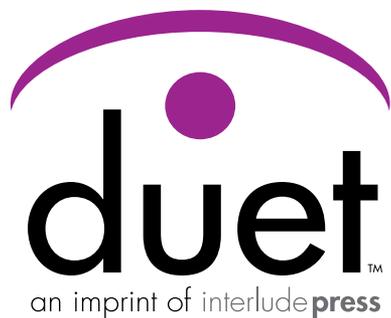




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Not Your Villian Deleted & Extended Scenes

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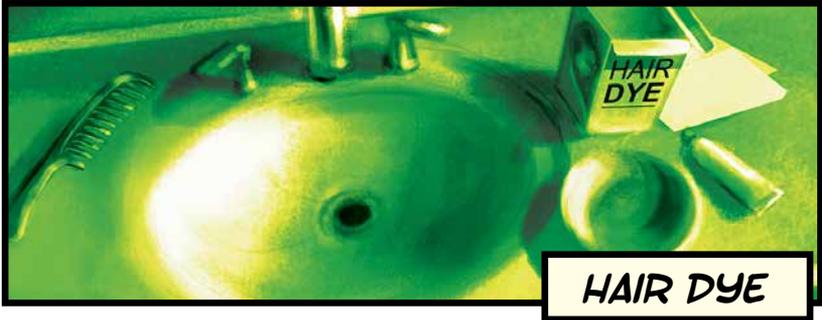
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CB: *This flashback occurs after mutants are brought up during Bells' class at Meta-Human Training. While I loved how it shows the friendship between Bells and Jess and Emma and the little nod to Jess' insecurity with her own powers, the flashback slowed the pacing, especially when so many exciting things happen during training.*

It still is one of my favorite scenes and is a very distinct Bells moment, especially about how he feels about himself and his body and how shapeshifting plays a role.

LATER, HE CALLS EMMA AND Jess. Their daily catch-ups are audio only, since he's not allowed to take pictures of the Training Center. Bells blames the no-video calls on a bad connection to the Net. This fib means they think he can't access any entertainment, so Emma is recording all the new *Gentleman Detective* episodes for him and Jess is stockpiling a bunch of movies.

"Hey, we had a guest lecturer talk about the history of meta-humans today," Bells says thoughtfully. "And our current assignment is to do art inspired by the science."

"Oh, that's interesting," Jess says.

"Yeah, but there isn't too much information on mutations, which is my focus," Bells says. "Em, your mom studied genetics before she

went into cancer research. Do you think she could let me borrow some books?”

“Oh, yeah, sure.” Bells hears a somewhat muffled, “Mom!?! Are you home?”

Bells can hear a door opening. “*Qué necesitas, miija?*”

“Ah, no, the other one... *Mom!*” Emma turns back to the phone. “Okay, she’s outside and the DED is charging. I’ll send you the stuff later, okay, Bells?”

“Sure! Thanks!”

There’s a sigh on the line, barely audible, but Bells knows it’s Jess.

“What?” he nudges.

“Huh?” Emma is distracted; he hears shuffling from her end.

“Nothing! It’s just now *both* of you are gonna be gone!” Jess blurts.

Bells blinks. “Emma? Where are you going?”

“It’s not that long, just visiting my abuela and all my cousins and family in the South,” Emma says.

Oh, right, she does make a long visit once or twice a year. Bells nods, then remembers that this isn’t a vidcall and they can’t see him. “Sounds fun. Say hi to everyone for me.”

Jess makes a high-pitched, distraught noise, and Emma laughs.

“Don’t even worry, it’ll be over before you know it, and the three of us will be reunited,” Emma says brightly.

Bells grins, listening to Emma and Jess argue with each other; Jess’ exasperated *psh* noises get more and more drawn out. If they knew the real reason he wanted to learn more about the mutations of the meta-gene, they would be all over it, helping him research until he had all the answers to his questions. They’ve been there for him for so often, and they don’t even know that they were both there when he first consciously used his powers.

When he was a kid, the first time he copied his brother’s hair had seemed like a fluke. Try as he might, Bells just couldn’t do it

again. Simon was convinced that Bells' powers had manifested, but to everyone else—including Bells—it seemed like a one-time thing.

It didn't happen again until he was twelve. Bells remembers it like yesterday: the acrid smell of the hair dye and the soft floral hues of Emma's twelve-year-old bedroom.

