

UNTITLED SCREENPLAY

by

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EXT. A PARK IN NEW YORK - DUSK

DARK PHOENIX is attacking the X-Men and the park is their arena. Through the lens of a shaky news camera, we see flying debris, trees uprooted from the ground, matter twisting and defying its natural shape. A bridge of stone is being torn apart and the pieces are flung awry. Storm clouds crack lightning down toward a flaming body of passion and irrational power that is unabated by the strikes. In the background, CYCLOPS, STORM, NIGHTCRAWLER, COLOSSUS, and WOLVERINE can be seen weaving through the rain of projectiles. Some of them shoot back in turn. A panicked, but determined reporter named JANE SWIFT sets the stage.

JANE

This being, calling itself 'The Phoenix', is currently terrorizing Central Park, only barred from the rest of the city by several mutants in some sort of superhero team called-

A bridge stone flies toward the reporter from the background. As it nearly reaches her, COLOSSUS charges in, catches the large rock, and hurls it back towards Phoenix.

CAMERAMAN

(Frantically)

Jane, we need to go now, we have all the footage we need-

JANE

If we go now, we'll miss the end of it!

CAMERAMAN

It's not worth you getting hurt!

PHOENIX

(With a booming voice)

I AM PHOENIX! You bore me with your pitiful display of resistance!

The earth shakes, and begins to become soft and malleable. Jane loses her balance. The cameraman reaches one hand out to try and help her gain her footing.

CAMERAMAN

(Screaming)

NOW JANE, NOW!

JANE

(Scared and trembling)

I'm trying but I can't move my feet!

Jane's legs sink into the ground. She starts crying, yanking on the cameraman's arm with both of hers. He is desperately pulling back, trying to release her from the grip of the malformed ground beneath her.

JANE
 GOD I DON'T WANT TO DIE!! Please
 pull harder, PLEASE!!

CAMERAMAN
 I'm trying but there's no give!
 SOMEBODY HELP!!

Like a monster with a gaping mouth, the hill begins to swallow Jane into it, distorting and becoming almost a quicksand as her waist and chest sink into the rift.

JANE
 DON'T DROP THE CAMERA!!!

CAMERAMAN
 I WON'T LET YOU DIE FOR TV, JANE!!!

The cameraman drops the camera onto the ground, causing the screen to crack, but it continues to film from a different angle. It is tilted towards Jane as the cameraman grabs her arm with both hands and pulls, digging his heels into the firmer ground around the sinkhole.

CYCLOPS
 (Exasperated and shaken)
 JEAN! I KNOW YOU'RE THERE! PLEASE
 STOP THIS!

As the distressed sounds of the tape continue to play, the screen zooms out from the footage to show it has been playing on Scott Summers' television in his bedroom. The room is dark, except for the light from the screen, and Scott sits on the edge of his bed, holding a ruby quartz night mask in one hand, a cup of water with a fizzling tablet on the bottom in the other. His eyes are closed, his mind lost in spiraling, miserable thoughts of doubt. The world cannot punish him for his failures if he is already punishing himself. The television's audio plays while we focus on Scott.

REPORTER
 This disturbing footage is only one of the many accounts of the chaos at Central Park. Many are calling this incident the first major justification for the registration of mutantkind. Who can we trust? What do we do when mutants come knocking at our door? These are questions we must ask ourselves, before it's too late to act.

He puts on the night mask, reaches for the remote beside him, and turns off the TV, making the room black and ending the scene.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - MORNING

It has been six months since Dark Phoenix attacked Manhattan. Alex Summers is on a phone call with his brother, Scott. The window to his apartment is open, the air is stale but it's from outside at least. Alex is wearing a towel around his waist, hair soaking wet and holding the phone between his face and his shoulder while he searches through the cabinets for a clean mug.

ALEX

(Rolling his eyes)

You are not. Why do I always have to be the one you mope to about these things, don't you have friends?

He finds a mug, puts his phone down and turns it on speaker so that he can pour coffee into the mug.

SCOTT

You're my brother, Alex. And that's why I'm trusting you with- what I called about.

Alex gets out the milk from the fridge, sets it on the counter, and puts a piece of bread in the toaster.

ALEX

This is about something? You aren't calling to vent this time?

SCOTT

Alex I-

Alex's ringer goes off.

ALEX

(Interrupting)

Hold that thought. I'm getting another call.

SCOTT

This is important, don't forget to call me back-

ALEX

Yeah yeah, I'll call you back, Scott. Don't be so dramatic.

SCOTT

(Stern)

I wouldn't be if I didn't think you'd forget.

ALEX

Thanks for the vote of confidence, love you, bye.

Alex hangs up on Scott, then picks up the new call.

ALEX

Y'ello.

WOMAN

Hello, is this Alex Summers I'm speaking to?

ALEX

It is.

WOMAN

I'm calling to remind you that your scheduled time for the Santa volunteer position is in one hour. Do you have any questions or concerns about the McEany Home for Underprivileged Children before your visit?

ALEX

(Flustered)

I'm sorry, did you say an hour? I thought I was supposed to be there at nine thirty?

WOMAN

No sir, the slot was scheduled for eight thirty a.m. Is there a problem?

ALEX

Not at all, I'll be there, thank you for letting me know.

