

Descanso

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/10167425) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/10167425>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Logan (Movie) , Logan - Fandom
Relationships:	Victor Creed & Laura Kinney , Laura Kinney & Logan
Characters:	Laura Kinney , Victor Creed
Additional Tags:	Found Families , Movie Spoilers , My Beloved Feral Children
Language:	English
Collections:	ehxmen , ☆☆Done☆☆ , IronDad and Others
Stats:	Published: 2017-03-07 Completed: 2018-08-15 Words: 26,165 Chapters: 18/18

Descanso

by [tonytones](#)

Summary

“That’s your Uncle Victor,” Logan grunts, a muscle jumping in his jaw as he stares stubbornly at the road ahead. An *uncle*, Laura marvels. She never imagined such a thing.

“Is he dead?”

“I dunno. Maybe. We don’t talk.”

“Why?” she asks, shuffling through the photos again.

“Cause he’s a feral son of a bitch,” her father says, but Laura thinks he looks happy in the picture. She doesn’t ask any more questions though.

Notes

HOLY SHIT LOGAN WAS SO GOOD! GO WATCH IT! GO WATCH IT AGAIN! anyway i loved laura, the small feral child and i just thought, like, what if victor creed is still alive and she goes to find her uncle? that would be cool. i may or may not add more to this, what do you guys think? should i?

Chapter 1

Laura examines her hands, the bruises rapidly healing, knuckles popping back into place, leaving behind only flaky dried blood. She tastes metal in the back of her mouth, leftover adrenaline. The old man whispers in her mind, *You don't have to kill, Laura, there are other choices*, but she's fairly sure her father never listens to him and so she won't either.

She snarls at the last surviving man, snapping her teeth, and kicks a foot claw through his skull, the blood splattering hot and wet up to her knee. The other kids couldn't kill unless pushed, always hesitating. Laura never had that problem.

"Laura! Come on," her father is ordering, gore on him as well. He takes her arm and drags her easily towards the car, Laura going without much protest, more interested in getting her hands on the candy she knows Xavier saved for her, something fruity and sweet.

Settled in the back seat with him, Laura chews, satisfied, watching her father. Xavier naps on and off next to her, the occasional dream floating through Laura's mind, a confusing mishmash of images. Laura likes Xavier enough. He doesn't treat her like she's stupid. Just because she's silent and serious and capable of sitting still for long periods of time doesn't mean she can't think.

Laura points at the tags dangling from Logan's neck, glinting silver in the light. He raises an eyebrow, and she tilts her head in question. "They're dog tags," he grunts, tucking them back inside his shirt. "You get 'em in the military so they can identify you if you die. Vic-" He stops himself, coughing. "Never mind. You don't wanna hear about him." Laura does, but words still feel trapped in the back of her throat, so she doesn't ask.

At the next rest stop Laura waits til the attendant's not looking before she takes a Coke from the fridge, having learned from last time. Logan's heavy hand clamps down on her shoulder seconds later, his presence announced by a rattling cough and a rough, "Put it back."

She turns and glares, holding the Coke close. She's *thirsty*. When he tries to take it she knocks his hand away, moving back against the fridge and baring her teeth. He sighs. "You're just like him sometimes." Laura wonders who "him" is, but her father is turning her around, steering her towards the front of the store. "Look, kid, I'll buy it for you, alright?" He's not the boss of her, Laura thinks. She can take care of *herself*. If they weren't being chased she might try to fight him. Instead, she resentfully hands the Coke over, making a face. For now, this'll do.

Laura's legs swing from the doctor's chair; he'd let her sit there when she refused to leave Logan's side. Her father breathes loudly, the poison crawling up from his lungs. Her jeans have a bloodstain on the cuff, maybe Logan's blood, maybe hers. Convincing the doctor to take them hadn't been difficult. Some people miss mutants, she guesses.

Laura unsheathes the claws in her hands, examining them, wondering if one day she'll get sick like Logan, too. She doesn't remember the operation to put metal in her bones, just waking up with a body that felt heavier, was deadlier. Gabriela had been horrified. Laura has never minded.

On the bed, Logan makes a gruff sound low in his throat, twitching. Laura tenses, prepared to fight him down if he thrashes. Instead, he grunts, "Victor. Vic, no," and rolls over as Laura wonders who Victor is. She'll ask Logan later, she decides, spinning her chair around and waiting for her father to wake up.

Her father has a lot of pictures in his wallet. A beautiful woman with dark hair. Another beautiful woman with red. A team full of people, some clearly mutants, some not so, all grinning, Xavier seated in front. Laura's favorite is the one of her father and another man with a similar look and build, arms over each other's shoulders.

"Who's this?" she asks, holding it up.

He looks over, growls, "Don't go through my stuff."

She snatches it away when he tries to take it. "Tell me."

"That's your Uncle Victor," Logan grunts, a muscle jumping in his jaw as he stares stubbornly at the road ahead. An *uncle*, Laura marvels. She never imagined such a thing.

"Is he dead?"

"I dunno. Maybe. We don't talk."

"Why?" she asks, shuffling through the photos again.

"Cause he's a feral son of a bitch," her father says, but Laura thinks he looks happy in the picture. She doesn't ask any more questions though.

After her father's death, Laura says goodbye to her friends and sets off in search of her uncle. She doesn't really know why, just knows that she found and lost a father without really getting to know him besides the last few seconds when she looked in his eyes and saw there what she used to see in Gabriela's. Both the people she's loved have sacrificed themselves for her now. The new mutants will be okay without her, with Rictor in charge.

It takes Laura a while to find her uncle, but the mutant community is small, and Logan's name still garners respect even when it's used by an eleven year old. Sabretooth, she learns Victor's name is. Sabretooth and Wolverine. Laura wonders if she should choose an animal name as well, maybe something like Wildcat.

Her uncle lives in the wilds of Canada, far from anyone else. Laura, driving a stolen truck, has to stop a mile away and hike the rest, digging the claws on her hands into rock when it gets steep. The grit leaves tiny slices in the soft skin over her knuckles, healing almost

instantly. By the time she reaches his house it's almost dark, Laura not bothering to hide her footsteps. He'll be able to smell her.

Sure enough, he's waiting outside when she walks up, a mountain of a man even bigger than her father. "Who the fuck're you?" he asks, baring a fang.

"I'm your niece," Laura says, peering up at him. She's done research, and she knows Victor isn't a good man. But he is her uncle, which means something.

"Bullshit." In response, Laura unsheathes her claws, holding her hands out so he can see, watching the suspicion leave his face as his eyebrows rise. "Well goddamn." Victor drops the cigar he'd been holding, crouching with feline grace. "Jimmy finally knock someone up?" Jimmy. James. Her father's real name.

"I was created in a lab."

Victor's grinning, feral and pleased. "Of course you were. Lemme guess. He sent you here so his big brother would protect you while he goes off and saves the world."

Laura lowers her sunglasses to eye him coolly. "No. He's dead."

She's not expecting the honest grief that crumples Victor's face, the heavy layer of misery flooding his scent. "Jimmy's dead? Impossible."

"I buried him." Laura gestures at her arms. "He stopped healing." Victor rocks back on his heels, howls at the sky, a mournful, strangely animal sound that raises the hairs on her arms. It echoes throughout the mountains a thousand times as he looks back to her. In the ensuing silence they just stare at each other, both stonefaced, Laura beginning to shiver in the cold air.

"What're you doing here then?" he asks hoarsely. Laura doesn't know how to explain, doesn't even know herself what she wants. She just knew she had to find him, so she shrugs one shoulder, ducking under his arm and inside his house.

It's pin neat, small, a kitchen and a fireplace, two rooms leading off to what she presumes is the bathroom and bedroom. There are no knickknacks, nothing to show that someone lives here besides the dishes at the side of the sink. And books. A lot of books, stacked by his armchair, on the table, one propped next to the sink with water stains on its cover. She picks one up, examining it, only to have Victor snatch it out of her hands.

"Hands to yourself, kid." She snarls half-heartedly, already busy going for the other rooms, finding the bathroom boring, sliding under his arm to look in the bedroom. He's ineffectually chasing her around, too big for this space and for Laura, who's always been faster than everyone else.

His room has a large, comfortable bed, the sheets mussed; it reeks of him, of whatever brand of mutant their family is and something brooding, thoughtful. He corners her when she gets on the bed, bouncing, barely the same height as him even standing this tall. "You're a little shit, kid," he says, almost fond, sounding so much like Logan that Laura feels tears prick in her eyes.

She falls to sitting, bouncing one more time, looking down at her knees and feeling exhausted for the first time since this all started. She's been running for so long, she just wants rest. "Descanso," she murmurs. "I want to rest."

Victor, mistaking her words as a request, gestures at the couch in the other room, where the fire's crackling. "If you're staying, you can sleep there." Feeling all the weight of the past couple days, Laura makes her way over, falling face first into the cushions, asleep instantly.

Sixteen hours later, Laura wakes up to the smell of meat cooking, her mouth watering. She didn't even dream, looks at the ceiling for a minute or so until she has her bearings, then sits up to look over the back of the couch. Victor's in the kitchen bent over the stove, back to her.

"Comida?"

"I dunno, uh..." Victor hesitates, turns with a pan full of sizzling meat. "I never got your name."

"Laura," she says, heaving herself over the top of the couch, checking to make sure her bag is still on the floor where she left it. When it is, she heads over to Victor, stealing a strip of whatever it is he's cooking, feeling the burns on her fingertips only briefly, and sits on the table, swinging her legs. There's a book next to her thigh, a paperback, that she picks up to read.

"You can read?" Victor asks, so she gives him a deadpan stare. Of *course* she can read. She's *eleven*.

"Yes."

He shrugs one massive shoulder, hooking a claw into a strip of meat and wolfing it down. "I was half grown before I learned to read." There's silence while they eat, Laura ravenous. When they're done, Victor pushes his plate away and says, "There's not much for a kid to do up here. TV, mostly."

"Rest," Laura repeats. "Just rest."

Dos

Chapter Notes

well, here's more, and i think i'm starting to figure out their voices. lemme know if you think i should continue!

“Why are you here?” Laura asks that night after dinner, wiping gravy from her mouth.

“Why are *you* here?” Victor counters, tearing his meat apart with his claws easy as anything.

Laura glares at him, annoyed. “I asked you first.”

Victor shrugs, scratching at his beard. “I killed a lot of people. Got tired of it. And I tried to stop.” He sounds so much like Logan, again, that Laura has to stare at her plate, blinking furiously. She wonders why she doesn’t regret anyone she’s killed. Not yet.

“You couldn’t stop?”

Victor’s looking somewhere over her shoulder, lost in thought. Laura’s seen the footage of him, played for her in the basement of a mutant with mild telekinesis, a mutant who had tried to warn her away. Victor was an animal, tearing throats out with his teeth and grinning, back to back with Logan with a snarl on his face, a monster in a trenchcoat who materialized out of the dark. She can’t see any of that now though in the large, quiet man before her.

“People kept...pushing me. So I came here.”

“But we all died.”

“Who died?”

Laura makes a vague gesture, trying to encompass them both, that they’re both mutants and Victor did nothing to stop their extinction. “We died.”

He sneers, which is somehow more impressive coming from a man with fangs. “And? What could I have done? Guttled a few sorry fucks until they figured out a way to kill me?” He focuses on her face, glaring under heavy brows til Laura feels pinned where she is. “Here’s the thing, kid. We’re not all that powerful, in the end. You, me, even Logan. We’re good at killing and not being killed and that’s it.” Laura shrugs, figuring that killing is half of the point.

“Logan helped,” she says, more for the sake of arguing than any real disagreement.

“Look where that got ‘im.” She winces, thinking of Logan with his blood all over his chest, grasping her hands. “But he was a good man,” Victor admits, mournful. “A better brother

than I deserved.” Laura misses Logan like an ache in her chest, in the same place where she misses Gabriela.

Instead of answering she just spoons more food into her mouth; Gabriela had always said stuff about growth spurts and carb intake, insisting that Laura eat even more than three times a day. Laura just knows she’s always hungry.

“You ever killed, kid?”

Laura, on the porch of her new home watching as Victor skins a deer, rolls her eyes. “*Yes*. A lot.” There would be days at the institution where the scientists would bring men in for Laura to kill, lots of them who fell under her claws like meat. She can’t remember their faces, just that Gabriela had cried after, fussed over Laura while she wondered what was wrong. She’s starting to get it now.

“Baby killers,” Victor mutters, deftly separating the deer’s skin from its muscle.

“I never killed any babies,” Laura defends, angry. She’s never killed anyone who wasn’t trying to hurt her, and with Logan she learned how to tell the difference.

Victor snorts a patronizing laugh. “No, I meant that you, me, Logan... We were all cubs when we killed. Not grown yet.”

Laura settles back to her original seat, kicking her heels into the soft wood slats holding the porch together. “Oh.”

“It’s sad.”

“Is it?” They’re mutants, it was bound to happen eventually.

Victor hesitates in his work, the skin peeled halfway back, bloody and glistening. Laura’s mouth waters. “You don’t think so?”

Laura considers the question, thinks about how good she is at defending herself, with all the practice she’s gotten. “No.”

“Well, that’s probably a good thing. Now, come over here and help out.” Laura clambers off the porch and follows his orders, interested enough that she doesn’t mind being told what to do.

The first time Laura brings out the foot claws, Victor’s teaching her how to hunt, chasing down a deer. Laura’s heart is pounding, a grin on her face as she snarls and leaps from a tree, kicking her foot deep into the deer’s fur, feeling skin and bone give way as the deer falls, her claw reaching the brain. The deer’s fall, and Laura’s subsequent tumble, sprains her ankle, but it’s healed before she’s even stood up, grinning at Victor. Blood drips between her toes. “Bueno?”

Victor's staring at her feet, panting slightly. She had watched as he went down on all fours and ran, a thousand times more graceful than she or Logan could ever be, twisting in midair like water. "What the hell are those?"

Laura stands on one foot and holds the other out, wobbling a little. "Foot claws."

"Did Logan have those?" Victor asks, clearly questioning his observation skills.

"No." She wants to explain what Xavier said about the lioness, about protecting her family, but that's too many words even now when they come easier. And Laura doesn't think she's done a very good job for her family, not when Logan and Gabriela are dead. At least the new mutants are alright, are all together besides her.

"Well alright then. C'mon, help me lift this." Laura helps him lift the deer to his shoulders, reaching out as he stands to his full height, easily taking the weight. She wonders if she'll be as strong as her father and her uncle when she grows up. She hopes so.

They head off through the forest together in peaceful silence, Laura staying close to Victor's side. She finds his bulk comforting, especially now as the forest gets darker. Laura isn't scared of most things, but she doesn't like the dark. Victor is sniffing the air, tipping his head to the side; she gets the impression that his sense of smell is better than hers. "Wolves," he says after a minute.

"Dangerous?" she asks, and he shrugs.

"Nah. Not really." They break through the trees into the clearing where the house is, Victor leaving the deer in the locked shed next door. "They're afraid of humans."

"We're not humans," Laura points out.

Victor just smiles. "To them, we might as well be."

Origins

Chapter Notes

i rewatched xmen origins and had victor feels to add on to my continued laura feels from logan so here's more! if you're a filthy multi-company person like me and are reading my DC fic, that should be updated soon as well!

They go into town three days after Laura shows up, to get toilet paper and other necessities they can't make for themselves. The drive there is six hours, Laura spending most of her time staring sullenly out the window after Victor wouldn't let her drive, even though she *can*.

"You're eleven and you look it," he'd said. "I'm not getting arrested for bullshit."

Being back with people, with people who aren't Victor, aren't like *them*, is harder than Laura expects it to be. She snarls at the woman who pushes her out of the way to grab a toothbrush, which with Victor would be understood as just a warning, but the woman scolds her til Victor has to come loom, smiling that fanged grin of his. "Is there a problem, ma'am?"

She looks up, and up, at Victor, clearly thinking better of it, leaves with a, "Control your daughter, please."

Laura beams innocently up at him, toothbrush in hand. "You're more trouble than you're worth, kid," he says, but he's smiling.

"Sorry, dad," she mocks back, heading to the counter to ring up their purchases. He just snorts a laugh.

Victor is clearly uncomfortable in town, stiffening any time someone comes too close, popping his claws til Laura bumps him in the side. If she doesn't get to have her claws out all the time, neither does he.

"When can we go home?" she asks in the hardware store as Victor chats with the cashier, interrupting their conversation and not really caring. If it was important, their scents would be different.

"We go home when I say we go home," Victor growls, putting down a twenty dollar bill.

"Could just steal the car," Laura says under her breath, and the cashier laughs like he thinks she's kidding.

"Quite the joker you've got there. I didn't know you had a kid."

“She’s not my kid,” Victor says, and Laura catches the sharp edge of concern in the cashier’s scent before he continues, “She’s my niece. Brother died.”