He was sitting on her floor with a plastic sheet draped clumsily around himself like a cape. Emma eyed the empty box of dye. "Are you sure you don't want to go to a salon? I don't really know what I'm doing here."

"Gloves! Gloves, we need gloves!" Jess said as she snapped rubber gloves on her hands and shoved a pair at Emma and another at Bells.

The goop was bright, bright red, and Bells loved the color on the box, but in the bowl it was a little darker than he expected. Jess read the instructions. "It says we have to dye one part! To see what it looks like!"

Bells waved her off. "That's just to see if I'm allergic or not. Just do all of it."

Jess blinked. "Are you sure? What if it's not the color you want? What if it shows up differently on your hair?"

"I trust you guys," Bells said.

"All right, here we go!" Emma said. She picked up a blob of goop and smeared it into Bells' hair. He'd brushed his hair out earlier, and it felt strange being unstyled in front of his friends. His hair should have the majestic volume of his brother's Afro or the styled intricacies of his mother's. His dad preferred the short or shaved look, but Bells liked his options.

The dye was heavy as it weighed down his hair, and Jess and Emma giggled as they spread it on his head. "Do you guys wanna go see *Vindicated 3* tomorrow?" Jess asked. "My mom doesn't need the minivan, and it's got plenty of charge; it can take us downtown and back."

Bells laughed. "Sure."

“Oh, I can’t,” Emma said. “My parents are taking me to this power specialist.”

“A what?” Jess blinked.

“You know, those people that help you test your powers and stuff. My great tia was a meta-human; she could make little zaps of electricity. Nana says it was pretty cool; she never did anything about it, but there’s a big chance that I’ll have something. You know it runs in families.”

“Yeah,” Jess said, not moving.

“Jess, you’re still on the same clump of hair,” Bells pointed out.

“Ah, sorry,” she said and kept moving.

She and Emma worked methodically until Bells’ head was covered in slick, red goop. He eyed the color in the mirror and hoped that it would turn out okay. Emma combed the goop into his hair in even, rhythmic strokes as she hummed. “You guys should go. I’ll catch up later.”

“True.” Bells laughed. “So, can you make anything zap?”

“Not so far,” Emma said, frowning. “I mean, I’m only twelve, but it’s pretty normal to get powers any time after puberty.”

Bells nodded, thinking of puberty and bodies changing. He felt an unhappy twist in his stomach.

“You okay?” Jess asked. She finished her side of Bells’ head and held her gloved hands carefully so she wouldn’t get red goop everywhere.

“You think you might get powers too?”

“Nah,” Bells said. “No one in my family has ever had any meta-powers, all the way back to X29.”

Emma said. “Doesn’t mean you can’t, though. Aren’t there some people who say they just—poof!—have it?”

“There’s been research that some genes activated by X29 didn’t present immediately and could show up later,” Jess said.

“Hmm, what about you, Jess?”

“Oh, um, my family’s not meta-human, either. We won’t—I won’t have powers.”

Emma laughed. “Okay, well, there’s nothing wrong with that. Just promise me you two will still talk to me if I get all busy with meta-human training and everything.”

“Of course,” Bells said. “But aren’t you supposed to keep it a secret? Like in your family?”

“You two are my best friends. You are my family too,” Emma said. “I can tell whoever I want, and you’re the first people I wanna tell when I get my powers.” She wrapped a towel around Bells’ head. “There. Now you’ll be a redhead, in about... two hours.”

They watched a movie—Bells doesn’t remember whether it was *Vindicated 1* or the sequel, but he fell asleep in the middle of a car chase. Emma nudged him awake, marched him to the bathroom, and instructed him to wash the goop out.

Bells carefully tried not to get any of the dye in his eyes and he watched the red dye swirl down the drain. It was very red, and he wondered if his hair would be that color. Finally, he got all the goop out and started patting his hair dry with a towel.

He let the towel fall and frowned.

There was practically no difference. The dye didn’t take, or his hair was too dark. Bells stared at his reflection in dismay. *Why did everything have to be so difficult?* He looked at his unruly hair—boring, boring, normal—and eyed the edge of his binder visible under his tank top. The beige fabric was streaked with red. Great, so his clothes and his binder got dyed. His hair didn’t.

He peered closer in the mirror and shook his hair. In the light, he could see that it was slightly lighter, maybe even red. But overall, he looked exactly the same.