(Hangs up the phone)

God, the home is like a half hour away, I have like five minutes! I'll have to uh-

Alex moves to the toaster, cancels the toast, then pulls the bread out. He takes a deep breath, and lifts up the bread in front of his face, staring at it.

ALEX

(Concentrating)

Alright, think calm thoughts, Alex. The bread will toast just fine. Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in-

A man's voice blares through a megaphone into the streets of New York-

MAN

Mutants are among us!

- shocking Alex and causing him to burn the bread he held in his hands.

ALEX

(Sighs)

Dammit. (Drops the bread into the trash can)

As the man preaches his tired tirade, Alex shuts his window, takes his mug and phone, and heads out the door.

MAN

(While Alex is performing the actions above)

They could be your husbands, your wives, your children, your friends, but whoever they are, they are dangerous! While they live, we walk on eggshells, foreboding the day that another one of them may lash out against our kind!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MCEANY HOME FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN - MORNING

The streets are bustling in the city, but this block seems to receive little attention. Alex stands outside the daunting and aged black gate. It bares resemblance to a jail cell, and for a moment, Alex stares at it and thinks back to when he was trapped in a similar prison. He reaches a hand toward the gate to touch it, but is interrupted.

WOMAN

I assume you're Mr. Summers?

He turns to see an older woman with sharp features and a dry voice. She is petite and has a stern look about her. Her clothes are tidy and she has a scowl on her face that Alex could guess probably doesn't change much. She's rather intimidating.

ALEX

(Stammering)

I- I am, yes. Alex Summers.

WOMAN

McKenzie Bell Winters.

(Her eyes narrow)

I was unaware your brother was Scott Summers. If I had known, I wouldn't have been so quick to accept your volunteering.

ALEX

(Embittered)

I'm here for the kids. Don't make this something it's not.

MS. WINTERS

I vet my help for the children's protection. You were simply lucky enough to slip under the radar.

ALEX

Are you this endearing to your other volunteers?

MS. WINTERS

(Scoffs)

What other volunteers?

They walk toward the door to the building, Ms. Winters' heels clicking on the pavement.

MS. WINTERS

I put your costume in the men's restroom downstairs. My assistant will point you in the right direction.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MCEANY HOME FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN - THE ENTRANCE

The main entryway to the home is void of kids. It feels colder inside than out, and the furnishing would be cozy if it seemed at all lived-in. Alex is wearing Santa Claus get-up, minus the beard, which he holds in his hand as Ms. Winters walks him down the hall.

ALEX

Are all the kids upstairs?

MS. WINTERS

They're in their rooms, yes. They tend to isolate themselves when they aren't eating or playing outside. Since we're in the Winter months, of course, going outside is not ideal, so they all live like hermits.

ALEX

I... see.

MS. WINTERS

(Intensely)

That being said, put the beard on, I don't want any of them seeing you without it.

ALEX

Right. Of course. (He puts the fake beard on as she continues)

MS. WINTERS

They're all in the den, waiting to see you, so act proper. I know you've done this before, for other homes, this one's no different.

They head toward the doorway to the den area, but Ms. Winters halts and Alex follows suit.

MS. WINTERS

One last thing before you go out there.

ALEX

Alright.

MS. WINTERS

(Clears her throat,
speaks in a reluctantly
kind tone)

We have been... very grateful to have received the donations we did from the Xavier School, whether or not I agree with my superior's decision to take funds from such an organization. But for the past few months, that money has stopped. I know that Charles Xavier is gone, that money may exchange hands for that mess made of Central Park and whatnot, but...we have made a lot of progress on this home that would not have been made without Xavier's support.

ALEX

(Concerned)

I'll... speak to Scott about where the money went. I'm sure there's just a misunderstanding.

MS. WINTERS

Thank you.

ALEX

(Shifting to a happier
tone)

Now, let's give out some presents.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MCEANY HOME FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN- THE DEN

Alex is sitting in a large chair in front of a crackling fireplace, Ms. Winters over his shoulder, her assistant near the door. The children sit criss-cross applesauce on the floor as Alex begins giving out presents. Their eyes are focused on him, they're wide and naive, but there's also a tinge of awareness that Alex knows all too well. A lingering

feeling that they're stuck here.

ALEX
(Excitedly as he places
the first present in his
lap)

Okay! Who's ready for presents?!

The orphans all raise their hands and flail them in the air in enthusiasm. Alex laughs and looks at the first tag.

ALEX
Alright, we have a Yolanda Bowen?

One of the children stands up, walks over to Alex, and takes their present quietly, muttering 'thank you' as they return to their seat.

ALEX
(Congratulatory)
Very behaved! This will go by
smoothly if we keep that up!

The child who retrieved the present smiles and begins to open it. Myra walks over and helps her with unboxing her toy.

ALEX
Now, how about a Johnathan Crouse?

Alex continues reading names for a while, time passing. The children's faces gradually light up as they get their own toys to play with, they are vibrant and active- until he runs into a particular name.

ALEX
Fiona Thompson?

The laughter dies down and the children look less interested in their toys.

CHILD
(Quietly)
She's... mean.

ALEX
(Confused)
Mean?

MS. WINTERS
Fiona is not getting a present,
unfortunately.

ALEX
Not getting a present at all?

MS. WINTERS
The children know as well as I that
Fiona is a rotten girl.

