

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

A/N: Thaddeus and Emma work through their options.

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FUBAR. Fucked Up Beyond All Repair. Thaddeus didn't want to say the situation was that bad... if only because he'd somehow miraculously come back to life despite definitely dying at the Phoenix's... touch. He was here. Emma was here. And that meant they still had a chance to fix things.

Leaning forward, Thaddeus touches his forehead to Emma's. The blonde goes still for a moment before relaxing and leaning into the touch as well. They both just breathe for a few moments, until eventually that breathing is synchronized, both of them slowly breathing in and out.

Rubbing soothing circles on the back of Emma's hands, Thaddeus considers their options. But he doesn't just consider them, he considers them WITH Emma, albeit carefully and hesitantly. Fortunately, a combination of the skin contact and Thaddeus' psychic defenses alongside the Phoenix's temporary retreat apparently grants them a moment of privacy.

That's good because Thaddeus has no desire to hear the Phoenix's input right now. This is just between him and Emma, a way to go over their options and let Emma make the choices.

First and foremost, given what he'd just done a couple days ago with Wanda and Rogue, the initial idea that comes to Thaddeus' mind is to just warp reality and bring back the Phoenix's old host. If Jean Grey was alive again, then surely the Phoenix would want to jump back into her, right?

Emma shoots that idea down immediately though. She shares with him a bit of what being bonded with the Phoenix has given her and all that they can see from the end of the Phoenix's time with Jean Grey... is darkness. Bringing the

dead red head back, connecting her to the Phoenix again... it has a very high chance of ending in disaster.

Fair enough. If that won't work, Thaddeus pushes forward his second idea. He could use his reality warping powers to create an empty body for the Phoenix to inhabit instead. One without a human mind already inside of it, so that the Phoenix could learn to interact with the world on a human level, but without any baggage.

It takes a bit longer, but Emma shoots this idea down as well. Not immediately though, she gives it much more consideration than the first one. After all, it would get the Phoenix out of her head... and it would limit the Phoenix to a mortal form as well for as long as the body lasted.

There were just two major problems Emma could see with the idea. First was getting the Phoenix to go along with it to begin with. The Phoenix was attracted to incredibly powerful telepaths feeling incredibly powerful emotions from what Emma had gathered so far.

She COULD use others as hosts, she didn't have to necessarily bond to psychics, but they were the Phoenix's preference in the end. An empty body would be an unattractive prospect to the Phoenix, to say the least.

The other major problem was even if the Phoenix did body hop, that would mean losing what little control over her that they currently had. Not that they had much, but it was ultimately a coin flip whether they could make the Phoenix listen to them if they somehow shunted her off into her own body.

The only reason she was even taking a backseat right now for Emma was because she recognized that she'd fucked up by so callously killing Thaddeus. Would she feel the same level of empathy if Emma was no longer her host? Would they be safe from her infinite cosmic power if she no longer had a reason to care about them?

That, Thaddeus felt, was a very good point on Emma's end. However, that just left option three... and she'd already expressed her immense disdain for option three.

"Fuck."

Emma finally speaks out loud, breaking the silence that had fallen over the room as the two of them pressed their foreheads together. Opening his eyes, Thaddeus offers an apologetic smile.

"Yeah."

Because in the end, if they weren't going to bring Jean Grey back to life, if they weren't going to create an empty body for the Phoenix to inhabit... then that left just one logical option. Fighting the Phoenix was already off the table, they'd tried that and it had gotten Thaddeus killed in an instant. That just left... peaceful coexistence.

"God-fucking-damnit."

Thaddeus just hums and nods some more, even as he holds Emma close. Funny way to find out just how much someone loved you, if nothing else. He knew Emma felt love for him before now... and he knew he loved her right back. But 'Phoenix Force comes and makes you her new host' levels of love was something else entirely, he figured. Fortunately, he was already committed.

"I'm with you Emma. To the end of the line."

That brings a cute scowl to Emma's face as she squeezes his hands tightly and growls.

