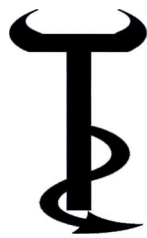


RUNAWAY

SELENA ILLYRA



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A Tease Publishing Book/E book
Runaway
Copyright© 2008 Selena Illyria
ISBN: 978-1-60767-016-2
Cover Artist: Stella Price
Interior text design: Stacey Sierra

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Swansboro, North Carolina 28584-0234

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Dedicated to Gail, Celia, Shar, Ro and Stella.

Chapter 1

New Earth, Year 2150

Hayley tiptoed to her desk, occasionally glancing at the wooden staircase, leading upstairs to the second floor. Relieved that her boss wasn't awake yet, she slowly pulled out her chair, sat down on the leather cushion and started to riffle through the morning's mail.

"Bills, junk mail, bills . . . oh, I may have won one million dollars, a coupon for free coffee, a sale at Whitney's Lingerie Warehouse, a letter from an irate spouse. Ugh, I need a vacation."

Shaking her head as she muttered to herself, she sorted the mail into piles, not noticing that a man had walked into the building and made his way to her desk.

"I need to see Devlin Virgil. It's a matter of urgency. My wife is missing. I need to see Devlin." The man demanded, startling Hayley, she hadn't heard or seen him, too busy trying to get through the mail and be as quiet as possible to notice anything else.

"Shhh. Sir. Please, keep your voice down!" Hayley pleaded as she glanced at the staircase, praying that Devlin hadn't heard the man. One thing Devlin hated was being awakened unnecessarily on his day off. The man wasn't paying her any attention. His voice quickly grew louder until he was shouting at her, emphasizing his angry and panicked state of mind.

"My wife is missing, the police won't do anything. It's not like her. She's a good woman. I need to see Devlin, where is he?" He demanded again.

Without warning, the man leaned over her desk and grabbed her by the lapels of her blazer, dragging her across the surface with surprising strength. Unable to move away, Hayley studied the man before her. Wire rimmed glasses enlarged his brown eyes. His light brown hair was neither, long nor short. It was clipped neatly so as not to fall into his face. He had light brown freckles across the bridge of his nose and they spread across his cheeks. His lips were thin and currently pressed in a line. He had broad shoulders and from what she could see he was wearing a crisp white shirt underneath a black sports jacket.

He has to have cybernetic implants. No one is this strong, she thought.

"Sir please, let go of me." Hayley requested, her eyes not leaving the man in front of her.

He ignored her and restated his demand.

"I need to speak to Devlin Virgil right now."

The sound of boots, clunking down the stairs heralded Devlin's currently awakened status. Hayley blew out a breath and sent up a silent prayer that Devlin wouldn't be an ass.

"Sir, please let me go." She repeated quietly.

He ignored her again.

"Is that Devlin? Is he coming?" The man's head turned this way and that looking for her employer. Hayley opened her mouth to respond but was stopped when she heard the sound of a safety being taken off.

"You have three seconds to let her go or I will shoot you where you stand." Devlin said, tone filled with a calm Hayley recognized as one he used before he shot someone.

Hayley groaned she had no desire to have to yet again give a statement to the police about why her employer was shooting his potential clients. The last one threatened to press charges against Devlin.

"Devlin please, this man is just anxious to see you. Aren't you Mr. uh, what is your name?" Hayley said, trying to bring some sort of calm to the situation.

"My name is Taylor Meadows. Mr. Virgil, a pleasure to meet you, at last."

Taylor Meadows said, as he quickly let go of Hayley, causing her to fall on the desk. Her stomach hit the hard wooden surface knocking the air out of her. It took her a moment or two to recover before she made her way back behind her desk and into her seat. Finally seated in her chair she blanched when she saw that Devlin had Mr. Meadows pinned against the wall. A gun was pointed at

his chest.

"Devlin let him go this instant. Devlin! I'm warning you." Hayley cried out. Standing up, she marched over to Devlin, she grabbed his left arm and tried to pull him back but he wouldn't budge.

"Devlin, stop this. Let him go!" Hayley ordered.

"He put his hands on you." Devlin growled, his eyes never leaving Mr. Meadows.

"Yes, but that is no excuse for you to threaten him and assault him. Stop this, please."

It took a second before Devlin let go of Mr. Meadows, who duly sank to the floor. Devlin put the safety back on and slid his gun into the waistband of his jeans.

"Devlin put that thing away. You could get hurt or worse hurt someone else." Hayley ordered.

"Where's the coffee?" Devlin asked, not putting his gun away.

"I'll get you a cup. Just put your gun away," Hayley retorted.

"You sure? It makes me feel safe." Devlin said with a twinkle in his eye.

Hayley rolled her eyes. "From what?"

He didn't answer. Instead, he headed for his desk, that was situated directly behind hers. Mr. Meadows had recovered enough to stand up and follow Devlin back to his desk.

"Mr. Virgil, please you must help me. The police won't do it, they said forty-eight hours, but I can't wait that long. It's my wife you see, she's missing."

"Mr. Virgil was my father. Don't call me that."

"Devlin, please help me."

Devlin grimaced.

"Don't call me that either."

"Please just help me."

"Why?"

"I'll pay whatever the amount, please find my wife."

Hayley heard the sound of a drawer opening, a loud clunk and then the drawer was slammed shut. Devlin had put his gun in his drawer instead of in the holster on the underside of his desk. She shook her head as she poured coffee into the *Penguins Can Kick Your Ass* mug, Devlin's favorite.

Bringing his coffee to him, she walked around his desk, placed the mug on the surface, opened the left hand drawer, and took out the gun, checked to see if the safety was on. It was, bending down. She put it back in the drawer and shut it.

"Careful, a few inches over and I may sue you for sexual harassment." Devlin said, amusement in his voice. Hayley as usual, rolled her eyes and shook her head.

"I'd have to want you for that to happen."

"You know you do."

"Bite me."

"Hard or soft"

"Neither, you know you're an ass Devlin."

"So, I've been told."

Turning to Mr. Meadows she pasted a smile on her face. "Would you like some coffee Mr. Meadows?"

Mr. Meadows ignored her. Hayley shrugged and walked away.

"She asked you a question. I may be rude to her on occasion but clients possible or not, should be polite, now accept the coffee." Devlin ordered, taking a slow sip of the brew.

"On occasion?" Hayley asked, eyebrow, raised, looking in Devlin's direction.

Both men ignored her.

"I don't drink coffee, makes me jittery," Mr. Meadows replied, his eyes on Devlin.

"Whatever. Now tell me about the case I'm about to turn down." Devlin said as he placed the mug back on the desk.

"Please, I don't have anyone else to turn to. You're the only one who can find her."

"And why is that Mr. Meadows?"

"Because, she's a psychic."

Hayley went cold. No matter how many times a client mentioned the word psychic she still felt a chill run through her. She should be use to it. After all, Devlin specialized in finding psychics whether kidnapped, fugitives or runaways. It was one of the reasons why so many people came to him, including the New Earth Government.

The New Earth Government had an office to deal with and research psychics not to track them down. For reasons known only to them, the Government turned to local P.I.s to do their dirty work and Devlin was at the top of their list. Devlin could always name any price when working with them. He always managed to find a secret or two that the Government didn't want coming out. For that reason they gave Devlin almost anything he requested no matter how insane the demand. Taking a deep breath she sat back down in her chair and waited for Devlin to do what he always did: Accept. Tracking down psychics always meant big money working with the Government or regular citizens and Devlin never turned down a big pay off.

"Sorry not interested."

Hayley's mouth dropped open.

"What?" Both Hayley and Mr. Meadows exclaimed in unison.

"I said I'm not interested. You come in here, wake me up with all your yelling you manhandle my assistant and make demands of me. Sorry, not interested, no matter how big the payoff is."

Hayley heard the clunk of boots and guessed that Devlin had put his size 16 boots up on the table and was now sipping his coffee slowly, savoring Mr. Meadows' shock.

"But, she works for the Government, I'm sure they would compensate you, too." Mr. Meadows tried to get Devlin to reconsider.

Hayley felt another chill go through her. She hated dealing with cases that meant working with the New Earth Government. Every time they had to help the Government out or work with them on case, Hayley felt like any minute she would be exposed as the hiding psychic she was. She waited to hear what Devlin had to say.

"So, if we work the case, we'll get what from them?"

"Ten million dollars, this is a missing psychic case, she is valuable to them. I'm sure they would pay you handsomely."

Hayley knew that Devlin wouldn't turn down that kind of money, no way.

"So, you get your wife back, the Government gets their employee back and I get ten million dollars?" Devlin reasoned.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Meadows replied.

"Don't call me sir." Devlin said sounding annoyed.

Silence fell and Hayley waited. It didn't take long for Devlin to answer him.

"We'll do it. Hayley draw up the paperwork," Devlin called out.

Hayley let out a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding. Doing what she had done a thousand times before, she drew up the contract and brought it to the back of the office for both men to sign, a bad feeling weighing on her. She resisted the urge to peek into Mr. Meadows mind.

On the outside the man looked like any other Government office worker, cybernetic implants and all. He wore a simple, black sport coat, white shirt, black slacks and shiny, spotless, black loafers. But Hayley knew beyond the immaculate appearance was something horrible. As a child she had witnessed it firsthand. Standing next to Mr. Meadows now, she couldn't suppress the shudder that ran through her. He brought back memories of the child she had once been, with wires, tests, experiments, questions and tears. A lot of tears.

"You okay Hayley?" Devlin asked a hint of concern in his voice.

"Yeah, I'm just cold."

"You sure?"

She nodded, not trusting herself to say anything else without giving herself away. She had a feeling that Mr. Meadows was observing her. After a minute the men stood up. Mr. Meadows offered Devlin his hand and Devlin just looked down at it.

"What's that for?"

"For taking the case," Mr. Meadows said, tension in his voice.

"Hey I'd do almost anything for ten million dollars. I'll go over all the information you gave me and start looking for your wife. I assure you, I'll find her."

"Thank you again Mr. Virgil."

"I'm not my father."

"Yes, well . . ." Turning he looked at Hayley, he gave her a stiff nod.

She just nodded in response and watched him leave the office.

"You sure you're okay?" Devlin asked, looking at her closely, concern clear on his face.

"Yes." She answered.

"Good, I'm going back to bed." He said, too tired to pursue the subject further.

He got up from his chair, stretched and headed upstairs. Hayley just shook her head and sighed. *Some things never change*, she thought as she gathered up the files, photos and contract that Devlin had left on his desk. Examining the picture of the pretty blond woman with delicate features that Mr. Meadows said was his wife. Hayley couldn't help but think they had just been invited into a trap.

* * *

"Mr. Meadows?"

"Target found. Start the test."

"Yes, Mr. Meadows."

Mr. Meadows slipped into the backseat of a solar hover limo, picked up the files strewn across the backseat and flipped through them until he found the one he wanted. Lifting the flap he slipped out a photo of an eight year old child, dark brown, tightly curled hair, styled in three pony tails in a vertical line, all braided and tied off with a bright pink bubble hair tie. She had a wide grin on her face. Her smile was missing a front tooth. Her large brown eyes filled with so much happiness as she clutched a huge teddy bear that was almost the same size as her.

"Hayley Michaels we finally meet."

Over the intercom, the voice of driver sounded.

"Where to, Mr. Meadows?"

"New Earth Genesis Clinic, Samuel."

"Yes, sir."

The limo pulled away from the curb and slipped into late morning traffic, heading to the center of psychic research and development.

Chapter 2

One week later Hayley found herself frustrated and annoyed. Devlin still hadn't done a damn thing on the Meadows case except use most of the information Mr. Meadows had provided as paper airplanes. Gathering up the wads of paper around the garbage can she threw them away and started to organize Devlin's desk. As usual it was a mess of papers, pens, pencils, paper clips, rolls of film, mini thumb drives, mini data CD's, photographs and books on psychics. Raising an eyebrow she picked up one of the books. *Raising the Psychic Within* by Amanda Raines Meadows.

"Okay so maybe he has been working." She said to herself.

She flipped through the book and found a page earmarked. The title of the chapter was *How to Nurture Latent Psychic Genes*. She read the first few paragraphs before turning the book over to read the blurb at the back. Apparently Dr. Amanda Raines Meadows was doing research into making everyone a psychic instead of the handful of the population who had been born with the psychic ability.

"Some pretty interesting stuff. You should read her book on sex with a psychic pretty hot stuff, if I do say so myself, although I would never have sex with a psychic." Devlin said. She felt his head next to hers, his mouth near her ear.

Hayley jumped and dropped the book on the desk. It fell onto its side, showing its back cover, a picture of the woman who had now been missing for over a week looking up at her. Devlin chuckled and walked around her, sitting down in his chair, a small rubber ball in his hand. He tossed it around before aiming it.

He threw the ball into the small plastic hoop, at the far side of the room. The ball went in no problem with a small *swish*, the net swinging back and forth softly. Devlin turned his violet-blue eyes toward Hayley, looking her over. She finally voiced the question she could no longer hold back.

"How's the case going?"

"It's not."

He sat back, folding his hands behind his head and tilting the chair backward staring at the ceiling.

"Well that's what you get for not leaving the office to investigate."

"Why should I leave the office? I have everything I need to find her right here."

"Oh really?" Haley asked, eyebrow, raised. "Books, photos you got from Marshall and files that were faxed to you from her office don't count as legwork."

