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To my family and my best friend Sarah-Jane.

Setting The Future

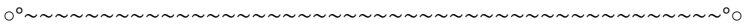
Cam Cammy

Writer: Cam Cammy
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Prologue| Setting The Future



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The school day is coming to an end. Amber is the only person left in the classroom. She had volunteered to clean the classroom. They were working on their costumes today. Mostly working on the design and making a small version of their costume. Amber volunteered to clean up all the arts and crafts stuff that was still left in the classroom by the other students who were rushing to go home and didn't bother to clean after themselves. A lot of the students didn't like this class because they are here to train to become heroes not to learn to do arts and crafts. Amber doesn't mind. Rose's skill is in designing and making clothes, which only motivates Amber to do her best. She can't lie and say she didn't already ask Rose for help before class. Anything to spend a few minutes extra with her girlfriend. She puts

the cleaning supplies back where she found them and grabs her stuff ready to leave. As she walks towards the door, it is suddenly thrown open and Joshua and Rose enter the classroom. "What are you guys doing here?" Amber asks confused. It isn't normal for them to walk her from her classroom. Most of the time they would wait for her in the parking lot because of the different times their classes ended. "Can't we come and see our girlfriend?" "Yeah, aren't you happy to see us?" Their tone is off. Amber immediately knows something's wrong. "Okay?" Amber says getting worried for herself, gripping her bag tightly. Rose rolls her eyes. "You were always ungrateful and annoying." Rose says, looking annoyed at Amber. This makes Amber grip her bag even more and quickly looks for an escape. They would never say something like that to her. Not even as a joke. They know she's sensitive. The twins start to walk toward her making her walk backward. "W... what are you guys doing?" The twins both look and smile at each other. Joshua suddenly disappears from his spot next to Rose and reappears behind Amber and twists her arms tightly behind her back, making Amber drop her bag. "We're going to teach you how to be grateful." Rose raises her fist. Amber struggles, trying to get free from Joshua's grip but It's no use. Amber gives up and closes her eyes waiting for Amber's fist to hit her. Nothing happens. She

slowly opens her eyes again and looks around. Joshua and Rose are gone. The classroom door is closed. 'What just happened? Was I just imagining things? No. Joshua's grip was real. I need to tell the others about this.' Amber grabs her stuff from the ground and runs out of the classroom.

Across the hall, Rose is entering a storage room to get some sewing material. She got permission to borrow some materials from the school to help Amber make her hero costume. The first thing she does upon entering the room is turn on the light and close the door behind her. She looks around and sighs. 'Why is the storage room so big.' It's going to take her a while to find the materials she needs. She takes a few steps when suddenly the lights start to flicker. "Really now?" Rose says looking up, disbelieving. Suddenly the light goes out and everything is black. "This isn't funny!" Rose shouts into nothingness. "Can you please turn on the lights again?" No answer. She's starting to get scared. The fact that she's scared of the dark is making this experience worse. Being scared of the dark isn't something she tells others about. The only people who know are her twin because they have spent enough time together for him to figure it out. Amber, the only person she told. And her parents, who use the fact against her. Lock her up or tell the maids to lock her up in a dark room to discipline her. Rose

begins to sink to the ground and curl up to make herself seem smaller. This way she's less of a target for whatever danger is lurking in the dark. She feels herself starting to panic as her breathing gets heavier. "Okay. Okay, calm down." She says to herself, trying to calm her breath but it's not working. "Okay, what was it that Joshua told me to do in these kinds of situations?" She starts to uncurl herself and looks around. "Four things you can see." She looks at her surroundings. 'Nothing. Only darkness and more darkness. This isn't helping.' It's only making her panic more. She tries to take a few deep breaths and succeeds after a while. "Okay, let's try again. Three things you can touch. 1 The ground. 2 The shelf. 3 My hair." She tries to hold on to what she can feel to ground her. "Two things you can hear. My breathing and... people talking?" 'Yes, there are people outside maybe they can help me.' Rose is immediately filled with hope. She stands up and yells: "HELP! CAN SOMEONE HELP ME!" No answer. She knows they're still there because Rose can still hear them talking. She slowly moves closer to the sound of their talking. Maybe if she's closer to them they will hear her. "HELP!" She's getting closer and closer but still no reaction. Maybe she should stop yelling and just follow the voices because it seems like they aren't going to hear or help her anytime soon. She's almost there when she suddenly trips over

