

Magical Mutations

Chapter 8

The sun broke through the trees in thin, golden shafts. The grass was still wet with dew, and Harry could see his own breath in the air when he exhaled. He took the back steps two at a time and cut across the huge lawn, leaving a trail of bent blades in his wake. At this hour, the mansion was empty and quiet. Jean, Scott, Kurt, and Kitty were all still sound asleep. For some strange reason, Harry didn't sleep nearly as much as they did. He only needed a few hours of good sleep a night to feel fully refreshed. Harry moved with a restless energy. He always felt this way in the morning. He usually used this time to practice his powers. That would help burn through the excess energy and leave him more even-keeled.

He'd had the dream again ... the one where he was falling through darkness, then waking up with a start and feeling like he'd been on fire. He couldn't remember how it started or ended, but he knew he had to get out, walk a bit, and clear his mind. It was still early enough that he'd have the whole place to himself.

Harry crossed behind the garage, cutting through the neat rows of clipped hedges. He found a path he'd never walked before, one that wound through a narrow stand of trees and ended at a chain-link gate. He worked the rusty latch and let himself into a little courtyard. At the far end, tucked against the stone wall, was a greenhouse. It was mostly glass, with a peaked roof and a riot of colors inside.

He didn't remember seeing the greenhouse before. Maybe it was new. Maybe he just hadn't paid attention. That was a very real possibility. He stepped closer, and he heard a hissing sound inside. The glass walls were beaded with condensation, and big leaves pressed against them, blurred by the steam. The door was slightly ajar. Harry hesitated for a second, then shrugged. What was the worst that could happen? He suddenly had a vague memory of being in a greenhouse with plants that tried to kill him, but that was obviously crazy.

Inside, the greenhouse was like a tropical oasis. The air smelled like citrus and damp soil, and sweat sprang out on his forehead in seconds. There was a winding gravel path that twisted through clusters of banana trees, orchids, and what looked like some kind of small, dangerous cactus. Sunlight slashed through the roof, turning the foggy air into a shifting, golden haze. In the middle of the greenhouse, under a web of hanging ferns, stood Storm.

She didn't see him at first. She had her back turned, both hands raised above her head, and her fingers spread as she concentrated. She wore a pair of shorts that instantly captured his attention. They were made of tight white spandex that hugged every contour of her hips and ass, and she had nothing else on below her waist. Her legs were long, toned, and smooth, and her calves flexed with the small movements of her stance. Her skin, the color of caramel, glowed against the white of her tank top. The tank top was so thin and cut so low that it barely

covered her breasts. From where he stood, Harry could see the bottom of her large tits hanging out of the bottom of her top. The rest was just skin, gleaming with a faint sheen of sweat.

Harry stopped at the edge of the path and stared, unblinking. Storm's white hair fluttered in the gentle breeze. His eyes drifted down the dip of her waist and over the curve of her hips. He particularly liked the way her shorts vanished into the deep crease of her ass when she stretched higher.

She stood perfectly still for a moment, and then, all at once, a miniature storm cloud gathered beneath the glass ceiling. It formed with a slow, twisting coil of gray clouds, swirling and darkening until it looked like a small thunderhead had been born inside the room. A flicker of lightning illuminated the inside of the cloud. The first drops of rain splattered down in a gentle, controlled shower, falling perfectly on the plants below.

Storm's beautiful face split into a small smile, the kind she normally reserved for herself. She made a subtle gesture with her wrist, and the rain shifted direction, watering a bank of delicate purple orchids. Harry could see the droplets streaking down the glass walls, each one refracting sunlight into a rainbow.

He tried to step back and give her privacy, but his foot caught a garden hoe hidden in the gravel. It fiercely swung up like a billy club and womped him right in the back of the head with a loud thunk. Harry winced and grabbed the back of his head. Storm's head whipped around, and she saw him instantly. Her eyes narrowed, and a grin spread slowly across her lips.

"Did you sneak in here because you're a lover of plants, or were you just hoping to enjoy the show?" she asked in a soft, amused voice.

Harry opened his mouth, but no words came out. He was still seeing stars from the crack on the noggin. He just nodded, his eyes locked on the soaked tank top. The thin fabric clung to her breasts, outlining the perfect shape of them, and her nipples were as hard as marbles. For a second, he wondered if Storm had made it rain just to see how much she could show off.