ALEX

Now hold on a second-

MS. WINTERS

(Cutting, withholding
anger)

While I appreciate your concern, I
must insist you move on.

ALEX

Can't I just talk to her after
this? I'm great with kids-

MS. WINTERS

I wouldn't be running a home if I
wasn't, now *move on*.

ALEX

(Reluctantly)

Luis Ubilla.

The camera pans to the assistant, who looks mildly
uncomfortable.

INT. THE MCEANY HOME FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN- THE
ENTRANCE

Alex, changed back out of his Santa attire, is walking
toward the front door when Ms. Winters' assistant MYRA
decides to tell him some crucial information. She is sitting
behind a desk in front of her desktop, but is clearly in her
own head.

MYRA

(Pursing her lips before
speaking out)

Is Ms. Winters away?

ALEX

She's in her office, I had to
discuss... business with her
briefly.

MYRA

(Nervously)

You didn't... tell her off, did
you?

ALEX

Admittedly I thought about it, but
no. It was about the future of this
home's relationship with the Xavier
School.

MYRA

(Leans in, whispering)

Fiona Thompson is a mutant, Mr.
Summers.

ALEX

Oh...oh I see.

MYRA

There was a bit of a scuffle between Fiona and Ms. Winters' daughter Patrice. And since that scuffle, Ms. Winters has made Fiona exceedingly miserable.

ALEX

(Worried)

What can I do to help?

MYRA

The only way that I can see Ms. Winters allowing you to speak with Fiona is if you told her you were considering fostering or adopting her.

ALEX

(Boggled)

Woah, woah. I'm not just gonna' pick up a kid from the orphanage like they're a burger I ordered.

MYRA

(Chuckles to herself)

You don't have to, sir. Visitation is acceptable as many times as you'd like. You only have to express interest and have the proper credentials.

ALEX

(Disappointed)

Proper credentials like the ones that almost got me barred from being a volunteer santa?

MYRA

(Frowns)

Oh...right. And, actually, the credentials you had would have gotten you barred.

ALEX

What do you mean?

MYRA

I was the one who did your background check. I chose not to tell Ms. Winters that you were related to Scott Summers, because I knew if I did, she-

ALEX

She wouldn't have let me come here
at all.

MYRA

(Sighs)

Right. So then what options do we
have?

ALEX

(Pondering)

I think I have an idea. But she
might not care for it.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE X-MANSION COURTYARD - DAY

It's a picturesque afternoon on Graymalkin Lane and the sun is shining down on a white limousine driving toward the late Charles Xavier's modern castle. The car pulls up to the front of the school and slows to a halt, the camera focuses on the space below passenger door as a white high-heeled boot makes contact with the asphalt below. The shot follows these clacking boots as they approach the mansion door and stop. The figure in boots presses the doorbell and a lovely chime rings out inside the house. After a few moments, SCOTT SUMMERS opens the door to reveal EMMA FROST.

SCOTT

(Fumbling)

Emma. I wasn't sure you'd come.

EMMA

Just because I'm here doesn't mean
I agree to your terms.

There is an awkward moment of silence. Cyclops is staring at Emma like an alien, and Emma is uninterested in making small talk. She sighs.

EMMA

Are you going to invite me in or
did you call me only to gawk?

SCOTT

Right, right. Come in.

Scott moves away from the doorway and Emma walks through,
into-

THE X-MANSION FOYER - DAY

EMMA

(Curiously)

An empty nest? Are Charles' X-Men
still on sabbatical?

SCOTT

We've all been handling what happened in our own ways.

EMMA

Of course. We all lost that day. All that differs is whom we lost.

SCOTT

Mm. Before we discuss business, I want to clarify something.

EMMA

Do.

SCOTT

I love this school. It's meant everything to me. Meant everything to Charles. Generations of mutants have come here from all over the world to learn control, camaraderie... self-worth.

EMMA

Did you practice this?

SCOTT

I'm serious, Emma. I'm telling you that I need these priorities upkept if you run this place.

EMMA

(After a pause)

No. No, I'm not going to do that.

SCOTT

(Stunned)

Then we have nothing to discuss.

EMMA

Mr. Summers, when you said you needed new blood, I was happy to be reached out to, but I was not under the impression I would be a replacement for Xavier.

SCOTT

I'm not asking you to be perfect. This is a big offer-

EMMA

So like a disciple of Charles to dress his crisis up as a gift. Mr. Summers, I am not Professor Xavier. I am not some holy father to mutantkind, and-

Scott attempts to interject, but Emma continues speaking.

EMMA

I am not your mother. If you come to me looking for advice, I will give it, but if you expect me to run the school? That begins with some sorely-needed revisions to your curriculum.

SCOTT

I can be flexible. But some things have to stay.

EMMA

Tell me what you know is sacred, and I will tell you why it is outmoded.

SCOTT

Non-violence. A commitment to integration. An emphasis on self-worth.

Emma shakes her head as Scott goes through his list. Scott falls off, visibly desperate. There is a pause.

EMMA

Xavier's message was all well and good when the world had turned a blind eye. Now they know that even the best of us, through no fault of our own, can become a danger at the drop of a hat. Take off that visor and what will happen? This entire building, up in smoke. They think we're a threat, Summers, and they're right.

SCOTT

Are you really that jaded, Emma? You think no one out there's still willing to build a bridge?