“I’m sorry,” the cashier answers, discomfited by Victor’s shrug. He’s human, he can’t smell the grief flooding the room, the heaviness of Victor’s mourning.

“It happens. See you.” They head out and back to the truck where Laura gets in the passenger seat without arguing, too relieved to be going home to waste time.

Laura falls asleep on the way back, cheek pressed to the cool glass of the window as the moon flits between the trees. She dreams only briefly, about rabbits and trying to catch them, her claws out.

She wakes up to Victor’s rocking walk, face pressed into his coat. It smells like blood and sweat mostly, like other people’s blood most especially. Her nose wrinkles, still too foggy with sleep to think. “Ew.”

She hears him laugh as he topples her onto her couch bed, gentler than she would’ve expected. “Yeah, kid. I know. Go back to sleep.”

“S’early,” she complains, remembering from TV shows Gabriela used to watch that kids aren’t supposed to want to sleep.

“You need it,” he says, and Laura’s pretty sure she’s imagining this, but she feels a hand stroke over her hair. “Night.” Laura’s out before he leaves the room.

“Why do you have to hunt?” Laura asks, watching Victor grin as he tracks rabbits through the forest, smaller prey and more difficult to catch. She’s seen the guns he keeps in the shed, she knows there’s an easier way to do this.

“We need to eat,” he says, like she’s being dumb. She huffs, jogging after Victor as he lopes easily through the forest. She can’t run like Victor and her legs aren’t as long as Logan’s. This is *stupid*.

“No. Could shoot.”

“Nah.” Victor leaps, grinning, rolls with the rabbit between his claws. He has blood all around his mouth when he turns back to her, the rabbit bloody scraps. “I need this. I need to hunt. People like us, we go crazy without it.”

“You used to hunt people,” Laura remembers, recalling footage of Victor stalking a girl not much older than she is through the halls of a lab.

He wipes at his mouth, nodding. “S’why I came up here. No humans to hunt.”

“Why do you care?”

He shrugs, gathering up previously caught rabbits to throw over his shoulder. "I told you. After a while, I got tired." Tired enough to come up here, completely alone, for years. Laura can sympathize.

Rictor contacts her through the cell phone Logan gave her, two weeks after she left them, as promised. The new mutants watch out for each other, because they're all family in every way that matters.

Just hearing his voice is enough to make Laura beam, her cheeks hurting with it. "Laura! Are you okay?" he asks in a rush of Spanish, the noise of the other children behind him.

"Yes," she answers, sheathing and unsheathing her claws. Sometimes, it feels like there's too much under her skin, too much bone. This helps.

"Everyone is doing fine," he says without having to be asked. "Delilah wants to show you her drawings." Victor comes in from the cold, raising a questioning eyebrow. *Mis amigos*, she mouths, curling further into the couch.

"I'll visit when I can," she promises. Their conversations have to be short, a casualty of distance calls.

"Call again in two weeks," Rictor orders, always the most bossy one of them all.

"I will." He hangs up with a soft goodbye, and Laura closes the phone to put back on the charger. She's learned it's impossible to be too careful.

"Who was that?" Victor asks, spreading a wealth of vegetables over the table.

Laura sighs, getting to her feet. She's learned quickly that if she doesn't help with dinner, she doesn't eat it. "My friends. The new mutants."

"There are more of you?" At her nod, Victor blows out a breath. "Jesus Christ." Laura starts cleaning dirt from the vegetables, passing them to Victor when she's done. Her claws would do just as well for cutting, but he seems to prefer using the knife. "Tell them to be careful. People hate us," Victor says, which they all already know, but Laura nods anyway, surprised by this mild kindness.

High In The Sky

Chapter Notes

guess i was feeling a lil fluffier with this one. also, pls don't expect plot because i'm terrible at plot. anyway, hope you guys enjoyed. btw, jen is an oc and of course, the kid that victor mentioned was graydon creed :)

Laura wakes up from a nightmare with the sheets in tatters around her, Victor sitting some distance away just watching. She breathes hard, sheathing her claws so she can fist her hands and press them to the cushions.

“Your father did the same thing,” Victor says after a while. “Think he killed more people in bed than he did in the field.”

“Shut up,” Laura says, pretty sure that’s not true. She’s still overwhelmed with visions of men in lab coats who did terrible things, of scalpels digging into flesh that didn’t always heal immediately. “Why are you out here?”

“Heard you growling.” Victor lights a cigar, illuminating his face til he looks like a monster, all harsh angles and shadow. His eyes reflect oddly in the dark, two pinpoints that catch the light. Laura shivers, reaching for the lamp near her couch, and watches his pupils slit like a cats. She wonders why Victor is a cat person and she and Logan weren’t, if they’re all related. She kind of wishes she could run like him, graceful and on all fours. Pulling her knees close to her chest, Laura watches him, hearing crickets outside. “What were you dreaming about?”

In the labs, the scientists would try to get her angry, to see if it made her kill better. But nothing really makes Laura very angry; she’s annoyed if her toys get taken away, or if someone calls her names, but she doesn’t kill for it. So they figured out who she loved best and hurt them. Usually it was Rictor, brought in so Laura could watch as they cut him until she got so angry all she saw was red. It always worked, every time.

Instead of answering, Laura shrugs. “I dreamed of monsters.”

Victor nods, puffing out thick clouds of smoke. “I dream of monsters too, kid.” Laura yawns, watching Victor mirror the motion, his fangs exposed. She’s tired and shaky under the skin, laying down and turning over. She thought it would be hard to fall back asleep, but she can hear Victor breathing, smell the herbs in his cigar, and something about it lulls her back down.

“Victor!” Laura calls from the doorway, holding the eyes of the woman before her. She smells like confusion, and concern, crouching to look Laura in the face. Thick black hair is pulled away from her tanned face, trailing onto the collar of the sturdy yellow flannel she’s wearing over jeans. There’s dirt dug deep under her fingernails, Laura notices. Victor makes his silent, padding way from the bedroom where he was napping, nudging Laura behind him.

The woman stands, looking up at Victor with no fear. “Who’s this?”

“This is my niece, Laura. Laura, this is Jen. She’s an old friend.”

“Is she like us?” Is she a mutant, one of the few who survived. She doesn’t look like one, but neither does Laura. Victor can pass as human, until he shows his teeth.

“No. She graduated from college with me.” Laura tries to imagine Victor behind a desk, like in the TV shows, but her imagination fails her. He’s too big and growly, he would break it.

“I come and visit when I’m in the area,” Jen explains. Laura examines her face, sensing no malice but still bemused. Victor has friends? “I’m a truck driver.”

Laura worms her way out from between them, going to her couch where she can watch. Nothing interesting happens besides a shared coffee and some small talk, Victor obviously sheathing his more feral tendencies. Well, obviously to Laura anyway. Jen leaves with a kind smile and a promise to return, something strange on her face when she looks at Victor. Laura casts the thought away. Other people are weird.

Alone with Victor again, Laura grabs a bowl of cereal and eats slowly, glaring at him. After a while Victor sneers, making his own bowl. “Am I not allowed to have friends, kid? What’s with the look?”

“She’s human.” Humans are too... Laura doesn’t have the words to tell Victor that every human she’s ever liked has died. They’re delicate. She thinks of the family in the house where Xavier died, falling easily under fake Logan’s claws as Laura was *helpless*.

“So?” Laura slams her fist on the table, feeling the skin bruise and heal all in a second, overwhelmingly angry. Back at the house, the son had watched her, guts in his hands, and died without ever understanding why. Victor raises an eyebrow. “Jesus, Laura, what the hell?”

Laura unleashes a flurry of Spanish, knowing he doesn’t speak it but too frustrated for anything else. She doesn’t want to see another human die just for being kind. Logan wouldn’t want that. “Selfish,” Laura finishes, wishing Victor was Xavier. Xavier always got it. Her fingers flex, space between her knuckles itching as that familiar feeling of hopeless rage starts to overwhelm her.

Unexpectedly, Victor reaches a hand across to cover hers, enclosing it completely. “Kid. Laura. It’s okay.”

“It’s *not*,” Laura whispers, wiping at the hot, shameful tears she can’t help. “I don’t want to hurt anymore good people.”

Victor squeezes once, smiling. “Now you’re starting to get it.”

Laura’s never really understood other children. Even the new mutants seem to feel things she can’t, like when Delilah cries during Cinderella while Laura wonders why she didn’t just kill her stepmother.

She eyes the boy across from her as he bounces a ball against the ground. He’s white, with hair that’s almost as long as Laura’s but less tangled. “Move.”

Laura glances down at her mechanical horse, gripping the molded reins. “No.”

The boy peers at her from between his bangs, wiping his nose on the sleeve of his t-shirt. He smells like sweat. It’s *gross*. “What’s your name?”

“Laura,” she says, wishing Victor would just buy the milk and get out. Her horse has stopped moving, and Laura considers stabbing it til it works again, but being with Logan taught her patience. She’ll wait, and if Victor doesn’t give her another quarter, then she’ll stab it. She feels a flutter of pride at being so grown up. “Who’re you?” she challenges back to the boy, who looks surprised to be asked.

“I’m Tommy.” Laura nods absently, tracing over the carved metal of her horse’s mane. The vibrant red paint is beginning to fade, flaking off under her fingertips. “I’ve never seen you before.”

“I don’t live around here.” Through the window Laura can see Victor, an ominous black shadow even when he’s not trying, choosing between two types of milk. Laura prefers 2%.

“You’re not in my class,” he presses, *bouncing*. Laura grits her teeth.

“I don’t go to school.”

“You don’t go to school? Are you stupid?” Laura clambers off the horse to face him, almost chest to chest. He’s a little taller than her, with bulk that’s more baby fat than anything else.

Laura frowns, knowing she has a perfectly average IQ of 115. “No.”

He sneers, pushing Laura back so she falls, thumping against the horse on the way down. Examining her skinned knees, Laura growls, raising a fist. Before she can strike, Victor’s big hand closes around her forearm, lowering it with little effort. “Laura. *No*.”

“He’s bad people,” she hisses, struggling as Victor pulls her back, away from Tommy. He watches with wide eyes, ball forgotten at his feet.

“No, he’s just a dumb kid. Leave it alone.” Tommy tries to complain at that but stops when Victor glares and says, “Shut up.” The bottle of milk is cold against Laura’s skin, jostled between them. 2%, just what she likes.

“You’re *freaks*,” Tommy calls as Victor hauls her back to the truck, Laura struggling. She just wants to punch him, just once. He deserves it.

“Touch my kid again and I’ll cut your throat,” Victor answers, stunning both her and Tommy into silence as she’s dumped into the front seat. Her hands curl automatically around the gallon of milk.

The drive home is silent for the first couple minutes as Laura calms down, eventually sulking, “I’m not your kid.”

“I know. I only have the one.”

This surprises Laura, who can’t see Victor being very good with children. Normal children, anyway. “You do?”

“Yeah. He was terrible and he’s dead now,” Victor dismisses, not a trace of grief in his scent. “Now, shut up and keep the milk from spilling over.” Thoughtful, Laura closes her mouth and does as she’s told.

School Daze

Chapter Notes

me: tells myself this is just going to be a series of short glimpses into Laura's life
also me: decides to set up a plotline and send her to school knowing full well that'll take actual, detailed work

“What was my father like?” Laura asks over dinner, kicking at the rungs of her chair with a foot. She can’t touch the ground with her feet. Yet.

“You knew him,” Victor grunts, ripping apart a hunk of raw meat with his teeth, blood speckling his hands. Laura prefers hers cooked, personally.

“No,” Laura answers, because she did, but not for long, only knew him for a brief, terrifying period of time. One of the guards back at the labs, a nicer one, told Laura that you learn a lot about a man when you watch him die, but Laura doesn’t believe that. She’s seen a lot of people die, and all she’s learned is that most of them look surprised. Logan had just looked relieved.

“Well, he was a tough son of a bitch,” Victor says finally, wiping at his mouth. “Scrappy, too noble for his own good, and not too bright. Always getting me into trouble.” Victor seems to be thinking for a few moments, finally smirking, “He liked brunettes. S’why I thought you were his real kid at first.”

“I am,” Laura says, confused. It’s impossible to deny.

“Yeah, but, you know, like a kid he wanted.” Laura is momentarily baffled by the sharp, almost nauseous feeling that sweeps through her, settling into her stomach. She stares down at her plate and is surprised by the prick of tears in her eyes. Is this what hurt feels like? Victor seems to realize he said the wrong thing, because he frowns uncomfortably. “That came out wrong.”

Laura shrugs one shoulder, picking at food that doesn’t seem yummy anymore. She had thought she was wanted. In the end. Kind of. She’s never been very good at emotions, though. She slides off her chair without speaking and heads outside, where the sun has already gone down. She can hear Victor grumbling to himself through the walls as she leans her back against the house and slides down, staring at the stars. She thinks of Logan, his blood slicked hands in hers as he died, and wonders if she was just a replacement for the child he really wanted.

After a minute or so Victor comes out and sits next to her, folding himself small in a way she wasn’t prepared for. Is he going to try and soothe her like Gabriela used to, murmuring

softly? That would be weird. "I've been an asshole for most of my life," Victor starts, his slitted pupils huge in this light. "Your dad still loved me. And you're a lot easier to love, kid." Victor shuffles closer til they're pressed shoulder to shoulder, Laura scenting the familiar smells of animal and blood and exhaustion that she knows means Victor. She can tell he's being honest. Mollified, she smiles into the crook of her elbow and lets Victor point out constellations til they're too cold to stay outside.

"Your dad did this once," Victor says, hefting a log twice his size over his shoulder.

Laura, her own pile of sticks in hand, lifts a skeptical eyebrow. "Lift trees?"

This earns her one of Victor's toothy grins as she follows him back to the shed where they keep firewood, her steps lighter than his. "Kind of. This lumberjack, wilderness shit. All alone in the great beyond. Before he stuck that metal to his bones."

Laura shifts her sticks to one arm and unsheathes her claws. She had never considered that Logan would choose to do this to himself. Although, if given the choice, Laura would still choose the adamantium. It helps her fight better. "And?"

"And what?" Laura gives him a look, meaning go on. She likes hearing about her dad. "Well, it ended bad," Victor continues, clearing his throat. There's something shifty in his expression that Laura decides not to chase. Victor was bad once, she knows. He still kind of is, but it's in more of a grumpy way than anything.

"Will this end bad?"

He bristles all over, shivering. "Jesus, kid. I sure as hell hope not." Laura hopes, too.

"Do you wanna go to school?" Victor asks one morning during breakfast, as Laura's trying to figure out how to only eat the candy dinosaur eggs in her oatmeal. She can do it without Victor noticing for a while, but then he gets all annoyed and says things about proper nutrition. Oatmeal tastes like beige looks, Laura hates it.

Surprised, she just stares at him, spoon halfway to her mouth. She tries to imagine herself in a school like she sees on TV, but that was all older kids. Everyone her age on TV is dressed weird and smiles too much and they never seem to spend time learning. Laura learned how to read in a small white room with a woman who never made eye contact. She's pretty sure that's not how real school works. "You could start next year," Victor goes on, peeling an apple with his claws in one long spiral. "And you can't stab people."

"Only bad people," Laura says around her spoonful of oatmeal, ignoring his grimace at her open mouthed chewing.

"Everyone your age is too young to be bad people."

Laura could beg to differ, except Victor actually seems serious about this. "Why?"

“Why go to school?” She nods, subtly pushing her oatmeal away. She had half, that counts, right? “To socialize you, and learn.”

“Already learned.”

Victor sighs, tugging her bowl towards himself to put in the sink. “What’s a decimal, Laura?”

She has no idea, sets her jaw mulishly and stares over his shoulder. “You don’t know, do you? Cause you never got a fuckin’ education.”

She bares her teeth, letting her claws slide out. He just grins and unsheathes his own.

“S’ dumb.”

“Do you wanna spend the rest of your life killing people?” Laura’s not sure; killing people has seemed to work for her so far. As long as they’re bad people. “Descanso, remember? Rest.” Laura blinks, surprised he bothered remembering that. “Once you start down that path, you’ll never find it.”

There’s a long pause as Laura considers this. She guesses it might be cool to be like, an astronaut or something. “Okay.”

“You’ll try?”

“Mm.” He nods and goes back to his breakfast.

Dazed

Chapter Notes

me: incapable of plot

that's all i have to say there's no joke here. i just really wanted laura to go to school and meet other kids and have a vague plot lol lemme know if this is a flop

“Will this fit you?” Victor asks, holding up a shirt that would’ve been too small for Laura when she was *seven*. She gives him a look and shakes her head. He sighs. “C’mon, kid. We drove all the way out here. Work with me.” The twelve hour drive to the closest mall was already stressful, made worse because Laura knows it’s for her first day of school outfit. She usually wears the same three, similar outfits and she’s perfectly happy with that. This is *dumb*.