“Ugh,” Bells said, to no one in particular. He stared at his reflection. It’s not about the hair—Emma would probably offer to take him to

a fancy salon with proper chemicals and stuff and start with bleach. That had been the first problem, that he didn't want to bleach his hair. But all this talk about things changing—he thought of the future with dread, thought of waking up and his body changing beyond his control, into something unrecognizable, unfathomable.

“Bells? Are you okay? How's it look?” Emma said from the other side of the door.

Bells scowled at his reflection. Red hair, that's all he wanted, proof that this body wasn't permanent, that he could be anything—

A strand of hair turned red.

Bells blinked at it. All his hair was turning red.

He couldn't maintain the change past that day, but Jess and Emma were delighted at how successful their dye job had been, and then supportive when the color “faded” so quickly. After that, Bells spent a lot of time trying to alter his hair make it shorter or longer, change color, anything.

He's come a long way since then.



CB: *In this scene, Bells hangs out with Tanya and Sasha, two of the other trainees. It takes place right before the events of the last week of training. I liked showing some of the personalities of other trainees, especially the twins, Tanya and Sasha, since they'll return in books three and four. However, like the previous scene, this slowed the pacing and didn't advance the main story line.*

I do enjoy this scene, particularly because we get to see a bit of Bells' sneaky side as well as see his friendships with the other kids at Meta-Human Training.

THE MAIN TRAINING ANNEX ITSELF is made up of a gym, several offices, and an arena with various programmable difficulties. Bells is sticking to his usual twice-as-long route with all covered walkways, when he spots Tanya and Sasha from the other end of the hall. With a quick pop, one disappears, and then the other. They laugh as they flank Bells and join him in step.

"Hey," Bells says. The twins are the only other Black kids in the program and are a bit older, having continued to train beyond the required four years. *Or were they rejected for the League and just kept coming back to try again?* He doesn't remember.

"Barry," they say in unison.

Bells nods at one twin, then the other. "Tanya. Sasha."

“Nope, I’m Tanya,” Sasha says with a mischievous grin.

Bells chuckles. “Sasha,” he says pointedly.

She rolls her eyes, but gives him a small smile.

“Great job on the test last week,” Bells says. They’re beginning the assessments, a combination of grueling physical exercises, timed obstacle courses, and written exams. Last week they had to navigate a maze filled with fighting bots whose padded “fists” threw soft punches dusted in red powder. Some students fought back until the bots depowered, but Bells ran out of stamina halfway through and concentrated on exiting the maze. He finished in good time, but covered in red dust, and only received partial points. Sasha and Tanya popped from the beginning of the maze to the end and should have had full points for the quickest time. Harris was annoyed, but Bells was impressed. “I can’t believe you didn’t get full points.”

“Forty out of fifty isn’t bad.” Tanya sticks out her tongue. “Harris said our moves weren’t dramatic enough. Apparently those were the showstopper points we missed out on.”

“Better than zero,” Bells muses. “Which is what Cornish would have given you if he knew you didn’t actually *do* anything during your test, Sasha.” He’d noticed Tanya’s look of concentration during Sasha’s test and the gleam of triumph after her sister received her score.

Sasha’s mouth falls open.

Bells grins and throws a companionable arm around each twin’s shoulder. “Don’t worry about it. Your secret’s safe with me. Personally, I think it’s really cool. Your powers are... complementary, like a perfect mirror of one another. It’s neat.” They’ve been clever with their power demonstrations, always working together or near each other. Sasha can summon anything she’s ever touched to her side, while Tanya can teleport anything she’s ever touched to a location she’s been before. It’s taken Bells two summers to figure it out.

Sasha and Tanya trade questioning looks, but they relax into the hug, squeezing Bells back.

“It’s a good idea,” Bells says. “The League is definitely going to want you on their side.”

Tanya smiles slowly. “Yeah, that’s what I said. Took her awhile to be okay with it, though.”

“Lying on the Meta-Human Registry—it’s treason!” Sasha says, glancing around nervously.

Bells shrugs. “Yes, it’s a lie. Technically. But think of it this way: when you’re heroes, you’re going to be working together, and no one is going to know or care whose power is whose.”

“Yeah, maybe,” Sasha says, but it sounds as though she doesn’t quite believe it.

“Thanks for not saying anything. You didn’t do so bad yourself, you know. You’re really getting better.”

Tanya raises her eyebrow. “How’d you know who was who, anyways? None of the teachers can tell us apart.”

