

**(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)**

**A/N: To the MOOOOON!**

**-x-X-x-**

In the end, they remove themselves from the equation. People (specifically Charles Xavier) are afraid of the Phoenix being back on Earth? Then they will remove the Phoenix from Earth.

Ilyana offers up Limbo as an option, but even Thaddeus knows enough at this point to know that's ill-advised. Emma, meanwhile, shoots it down immediately. The thought of the Phoenix, a creature clearly vulnerable to negative emotions, being in a Hell Dimension... well, it didn't bear considering, in the end.

Fortunately, there's another option. Unfortunately, it does require a tiny bit more leg work than just teleporting to Limbo would have. They have all of the access codes, security protocols, and what not for the automated HYDRA Moonbase thanks to snooping around in the minds of HYDRA's leadership, but they don't have access to the computers up in the Arctic that are connected to it.

That's where Sage comes in though, able to use the computer in Emma's office to backdoor her way through several satellites and eventually make contact with the HYDRA Moonbase. This only takes five minutes, but that's still five minutes more than Thaddeus would have preferred to spend, considering the numerous forces no doubt converging on them as they worked.

In the end though, they make it. Gwen and Doreen depart so they can remain relatively uninvolved, while everyone else takes a trip to the Moon with Thaddeus and Emma, where they land in a control room that didn't even have oxygen flowing through it until a few minutes ago.

Sage immediately moves to the center console and starts tapping away for a moment before nodding decisively.

“The rest of the base will have breathable atmosphere within the next thirty minutes. We’ll just have to hang out here until then.”

Cessily raises a hand at that.

“I technically don’t need to breathe, so if you wanted me to scout around, I could.”

She’s not looking at Sage though as she asks, but at him. Thaddeus smiles and nods.

“That would be most appreciated, Cessily.”

Before she can leave, Sage hands the other mutant an earpiece, which Cessily shrugs and puts on before departing. That still leaves the control room rather crowded though. There’s him and Emma and Sage, of course... but there’s also Laura, Illyana, and Kitty.

It’s the last of whom that Thaddeus turns to with a sigh once Cessily is gone, his arms crossing over his chest.

“I think it’s time we had a conversation, Kitty.”

The mutant woman wilts under his gaze, suddenly looking a little hunted. In the end though, she settles for defensive, crossing her own arms over her chest and scowling.

“You’ve known since our first day at Empire State that Laura and I were sent to watch over you for the Professor, Thaddeus. You told me yourself that you overheard me talking to her about it. You can’t... you shouldn’t be mad...”

Even she seems to realize how weak her protests are, because she trails off after a moment, looking a little lost. Thaddeus just sighs again and shakes his head.

“I’m not mad at you, Kitty. I’m just disappointed.”

Kitty's mouth drops open in disbelief at that but Thaddeus holds up a hand and continues on.

“You rushed into a volatile situation on the word of Charles Xavier without understanding an ounce of what was going on. And you didn't do it alone; you dragged everyone else along with you. You definitely shouldn't have had Illyana teleport you all directly into Emma's office. At a bare minimum, you should have started outside of the building and then come in the normal way.”

Her mouth opening and closing wordlessly, Kitty looks completely and utterly flabbergasted by the fact that Thaddeus is lecturing her. He's not sure why... she deserves it.

“More than that though, there was something you should have done before anything else. Can you think of what that is?”

Scowling, furrowing her brow in consternation, Kitty nibbles at her lower lip for a moment before biting out her response.

“What?”

In turn, Thaddeus reaches down... and takes his phone out of his pocket, waving it at her with a raised eyebrow.

“You should have *called*, Kitty.”

Kitty goes bright red at the admonishment, and even redder still when Laura snorts in amusement.

“That's what Cessily suggested, actually.”

“Laura!”

But Laura just shrugs, unrepentant over throwing Kitty under the bus. Huffing and pouting massively now, Kitty averts her gaze, unwilling to look Thaddeus in the eyes.

“... We thought you were in danger and that time was of the essence...”

Thaddeus hums, nods at that... and then lies his ass off.

“Well, I wasn’t in danger. You jumped the gun, Kitty. Emma had everything under control.”

As both Emma and Sage side-eye him at that, Thaddeus is just glad the three of them are the only psychics in the room right now. Because... yeah, she definitely didn’t have everything under control. Kitty actually didn’t jump the gun so much as she and the others got to the scene too late.