"Who's got the P.I. license here? You or me?"

Hayley rolled her eyes.

"Just because you have the fancy license doesn't mean that you are good private dick."

Devlin's arms dropped, his hands falling on his knees, he leaned forward, a sparkle in his eye.

"I know I'm a good private dick, I've been told so many times."

Hayley sighed. She'd walked right into that one.

"Devlin."

She closed her eyes and pinched the bridge of her nose.

"What?"

"Grow up."

"Never."

"Just tell me what you've found out so far. I have to type up a report for Mr. Meadows."

"You're no fun today. Getting a migraine?"

"Yes, its name is Devlin."

"Awww, you're so sweet, naming your migraine after me."

"Devlin." Hayley said, gritting her teeth.

"All right, all right, so far I found out she was working on the idea that psychics can be tracked."

"Tracked?"

Hayley felt herself starting to panic.

"Yeah, based on their abilities, if you know what kind of ability you're dealing with you can track the psychic using it, by narrowing down the list of people with the same ability."

"But psychics have different abilities, how it is possible to discern which person is using which ability."

"Bag and tag."

"What?!"

She knew she had let a little of her panic come out when Devlin raised his eyebrow.

"Migraine, the strain and all that," She said, trying to regain some control over her nerves.

"Hayley you should go lie down, otherwise you'll really hurt yourself."

"No, no I can handle it." Hayley protested, wanting to hear more about the 'bag and tag' project that Dr. Meadows was working on.

"Hayley . . ." Devlin said, concern filling his voice.

"No, no, I swear, after this I'll lie down. Now tell me about this 'bag and tag'."

Devlin didn't look like he bought her promise but he didn't press it.

"What they do is id a psychic, grab them, tag them and use the tag as a monitoring device to determine what abilities this person has. They put it the database and viola, a list of all the psychics and their abilities. It's supposed to help the Information Bureaus and Law Enforcement agencies deal with the psychic populous. At least that's the theory."

Hayley shook her head it sounded more like an easier way to single people out and harass them.

"What? Hey if psychics didn't pose a threat to normal people there wouldn't be a need for this type of thing."

Hayley had to hold back the flash of anger she felt. A threat, he thought psychics were a threat to normal people? She couldn't help but wonder how he would feel toward her if she told him, she was a psychic, that she was one of those threats that he was talking about. She drew in a deep breath to calm herself down if she didn't her powers would flare out of control. She didn't want to accidentally set fire to something or send something flying. It was bad enough that when she lost just a little bit of her control, she could slip into people's minds without realizing it.

"Devlin, just because some people have psychic abilities, it doesn't mean they are a threat. It's not their fault that being born on this planet instead of Earth has given them abilities that no one else has. It's not fair to lump all psychics into one category just because of the people we are paid to track down who happen to have the so-called gift."

"Don't lecture me Hayley. I know what I'm talking about. All psychics are nothing more than bombs just waiting to go off."

Hayley was taken aback by Devlin's tone. She felt the tears burning her eyes as hurt welled up inside of her.

"I'm going to go get some work done, just write up a report on the progress of the case, I'll type it up later."

She turned quickly. Instead of going to her desk she went to the bathroom and locked herself in, letting the tears fall. Leaning against the door she shook her head. She could never tell him who she was. She could never tell him what she was and most of all she could never tell him she was in love with him. She wiped away the tears that had already fallen, ignoring Devlin, who now tapped softly on the door demanding to know what was going on.

"Migraine," She called out, wincing. Her head was already pounding, her heartbeat had picked up. She could feel her power rising up inside of herself, like water filling a cup, ready to spill out, through her fingertips, through her pores. She swallowed as the pressure inside of her increased. Taking deep even breaths she tried to regain her composure and control. Shutting her eyes, squeezing them tight she focused all her energy on tamping the threatening surge down.

Finally her powers started to recede until she felt the emptiness that came with shoving her powers down and regaining control. Taking a deep breath, opening her eyes, she reached for the light

switch and looked at herself in the mirror, her make-up was smudged and she looked drained. Her normally glowing milk chocolate skin looked waxy. Her dark brown eyes no longer shined, they looked hollow and empty. As she always looked, right after she used or shoved down her powers. She took another deep breath, turned, opened the door, turned off the light switch and made her way to her desk. She was annoyed to find Devlin riffling through her desk.

"What are you doing?" She asked, hugging the files to her chest.

"I'm looking for your migraine medicine." Devlin said.

He didn't even bother to look up at her, instead continuing to riffle through her desk drawer.

Thank God, I don't keep anything in there, she thought.

"Devlin, I don't keep my migraine medicine in my desk drawer."

"Well, it's not in your purse."

Hayley stared at him wide eyed.

"You went through my purse?!"

"Yeah, I had to see if you kept it there. Didn't find anything though. You really need to start carrying it around with you."

Relief rushed through her. She had forgotten to bring her so called 'migraine medicine' with her today. The pills she took to help manage psychic outbursts were currently at home.

"I forgot it today."

"Yeah but what if I wasn't here? What would you have done?" Devlin straightened up and looked at her, concern filling his eyes, as he looked her over.

"Lie down on the couch? I can take care of myself Devlin."

"I know but . . ."

He didn't finish because Marshall Jacobs came through the door waving his digital camera in the air

"I got the money shot. Check it out, Mrs. Houston, with her boy toy."

Devlin dropped the pens he was holding and rushed over to Marshall, grabbing the man's camera he looked at the clear shots of their client Mr. Carter Houston's wife *in flagrante delicto*.

"You are a Godsend. Hayley write up Marshall's check right now, I'm going to call Mr. Houston. Looks like champagne tonight. I'm taking you all out to dinner."

Marshall grinned and leaned a hip against Hayley's desk.

"I hope it's a nice place this time, not that rat infested dive he took us to the last time we scored huge. Hey, you okay kiddo? You look exhausted."

Marshall leaned in. He brushed his fingers over the side of Hayley's face. Hayley stopped rummaging around in her desk for the checkbook, sighing at the feeling of Marshall's healing touch running through her. The warm energy of his power poured through her, taking away the throbbing pain she felt and re-energizing her.

"Better?"

"Yes."

"Want to talk about it? Is it Devlin?"

She nodded.

"He's not a bad man, just has some problems."

She shrugged, found the checkbook and wrote out Marshall's check.

"Doesn't matter." She said as nonchalantly as she could.

"Yes it does, you need to tell him, trust him."

She ripped the check out of the book and handed it to him, looking him dead in the eye.

"You mean like you do?"

Marshall's cheeks became red. Marshall still hadn't brought up the fact that he was a healing psychic with Devlin.

"Point taken, but you have to tell him, considering . . ."

"Considering what? What do you have to tell me?" Devlin returned, bottle of champagne in one hand with three glass flutes in the other.

"Nothing, just giving her some advice on how to handle a suitor," Marshall said.

"Suitor?" Devlin asked.

"Yeah, old Earth word for admirer."

"Who would want to admire Hayley?"

That was the last straw for Hayley. She quickly shoved things back into her drawer and slammed it shut. Grabbing her purse and jacket she didn't pause, instead heading for the door.

"I'm going home."

"Hayley, I was kidding. Seriously, come back. Hayley!" Devlin called after her.

But it was too late. Hayley was already out of the door.

* * *

It took Hayley an hour to get home with the underground subway system a mess due to an accident. By the time she got home she was exhausted, her nerves were frayed and the only thing she wanted was a nice hot bath, something to eat and to slip into bed. She shrugged out of her jacket and dropped her purse on a side table when she noticed her answering machine message light blinking. Walking over to it, she hit play and waited.

"First message," The machine's mechanical voice said. There was a pause before she heard Devlin's voice.

"Hayley it's Devlin. Look I'm sorry. I was joking. Who wouldn't want to admire you? I mean, you're Hayley."

"Good job Dev." Hayley shook her head at Marshall's voice.

"Anyway, I'm sorry, uh, that's all. I'll see you tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow is Saturday, you idiot." Marshall snickered.

"Shut up Marshall. Uh, I'll see you when I see you? Better?"

"I don't know stupid ask the answering machine, it's still recording." Marshall burst into laughter. "Shit!"

The phone slammed down. Shaking her head, she decided not to call Devlin back, letting him squirm brought a smile to her face. Moving around her apartment she heated up a microwavable pizza and went about figuring out what bath salts to put into her bath before bed. The microwave beeped and Hayley returned to the kitchen. She had just transferred the steaming pizza pie onto a plate when her phone rang. She decided to let the machine pick it up, thinking it was Devlin trying to apologize again. A woman's voice came over the speaker.

"Hello? Ms. Michaels? This is Amanda Meadows, I need your help. Please it's urgent. You're the only one who can help me. I'm at the Moor and Roses Motel on Route 44, please come quickly and come alone. Don't bring Devlin Virgil, please."

The call ended and her machine beeped. Hayley stood in her kitchen frozen, pizza cutter in hand, staring at her machine. Amanda Meadows had contacted her and sounded so scared. Hayley debated with herself to call Devlin or not. Putting the pizza back in the microwave, she grabbed her purse and jacket, deciding to call Devlin when she was halfway to the motel. All her common sense screamed that something was wrong. Why would the woman call her? Why not her husband or the police? Why not Devlin?

Because you're a psychic. Her inner voice of reason responded. She slid into her solar car and started it up. Since she lived in the city, she rarely used her car. It was much easier to get to her job with the trains than sitting in traffic. It was also cheaper since car companies had jacked up the price of solar power cells for cars. She had just turned onto the highway when she hit the call button and told the computer to call Devlin.

Keeping an eye on her rear view mirror, she could see quite clearly a car following her. Obviously the case of the missing Dr. Amanda Raines Meadows was more than a wife gone missing. Running a hand through her hair she kept her eye on the navy sedan two cars behind her. The office phone kept ringing until the answering machine picked up and Devlin's gravelly voice came over the speakers of her car. Groaning she hit the button to disconnect the call and then hit it again to have to the computer call Devlin's cell phone. He picked it up on the second ring.

"Devlin Virgil."

"Hey Devlin, it's Hayley."

"Where the hell are you? I'm at your apartment."

She held back a smile he had been so concerned about her that he had gone to her apartment.

"I got a craving for barbecued steak."

"What?"

"I got a craving for barbecued steak."

"Uh huh, are you feeling okay? Should you be eating spicy food with a migraine?"

Hayley rolled her eyes. The man was a good detective but when it came to her, he couldn't see the obvious when it stood right in front of him.

"I'm feeling better now. Look, can you meet me at the Barbecue Hut off of Highway 44? I want to help celebrate the big case pay off. Okay?"

He didn't answer for a while and she became nervous.

"What's going on?"

"Just meet me there and we can discuss things over barbecued steak, Martian style."

She waited for him to get the hint. Finally he answered her.

"Okay, I'll see you in an hour."

Hayley shut off the phone. The navy blue sedan kept at least a two car distance from her, but always kept her in sight. She suspected that Mr. Meadows wasn't the only one trying to find his wife. She also thought her car was bugged. In the last year or so a technology boom had created all sorts of new gadgets especially those used for spying on people. Working for Devlin she had encountered several ways to eavesdrop on other people's conversations. Giving the front part of her car a cursory glance she spotted one of those ways attached to her visor, a thin strip of gray metal that almost blended into same color of her car's interior.

The only thing that gave it away was that matte sheen, which didn't blend with its fabric background. The bug doubled as a tracker and listening device. She felt the temptation to rip the thing off of her visor, but then they would know. Pulling into the restaurant was the only way she could think of to meet Devlin and talk to him about Dr. Meadows' phone call in safety. It was harder to eavesdrop on a conversation if there were several conversations going on at the same time. She couldn't help but wonder how they knew that Dr. Meadows would contact her. They probably figured Mr. Meadows would hire Devlin, she surmised silently. She then wondered if Amanda Meadows had contacted her husband and if someone was following him too.

She spotted her exit and turned on her blinker, with ease she managed to get across the busy highway and take the exit to the restaurant. Finding a spot closest to the restaurant was tricky since it was during rush hour. Parking, she shut off her engine and waited until she saw the navy blue sedan pull into the parking area. She got out of her car and headed for the building. Inside, the place was a mad house. Waiters and waitresses bustled everywhere. After waiting ten minutes a waiter finally greeted her.

"Good afternoon, welcome to The Barbecue Hut, where everything on the menu is cooked Martian style to perfection, table for one or two?"

"Two please."

"Right this way."

He picked up a menu and lead, her to a table, weaving around various patrons, waiters, waitresses and tables. Finally they came to a table in the back, closest to the kitchen. She sat down in the chair he pulled out for her and took the menu offered her.

"Is there anything you'd like to drink while you look over the menu?"

"Yes, a cherry coke if you have it. I'm expecting a man to join me. He has violet-blue eyes and black hair, about 6'7."

"One cherry coke, you got it and as soon as he arrives I'll show him to the table. I'll be back in a few minutes."

He bowed his head and disappeared into the crowd. She pretended to look over the menu, in

reality she looked over the busy dining area until she spotted her trackers. Unlike everyone else coming home from work and stopping off for a bite to eat, they looked buttoned up, their suits neatly pressed, no wrinkling or loose ties. She could also spot the almost invisible earpiece wires coming out of their ears.