Bells tilts his head. Sasha’s nose is a little longer. Tanya’s cheekbones are a bit higher. These are small differences, but he’s trained himself to notice the little things. When changing his own face, he’s very careful to keep Barry’s face exactly the same. People would notice if he made his nose too big or if his eyes changed color. He’s lucky that people at school are used to him changing his hair color all the time, so it’s not unusual if Bells forgets or does it wrong—but the face. The face is important.

“Where are you headed?” Sasha asks.

“Gym. I’m almost at a hundred pounds on my chest press.”

The twins both whistle. “Neat. But the gym is that way. That’s the archive room. You don’t wanna go past there; Harris will yell at you. He got in an argument with Barbara over the origins of the meta-gene

again.” Tanya jerks her head toward one of the open walkway paths, which quivers in the wind.

“Ah, no thanks, I like taking the long way round—”

“I can—” Sasha snaps her fingers at Bells and winks at him.

“Oh, sure—” No sooner are the words out of his mouth than his body is jerked from the walkway. His stomach swoops as the bridge disappears and he reappears in front of the gym.

Next to him Tanya grins. “Do you need to be sick? The first time she did that to me, I threw up. Everywhere.” Tanya snaps her fingers, and Sasha appears next to her.

“Is that necessary, the finger snapping?” Bells asks.

“Nah, we just like it. It’s fun!”

The twins follow him to the gym, and somehow Bells is corralled into a push-up contest with them. He loses, but it’s still fun.



CB: *On the first day of school, several kids say hi to Bells as he waits for Emma to walk to class. In an earlier draft, this scene came later and was combined with the scene when Emma doesn't show up because she's dating Carlos. Originally I thought having the kids say hello to Bells, but not really know him the way his best friend does, would make a great contrast, but Annie, my editor made a great point: We needed to see this sequence earlier. So it became two scenes: the first day of school and the reprise.*

In this earlier draft, Jimmy, a sophomore trans boy, not only says hi to Bells and has a brief exchange with him, but asks Bells for dating advice. I loved this moment because we got to see Bells in an upperclassman, mentor role. However, it did not work as a first-day-of-school bit. We cut it because it redirected the pacing of the story, but I'm excited to share it!

“OH, HEY, JIMMY,” BELLS SAYS, smiling at the curly-haired guy falling into step next to him.

Jimmy is a sophomore he knows from the yearbook committee, who came out as trans last year. *Nice kid, great at photography.*

“Hey! Can I ask you for some advice again—?”

“Sure,” Bells says, amused. “What’s up?”

“So uh, Darryl asked me out on a date,” Jimmy says, fiddling with his hands.

“Oh, cool! Do you like him? Do you wanna go?”

Jimmy mumbles something.

“What?” Bells has no idea what he’s saying, and Jimmy probably doesn’t want to have this conversation in the hallway. Bells yanks open the nearest bathroom door, checks to see if anyone’s inside, and jerks his head for Jimmy to follow him. “Okay, what’s up? I know you like him; you told me that last week.”

“Yeah, that was when he was an unattainable crush! And then he started talking to me.” He takes a deep breath. “Darryl likes boys.”

“You’re a boy,” Bells says.

Jimmy ducks his head. “Yeah, but I’m not... I mean, everyone knows that I’m... I mean, why would he ask me?”

Bells pats him on the shoulder. “You’re a dude he likes and wants to get to know better, I’m pretty sure that’s why he asked you out on a date.” He hasn’t seen Jimmy this nervous since last year, when he asked Bells about binders.

“Hey. He wouldn’t ask you out if he wasn’t into you.”

Jimmy bites his lip.

“All of you,” Bells affirms.

“Okay,” Jimmy says. “Thanks. I gotta go to class, but can I message you later?”

“Yeah, absolutely. Message me whenever you want. I’ll see you around, dude.” Bells claps him on the shoulder and gives him a thumbs up.



CB: *I really enjoyed this scene not just because of the Bells-and-Jimmy conversation, but we also get to see Darryl again. If you remember from Not Your Sidekick, he's the president of the Rainbow Allies club, and he was awkward with Jess because he assumed she was a lesbian. Darryl's developed a lot since the first book, especially when it comes to the community and how his club is run. (It didn't seem welcoming to a lot of kids, since it was, as Jess described, "Darryl and his friends," who were mostly gay guys.)*

Here we get to see what he's been up to, which is having a date with Jimmy.