something and falls on a shelf. The shelf and everything that was on it falls over and land on her. Rose groans as she is now lying on the ground beneath a shelf and other things that have fallen on her. "Did you hear something?" One of the voices asks. "I didn't hear anything." The other one responds. Rose turns her head to where the voices are coming from and sees that she's close to the exit. She can see light coming from underneath the door. She gets out from underneath the shelf and all the other things that had fallen on her and stands up. She follows the voices again until she hits her head against the door. She moves her hands across the door and feels a handle. She was just about to open the door when she heard the voices speak again. "Why are you even with Rose if you're not even Bisexual or Pansexual?" 'Wait! Is that Joshua's voice?' Rose thinks to herself getting hope that he'll get her out of the dark room like he always does. 'But what does he mean not Bi or Pansexual?' "What do you mean?" The other voice asks. 'Is that Amber?' "I know you are straight. Don't deny it- What are you doing?" "I'm making sure Rose isn't around to hear this, but you're right. I'm not Pansexual. I'm straight. I'm only with Rose because I knew she always had a crush on me and as your personal butler it's my duty to make you two happy no matter the cost." Rose takes a step back from the door in shock. She can't believe her ears. 'Is

that true? Please don't let it be true.' "Anyway. I only love you, Joshua. Let's go. Rose is waiting for us." Rose can hear the two walk away from the door. She's heartbroken. How can they do this to her? She slowly opens the door and looks around. No sight of Joshua and Amber. Suddenly the lights go back on. "Seriously now?!" Rose says, throwing her arms in the air out of frustration. "What about now?" Rose quickly turns around to see Miss. Birdie standing next to her. "Did you find everything you need?" "No, but I accidentally broke one of the shelves. Don't worry I'll pay for it." Rose quickly says after. Miss. Birdie looks around in the storage room but nothing's broken. "Are you sure you broke something because everything is still in place" Rose is confused and looks to find everything still in place. Was she just imagining things because she was scared? Was the conversation between Joshua and Amber also fake? "I shall be going now. I'm going to get fresh air. I think I'm imagining things." Rose says, walking away. Miss. Birdie checks the storage room again. Nothing is broken or missing. "I hope Rose is all right. Poor girl probably overworking herself again."

In the parking lot, Joshua is waiting for Amber and Rose. He's leaning on their car, tired of standing. Two girls walk towards Joshua and go to the car parked next to him. "Is

that Joshua?" One of them whispers to the other. "I can't believe he's really allowed back. What if he's still infected?" Joshua pretends not to hear them. "Even if he isn't infected, he can still bully people. I mean do you really think he changed? I don't believe it." "I heard he even has a girlfriend?" "What's even worse is that his sister is also dating his girlfriend." "That's so gross. What do their parents think about it? Wait! Do they even know?" "I know right? What a disgrace." The two girls are starting to get on Joshua's nerves. "I can't believe the girl is dating Joshua. I mean he bullied her. Is she stupid or something?" "I know. His parents should be ashamed of him." "Okay, shut up!" Joshua yells. He looks at where the girls were standing, and they're gone. "Where did they go?" "Sir, are you okay?" The driver asks Joshua, rolling down his window. "Yeah, there were just these two girls who were getting on my nerves." "Girls? There was no one here sir. We were alone the whole time." The driver says concerned. "What?" Joshua asks startled. But he just saw two girls walk to the car beside him. They were talking about him, Amber, and Rose. Is he going crazy?