She watched one man put his elbow on the table, his mouth was moving and his companion's head was nodding, but she could see the man's finger pressing his ear as if either talking or listening to the person on the other end of the wire. She looked over her menu, her stomach growling. She decided it was safe for now. She was about three blocks from the Moor and Roses Inn. While waiting for Devlin she ordered a small barbecued steak well done, a side order of garlic mashed potatoes and buttered biscuits. Within a few minutes her food had arrived. She had already started eating when Devlin was lead back to her table.

"Well, we won't be kissing later," He said in greeting. He sat down in the chair opposite her, picked up a fork and dug into her mashed potatoes.

"Hey get your own."

"Mmmm, but yours is right there."

She slapped his hand when he reached over for another scoop. He unzipped his jacket, shrugged out of it and ordered his own version of her meal only in super, hungry man size. He seemed oblivious to the fact that his holster was on display for everyone to see. She couldn't help but shake her head.

"You sure you'll be able to eat all that?"

"Two words, doggy bag."

He ticked off the words with his index and middle finger. She sighed.

"How's your migraine?"

There was something in the way he asked, that made her pause.

"Fine, took some medicine, so all better."

"Uh huh, so you got the sudden urge for barbecued meat instead of pepperoni pizza huh?"

"You broke into my apartment?"

She wasn't sure whether to be annoyed or angry.

"You weren't answering your door."

His expression was shuttered and she couldn't help but wonder what he found when snooping around her place. She knew he wouldn't be able to resist looking around her place. After all she never let him come up to her apartment to see her. She always made sure she met him at a coffee shop or at the office. The arrival of his food saved her from further conversation when he opted to start eating rather than talk. After a few minutes he finally broke the silence between them.

"When were you going to tell me?"

"About what?"

"That you were contacted by Dr. Amanda Meadows."

"Why do you think we're here right now? I couldn't risk telling you over the phone, my car was bugged and I was being followed."

"So, instead of coming back to the office, you decide it's in your best interest to go meet this woman by yourself."

"She contacted me."

"So? You didn't think that was suspicious?"

"That's why I called you."

"Not good enough. You could have waited for me. You said so yourself, you're being followed and have been bugged. For all I know you could be kidnapped next. I can't afford to lose you. You're the only assistant I've got."

"Good to know your only concern is if you have to put an advert in the newspaper for a new assistant."

"Hayley."

His warning tone clearly said he was annoyed.

"No, she called me and yes I did think that was suspicious. I couldn't afford to wait for you to get your ass in gear, for all I know they bugged my apartment too. Why she contacted me is of no concern to me, she's in trouble, that's all that matters."

"Excuse me? You couldn't afford to wait for me?"

Eyes narrowed, Devlin's annoyance was turning into anger. He reached over and grabbed her hand, his face becoming hardened. She gulped, the look in his eyes said, he meant business. He was beyond pissed with her.

"Let me tell you what you can *afford*. You can *afford* to tell me what's going on so I don't have to go off and save your ass when you get in trouble. We're dealing with serious people here; people who are willing to bug your car and follow you here. You can *afford* to wait for me so that you don't have to go alone somewhere that could be dangerous and you damn well can *afford* to stay at the office where it's safe so you don't get hurt. Got it?"

She yanked her hand away feeling as if he treated her like a child. She had lost her appetite.

"Yes I got it. Can I go to the bathroom alone or do you need to escort me?"

In response he stood up and gestured for her to precede him. Clenching her fists she stood up, grabbed her jacket, purse and walked past him. He threw a few dollars on the table and followed her. She marched to the bathroom and pushed open the door, she was about to go into one of the stalls when she heard the door open behind her, looking toward the door she saw Devlin looking around in wonder.

"Devlin! This is the ladies room," she exclaimed, looking around quickly to see if anyone else was in the bathroom. She bent down looking under the stall doors to find they were alone in the small room.

"How come you guys have a chair in here? Are those decorative soaps?"

He picked up a brightly colored package and turned it over in his hands. Examining it, turning it this way and that, trying to determine what it was.

"That's a maxi pad."

As if it were a snake, he dropped it back on the counter and stepped back. She rolled her eyes and stepped into the stall, flicking the locking mechanism up she put down the lid to the toilet and sat down gingerly. Originally she had wanted to go into the bathroom and take her prescription for psychic episodes. She managed to get the bottle before leaving her apartment, just in case she would need it. That way she'd have her powers under control. Currently dealing with Devlin made her feel unstable. She wouldn't take the tablet with Devlin here. If she took the pill he would ask if she was okay, yet again. The side effects of the tablet were an upset stomach, a brief headache and dizziness. Checking her watch she waited until she'd been in the stall for at least three minutes, getting up she flushed the toilet, unlocked the door and walked out to the sink area to find Devlin sitting on the counter.

"Devlin get down from there."

"Yes, momma."

"Don't be a smart ass."

"I know my ass is smart but you don't have to comment on it."

"Shut up."

"Is that the best you can do?"

"At the moment yes," She said, not looking at him.

He slipped off the counter and stood next her, brushing away some stray curls to slide his hand over her forehead. She resisted the urge to lean into his touch, the rough pads of his finger tips against her skin caused her nipples to pucker and her stomach to clench, her heart beat picked up speed and her body started to heat up.

"You feel warm." He said, his voice low, edged with huskiness. She felt nervous and scared. She wanted to tell him that was because of him but held back. For the longest time she'd loved him. It had only been five years since she started working for him, but four of those years she had been in love with him. Even though he had a gruff exterior and could be an ass at times, underneath it all he could

be kind, sweet and considerate.

They knew each other so well. Well, she knew him better than anyone else and that was not due to her psychic gifts. That was all due to watching him over the years. He didn't know all her secrets and she wanted to keep it that way. She stared into the bottomless violet, blue swirl of his eyes and sighed only to jerk back from his touch. For a second she had let herself get comfortable, almost forgetting why she was at the restaurant in the first place. His fingerless, gloved hands dropped down slowly and his eyes went from a sweet distraction to unreadable. He stepped away, a barrier forming between them, breaking the brief intimate moment.

'I'll be outside. We'll walk to the building together,' He said, his voice back to normal.

He brushed past her and left the bathroom. Sighing she turned on the tap and splashed cold water on her face. Pulling a paper towel out of the worn metallic canister she looked at herself in the mirror. Her large brown eyes, set wide on her face, a medium size button nose, full lips, round cheeks, wild curly hair, pulled back in a low ponytail, with strands framing her face. She stood at 5'5, average height, to her, she looked average as well, not exactly curvy, but she did have some curves.

She sighed, wadded up the damp paper towel and threw it away. Brushing back some strands of hair. She straightened up and headed for the door. Opening it she found Devlin leaning against the wall just outside the door, the picture of rugged toughness. Long black hair pulled back into a ponytail, with chunks framing his face. Long, wool, black overcoat with a multitude of pockets, black T-shirt stretched taut over his hard chest, baggy black pants and black shit kicker boots with the silver bump toe. His chiseled features tense as he studied the dining area, ignoring the admiring looks he got from a table full of women.

"Excuse me sir, I was wondering if you could help us." One of the women from the table that had been ogling him called out. Devlin looked over at them, his features impassive.

"Sorry no time, gotta get the wife back home, she's impatient for me to show her a new trick I learned."

His face broke into a devilish grin and before she knew it he had grabbed one of her hands and pulled her toward the door.

"Wife?" She asked, trying to keep up with his pace, while dodging tables, waiters and patrons.

"Girlfriend sounded too easy."

"Devlin, I can walk."

"I know, but we don't have time, the suits are finishing up their meal and we gotta move to beat them to the inn."

They soon left the restaurant and headed east, every once in a while checking behind them to see if they were being followed all the while Devlin never let go of Hayley's hand.

Chapter 3

Devlin resisted the urge to brush his thumb over the back of her hand. He pulled her through the crowd, keeping his senses open, looking back occasionally. After she had left the office, he felt horrible for what he had said. Even though he was kidding he knew he could sometimes go too far with his joking and to see her so hurt made him feel pain. He called her first then had gone after her, taking his car, dealing with rush hour traffic and Marshall being a side seat driver.

By the time they got to her apartment, she was gone but he didn't know that. When she didn't answer the door after he had pounded on it for so long and so loud that her neighbor threatened to call the cops, he broke in with Marshall trying to stop him. He searched all over the apartment. He found the cold pizza in the microwave and the bath salts on the lip of the tub and a towel put out.

He found no evidence of foul play, which worried him even more than if someone had taken her and the place was a mess. He had made a lot of enemies doing what he did for a living. If someone had taken her for revenge, there would be no holding him back. In the five years that she had started working for him, he had come to care for her like no other in his life. Not even Marshall mattered to him as much as Hayley did and he had known Marshall longer.

She was able to calm him down and keep him from doing something stupid. Her presence soothed him. Before her he was wilder, ruder and didn't care as much as he did. He glanced down at her, looking at where their hands connected, he couldn't help but wonder what secrets she kept from him. He had a file on her, one he hadn't compiled himself but he kept putting off looking into it. Marshall had commented that maybe he was scared of what he would find in that file, which was in part true. If he found something he didn't like, he would never be able to look at her the same way again. He wasn't sure if he could handle that.

Giving into temptation, he brushed his thumb over her hand and looked ahead. He couldn't help but feel that this whole thing was a setup. Something was off. His research into the doctor's disappearance had lead to dead ends. She was kidnapped from her office. Her car was still in the parking lot, not broken into. The security cameras had been offline due to a monthly upgrade so they lost at least ten seconds recording time.

During that time the doctor had made it to the parking lot and by the time the security cameras had come back online she had disappeared. He had been surprised by the helpfulness of the New Earth Research Center, normally they guarded their secrets tightly and getting any info from them was like pulling teeth. But they were desperate to get their team leader on the Tag and Track project, as they felt she was just about to make a huge break through on a way to track psychics.

He couldn't blame them on wanting to track psychics. His experience with the so called 'gifted populous' hadn't been easy. He had always met psychics who were deceptive and destructive. Some determined to take others down with them. He could still hear the echoes of his mother trying to talk his father down off the ledge after his powers had overwhelmed him. His father had ended up dead and his mother had never recovered from her husband's death. Devlin had been sent to live with relatives who hadn't wanted him, he ended up spending more time on the streets and hanging out with the wrong crowd and getting arrested rather than at home or in school. The way Hayley looked at him at times made him feel like he could be better, more than what he had grown up with. He halted and she crashed into him, causing him to rock forward.

"We're here."

He looked up at what was supposed to be the Moor and Roses Inn, an old motel that looked like it had seen better days. The pale yellow paint flaked and the windows looked like they hadn't been cleaned in quite some time. The only people who stayed at a place like this were either on a tight budget, cheating on their spouse, hiding from the law or someone worse.

"Hike up your skirt."

"What?"

"Your skirt, hike it up so it barely covers your ass."

He turned around, dug into his pocket and produced a small knife; he made his way behind her, took hold of her hair and cut the ponytail holder. He ran his fingers through her hair, savoring the silky feel of it against his hands. He massaged her scalp and scrunched up her hair until it looked wild and disheveled like she had just come from his bed. His cock lengthened and hardened in his pants and he was thankful his pants were baggy enough to hide his arousal.

He turned her around and leaned down. She jerked her head back. He took her head in his hands and held her still. Bringing his lips down, he brushed them over hers once, twice before kissing her hard, devouring her with a passionate kiss. Allowing himself the excuse of making her look the part of his wife, he kissed her until he was sure her lips were bruised. Pulling back with just a thread of control left he examined his work. Her eyes were darkened with desire and her lips were a dark bruised red. He wanted to lean down again and kiss her again and again until she was aroused like him but they had no time.

"What was that for?"

"You're my wife remember and we're horny, so horny we've come to the motel near the restaurant in need of a room. We check in and casually ask about the good doctor, saying she recommended the place, find her, turn her over to her husband, collect the fee and go back to our ho hum lives at the office."

"You had to kiss me?"

"Yes."

"Why are you still holding my head?"

"Well just in case you need to be kissed again. After all, what other time am I going to be able to shut you up so effectively?"

"I could sue you for sexual harassment you know."

"Sure, but I'd have to have said something sexual in order for that to happen and so far I've only kissed you and this is for the job."

"You sure you don't want me and not the other way around as you claim?"

Her eyes were sparkling with mischief and he smiled back. She jerked her head out of his hold and stepped back. He took a step forward, smiling.

"Nah, you want me you know you do."

"Uh huh, let's go lover, we have a fee to collect."

He followed her to the door and dashed ahead of her to open it. He leaned down just before she went in to whisper in her ear.

"Besides, if I really wanted to get slapped with a sexual harassment suit by you all I'd have to say was if that skirt went any higher I'd be tempted to say screw the fee, let's grab a room for ourselves and fuck." Leaving her speechless he ushered her into the lobby of the motel. He wrapped an arm around her and smiled at the attendant at the desk.

"Welcome to the Moor and Roses Inn, how many rooms and beds would you like?"

"One of each, please."

He turned to a still speechless Hayley whose lips were still parted in surprise. Leaning down he stole a kiss.

"Isn't that right, honey?"

He shook her shoulder to get her out of her dazed state.

"Yes, that's right. One room, one bed, sugar lump."

She slapped him hard on the ass, causing his hips to move forward. He looked down at her as if she'd gone mad.

"I can't wait to get a hold of his nice tight ass, in our one room, one bed. Don't worry doodle berry, Mistress Hayley will punish you soon enough. You've been a very bad boy."