This takes place during the super-awkward triple date, when Christine and Bells show up early to the bowling alley and see Jimmy and Darryl on a date. Since we cut the first bit, we also had to cut this snippet.

THE BOWLING ALLEY IS ALMOST empty, save for one lane being used by Darryl and Jimmy. Darryl waves at Bells and Christine and then continues talking with Jimmy. There are several empty plates and cups on their table; it looks as though they've been here awhile.

Jimmy spots Bells. His face lights up. He mouths, "Second date!"

Grinning, Bells gives him a thumbs up. He's glad they're having a good time.

"Did you wanna say hi to your friends?" Christine asks.

"Nah, they're on a date," Bells says. "Let's not bother them."



CB: *This is one of the first scenes I wrote for Not Your Villain. I think it's hilarious, but it ended up being cut very early on in the writing process because it was too similar to his other cat rescue scene. In this one the cat is actually stuck in a tree.*

HE GETS BETTER AT IT. There are better jobs, and closer to home, too, but when he pictured hero-ing, Bells never quite pictured this.

“Okay, kitty, come on down, please,” Bells beckons, waving his arms at the creature aloft in the tree.

The fluffy monster snarls at him and jumps to a higher branch.

Bells scowls. Hero work, indeed.

“Please, Chameleon.” The boy is hardly a *toddler*. He barely comes up to Bells’ waist.

“I’m on it,” Bells says, saluting the kid. He’s Chameleon, newest recruit to the Heroes’ League of Heroes and he’s got this. He backs up a few steps. He doesn’t have super-speed or super-strength or any kind of assisted agility, so getting up in this particular tree is gonna be work. He’s trained for this, though.

There are no cameras for this particular venture; Chameleon being heroic has been broadcasted enough. This is an actual cat that is actually stuck in a tree, and Bells can’t believe he found this in downtown

Andover. These independent assignments are his favorite, because then he can just go about doing general good deeds as Chameleon.

Bells stretches, arches his shoulders, and then drops into a squat.

“Mister, what are you doing? What about Mr. Flufferbottoms?”

“Mr. Flufferbottoms isn’t going anywhere. I am stretching, young—what’s your name, kiddo?”

“Isaac.”

“Isaac, did you know if you don’t stretch before you exercise, you might get a cramp!”

“But you’re a superhero.”

“All the more reason. Just because I’m super doesn’t mean I don’t stretch!” He winks and then runs at the tree, launching himself in the air. Bells grabs a lower branch, swings himself aloft, and manages to get a foothold. The oak leaves shake as he pulls himself up.

Mr. Flufferbottoms gives him an unimpressed look.

“I know, I know, I’m not Tree Frog,” Bells says. *Why didn’t they get the tree climbing superhero to do all the cat work?*

Oh right, because Tree Frog lives in the Pacific Northwest, and Bells lives *here*. He’s got cats to rescue. Taking care of the local villains—that’s Shocker’s and Smashwave’s job.

Technically Bells is in their territory, but Chameleon is new. He doesn’t have a city of his own yet, or even a county to watch over.

He manages to coax Mr. Flufferbottoms, a soft black cat with one eye, out of the tree, and hands him back to Isaac, who cries and cuddles the creature to his chest, and then insists on hugging Bells.

It’s not all that bad.



CB: *This was a great Bells-and-Emma moment, but it diminished the excitement when they'd just figured out the video they thought would expose Captain Orion and how the League was corrupt just isn't working. Bells and Emma have a habit of eating an apple together that's a callback to when they first met: Emma doesn't like starting an apple, so Bells will, and they take turns biting into it. There's also more group chat and banter in this extended version of the first Sidekick Squad meeting. I loved showing Emma's studious side too.*

HE PICKS UP THE PACE, sprinting up the hill that takes him to Andover Heights and humming to himself when he spots the two-story adobe house.

Bells unlatches the back gate and slips through the Robledo garden. He admires the string of soft lights over the patio and the bright pink petals of the lone flower blooming on the saguaro cactus. He slips past the yucca with minimal scratching and gently pulls up Emma's window screen. It opens smoothly, and he climbs inside.

"Brendan also call you?" Emma asks, not even looking up from her bed and deftly maneuvering her fingers through a complicated-looking holo, drawing it out. On her pillow is an apple, shining with reflections from many holos. Projected on her desktop are various pages from

the Net, all from science archives, and the holobook assigned to their AP Physics class—the chapter they haven't covered yet.