EMMA

(Callous)

Where did all these metaphors leave you and your X-Men?

Scott is silent. Emma continues.

EMMA

(With intensity)

I won't have more children die. Tying ourselves down with high-minded principles won't protect anyone from reality, and the reality is, Scott Summers... this world will never accept co-existence willfully, and you'd

(MORE)

EMMA (cont'd)
rather beg for crumbs than demand
their respect.

There is a long pause as Scott soaks in what he's been told.

EMMA
Call me back when you're serious
about this.

SCOTT
Emma please-

EMMA
And don't grovel. It's unbecoming.

Emma exits, leaving Scott alone in the empty foyer. He slides his glasses down and moves a hand over his eyes. His face strains with rage for a moment, as if he's about to take his hand away and destroy everything he's help build. Then all the fight goes out of him, he sags, and mutters to himself:

SCOTT
I just don't have it in me anymore.

INT. THE MCEANY HOME FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN- MS.
WINTERS' OFFICE

Alex has been sitting in an uncomfortable office chair for a few minutes. There are several photos of Ms. Winters with her daughter. Some of the photos look visibly torn, but they sit in quaint frames regardless. Very little else in the office would indicate who it belongs to. Ms. Winters enters the room with a thermos and a frown.

MS. WINTERS
(As she walks over to her
swivel chair at the
desk)
So, Mr. Summers, have you spoken
with your brother about donations
to the home?

ALEX
(Pleased with himself)
No, I have not.

MS. WINTERS
(Sits down, annoyed)
Then what, may I ask, are you doing
here?

ALEX
I can make it happen for you, Ms.
Winters. I can get you the money
you need for your home, Scott won't
be an issue.

MS. WINTERS
(Hesitating)
So what's the catch?

ALEX
I want to have visitation time with
Fiona Thompson.

Ms. Winters scowls at the name, but Alex continues unabated.

ALEX
I knew that if I'd asked without
offering something in return, you
wouldn't allow it...so...

MS. WINTERS
(Visibly agitated)
That is **highly** unorthodox, Mr.
Summers. And what exactly drives
you to speak with Ms. Thompson?
She's a delinquent, she's not worth
the effort.

ALEX
How do you expect her behavior to
improve if you lock her up?

MS. WINTERS
Fiona is a lost cause. She attacked
one of the other children.

ALEX
Your daughter, I heard, but an
outburst or two does not make it
acceptable to exile a child.

MS. WINTERS
She's dangerous.

ALEX
Only if left on her own.

MS. WINTERS
In her eyes, she has been on her
own since she got here.

ALEX
Well, I'm going to help her, and
that's all there is to it. We have
a deal?

Ms. Winters huffs and drums her fingers on the table. She loathes the idea of Fiona Thompson having company, but desires the money for the other children... and perhaps for herself.

MS. WINTERS

(Regrettably)

I will allow it, BUT I will have my assistant Myra watching this visitation on camera. If anything is awry, she will let me know and you will get the boot, money or no money. Even if Ms. Thompson is a bad apple, she is still under my roof.

ALEX

Sounds good to me.

MS. WINTERS

(Admonitory)

And know that I do not take kindly to being strongarmed, Mr. Summers.

ALEX

If I only did things you "took kindly" to, I worry I might lose some of my charm.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Alex is walking back to his apartment. He is texting Myra and the conversation can be seen as he crosses the street.

ALEX (TEXT)

Awfully forward of you to give me your number.

MYRA (TEXT)

lol it's a formality, don't get too excited.

ALEX (TEXT)

A formality?

MYRA (TEXT)

Ms. Winters wanted me to ask you a few questions before your visitation on Thursday.

ALEX (TEXT)

Ask away.

Suddenly, Alex's phone begins to ring. It's Scott.

ALEX

(Groaning)

God, I was supposed to call back.

Alex sighs and answers his phone.

SCOTT

(Patronizing)

Been busy, little brother?

ALEX

Don't call me little brother, and yeah, I've had a lot on my plate.

SCOTT

I need you at the mansion ASAP.

ALEX

Wh-what? It's like eight-thirty, can't I come tomorrow?

SCOTT

I have a guest, and I have a proposition that involves you.

ALEX

Would have been nice to be warned-

SCOTT

Gee I wonder when I would have done that? I only called you three times.

ALEX

Alright, alright, I get it. I'll be over, just give me an hour or so.

SCOTT

Please hurry.

EMMA

Yes, please do.

ALEX

Who was that?

SCOTT

(Tired)

It's-(sighs) just get here.

Scott hangs up, and Alex is left with the texts he received from Myra:

MYRA (TEXT)

Have you ever done a visitation at an orphanage before? What are some of your experiences working with or caring for children, if any? And I know the answer to this one, but I have to ask. Are you interested in fostering or adopting Fiona Thompson?

ALEX

(Huffing as he stares at his phone)

God... what am I doing?

CUT TO:

THE X-MANSION FOYER - DAY

Alex has come to the mansion and is in a state of shock. An enemy of the X-Men, Emma Frost, is sitting comfortably on a sofa in the foyer. Scott is sitting in a couch across from hers. Alex has not sat down.

ALEX

(Angry)

God Scott, what are you doing? Emma Frost is a psychopath!

SCOTT

She is not a psychopath- he didn't mean that.

EMMA

Not a good first impression.