She emphasized her point with another slap while Devlin was left speechless. Devlin could only stare at her as she took control of the situation and took the room key from the woman.

"You know how it is with slaves who have been bad right? Men sometimes they need a good

spanking."

The woman at the front desk laughed. "You're telling me?"

"Spanking, flogging, maybe even a little clamping now and again just to show them whose boss."

"And don't forget cock rings, can't let them have all the control of that now can we?" The attendant chuckled. Devlin had lost complete control and Hayley and the attendant were bonding. He could only stare at her as she produced a credit card and handed it over to the attendant.

"Oh does he like strap-ons? I've got a few toys that you may like to use on him. Don't tell the bosses though. They don't like me trying to sell during my shift but I have to make extra money somehow you know? This dump doesn't pay that much."

"Oh I totally understand. I work for him you see and even though we're married he doesn't seem to think that I should get a raise for all the work I do around the office. But that's okay I get him back in the bedroom, tie him down, and gag him. We'll see whose boss now won't we?"

The women shared a laugh and all Devlin could do was stand there and stare, getting more and more aroused by all this talk of strapping him down and letting Hayley have her wicked way with him. This job had taken on a whole new life, revealing a side to Hayley he had never known existed. He found it exciting and sexy as hell. He couldn't help but wonder if she would be willing to do that to him. He watched her small hands handle a purple glass eight and half inch dildo, her fingers wrapped around the shaft running her palm up and down the length. He groaned out loud. His stomach tightened, his cock throbbed and his balls ached. She was torturing him and she didn't realize his pain was for real.

"What do you think? You want to try this one honey?"

He nodded not understanding the question. She gave him a huge grin and handed it back to the woman.

"Add it to the room charge."

The woman wrapped up the dildo, boxed it and handed it Hayley who handed it to him. The case and Dr. Meadows were both forgotten at the thought of watching Hayley use that thing while he watched.

"Nicedoingbusinesswithyou."

"And you have a great day." The attendant said, smiling.

"Let's go, slave."

Hayley turned, grabbed him by the hand and lead him toward the bank of elevators. She pressed the top button, not letting go of his hand for a second. The elevator finally came and they stepped inside, alone, the doors slid closed and she started to giggle. He looked down at her confused.

"The look on your face was so priceless, I swear, I thought you really did think we were going to a motel room to use that thing. Give me that."

She took the box from him, still smiling. Like ice water being thrown on him, he was pulled back into the case. He cursed himself for allowing his attraction to Hayley make him forget about the job.

"Shit, the doctor . . ."

"Don't worry, she's here."

"How do you know?"

"I saw her in the seating area of the lobby. Our eyes met and she nodded at me, I held up the room key to her when the woman was getting her box of stuff. I think she's going to meet us in five minutes."

"Good job Hayley." Devlin said, a sense of pride filling him.

"Thank you." Hayley grinned.

The elevator dinged and the doors slid open, they made their way to their motel room to wait.

Chapter 4

They didn't have to wait long, ten minutes of waiting in the room, most of which was Hayley getting herself together. She had found another hair tie. Much to Devlin's annoyance and pulled her skirt back down to mid thigh length much to his disappointment. There was a soft rap on their door and Hayley went to go answer it before Devlin could stop her. She opened the door to show him it was Dr. Amanda Raines Meadows. The doctor stepped into the room, clutching a large overnight bag to her side. She looked around unsure of her surrounding or the people inside of the room, Hayley closed the door softly and walked further into the room.

"Please doctor, have a seat," Devlin said, gesturing to one of three chairs in the room.

The woman looked just like her picture only tired and worn. She sat down gingerly on the edge of a threadbare chair.

"We've been looking for you Dr. Meadows. I'm sure your husband will be very pleased when we call him to tell him we've found you safe and sound." Devlin said, studying Dr. Meadows.

The woman's large blue eyes darted around the room. She licked her lips before speaking.

"You haven't told him where I am, have you?" Dr. Meadows asked, looking wearily at Devlin.

"No, we haven't but as soon as we shake the people tailing us we'll call him." Devlin replied.

"You've been followed here?" Dr. Meadows asked, panic creeping into her voice.

"Yes, we have. We managed to shake them for now." Hayley said soothingly, trying to calm down the doctor.

"Good, what I have to say is very important and we don't have a lot of time."

Hayley's palms started to sweat and she felt her panic rise at those words. The doctor's eyes met hers as she slipped a file out of her large overnight bag and handed it to Hayley.

"Here you may want to take a look at it." The doctor said as she handed the file to Hayley, who took it with shaking hands. Devlin slipped off the bed and made his way over to Hayley who flipped open the file folder. She gasped. A picture of her at the grocery store a few weeks ago was the first thing she saw. She started to go through the file finding more pictures of her through the years from her time at hiding in a homeless shelter to her first apartment, at her first job and just outside the Devlin Private Investigations office. She found a detailed report of her over the years from how she survived after being set free from the R & D center. They knew where she lived, her every day routine, they knew the type of car she drove and where she liked to get lunch when time permitted it.

"Hayley what is this?" Devlin asked.

"That is Hayley's file from the New Earth Genesis Clinic," the doctor answered for Hayley, who had gone speechless.

"Hayley?" Devlin demanded.

Hayley was too shocked to answer him. Devlin took the file out her hands reading the detailed account of the assistant he now knew nothing about. He found a bio on the very last page in the file.

Subject: Hayley Michaels

Date of Birth: July 3, 2122

Patient Number: 33377983-H-G-M

Doctors: Halworth, Graham and Meadows

Psychic Ability: Telepathy, Telekinesis, Elemental abilities. More tests must be done.

Psychic Level: Unknown

Psychic Powers: Mind reading and communication, moving objects with the use of the mind and the ability to control the elements. More tests must be done in all fields.

Devlin closed his eyes. He couldn't believe this, *his* Hayley, *his* trustworthy assistant was one of them, a psychic. He opened his eyes and looked up to find Hayley shaking Dr. Meadows.

"How do they know? How long have they been watching me? Tell me! Tell me!"

Devlin grabbed her by her shoulders and pulled her away but she refused to let go.

"I need to know! I need to know." Hayley cried out, tears streaming down her cheeks as, hugging herself she sank down to the floor crying.

"I'm sorry Hayley I tried as best I could to protect you, especially after what they had done to your parents but they found you, they've always known where you were." The doctor said, going over to Hayley, crouching down to look Hayley in the eye. Hayley looked up at the doctor. Devlin was speechless at the raw pain in her eyes.

"Why would you protect me? I was just a test subject, a number on a piece of paper, a fucking lab rat to you."

The only emotions in her voice were pain and anger.

"Hayley you have to calm down and understand we don't have time. They're coming for you. They're coming to get you. They're not happy that you haven't manifested any powers as an adult. They want to put you back in the program to bring out your full abilities," Dr. Meadows said, reaching out a hand to place it on Hayley's shoulder. Hayley shook the doctor's hand off.

"They can come if they want but they won't take me back. I'll kill myself before I let that happen," Hayley said bitterly.

Her words jump started Devlin's own memories of his father, standing on the ledge of their apartment, his mother trying to talk him down, crying, tears staining her pretty face.

"The hell you will. We're going to get out of here and you're going to explain to me why the hell I should ever trust you again." Devlin said he made his way over to Hayley, pushing the doctor away as he reached for Hayley.

"You can go to hell. I won't let them take me back." Hayley said, anger filling her voice.

Devlin took a few steps back as he watched her eyes became a metallic brown and the air suddenly felt heavy. Devlin reached under his coat for his gun every instinct in him warring against each other to not shot her but if worse came to worse he would, he knew he would. He refused to let another person lose their life due to a psychic meltdown. Suddenly the door burst open and men with guns rushed into the room.

"Dr. Meadows get behind us please." One of the men ordered.

"No, you don't understand, this isn't the way to go about it. Please, if I can just get through to her." Dr. Meadows pleaded.

Devlin snorted, gun drawn aiming at Haley's heart.

"Look doc, she doesn't seem like she's in an understanding mood does she? Do what the man says." The man who seemed to be the leader replied.

Out of the corner of his eye he could see Dr. Meadows not moving.

"Go!" Devlin ordered. He couldn't concentrate on Hayley and the doctor.

She still didn't move. Devlin became distracted by Hayley's voice, his eyes found hers.

"You'd shoot me Devlin?" Hayley asked, surprise on her face.

"You're a threat. You have to be taken out." Devlin replied, his voice empty of emotion.

Devlin felt pain shot through his heart at his words. He cared for this woman and he was going to have to kill her if necessary. The door to the bathroom burst open and men in riot gear came into the room surrounding Hayley, one of them grabbed her around her waist, two others took hold of her arms and another came up behind her and stabbed her arm with a needle. She thrashed as best she could.

"No, I'm not going back, not going back." Hayley cried out.

The room suddenly became very hot and then it all stopped. Hayley hung limp in the man's arms. Devlin didn't holster his gun instead he held it out in front of him, both hands wrapped around the handle, two fingers on the trigger, the safety off.

"Stand down Virgil. It's okay, everything is handled."

One of the men said.

"I don't think so. I don't know what the fuck just happened but I want it explained to me, now." Devlin demanded.

"Put your gun away Mr. Virgil."

The men parted to reveal Mr. Meadows. He walked into the room surveying the scene with intense glee.

"It's all right, everything is handled, you found my wife and you've delivered a very valuable test subject to us. Good job." Mr. Meadows said, grinning.

Devlin didn't put his gun away, instead aiming it at Mr. Meadows.

"Explain yourself."

"All will be explained in due time. But you will be doubly compensated for your work."

"Fine, you'll explain yourself when you get back to my office. Bring Hayley."

"But . . ."

"No buts otherwise I start shooting and I may be outnumbered but I'm a damn good shot. Do you really want to have to deal with police and paramedics?"

Mr. Meadows hesitated and sighed. Devlin could see that Mr. Meadows didn't want to have to explain himself to the authorities. The Government hated dealing with messes and this situation would turn into one if it wasn't handled correctly.

"Fine. I'll explain everything back at your office and we will bring Ms. Michaels with us. Gentlemen let's get out of here. We will of course, Mr. Virgil, pay for the room." Mr. Meadows said, somewhat more subdued than before.

"I told you before don't call me that. Mr. Virgil was my father." Devlin growled in agitation.

Mr. Meadows shrugged as the men left the room. Devlin put the safety back on his gun and holstered it, grabbed the box with the dildo in it from the bed, Haley's purse from when it slipped down to the floor and the file also on the ground. He followed everyone out of the room. He didn't know why he took the dildo or the purse with him but for some reason he couldn't leave those items behind. Ignoring the looks he got in the lobby he left the motel and made his way back the Barbecue Hut.

Getting into his car he let his head fall back onto the headrest. Night had fallen and his world had shifted, the one person he thought he could trust had lied to him, the one person who he had come to care for above anyone else was not who he thought she was. Despite all the anger, pain, disappointment and feelings of betrayal he still cared about her. Burying his feelings as deep as he could, he started the car and pulled out of the parking lot. Before he let them take her, he wanted to hear from her own lips that she was a psychic that she was one of them; a ticking time bomb waiting to go off, just like his father.

Chapter 5

When he got home he found Marshall sitting on a couch in the waiting area of the office. He scrambled up when he saw Devlin.

"Did you find her? Is she okay?" Marshall asked eagerly.

"She's one of them," Devlin replied wearily.

"One of whom?" Marshall asked.

"Them, a psychic, we found that Doctor Meadows woman and she showed Hayley a file with all this stuff about her in it."

Devlin tossed the file at Marshall who caught it before it fell open.

"Are you sure this is for real? I mean it could be some sort of Government bullshit . . ."

Devlin cut Marshall off.

"I saw it! Saw it with my own eyes and I felt it, she was going to go off." Devlin said.

"Not Hayley, come one, what could set her off?" Marshall asked worried.

Devlin didn't answer him.

"They were going to drag her back to that place she came from and I say good riddance." Devlin declared.

"Devlin," Marshall said in disbelief.

"What? She was going to take everyone out, me included."

"You don't know that." Marshall reasoned.

"You didn't see her, besides when they get here, you'll get to talk to her yourself. You'll see, she's no better than the others, just like them and just like them she'll be caged as she should be." Devlin said angrily.

"Devlin. Please, this is Hayley we're talking about." Marshall pleaded.

Devlin ignored Marshall's pleading tone instead grabbing a bottle of whisky from the refrigerator and a glass out of the cupboard. Pouring himself a shot he threw it back, letting the alcohol burn the back of his throat. The front door opened and several armed men trooped in looking over the open space, after about a minute Mr. Meadows followed them with Hayley in shackles, tiny lights blinking different colors along the chain links indicated her status as a prisoner and that the shackles were locked.

Devlin's heart lurched in his chest when he saw her, they had her wrists and ankles shackled, her eyes looked slightly glazed. He squeezed the glass in his hand, he was torn between going to her and demanding that she be released and ordering them out of his place of business. But he couldn't do it, old wounds had been ripped open tonight and she was the cause of it all.

"Mr. Virgil, here is your fee, twenty million dollars, one for finding my wife and for delivering her to us and for the lost test subject known as Hayley Michaels. The Government of New Earth thanks you," Mr. Meadows said beaming.

Mr. Meadows walked forward and handed Devlin a check, which Devlin accepted, holding it to the light to check for the watermark and the security strip that came with all Government issued checks, they were there, shoving it into his pocket he glared at Mr. Meadows.