Alice was walking toward the parking lot. Asher is still busy with something, so she decided to go ahead and wait for him in the car. Suddenly a lot of wind starts coming her way and circling her. There is dust coming into her eyes, so she puts her hand in front of her face and closes her eyes. Just as suddenly as the wind came it was gone. "Alice is that you?" That voice is so familiar. 'No, it can't be.' Alice removes her hands and opens her eyes. A is standing right in front of her. "How are you here?" Alice asks getting on guard. "I survived and found a way back here. Where is Asher?" A asks while walking toward Alice. "He's still inside. Are you going to try and manipulate him again?" A says nothing and keeps walking towards Alice. "If so. I'm not letting you near him." "Don't worry I only came for you. To tell you I'm alive. I know if I go to Asher, it won't end well." A says looking sad. Alice still doesn't trust the situation. She tries to freeze A but fails. She knew it. She must be an illusion. "I know you're not real. You're probably just an illusion." A's eyes widen. "W... what? Why would you say that? I'm real, here I'll prove it." A grabs Alice her hand. "See I'm real." Alice still doesn't buy it. "Stop time then." A rolls her eyes and stops time. Everything around them is frozen. But why couldn't she freeze A? Suddenly Alice feels a hand on her shoulder. She turns around and sees Joshua standing behind her. 'Didn't A stop

time. How is Joshua here?' She turns to where A was standing but A is gone. "Alice, are you all right? You were talking to yourself. Did you also see things that weren't there just like me?" "What did you see?" Alice asks worriedly. "I saw two girls gossiping about me, but my driver told me I was talking to myself and that the two girls weren't even there." Alice brushes Joshua's hand off her shoulder and looks around. "Something is going on. I think someone is targeting us. We need to find the others. The same thing probably happened to them."

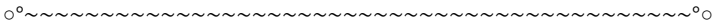
Asher is done with whatever he was doing. He can see Alice talking with Joshua. He was just about to exit the school building when he feels a hand on his shoulder. He turns around and sees A standing in front of him. "A?!" Asher is confused, happy, sad, and mad. He doesn't know what to say or how to feel. "How? Why?" A smiles and puts her finger on his lips to stop him from talking. "It doesn't matter. I'm here now. We can be together again." A says with the brightest smile. Asher is starting to feel uncomfortable. He knows something is wrong. Why would she still want to be with him when they parted on bad terms? When he told her he knew she was using him. "We should tell the others." Asher says, walking towards the door. Hoping to get help from the others on this situation.

“No don't!” A says grabbing Asher's arm, preventing him from going to the others. “Why?” Asher asks, trying to pull his arm out of her grip without her being suspicious. “You see I'm going to disappear soon. I want to make sure we'll part on good terms this time. I want us to be together again. Just like how it was before Alice ruined everything.” “Uhm.” Asher says, not knowing what to say. “I just wanted to say I love you and don't forget it. I'm the only one that loves you like this.” “I... I.” A doesn't give Asher a chance to talk as she interrupts him. “Your parents didn't love you as I did, and I know Alice will never like you like that. So just come back to me.” Asher is now trying harder to get out of her grip and A notices this. “Oh. I'm sorry for hurting you. I just didn't want you to run away. I'm going to let go now. Don't run away.” A lets go and Asher immediately rubs his wrist where a handprint is now shown. “So how have you been Asher?” A asks completely changing the subject. “I've been doing well. And you?” He asks warily. “I get to see you again, so I am great.” As she says that she starts to fade. “Looks like my time is up. Remember I'm the only one who loves you. Alice is just going to break your heart in the end.” “Just like you did?” A smiles at him before walking into his personal space and their foreheads almost touching. “You do know that Alice and I are the same person?” With that A completely disappears. Asher immediately walks towards

the exit, hoping to get as far away as possible in case A does come back. "Asher!" He turns around and sees Amber run towards him. "Hey Amber, you're still here? And Rose too?" Amber turns around and sees Rose walking toward them. Amber goes to stand behind Asher. Rose notices this and frowns. 'She probably knows I heard what she said to Joshua and is scared I'll do something.' Rose thinks to herself. The three walk outside to Alice and Joshua. "Hey guys." Asher says waving at Alice and Joshua. "Hi Asher. We need to talk to you guys about something important. Have you been seeing or hearing things that weren't there?" All of them respond with yes except Asher. He still doesn't know if she was real or not. It would make sense that she'd be an illusion, but nothing indicated him that it was just an illusion. "That's strange. I have a feeling someone is targeting us and is making us see illusions. Asher are you sure you didn't see anyone or anything that wasn't supposed to be there." Alice asks concerned. Asher is thinking if he should tell them about A, but decides against it. If she was just an illusion. What difference does it make? "I'm sure. Nothing abnormal happened to me." "Look!" Rose shouts, pointing at the school's roof. There are two figures standing on the school's roof.

