevor declared levelly.

"Going to wait for her to drop off another creepy package? Sounds like it could take a while. Also what are you going to do with her once you get her?" Henry asked.

"I planned to check out that restaurant to start with," Trevor said. "And hopefully scare her off when we find her. Or blackmail or something. It's just creepy... she's been apparently following me around since this started."

"I would see if she tries to contact you again for a meet up. When you show up you will have back up. So the moment anything weird happens you will be covered. And if she wants to throw down you box her and I will throw it across the city. Should make the point." Henry said with a chuckle.

"I don't know if I want to wait for her to make the next move again," Trevor said, a slight whine in his tone. "It just doesn't seem right..."

"You able to find her then? I have no clue how to track someone without some kind of clue to go off of." Henry said scratching his head.

"No, but she did, apparently, make reservations at a restaurant. I figured start there," Trevor said.

"She could have left it under your name though. Doesn't mean that she slipped them her address. Plus we couldn't do anything if they gave us a credit card number. You know what? She put your



and Alex's name in that thing. She didn't happen to put her name in it did she?" Henry asked thinking up a plan.

"No she didn't," Trevor admitted, but he continued on resolutely.. "And just because she might have not done it doesn't mean she didn't not do it."

"She would be the worst cat burglar ever but it is a place to start. You think she has had run ins with the law before? Might have prints or something on the book." Henry mused out loud as he started to head to the kitchen to put something together for breakfast.

"... I admit, I never thought of the fingerprints thing," Trevor said, looking to where he tossed the book after he last looked at it. "Wouldn't it have had fingerprints on it too? Wait.. do I still have fingerprints?" Trevor said slowly, looking at his fingers.

"I don't know if you even have fingers man. This whole thing has changed so many things. Hey, have you had breakfast yet?" Henry asked.

"No, not yet," Trevor said. "Called you first. That's how important you are to me, that I'd put off breakfast."

"Ha ha ha." Henry chuckled. "You want to grab breakfast and figure out what you want to do about this mystery stalker?"

"Sure, that would be awesome," Trevor said happily. "Got any place in mind?"

"I know a little place that I went to yesterday. Has a buffet and there wasn't a whole lot of people there. It is on the corner of 124 St. and 66th Ave. Meet you there?" Henry asked.

"Yeah, I know where that is. No problem," Trevor knew where this place was.

"See you there in a bit then. I am going to head over there now and grab us a spot." Henry said putting the few items he had taken out to make his own breakfast.

"Here's a question I never thought I would ask; but should I drive or fly?" Trevor said quickly, hoping that Henry didn't hang up yet. Granted, his method was more riding than flying. Still achieved the same end.

"I would assume that you would drive. I am driving around still. Don't want people freaking out any more than they need to. Plus I kind of miss driving the beast." Henry continued while putting the last of the breakfast items away.

"Right, right..." Trevor said, thinking of Henry's truck. "I should be there in maybe fifteen, twenty minutes."

"Nice, I will see you then." Henry said grabbing the keys off the counter and heading down stairs to put on his new hand-me-down shoes he picked up the day before. It was time to get back to work it seems. Breakfast and stalkers. It is what winners had.

[Do the timewarp~]

A few minutes later Henry got to the buffet.

Henry walked up to the hostess he smelled the air. Taking in the scents of the never ending supply of breakfast foods. Realizing that he was just staring at the food and not noticing that the hostess was looking at him he focused back at the real world.

"Going to be two of us. The other person will be here soonish. Put the table under Mason." Henry said trying to save some kind of face.

"Of course," the hostess said. "If you would follow me," she motioned as well and led him to a table set for four, quickly sweeping away two sets of utensils and their saucers with an ease and efficiency born of practice. "Would you like something to drink? Coffee? Tea? Juice? Pop?"

"Orange juice will be fine for now. I am going to wait for the other to come before hitting the buffet." Henry said pushing the coffee cup a little away from him.

Trevor turned up in due notice, maybe five or eight minutes after Henry has gotten settled in, the same hostess that had seated him escorting Trevor as well [sensemotive 15 to tell she's a bit tense about it].

**Trevor** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 6+4

"Morning Henry!" Trevor called cheerfully enough, oblivious to the slight dis-ease of the hostess.

"Morning, morning. You got here a lot faster then I thought you would. But we can have breakfast and figure out what to do." Henry said partially eyeing the buffet.