"You've paid me, now get the hell out and take your security with you, leave Hayley, I still have questions for her."

"Mr. Virgil we can't just leave her here without supervision, I would feel better if I left some security behind, Dobson, Treger stay behind and escort the test subject when Mr. Virgil is done." Mr. Meadows ordered.

"No. One armed guard and Dr. Meadows, she still needs to explain a few things to me."

"Mr. Virgil . . ." Mr. Meadows started, but Devlin cut him off.

"Mr. Virgil was my father, those are my conditions otherwise I may do something you won't like, got it?"

Devlin tossed the bottle of whisky to Marshall who caught it, and then he put down the glass on a nearby counter, reached under his coat, un-holstered his gun and took off the safety. Aiming it at Mr. Meadows head he took a shot, the bullet grazed Mr. Meadows' ear. Devlin didn't care that now all the guns in the room except his were aimed at him. Red dots danced across his chest, head, and stomach.

"I don't care if I live but both of us aren't leaving this room alive, got me?"

Mr. Meadows blanched.

"Put your guns away. Amanda, you and Dobson stay here, the rest of us will leave now. Nice doing business with you Mr. Virgil, good night."

Mr. Meadows bowed and left with his security following him out. Devlin put the safety back on and holstered his gun. He walked to his desk, shrugged off his coat and draped it on the back of the chair, revealing his usual attire of a black tank top and black baggy pants. He pulled out his chair and sank down, putting his booted feet up on his desk, he looked over at Dr. Meadows and Hayley, the doctor was speaking softly to Hayley who didn't seem to be responding.

"Hey! Over here." Devlin called out.

Everyone turned towards him, Marshall looked at him hesitantly, Hayley looked drugged and Dr. Meadows looked scared.

"Bring Hayley over here, Marsh," Devlin ordered.

Marshall guided Hayley over to Devlin's desk, gently. He pulled out the visitors chair and helped her sit down in it carefully. For the first time Devlin noticed that Hayley wasn't wearing her jacket, her sleeveless shell showed off her arms which were bruised. Devlin gritted his teeth. He looked at Dr. Meadows deciding it was better to deal with his current case rather than the past. He also avoided looking at Hayley there was too much emotion there that he didn't want to deal with.

"Dr. Meadows, what happened? Did you runaway or get kidnapped?"

Dr. Meadows sat down in the chair next to Hayley, not meeting Devlin's eyes.

"Okay then how did you know about Hayley? Were you the Meadows mentioned in the file?"

Without looking at him she answered.

"That was my father. He was initially in charge of monitoring Hayley. She escaped after my father was sacked and I was put in charge of his department. He made me promise to watch over her. She was only five when the massive breakout happened. He was worried that a five year old girl with powers that weren't fully developed wouldn't be able to survive out in the real world on her own, but he was wrong. Hayley found a family to take her in and protect her, raise her and allow her to be the normal child she wouldn't have been at the facility."

"So you've been watching her this whole time? Either you've aged really well or you're not as old as the file says you are." Devlin said.

"I was a child prodigy, I was inducted into the New Earth Genesis Clinic when I was eleven and at thirteen I was promoted and put in charge of my father's department. So the file you put together on me is accurate I am 36."

"So was this whole meeting a set up all along to capture Hayley and put her back in your program?" Devlin asked.

"No, I was trying to warn her. For the last twenty-three years the N.E.G.C have been scouring the planet for all the psychics that were involved in that massive breakout." Dr. Meadows said, looking down at her hands.

"So, your husband, this case was a trap trying to get me to find you and get Hayley back at the same time?"

"Mr. Meadows is not my husband, he's my brother, Raines is my mother's Maiden name, which I use and yes this was a trap." Dr. Meadows still didn't look up.

"But why not just pick up Hayley once they had found her?" Marshall asked finally breaking his silence.

"It's not that easy, they had to make sure that she was who they were looking for." Dr. Meadows replied, looking up at Marshall.

Devlin thought back to a week ago when he came downstairs to find Mr. Meadows' hands on

Hayley, the way he had had her across her desk by the lapels of her jacket and how angry he felt seeing someone with their hands on Hayley, yelling at her. He could have easily gotten a DNA sample then. Devlin thoughts were interrupted by Marshall's next question.

"But still, he had DNA, that's still not a fool proof way to determine whether she is in fact psychic. DNA only proves if a person has the psychic abilities, how would he know, the file said she was basically an unknown in power, her other abilities were listed but how can you be sure as an adult that her powers are still present? There was a paper a few years ago that in some cases, when children born with the psychic genes become adults, they can lose their powers in some cases." Marshall said. Devlin couldn't help but wonder just how much info Marshall knew about psychics.

"True, but her parents were psychics and their abilities were extraordinary, her mother could move things with her mind and her father could use his powers to read a person's mind. Both her parents were quite powerful for their ages," Dr. Meadows said, awe, clearly in her tone.

"Ages?" Marshall asked.

"Her parents were young when they had her, her mother was eighteen and her father was only twenty." Dr. Meadows replied.

"What happened to them?" Marshall asked.

Amanda's eyes dropped to the floor, her voice a whisper as she told them of the fate of Hayley's parents.

"They were pushed too hard. My father pushed her father until he went insane and killed himself and her mother used so much of her power and was pushed so hard that she died of exhaustion."

Devlin looked over at Hayley, her eyes still slightly glazed over.

"What's wrong with her? Why is she not responding?" Devlin asked breaking his silence. "She was injected with an inhibitor that binds her powers for twenty-four hours. It slows down her thought processes and calms her down. It's like a relaxer," Amanda said, not looking at Devlin.

"Is she even aware of where she is, what's going on?" Marshall asked.

"Yes, on one level, but she can't do anything about it, until the drug is out of her system and her shackles have been removed." Amanda replied.

"Why after the shackles have been removed?" Marshall asked.

Devlin looked over at Hayley's wrists. The blinking lights were twinkling green at the moment, indicating the lock was on.

"If the drug is shown to be dissipating in her system too quickly another dose is injected directly by the shackles which have a built in syringe and needle in the cuffs." Amanda said.

"What will happen to Hayley once she is handed over to the N.E.G.C?" Marshall asked.

"She will be tested until her breaking point. If my brother has his way he will test her and push her until she is dead. Unless she proves of any use to the N.E.G.C she will be disposed of," Dr. Meadows answered, bitterness seeping into her tone.

Devlin's stomach roiled and there was a pain in his chest. So far he'd let Marshall do the talking. Only interjecting once in awhile but he couldn't remain silent any longer. As much as he hated what she was, he didn't want her dead.

"How does she avoid death? If she proves to have powers what will the N.E.G.C do to her?"

"They will give her combat training and put her to work in either the information bureau or the military." Dr. Meadows said, now looking at Hayley.

Devlin shuddered at the thought of Hayley working for either branch of the Government. To him Hayley wasn't capable of that kind of work, she was too gentle, too sweet, too caring. He stopped his thoughts and shook his head. He didn't know her at all, she'd been lying to him and yet he couldn't stop himself from caring for her. Amanda looked up at him, tears in her eyes.

"Please Mr. Devlin, you have to help me, she can't go back."

"Why should I help you? Why should I help her for that matter?" Devlin asked, a headache forming.

"Devlin!" Marshall exclaimed in disbelief.

"What? Marshall, she lied to me. Who knows what else she's lied to me about and besides why

should I help you?" He asked looking back at Amanda.

"Because she's a good person, she helps runaways and anyone for that matter when she can. She isn't hurting anyone," Dr. Meadows said, finally meeting Devlin's eyes.

"She's a psychic that is enough to hurt anyone," Devlin replied in disgust allowing his anger and sense of betrayal to act as a shield.

"Mr. Devlin, I've done some research about you and I know about your father, I'm sorry that you had to witness that and what happened to your mother but you can't let that color your judgment. Especially in Hayley's case, she's worked for you for five years. Doesn't that have any meaning to you?"

Devlin sighed and looked back at Hayley, shackled and drugged. He couldn't erase the past. He glanced up at the soldier standing guard not too far from them.

"You're taking a huge risk with that soldier there."

He nodded toward the armed man that Amanda seemed to have forgotten about. She shook her head.

"He'll help me if he has to. He was the man responsible for monitoring Hayley in the first place. He was the one who tipped me off to my brother finding out about Hayley's whereabouts."

"You sure he'll help you?" Devlin asked, not believing that the soldier was trustworthy.

"His parents were psychics but he didn't get the gift, he knows firsthand what it's like to have the Government do to your parents what they did to Hayley's parents." Amanda said softly.

Devlin decided to test that theory.

"Hey you, military boy get over here."

"Devlin!" Marshall admonished.

"You're not Hayley so that tone doesn't work on me." Devlin retorted. He stopped after he said that and shook his head. She had him more screwed up than he thought. He glanced back at Hayley, still sitting there looking drugged. Dobson arrived at Devlin's desk, gun at his side, ready for action at any moment.

"I'm sure you've been listening, is it true what Dr. Meadows said about your parents?" Devlin asked, studying the man before him.

The man was tall, about Devlin's height standing up with tiny braided black dreadlocks and alabaster skin, his large green eyes surveyed Devlin, weighing him before answering. "Yes." "Would you really be willing to help them escape?"

"I knew Hayley when she was at the Clinic. I played with her when we were children. My parents died the same day hers did. I will never forget what they did to my parents, the way their bodies were contorted at inhuman angles. So, yes I am willing to help them escape."

"You knew Hayley, Jake? Why didn't you say anything?"

"And why did you decide to work for the very same people that killed your parents?" Devlin asked.

Dobson turned to Amanda, an unreadable look in his eyes.

"I wanted to serve the people and protect them and besides being in the military have given me a comfortable lifestyle, enough that I can help others. As for Hayley, if they knew I knew her they wouldn't have let me be a part of the group that was sent to pick her up. They would have been afraid I'd do something like help her escape. So I kept my mouth shut, besides if I told you that I knew Hayley would you really let me monitor her upbringing?"

Amanda shook her head.

"No, I would have felt you were too personally involved and done something stupid to help her."

"This is all well and good but I haven't decided to help any of you. Hayley is property of the Government and they've given me a nice, big fat check for my assistance in bringing you and Hayley back to them, why should I help you? Besides I don't want the Government on my ass about helping you escape," Devlin said.

Marshall made a disgusted sound. "Devlin, you can't turn your back on Hayley after all she's done for you?"

"All she's done? Marshall, she lied to me and for all I know she's been using her powers to influence me." Devlin said, knowing that he was grasping at straws. Devlin wanted to be stubborn about all this, but Marshall was right, Hayley had done a lot for him and damn her, the feelings she incited in him wouldn't go away. He was torn between the wounds of his past and his now changed present.

Chapter 6

Hayley watched the world around her move in slow motion, the inhibitor moving through her system was making her feel sluggish, like her mind was moving through thick molasses and yet one thing was very clear, Devlin was angry and he had every right to be, she had lied to him, concealed who she was for fear of not only his rejection but the Clinic finding her.

She had lived her life as what was essentially a half-life from the moment she had been freed from the Clinic. Her memories were still foggy about that night, but she did remember silver hair and a kind smile. Her eyes drifted slowly to Devlin, watching his facial features as his thoughts drifted across his face, anger, sadness, pain, hurt, disappointment, betrayal. She had put those feelings there, she had caused him pain and in doing so she had hurt herself. She had never wanted to hurt him she had never wanted to keep it from him, her secret, but how could she tell him without him getting angry and pushing her away, never letting her near him again.

She wanted to be with him, erase the pain of his past and give him a solace in the storm of his life. He may always act so tough, so hardened, but underneath it all, there was still the essence of that scared little boy who had seen something horrific and been through so much that it had caused him to build his defenses so high that not many people were willing to climb his walls, only she and Marshall had tried and succeeded and now she was about to get cast out.

She sighed inwardly, she knew his story, he had told her about his childhood one day after a difficult case where the psychic they had been tracking was a father who had run out on his family. She hadn't understood why he was so adamant that the father was a monster. She had understood why the father had run away, walking out on his family. The Clinic didn't believe in separating families, which was a double edged sword, on the one hand the family was kept together on the other hand they had to watch as the Clinic killed their loved one. It was painful, excruciating and heart wrenching. She could remember watching children crying for one parent or both as the Clinic personnel, indifferent doctors, lead the child or children away to be tested or sent to foster care depending on whether or not they had abilities.

And then it happened to her, her parents were there one day and then they were gone. One minute she was happy the next she was wallowing in a pain that was fathomless and bottomless. Then on the same day her parents had died, she had been freed by a mysterious silver haired stranger with a kind smile. Once she had gotten beyond the security fence and into the city, she found a small alley, ducking inside, scared, confused and still in pain, she slide down the rough brick wall and cried, not caring that she was sitting in garbage in a strange city she had never been to, the only thing that concerned her was that she was free and alone.

Hayley could feel the tears trickle down her cheeks but no one noticed. They were all having a conversation that as far as she was concerned was meaningless, she was dead whether they freed her or not, if they found her once, they would find her again. Devlin looked at her and she could see the conflict in his eyes, see how torn he was. She didn't want him to have to make the decision to turn her over or help Marshall, Dr. Meadows and Dobson. She wanted to open her mouth and say something but it was too much work, so she said nothing. She wanted to sleep, her body felt so heavy and yet she had never felt more awake in her life.