Victor waits patiently, too big in this store with its dainty pink clothes and smiling stuffed bears. The cashier hasn’t stopped gawking, which makes Laura’s hackles rise. She’s too used to being watched, and it never bodes well. Instead of arguing further, she grabs the closest dress that’ll fit her and holds it out. “That?”

“Mhm.”

Victor shifts from foot to foot, clearly as uncomfortable as she is in here, with the too bright lights shining down on them. His pupils are thin slits, only making it clearer that his eyes are yellow. “Okay. Go try it on.”

“Why?” Laura knows what her size is.

“It’s what you’re supposed to do.” It strikes her suddenly that neither of them have any idea what to do here, as Victor’s claws begin to grow. He cracks his neck, growling in the back of his throat.

“Let’s go,” she orders, tugging him by the hem of his coat to the front of the store. “I’m tired.” He can probably smell the lie, but he doesn’t say anything.

During the drive back Laura sleeps on and off, soothed by the rattling air conditioner that Victor occasionally slaps to keep working. She’s not really sure how mechanical stuff works; usually, if she wants something to stop, she just sticks her claws in it. Everything about this car is old, even the person driving it. Probably.

“How old are you?” Laura asks as she stares out at an endless line of pine trees.

“One hundred and ninety-two, give or take a few years,” Victor says, scratching at his sideburns. Laura gapes. She’s very sure that people aren’t supposed to live that long.

“My dad?”

“Jimmy was one eighty eight, that one I know for sure.” His lip curls. “The runt got a birth certificate before they realized he was a bastard.” He must be able to smell her disbelief, because he continues, “We stopped aging after a while. And then we just...kept going.”

Laura peers down at her hands, the same square palms and knobbly knuckles as Logan, and tries to think ahead a hundred years. “Me?”

“Yeah, you too. Since you have the healing factor.”

“Hmph.”

Victor laughs, starting down yet another winding road. “Don’t worry, kid. You’ve still got a couple years of growing to do.”

Laura has immediately decided that school is the *worst*. There are so many gross smells and the teacher is grumpy and Victor decided to move closer to town so the drive there was shorter. She had to wake up at *seven*.

There are only seven kids in her class, five boys and two girls, and they all stare at her with the same blank expression, curiosity threading through their scents. Laura, standing at the front of the class with the teacher’s expectant eyes on her, briefly considers killing Victor for this. It’s not like he wouldn’t come back.

“Go on and tell us your name,” the teacher, Mrs. Dufress, prompts.

Laura glowers at the floor, muttering, “Laura.”

“And where are you from?”

She shrugs, feeling like all her words are used up for the day. Apparently that’s not an option here, as the teacher waits til Laura sighs and says, “Mexico.”

“Well, that’s very kind of your uncle to take in an immigrant. You should be thankful.” Victor is *not* kind and Laura is *not* thankful, or at least she won’t say those things out loud. Laura wishes she had Xavier’s powers so she could make the teacher stop speaking. Or she could kill her. Which would be a bad thing, she’s pretty sure. She locks eyes with Tommy, the kid from the store who called her a freak, and glares. He’s bad people no matter what Victor says. “Can you tell the class something about yourself?”

I’m a mutant, Laura thinks, pressing her lips together. Victor gave her a different backpack to bring to school, one without her stuff in it. This one has a notebook and a pencil she found under the couch. Her shoulders feel too light without it, inching up towards her ears. “I like TV,” she says finally, choosing a safe option.

“Very nice. Sit down now.” Laura sits in the back so she can watch everyone, especially Tommy. They all have nametags on their desks which is dumb cause there’s not enough people to have trouble remembering. They’re all white, too.

Tommy is the big one with long hair. Hunter, in the front row, is very small, perched on the edge of his seat. His hair feathers out from under a John Deere hat. Emma is blonde and she smells very strongly of bubblegum, passing notes to other people while Mrs. Dufress isn’t watching. Brayden hasn’t stopped fidgeting, tapping his fingers against the cast on his left arm, jiggling his leg. He’s dressed entirely in eye-searing yellow.

Jesse and Ricky are twins in matching Power Rangers shirts, turning around every so often to stare goggle-eyed at Laura. And Ashley smells like hunger, hunched over in her seat, her crown of intricate braids coming loose in strands around her face.

Laura’s not impressed by any of them. She kicks her feet up on the chair in front of her and listens as Mrs. Dufress begins explaining class rules.

By lunchtime, Laura has decided that she hates Victor. She got yelled at for putting her feet up on the chair, yelled at for snarling at Ricky when he tried to tug on her dress, yelled at for not knowing the pledge of allegiance. “They don’t have that in *Mexico*,” she hears Emma whisper to Hunter. “But this is *America*,” Emma sneers. They’re barely in America, because Alaska doesn’t even touch the rest of it. It shouldn’t count.

At lunchtime they’re finally dismissed and Laura can run from the room to get something called ‘hot lunch’ where she stands in line with a tray and gets something that barely smells like food dropped on her plate. The entire school, grades 5-12, only has 148 students, so they all eat together.

Laura’s classmates eat bunched up at their assigned tables, chatting, going quiet when Laura sets her plate down to join them. She meets their flat stares with her own. All of them but Tommy have lunches from home. Ashley looks down at her single, pre-packaged sandwich with sadness, and Laura wonders if she’s the only one who can hear her stomach growling. It makes her uncomfortable in a confusing way, like how she felt whenever Xavier couldn’t remember who he was.

“Are you really from Mexico? Do you speak Spanish?” Brayden asks before anything, stuffing a cracker in his mouth. Laura nods.

“My dad says everyone from Mexico is a criminal,” Emma says. Laura is very aware that murder is illegal in probably every country, so she just shrugs.

“My dad says your dad is a racist,” Brayden tells Emma, who makes a face.

“Who’re your mom and dad? Are they new?”

“Her dad is a *freak* just like her,” Tommy cuts in, digging into his mysterious meat. Laura can’t tell what kind of animal it came from. “He looks like an animal.”

“S’not my dad,” Laura growls. “My uncle.”

“Where are your parents?” Jesse asks, peeking out from behind his brother.

“Dead.”

There’s a brief pause before Emma sighs, shuffling closer to Laura. “My mom is dead, too. Sorry.”

“My sister died last year before she was born,” Ashley offers, the first time she’s spoken. “We’re not supposed to talk about it.”

Laura hears her stomach growl again and, fed up with it, shoves her pudding cup in Ashley’s direction. “Here.”

“I’m fine,” Ashley protests, even as her hand inches towards it.

“Yours,” Laura presses, satisfied when Ashley unpeels the top and takes her offered spoon. Lunch is easier after that, besides Tommy, who Laura has decided is her nemesis. She’s allowed to have one of those, right? Logan had a bunch. Victor was one of them.

Victor comes roaring up to the school drive thru in his ancient pick-up truck, looking bigger and somehow more present than everyone else there. He grins at her, waving.

“Is that your uncle?” Emma asks, standing slightly too close behind her. Laura nods as she heads for him, waving goodbye. “He looks cool!” Emma calls after her, cupping her hands around her mouth.

Laura tosses her bag in the footspace and climbs in, avoiding Victor’s eyes. “How was school?” he asks, sounding exactly like the parents in the sitcoms Gabriela used to watch.

“Okay.”

“Did you stab anyone?” She can tell he’s kidding by the hint of fang peeking out from between his lips.

Their new home is about an hour from school, still tucked away in the woods but not as far as before. Laura doesn’t mind either way, but Victor is unsettled, his lip twitching any time someone stares for too long. If he snaps and attacks someone, will they have to move? Laura looks down at the tiny fortuneteller Ashley folded up and made for her, pressing it into her hand before school ended. It doesn’t say anything about killing on it, but Laura’s found that’s mostly where her life leads. She fiddles with it, unfolding the little flaps until she can read her favorite fortune, the one that promises chocolate milk at lunch tomorrow.

“I remember when those were invented,” Victor says, nodding at it. “Jimmy liked them.” Grief thickens his scent; Laura’s shoulders slump under the weight of it.

“Homework,” she says to distract him. The teacher had passed out a thick pile of papers that everyone had complained about.

“I’ll help,” he says, and just like that the mourning is gone.

Why

Chapter Notes

me a couple weeks ago: oh this'll just be a fun slice of life story no big deal, i don't even loooove the characters that much

me now: is getting heavy into an actual real plot, would die for laura kinney my beautiful feral child and her terrible uncle victor

“So, what’re you tryin’ to say?” Laura hears Victor ask, the low threat of a snarl in the back of his throat. She’s sitting outside the principal’s office on one of the uncomfortable benches hugging her knees.

She’s only been at school for a week, and the principal has already called Victor in for an ‘emergency meeting’. Laura doesn’t think the principal, Mr. Kay, was ready for someone like Victor to show up; he smells like fear. “Um, Mr. Creed, I just mean...” His heart rabbits faster as Laura watches Victor lean forward through the glass of the principal’s closed door. She’s very thankful for her enhanced hearing right now. Mr. Kay swallows and adjusts his tie. “First, she’s been found on the roof twice. We can’t allow that.”

“If she falls, she falls,” Victor says casually, examining his nails. They look mostly normal. For now. Laura looks down at her own hands, with knuckles that just healed from bruising, the reason she’s in trouble this time.

“*And*, and, she’s been fighting,” Mr. Kay says, like Victor would care. “She broke another student’s nose.” Jenny Turner, who called Ashley trash and made her cry. Laura’s seen enough movies to know what a bully is, and how to take care of one.

“She coulda done worse.” Laura smiles into her elbow as Victor meets her eyes through the glass and winks. “So, what’s her punishment? Whipping? Ruler to the knuckles?”

“Uh, Mr. Creed, we don’t do that anymore...”

“Then why am I here?”

Mr. Kay is lost for words, eyes darting anywhere but at Victor. He finally spots Laura and frowns; Laura has learned that in school, most adults don’t like her. “We wanted you to have a talk with Laura.”

Laura tries to picture Victor scolding her; she imagines it would end bloody for both of them. Victor grimaces, probably thinking the same thing. “Sure. Call her in and we’ll *talk*.”

Curious, Laura goes when she's beckoned, settling next to Victor and copying his haughty expression. "We've been having a very serious discussion about you, Laura." She's not as scared as Mr. Kay seems to think she should be; scary is the scientists back in Mexico. Scary is Logan's clone cuffing her hands. Scary is Victor before he has his coffee. "Do you have anything to say?"

She exchanges looks with Victor, who grunts, "She doesn't talk much."

"You've done a bad thing. Do you understand that?" Mr. Kay says very slowly. Laura shows her teeth.

"She also ain't stupid," Victor says, doing that thing he does that makes him seem way bigger even though he hasn't moved.

"Well, we need to discuss methods of punishment-" Mr. Kay starts, interrupted by Victor's impatient, "I'll take away her cellphone or something. Are we done here?" He stands without waiting for an answer and strides out, Laura following close behind. Laura hears Mr. Kay sigh and start going through his papers, giving up.

"Mad?" she asks Victor as they push through the main doors of the school and head for Victor's truck parked out front.

"Mad? No. I don't care who you go around punching, long as they don't die."

Laura slides her sunglasses on as Victor takes off. The wind whips through her hair, tangling it further. "The girl. She hurt my friend."

"And you had to help?" Laura nods. He laughs in a sad kind of way. "Of course you did. You're just like your father; too noble for your own good." He says it like it's supposed to be a bad thing, but Laura feels a quiet swell of pride. She couldn't know Logan well, but she can be like him. That's enough.

"My dad says that all Mexicans can't read," Emma says two weeks into the semester, leaning over the back of her chair during break time. Laura tilts her head, used to this by now. Emma's nice, but Victor says that her dad is stupid and needs to keep his mouth shut.

"I can read," Laura points out, gesturing to *Charlotte's Web*, open in front of her.

Emma wrinkles her nose. "Oh, yeah. Maybe my dad is wrong."

"Your dad is wrong about a lot of things," Laura says, which makes Emma frown. She doesn't argue though. Laura thinks class is easier now, with people she can talk to.

Ashley made her a friendship bracelet out of bright string that she told Laura not to take off, which is new. Laura hasn't ever had to make friends before; everyone from the labs are friends by default, by necessity. They didn't have the luxury of choosing. Laura loves the new mutants, her family, but she likes this, too.

The librarian at this school, Miss Stephanie, is very nice; she lets Laura eat lunch in the library when the cafeteria is too loud, she smells like cherries, she's young, and she never raises her voice, even when Laura rips a page in a history book because it has *Logan* in it. *World War II*, the cover reads, simply, and when she flips through a few pages there's Logan, staring out at her with a cigar between his teeth.

He looks younger, more like Victor's age than the old man she knew. And she can tell Victor's behind him, with his back turned, recognizes the broad shoulders and hint of claws. *Unknown soldiers at Luzon*, the caption underneath says. She has no other pictures of him, the wallet lost when he died; the only images of Logan left are in comic books.

Laura presses a finger to what she can see of Logan's hands, knowing the claws hide underneath, and blinks back tears before glancing around the library and carefully slicing the picture out with one claw. Unfortunately, Miss Stephanie catches her.

"Laura? What are you doing?" she asks as she turns a corner, catches Laura red-handed with the book in her hands. For the briefest of seconds Laura considers killing her and running, but just the thought makes her stomach twist in knots. Miss Stephanie is *good people*. "Oh dear," Miss Stephanie breathes, taking the book from Laura's hands and examining the cut out space. Her scent sours with surprise and disappointment.

"My dad," Laura says before she can ask any questions, showing Miss Stephanie the picture of Logan.

"What?"

"This is my dad," Laura says emphatically, shaking the picture a little. She's never said a word to Miss Stephanie before.

"Laura, honey, that picture is over eighty years old."

"Dad," Laura says again. She would know Logan's face in a crowd of a million people, the harsh planes of it, the eyes of a man a hundred years older than he should be. She knows.

Miss Stephanie bites her bottom lip, eyes flicking to the clock where it's rapidly ticking towards the end of lunch. "Okay," she says instead of arguing, smoothing down the skirt of her pretty yellow dress. "Okay, Laura. I'm not going to tell the principal, but I want you to bring your uncle to meet with me after school." Laura nods; she doesn't want to get in trouble again, not so soon. Leaving Miss Stephanie behind with the ruined book, she tucks Logan's picture carefully into her homework folder and heads back to class.

At the end of the day Victor is waiting for her in his truck, as usual, ignoring Emma's excited wave. He hasn't responded yet, but Emma's persistent. Laura makes her way over to the pickup truck, hooking her hands in the rolled down window of the closed door and standing on the steps she uses to get inside.

"Hey, kid."

"Miss Stephanie wants to talk to you."

“Who?” he asks, but he’s already turning the car off, the reassuring rumble against Laura’s chest stilling.

“Librarian.”

“Jesus, Laura, you’re in trouble again?” he grumbles as he stalks up to her, easily elbowing any remaining parents out of his way. She’s not sure whether she’s in trouble or not, so she doesn’t bother answering, just leads Victor into the school. People stare as they walk by, but people always stare at Victor.

When they reach the library Miss Stephanie is behind her desk sorting books, mumbling to herself; Laura and Victor are so quiet that normal people can’t hear them walk. She glances up, flushing when she sees Victor. There’s no trace of fear in her scent, just interest, which is unusual enough to be noticeable, as Victor makes a point to be unsettling. “Are you the librarian?” Victor asks, dumping himself in the chair in front of her desk. It groans under his weight.

“Oh, well, yes. I’m Stephanie Baker.” They shake, Miss Stephanie’s small brown hand disappearing in Victor’s giant paw. When they’re done, Miss Stephanie tucks a long strand of black hair behind her ear and folds her hands together.

“What’m I doing here?” Miss Stephanie slides a glance towards Laura, standing at Victor’s shoulder, and bites her lip again. Victor leans forward to examine her, tilting his head in that feline way he can’t seem to help. “Is Laura in trouble?”

“No,” Miss Stephanie rushes to assure, as she pushes the World War II book across the desk. “I just caught Laura defacing a library book today.”

Victor looks over his shoulder to raise an eyebrow at Laura, who doesn’t move. “Okay… How much do I have to pay to cover it?”

“Um, the school covers it, but, well…” Laura doesn’t need her enhanced senses to read discomfort on Miss Stephanie as she shifts in place, frowning. “Laura tore a picture of some soldiers out. She says one of them is her father.”

Victor stiffens, looking back to see Laura nod as she hands him the picture. He cups it in both hands, staring down at Logan; Laura’s fairly sure she’s the only one who notices his hands shaking, smells the grief and regret flooding his scent. After slightly too long he relaxes, passing the picture back to Laura.

“Wow, that certainly does look like Jimmy,” he blusters, grinning at Miss Stephanie. Her heartbeat kicks up a notch. “You know her parents died recently?”

“Yes, Mr. Creed. I’m sorry.”

“Kid’s still grieving,” Victor says, which isn’t exactly a lie. “It makes her do weird shit.” That is a lie, one that Laura frowns over but doesn’t argue against.