There are two people on the school's roof, dressed in all black and wearing masks to cover their faces, looking at the group. Suddenly they see Rose pointing at them and the rest of the group is also looking at them. "Well, it looks like they spotted us." One of them says to the other. "Our job for today is done. Let's go back to mother." The two mysterious figures disappear into thin air leaving the group with a lot of questions on their minds.

Chapter I



Mr. Primson recently bought a warehouse somewhere in a secluded area, away from most civilization, for it to be built into one of the bases for The Organization. The group is helping him renovate it. The quicker it is turned into a base the faster they can use it. It's not as if they can just go to a building company and ask them to help turn an old warehouse into a top-secret base. The group also had nothing to do and were bored so they decided to help Mr. Primson. "What is this base for?" Joshua asks, carrying the boxes into the soon-to-be new base. "This is going to be our backup base. If anything happens to one of the other bases, we can move to this one." Alice answers, looking over the

blueprints for this base with Asher and her father. Joshua puts the boxes down. "How many bases do you even have?" "We have three other bases plus the main base. What? Do you consider joining?" Mr. Primson asks raising an eyebrow at Joshua. Joshua laughs in response. "Ha, you wished you had someone as strong as me in your organization. Even Asher didn't join." They all turn to look at Asher who is looking at them confused. "What? Sorry I wasn't paying attention." Alice whispers to Asher what they were just talking about. "I joined The Organization. I'll stay until I graduate to become a hero. I'll just use this opportunity for field experience." Asher answers shutting Joshua up and making him rethink about not joining. "Rose, how are our new outfits coming along?" Mr. Primson asks Rose who is just entering the room. "I already finished them. Here, you can take a look at the photos I took of them." Rose shows Mr. Primson the pictures of the new outfits on her phone. "They're amazing. You did a great job as always. Here." Mr. Primson hands Rose some money. Rose looks at the money skeptically. "I'm sorry but I can't accept it. Besides my parents have enough money." She holds the money in front of her for Mr. Primson to take back. "It's not for your parents. It's for you. Take this as the first payment for your clothing business." "Thank you." Rose embraces Mr. Primson. He's surprised. The action

caught him off guard, but he returns the embrace. They let go and Rose walks away going to do what she had planned to do before Mr. Primson interrupted her. Mr. Primson smiles at Rose's retreating form before he remembers something. He clears his throat catching everyone's attention. "Are you guys sure you did everything for school? I don't want Miss Birdie scolding me again." Amber laughs. "Maybe it's because she has a crush on you and wants to see you." Rose says making the rest start to snicker. Mr. Primson blushes at that. "Perhaps it won't be bad seeing her from time to time." Mr. Primson says looking away trying to hide his blush. That made everyone stop what they were doing. They did tease him about Miss Birdie for a while, but they didn't think he'd actually have feelings for her. "Okay, now back to work. The base can't build itself on its own." They go back to what they were doing, pretending they didn't hear what he had said. Alice walks up to her father, putting her hand on his shoulder. "I don't mind having a new mom. I'm not saying you should rush things and replace mom, but if you really like Miss Birdie. I don't mind having her around. I just want you to be happy." Mr. Primson looks at his daughter. She reminds him so much of his late wife. Alice inherited her mother's electric blue eyes. She gives him a bittersweet smile and walks away.