She lowered her arms, letting the little storm dissipate. The rain stopped, and the last drops pattered to silence. She walked toward him with a rolling, panther-like stride, every step emphasizing the softness of her bare thighs. The shorts rode higher with every movement, and the line of her hips made Harry's throat go dry. He dared to look down a bit further, and the crotch of his trousers tightened when he saw the shape of her pussy pressing against the skin-tight spandex.

Storm stopped two feet away and planted her hands on her hips. "You do know it's polite to knock before entering someone's private space, yes?" she teased, not bothering to hide her womanly form.

Harry tried to look away, but his eyes wouldn't cooperate. "Sorry," he managed, though it came out more like a question than an apology.

Storm looked him over. Her eyes traveled up and down before lingering at his crotch, which betrayed exactly what he was thinking about. "If you're going to stare, at least have the courage to do it properly," she said. She hooked her thumbs under the waistband of her shorts and adjusted them, giving him a little extra view of her belly and the smooth skin just above her mound.

Harry's mind nearly malfunctioned. "You're, uh, really good at that," he said, pointing to where the rain had stopped. Harry averted his eyes from her body. He didn't want her to think he was some kind of raging pervert.

Storm arched one of her perfectly manicured eyebrows. "Thank you, Harry. I've had some practice." She stepped closer, and she was now close enough that he could smell the citrus on her skin. Storm ran a hand through her wet hair and squeezed out the water so it trickled down her back.

She walked a slow circle around him with her arms folded under her chest, pushing her tits up and together. Self-conscious wasn't a word Harry would use to describe this sexy beast. She leaned in and whispered, "You should see what I can do with a full-scale weather front. The rain is usually much, much colder," she teased, and Harry couldn't stop himself from glancing at her stiff nipples and goosebumped skin.

Harry shivered, despite the heat and humidity. Storm smirked and leaned back, resting against a wide table littered with gardening tools and pots of soil. She cocked her hip to one side and crossed her legs at the ankle, perfectly poised and totally at ease. "You're up early," she said, letting her gaze rake over him again.

"I couldn't sleep," Harry replied, rubbing the back of his neck. "For some reason, I don't need much sleep these days."

"It probably has something to do with your powers," she guessed. "Or maybe just too many hormones. Did you need something, or are you just here to ogle?"

Harry looked her in the eye and said, "Mostly to ogle." He felt his cheeks burn, but he didn't flinch.

Storm laughed, and the sound was bright and surprisingly warm. "Honesty. That's a first," she said. "I can respect that." She leaned forward and put her elbows on the table, and her cleavage deepened into a perfect V. She didn't seem embarrassed. If anything, she looked proud of the effect she was having on him. She was a very attractive woman, and she knew it.

She picked up a little spray bottle and misted her arms and chest, letting the water bead and run in little rivulets between her breasts. Harry could understand why she kept the bottle there. It was stifling hot in her greenhouse. Sweat was dripping down his cheeks, stomach, and back. She took her time and smoothed the drops over her skin, her fingers gliding across her collarbone and down into the hollow between her tits. Harry watched, mesmerized by the erotic sight.

"You know," Storm said, "if you want, you can help me water the plants. Unless you're afraid of a little rain."

Harry smiled, and the tension broke for a moment. "When you're dressed like that, I'll water anything you want."

Storm's laugh was throaty. "Brave boy." She handed him a battered green watering can, fingers brushing his hand a little longer than necessary. "Start with the orchids. They're thirsty."

Harry took the can and bent over the orchids, soaking the soil with a trembling hand. He could feel Storm's eyes on him the entire time. They spent the time chatting, and Harry told her about how he usually spent his mornings trying to hone his powers. Storm said that that was a great use of his free time.

When he straightened up, she was leaning on the table again, watching him through half-lidded eyes. Her tank top had gone nearly transparent, and every curve of her body was outlined against the damp fabric. He walked over to her, holding the empty can. "Do you need me to hose anything else down?" he said, as cocky as he could manage.

She looked at him with an amused smile. "You're going to fit in here just fine, Harry," she said. Her voice dropped, suddenly sounding serious. "But you should know ... there are people here who'll want you to pick a side." She tipped her chin up, and her eyes seemed a bit challenging. "Just don't forget what you want for yourself."

Harry nodded, and for a second, the air between them was thick with more than humidity. Then Storm pushed off the table and walked past him, brushing his arm with her fingertips as she did. The heat of her touch lingered long after she was gone.

She reached the door, then turned back. "Why don't you come back tomorrow morning? I could use some help in here." She smiled prettily, and then she vanished into the sunlit morning, her ass swaying with every step.