But then again, Thaddeus is very, very glad that they arrived when they did and not any earlier than that. If they or Sage had shown up while Thaddeus was still dead... well, suffice to say, he doesn’t even want to think about what would have happened. Especially since he and Emma still didn’t know how the fuck he’d come back to life, other than that it wasn’t the Phoenix or any of his powers that resurrected him.

That all said, even if he’s lying a bit, there’s still plenty of truth in what he’s telling Kitty right now.

“If she hadn’t had everything under control, if there HAD been a danger... than by teleporting in like you all did, you might have gotten yourself and everyone else killed, Kitty.”

That was no lie. And that’s what really gets a proper flinch from Kitty, her eyes flicking to both Illyana and Laura as she considers the ramifications of her actions.

Before she can muster up a response, however, Sage suddenly calls out from the console.

“Uh... we have a situation here. We have company fast approaching.”

What? Seriously?!

“They’re chasing us all the way from fucking Earth? How are they moving so fast? Who is it?”

“Actually... I don’t think they’re from Earth. I’m pretty sure they’re... natives?”

Wait what? Thaddeus glances to Emma, who glances back for a moment. With a sigh, he holds out his hand and she retakes it, gripping it tightly. A moment later and their minds are reaching out.

Very quickly, they figure out what’s happening. Apparently there’s a hidden civilization on the Moon who were aware of HYDRA’s Moonbase and had been just sort of... letting it exist because it was empty until now. But they were at least smart enough to keep watch over it, so when the base activated upon Thaddeus and Emma and the others showing up, they’d scrambled to formulate a response.

That response, in the end, was to send a group to sabotage the base and kill everyone inside while making it look like an accident so nobody back on Earth knew what had happened. Therefore maintaining their anonymity and ensuring their continued secrecy.

If any part of HYDRA had actually made it up to the Moon during the purge, Thaddeus wouldn’t have blamed these hidden ‘moon people’ for their decision making. But since it was him and his women instead, he was a little annoyed. At the same time... him and Emma are of the same mind on this subject.

They simply didn’t have the mental or emotional bandwidth to deal with this bullshit. The moon people are lucky then, because that means rather than go with shock and awe, the two of them act more subtly instead. It’s Thaddeus’ first time doing anything akin to telepathic heavy lifting with Emma as the Phoenix’s

Host, but fortunately the Phoenix seems to still be chagrined over her previous actions and is remaining in the 'backseat' so to speak.

As such, it takes about a minute for them to fix things on their end.

"... They're retreating. What did you do?"

Sage's voice is what pulls Thaddeus and Emma out of things, both of them shrugging as they glance at one another before Thaddeus answers.

"We have enough on our plate right now. As far as they're concerned, this base no longer exists and there's no longer a threat to deal with. Considering we don't intend to mess with them, that last part is even true. They should leave us alone now."

Sage nods before looking back down at the monitor in front of her.

"... Most rooms are currently registering as breathable now. We can stretch our legs a bit if we want to."

That sounded good. Fuck, it was crazy to think they were on the Moon. Everything that was happening was a bit of a distraction from that fact, but it didn't change anything. They were seriously up here, off of Planet Earth, on the Moon. That was so cool.

As they all leave the control room and begin spreading out to join Cessily in exploring the HYDRA Moonbase, Thaddeus finds himself holding hands with Emma the entire time. She doesn't seem to want to let go again, so he keeps holding on, giving her a smile and a squeeze whenever he thinks she needs it.

It'll all be alright, he figures. They just need to make sure everyone down on Earth knows that Emma isn't going to go off the reservation like Jean did so long as they don't fucking provoke her. Yes, the Phoenix is back... but for the moment, they have things under control.

Surely the disparate factions down on Earth will understand that and back off... right?

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A woman with black hair and blue eyes sits in the back of a black car with tinted windows, staring out at an office building across the street. The street, the office building, and the buildings all around have seen better days. The street is still drivable and the buildings are still standing, but there's visible cracks through everything.

In the past while, the woman with black hair and blue eyes has watched as everyone under the Sun, from the X-Men to the Brotherhood to the Avengers and SHIELD, have shown up and gone through the building. They don't find anything though, to be fair. Nothing worth their time anyways.