"I want to speak to Hayley alone," Devlin demanded.

"I'm sorry Mr. Devlin but that won't be possible, she can't answer you." Amanda replied.

"Who said anything about her answering me? I just want to talk to her."

"Devlin, don't do it. Please, don't give her a hard time she can't handle it right now," Marshall

pleaded.

"Stay out of this Marshall, there are things that need to be said between us and only us. You three get lost," Devlin ordered.

"No, I won't let you verbally abuse her." Marshall said, fists clenching.

"Who said I was going to verbally abuse her?" Devlin asked.

"You didn't have to say it." Marshall retorted.

Hayley could see that Devlin was hurt by what Marshall had said. She could tell he chose to ignore it, instead focusing on what he wanted to accomplish, having a word alone with her.

"I won't verbally abuse her, there are things that I have to say to her and I don't need you hearing it." Devlin said.

"It won't be of any use to talk to her, she can't reply or defend herself, besides that's not the most pressing matter, what's more important is what are you going to do? Will you turn her in or help us free her?" Marshall asked.

Hayley watched Marshall's eyes roam over Devlin's face, looking for any tell tale signs that would give away what he was thinking, but there were none. She wished Marshall would just let Devlin get it over with and tell her how angry he was with her, how disappointed he was and the most painful thing, how he could never trust her again, much less wanted to see her again.

Devlin ran a hand through his hair, blue-violet eyes tired and worn. He stood up and started to pace. He walked over to the tiny, open kitchen area and grabbed his glass and walked back to his desk, he held out his hand to Marshall who gave him back the whisky. Pouring himself a glass he sat back down and threw it back, grimacing for a second at the burn he looked over at Hayley, determination in his eyes.

"Fine, Marshall, you can stay but you two go over there and find something to do."

Marshall, Amanda and Dobson talked for a second and then Amanda stood up and went into the sitting area of the office with Dobson. Devlin turned to Marshall. Marshall eyed him suspiciously, Devlin hadn't answered his question but that didn't worry Hayley, she had given herself up for dead, there was no way she could go on the run even if he did let her loose, nor could she go back to the Clinic and be tested over and over again until she died, just like her parents.

"Well, you haven't answered my question, what are you going to do about Hayley? Are you going to turn her in or do we have to fight you to help her escape?" Marshall demanded.

Devlin looked him square in the eye and with an emotionless face he answered him. "I'm not going to help you do anything. She's going where she belongs and if we fight I won't hesitate to kill you, all of you." Devlin said coldly.

Marshall flinched as if he had been hit.

"You're a cold asshole, you know that? She's not a criminal, she's a victim," Marshall said.

"I don't give a shit what she is, she's a psychic and that's all I care about. What they do to her is of no concern to me." Devlin said nonchalantly.

Hayley felt the tears flow faster down her face. His words lashed her like a whip. His voice was so cold and emotionless. *He doesn't care for me at all*, she whispered in her mind. Her chest hurt. Her heart hurt and she wanted to run but couldn't move she was stuck listening to how little she meant to him. Everything they had shared was shattered in one moment, this was what she had wanted to avoid, stupidly staying in one place instead of moving on as she had planned, had allowed her to form an attachment that was now being used against her to cause her pain.

It was her own doing, she had allowed herself to fall in love with him now her love was being trampled on and he didn't even know he was doing it. Marshall's horror and anger were written on his face. Then it happened so fast she hadn't even seen him move, one minute Marshall was standing a few feet away, the next he was on Devlin, his fists flying as he yelled at Devlin. "You son of a bitch, after all she's done for you, she's a human being you ass wipe, how dare you treat her this way."

Hayley felt her heart breaking all over again. Marshall and Devlin had been so close and now she was the cause of their friendship breaking apart. It was all her fault that this was happening and she could do nothing to put a halt to it all, she had to sit there and watch the world she had once known,

crumble and incinerate right before her eyes. Pounding of feet announced that Dr. Meadows and Dobson had returned. Dobson went about pulling Marshall off Devlin. Both men rose and to Hayley's horror, Devlin's nose was bleeding.

The horror and pain she experienced overwhelmed her. She felt her powers surge through her, filling her up. She was no longer as lethargic as she was before. She felt the heaviness leave her as a surge of energy ran through her. The hairs on her arms and the back of her neck rose and she felt a tingling sensation at the tips of her fingers, as if they had been asleep and were waking up, her hands started to heat up and her head started to pound as thoughts came crashing into her mind. Suddenly glass shattered and objects started to move around the room.

"Shit, we don't have time for this. Dobson up her dosage before my brother comes back." Amanda ordered.

"What the hell is going on, I thought she couldn't do anything." Devlin said.

"Apparently we were wrong." Amanda said.

Dr. Meadows left Devlin and crouched down, taking hold of Hayley's hands and flinching, a small yelp of pain left her lips, despite that the doctor held on.

"Hayley calm down, please, calm down."

Hayley was losing control, her emotions were at war with each other the need to flee versus the need to make things right fought each other, the more emotional she was feeling the stronger her powers became.

"Hayley please, calm down." Amanda pleaded.

Tears slipped down Hayley's cheeks, she couldn't stop herself, and she was hurting everyone, including herself. She opened her mouth and only one word slipped out. "Devlin."

Dr. Meadows turned her head, blonde hair whipping around, "Devlin get over here, she, needs you."

"I don't care." Devlin said sullenly.

Dr. Meadows let out a sound of frustration and anger. "Get your ass over here you bastard or I swear to the skies I will beat your ass, she needs you."

"You can go to hell." Devlin spat out.

Marshall grabbed Devlin's arm and dragged him over to her. "Talk to her or I will ask Dobson to shoot you, got it?"

Devlin yanked his arm away from Marshall. "You and I are going to have a nice long talk; my fist wants to beat the shit out of you."

"I don't give a rat's ass, talk to her," Marshall ignored him as he shoved Devlin closer to Hayley.

Dr. Meadows didn't let go of Hayley's hands, her eyes never leaving Devlin, she motioned for him to crouch down to Hayley's height, Devlin refused.

"Stop being an ass and get down here." Amanda ordered.

"No." Devlin said, turning his head away.

"You little . . ." Amanda made a motion to rise, but stayed where she was.

"Please . . . no . . . Devlin . . .," it was all Hayley could whisper.

Devlin's eyes widened when he heard her and within seconds he was crouching down, shoving Dr. Meadows aside.

"What is it Hayley? What do you want?" Devlin asked, for the first time since finding out what she was, concern filled his eyes. Hayley struggled to get the words out, Dobson had activated the inhibitor and the drug was sweeping through her system.

"I . . . love . . . you."

It was all she could get out before her world went black.

Chapter 7

Hayley woke up, unable to move. She could feel people moving around her and her head felt like it was going to explode. People were talking but she couldn't tell if they were familiar or not.

"Up her dosage, don't want anything to happen, like in the office."

"Won't that kill her? She's already up to the maximum dosage."

"Do it, no screw ups. If she can use her powers while under the minimum dosage she can use them at the maximum."

"You don't know that."

"Do you want to risk it?"

"Okay, I'll up her dosage but not to the maximum."

"Fine but if she . . ."

"She won't."

Finally Hayley identified Dr. Meadows' voice but it was too late she felt more of the inhibitor rush through her veins, her headache started to subside a bit, but not by much. She felt her body become even heavier and then her world went black. Before she went under the black blanket of sleep she felt a hand stroke her hair and whisper to her, "I'll watch over you I swore to him I would."

Then sleep overtook her.

* * *

It was one week later and Devlin was still ignoring Marshall's looks. Marshall was still pissed at him and that was fine by him. Hayley was where she should be although he felt empty inside. The office didn't have the same feeling it had before. It was less pleasant, less happy. He didn't know where everything was and his new assistant was a pain in his ass, she kept asking how Hayley did things, how Hayley would answer the phone, interact with clients, talk to him, etc.

He was tired of it but he couldn't get a new assistant just yet. Business had started to pick up. New Earth Genesis Clinic had dubbed him their official psychic bounty hunter. Every day he got a new list of people that needed to be found and returned to the clinic. He hated having to work with Mr. Meadows who had become the official liaison between Devlin and the N.E.G.C. The man got on his nerves, constantly asking him if he would like to see Hayley. He did want to see her, wanted to make sure that the promise he'd extracted from Dr. Meadows was being kept. But pride and the past kept him from going.

As much as he hated the fact that Hayley was a psychic, he did admit, at least to himself, that he did love her, cared for her more deeply than anyone other than himself. Not having her around; was like having a part of himself missing and he didn't know how to get it back. He had been cold and cruel to protect himself from the pain of having his worldview shattered before his very eyes.

But even as he uttered those words to Marshall, to Amanda, he couldn't bring himself to look Hayley in the eye and tell her all those cruel things. To see the pain in her dark brown eyes, tears streaming down her face when she started to lose control, he could see how much the situation was tearing her apart. Then to hear her utter the words, the words he'd never thought to hear again, nearly broke his resolve to turn her over to New Genesis. She loved him and then was taken from him. The security force had burst through the doors and had taken Hayley away amid much protesting from both Marshall and Amanda. Apparently Mr. Meadows didn't want to leave anything up to chance.

He said nothing, watching her go, not saying a word to stop them and every second he hated himself. She was where she should be, he kept telling himself that, but he knew that he was lying to himself. She needed to explore her powers, gain some control, but he wondered if she couldn't do that with him, where she truly belonged. Running a hand over his stubble shadowed jaw he winced, he almost had a full beard, he needed to shave and clean up. He expected to meet with Dr. Amanda Meadows in about an hour as much as he detested her clipped tones and accusatory looks, he needed

info on an escapee known simply as "Roger" and he also wanted an update on Hayley, a small one, not enough to make anyone think he missed her.

"Take over the desk." Devlin ordered Marshall as he got up from his desk, Marshall looked over at him.

"I'm not your damn assistant."

"You stay around here enough to be. Take over the desk for an hour and I'll pay you." Devlin replied.

"Whatever." Marshall said going back to whatever it was he was doing.

Devlin smiled, even though Marshall hated him, he still needed the money Devlin sent his way whenever he gave him an assignment. Devlin made his way up the old wooden steps, boots clunking all the way. He pushed open the door leading to his suite of rooms, making his way into the living room, he shoved the door closed behind him and looked around. The sparse room had all the necessities, but it didn't say home.

His living room had a comfortable couch, a plush, over stuffed leather chair, a coffee table, a brick fireplace, a side table with a lamp and a stack of books and magazines. He moved onto the kitchen, a small wooden table, island in the middle of the kitchen area with a stove top and sink in it, a lot of counter space with only a phone, coffee maker, phone and paper towel dispenser taking up room, a modest refrigerator and almost bare cupboards.

He moved deeper into his space, realizing just how empty it was. Passing empty bedrooms and bathrooms he finally came to his room at the far end of the top floor. It was one of the reasons why he bought the building to begin with, the large master bedroom. A king-sized bed sat against the far wall, covered in a silk comforter and a soft cashmere throw, all gifts from Hayley after she took a tour of his place and was shocked at how empty it was.

Piled high on the bed were pillows, most of which he tossed on the floor before going to sleep. The dark purples, burgundies, teals and burnished gold contrasted with the golden wood and brass metal of his headboard. The side table only had a brass lamp and a few candles for when the power and generator went out and a stack of books on it.

A chair and couch were the only other furniture in the room. He started to undress, shrugging out of his heavy, overcoat, pulling off his fingerless black gloves, then the simple black tank top. He pulled off his heavy as shit kicker boots, unbuckled his belt, unbuttoned and unzipped his pants and then shoved them off. His cock hung limp, curving slightly to the right. He ran a hand over his chest across the scar that slashed across his Pecs. He had several bullet and stab wounds that decorated his torso.

He sighed and headed for the bathroom, which, like all the other rooms, held only the necessities. He turned on the shower and waited for the water to heat up, he stared at himself in the mirror and shook his head, he had bags under his eyes from lack of sleep and his eyes looked almost dead. Steam started to pour from the top of the shower stall and Devlin turned and slid open the door and stepped inside to encounter a downpour of hot water, sliding the door closed he closed his eyes and turned his head up to water, savoring the feel of it hitting his face and slipping down his body. He dropped his head and reached for the loofah Hayley had gotten him. He didn't care about the exfoliating qualities what he cared about was that it was able to clean up dirt, grime, mud and blood with ease.

He picked up the body wash and squeezed a generous amount onto the rough surface, putting the bottle down he squeezed the sponge and started to run it over his chest, closing his eyes, his thoughts drifted to Hayley. He didn't want to think of her tortured and unhappy, but smiling, laughing and here with him. He pictured her milk chocolate skin, her dark brown eyes, looking at him with desire, like they had at the motel, before the shit had hit the fan.

He pictured it was her, washing him, her hands moving the loofah in small circles, her wild curly brown hair getting soaked, streaming down her bare shoulders, her small high breasts tipped in dark chocolate nipples, puckered, ready for him to suck, nip and lick. Her small waist, generous hips ready for his hands to explore. How many times had his eyes watched her as she bent over to retrieve something? He groaned as he pictured her rounded ass, bare and ready for a bit of spanking. His cock

twitched, slowly lengthening and becoming hard as his stomach became tight. He had only indulged in his attraction to her in bed or in the shower, wishing that she would make the first move so he wouldn't have to suffer through the rejection he had always thought would happen.