Harry watched her go, and the image of her wet body was burned into his mind. He stood alone in the steamy air, not sure if he'd just been seduced or not. Either way, he planned to come back tomorrow, just as she requested.

Magical Mutations

Night bled all color from the city except for the neon signs flickering on and off. Harry walked down the middle of the street, and his clunking boots echoed off the boarded-up shopfronts and empty bus shelters. The only things moving were rats scurrying in and out of gutters and a pair of lean, stripe-furred cats flipping a dumpster lid. Harry's ears caught every scratch and scrape, and every shuffle of wind across asphalt. Even the flickering buzz of a failing streetlamp made his nerves coil tighter.

He kept his hands in his jacket pockets, his shoulders hunched, and his pace loose but alert. His eyes tracked every shadow and every window, watching for the first break in the monotony. He was always ready for anything.

A car alarm blared four blocks away and then cut off. Harry paused, stared down at a patch of broken glass reflecting the street lamp's sickly orange color. He shifted his weight to the balls of his feet. It was quiet again. That's when the energy blast came.

A ruby red beam streaked from a rooftop and slashed through the night. Harry barely ducked. He flung himself sideways, hands out, and a polished rectangular mirror shimmered into existence above him, refracting the beam. The reflected blast lanced upward and blew out three stories' worth of brickwork with a thunderous crack. Chunks of rubble crashed into the road, pelting the street in a storm of masonry.

Harry crouched, his heart beating like a jackhammer. He flicked his hand, and the mirror vanished, evaporated into mist. On the rooftop, something moved. It was a human shape vaguely silhouetted against the dark sky. It was hunched low and tracking Harry's movements. The next blast of energy was already shrieking his way. This time, he didn't block. He moved.

He sprinted low, diving behind a rusted van. The beam hit the side panel and melted a fist-sized hole through the steel. Molten metal sizzled and drooled onto the curb. Harry kept his head down, rolled out the far side, and bolted for the next block.

A shadow fell across the street. Harry glanced up and saw something appear above him. It hovered for a half-second, then dropped. An entire garbage dumpster flipped end over end straight at his head.

Harry barely had time to curse. He thrust his hand up with his palm open. The dumpster stopped in midair, hung there trembling, then twisted and collapsed into itself. In just over a second, it was gone, replaced by a swirling flock of eagles. There were dozens of them, every beak and talon bristling with metallic sharpness. Harry snapped his fingers, and the birds peeled off in a wild, shrieking spiral toward the rooftop.

He heard a feminine yelp, then a loud curse. The eagles went after the attacker in a blinding flurry. Harry didn't stop to watch the carnage. He ducked into a narrow alley, his boots splashing

through old puddles and the pungent filth of the city. The birds would slow them down, but it wouldn't be enough to stop them.

He kept moving, only checking over his shoulder once to see if anyone was coming up from behind. The alley twisted and narrowed, blocking almost all light and casting him into deeper darkness.

The wind started to rise. At first, it was only a stiff breeze, but then it grew, swirling down the alley until the trash and rubble began to move with it. Harry heard a low, rumbling groan from above, and then thunder cracked so close to him it made his eardrums pop.

He looked up and saw the storm rolling over the rooftops. Black clouds spun up from nowhere, boiling with pent-up violence. His skin prickled. The air was static-charged, and Harry knew he was in a bad situation. He ran faster, but the wind was against him, snatching at his jacket and tugging him back like invisible fingers. The best he could do was run in a zig-zag pattern.

A flash of light burned through the night. A lightning bolt hit the ground right behind him, obliterating a cluster of trash bins and sending a shockwave up Harry's spine. The blast hurled him into a heap of garbage bags. He landed with a grunt, and the stench of rotting garbage filled his nose. For a moment, all he could do was twitch through the pain as his nerves flared from the sudden electrocution.

He pushed himself up, shook off the pain, and stumbled forward. The storm was everywhere now. Torrential rain blasted sideways in sheets of water that stung his face and blinded him. Harry snapped his fingers, and a transparent field surrounded him, blocking the rain. He saw another figure at the mouth of the alley. She was tall, slender, and shapely, with a mane of white hair whipping in the wind. He recognized her instantly, but didn't have time to shout a curse at her. A second bolt of lightning came down, aimed straight for his skull.