ALEX

I'm not trying to impress.

EMMA

Good, because you currently have the grace of a drunken elephant. And the punctuality of one as well.

ALEX

Already throwing punches?

EMMA

For what reason should I be delicate or patient with you when you haven't shared the same courtesy? I arrived precisely at four in the afternoon. I was told we would discuss the parameters of our agreement when you got here, but I didn't think I'd have to listen to your brother drool over Xavier while I wasted away.

SCOTT

(Attempting to interrupt)

Drool over-

EMMA

(Cutting him off)

I meant what I said, Scott.

ALEX

Okay, let's get this over with. What agreement are you referring to?

Emma opens her mouth to speak, but Scott stops her.

SCOTT

Emma, let me give him the news, I don't know how he'll take it.

EMMA

Oh, rip the bandage off already. I'm going to be teaching here, Alex.

Alex is shocked, and Scott sighs as Alex's expression shifts to confusion.

ALEX

(a small laugh,
hysterically)

Teaching? Teaching what?

EMMA

What on earth do you mean? You were a student here once, weren't you?

ALEX

You're going to replace Xavier?

EMMA

Are you both this melodramatic? No one is *replacing* Xavier.

ALEX

You don't deserve to be here, let alone to teach here.

EMMA

I know I've thrown my share of sticks and stones, but we've all grown since then, haven't we? (Patronizing) If it makes you feel any better, I could show I'm not crossing my fingers.

ALEX

Is everything a joke to you?

SCOTT

(Attempting to be the
voice of reason)

Alex, Emma has experience with teaching mutant children. And Xavier was going to settle things with the Massachusetts Academy before things went sideways-

ALEX

Yeah, which I didn't agree with. Many of us were against it, because that school's students were trained by the White Queen to be her attack dogs!

EMMA

They weren't dogs, you imbecile!
They were children, they did
exactly what they were told.

ALEX

Clearly, you should have told them
something different.

SCOTT

(After a pause)

Alex, I'm leaving the school.

ALEX

What?! You're all that's left,
you're going to hand over the
responsibility of teaching the next
generation to Emma Frost?

SCOTT

And you, if you're up for it.

ALEX

(Stuttering)

You're- you're insane! Where are
you even going?

SCOTT

I need to figure some things out.
On my own.

ALEX

Yeah, clearly!

EMMA

If you aren't up for it, I'll do it
alone, which is what I wanted in
the first place. But you'll regret
having missed this opportunity.

Alex takes a deep breath and tries to take in everything
he's heard. It's clear Emma is not interested in if Alex
stays or goes, and finds this meeting to be a formality.

ALEX

(Glaring at Scott)

The world hates us and you want
mutant children to have her as a
role model. You're unbelievable.

SCOTT

Alex, please, if I had a choice-

ALEX

Forget it! I'm not going to take
the blame when these kids end up
damaged. You can shoulder that on
your own.

SCOTT

Alex, the opportunity we got, to use our gifts for the greater good and not fear what we are, someone needs to provide that shot for new mutants. And I can't trust myself to do that when I'm falling apart.

ALEX

(Bitter)

She wouldn't want this. You know that.

SCOTT

(After a pause)

...She's not here.

Scott is ashamed, but doesn't regret his words or his actions. Alex storms out the door. Emma takes a deep breath and rises from her seat.

EMMA

Well, I ought to be going then. Thanks for dinner and a show.

She walks toward the door, and stops.

EMMA

(Coy)

Make sure my room is ready for me, Scott Summers.

Emma exits, leaving Scott alone with his thoughts.

INT. THE MCEANY HOME FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN- THE DEN

Alex is rushing toward Myra's desk, phone in one hand, present in the other. In his mouth is a pop tart. Myra laughs.

MYRA

You ran late?

ALEX

(Muffled through a pop tart)

I don't roll out of bed looking like this, Myra.

MYRA

Second door to your left, up those stairs (She points to the stairs on one side).

ALEX

Thanks.

He rushes toward the staircase as Myra shouts to him.

MYRA

Alex, don't choke! Try chewing!

Alex goes up the stairs and into the hallway. All the doors are shut, he picks the one Myra told him to and is surprised to find it looks more like a room for interrogation than for living. There is a desk in the center of the space, and a chair on both sides. A tin can with some pencils in it, a pad of looseleaf paper set to the side. There is a metal baseball bat in the corner. Alex hides the present he bought behind his back. His attention is focused on a crude drawing of Patrice Winters that is stuck to a target. It is riddled with darts.

ALEX

Cute.

FIONA

(Entering from behind)

A man's home is his castle.

Alex can't help but jump, she appeared behind him so quickly, a small shadow in a jean jacket. Her clothes are worn, her hair is completely concealed under a ragged sports cap, and as Alex stares blankly at her, she takes a bite out of a granola bar.

ALEX

(Awkwardly)

Hello there.

Alex does a short wave and Fiona wrinkles her nose.

FIONA

Who are you?

ALEX

I'm Alex Summers. I'm here to talk to you.

FIONA

What about?

Alex begins to kneel to get to Fiona's level. She steps backward and looks confused.

ALEX

Sorry, I was just trying to... get on your level.

FIONA

It's not gonna' make me trust you any more.

ALEX

(Trying to sound old,
looking down briefly)

Well I'm already down here, no going back now.