He allowed himself to delve deep into his fantasy of Hayley joining him in the shower. She would drop the loofah and started to run her hands over his chest, tracing his battle scars with the tips of her fingers, reaching up, plucking his nipples before taking one turgid peak into her mouth and sucking on it. She nipped it with her teeth, flicking it with her tongue, driving him crazy. Her other hand would run over his rippled abdomen, down through the thick patch of wiry wet pubic hair to take hold of his cock.

His own hand wrapped around his shaft squeezing it gently before pumping himself once. He opened his eyes and grabbed the bottle of body wash, squeezing some into his hand he wrapped his hand around his cock again and started to run his hand up and down his shaft, giving himself a slight twist when he reached the root. He leaned against the wall, allowing his mind to run wild.

Hayley transferred her mouth to his other nipple, biting down gently on the hardened, nub as electricity shot through his system, her other hand found his balls and gently tugged on them before rolling them in her hand. Kissing her way down his chest, flicking her tongue out every so often, she nibbled his abdomen, dipping her tongue into his navel and swirling it around. The hand on his dick teased the mushroom head of his cock, running her thumb over the slit, smearing the pre-cum leaking from the tip, flicking the crown as her hand moved downward, her lips moved through the coarse pubic hair until she was before his shaft.

He wanted her to envelop him in her mouth, he could feel the ghost of her tongue, trace the head of his cock, exploring the bulbous head slowly, teasing him with the tip of her tongue, lapping up the evidence of his need for her. She took him into her mouth, just the head, and tortured him with her tongue, while holding him just under the head, her other hand, rolling and tugging his testicles gently. She then ran her finger over the perineum, massaging it gently at first with teasing touches.

Meanwhile, her tongue started a circular motion over just the head, driving him mad. He wanted to thrust his hips forward and force her to take more of him inside of her mouth, but had to hold back. Her hand started moving slowly down as she started to take more of him in her mouth, her tongue, tracing the underside of his crown, flicking the sensitive spot of the V found just under his cockhead.

He moaned as his hands substituted themselves for fantasy Hayley's mouth, as she went further down, her tongue would trace the veins of his penis, then moving back up to tease his head again, driving him further and further to the brink. She took him further into her mouth until he hit the back of her throat. He moaned as he gave into his desire, gently pumping his hips, his hand sliding up and down his hardened shaft, the fantasy Hayley allowing him to fuck her mouth. He could see in his mind, her lips sliding against his flesh, her tongue teasing the head of his cock, his balls being rolled in her hand. He increased his grip and started to thrust harder and faster, wanting to come, picturing in his mind, Cumming in her mouth.

"Fuck, Hayley," he moaned.

Her dark brown eyes, almost black egging him on and that was all it took. He came spurting cum on the walls, the tub lip, his chest, covering his hand. He was breathing hard, he let go of his now flaccid penis. He groaned out loud and started to punch the wall nearest him.

"Hayley, Hayley, Hayley. Shit, shit, shit."

The more he punched, the angrier he became until tears started to fall from his eyes. His legs felt weak, he slid down to the edge of the tub. He'd betrayed the one person who was more precious to him than his own life. He let her be taken by those bastards from the New Earth Genesis Clinic, all because of old wounds and fears. She loved him, trusted him, and he turned his back on her, he couldn't forgive himself if he left her to rot there, he had to figure out a way to get her back and show her how much she meant to him.

Taking in a shaky breath, he stood up and started to clean up. One way or another he would get Hayley back and keep her with him, always. Making that vow he finished showering, he dried off and

got dressed. Making his way downstairs he spotted Marshall. Before he reached the bottom of the stairs something occurred to him, Dr. Meadows had been kidnapped, at least that is how it appeared that had yet to be explained. Swearing to himself he called out to Marshall.

"Call Dr. Meadows, I want a word with her. Tell her to bring Hayley with her."

Marshall looked at him dumbstruck.

"Well? Get a move on, if you don't want to be my assistant than we have to get my old assistant back now don't we? Oh and fire the new girl."

With that, Devlin went to his own desk to examine the points he had missed in the case of Dr. Meadows 'kidnapping'.

Chapter 8

Dr. Meadows fidgeted with the hem of her sweater. She had been sitting in the visitor's chair for nearly two hours and still Devlin hadn't said anything. She glanced over at Hayley, whose eyes were glazed over. Over the last few hours they'd been upping the dosage of the inhibitor, so far she had enough of the drug in her system to knock out a full size Elephant from Earth, and yet her body kept adjusting to the dosage. She looked at Marshall who was scowling. Finally Devlin broke the silence.

"Take Hayley off of the inhibitor doctor."

"But . . ." Amanda started.

"No buts, take her off the drug now." Devlin ordered.

Amanda flinched at his harsh command. His eyes were blazing and he looked like he was about ready to go off. Amanda reached over and started to push the button to bring down the amount of inhibitor being pumped into Hayley's system. If Amanda's calculations were correct, Hayley should be fully conscious in about five minutes. She looked over at Devlin who was looking through a file of some sort. Without looking at her, he began to talk.

"Dr. Meadows, you worked for the Tag and Bag project yes?"

"Uh, yes," Amanda replied uneasily.

"Tell me something, the night you disappeared, were you kidnapped or did you leave voluntarily?" Devlin asked, still not looking at her.

"What?" Amanda asked, she started to sweat, her heart picked up pace and her vision started to blur.

"You heard me. I asked you about it, but you never answered me. Then all the drama happened so I'm asking again. Were you kidnapped or did you leave voluntarily?" Devlin still didn't look up, looking down at the file before him.

"Why do you want to know?" Amanda asked hesitantly.

"Just answer the question."

Finally Devlin looked up giving her a hard look that made her squirm in her seat.

"I . . . I . . . it was both." Amanda blurted out.

"Both? How can it be both, unless you left willingly, but made it look like a kidnapping? Is that it?" Devlin's eyes bore into her.

"Ye . . . yes. Yes, that's what happened." Amanda stuttered.

"Why?" Devlin asked.

"Why what?" Amanda asked looking to Marshall who was looking at her with interest.

"Why the hoax? Why all the trouble? Why didn't you just leave the Clinic, put in your resignation and leave? You were concerned about Hayley, that is understandable but if you were unhappy at the Clinic why not just leave?" Devlin leaned forward, placing his elbows on the table, the tips of his fingers touching.

She looked at him flabbergasted.

"You can't just leave the Clinic, not alive anyway. Once you're employed by them it's for life."

"So, you had to make it look like a kidnapping because you had to warn Hayley?" Devlin asked.

"Yes."

"Why? Why is she so special? Why just her or were there others you had to warn too?" Devlin asked as his hands fell to the desk, he folded his hands on top of one another and watched her. She gulped.

"Just her," Amanda replied.

"Why and while we're at it how did you find her?" Devlin asked, studying her reaction.

"I . . . I . . . told you they knew where she was all the time."

Amanda squirmed.

"That doesn't sit right with me." Devlin said as he leaned back in his chair, his eyes never leaving

Amanda.

"It doesn't?" Amanda's voice squeaked as she responded.

"No because if they knew where she was they would have just taken her and left you to where ever it is you went. But they went after you both, using her, knowing that you would contact her, to get the both of you at the same time. So, no I don't think they knew where she was this whole time. Maybe you did, but not them," Devlin said.

"Are you calling me a liar?" Amanda said, trying to sound outraged.

"Yes, now tell me doctor, why Hayley and how did you know where to find her," Devlin asked.

A moan distracted the both of them, Amanda quickly moved her finger off the button and watched as Hayley fell forward, and her legs spread as far as the shackles would go. She took deep breaths with her head between her knees. Marshall was at her side in an instant.

"Water," Hayley said her voice a hoarse rasp. Marshall left to go to the kitchen area to fill up a cup of water. Devlin continued.

"You were about to tell me doctor why Hayley and how you knew where to find her."

"I don't understand you," Amanda said, focusing on Hayley instead of Devlin's gaze.

She started to rub Hayley's back in slow circles.

"Doctor, you are trying my patience. Answer my questions," Devlin ordered.

Amanda bit her lip and then sighed.

"Hayley isn't just a normal psychic; she was one of the Clinic's first successful experiments."

"Meaning?" Devlin asked.

"She was born with the abilities of her mother and father and she had one of her own. She could control the elements with a thought. Her mother could move objects with her mind and her father could read minds. The director of the N.E.G.C. thought she was the perfect candidate for a new type of program, one that would give her more abilities."

"She already had some control over her own abilities, the board wanted to see how she would do with others, to see if they could create the perfect psychic so to speak. When she was three, they did an operation and it was successful but then things started to go wrong. She didn't have a grasp on her new powers, so she was taught to suppress these new powers. But now after years of research and tests the scientists at the Clinic have found a way to help Hayley control her added gifts. When I heard about that I had to find her and warn her that they were looking for her." Amanda explained.

"But you said she was one of the Clinic's 'first successful experiments,' how so? She couldn't control her new powers." Devlin asked.

Amanda licked her lips.

"Success in the Clinic's eyes at the time was adding onto her powers without her going insane as earlier experiments had done."

"I see, so you heard about them tracking her down and wanted to warn her?" Devlin asked.

"Yes, she was priority number one above all other psychic escapees during the night of the big break out. They had to find their golden child." Amanda responded.

"How did you find her?" Devlin asked.

"Through the Network," Amanda replied.

"The Network?" Devlin asked. Interest was clear in his voice.

"It's a group of psychics that track the escapees to make sure they aren't in trouble, they keep track of them." Amanda responded, knowing she could be making a mistake in telling Devlin all of this, but she felt she could trust Devlin, for whatever reason, she felt Devlin would keep this information to himself until he was presented with an opportunity to use it or sell it.

"And they've been monitoring Hayley?" Devlin asked.

"Yes."

"You said that they had to make sure that it was her, that she had powers before taking her back is that correct? I understand that most psychics can lose the powers after they hit puberty. So how can the clinic be absolutely sure that the person you are monitoring does have abilities?"

"Her medication," Amanda said simply. Before Devlin could ask Amanda answered for him.

"Psychics who want to remain among normal people are given a prescription for psychic episodes, it helps tamp their powers down to avoid such things as psychic bursts or migraines that sometimes come with trying to hold back their powers. Hayley has a prescription for the medication. A few weeks ago she had an episode. That combined with the prescription told them she still had her powers."

Devlin looked like he was thinking.

"Ah, yes, she couldn't come into work because she wasn't feeling well. I had to hire that blasted tempt who I almost shot for trying to take money out of the petty expenses box."

Marshall returned with a cup of water and cold compress. Hayley sat up slowly and took small sips of the water, while Marshall held the cold compress against her forehead.

* * *

Devlin winced at how exhausted Hayley looked. He was thankful Marshall was here otherwise he would be taking care of Hayley and not be able to get all the information he needed to fill in the blanks in this case.

"Take her up to my room. Lay her down on my bed. I still have things to discuss with Dr. Meadows."

Marshall looked unsure and Devlin didn't blame him. Marshall helped a wobbly Hayley to her feet and they made their way up the stairs, leaving Devlin and Amanda alone. Amanda didn't protest at all.

"Doctor, I've decided I want to make a deal with the N.E.G.C., I want Hayley working with me. I'll track their psychics, clean up their messes, but Hayley stays with me. And if you don't help me broker that deal, then I'll have to tell your brother about your association with that Network you were talking about. I assume they were the ones that faked your kidnapping to find Hayley? There is also of course that incident with Dr. Horace that the N.E.G.C doesn't want getting out, now do they" Devlin watched Amanda carefully. She looked shocked.

"You know about that?"

"I have worked with the Clinic before, I know where several of the bodies are buried, Dr. Horace, who was recently transferred to the outer fringes of Sector H for example. You tell that brother of yours what I want and if I don't get it, there is a persistent reporter I know of that would be quite interested in some of the information I could tell her. I do have files to back up my claims. Understand?" Devlin asked.

Amanda nodded.

"Good, any questions?"

"Why do you want her back?" Amanda asked. Her face gave away how unsure she was of leaving Hayley in Devlin's care.

"Because as much as I hate psychics, I love her more. Without her here, I can't function fully. I don't want her to be tested in some damn lab, like a monkey or rat. She's a person, psychic and all. And so help me, if I can't have her with me then they have a war on their hands, you tell them that. You will leave her here with me, guards can stand watch at all exits, but she stays," Devlin said, his tone said that he was prepared to fight and Amanda was sure, despite all the power the N.E.G.C. had, that they would lose, something told her he would take them all down with him.

"I'll do what I can." Amanda replied.

"Good."

Devlin and Amanda stood up and shook hands. Amanda reached into her bag and pulled out a file. She handed it to him. He took it and put it on his desk.

"You may want to take a look at this." Amanda said.

"Later, I have Hayley to attend to."

Amanda nodded and left, Devlin headed upstairs to find Marshall sitting on the bed next to Hayley.

"Why am I here?" Hayley asked her voice soft and rough.

"He asked for you to be brought here. Don't know why, but he did," Marshall replied.

"Is he still angry?"

"Maybe, not at you," Marshall said.

"Himself?" Hayley asked.

"Probably, you know Dev, acts before he thinks, does something stupid and won't say sorry for it later," Marshall said, laughter in his voice.

"Who replaced me?"

"No one no could replace you," Marshall said softly.

"Thank you Marsh. I love you," Hayley said softly.

Marshall laughed. "You love everyone don't you?"