“I understand,” Miss Stephanie says, and the funny thing is, she’s being honest.

“Can we keep the picture? Might help,” Victor says, flinching when Miss Stephanie puts her hand over his.

“Of course,” she says, squeezing once then drawing back. The pain Laura’s reading off Victor fades a little. “If you need anything, Laura, I’m always here,” she promises, holding Laura’s eyes.

Surprised and pleased, Laura smiles at her, receiving an answering smile that lights up Miss Stephanie’s face.

As soon as they’re outside, back in the car, Laura pulls out the photo for Victor to examine. “Real?” she asks, nervous although she was so sure before.

“Yeah, it’s real,” Victor says, curling his hand around the back of her neck without seeming to think about it. “I remember that war. Was when things started to go bad.”

“Bad?” She puts the picture back in her folder again, careful not to bend it.

“When I started to go bad,” Victor admits, starting the car and pulling from the parking lot, removing his hand from her neck. Laura curls her body around her backpack. “Too much war, too much death. I couldn’t get enough.”

Laura calls up images of Victor from the footage she saw once, with his mouth and chin dripping blood, grinning over the bodies of an African village. “You were a bad man,” she agrees. Not anymore, though. Not really.

“Your librarian friend smelled weird,” Victor says, changing the subject. “But familiar.”

“Like cherries?” That’s what Laura’s always gotten.

“No.” Shrugging, Victor takes the turn onto their exit. “Whatever. Let’s go hang that picture up somewhere so you can see Jimmy’s ugly mug every day.”

Laura, reading between the lines, only smiles.

The next day Laura watches Miss Stephanie calm a screaming student with just a touch and realizes what that weird smell Victor was talking about is. There’s another mutant in their territory.

Puppy

Chapter Notes

hope this is okay, guys, and hope you like it! i love writing laura and victor and now i kind of have a plot?? i guess?? who knows lol. if you like this and want more/have suggestions about what to write, please let me know!

“Miss Stephanie is a mutant,” Laura announces later that day, as soon as she’s gotten into Victor’s truck. Her bag sits at her feet, heavy on her toes.

“Impossible,” Victor dismisses, turning the key.

“She *is*,” Laura insists, annoyed.

“There hasn’t been a new mutant in decades.” Laura gestures at herself. “You were made, kid.”

“There are some,” she tells him, remembering Caliban, and the scattered mutants she used to find Victor after Logan died. “I saw her...” Laura touches her fingers to the thin skin on her inner arm, mimicking what she saw earlier. “And the boy calmed down.”

“She touches people and they calm down?” When Laura nods, Victor sighs, dragging a hand over his face. “Of fuckin’ course.” He shrugs at Laura’s curious head tilt. “It’s just karma biting me in the ass, kid. Don’t worry.” Laura wasn’t worried.

“Now what?”

“Do you think we should kill her?”

“*No*.” Sometimes Laura forgets that Victor’s a bad man. But only sometimes.

“Is she a threat?” Laura thinks of Miss Stephanie, who never raises her voice, always smiling, always willing to work with students who need help. Laura knows threats, and Miss Stephanie isn’t one. She shakes her head no. “Then do whatever you need to, kid. I trust you.” Surprised by this, Laura scrutinizes Victor’s craggy profile, but his face doesn’t give anything away. She smiles anyway.

Laura waits until lunch the next day, showing up to the library after everyone has headed to the cafeteria and leaving her backpack near Miss Stephanie’s desk. Now that she knows, she recognizes the scent Victor was talking about, that weird underlying twist of genes that they all share.

Miss Stephanie gives her a smile, apparently holding no grudges from the day before. Today, she's dressed in a long sleeved dress that matches the pink of her lips, the barrette holding her curly hair back. "Hi, Laura. Is there something I can do for you?"

Laura squints and leans over Miss Stephanie's desk, examining her. "You're a mutant," she says after a while, careful to move away from easy reach. She doesn't know the extent of Miss Stephanie's powers yet. Immediately a flood of fear and shock fills Laura's nose, making her sniff.

"A...a what? No. *No*. Laura, you can't just go around saying things like that," Miss Stephanie babbles, waving frantic hands. Laura thinks this gross feeling in her stomach might be regret for scaring her, maybe. She's still not all that clear on the subtler emotions; before she died, Gabriela was working on that.

"So am I," Laura interrupts, unsheathing her claws and holding them out. "You're like us."

"Us?" Miss Stephanie says faintly, still reeling.

"Me. Victor. My dad." She takes the picture of Logan out of her pocket; Victor brought it to a store and they have dozens of copies now. "This *is* my dad. We don't die." Not usually, anyway.

"I don't, I...I've never met someone like me," Miss Stephanie says, motioning for Laura to take the chair in front of her desk. She does, keeping a wary distance. Miss Stephanie is nice, but she's scared. Even nice people do bad things when they're scared.

"We're not exactly like you."

"But...you..."

"You have nice powers. We don't." Victor can't take away pain, Laura can't calm someone down by taking their hand. All they do is kill. Laura privately thinks they got the better end of the deal; she likes being able to defend herself. She just wishes Logan and Gabriela and Xavier didn't have to die so she could be safe.

"I'm sure your powers are very nice," Miss Stephanie reassures. Laura, who can cut through a grown man's spinal cord in 1.68 seconds, just shrugs. "I'm going to have to talk to your uncle again," Miss Stephanie says, watching Laura eat her lunch. From home this time, made by Victor. The best kind of meals, because he knows how much people like them have to eat and Laura never goes hungry.

"Why?" she asks around a mouthful of bread and meat. Victor's never social at the best of times. Miss Stephanie doesn't seem to have an answer for that, so Laura takes pity on her. "Okay." Miss Stephanie offers her a tentative smile that Laura returns, even though her mouth is full. Gabriela taught her it's important to be polite.

"I told Miss Stephanie about us and she wants to talk to you," Laura tells Victor as soon as he shows up; he sighs.

“Am I ever gonna get to just bring you home?” he asks, putting the truck into park. “You’re more trouble than you’re worth.” Laura, who knows he doesn’t mean it, leads him into the school without comment. “Am I gonna have to kill her?” Victor asks, prowling through the hallway without seeming to think about it.

“No,” Laura says firmly as they reach the library; she can hear Miss Stephanie’s pounding heart from here.

“We’ll see,” is all Victor says as he ducks through the door. Laura wonders if it annoys him, being so big in a world that’s not fit for him. He settles at the chair in front of Miss Stephanie’s desk as Laura takes her usual place at his shoulder.

“The kid had some interesting news for me,” he purrs, leaning forward with quiet menace. Logan carried everything on his sleeve, said whatever he was thinking. From what Laura saw, he pushed through everything until he couldn’t anymore, until it killed him. Victor is more subtle, more likely to leave people wondering why they feel threatened when he’s barely said anything. Both ways work. Miss Stephanie’s heartrate kicks up a notch, but she holds her head high. “I could barely believe my own ears,” he continues, resting his hands palm down on the arms of his chair.

The claws come out slowly, curving down over the wood. When he scratches Miss Stephanie flinches, the sour stink of fear flooding the room. “You’re scaring her!” Laura snaps, slapping his shoulder. She knows it’s just a threat display, mostly harmless, but Miss Stephanie won’t. Laura will fight Victor if she has to, if he’s going to be a bully. It comes too easily to him to disappear entirely.

Victor twitches, the claws gone and back to almost normal in seconds. “Relax, kid. I’m not gonna eat the pretty librarian.” He grins, friendly again. “When did you know?”

“Know what?” Miss Stephanie stammers, thrown for a loop.

“Know you were a freak.”

“When I was a teenager, and I touched people...” She trails off, shrugging. “I felt what they felt. Or made them feel what I wanted. I didn’t understand it, at first. But I learned.”

“You had no one to help you,” Victor says, almost kind. “All of us are gone now.”

“Not all,” Laura interjects, leaning her elbow on Victor’s broad shoulder. “Not all,” he agrees. “The kid’s been through a lot. Can you keep her secret?”

“Can you keep mine?” Miss Stephanie challenges, and Victor huffs a laugh.

“Of course I can, Miss Baker.”

“It’s just Steph,” she tells them. “For both of you.” *Steph*. Laura rolls the name around in her head, feeling the edges, and decides she likes it. Just Steph. Another mutant, and a new friend.

“My mom had blue eyes,” Emma says one recess, sitting on the swing next to Laura. She turns in slow circles, kicking the dirt. Sadness seeps out from her scent like a wound. Today she’s wearing a monster truck t-shirt over a poofy ballerina skirt, rainboots with ladybugs on them.

Everybody else is splashing in puddles and shrieking with laughter. “And she watched wrestling with me. And made me a huge birthday cake every year.” Laura, unsure what to say, just watches Emma spin, and wonders how someone can be so sad that even their braids are limp. “She died today. I miss her.” Emma sniffs, wiping at her nose. “What was your mom like?”

Laura understands the concept of a mom; she watches a lot of TV and she’s not *stupid*. But her mom died when she had Laura, or was killed. Gabriela never explained. Oh. Of course. Gabriela. The middle of her chest still hurts when Laura thinks of her, but it’s getting better. Laura doesn’t have any pictures of her, and is sometimes worried she’ll forget her smile, the soft Spanish she got used to falling asleep to. She bows her head.

“My mom had brown eyes,” she starts, swinging into Emma til their legs bump, gently, and then drifting away. “She liked telenovas.” Every day Laura’s English is better, but she doesn’t know if there’s a better word for telenovas. “She wanted me to be a kid.” Unlike everyone else Laura had known, who wanted a weapon with no feeling, who looked at the new mutants and saw scientific progress instead of children. Gabriela sang songs when no one was looking, and celebrated Laura’s birthday with a clandestine candle every year. The first time she caught Laura dragging her claws across her skin, wanting to see the metal underneath, she wept and rocked her. Laura had explained that she was just *curious*, and never did it again.

“I loved my mom,” Emma says.

“Me too.” They sit in silence for a second before Emma reaches over to take Laura’s hand; her fingers are warm, wet from holding on to the swing. Laura is suddenly very aware of the claws in her hands, the metal underneath her skin, and how delicate Emma’s fingers feel between hers. Laura has chopped fingers off, bitten them off, even cut off one of her own when she got desperate once. She’s never thought about them much before.

When Laura looks over Emma is smiling, tilting her head against the chain of the swing. “Thanks for listening, Laura.” Laura, surprised by the nerves unfolding in her stomach, just nods as they drift slowly back and forth, hands entwined.

Materials

Chapter Notes

ugh FINALS so i'm procrastinating by writing this. it's not v long or important to the story but i wanted to stress how abnormal laura's childhood is and how some of the horrible things that've happened to her might not even strike her as weird

Laura doesn't understand Victor sometimes. Although, she thinks as she stares up at him, she doesn't understand a lot of people.

Right now Victor smells like low, seething rage and frustration, so potent that Laura's nose itches. On the outside, though, he's grinning and relaxed, mouth curving upwards in a slow grin that does nothing to hide his fangs. His pupils are blown so wide they look round like a human's, hiding the yellow shade of his irises.

"This is the third time I've been in here since Laura started school," he purrs; if he was a real cat, if he had a tail, right now it would be curling slow and dangerous, ready to pounce. Mr. Kay seems to realize this as he squares his shoulders, but he's not as tall as Victor. Very few humans are. They hadn't even made it into the office this time, standing outside with Mr. Kay as his secretary looks on, her interest filling Laura's nose. Outside the windows, people are staring. Laura stares right back at them, lip curling. "Is the kid really that bad?"

"Well, no," Mr. Kay starts, although his face says *yes*.

Laura, before she came here, had never had an enemy she couldn't physically fight. The people at the lab and the mercenaries were real bad guys, so she could kill them. When Logan or Victor annoy her, she can pop the claws and they'd be fine. When the new mutants get in fights, Laura pulls her punches, but they're still *punches*. Mr. Kay is her enemy, Laura is pretty sure, but she can't fight him. Not with her body. Doesn't mean her hands aren't fisting at her sides, though.

Victor leans into Mr. Kay's space with that air of quiet menace he's perfected, still grinning. "What'd she do this time? Kill someone?" Laura knows better than to kill anyone at school, and she doesn't *want* to. They're good people.

Mr. Kay sputters out a no as Laura drifts into Victor's side, disinterested. There's fresh blood somewhere on his clothes, animal, and she hopes that means dinner will be fresh tonight. It tastes better that way, when it's almost raw but not so much it upsets her still-human stomach.

Victor bristles, glancing down when Laura tugs on his sleeve. His jacket is leather, buttery soft under her fingertips. "It's good," she tells him.

“It is *not*,” Mr. Kay snaps. Laura, confused, tilts her head. She’s not in trouble, Mrs. Dufress had made sure to let her know and she wasn’t lying.

“What’s going on?” Victor demands.

“Laura’s been handing in disturbing material for writing assignments,” Mr. Kay says gingerly, swinging the door to his office open and ushering them inside. Victor, this time, goes without argument, settling so heavily into his chair that it creaks under his weight.

“What do you mean?” he growls as Laura takes her place at his shoulder, putting her backpack at her feet. She has to empty it soon; people have been commenting on how heavy it is, worrying about her spine. Laura, whose bones don’t bend, hadn’t noticed.

“We’re beginning to think she’s seriously disturbed,” Mr. Kay says, and Laura figures she agrees. She’s not like other children, she knows that. He pushes across a file for Victor to read; Laura watches Victor’s shoulders rise til they almost touch his ears, the sudden tension in the room choking her.

She wrote about the first time the scientists took her out to toughen her; she used the words mom and dad so it wouldn’t seem weird. Laura was strapped down to a table and taught exactly how much heat or cold she could endure; more than the other children, but eventually everything went fuzzy and black. “Everyone does this,” the scientists told her. Laura flexes her fingers, remembering the skin peeled back in long lines from heat, and frowns.

“I’ll take her to therapy,” Victor says after a few minutes of reading. Mr. Kay seems about to argue, but even Laura wouldn’t cross Victor right now as he sweeps the paper off the desk and stands, filling the room. Laura follows him out, having to jog to stay in step.

*

The ride home is bitter and deathly quiet, Laura keeping her hands in her lap after Victor flung the papers at her so they’re now scattered at her feet. They don’t speak for the first five minutes of the drive, as Laura listens to Victor’s heartbeat slow.

She’s staring out at the green blur of trees when he speaks. “I told you to try and be normal.” Laura nods; even at the best of times words are hard, and right now confusion seems to be swelling in her throat. “Then what the *fuck*, Laura?” Laura snarls at him, gets bared teeth in return and Victor’s nails lengthening til he scratches thin white lines down the steering wheel, losing control. “Don’t give me that fucking feral bullshit, not right now,” he warns, and Laura thinks he’s one to talk. Victor’s wild, and he barely bothers to hide it. “Normal kids don’t get exposure training,” he tells her, which is news to Laura. “I’m lucky they didn’t try to take you away from me.”

Like they could, Laura scoffs in her head. But there’s real fear in Victor’s scent, the first time Laura’s gotten that from him. “Didn’t know,” she finally murmurs, pulling her knees to her chest.

“You didn’t know what?”

“Didn’t know...” She gestures, trying to encompass the gaps in her childhood where normal children have memories. “The cold, the heat. I thought...”

“You thought every kid went through that,” Victor finishes, seeming to shrink until he’s just himself again, still big but not overwhelming.

She nods. “I figured people just didn’t talk about it.” There’s a lot of things people don’t talk about that Laura’s had to learn, like what foods can and can’t be shared or when to stop staring. She assumed this was one more of them.

“None of your childhood has been normal,” he reminds her, like she needs it. One of his massive hands comes to rest on her shoulder, and where Laura would usually shake it off she accepts it, sensing they both need a bit of comfort. “Next time you want to write about it, just ask me.”

Nodding in agreement, Laura feels the last bit of tension leave the car and smiles. Victor gives her a grin back, a real one this time, and returns both hands to the wheel. The drive home continues in peaceful silence.

Fadhil

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Someone’s here,” Laura says one Friday, while Victor’s taking his usual nap and she’s doing her homework, bored and glancing out the window. She hears Victor groan and get up, grumbling.

The person walking up their path is male, young. Not as young as Laura. His hair is brown and hangs around his face; he’s not smiling. Laura watches with interest from the window as Victor comes up behind her and opens the door; he smells curious but not concerned, waiting til the man comes closer before speaking. “You’re wearing his face now?”

“No one remembers what Charles Xavier looked like, long ago,” the man answers, his mouth curving into a smirk that’s more bitterness than mirth. His gaze falls on Laura. “Is this her? Wolverine’s daughter?”

“Yes,” Laura answers for herself, peeking out from behind Victor’s bulk. Her nose itches. The man doesn’t smell right. He doesn’t smell like anything, that’s the problem. He’s just a blank space.