He raises his eyes and catches the corner of Fiona's mouth up in almost a smile, but she retracts it quickly and looks away.

ALEX
You know Santa right?

FIONA
(Defiantly)
He's not real.

ALEX
(Stuttering)
Sure he is.

FIONA
(Unfazed)
I'm twelve years old. That ship has sailed.

ALEX
Nothing gets past you, huh?

A pause.

ALEX
(Trying to recover)
Well, a lot of the other kids believe in Santa-

FIONA
Not me.

ALEX
Right, not you, of course. But sometimes to make those kids happy, we adults will dress up like Santa and hand out gifts, yeah?

FIONA
Not to me.

ALEX
That's the thing. Yesterday I came by as Santa, but they wouldn't let me give you...your gift. So...

Alex pulls out his concealed gift and hands it to her.

ALEX
And you say-

FIONA
(Disinterested)
Mm.

Fiona unwraps the present, revealing a girlish doll. She gives it a brief glance, unimpressed, and looks back up at Alex.

FIONA

Was that it?

ALEX

No, actually. I wanted to talk about one more thing.

Alex looks around, a bit uncomfortable as he leans back and sits down on the ground. Fiona sits down on the ground in front of him.

ALEX

How do you feel about this place?

FIONA

It sucks. I hate it.

ALEX

How do you feel about the way they treat you?

FIONA

It's not great, but it's not awful.

ALEX

They locked you away in this tiny room.

FIONA

At least I have a room.

ALEX

And that's enough for you?

FIONA

Like I got any better place to be? The only way out of here is if somebody wants you, and no one is gonna' want me. I made sure of that when I knocked four of Patrice Winter's teeth out. Is that what you're here for, to arrest me?

ALEX

(A little dumbfounded)
No, nothing like that at all.

FIONA

Well, whatever. I know they told you, they tell everybody. Before you ask about it, I didn't have a good reason. She didn't say nothing, do nothing. I got sick of her looking at me like I didn't matter.

ALEX

I understand.

FIONA
(Agitated)
No, you don't.

ALEX
I do. If you can believe it, I know exactly what it's like to be in foster care with the whole... world looking down on you for something you can't control.

Alex looks intently at Fiona. She shifts, uneasy.

FIONA
I don't know what you're talking about.

ALEX
I think you do.

FIONA
All I did was punch her.

ALEX
You know, you also busted her nose. You probably haven't seen it, since you haven't been allowed out.

Fiona says nothing. Alex leans in slightly.

ALEX
Most girls your age don't knock other kids' teeth out with their bare hands. Or use this much duct tape... repairing things they broke.

FIONA
(Mumbling)
It wasn't on purpose.

ALEX
I know. Relax.

Fiona slumps, but makes eye contact, and Alex smiles.

ALEX
Like I said, I've been there. I get it. But I'm gonna' tell you something now, and it's very important that you stick to this: we don't use our powers to hurt innocent people.

FIONA
There's no 'we' here. You don't make my rules.

There is a pause as they lock eyes. After a moment:

ALEX
 (Shrugs)
 Well, it was worth a shot.

Alex rises to his feet, and Fiona follows suit.

FIONA
 So you came here to preach, that's
 it?

ALEX
 I'm no preacher. I'm a teacher.

FIONA
 I hate teachers.

ALEX
 That makes sense. You haven't had a
 good one yet.

Alex moves toward the door, but stops.

ALEX
 Alright, I'll get out of your hair,
 Fiona. But I want you to think
 about what I said.

FIONA
 Yeah yeah, see you never, Santa
 Claus.

ALEX
 (As he exits)
 Don't say never just yet.

EXT. OUTSIDE 'THE BAMBOO PALACE' - NIGHT

LORNA DANE is standing outside, scrolling through her phone. She is dressed casually in a tan jacket, with an auburn scarf and a white shirt underneath. Her jeans are faded, and she wears green sneakers. Her wavy, vibrant lime hair pours out from under her knit cap. Alex Summers shuffles toward her quickly and laughs.

ALEX
 What are you doing outside, it's
 freezing?

LORNA
 Waiting for you, dummy.

ALEX
 You could have gone inside.

LORNA
 (Snippy)
 I wasn't going in by myself and
 waiting. You've embarrassed me
 before.

ALEX

This is supposed to be a friendly get-together. Remember? We're friends.

LORNA

(Reeling in her attitude, she sighs)

I know, Alex. I missed you, I did, but I'm highly uncomfortable with the idea of sitting alone, eating my feelings.

ALEX

(Chuckles)

Okay, okay.

LORNA

Let's go inside, I'm freezing.

ALEX

Of course.

Alex motions towards the door, pushes it open (causing the bell above the door to ring) and holds the door with one arm, tipping an invisible hat with the other.

ALEX

M'lady.

LORNA

(She laughs, smiling)

You're so stupid.

Lorna enters, and Alex follows.

ALEX

We can sit anywhere, I called ahead.

They move toward a booth as their conversation continues, sitting as Lorna delivers the next line:

LORNA

(Grinning)

Right, you always know what I want.

ALEX

It's magic, I'm telling you.

They both laugh and, for a moment, they seem to forget where they stand. But that moment ends, and Lorna's face turns to a frown.

LORNA

(Concerned)

Y'know Alex, in this light, you look...exhausted.