"Yeah," Bells says, checking the time. Eight-forty-two. He grabs her desk chair and spins it around so he can sit in it backwards. "You get a location yet from our little mastermind?"

Emma snorts. "Mastermind, please. I know he's a genius, but I've made *plans*."

"What plans?"

"You'll see." She smirks.

Bells eyes the projection in her hands. "Oh, is this your chemistry project?"

"Yeah. Almost done." Emma gets out of bed. She carefully widens with her hands until the display expands to the width of the room. "I mean, I could have gone with something with a lower count but I thought this would be much more impressive. Did you finish yours?"

Bells gives a halfhearted shrug. They got the assignment last week, but with all the news and the adults telling them to focus on school, he hasn't done much. He flicks his DED and projects the bare bones of his own project: just a few notes and ideas and an outline of where he wants to the molecules to go. The project isn't due until the first week of class in January. He's got plenty of time to procrastinate.

"You know Williams said the minimum electron count was only sixteen. I mean, it looks really cool, I'm not knocking that."

"It's still an equation, Bells." Emma closes her finished diagram with a flick of her wrist. She tosses the apple to Bells and crosses the room to her closet.

Bells takes a bite, as Emma rummages through her clothes, picking and then putting back several different tops and skirts. She holds up a blouse with a bright floral pattern. "Nice," he says around his mouthful of tart apple.

Emma holds out her hand, and Bells tosses the apple back to her. She takes a bite, holding the entire half-eaten apple in her mouth as she contemplates the blouse and then puts it back. She hums idly around the apple, then takes a large bite when Bells chuckles and says, “Did Jess say anything about the ‘soon to be disclosed location’ yet? I’m guessing its—”

“Her house,” Emma says, reaching for Bells’ projection to enlarge it to match the size of her own.

“Hey, c’mon, it’s not fair. I barely even started,” Bells says, reaching to minimize it again, but Emma grabs his wrist and unbuckles the DED strap and plops it on the charging dock on her desk.

“You’re doing great so far,” Emma says, walking into the molecule. She laughs, touching one of the “electrons” and giving it a little push, making the diagram spin in the air around her. Her face is lit with the soft illumination of the glowing pixels as she smiles and nudges them into place.

“Yeah,” Bells agrees, distracted. Watching her concentrate is one of his favorite things. In moments like this, he’s struck by how much he adores her.

Emma laughs, poking at the nucleus. “You forgot one. This is unbalanced.”

“It’s an isotope!”

“You’re an isotope,” Emma says, hip-bumping him.

“Your face is an isotope,” he says, bumping her right back, and they stumble backward, laughing, onto Emma’s bed. Bells finishes the apple while Emma picks her outfit. As she brushes her teeth and changes her clothes, she talks to him from the bathroom about everything and nothing: Rhinehart’s latest assignment, the new lunch menu, Abby being in the group chat.

How comfortable this is; that would change if Bells tells her how he feels. But not forever; she wouldn't be cruel. He wonders if she feels the same and is struck by both fear and longing for change.

[You have been added to group chat “DON’T YOU DARE DELETE THIS ONE BRENDAN.”]

Jess: *are you guys on your way? brendan is WAY too excited about you guys coming over today for our vindicated marathon*

Bells: *IMG39104.ppg*

Jess: *omg why are you at emma’s it’s NINE we’re starting already*

Bells: *I THOUGHT WE WERE MEETING HERE*

Jess: *i thought it was obvious that*

Bells: *EMMA HAS THE BIGGEST PROJECTOR YOU LOVE WATCHING VINDICATED HERE*

Jess: *...*

Abby: *We’re not watching the movie and you know this. Hurry up.*

[b-mastermind has entered the chat.]

b-mastermind: *i can’t believe you guys are late for our MOVIE MARATHON*

b-mastermind: *MOVIE MARATHON. not anything else. just kids being kids watching movies*

Abby: *Now you’re just making this more suspicious*

Abby: *I really doubt that anyone is reading this. I could say I want to take down the*

[User b-mastermind has deleted the chat.]

“What is it?” Emma steps out of her bathroom, dressed in the floral blouse and a skirt, with a matching cloth flower pinned in her hair.

“Jess says we’re on for a *Vindicated* marathon,” he says, chuckling. “I was trying to get her to say we’re gonna discuss what we’re gonna do next about the League.” He takes one last spin on the chair. “Ready?”