“You hear about what happened to Charles?” Victor asks, almost gentle.

The man stiffens. “Yes. Two months ago.”

Victor watches him for a few more minutes before he sighs, opening the door a couple more inches. “You can come in, Raven.”

“For old times sake?” the man, or Raven, says, something almost flirtatious in his smile. Her smile, Laura realizes, as Raven steps inside and shrugs off Charles Xavier’s face like an old coat, revealing blue skin and yellow eyes that blink, cat-like, down at Laura. She’s naked but apparently unconcerned about it, settling comfortably in Victor’s favorite solid oak chair with her legs crossed.

Laura is fascinated in spite of herself, sitting at her own spot opposite Raven to stare at her. Raven grins back, and Laura thinks of another blue person she knew, a baby back at the labs who had red hair and, one day, melted away entirely. She doesn’t say anything about it to Raven.

“How’s the search going?” Victor asks as he drifts around the kitchen, making coffee, grabbing chips.

“There’s a prison down in Ecuador where they used to keep mutants,” Raven says, her foot jiggling. “I’m leaving for there tomorrow. I’m just up here to visit. When I-”

“You ever think he might be dead?” Victor interrupts, earning himself a poisonous glare from Raven.

“He’s alive.”

“He’d be in his nineties by now.”

“Erik Lehnsherr is *alive*,” Raven insists. “I just haven’t found him yet.”

“You’ve become so loyal in your old age,” Victor mocks, setting coffee in front of Raven.

She sneers at him, taking a sip, then murmurs, “Cream, no sugar. You remembered.”

“Course I did.”

Raven smiles at him over the rim of her cup before looking to Laura, brow raised. “If you keep staring at me, I’m going to steal your face.”

Laura’s pretty sure that’s not how Raven’s mutation works, and anyway, “It would grow back.” Raven’s laugh is warm and pleased, her head thrown back. Laura smiles in spite of herself.

Later, when Raven has left, Laura has a million questions that she pesters Victor with, following him around as he chops firewood and puts it away. “She’s a mutant.”

“Obviously.”

“But she’s young. Like me.”

“No. She doesn’t age.”

“Like us?”

“Something like us,” Victor agrees.

“You knew her?” Back before, when there were more mutants and her father was young.

“You could say that.”

Laura frowns, wishing Victor wasn’t so mysterious all the time. “She’s nice,” she decides, watching wood split easily under his massive blows.

He snorts, wiping sweat from his forehead. “No, she’s not. She has a thousand sides and she can show any of them at any time. She’s been on some dumbass quest for Magneto since he disappeared in ’19.” Magneto, Laura knows from school, was a terrorist and a mutant. “She’ll never find him,” Victor dismisses, but Laura thinks she understands.

“My dad says I don’t need one,” Emma explains, staring wistfully at Jesse and Ricky as they show off pictures of their new puppy. Laura tries to imagine Victor ever denying her something within reason and can’t; Logan would’ve, but she imagines he would have also wanted a dog.

She also thinks that saying ‘the only thing Victor won’t let me do is kill people’ wouldn’t go over well. Instead, she puts her hand in Emma’s and squeezes tight.

“Tell me your story, Laura,” Steph asks one day, when Laura and her are reading in the library during lunch. Laura still has kind of a hard time thinking of her as anything but Miss Stephanie, but she’s learning.

“I was made in a lab. I killed a lot of people. Found my father. Killed more people. Found Victor,” Laura says simply, flipping through the pages of Harry Potter. She doesn’t understand why Harry hasn’t stabbed Draco Malfoy yet; she would’ve. “No more killing.”

“And is Victor really your uncle?” Laura doesn’t bother giving that an answer; of course Victor is her uncle, she wouldn’t be living with him if he wasn’t. She’d be alone, or with the new mutants.

“Why are you here?” she asks instead, sheathing and unsheathing her claws to ease the ache that sometimes comes. Victor promised that they’d go hunting after school, big game this time. Maybe even a moose. He made a joke about hunting down wolverine, but Laura didn’t think it was funny.

“I came to Alaska when I was young. I had enough.” Enough of what, Laura can imagine. Enough people, enough stress. She wonders how many mutants are in Alaska, hiding out. She tries very hard to focus on her book, feeling awkward and uncomfortable. Sometimes, the words aren’t stuck in her throat but she can’t think of anything to say. Steph frowns and smells upset when Laura talks about killing or not understanding other people.

“I like Alaska,” she says after a while, when Steph is starting to look concerned. “It’s big and there are lots of animals to hunt.”

“You hunt?”

“Me and Victor hunt,” Laura corrects, because she could hunt on her own but Victor says it’s less fun and too easy to get lost in.

“What kind of guns do you use?”

Laura giggles, wrinkling her nose. “We don’t need guns.”

Steph’s smile is wide and beautiful and beaming. “Of course you don’t.”

it's been a while! hope this chapter is okay!

Realizing

Chapter Notes

WHY DID NONE OF YOU TELL ME I HADN'T UPDATED SINCE JULY???? you've all been so patient and not yelled at me for taking forever; i haven't forgotten this story, i'm just lazy apparently. thank you all for waiting :*

Laura stops in the hallway, sniffs once. She smells rage, hunger, exhaustion. Musky animal smell. Family. *Victor*. What is he doing here, when Laura hasn't done anything wrong in days?

She peers through the library door windows, curious. School ended just minutes ago, too soon for Victor to have gotten bored and come looking for her. Why is he in the library?

He leans over Miss Stephanie's desk, not as predatory as usual, head tilted in an interested way. He's resting on the edge of her desk, overwhelming it with his height and the breadth of his shoulders; Miss Stephanie, sitting primly upright in her chair, doesn't look scared. Laura can only just hear the low murmur of their voices through the door. Victor takes Miss Stephanie's hand, grinning, taps a claw in the middle of her palm. She laughs and pulls it back, shaking her head.

Neither of them seem to notice Laura until she's just feet away, not even Victor. *Victor*, who can hear a leaf falling from a hundred feet away, who can smell a man's fear from across the room. "Laura!" Miss Stephanie gasps, hand to her chest, something almost guilty in her face, Laura thinks. She could be wrong; she's still not very good at emotions. "I didn't hear you."

Laura shrugs, standing near Victor, nudging until she's between them and the focus of their attention. "School's over," she states, tugging on the edge of Victor's heavy leather coat. It's half as old as he is, with cracks threading along the surface like wrinkles in a human face.

Victor shrugs, easy, hauls his body up with that deceptive grace. "You're so eager to go home?" He winks at Miss Stephanie, whose heart beats a little faster, Laura crinkling her nose with confusion. "I'll see you later."

"I'll see you, Victor," she murmurs, going back to her work with a smile.

"Are you going to hurt Miss Stephanie?" Laura demands once they're in Victor's truck, her backpack resting comfortably on her lap.

"Not unless she wants me to." Victor laughs at his own joke, and Laura's knuckles itch with annoyance; she doesn't like being confused. She glowers at the line of green trees, and thinks

about stabbing Victor. The only problem would be that he'd crash the truck and she wouldn't be able to go back to school.

"I don't get it," she mutters.

"You will in a couple years, kid." Laura glowers even more. She hates adults.

"Are you lost, sweetheart?" Laura looks up into the pale green eyes of an old woman, her hair a white cloud around her face. She is, Laura reflects, probably half Victor's age. It's weird to realize how much time she has before she grows old, if she ever does. She'll never look like this woman.

"No," she answers, because she's not. She might be standing alone outside a CVS, but she's not lost. Victor just doesn't like to take her into stores; she still steals by habit, and bites viciously if he tries to take anything from her. Laura learned young that what she can defend, she can keep. The old woman still looks concerned, so Laura bares her teeth in a smile, hefting her bag a little further up her shoulder in case she has to run. "Mi tio..." she starts, momentarily forgetting the word in English. "My uncle," she corrects. "My uncle is inside."

Mollified, the woman pats her shoulder and hobbles off, into a car where another old person is waiting. Laura watches them leave without expression, more interested in finding out whether Victor listened and bought her a Snickers bar.

"And what are you going to be when you grow up, Laura?" Mrs. Dufress asks during group discussion time, when they're all forced to sit in a circle and talk about themselves.

"I'm never going to get old," Laura says.

Mrs. Dufress just smiles, indulging, and ignores her. Laura's found that a lot of adults do that. "Well, I'm sure I felt that way once, too," she says, moving on to Brayden, who wants to be a Marine just like his dad.

"So I can kill bad guys!" he says. Laura, who has killed a lot of people, not all of them bad, crosses her arms over her chest. She's done with killing for a while.

Raven is sitting at their kitchen table when Laura wakes up one bright Saturday morning; Laura sits up, rubbing sleep from her eyes. She can hear Victor outside chopping wood, harder than he usually does.

Raven is still blue, still naked, but she looks more tired than she did last time, her gaze unfocused as she stares out the window. Her fingers tap idly on her knee, and Laura wishes she could catch a scent off her, know what she's thinking. She jumps when Laura clears her throat, turning her head in Laura's direction.

"You're awake," she murmurs, low enough that anyone without Laura's sharp hearing wouldn't be able to catch it.

“You’re here,” Laura says, sleep-slow and stupid.

“Should I be somewhere else?” Raven asks, examining her nails as Victor comes through the doorway, smelling of sweat and low, simmering anger.

“Yes,” he growls, throwing himself into the chair opposite Raven, which creaks under his weight. They hold each other’s yellow eyes for a moment before Victor huffs and looks away.

“I’ve found him,” she insists, seeming to continue a conversation they were just having. “I found Magneto.”

“You found an old man who’s been locked away for decades. You take him out of there, he’s gonna end up like Xavier.”

Raven winces, her mouth screwing up. “I could help him. *We* could help him.” Laura hooks her chin over the back of the couch, watching with rapt interest.

If Victor had a tail, it would be lashing right now as he bristles to twice his normal size, claws extending and scratching the wood of the table. “I can’t follow you across the country on some fucking prison break. I have responsibilities. I have a *kid*.”

He gestures at Laura, who’s privately relieved. She doesn’t want to leave, not now when the weather’s turning cold and Emma promised to go trick or treating with her. Plus, she has a spelling test on Monday.

“You’ve given up,” Raven snarls, getting to her feet. “Just like everyone else, you’ve given up and you’re content to live out the rest of your life in the middle of fucking nowhere doing *nothing*.”

“I’ve done enough for you,” Victor hisses. “I’ve got enough blood on my hands to drown all of us.”

“So you’ll stay here, let Laura hide who she is forever?”

“Or I can what, Raven? Bring her with us, use her like a weapon? Make sure she ends up like me?”

“Better that than a coward.” Victor bangs his fist, making them all jump.

“I don’t want to go!” Laura butts in, feeling her heart leap into her throat. Two pairs of eyes turn to her, both furious, Victor angry enough that his slit pupils have blown wide. Laura pulls her knees to her chest, suddenly nervous. Her claws slide out, loud in the silence, forming a barrier between her and the two at the table.

But Victor is grinning at her, sharp and proud, his own claws retracting. “Then you don’t have to, kid.” He turns to Raven, still smiling. “You heard her. Fuck off.”

Raven’s beautiful face twists as she stands, striding towards the open door, pulling Charles Xavier’s face on like a coat. The man who looks back at them has the same expression, his blue eyes incandescent. “I’ll get him out. I won’t give up on mutants,” she swears, slamming

the door behind her as she leaves. They both watch her go through the window, Laura's claws slipping easily back into place. The cabin settles into peaceful silence once more.

Later that night, after Victor helped her with her history homework, they have a quiet dinner, Laura focusing on the noise of her own chewing, planning out her Halloween costume. Victor seems thoughtful, barely eating. "Your dad would've gone," he says once Laura has finished off the last of her potatoes, dripping with gravy.

"Hm?"

"With Raven. He would've followed her. He always did the noble thing." Victor laughs, but it's weak, trailing off quickly. "The stupid thing."

Laura is quiet for a while, long enough that she picks up traces of worry in Victor's scent, in the shift of his shoulders. "But I didn't," she finally says, squishing what's left of her potatoes into a smear.

"No, you didn't," he agrees.

She shrugs one shoulder. "Maybe, sometimes, I'm more like you," she says carefully, watching him from the corner of her eye, barely catching his quick, pleased smile.

"Maybe sometimes," he accepts, and some tension Laura hadn't noticed he was carrying leaks from his body.

"I don't want to kill any more people," she admits. Not unless she has to. Victor's answer is a soft grunt, the brief squeeze of his hand on her shoulder. Laura knows he understands.

Halloween

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Victor fixes her collar one last time, yellow eyes narrowed. There's a nervous flutter in his pulse, enough to set Laura on edge herself. "Don't do anything stupid," he tells her, stepping back.

"It's trick or treating," Laura says, garbled around her plastic fangs. She's a werewolf, with fake tufts of hair glued to her face, one of Victor's flannels going to her knees, almost covering her jeans and the sturdy boots she always wears.

Victor shrugs. "You never know." He looks her up and down, something sad crossing his face before he laughs. "You look more like your dad than ever. All that fuckin' hair." Laura grins up at him, proud.

Emma is a fairy princess; her gossamer wings tremble constantly, sparkle catching Laura's eye. Glitter is smeared along her cheekbones, and Laura thinks she's beautiful, something nervous and warm coiling in her stomach when Emma comes bounding over to them.

"Laura! Hi!" She folds Laura up in her arms, clouding her in that ever-present bubblegum smell. "You came!" Was Laura not supposed to? She thought Emma was pretty clear with the invite... Before her brow can even furrow Emma's moved on to Victor, who's a silent mountain at Laura's side, peering down at them with disinterest. "Hi, Mr. Creed."

"Hey," he grunts, turning to Laura. "I'll pick you up at 8:30." She nods as Emma takes her hand, tugging her away and to her father.

Mr. Roy is a short, bearded man who smells of exhaustion and low, simmering anger, forever tense. He makes Emma nervous, Laura can tell. She can't sympathize, as she is rarely nervous and when she is, she kills whatever is making her feel that way. He slicks his blonde hair away from his face, rumbling something at them before taking off down the street where Laura can see other kids in their colorful costumes.

Despite herself, Laura feels a spike of excitement. She's never been trick or treating before, only ever seen it on TV. Victor is already in his truck when she looks back, but she waves anyway.

Four hours later, Laura is on her way back home, nestled comfortably in the passenger seat of Victor's heated truck. Her pillowcase of candy is halfway full; Laura doesn't really understand the concept of giving out free food to strangers, but she had fun anyway, even when Emma's dad yelled at them for taking too long. Laura had thought about killing him, but that would upset Emma even more than the yelling, she's pretty sure.

She's drinking slowly from the milkshake Victor bought her at the diner in town; the cold makes her teeth ache, but she's had worse.

"Gimme a Snickers," Victor says, so Laura digs through her bag before handing one over. His soft chewing is the only noise, Laura tired and not much inclined to talk at any time. They pull in the driveway of the cabin, Laura pulling the fur off her face as she climbs out. It's starting to get itchy. "Now where-" Victor begins, taking one step towards the cabin before he freezes, sniffs once. "Laura. Get out of here," he snarls, bristling all over.

Laura doesn't question, sprinting off into the woods as a shot rings out. She only makes it a few yards into the trees before there's a heavy weight on top of her, breathing hot in her ear. She yowls, struggling, swipes back with her claws and meets flesh. The weight yelps, grip loosening so Laura can squirm out from under him.

Her senses are going haywire, narrowing down to the cold on her skin and her attacker's smell; focus, exhaustion, animal musk, and an edge of bitterness that makes her nose wrinkle. She shrieks a challenge, shifting on the balls of her feet, feeling rage crawl up from her stomach as she heats all over.

"Calm down," the man says. She can only see his outline in this dark, far from the lights of the cabin, far from Victor. The man's voice is low, rough, accented with something she can't identify. She swipes at his belly, intending to disembowel, though he easily dances away. He's a mutant of some sort, Laura can smell it, and he should be bleeding from her cut earlier but...he's...not...She hesitates, which is enough for him to leap and get her on the ground again, so fast she's breathless, dry leaves crunching beneath them. He may have her hands over her head, but her legs are free. She spreads them, unsheathes her foot claws, stabs him hard in both calves. This isn't enough to get him off her, although he grunts, tensing. "What the... Would you *stop*? I just want to talk." Panting, trapped, Laura sheathes her foot claws and waits, hearing a wet fleshy sound that she recognizes as instantly healing wounds. He's like her and Victor and Logan.

"Que?" she growls, shifting. He's bigger than her, but Laura's killed big men before. The claws that are sliding out from his knuckles and wrists would be a problem though.

"See? I'm like you."

"Want?" Laura asks as he seems to realize she's not going to attack anymore. For now.

He climbs off her, offering a hand up that Laura doesn't take. Weak light slants across his face, good enough for Laura's superhuman eyes. His face is a brutal, angular thing, high cheekbones and a thin slash of a mouth, his black hair swept away from his forehead. He stands very upright, breathing hard, watching her with narrowed eyes. "Are you going to stab me again?"