He threw his arm up, conjured a rod of copper, and the lightning forked into it with a deafening snap. The rod took the hit, but the force knocked Harry to his knees. His muscles seized, and he lost feeling in his left hand for a second. He used his powers to banish the superheated rod at the attacker. It spun through the air, still crackling with energy, and struck the ground at their feet. The figure leaped back, but Harry caught a glimpse of familiar blue eyes.

"Storm! I'm gonna shove that rod straight up your ass if you keep trying to fry me!" he yelled, but it was lost in the gale.

He staggered out of the alley and into a wider boulevard. Rain lashed the glass and steel, pooling in the gutters. Lightning flashed in the distance, and Harry spotted someone on the roof of a building, three stories up. Harry instantly knew it was Storm again. He could recognize that curvy body with his eyes closed. This time, she had company. A red-haired woman in black was perched next to her like a vulture. Harry recognized the shape of her telekinetic aura as it glimmered around her fingers.

He tried to think and predict the next attack, but his head was still swimming from the constant electric shocks. The white-haired bombshell was closing in, and the curvy redhead was lining up another shot.

Harry ducked behind a bus shelter as the next beam of ruby energy shattered the plexiglass, atomizing it in a cloud of burning debris. He felt the heat on his skin and forced himself forward, sprinting for the last block before his destination. He could see it now. The city's police station loomed ahead.

He reached the street's end and was met by another attacker. This one was in full tactical armor with a helmet, and Harry saw the glint of metal claws. The figure slashed at him with a snarl, and Harry barely dodged. The claws raked his shoulder, sliced fabric, and drew a line of red. Harry responded by using his powers to rip a stop sign straight from the concrete. Harry then flung it straight at the blade-wielding maniac. The concreted base of the sign connected with the helmet and rang like a gong. His body ragdolled off the sidewalk and crashed through a glass shop window.

Another blast came down from the rooftop. Harry dove for cover and felt the heat of the shot burn through the sleeve of his jacket. He hit the ground, rolled, and looked up to see the police station only fifty yards away, but the final assault team was already between him and safety. Harry threw his hand out and fired a powerful concussive blast at the building his attacker was standing on. The blast hit with the force of a bomb, and the entire front face of the building broke away and slid down like a waterfall of bricks and debris. Scott, of course, rode that wave down and hit the street hard.

The attacker pushed himself to his feet and staggered. Harry ran forward and waved his hand at the ground. The sidewalk rippled, and the liquified concrete snaked out and grabbed the attacker's ankle. With a twist of his wrist, the liquified pavement sucked the attacker's feet in and hardened, trapping them in place.

He was outnumbered, outgunned, and running on empty. It was time to improvise.

Harry drew in a breath, gathered all the pain, adrenaline, and annoyance, and funneled it into his palm. He fired a golf-ball-sized orb of pulsing blue energy straight up. The orb exploded into a superdense black cloud, blowing thick, dark smoke over the block. Instantly, the attackers' vision went, and their coughs filled the air.

Harry ran for it. He barreled through the doors of the station, slammed them behind him, and slid to a stop inside the atrium. Everything was quiet again, except for his own heartbeat, his labored breathing, and the patter of rain on the roof. He leaned against the wall, his chest heaving. He'd made it.

The world shimmered, the walls flickered, and suddenly the grimy station melted into steel, chrome, and light. Harry blinked, feeling slightly disoriented. He was back in the Danger Room.

Storm, Jean, and Scott stood at the far wall, coughing as they waved away the last of the acrid smoke. Logan stood beside them, arms folded across his barrel chest. His face was pulled into a wolfish grin.

"Not bad, kid," Logan rumbled. "You made the rendezvous with thirty-two seconds to spare."

Jean wiped soot off her cheek and laughed. "I told you he'd try the eagles thing again."

"It worked, didn't it?" Harry said with a smirk.

Storm clapped once. "Very resourceful. Next time, try to keep your head lower when you cross open ground. But excellent reaction with the mirror."

Scott, who still looked annoyed at being stuck in the pavement trap, just grunted. "You're supposed to get past us, not leave us buried, Harry."

Harry shrugged, wincing as he touched the cut on his shoulder. "If you can't beat 'em, cheat."

Logan snorted, which was the closest he got to approval. "Take five, all of you. Next run's in ten. This time it's Summer's turn. I think I'll turn up the difficulty."

Harry's arm was captured by Jean, who pulled him away to grab a quick snack. She yapped away about all the things she would do differently on her next run. All Harry could do was listen, agree, and try not to pop an erection as she rubbed herself against him.