The next day Asher, Alice, Joshua, and Rose had to stay behind after class for not finishing a project in time. Joshua went home early yesterday because he was already finished with his task and didn't want to stay at the base any longer. When he arrived home, he remembered that none of them had finished the project. He was so nice that when he remembered, he did not tell the others about it. His reason was that he was so panicked that he was only able to finish his and forgot to tell the others that they had a project to finish. "Joshua. Why are you here?" Miss. Birdie asks, crossing her arms. "Well, I have to wait for Rose to go home and it's hot outside." Miss. Birdie pinches the bridge of her nose. "Can you guys stop making me keep you after class? You guys need to make a balance between school and work. I mean I'm happy the reason you're here is that you have work and not because you went partying or playing too much video games." Alice raises her hand. "Yes, Alice." "I don't even want to become a hero. I'm just here because my father wants me to be here." Miss. Birdie sighs. "Your father is a smart man. And you and I both know that there is a reason he sent you to school. And speaking of your father. I don't think he appreciates coming to school for you guys almost every day." "I don't think he minds." Rose says snickering. "Yeah. He probably lets us get in trouble on

purpose." Asher says, fist-bumping Rose. Alice smiles while shaking her head at their antics. Miss. Birdie doesn't seem to know what they mean. "Miss Birdie?" Alice asks raising her hand. "Yes, Alice?" "Are you single?" "Yes, I'm single, but what kind of question is that?" Miss. Birdie asks confused. "Okay enough!" Joshua says catching everyone's attention. "Guys we got to be serious." "Thank you, Joshua." Miss Birdie says out of relief. "Miss. Birdie do you want children? Because you're going to get one very soon. And a daughter specifically." Joshua says making the group break into laughter. "Okay, I have had enough. Mr. Primson should be here any moment now." Miss Birdie says looking as if she would rather be anywhere else than in this room with the group. As she says that the classroom door opens, and Mr. Primson enters the classroom. He looks around and sees the group laughing uncontrollably while Miss. Birdie's face looks red in embarrassment. "What did they do now?" Mr. Primson asks getting everyone's attention. "Well for one. Everyone except Joshua didn't finish the project they were supposed to turn in today." "Ma'am?" Asher asks raising his hand. "Yes, Asher?" Miss. Birdie asks getting tired of the group. "We did try to do the project, but we just gave up. So, it wasn't really because we were too busy with work." "Explain." Mr. Primson demands wanting to hear what Asher has to say. "Well, you see. We had to ask people what

they think about this school. Alice isn't very good at communicating with people. I tried to help her, but my help wasn't good enough. People just kept smiling and slowly backing away from us. And then I thought I'll ask the people myself. But with almost every conversation, it started okay but then they suddenly had to go. So, I could never finish my conversation." They all turn to look at Alice. "Well in my defense. The duo is still out there, and everything can be an illusion." Alice says leaning back in her chair. Mr. Primson sighs. "And what about Rose?" Miss. Birdie asks. "Joshua still acts all high and mighty, like he's better than everyone else. That made people either scared of him or completely ignore him. And for me. They know I'm his twin sister and so they thought I was just like him, making them treat me the same." Rose says looking disappointed at Joshua. Joshua shrugs and looks away. Miss. Birdie sighs. Sighing is her response to most of the things that involve the group. "I'll see what I can do." She looks at Mr. Primson and then at the group. "You know what. Because you saved my life, I will give you extra lessons so that you guys still get to pass this school year." The group cheers. "Miss Birdie-" M. Primson begins hesitantly. "You don't have to call me Miss. Birdie. You can call me Lulu." Mr. Primson smiles at her. "Okay, Lulu. You really don't have to do this for us. We can manage. We just

need to find more people to help us.” Miss. Birdie shakes her head. “I really don't mind it. You can all leave now.” The group stands up, grabs their stuff, and leaves. Mr. Primson stays behind to thank Miss. Birdie again before leaving.

Chapter II



As soon as the situation at school was resolved, Mr. Primson, Alice, and Asher left for home. Still in the car when they get home, Alice stops time. Everything is frozen except for them and the car. Alice does this every time they go to one of the bases. It's to make sure they won't be followed. They made special roads to drive to the bases so that when Alice stops time they won't be hindered when they drive to a base. Today they're going to the main base to talk about things that need to be handled. The main base at first was the one at the mansion, but they decided to change it for safety reasons. Joshua and Rose were going to come to the base with them, but their plans changed last minute because they suddenly got a message saying that