Laura shakes her head, starting to worry about Victor. He should be here by now, puffed up to twice his size, fangs bared. Instead, there's silence. "Want?" she repeats.

"I just wanted to see my little sister," he says, grinning. He has fangs, just like Victor. "I heard Daddy kicked the bucket."

“Yes,” Laura answers, ignoring the pang of grief as her excitement mounts. More family? She never imagined...

“My name is Daken.”

“Laura.” They eye each other for a moment before there’s an annoyed bellow in the distance. They both glance back towards the cabin. “What did you do to Victor?”

“Shot him. He’s fine.” Laura doesn’t bother believing him; she sprints back to the truck where Victor’s sprawled on his back in a pool of blood, and for a moment Laura sees her father, sees Logan choking on his own blood with their hands clasped tight.

Her breath catches in her chest, but Victor’s already getting to his feet, grumbling, so Laura pushes the panic down. He’s rubbing at his forehead, where a bullet wound is swiftly closing over bone.

“Where is he? Where’s Daken?”

Laura looks back to the woods, but she knows he’s gone somehow. “Brother?” she says instead, letting Victor steady himself with a hand on her shoulder. They head back to the house, Laura’s bag of candy forgotten in the truck.

“Yeah, he’s your brother, the dramatic little fuck. Coulda just said hello.” The cabin is warm, Laura’s muscles loosening, Victor going to the bathroom to sponge his face clean. He looks even more violent than usual, blood crusted into his beard, red rivulets down his temples. “C’mere.” Laura goes obediently to him, examining their reflection in the mirror. Victor dwarfs her, all in black with his blood streaked skin and grizzled face, Laura next to him in her oversized flannel, pieces of hair still stuck to her face. They look exhausted, battle-hardened. Which they are, Laura reflects. Victor takes her chin in one hand, roughly scrubs the hair away, Laura’s fangs long ago lost. She grimaces but doesn’t fight, and it’s over in a few seconds. “Go off to bed,” he tells her, and Laura is tired enough that she doesn’t argue, just goes out. “Oh, kid, by the way. Happy Halloween.”

She murmurs a response back, already sprawled face down on her couch, and falls asleep to the sound of the shower starting.

+

The next day, when school’s over, Laura leaves class as always and heads through the hallways to Victor’s truck, also as always, until someone calls her name. “Laura!” She turns to see Daken, wearing black jeans and a white t-shirt, tattoos spiraling up his arms. He leans casually against the front desk where the security guard sits; Mr. Brunsen, a usually surly fifty year old man with a large mustache and a beer gut, is grinning dreamily, chin propped on his hand as he gazes at Daken.

“What?” she demands, curling her fists but heading over to him anyway. School’s empty by now, mostly. Daken could still do damage, Laura assumes. She knows a dangerous person when she sees one.

“I’m here to pick my little sister up,” he says, patting her patronizingly on the head. Laura would cut his arm off at the wrist, but people might see it.

“Why?” Laura sniffs, trying to understand him, and gets...nothing. Only the security guard, bad cologne and beer and cats, nothing of the scent she remembers from last night. She must look confused, because Daken smiles. It’s not a particularly nice smile, but there’s no malice in it either.

“You won’t get anything from my scent, *imouto-chan*. I’m changeable.” He leans over the desk to talk to Mr. Brunsen, tilting his head in the way she’s seen Victor do, trailing a finger up Mr. Brunsen’s arm. “I’ll be taking Laura home, now.”

“Oh, we don’t let undocumented family members take...” Mr. Brunsen trails off when Daken shakes his head, a smell filling the air that makes Laura feel like she’s choking. Mr. Brunsen sighs, eyes fluttering, and sits back in his seat. “I mean, um, whatever you like.”

“Thanks, darling.” Daken winks at Laura and strides out, Laura following in his wake without really wanting to. But she’s curious, about this weird new sibling who can do things none of them can, who looks angry even when he smiles.

They walk the half-mile to the gas station, where Daken scrounges around for change in his pocket before seeming to realize he doesn’t have any, giving Laura a barely apologetic shrug. “Sorry, guess there’s no Twinkies for you after all.” Rolling her eyes, Laura takes out some of the money Victor always ensures she has; he says that sixty dollars can take her a lot farther than she’d imagine.

After they’ve paid the attendant and Daken has made himself a slushie, they head outside and sit on the curb. The packaging on Laura’s Twinkie crinkles as she unwraps it, the only noise between them. “Why?” Laura asks, the word tripping over her tongue and coming out garbled. She wishes someone around here spoke Spanish so she could hear it more often, not just when she calls the new mutants. “Why are you here?”

“I wanted to move in with you and Victor, form a perfect happy family where we can love each other and snuggle every night, *imouto-chan*.” Laura doesn’t know what that word means, but she gets the feeling he’s mocking her.

“You’re lying.” Daken shrugs, peering out at the parking lot, empty of cars. It’s been a while since school ended; Victor is probably looking for her by now. Laura takes another bite of her Twinkie. “You should leave.”

Daken glances at her, surprise in his face. “Why?”

“You’re not a nice person. I can tell.”

There’s definitely mocking in his expression now, twisting his thin mouth. “Oh? How would you know, baby sister? Do I look like a big meanie?”

Laura shakes her head, not letting him get to her. "I'm not stupid. I just don't talk much." But he reminds her of Pierce, a little, of the men from the Reavers who took pleasure in other's pain. He's not as bad as them, probably. And he's her brother.

But Laura knew twins once, back at the labs, both of them able to shoot energy from their fingers. They were together at all times, always talking, foreheads pressed together. Until the slightly older one killed his brother with a stolen razorblade. Laura can still remember the boy's blood spurting across the room, coating her face in hot splashes, the guards running in to tackle the older twin to the ground. Brothers can't always be trusted.

She gets to her feet, looking down at Daken, who holds her steady gaze. "What?" he asks, and there's his scent, coming up in waves of shame and anger and that familiar animal smell.

"Come back when you're better," she says; they have plenty of time, they're immortal.

Daken places his slushie beside him on the ground and bows his head, seeming to think. "Maybe I'll see you again one day, then."

"You will," she answers, entirely confident. It only makes sense; there's not enough mutants in the world for them to avoid each other. "Adios."

"Sayonara, Laura." She doesn't turn back to look at him as she walks away.

+

When she gets back to school Victor is still there, waiting, dozing off in his truck. Laura knows he's not really asleep though, on edge at all times. She raps sharply at his window and he opens one yellow eye, tapping a claw against the window where her nose is pressed against it. "You're late, kid."

She jumps off his side of the truck and heads to her own, clambering into the passenger seat with her backpack on her knees. Looking in the side mirror, she sees her cheeks are pink from cold. "Daken picked me up."

Victor doesn't seem to move. Laura smells the stress in him anyway. "And?" The car starts up with a rumble and pulls out of the parking lot, Victor's claws tapping on the wheel.

"He's gone now." Victor doesn't question it; he just drives a little faster towards home. Laura curls into her seat and thinks of her brother.

Chapter End Notes

don't say i never do anything nice for you guys :P a more than 2000 word addition and i found a way to fit daken in there :) hope you guys like! also i know that the japanese daken is using isn't the typical way someone would refer to their younger sister, but it said that imouto-chan was condescending to use which is definitely daken lol.

Fe

Chapter Notes

shrugging emoji

Laura drops her bag off by the door, sniffs once. She wrinkles her nose, smelling old man and iron and sour sweat.

Raven is sitting at their kitchen table, one leg crossed over the other, her blue arms resting on their table. There's a new scar on her belly, almost invisible against the scales, if Laura wasn't trained to recognize vulnerabilities. "Hello, Laura." Laura feels like her bones are humming, a low throb that puts her body on alert, her claws coming out. "Relax," Raven warns as Victor comes in behind Laura, bristling.

"You didn't."

"I did," Raven says proudly, getting to her feet.

"So you brought him *here*?"

"Who else can I trust? Charles is dead." Laura herself doesn't consider Victor very trustworthy, unless you're family, but Raven's choices are her own.

"Raven, I..."

A hand rises from the couch, the back of which is to them. It's pale, liver-spotted and trembling. On the inside wrist is a line of numbers, faded with time. Victor cuts off his words. "Sabretooth. It has been so long." The man who sits up, squinting at them over the back of the couch, is older than anyone Laura's ever seen, even Xavier. His face is a mass of wrinkles, cheeks sunken in, his white hair wisping at his temples. Even so, Laura recognizes Magneto. The intensity in his eyes hasn't lessened with age, Laura feeling stuck where she stands. "And Wolverine's daughter. A privilege to meet you." Uncomfortable, Laura sheathes her claws, drifting closer to Victor.

"He was down in Ecuador, just like I said. So drugged up he barely recognized me." Raven gets up and goes to Magneto, who takes her blue hand in his as she touches the other, breathtakingly gentle hand to his cheek.

"I could never forget you, my dear," he promises.

"Very cute, but what are you doing here?" Victor grunts, motioning for Laura to sit with him at the table. She lays her head in her arms, keeping a watchful eye. Age doesn't mean Magneto isn't dangerous. Xavier was old, too.

“We just need a day or so,” Raven swears. “There’s a safe place farther up north.”

“But it is a hard journey, and I am no longer the man I was,” Magneto murmurs, laying back down. They wait in curious silence for a moment, but all that happens is Magneto starts to snore, fast asleep.

“Please,” Raven says again, and for a moment Laura thinks Victor will refuse. Instead, he shrugs one massive shoulder.

“Two days. And you sleep on the couch.” Raven’s thankful smile is wide and white and beautiful.

Laura sleeps in Victor’s bed for the night, curled up beside his reassuring bulk. He snores in just the same way Logan did, and makes the same growling noises when he dreams. Laura herself dreams of being underwater, pressure heavy on her body, and wakes up to the realization that she actually *can’t* move.

The hum in her bones is deafening; she winces, unsheathing her claws, struggles out to the living room where Raven is asleep sitting up, Magneto’s head in her lap. His mouth is a thin line of stress, fingers twitching.

“You’re hurting me!” she accuses, and they both awake with a start. The humming in Laura’s bones rises to a fever pitch, driving her to her knees.

She can’t see, can’t *think*, can only feel blinding pain as Victor lumbers out behind her, yelling, “Turn it off! You’re hurting my kid!” It cuts off in seconds, Laura rolling onto her side, dizzy. She’s never felt pain like that before. Victor picks her up by the scruff of her neck like a kitten, brushing her off. “You okay?” he asks. Laura nods.

Magneto is watching them, wide-eyed and morose. “My deepest apologies, Laura. I lost control. With age comes...difficulties.”

“You’re not welcome if you hurt her,” Victor growls, his heavy paw of a hand resting on top of Laura’s head. She’s tired enough to accept it, still feeling like her bones are singing.

“She’s *metal*. He affects metal,” Raven protests, baring her teeth.

“So I’m supposed to just let him fuck her bones up?”

“Obviously *not*,” Raven returns, but Laura has turned her attention away from them, to Magneto who’s already nodding off.

“Hey.” He starts, blinking down at her; at one point in time, he must have been very intimidating. He still is, really. “Did you know my dad?” she asks as the argument behind them gets louder.

Magneto folds his hands in his lap, smiling thinly. “I did. I ripped the metal off his bones, once.”

Laura frowns, imagining it. "I'm just like him."

"I wouldn't do that to you," he answers her.

"I'm faster. I could kill you first."

His laugh is rusty and surprised. "I imagine you could, child."

"What was my dad like?"

Magneto considers this for a moment. Laura yawns. "An animal. A killer without remorse. A fearsome opponent. An honorable man." Laura misses Logan fiercely; she forgets sometimes, for a little, the people she lost. Logan. Xavier. Gabriela. A whole family.

"I watched him die," she tells Magneto. His eyes soften.

"I'm sorry. I myself witnessed my mother's passing."

"I'm sorry," Laura repeats back.

"Us mutants, we see so much death." His sigh is gusty and exhausted, interrupted by a chest-rattling cough.

Raven rushes to his side, forgetting her quarrel with Victor. "Erik. Are you alright?"

He waves her off, settling back into the couch cushions. "I'm an old man, my dear. Not everything works like it's supposed to." He seems to fall back asleep almost immediately, the thin skin of his eyelids fluttering.

There's a staredown between Victor and Raven that culminates in Victor's annoyed shrug and retreat to his room. Raven puts Magneto's head back in her lap, maneuvering him with a care that Laura wouldn't have expected from her. She doesn't seem to notice Laura as she strokes the hair away from Magneto's temples, yellow eyes warm. Uncomfortable, feeling like she's witnessing something private, Laura retreats to Victor.

"Magneto's sleeping on my couch," Laura tells Stephanie, whose mouth opens in a wide, pretty O. Laura, perched on her desk to wait for Victor, tilts her head.

"He's supposed to be dead!"

"He's not." Not this morning, at least, as he ate eggs at their kitchen table with Raven hovering protectively over him until his fond grumbles drove her away.

Stephanie tucks a lock of dark, curly hair over her shoulder, looking around the empty library as though someone is lurking. "You live a dangerous life." Laura, who feels safer here than she's ever been, just shrugs.

Stephanie follows Laura outside to Victor's truck this time; her heels click pleasingly on the pavement. Victor eyes her as she walks up, obligingly rolling down his window when she reaches the truck. Stephanie sets her hands on Victor's window, an inch away from his shoulder. His mouth is curving up in a slow, pleased grin. "Are you planning to come home with us?"

"Is Magneto in your house?" Stephanie whispers, her fingers tightening.

Victor's eyes narrow, dart to Laura where she sits in the passenger seat. She shrugs. "Yes," he says finally, tapping a claw on the wheel. Her eyes pop wide.

"Who *are* you?"

"I was important once," Victor mumbles, his shoulders rising towards his ears. "Some people remember that."

"He's *killed* people."

Even Laura laughs, feeling bad at Stephanie's confused expression. "Gorgeous, so have *we*."

He starts the engine, which seems to end the conversation as Stephanie steps back. "Stay safe!" she admonishes, and Victor just smiles.

News

Chapter Notes

wow, first post of the new year and it's for my baby...more to come soon!

Laura was born snarling and screaming. Her claws had torn through her birth mother's stomach like paper, although they were just bone at the time. Gabriela told her so. "She would've been killed anyway," Gabriela had always reassured her, though Laura was never concerned. She was a *baby*. Babies can't control themselves. Laura, who is old now, knows better.

"It's my birthday," she tells Victor on November 14th. Gabriela had been very adamant about birthdays after so many years missed in the labs.

Victor, in the process of cleaning up the cabin after Magneto and Raven moved on, pauses in the act of fluffing a pillow. "It is?" Laura just looks at him; why would she bother lying about something like that? "How old are you turning?"

"Twelve."

"Jesus Christ." Victor is seeing her with new eyes, wary and a little proud. He taps a claw against his lower lip. "You're gonna start growing soon." Laura has been growing her whole life. Does Victor think she came out of the womb like this? "Has anyone taught you, uh, about the birds and the bees?"

Laura's eyes narrow; she doesn't know, and she doesn't like not knowing. "No."

"We'll leave that for later," he decides, easily lifting the couch with one hand to check for anything left behind. It's just mothballs and pennies, a hairband Laura thought she lost at school. "Did you tell anyone else?"

Laura nods; she'd told Emma at recess, and Emma had given her a tube of glittery lipgloss that was barely used. It tastes like grape as Laura smacks her lips together. Then she'd told Ashley and Ricky. They hadn't given Laura anything. Ashley doesn't have anything and Ricky had seemed entirely disinterested, wandering off to go play with his Power Rangers. She doesn't mind. The concept of gifts is very new to her. Victor lets the chair fall with a clunk, seemingly off balance in a way he rarely is. "Do you...want a birthday party?"

Laura has a vague idea of what a birthday party is. She thinks of TV, with dozens of guests and piles of presents and gleaming, cardboard cake. Games where you stab other people with a pin. "No."

“Okay.” Mollified, Victor reminds her to do the dishes and drops the subject.

For dinner, Victor makes venison, almost raw, the meat leaking red onto the plate, Laura’s mouth watering.

She bit into a rabbit raw the other day, before Victor could stop her, more out of curiosity than anything. It had tasted sharper, better than the cooked meat she’s always had, but Victor had snatched it away from her before she could tear more than a few strips of flesh off, blood trickling down in warm streams. She’d snarled half-heartedly, spitting a hunk of fur onto the ground, and asked, “Why?”

“You can’t go feral,” Victor had growled, although with the coyote carcass hitched over one shoulder, chops splattered in blood, he’d looked feral himself.

“You are,” she’d argued, getting to her feet, wiping her mouth.

“Not like I used to be.” Laura doesn’t ever want to be sad like Victor is, like even Logan sometimes was, so she’d just nodded.