"You know what I mean." Hayley said.

"You don't love me like you do Dev." Marshall replied.

"You're like a brother to me."

"Gee, thanks you make me feel so good about myself. Why don't you get some sleep okay kiddo? You look like hell," Marshall said grinning.

"Thanks, you bastard," Hayley laughed softly.

"You're welcome."

Marshall leaned down and kissed Hayley on top of her head and stood up, turned and spotted Devlin standing in the door way.

"Damn it you need to stop that!" Marshall stood up, shaking his head.

Devlin laughed, "Go, leave I'll take care of Hayley now."

Marshall nodded and left the room. Devlin started to undress. He could see Hayley's eyes were slits, watching his every movement. He could feel himself getting aroused as she watched every movement he made. He took off his jacket then bent down to take off his boots. Padding to the bed he slipped off his shirt, exposing his upper body to her something she had never seen fully. She made a small gasp and he shook his head.

"I'm fine."

He unbuckled his belt and pulled it off. He didn't dare go further otherwise he'd be naked and tempted to try something with her. He climbed on the bed and lay down beside her. She turned to him, tears in her eyes. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close.

"Shhh, it's okay, it's my fault. It's all my fault. Just rest, it's okay, you're home now."

He kissed the top of her head and let his head drop to the pillow. He felt her body relax next to his and sighed. *His* Hayley was home.

Chapter 9

Hayley awoke in Devlin's arms. She snuggled further into his embrace and sighed, breathing in his familiar scent of mint and sage. She could feel every contour of his body and was shocked to find his erection pressing against the soft swell of her stomach. She bit her bottom lip trying to decide what to do. Part of her wanted to reach down and massage him and another part of her wanted to get off the bed and run as far and as fast as she could.

Deciding that she had been given a second chance she wanted to do something she had never had to the courage to do before. The devilish part of her won out, she ran her hand down the hard wall of chest over the many scars and ridges until she found his erection, running her hands over it she grinned when she felt his hips press forward against her hand.

"Hayley," his voice was husky from sleep.

She squeezed him and groaned. He started to move his hips against her hand. She leaned forward and pressed her lips to his. During her time with the Clinic, this is what she dreamed about, being back with him, in his arms, where it was safe. He wasn't mad at her nor did he look at her as if she was a freak. She was just Hayley to him, *his* Hayley. He responded, his tongue slipped out and traced her lips. She opened her mouth and allowed his tongue entrance.

"Hayley," he sighed.

Their tongues dueled, swirling and sliding against each other. She nipped the tip of his tongue gently while massaging him through his pants. It was a dream and she had been given this chance and she was going to take it, she thought as she took control, kissing him with more passion and need. He responded, an arm snaked around her waist and held her fast, rolling them over, she found herself on top. She looked down at his purple eyes now darkened with passion. He reached up and brushed her hair back from her face. She ran her hand and up and down again, bringing his attention to where her hand was. The fun soon stopped.

"Hayley stop," he ordered.

She quickly removed her hand and tried to scramble off of him. She had made a mistake and didn't want to face his rejection, but he held her fast.

"Don't try and leave, I won't let you. We need to talk. As much as I enjoyed waking up with you, we do need to talk. There is a lot that needs to be said and I need to say it and you need to listen." Devlin looked up at her, an unreadable look in his eyes.

"Devlin . . ." Hayley started, not wanting to hear what he was about to say.

"Don't, I need to say things and you need to hear them. Will you listen or do I have to tie you to this bed?" Devlin asked, a serious expression his face.

Her eyes wandered over to his headboard, which looked sturdy enough to her.

"Don't consider it, it won't be fun."

She sighed.

"You'll listen?" He asked.

"Yes."

He raised himself up as he held her fast. She ended up straddling his lap. Pulling her close, she could feel his erection, pressing the juncture of her thighs. He leaned forward and kissed her softly.

"I love you Hayley, I mean it and not like a sister or family member, I love you, all of you. Even if it does make me uncomfortable that you are a psychic. I was wrong to let you go with the Clinic and I was wrong to treat you so badly. I've been a huge asshole and I know it. I was stubborn and stupid and didn't want to consider your position in all of this or your feelings. I understand why you didn't tell me, it's not your fault that I have old wounds that are still open."

"I keep them open, I can't let go of the past, and it's hard for me to forget witnessing my father going insane and my mom having a breakdown. But it's not your fault that those things happened to me. I should have been more open with you. I should have let you talk to me. I can be a stubborn man

but that's why I need you, to balance me, keep me sane. Love me through all my moods. I need you sweetheart." He paused and took a breath.

He continued. "This week being away from you was hell, I was dying without you. And I'm sorry you had to go through all of that, with your parents and the Clinic, I'm sorry you had to run. But you're not going to run anymore, not when I can help it. I promise you I won't let them take you back with them. You're home with me now and I plan on making sure you stay. Do you understand me?" Devlin reached up and brushed hair out of her face, his eyes pleading with her to understand and feel safe with him, to be with him. Hayley had tears in her eyes. She threw her arms around him and gave him a big kiss.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you I was psychic. I'm sorry you had to go through all of this." Hayley said, sniffing and crying.

"It's not your fault, it's their fault. This is who you are, but I have to warn you we will be working with them otherwise they'll probably take you back and I can't handle that," Devlin said.

Her stomach growled and he laughed.

"How about I order out? What would you like, Martian style barbecued steak?"

She nodded and laughed when he leaned forward and kissed her gently.

"You got it, honey."

She got off of him and he went to get the phone from the other room.

"Devlin?" she called out.

"Yeah, babe?"

"What do you think they'll do?"

"I don't know but I know I'm not letting you get taken back there."

* * *

Amanda fidgeted nervously watching her brother's face for any tell tale signs as to what he was thinking. Standing in her father's old office, surrounded by all the photos of the escapees from years ago gave her the creeps.

"So he wants her with him or he'll reveal company secrets, is that it?" Mr. Meadows asked.

"Yes." Amanda said, nervously.

Mr. Meadows touched his fingertips together forming a steeple. He was silent for a few minutes causing Amanda to fidget even more.

"Does she seem stable?" He asked. It was clear to Amanda that his mind was working on something.

"She did when I left."

"Good." He said simply.

The one word answer worried her. She didn't know what her brother was thinking and that was bad.

"I will concede to Mr. Devlin's request, only if Ms. Michaels comes in once a week for testing to measure her abilities, the growth of her powers and to teach her how to control her new abilities."

"That's it?"

His simple acquiescence of the situation bothered her.

"I can't force the situation otherwise we may be exposed to unwanted scrutiny also, Mr. Virgil is too valuable to us to lose. He will help us find escapees that our trackers can't find. Besides this allows us to monitor Ms. Michaels in an environment that may help her to nurture her powers. We need to see how she interacts with other psychics and if the modifications that were made by our father were successful. Send him word that we agree with his terms if he and Ms. Michaels agree to ours."

"Yes, brother," Amanda said, feeling uneasy, but said nothing. She only wanted to deal with her brother when absolutely necessary. As far as she was concerned, asking him why he had given in so easily to Devlin's demands bordered on dealing with him unnecessarily. She had too many other things going on to probe too deeply into her brother's reasoning. So she left it alone and made a note to look into it later.

"Oh, and before you go, a package came for you while you were out. Here."

Mr. Meadows handed Amanda a small rectangular package. She took it with shaky hands, nodded to her brother and left the room. Once the door was closed behind her, she took in a deep breath, confusion skimming across her nerves. Rushing to her office she ripped it open to find a small thumb drive inside. Booting up her computer she hoped this was what she was looking for. Inserting the drive into her computer she gasped at all the information found on the drive, all of her father's notes and data on several of the escapees including files on the board members.

She knew what she had to do, she had to take this information to the Network and hope they would know what to do with it. Shutting down her computer she grabbed her purse and left for the night. This information needed to be delivered to the Network immediately she would deal with Devlin and Hayley later. Grabbing her purse, jacket and keys she hurried out of her office.

* * *

Mr. Meadows picked up the phone, dialing a number he knew by heart he waited for the person on the end to pick up.

"Hello."

"I have a way in. We may be able to use Hayley Michaels to lure out The Professor. I need your top men. I will brief you on the situation when you arrive." Mr. Meadows said to the man on the other end of the line.

"Very well, my men and I will be there in twenty minutes."

Mr. Meadows hung up; reaching into his pocket he took out a small key ring, selecting a shiny brass one. He inserted it into his bottom drawer. He punched in a few numbers on the keypad, swiped his finger on the scanner and turned the key. After a second a small beep was heard and he pulled out the drawer. Selecting a file on the top of the pile he placed it on his desk and flipped it open. A picture of a man with chiseled features, hooded black eyes and shoulder length gray hair, shot through with white looked up at him smiling.

Name: Dr. Tobias Krum

Date of Birth: Unknown

Alias: The Professor

Level of Clearance: A

Specialty: Unknown

Project: Chimera

Project Number: 5693048743-A

Project Level- A

Project Focus- Military, Information and Espionage

Associate(s): Doctor Meadows, Clark and Stevens

Patient(s): Hayley Michaels, Drew Tennison, Patient 0000000-157 (Name Undisclosed)

Project Synopsis:

Project Chimera was instituted in order to test the abilities of children in the fields of military information gathering and espionage using psychic ability. Children were necessary due to the inability of adults to be conditioned for such work after psychic abilities were established. Some patients during test trials of conditioning died or suffered massive brain damage. Project Hydra was disbanded and Chimera formed in its place.

Project Notes:

Lost in massive breakout along with test subjects.

Case File Notes:

Krum is not Tobias' real last name. Any information on this man has been lost due to the, massive breakout. It is essential that he be found immediately. The information he has is invaluable. Please use caution, he may be psychic himself. He may come out of hiding if one of his test subjects is in danger or is being used by the N.E.G.C. Thought to be the mastermind behind the massive breakout. Tobias must be found at all costs.

Chapter 10

Lying in bed Devlin fed Hayley another piece of steak. He watched her chew and cut another piece of steak. Piercing it with his fork he held it up to her mouth, ready for her to eat it.

"Do you think they'll let me stay?" Hayley asked; uncertainty in her voice.

"I don't know." Devlin said, not wanting to think about if she wasn't allowed to stay.

"I want to stay, I want to help you. Some of those psychics are dangerous and need to be caught." Hayley said; determination in her voice.

"And I want you to help me. Did they do anything to you while you were at the Clinic?" Devlin asked, as much as he didn't want to think about her time at the Clinic, he wanted to know.

"No, I was sedated most of the time. They had to keep me under otherwise they were afraid I might do something."

"Would you? Do something?" Devlin asked, curious.

"I don't know. I did want to be there, I felt that I didn't have a place to go," Hayley said, sadly.

"You will always have a place here with me."

He reached up and brushed back a strand of hair. He leaned forward and kissed her.

"So, um, exactly how will this work? What are we?" Hayley asked.

"How will what work and we are human beings." Devlin said, cutting another piece of steak and trying to get her to eat it.

"How will this work in the office? If they let me stay here and I know we're human beings, but I want to know. What is this thing between us?" Hayley replied eating the piece of steak, Devlin held up.

"Well, we'll work like we always do and as far as this thing between us, let's not label it. Let's see where it goes," Devlin said simply.

"But what if it doesn't work out? What then?" Hayley asked; uncertainty in her voice.

"I doubt that it won't work out, you don't have to be psychic to know that," Devlin said, smiling. He leaned forward and kissed her again. She looked behind him to the nightstand. He had brought up the file to look at if she fell asleep.

"What is that?" She asked

"That is probably my new case. Eat the rest of this."

He handed her the plate and picked up the folder. Opening it, he started to read the file.

"What the hell?"

"What?" Hayley said eating another piece of steak.

"This is a file about my father."

"Huh?"

Hayley put the plate on the nightstand and looked over his shoulder to see what he was talking about.

"They want me to find the man responsible for testing my father. They think he may have done some illegal things during the research project," Devlin said in disbelief.

"Do you want to do it? Take the case?" Hayley asked, watching his features carefully.

"You're damn right I do. According to this, they say that my father was one of his patients, but nothing else. There is so much blacked out on this page I'll need to talk to Amanda about getting the original." Devlin said.

"Can you handle this? This does have to do with your father," Hayley asked carefully.

"I have to, if something shady happened then I want to know what's going on. But that's tomorrow; right now I need to take care of you."

"Why take care of me?" Hayley asked, not sure what he was talking about. She felt fine.

"Well for one thing you look exhausted, so you need to get your strength back."

"What about you?" Hayley asked, not feeling tired.

"What about me?"

"You look tired too. Someone needs to take care of you," Hayley said. A yawn threatened to bubble up.

"Who will take care of me?" Devlin asked, smiling, thinking of all the ways she could 'take care of him'.

"I will, so shut up and finish up eating and then we'll go to sleep and get ready for tomorrow."

The yawn finally burst forth from her and Devlin smiled and kissed the tip of her nose.

"Yes, ma'am, now let's get some sleep okay?"

"Devlin, I do love you," Hayley said, trying to stifle another yawn.

Devlin smiled, he knew he would never get tired of hearing her say that.

"I know sweetheart. I love you too."

He kissed her, grateful that Hayley had returned. No matter what happened, they would be together, that he vowed. But, as for right now, they needed to rest and get ready, it looked like they would be very busy in future and that was fine by Devlin, as long as she was there, he could face anything, including his past.