"Don't worry, I'm hungry too," Trevor snickered, "We can get food first and discuss it when the plates are loaded," Trevor looked over at the hostess. "Could I have some mint tea, please? You plan on getting anything aside from that orange juice, Henry?"

"Of course," The hostess nodded and hesitated, looking at Henry.

"Going to get food. The orange juice is better for me then any tea or coffee. Plus it tastes better then bean water or wet compost." Henry said defending his drink choice.

The hostess gave a small smile and turned to leave. "I have the tea ready shortly."

Trevor grinned at Henry. "Yeah, tea is good for you too. what you call compost I call goodness infusing herb bits."

"Herbs are meant to be put on a meal. Not to jazz up a cup of hot water. Any how I am getting food from the buffet now since I haven't eaten anything since last night." Henry said getting up from the table.

"Herbs have more than one function," Trevor protested, following. He sniffed the air appreciatively. "Hmm... eggs."

"I barely use the things to be honest. Let the professional cooks deal with that." Henry piled his plate just like he did the day before. Meat, eggs, and all the fluffy sweet things he could fit on the thing before taking it back to his seat and starting on it.

Trevor took a bit longer to turn up, as he was a bit more selective in his collection, ever concerned that something there might make him sick. When he did turn up, he had about three kinds of eggs, fruit, lots of turkey products and french toast. He didn't start eating right away though, choosing instead to start brewing his tea from the pot provided; adding cream and milk and being liberal with the sugar, putting something like eight packs in before stirring daintily.

Henry made a grunting sound after watching Trevor spend a small eternity prepping his drink. Anything that takes that much work to drink was not worth it.

"You gonna sing that thing a song next and put it down for a nap. Good lord." Henry said shaking his head.

"Now, now, Henry. Don't be mean to my tea," Trevor said, fishing a few bits of ice from the water they also left and dropping it in the tea to hasten its cooling. While that set, he chased a few things around his plate and corralled them into their proper allotted groupings before loading a forkful with scrambled eggs. "Is this place any good?" he asked, the fork hovering over the plate. "I've never come here before."

"I think so. I am no food specialist but you can get a good amount and variety here. Most places it is old food from the night before and cold eggs." Henry ate more of his. "I like it."

Trevor nodded his agreement. He started on his food and found it really was good, so he dove in with a gusto. Eating took up the first few moments, but Trevor soon sensed an awkward silence looming. "So... before this gets very odd...er. What do you think about my plan?"

"The go to the restaurant plan?" Henry asked as he was trying to remember which was the last one they had talked about.

"Yeah, that one," Trevor said. "Is it extremely stupid?"

"The only thing is will they be able to help. I mean I came here yesterday but I don't think that if you asked anyone here about me they would be able to tell you who I am or where to find me. I figure that if she is willing to draw a whole comic book about you, invite you out to dinner and try to break into your house that she isn't done with you. She will most likely try to contact you again. I saw wait for her to make the next move." Henry answered.

Trevor sighed and occupied his mouth with some fruit, delaying his expected response. "I just feels wrong to be waiting for her to do something."

"I don't know how to hunt a person like that. Can you track a person's scent? We could do that. Other wise I am out of ideas. I could hover over your house in case she tries another break in. But a lot of my ideas here start out being defensive." Henry explained finishing off his plate.

"I can and I can't," Trevor admitted. "I'm still working on that one. I get confused when I try. I can't do it right if I think too much, but the last time I tried just blanking out and going with it I lost it for a while. Still trying to master the middle point between over thinking it and letting it take the lead."

"Does a good slap to the back of the head work in reseting you? Because I am good and doing that." Henry offered.

"And I'm pretty useless in the city, anyway," Trevor said. If he was going to be honest with his short comings, he might as well go all, or most, or the way. "Scents don't stay in open air long unless it's stuck to something. Like clothes or stuff. And traffic is enough that a person's trail get's lost fast. And I don't think it would look good if I go crawling around the sidewalks... maybe if she used rooftops... no one walks there..." Okay, he was seeing the holes in his plan too.

"Well then. What do we do now? Our options seem to be dwindling slowly. We know what she wants but that is about it. Kind of sucks." Henry said pushing his plate away.

"I just don't want to do nothing... She's been following me around for weeks, apparently. And it seriously pisses me off that I didn't notice it. I know it's not exactly right, but I feel like I've been just letting her do what she wants all this time..."