"You wouldn't be if not for your miraculous resurrection. You would be gone right now and I would be alone... again."

Thaddeus winces, even as Emma's tone turns questioning.

“What... what brought you back? One of your powers maybe? Did you set some sort of trigger in reality just in case you died that resurrects you without telling me?”

Thaddeus snorts.

“That sounds like both an incredibly smart and impressively stupid idea. No, I don’t have a clue. Remember, I already asked if the Phoenix was the one who brought me back. But if it wasn’t her... fuck, I don’t know. I really don’t.”

“It definitely wasn’t her. She was surprised. She still is surprised. And now she’s curious about what we... discussed between ourselves.”

Right, of course.

“Well, you can tell her what we decided at least.”

“... Yeah, that makes her happy. She wants to... she doesn’t want to hurt me. She has no intentions of doing so. The problem is, she’s like a fucking child with a gun. Her intentions don’t seem to matter very much.”

As Emma speaks, her eyes glow a bit more with contained Phoenix Fire. However, she still seems to be in control thankfully. Just... communing a bit more with her new passenger. Thaddeus opens his mouth to respond, only for the door to the office to fling itself open. Both of them turn as Sage staggers into the room, her eyes wide.

Emma flinches and gnashes her teeth.

“No. Don’t touch her. She’s *mine*.”

It’s obvious who the blonde is talking to. And not just to Thaddeus either, given the way Sage freezes in place, taking in the scene and trembling just a bit.

Thaddeus lets go of Emma’s hands... or rather, tries to. He manages to disengage from one of her hands, but she holds him fast with the other, leaving

them to rise to their feet still holding onto one another. Turning to Sage, Thaddeus smiles encouragingly.

“It’s alright Sage. We’re alright.”

Eyes flicking between the two of them, Sage bites her lower lip.

“Y-Yeah? You uh... you sure about that? Because the entire city block almost just tore itself apart... and you... you disappeared for a bit there, Thaddeus. I felt that bristling mind of yours *vanish*. And it looks like Emma is the new host for the Phoenix.”

It doesn’t surprise Thaddeus that Sage knows more about the Phoenix than she maybe should. Though, the fact that she’d sensed him die... well, for the time being Thaddeus just shakes his head.

“Well I’m here now, aren’t I? And the city block is still intact... mostly at least. Everything is... under control for the time being.”

Of course, the foundations of every building on that city block might be irrevocably cracked. Even if no buildings had been outright destroyed, the damage was almost certainly done all the same. The cracks in the walls of Emma’s Office running from floor to ceiling all but spelt out that fact.

“... Charles contacted me in a panic, just so we’re clear. He felt the Phoenix descend onto Emma. He wanted me to rush over because the X-Men are halfway across the country still after helping the Brotherhood rescue Magneto and a bunch of other mutant prisoners. He-!”

Whatever else Sage might have said is cut off by the arrival of more people. The ground glows in the middle of the destroyed office in the telltale sign of Illyana’s teleportation discs. Thaddeus just sighs and runs a hand over his face as she brings the team he’d sent her with right into the thick of things.

Laura and Cessily, Illyana and Kitty... and Gwen and Doreen. All six women suddenly fill the room up. The reason they're here becomes clear the moment they're done teleporting in as Kitty steps forward with wide eyes.

"T-Thaddeus, get away from her! She's hosting the Phoenix, it's too dangerous!"

Emma's glowing orange eyes flash and her jaw clenches as her free hand curls into a fist at her side.

"No. Not them either. They're just idiots."

Thaddeus shoots her a concerned glance that she returns with a wan smile.

"She's asking for just about everything at this point. It's a little irritating, but better than her making decisions unilaterally I suppose."

Like she did when she'd killed him offhandedly goes unspoken. Thaddeus just nods before turning back to the others, all of whom look both confused and prepared for a fight.

"Girls... it's fine. Stand down. Emma is... she has it under control for the time being. There's no threat right now."