The woman's blue eyes are bleeding red streaks down her cheeks, her lips curling into a pouty frown. When she speaks, her voice reverberates with that of a man layered over it.

"Well... this is disappointing. Such power, so close, only for it to... abscond to parts unknown. Still, you should be pleased, my dear... you're soon to be replaced. And if you're a good girl, you can continue to serve me, even once I've made the White Queen my newest host. How does that sound, hm?"

There's a brief pause... and then the woman's lips twitch and curl up into a rictus of a grin.

"Ah yes, I knew you would-!"

But then the forced grin falls. The woman's eyes widen, but that doesn't last either.

"What?! What is this? What are you-grk!"

Slowly, the man's reverberating voice separates from the woman's own. Slowly, a shadow comes off of her, pulled away from her body as her arm lifts up into the air and her fingers curl around an unseen neck. In the end, there is nothing but a pair of floating red eyes in the front of the woman as she sneers at him disdainfully.

"I do so detest when a good plan is ruined by *accident* of all things. How... infuriating."

"You... how did you...?"

Selene Gallio tilts her head to the side and lets out a cruel bark of laughter.

"How did I break your possession of me, Bogan? You small-minded man. The real question you should be asking yourself is why I let you possess me in the first place?"

The psychic shade known to a scant few as Elias Bogan continues to writhe in the Black Queen's grip. Once upon a time, Elias Bogan had been the very first Lord Imperial of the Hellfire Club, and indeed the man behind the creation of its very first chapter hundreds of years ago.

He was also an incredibly powerful psychic entity, bodyless but nevertheless incredibly powerful. He subsisted off of other telepaths, possessing them and feeding off of them to grow his own power.

Selene Gallio was his latest... acquisition. With the deaths of both the Black and White Kings, the Hellfire Club had been weakened. Without a masculine influence at the helm, things had started to go awry. Elias needed to step in and take control.

"What?! 'Let me'? No! You didn't... you are not the one in control here!"

Or rather, these were all things Selene had allowed the psychic parasite to think were true. She had allowed Elias to believe he'd conquered her mind, that he

had taken her over. Now, at his panicked cursing and whinging growling, she can only roll her eyes.

“Tell me Bogan, do YOU feel in control? If not me... then who is?”

Selene doesn't bother letting him answer that. Instead, the Black Queen of the Hellfire Club and seventeen thousand year old sorceress... clenches her hand into a fist. Elias Bogan screams, the psychic parasite's presence shrinking to a pinprick.

She doesn't fully kill him... but she does reduce him to a mere fraction of his power, draining most of the psychic energy he'd collected over the centuries for herself before tucking away the fragment that's left in a nice, secure place for safekeeping.

Then... Selene sighs, wiping the streaks of blood from her face with a simple spell while staring out the car window at the office building. Selene's plan was perfect. It was fucking immaculate. Thaddeus and Emma thought they were steps ahead of her, that she didn't know what was going on. The truth was... she'd known everything the entire time. She'd been watching via methods they weren't aware of and biding her time and making her plans.

It really was a great plan. Selene was to be the victim to Elias Bogan's villain. Letting him possess her, all she had to do was bide her time and eventually, Thaddeus Cummings would have come for her. Once he realized she wasn't his enemy, that Bogan was the 'true enemy', Thaddeus would have moved Heaven and Earth to rescue her... and he would have accepted her into his confidence as he had so many other women. It was just who he was.

From there, Selene would have been poised to do whatever the hell she wanted. But instead, everything had gone to shit in a single instant, all because of the fucking Phoenix. Truth be told, she didn't particularly care that Emma was the Phoenix Host now. At least, not outside of what she'd fucking done so far with that cosmic power.

Selene's phone suddenly rings and another sigh leaves Selene's lips as she pulls it out and puts it to her ear.

"... Yes, I felt it too."

A pause. Then, she rolls her eyes.

"No, I cannot simply retrieve him for a meeting just because he's in my 'backyard'. In fact, at this point he's no longer on Earth."

Another pause. Selene smirks, even if she barely feels in the mood for mirth. Still, she'll always take some amount of pleasure in the face of the caller's irritation.

"Then I suppose we'll just have to wait for him to come back."

She ends the call there... and her smirk transforms back into a full blown scowl in moments as she once again looks out the car window. All of her damn plans... ruined. Well. She was just going to have to improvise, it seemed.

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**A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!**