Tonight, she digs into meat that tastes almost right, and can’t help but smile when Victor produces a cupcake with a candle crammed in it. The cupcake is vanilla with vibrant blue frosting and sprinkles that crunch satisfyingly between Laura’s teeth.

“Happy birthday, kid,” he says, and there’s almost a shine in his eyes.

“Thank you,” she says, smiling, frosting smeared over her chin. He tosses her a squashed package that she catches easily, tears the paper off of. It unfolds into her hands; a brown leather jacket, the leather buttery smooth, inside collar and parts of the sleeves worn away. It’s clearly been repaired, with new stitches at the seams. Laura puts her nose to it, sniffs once, careful, and jerks her head back. It’s faint, but... “Logan?”

“It was your dad’s,” Victor confirms as Laura examines the jacket more closely, checking inside pockets to find only lint.

She slides it over her shoulders, dwarfed by it, the sleeves reaching long past her fingers. Her throat burns. “Where?” she asks, pulling her knees close to her chest.

“He forgot it once, a long time ago,” Victor dismisses, although Laura has the feeling there’s much more to it than that.

“Thank you,” she says again, pulling the lapels closed over her chest. She can’t keep the smile off her face.

“I heard interesting news,” Stephanie says the next day at school, while Laura is waiting as usual for Victor to pick her up. She’s not wearing Logan’s jacket, only because Victor had said the other students would make fun of her. Laura doesn’t care, but Victor said he wants as

little attention as possible on them, that faked papers and living in the ass-end of nowhere can only cover so much.

Laura tilts her head in question. Stephanie's pretty face is warm and excited, her slightly gapped teeth showing between her lips. She smells happy, rich chocolate in the back of Laura's throat. "It was your birthday yesterday, right?" Laura nods, continuing to flip through one of the science textbooks for the older students, examines a diagram of the cell. She wonders if her own cells are different than human. Maybe sharper. "Happy birthday, Laura," Stephanie says, pressing a paper box into her hands.

Laura is curious, opens it slowly to see a necklace with a butterfly charm. The wings are rich purple, specked with blue glitter, the body iron gray. She holds it up, watches it sparkle and spin. Pretty. "Thank you," she says, clasping it around her neck, feeling the charm settle heavy and cold against her chest.

When she heads out to Victor's pickup truck, dodging a grumpy senior who tries to elbow her out of the way and bruises himself instead, the charm has warmed up, but she can't help touching it. "New gift?" Victor asks, though he must already know because he's grinning, self-satisfied.

"Pretty," she says aloud as he starts the car, and watches him nod in agreement.

Forked

Chapter Notes

i did promise to have another chapter up by the end of the week! hope you guys like cliffhangers...

Laura comes home from hunting, alone for her first time; it had been exciting, a little scary without Victor to keep her focused. Blood slicks up to her wrists, dripping to her elbows as she hefts the body of her latest kill higher up her shoulder, its talons digging in. She'd managed to snag an osprey out of midair, leaping, twisting, her footclaws coming out. The ensuing fall and struggle had left her with a broken wrist and scratches along her face, but they're already healed as she steps through the door, only to pause.

Miss Stephanie is there, with Victor, both of them drinking wine. Laura frowns. Victor *never* drinks wine. Miss Stephanie's hair is tied back in a series of complicated twists, a crown around her head, and she's wearing a red dress that Laura's never seen before, cut low at the neck to expose her slim shoulders, a long expanse of skin at her back. She smells...good.

And Victor looks neater than usual, wearing clothes that barely smell of blood and with his fangs buffed to perfection. His claws aren't even out and they're almost *always* out when he's home.

Laura lets the osprey slide from her shoulder and to the ground, startling Miss Stephanie as Victor gives her a smug smile. *Annoying*. What does he have to be so happy about? Laura's eyes narrow.

"Que?" she asks as Miss Stephanie turns to her. She's wearing something that make her eyes look even larger and darker, her lips plum red. *Lipstick*, Gabriela whispers in the back of Laura's head.

Gabriela had always worn lipstick, no matter how dire things got, putting it on every morning in careful swipes. "Almond Rose," she'd told Laura when Laura had asked, and let Laura try it on. She'd wiped it away right after, hating the taste. Laura touches her mouth, remembering. When she'd found Gabriela, dead, she'd made sure to apply the lipstick one more time. Doing anything else had seemed...wrong.

"Laura!" Miss Stephanie exclaims, getting to her feet, matched by Victor. He looms behind her, grinning still. Laura wants to snarl and fight him, wipe that smirk off his face, but she knows Miss Stephanie wouldn't understand. There are different kinds of mutants, Laura knows, just like there are different kinds of humans. To her and Victor, fighting comes natural, and Victor knows she doesn't mean it seriously when she pops the claws if he's teasing her. Other people, mutants who aren't wild like them, are afraid.

“Nice bird,” Victor compliments, nodding at Laura’s feet as she brushes feathers from her shirt, tries to untangle the sticky blood matted in her hair. Something about Miss Stephanie makes Laura want to be better than she is.

“Es sabado,” Laura says, picking the bird up again and leaving it in the sink for Victor to take apart later; he seems to take some pleasure in tearing skin from bone. “Saturday,” she corrects. Why is Miss Stephanie here on a weekend? Is Laura in trouble and she’s breaking the news? Laura thinks of being taken away from Victor, and frowns. When she leaves him, it’ll be by her own choice.

“Me and Victor were just chatting,” Miss Stephanie reassures, moving closer with a swish of soft fabric. Laura wants to touch it, but her hands are dirty. She rests them behind her back instead.

There’s a moment of silence before Victor sighs, touching lightly at the small of Miss Stephanie’s back. “I’ll drive you home, Steph.” Laura’s eyes narrow further. *Steph?* Something’s going on here that Laura doesn’t understand, and she hates that.

Miss Stephanie touches the crown of Laura’s head once, gently, and Laura feels calmer even though she’s pretty sure Miss Stephanie didn’t use her powers. “I’ll see you on Monday, okay, Laura?”

She nods as Victor ushers them both out the door, turning with a warning look back at Laura. “Finish your homework. And take a shower before the blood dries. I’ll be back in a couple hours.” With that, they’re gone. Laura shrugs and heads for the bathroom. She’ll never understand people.

Victor returns hours later, after Laura has fallen asleep. She smells him before she sees him, all self-satisfaction and the gentle, lingering scent of Miss Stephanie. “S’ just me, kid,” he says when Laura sits up, catching his face in the glow of his cigar. “You did a good job with the bird.”

He holds up the osprey, its feathers plucked and gathered in a pile on the table before him. Now, the bird looks naked and pathetic, with long gouges where Laura’s claws cut deep. “Not a lot of meat on it, but...” He shrugs, unsheathing one claw and cutting neatly down the belly so its guts pile out with a soft, goopy noise. Laura has done the same thing to more than one person.

She watches Victor bend over his work, sorting carefully, stripping meat from bone with sharp, clever claws. Eventually, the wet noises lull her to sleep, and she dreams of flying.

Tommy hates Laura. The feeling is mutual-Tommy is cruel and stupid and he smells bad. The last time he pushed Laura in the hallway, she lashed out with a fist that bloodied his nose, and they had to call Victor in. Later, Victor had told her he was proud. A fist isn’t claws, and a bloody nose won’t kill Tommy. “Might teach him a lesson, though,” Victor had growled.

Now, today, Tommy is sitting behind her during silent reading, and he won’t stop poking her, tugging at the tangled strands of Laura’s hair. She considers sticking a claw through Tommy’s

hand, watching him squeal like a stuck pig. It would be satisfying, but then Laura would have to run, and she's not ready to stop resting yet.

Instead, she shifts closer to Emma, their arms brushing. "He's so annoying," Emma whispers, turning a page in her Harry Potter book. Laura doesn't enjoy reading anything that's not nonfiction. She's had enough impossible things happen in her own life. Laura, satisfied that at least she's not alone in hating Tommy, is mollified enough that her bloody thoughts fade to the background.

"My dad says I'm a freak," Emma confides to Laura later, when they're at her house and Laura had exchanged quick greetings with Emma's father. Laura, who's been able to grow bone claws from her hands since she was born, examines Emma's face. High cheekbones, pale skin, wispy blonde hair, a gap in her smile where she recently lost a tooth. She looks totally human.

Laura is confused, which is an emotion she has gotten used to around Emma. "Why?"

Emma shrugs, falling back onto her bed. Her room is like nothing Laura's ever seen. Pink everywhere-her bed is pink and so are her curtains, big fluffy pillows with cartoon characters, her walls painted a pale, pale purple. There are pictures everywhere, of Emma with friends, or dancing, or a couple pictures with a pretty blonde woman who Laura assumes is her mother.

There's a worn, one-eyed stuffed turtle resting in the middle of Emma's bed. Her bubblegum smell is everywhere. Laura has never belonged anywhere as much as Emma belongs here.

She carefully settles herself next to Emma on the bed, very aware of how heavy her bones make her as the cushions sink under her weight and Emma is forced to roll into her side. "You're not a freak," Laura tells her, looking down at her own hands.

"How do you know?" When they meet eyes Emma is defensive, holding her gaze for a long moment, and Laura's heart feels like it's going to pound out of her ears.

She licks her lips. "I'm a freak." She presents her left hand, lets the claws slide out, gleaming in the warm light of Emma's room. She can faintly hear Emma's heartbeat pick up, but there's no fear in her scent. "Don't tell."

Emma nods once, and shuffles a little closer to touch one of Laura's claws, drawing her hand back with a hiss. For a moment Laura thinks she's cut her, but Emma's unharmed, just staring at her fingers. "They're warm!"

"They stay inside me. They're my bones." Laura slides the claws back in and rests her hands in her lap. Victor is going to be *so* angry.

"Were you born like this?"

"No. I was in a lab, and they put metal on me," Laura tells her, which feels like one of the longest sentences she's said in months. It's always easy with Emma, she realizes.

“Laura...that’s horrible!” Laura has never worried about things that happened in the past, so she just shrugs. A second later she has an armful of Emma, blonde hair in her mouth, the bubblegum smell stronger. “I’m sorry, Laura.” Careful, aware of her own strength, Laura hugs back.

When Victor comes to pick her up from Emma’s, Laura hugs her backpack to her chest before she spills the news. He won’t hurt her, not really, she knows. It still feels better to make herself small. “I told Emma.”

“Told her what?” Victor asks, focused more on the dark road in front of them, seemingly lost in his thoughts.

“About me.”

A couple months ago, this would’ve led to Victor snarling, maybe bringing the car to a jarring stop. Today, his hands barely twitch, although his claws come out. “Why?” Laura doesn’t know herself, so she doesn’t answer, instead staring out at the trees. “Because you like her?” That seems as good an answer as any. Laura nods. Victor starts laughing. “You’re just like your father. Using the claws to impress girls.”

Laura beams. Emma had seemed to think they were pretty cool, after the initial shock. Victor reaches over a friendly hand to brush Laura’s shoulder, seemingly unconcerned. Underneath his approval, she smiles.

Sometimes, when Laura does really well in school or Victor wants something greasy, he takes her to the only restaurant in town, a little diner named Annie’s. Victor likes that they serve plates of food bigger than his head, piled high, while Laura likes that one of the waitresses speaks Spanish and always makes sure she takes their table.

Laura’s halfway through her grilled cheese sandwich, carefully pulling it apart so the cheese has maximum coverage. She glances up, instinctive, when the bell at the door tinkles to show someone is in. And it’s... The grilled cheese drops from her hands. Victor, catching her expression, twists in his seat. They both snarl. Across the restaurant, thumbs hitched in his belt loops, is Daken.

His shirt is cut at the sleeves so they gape open, exposing his ribcage and tattoos. It reads *Juicy* on the front in big, looped letters. The cold of March doesn’t seem to be affecting him as he waves, keeping a careful distance. One of the waitresses goes up to him, and they speak for a bit before he points to Victor with a smile, and ambles over.

Laura’s forced to shift aside as he forces his way into their booth; she can’t imagine what would happen if he tried to sit next to Victor. Daken leans into her, probably to be annoying. His leg is jiggling. “Why’re you here, runt junior?” Victor asks without greeting.

“You didn’t miss me, uncle?” Daken spreads his arms wide and grins.

“Back?” Laura asks, looking between them. Victor has bristled up to twice his size, ugly anger spreading like smoke. It makes Laura’s nose itch. “You’re not...” She’s nervous, she realizes, and can’t find the right words. Laura had assumed it would be years before they met again, not a couple of months.

Daken has hidden his scent from them, but even Laura can see that he’s uncomfortable. “I know you’re not happy to see me again, but I have news.”

“Spit it the fuck out, then.” Victor’s claws ting against his plate, and his cat eyes are ferocious. Laura wonders if he’d react the same way to her, in a different life.

“There’s more of us, Sabretooth. More mutants.” He glances around the diner, but there’s no other customers and the waitresses are chatting in the back. Laura can just hear them over the pop and sizzle of the fryer. They think Daken is handsome. “They’re coming back.”

“And you think I give a fuck?” Victor gets to his feet, looming, sends Daken one last snarl before throwing cash down and striding out.

Alone, Daken turns to Laura instead. “It’s true.” She examines his face, wondering if there’s any resemblance between them. Maybe in the eyebrows, or the chin.

“Believe you,” Laura says, going back to her sandwich and reaching over the table to snag some of Victor’s fries. Being hungry won’t help anything. She offers a fry to Daken, who takes it, throws it up in the air and catches it in his mouth. Chewing, he somehow manages to grin at her. “You care.” When Daken raises a brow she continues with, “You care about mutants.” Otherwise he would’ve never bothered to come all the way back here, where he’s not wanted. “You want us?” To help him, she assumes. Maybe to protect weaker mutants, or get the news out.

“I want Victor,” Daken corrects. “You’re just a kid.”

“I’ve killed people.”

“That doesn’t mean you’re an adult.”

Laura glares mulishly down at her plate, setting her jaw. “Why do you care?” she asks instead of arguing. Outside, she can see Victor sitting in his car, waiting for her. Through the glass his body is wavy, distorted. Laura looks away.

“I miss the old days,” Daken admits.

“Victor won’t help you.” He hates you, she doesn’t say. She knows how to be tactful sometimes.

“I can see that,” Daken says, making a face. He gets up, swiping the money Victor left behind without seeming to think as he tucks it in his back pocket. “Sayanora, little sister.” Before Laura can object, he’s gone. Laura sighs, digs some of the money Victor gave her out of her pocket, and pays the bill.

She and Victor don't speak about it on the way home, though she can see his jaw tense and release, his claws tapping on the wheel. Once they're back at the cabin, all he does is touch the top of her head, lightly, before he goes to his room and closes the door. Laura's sleep is uneasy that night.

Laura calls the new mutants twice a week, never missing. She would never be able to leave her friends behind. "Laura," Rictor says on the other line. He yawns, and she can picture his face, the crack of his jaw.

"Rictor."

"Are you okay?" he asks in Spanish. They always talk in Spanish.

"Yes," she answers; Victor is making dinner, and Laura got an A on her art project. She drew a picture of Gabriela, as she remembers her. "You?"

"There's more of us, Laura," he tells her, his voice rising. "More mutants." He sounds almost exactly like Daken, although they couldn't be more different.

"How do you know?"

"People are showing up every day. Joining us! Some are new, and some are very, very old."

Laura's hand tightens so much on the phone she hears it crack, forcing herself to loosen her grip. "More of us?"

"Yes!" He's quiet for a moment, and when he speaks again his voice is softer. Rictor has always been the leader of their group. He's a few years older than them, one of the first experiments, and he's good to listen to. "Laura...we need you to come back."

"Come back?" she asks, feeling dumb for repeating his words again.

"Yes. So we can all be together again, and we can try..." When Rictor is tense even the earth seems to freeze, and right now she can feel that although he's thousands of miles away. "We can try to bring the X-Men back. Help people!" The X-Men? Laura's head spins; across the kitchen, Victor looks up with concern, stops cutting broccoli. He must be able to hear her heart stutter and start again, pounding. The X-Men...Just like her father, Laura could be an X-Man. "Will you help us, Laura?"

Laura opens her mouth, feeling her throat swell to keep the words down. "I..."

A Choice

Chapter Notes

look at this! an actual chapter title that has meaning to the story. go me! so i'm interested in whether you guys think i'm making the right choice with laura going to help the new mutants and all. and thank you to the people who gently reminded me that it was time to update lol i know i'm bad about that

“What is it, Laura?” Victor puts the knife down, walking to her. Laura looks up at him; she’s grown some in the time since she left the labs, and he’s no longer quite so much bigger than her.

She shakes her head. She knows the answer and it’s pounding in her veins. Her head hurts. Is this what being sick feels like? She thinks of the comic books that Gabriela gave her and Logan laughed at, of a team of smiling people in yellow uniforms who saved the world. That could be *her*. She wants it so bad her bones ache with it.