ALEX

(Slightly nervous)

The tacky oriental lightning gives me a bad look? (Sarcastic disbelief) Nooo. No way.

LORNA

Is everything alright?

ALEX

Peachy.

LORNA

Alex.

Alex's smile fades and he cups his face into his hands, revealing his mood more clearly as he drags his hands down and stretches his face.

ALEX

I want it to be. I really didn't want this to turn into a therapy session.

LORNA

If we're going to be friends, you have to tell me what's going on when I ask what's going on.

ALEX

Okay, but it's a bit of a long story, so bear with me.

Cut to a waiter bringing the pair's food to the table. Their food is being placed in front of them as they talk.

LORNA

So let me get this straight. Emma Frost is going to run the school?

ALEX

(Describing his situation almost frantically)

It's not quite a school yet, but yeah. Scott invited her, she was sitting in the foyer, comfy as can be, and I- I don't know what he's thinking. And now I've saddled myself with this poor girl and I've got nowhere to take her.

LORNA

And staying at the home isn't an option? I know you like to be the hero but maybe it's better if she finds a nice foster family.

ALEX

She's not going to get fostered.
The lady who runs the place hates
her, basically keeps her in a
prison. The home is decent, you can
tell it's funded, but they put her
in this concrete dungeon or
something.

Lorna eats some of her noodles and talks with food in her
mouth.

LORNA

And you won't adopt her?

Alex has stopped listening, honed in on Lorna's face,
smiling.

LORNA

(Swallowing)

What are you doing?

ALEX

I'm sorry, I- I used to love when
you-

Lorna smiles a little, then looks away as she tucks some of
her hair behind her ear.

ALEX

Nevermind, it doesn't matter.

LORNA

(Awkwardly continuing the
conversation)

So... adoption.

ALEX

(Drumming his fingers on
the table)

No. No, I can't do that. You of all
people should know how I feel about
that.

LORNA

What other choice do you have? If
you won't drop this?

Lorna winces, holding up her index finger at Alex before he
can respond.

LORNA

I'm sorry, I need a sec. Deja vu.

ALEX

Oh, c'mon, Lorn, don't do this.

LORNA

Don't do what?

ALEX

Don't make this that, you know what.

LORNA

(After a brief pause)

Do you... feel like you aren't ready or something?

ALEX

It's not that I feel like I couldn't handle it, it's- y'know... what if it's safer where she is? Am I drawing attention to her by singling her out?

LORNA

You're being paranoid.

ALEX

No, I'm not. I don't even know what she does yet, what if we make things worse? It's happened before.

Lorna takes a deep breath in frustration and leans her head down into her hand, massaging her scalp while her eyes are shut tight.

LORNA

(Opening her eyes)

This is- it's a rehash-

ALEX

It's not a rehash, this isn't about us, it's about her-

LORNA

(Exasperated)

It's totally a rehash-

ALEX

(Raising his voice)

Lorna, this isn't a rehash, I'm asking for advice, I thought we could talk like adults.

LORNA

And now you're using charged language.

ALEX

It's not 'charged language', it's-

Alex stops himself, as he realizes he's getting worked up

ALEX

I'm... I'm sorry, it's a lot to process. I didn't mean to yell at you.

A waiter begins to pass the table, and Lorna waves him over.

LORNA

(To the waiter)

Can I get a to-go cup or something?
Thanks.

The waiter speeds towards the kitchen.

ALEX

Lorna, please.

LORNA

Alex, this was a bad idea. When you called me after a year of radio silence and said we could talk and catch up, maybe it's cynical of me but I doubted it'd end well. But I did it anyway, because I loved you so much I almost settled.

The waiter brings back a wide plastic cup and lid and Lorna stands and begins dispensing her noodles into the cup as she talks.

LORNA

But I'm not going to settle. And I told you that, and you said you respected it, and now here you are, flirting with me and then reminding me why we broke it off.

ALEX

Just sit down for a sec-

LORNA

(As she puts the lid on
the take-out cup)

She should go to the school. You know that, I know that. How she gets there is up to you, but your distaste for Emma shouldn't get in the way of this little girl's future.

Lorna looks at Alex, who is pitiful, and she takes a deep breath in and out. She leans in and kisses him on the cheek.

LORNA

I know you'll figure it out. Good night, Alex.

Lorna walks off-screen and Alex is left alone. He picks up a chopstick for his dumplings and begins to roll it between his fingers.

ALEX

(Defeated)

I guess Emma Frost wins this round.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Alex is speedwalking on the crosswalk, he grabs his phone out of his coat pocket and looks at his texts.

SCOTT (TEXT)

Told her to call you. Don't know why you wouldn't call her, I can still give you her number.

ALEX

Tsk. Of course you don't get it, this is a battle of wits.

He pauses after crossing the street.

ALEX

Oh, actually-

He begins typing, then sends a message.

ALEX (TEXT)

Maybe I should call her instead of the other way, she might not call me back.

Suddenly, Alex's phone begins ringing.

ALEX

Nevermind I guess.

He picks up, and the shot becomes split between Alex in New York and Emma in a lavish apartment. She is applying make-up with one hand while she probes a tabloid with the other.

EMMA

(Laughs)

Humans are so frivolous, Alex. You should see the refuse they put out as news, it is marvelously entertaining how tiny their problems are.