Laura and Cessily immediately relax, having full trust in Thaddeus' words. Gwen and Doreen, aka Spider-Woman and Squirrel Girl, don't look as sure for a moment, but ultimately follow their lead. Illyana, meanwhile, looks torn between Thaddeus and Kitty, having clearly struck up a fast friendship with the other girl given her past relationship with an alternate version of her.

And Kitty... Kitty just looks incredulous.

"Control? There's no controlling the Phoenix! Jean had to *die* because of it!"

Thaddeus has to assume that Charles Xavier, in a panic over feeling the Phoenix return to their world, had reached out to anyone close to Thaddeus and Emma to send them and assess the situation. Which probably meant that

anyone further away was coming at any second to stick their noses in this messy business as well.

And that meant their best bet was to convince the assembled, meaning mostly Kitty and Illyana at this point, that it was fine, that everything was fine. And then, get the fuck out of dodge before the entire world came down on their heads.

The only problem is, Thaddeus has no clue what to say at this point to convince Kitty that it's okay. Luckily... he's not alone. Even if it does sound like every word out of Emma's mouth is spoken through gritted teeth under significant duress.

"What the X-Men dealt with... when Jean Grey died, was not the Phoenix as it is right now. That was the Dark Phoenix, corrupted by negative emotions and ultimately unleashed by the fighting going on all around it when the mental blocks Charles Xavier put on Jean Grey's mind finally... shattered."

Kitty freezes, her eyes wide as Emma speaks in a clear, concise tone.

"I have no such mental blocks. I am not limited; I am not caged... and neither is the Phoenix. So long as we are left alone, there will not be a repeat of the Dark Phoenix incident."

The corner of Emma's mouth quirks upwards.

"Which means that we should probably vacate the premises and be elsewhere before everyone who wants to control or stop the Phoenix arrives and starts a war in the middle of Manhattan."

Kitty gawks at that.

"That... we can't just let you go! You're too dangerous!"

Emma narrows her eyes at that.

“I was already more dangerous than you can possibly imagine before this... incident. If you do not want me to reveal just how dangerous I can be, you WILL let me go.”

Before anyone else can react to that threat, Thaddeus steps forward, lifting his free hand.

“Kitty, please. Emma is right and the proof is right in front of you. All we’re doing is talking right now... and nothing is happening. No one is getting hurt. Nobody is in any danger.”

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Sage giving him a hard stare, no doubt remembering the sensation of him being gone for a short time when he’d... well, when he’d died. Still, she stays quiet for now. Small mercies and all that.

“Do you really think it will remain that way if we’re still here when everyone else starts to show up? When the X-Men arrive, are they going to hear us out or are they going to attack Emma? What about the Avengers? Or anyone else who the Professor might have alerted? To say nothing of villains who might be on their way...”

Thank fucking god they had basically sent everyone Xavier could contact out to destroy HYDRA today. This was all the immediate ‘firepower’ that the wheelchair bound mutant could rely upon... but every second that they spent here talking was another second that he had to get back here with ‘reinforcements’.

Now, was Thaddeus afraid of such a fight? Not in and of itself. No, he was far more afraid of what a fight might do to Emma... as well as the city.

Plus, he can tell he’s getting through to Kitty.

“New York isn’t safe so long as Emma is here, on that much we agree. So we really should get her out of here before anything else. Trust me Kitty... I don’t want anything to happen to her or anyone else any more than you do.”

Kitty bites her lower lip... and finally seems to take a look around the room at all of the others. Even Illyana, at this point, doesn't look too excited by the prospect of siding with her new BFF. And everyone else... well, they all have their reasons for not wanting a cosmic-level fight to take place right now.

That fact dawns on Kitty and her shoulders finally slump.

"Okay. You're right. We need to get out of here. But I'm coming with you wherever you go!"

Right, of course she is. Thaddeus exchanges a look with Emma at that. Then he looks around the rest of the room. He can instantly tell that everyone except for Gwen and Doreen are going to want to come along as well. Spider-Woman and Squirrel Girl, on the other hand, probably have more important things to be doing on the ground floor here in the city.

That said... where the hell are they going to go?

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A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!