“Laura?” Rictor says on the other end of the phone. He’s miles away but she can see the worried furrow between his brows in the back of her head. “Laura, you don’t have to say yes.” Rictor has always been the kindest of them. No matter how much the scientists pushed him, he could never kill without throwing up after. “I just...you’re one of us. We want you here.” Victor is reeking of worry now, though of course he can hear Rictor through the phone. “Laura, it’s-”

“Yes,” Laura interrupts. Heat rushes to her cheeks. She thinks of Emma, of Miss Stephanie. She thinks of saving the world, of carrying on a legacy that Logan and Gabriela and Xavier would be proud of.

“Yes?” She smiles at his voice; they’re still speaking Spanish, and the *i* in *si* is so drawn out it sounds like more than one syllable. She learned what a syllable was during the hasty lessons Miss Stephanie has been giving her so that Laura’s lack of previous schooling goes unnoticed.

“Yes,” she repeats. “I’ll help you. Send me your coordinates.”

She hears him breathe a sigh of relief, and then hum agreeably. “I will. I’ll see you soon.”

She hangs up, straightens to face Victor. His face is inscrutable. Laura can hear nothing but the steady pounding of his heart.

“The New Mutants need me. I’m going.” He puts one massive paw on her shoulder and kneels so they’re face to face; Laura might have grown, but he’ll always be bigger than her. His eyes are just like Logan’s. They’ve seen everything, and they’re exhausted. But Laura

always sees love in them, just like she saw in Logan. He examines her face for a moment. Laura thins her mouth out and stands straight to show she's serious. "I just need a car."

Victor laughs, gets up and restarts cutting broccoli. He's been very serious about health lately, as Laura really starts growing. The only shirt that fits her comfortably now is the soft one with the flower on it.

"You don't need a car."

"I'm going," she insists. Her claws slide from her knuckles. Victor *can't* keep her here.

"*We're* going." Victor finishes with the broccoli and holds eye contact with her. His pupils are so wide, they almost look human.

"You're coming with me?"

"I'm not letting a twelve year old travel alone. Or fight alone." Laura's thrilled to have Victor with her, but his words ring false.

"I can go alone. I have before." She'll do what she did after Logan died. Steal cars, steal food, and stab men through the hand if they touch her for too long.

"Laura." Victor scratches the back of his head, running his tongue over his fangs. "Look. For all intents and purposes, you're my kid." Laura stiffens. So many months ago, Victor would have denied it. But she realizes he's right. Victor takes care of her, he feeds her, helps her with her homework, makes sure she goes to school and teaches her how not to be feral. He *loves* her. Logan was her father, but Victor is... Victor is Victor. He's just as important. "And that means I'm not fucking letting you go out to fight without me. In this family, we fight together."

"But you wanted to rest." To be human, Laura doesn't say.

Victor looks down; she sees him swallow. There's something almost like fear in his face when he lifts his head. "I've had enough rest. I guess it's time to go help save the world. Make up for..." There are decades of killing in his eyes when they meet hers. She blinks. "For a lot of shit I've done."

Laura crosses the room to take his hand, unfurl his clawed fingers and rest her head against his bicep. She came here, so many months ago, thinking she would never want to fight again, never feel her claws sink into flesh. She's still not the killer she once was, but Laura feels ready. To bring mutants back into the world! To help people. Like Logan used to. She smiles, and wraps her arms around Victor's broad waist. They've never hugged before. Victor wiggles his arm out from between them and hugs her close with it, lifting Laura off her feet a little.

"Thank you," she says into his side, smelling the animal underneath, and the affection.

"Thank you," he says, and Laura isn't sure what for.

They eat dinner together, and plan. “You should finish the school year out.”

“There’s only a month left.”

“You’re finishing school.” His tone broaches no argument, and Laura doesn’t really want to argue. She’s come to like school, even though she still has a hard time understanding parts of it, like not eating whenever she wants or not punching Tommy when he’s being annoying. She nods, sucking meat from the bone of her latest catch.

She had managed to hunt down and catch a deer, leaping from a tree onto its back as it bounded past. The ensuing fall had actually ended up with her eye impaled on a stick, and Laura dying for a minute or two. She made very sure not to tell Victor that.

“What about Miss Stephanie?” Victor shrugs even as sadness leaks into his scent. “She could come with us,” Laura offers. “She’s a mutant, too.”

“Maybe.”

Laura sets her jaw, thinking. She wants Victor to be happy, and she wants Miss Stephanie to come. “Definitely.” Victor reaches across the table to ruffle her hair, more affectionate than usual. Under his fond smile, Laura glows.

Revelations

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The choice for Laura to finish the school year is taken away the next day.

Laura leaves school as usual; she's chatting with Emma, who has managed to get her hair back in pigtails today. Laura thinks she looks pretty, and it twists something in her stomach that Emma seems nervous, almost guilty. Laura keeps rubbing her nose to wipe away the bitter scent.

"What did you do, Emma?" she asks when they're halfway to where Victor waits in his truck. Victor can also sense something wrong. He looks very much like Logan when he tips his head to the side, sniffing.

"I'm sorry!" Emma says, stumbling backwards as her father emerges from his car, cocking a shotgun. Laura knows well enough what that is, and how to use one. She has enough time to be grateful there are no other kids around, to watch Victor leap from his car, before the slug hits her in the middle of her chest, just under her sternum, and Laura feels herself die.

She comes to with the uncomfortable sensation of skin growing over smooth adamantium bones, organs fixing themselves, blood soaking the front of her favorite flower patterned t-shirt to expose the pale, now-undamaged skin of her stomach. She's annoyed that the shirt is ruined. She twists, realizes her head's in Emma's lap and Emma is bent over her, frantically pushing Laura's sweaty hair back. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm *so* sorry," she's mumbling, still trying to grab at Laura's face even as Laura sits up, smearing blood across her own stomach. She's had worse. She's done worse, to other people.

Laura takes in the bubblegum scent of Emma, the smell of her own blood, and throws up bile, muttering, "Hijo de puta," then wipes her mouth. Emma still pulls her close, and Laura has seen enough people in shock to know what's happening. "I'm fine," she says into the fine blonde hairs just above Emma's ear, pushing away.

Victor is holding Emma's father, Mr. Roy, so high in the air that his legs dangle. Victor's claws are long enough to meet around the man's throat. He looks like...with a snarl in every breath, he looks like the feral clone who killed Logan, growling low in his throat, "You son of a bitch." Laura's never seen him bristle this big, his cat eyes mostly black. She unsheathes her claws, slowly, and gets to her feet.

Emma stays kneeling on the ground, mostly limp. She looks up at Laura with a resigned expression. "You kill people, don't you? And you're gonna kill my dad."

Laura feels unsure, which she doesn't like. Usually, she knows exactly what to do. Right now, with Victor slowly losing control behind her, and no Xavier in the back of her mind, she tries

to think of what Logan would do. Probably, he would gut Mr. Roy until his intestines unspooled onto the pavement below. So Laura makes her own decision.

“Victor, no!” Victor loosens his grip, but only slightly, shaking his head like a dog. He has that look Logan sometimes got, that Laura is sure sometimes appears on her own face. The look that says he’ll kill, and keep killing, til there’s nothing left to hunt. “If anyone gets to kill him, it’s me.” Emma makes a noise, a little gasp. Laura turns to her. “Do you want me to?”

“No,” Emma says in a strange voice, taking the offer of a hand as Laura sheathes her claws, and getting to her feet. “No, I don’t want it to be you. I didn’t mean to tell him about...the claws. I got excited. I have a comic book.”

“With people in yellow costumes?” Laura asks, but she knows the answer before Emma nods.

“My mom was a mutant. She could make anything disappear, and not come back. And Dad hated her.” Laura looks down at Emma; she’s ever so slightly taller, she realizes. She doesn’t want Emma to lose another parent.

“You should’ve stayed down!” Mr. Roy shrieks, scrabbling at the fingers Victor has wrapped around his throat. “I put...something...in there...”

“What was it?” Victor asks quietly, back to being even more dangerous now he’s calm.

“Arsenic! In the gunpowder.” Now Laura knows why she threw up.

“We can’t die, you fucking dumbass,” Victor says, letting go so Mr. Roy falls to his knees. “We’re leaving, Laura.” Somehow, Laura knows that he means for good. That he means they’re going to join the new mutants, today.

She looks back once at Emma, who nods, and kisses Laura on the cheek before going to stand next to her father. He just watches them, shotgun across his lap, and there’s hatred in his eyes when he looks at them, when he looks at Emma.

“You should call the police,” is all Victor says as he bustles Laura into his truck, tossing in her ripped backpack as an afterthought. It occurs to Laura that Victor doesn’t hurt people, but he’s not all that concerned with helping them, either. Not if they’re human. Looking at Mr. Roy, touching the blood soaked edges of her shirt, she understands why.

The last thing Laura sees of Emma as they drive away is her going to stand next to her father, and putting a hand on his shoulder.

What Laura doesn’t see is Emma looking down at the blood splattered over her own chest, at the bloodstain on the pavement where Laura fell, horribly still for a couple of seconds before she began seizing, her lungs expanding in the hole that Emma’s father had made of Laura’s chest. Emma had a glimpse of bones that shone silver, then Laura was healed, taking in deep breaths, and Mr. Creed had roared like a lion and grabbed Emma’s father by the throat.

Emma had hoped, in the first glow of excitement, that her father would be glad to know her mother wasn't one of the last mutants. She should've known why he was eying his shotgun.

Now they're alone; Mr. Creed's truck is barely a rumble in the distance, the school parking lot is empty, and Emma's father looks up at her with the same resentful, hateful eyes he always has. "They're freaks. Abominations," he mumbles, and Emma thinks of how her small, pink room is the only safe place she has. Thinks of her mother, who got paler and smaller til eventually she was dead. She looks down at her own chest, pictures the hole from the shotgun blast she knows will come someday, and puts a hand over her heart.

"So am I, Dad," Emma says, and squeezes her father's shoulder. He disappears, and he doesn't come back. Emma's legs give out, and she falls to sit on the curb, wrapping her arms around her knees. Someone will come by eventually. She can wait.

Chapter End Notes

i've had the idea for emma to be a mutant for a while...i hope her pov at the very end wasn't too weird. and i always knew her dad was gonna be one of the reasons laura and victor left for good! Laura was never going to be able to finish out the school year. Emma can make things disappear by touching them; they go to a pocket dimension and are immediately destroyed. in the future, i know she meets up with laura again and fights alongside her, and they fall in loooooove.

The End

Chapter Notes

hm....ending at 18, the age of adulthood. seems fitting.
this has been the most popular thing i ever wrote, and gained me the most responses, and been about two of my favorite characters who i only grew to love more. i think writing any more of this would take the fun out of it, and i would lose the characterization of them both. i hope this satisfies. of course, in the end, all is well, and mutants rise again, and laura and victor (and stephanie) are a family. thanks, everyone!

Laura is quiet as they drive away from Emma; she presses a hand to the spot on her chest where a hole should be. Victor is simmering, his claws out. "This is why I joined Magneto, we should've killed them all," he seethes. "Pack up when we get to the house. We leave now."

"To go where?"

Victor gives her a strange look. "To the New Mutants. Like we planned." Laura, who had begun to be concerned that Victor was going to rampage, cut a bloody path through town, heaves a relieved breath. "I don't hate humans," Victor says after a long, long time. Laura had started to doze off, perks up now. She's going to miss the trees going by as they drive to school, the routine she had fallen into. "But they're not like us. They're afraid."

Laura looks down at her hands. She's been able to kill a grown man since the age of four. She's mostly immortal, fast and strong with heightened senses. A scientist back at the lab once described her as the perfect weapon. She's not even the strongest. Rictor can cause earthquakes. One of the other kids, who maybe died in the escape, maybe didn't, could heat up hotter than the sun and had to constantly wear a special suit. Xavier almost killed everyone in that hotel while they were traveling with Logan.

"Maybe they should be," she says finally. Victor only nods.

Laura's hadn't realized how settled she's become here. With Gabriela, all of Laura's belongings fit in her backpack. Now, she has clothes scattered all over the place, little trinkets and awards from her friends and school, the books she's managed to finish.

She hears Victor muttering in his room, sorting through what to bring, and feels almost bad. Victor has been here for so long, built a life here. Now she's tearing him away. But it's worth it, she reminds herself. And Victor can make his own decisions.

After a long while, she has her one backpack, the clothing Logan bought for her that no longer fits, the picture of Logan and Victor she found in the Word War 2 book, and some books to read as they travel. She hesitates over the lipgloss Emma gave her, before deciding to take it, tucked away in a zipped pocket with a tube of Gabriela's lipstick. Logan's jacket is safe around her shoulders, some smell of him still lingering.

Laura presses her nose into the soft, buttery fabric, taking a moment for herself as Victor finally emerges from his bedroom, wearing that black trench coat, a duffle bag thrown over his shoulder. It's been patched up a few times, wearing thin at the seams, well-made enough that Victor has probably had it for years.

Laura wonders what he considers precious enough to bring with them. Books? Mementos from his long, long life? She has a feeling that he also has the picture of him and Logan tucked away somewhere.

"Let's go, kid," is all he says, so she trails after him to his truck. The buck she caught and killed yesterday has been left in the yard for coyotes and carrion birds to feast on. Laura was proud of the catch. The wood leftover from winter will have to go unburnt. Laura feels something like sadness, tugs at Victor's coat to stop him.

"We'll come back?" She can't read the look he gives her. Her English is good, getting better every day. She still doesn't have words for what she wants to say. That she hopes he's not mad they have to leave. That she's ready to stop resting, but she doesn't want to go back to being a simple weapon. That she needs him to stay with her, as family.

Victor must read some of this in her face, her scent, because he pauses at the open door of his truck. "You want to come back here?"

Laura shrugs, hauls herself up into her usual seat next to Victor. Their bags are small enough to rest on the floor at her feet, though Laura has to pull her knees into her chest. It's not like a car accident could hurt her. "We became family here." She smiles into her knees when she smells affection from him, glances from the corner of her eye to see his slice of a smile. Suddenly, it feels like everything will be okay.

"Miss Stephanie?" Laura asks thirty minutes into their drive, when Victor's started humming under his breath. It cuts off immediately as Victor's hands tighten on the wheel, knuckles bulging. Laura sets her own hands in her lap.

"I don't...know. What do you think?" It occurs to Laura that Victor sometimes decides what's good or bad based off of her reactions. That he's so close to the feral side of himself that he doesn't really know. She gets the feeling he needed Logan for that, too. Until Laura showed up, Victor mostly stayed in his cabin, cut off from everyone, hunting. Alone. Now he has Laura, and Laura had people to tell her what was good or bad. Or she relies on her instincts.

Like now, when she instantly decides, "She's with us." She touches the butterfly charm around her neck. Victor nods, guns the engine.

Laura doesn't ask how Victor knows where Stephanie lives, although she has her suspicions. Victor parks on the small, green lawn in front of her house, shuts the car off, and turns to Laura. "Stay in the truck. I'll be back soon, with or without her." He's serious enough that Laura nods, though she itches to follow. Until she realizes her hearing is good enough, and the house is close enough, that she can hear them, Victor's low rumble, Stephanie's higher pitch. "We're leaving, Steph. Now."

Laura slouches down against the car seat, just in case Victor can see her from the windows. Probably not, but he's clever. And a lot older than her.

"Victor!" Laura grins at the tone of surprise in Stephanie's voice. She can only imagine that Victor came looming out of nowhere.

"Will you come with us?" They must be moving away, because it turns to murmurs, soft, nothing she'd expect from Victor who mostly growls, until, "Fine. *Fine*. I'll see you then." Then there's a softer, wet noise that has Laura frowning with confusion before Victor comes striding from the house, trench coat billowing behind him. Laura stares straight ahead, doing her best to seem innocent.

Victor hauls himself into the front seat, making a pleased rumbling sound like his truck. "You heard that." It isn't a question. Laura nods anyway. "She's finishing out the school year, like you were *supposed* to, and then she'll join us."

"You love her."

Victor starts the engine, peels off. Laura digs her fingers into her seat, not very worried. "I might," he admits. One of his cigars is lit; he dangles it out his window, tapping it once, sharply. "Wanted her to come with us now. But she insisted."

Laura thinks for a moment. Thinks of being with Victor, traveling across the country to find the new mutants. Thinks of what Logan would say if he was here; he'd probably just grunt. Thinks of Xavier, who'd be so proud, and Gabriela, who only ever wanted to save some children, and succeeded. "She'll come. Everyone will come."

They won't be able to resist. Like Laura, they'll want to bring back the people in cheerful yellow costumes. To be X-Men again.

When they pass the town line, something in Victor seems to relax. For miles now there's just forest, just endless road. Perfect for people like them. "So, kid, where to?"

Laura sinks back into her seat, grinning. From the corner of her eye, she sees Victor smile, too. "To the new mutants." And this time, she's going to stay.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!