ALEX

So, no hello then?

EMMA

(Unengaged)

Let's not waste time with formalities. Give your piece or make your peace or whatever it is you plan to do.

ALEX

Emma, I'm... (huffs, reluctant)
I'm sorry.

EMMA
(Intrigued)
Interesting.

ALEX
(Clarifying, annoyed at
Emma)
I'm not going to apologize for my frustration, I'm only saying sorry for getting in the way of progress. I don't know if your methods will work, I don't know if you'll end up being what's best for the school, I don't even really know you as anything more than opposition. But I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place, and Scott trusts you, so...

Emma waits for him to continue, but he trails off and she rolls her eyes.

EMMA
Alex, that has got to be one of the worst apologies I have ever heard. However, I am willing to look past that, because... I will need staff. And shocking as it may be, quite a few of your friends see me the same way you do, so my pickings are slim. But with you at my side, perhaps they will reconsider applying, if you can nudge them in our direction?

ALEX
(Satisfied)
I'll... see what I can do.

EMMA
Excellent. I'll set some paperwork aside for you to sign when you get to the mansion.

Alex's half of the shot now has the camera at his back as he stares up at his destination, the McEany Home.

ALEX
Cool, I'll... I'll see you then.

EMMA
Oh, and Alex.

ALEX
Yeah?

EMMA
Your brother was right to have faith in you.

Alex smiles a little.

ALEX
Goodbye Emma.

He hangs up the phone and pockets it as he walks through the opened gate.

INT. ALEX'S CAR - DAY

Alex is in the front seat, while Fiona sits in the back. It's messy, but not terribly so. Alex keeps checking the mirror to see Fiona's face, which refuses to change no matter how hard he tries.

ALEX
Favorite color? (Pause) Favorite
food? (Pause) How about movies?

FIONA
(Groaning)
I'm going to roll down the window
and scream for help.

ALEX
(Laughing nervously)
Very funny.

The camera focuses on Alex's finger as he presses a button with a window icon on it, disabling window controls in the back seat.

ALEX
(After a pause)
We're getting close.

FIONA
Close to what?

ALEX
(Excitedly)
I can't tell you what it is but I
can tell you what it isn't. It is
not the slammer.

He smiles, but she looks unimpressed.

ALEX
It's- it's a joke, I'm saying your
old room was like jail-

FIONA
Yeah I got it.

There is quiet for a few moments, before the sound of the car's tires switching from street to cobblestone.

ALEX
Ah, the sound of home.

FIONA

I thought you said you lived in foster care.

ALEX

I did for a while. And then I found where I belonged... and I hope that's how you'll feel too.

The car pulls into the circle in front of the school and stops at the walkway. Alex parks and steps out, then opens the door for Fiona. She steps out of the car and is floored by the mansion, but tries her hardest to look indifferent.

FIONA

(Scoffing)

It's fine, I guess. It's not like I needed a place this big.

ALEX

You're allowed to be impressed.

FIONA

So you showed me your mansion, now what?

ALEX

Now, you stay here.

FIONA

What about McEany's?

ALEX

What about it?

FIONA

How did you even... get me out?

ALEX

(Hesitant to answer)

I pulled some strings.

FIONA

(Reluctant to express herself)

I don't... I don't understand.

ALEX

Welcome to Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters.

Fiona starts walking toward the door, as if hypnotized by the building's grandeur, as Alex continues talking without noticing her leaving.

ALEX

Now granted, it's not the same as when I came here, there are a few
(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)
 changes to the infrastructure and
 topiaries and whatnot but- (notices
 Fiona is gone) oh, Fiona, wait,
 I'll show you around!

He dashes after her.

CUT TO:

THE X-MANSION UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Alex and Fiona are walking down the hall back toward the front of the building. Fiona can't help but be overwhelmed, and Alex is moving slow so she can take it all in. Alex steps toward a door with a sticky note on it that says "Fiona".

FIONA
 (Muttering quietly as she
 scans the area)
 Why would you need a hallway this
 big? Why would you need any of
 this?

ALEX
 (Unaware of what Fiona
 said, with gravitas)
 And finally, this is your room.
 (Opens the door, and holds his arm
 out to present the space) Right he-
 (he stops, confused by what he sees
 inside)

MEGAN GWYNN sits on one of the two beds in the room. She is comfortably moved in, as evident by the many colorful pillows on her side and the posters on the wall. Fiona looks annoyed by this bright atmosphere. Megan's eyes are insect-like, and she has a pair of wings that resemble a dragonfly's. Her hair is a soft pink, straight and at a medium length. Her ears are long and pointed at the tip. She's wearing childish pajamas that have unicorns riding skateboards, with text all over that says things like "radical" and "tubular." A thin violet hairband with freshly picked flowers laced on sits atop her head. Alex looks at her, then looks at Fiona, completely unprepared.

MEGAN
 (Enthusiastically)
 Hey new friend! And Mr. Summers
 sir! (Salutes mockingly and
 giggles)

ALEX
 (Blindsided)
 Uh... who are you?

MEGAN

(While seated, bouncing
up and down)

I'm Megan. Didn't Miss Frost tell
you about me?

ALEX

Uh, no, I think she neglected to
mention you, actually.

FIONA

(Dryly)

Do I... have to stay in this room?

Fade out as Alex assesses the situation, puzzled.