"I don't know what to say. We really don't have anything to go off of. Just going to have to wait for her to try and make contact again. Then you can box her or freeze her or punch her. You have a lot options in that department." Henry said holding his hands up. There wasn't anything they could really do at this point. Not even the other people he knew could track a person.

Trevor sighed into his tea and idly stared into it's depths as if he could plum it's [seriously lacking] depths for the answers he needed. Unsuprisingly, the murky and fragrant fluid held it's silence as it slowly shifted it the ceramic cup. "You know, I suppose you really are the guy with the most sense for these things..."

"Normally I just stumble into things. Been trying to be more proactive lately. Hasn't been working out to well but it is a work in process. The sitting on your hands and waiting is the worst part by far." Henry said this and then finished off his orange juice.

"Alright... why don't we just fly around town then? It's pretty much the same chances of finding her and I really need the practice in open air anyway," Trevor admitted. In the tunnel was easy.

Flight practice. He remembered doing that once before with Jen a while back. She had been flying her whole life and was able to explain every so perfectly. Although practicing flying in the city could hold some issues. But, Henry did know just the right place.

"That is something that I can do. But, how about we don't do it in the city during the daylight. I learned to fly in the forest and let me tell you. If you can fly in that place then you can fly anywhere. I smacked into some many trees my first time. It works as a reminder of what can happen anywhere. No matter where you fly there will always be something for you to fly into." Henry said with a chuckle.

"I was wondering how you got so good at it..." Trevor said with a faint smile, one that was understandably tempered at the memory of what had happened to Jen. He didn't mention it though. "I've got the hovering down, which is pretty much standing, and the going straight, but aside from that, I've got nothing."

"Now is this real flight or is this more of the box thingy? Because I can help with flight but moving boxes would be something different." Henry said wiping off his mouth and putting the napkin on the plate.

He was trying to catch the eye of the waitress to get the bill so that they could leave and get started.

"Well I am done with breakfast. If you are as well we can get moving and figure this whole thing out."

"More boxes," Trevor admitted. He half demonstrated, picking up his saucer and putting it through motions in the air. "Like the silver surfer. Unlike some people, I didn't draw the superman powerset. So I make do. After everything that happened, the crash course at least helped me get used to how the idea can work, but I still need practice. It was sorta your idea anyway," Trevor shrugged.

"Do you know how fast you can move the boxes? That will be important to know in helping. I have seen you make some different shapes in it so I assume that you can make it so that you do not fall off once you get the speed up. But if the box only moves at a walking pace then you might only need it to act as a lift." Henry said thinking about how this could work. He didn't know how complex the boxes could get but he did know what surfing was so if he could do that in the sky he might be able to move pretty fast.

"I didn't want to do a speed test without having someone else around to spot me, in case the unimaginable happened," though Trevor did put a bit of a dramatic tone to that last part, his expression remained flat and he wagged his fork a bit. "Still, I got up to my jogging speed with no problems or strain, and I've gotten faster since all this happened."

"Well then. We can test this above the forest. No one really goes out there. Maybe a hiker or three but they will just see two metas flying. Which is nothing really new out there. See how fast we can crank the boxes up." Henry offered. "You ready to head out now?"

Well, the forest was seeing a tad more regular visitors these days, but he let the comment go for now and arranged his sauce and utensils on his plate before covering them with the napkin he used. That done, he downed the last bit of his tea. "All done," Trevor confirmed. "Just in time for all sorts of... testing... and... stuff..." he lost what he was going to say half way through it.

Henry put his money down for his meal and a little extra for the tip. He stood up and put his wallet away. Fishing his keys out of his pocket we waited for Trevor to get up as well.

"You want to meet again at the same place we went the first time or did you want to car pool there?" Henry asked.

"The regular place should be fine," Trevor said, even though carpooling would save on gas.

"Great! I will meet you there then." Henry said with a wave and headed to his car. He remembered the way to the forest from their last time there. At least there shouldn't be much traffic now.

Trevor paid his own bill and headed to his car when he was done. He got the distinct impression that they were nervous around him, but he decided to let it pass. People wanted money, anyway. Henry had already pulled out, so he didn't bother trying to find him to follow. He made his own way. Taking the back roads mainly, he avoided the main thoroughfares on his way to the forest. Henry beat him there, understandably, so he pulled up beside superman's van.

Henry was just putting his truck into park when he saw Trevor's car pull up. Her got out of the truck and locked the door. He didn't think anyone would try to steal anything but he wasn't willing to take the chance. He then waited for Trevor to get out of the car. When he did Henry called to him.