“Yeah, give me a sec.” Emma turns off the projections and snaps her DED on her wrist.

Bells stands up, but Emma rummages in her desk, gathers a number of datachips and sweeps them into her purse.

“What’s all that?”

Emma grins as she starts downstairs. “I made some slides for our team meeting!”

“Team meeting? I thought we were just getting together to discuss the Mischief situation.”

“As a team!” Emma calls.



CB: *This scene takes place after the meeting when they list each other's assets. Abby is feeling really down and says she needs to take a break, and in the book we meet her and everyone after this break, but to keep up with pacing it was cut. Originally during this break, Emma takes Bells out in her car and (tries to) teach him to drive.*

THEY PRACTICE IN THE EXPANSE of the Unmaintained lands outside Abby's home. Its hidden location in the canyons and distance from the city make it the perfect spot for them to make plans, as... learn to drive.

"That's enough for me today," Brendan says, wiping sweat from his brow. "I don't like this. This is weird." He tumbled out of the car.

"You only went two feet!" Emma says.

"The responsibility is too much!" Brendan announces. "I'm going back to the house to check on my programs. I'll see you guys later."

Emma shrugs, turning to Bells in the back seat. "How about it? Ready to give it a shot?"

"Okay, now reverse and turn the wheel—"

The car lurches forward; Bells cringes and slams on the brakes.

"Totally normal mistake," Emma says, nodding. "Okay, try again."

Bells inhales slowly, concentrating as he shifts and presses the accelerator. The car reverses, and Bells grins to himself triumphantly, until the screech of something scraping the car breaks his focus.

“Oh no, oh *no*.” Bells slams on the brakes again.

“It’s fine; it’s just a cactus,” Emma says.

Bells parks the car and steps outside. The desert wind whips his hair around his face. Emma’s car is covered in scratches; the offending cactus is still swaying, needles shaking in the wind. It doesn’t even look bothered. The bright, cherry-red paint is messed up beyond repair.

“It’s not fine, I messed up your car,” Bells says, staring at the paint job with horror.

“It’s just paint.” Emma shrugs. “We should head back on this road, though. I didn’t realize we were so close to the cliff edge.”

Bells takes a deep breath. Sometimes he forgets that a new paint job for her car hardly means anything to Emma. “Okay.”

“All right there?”

Bells nods. He follows Emma’s directions and takes the road downhill—the curves are a bit challenging, but soon he finds himself having fun. Emma pops the top of the car, and it slides down, and soon the wind is dancing in their hair. Bells glances over to see Emma laughing, holding her hair to keep it from flying all over the place. She grins back at him.

“See, you figured it out.”

“There’s nothing to figure out,” Bells says. “It’s easier; I just freak out when there’s pressure, you know? I’ve tried learning, before. Didn’t get very far with either one of my parents because they freak out over every little thing.”

“It just takes practice,” Emma says.

“Thanks for listening—I mean, not everyone gets it. The driving thing, that is. Like, why not just let the car drive? Seems simple enough.”

In the distance, the shrouded spot where Abby's home is hidden is visible. On the overlook, he can just make out two figures waving at them.

Emma waves back. "Hello!" she shouts.

"They can't hear you from here," Bells says, amused.

"Jess! Abby!" Emma yells, continuing to wave.

Bells reaches over and grabs her hand, laughing at her. "Seriously, we can just call them."

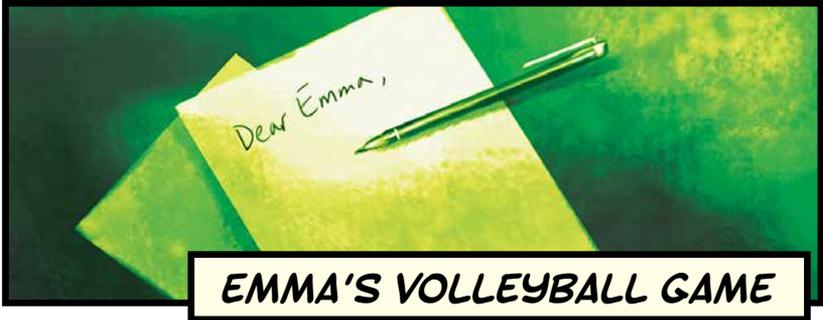
Emma sticks her tongue out at him, but lets her hand fall. She squeezes Bells' hand, and their joined hands rest on the console.

Bells is aware of how warm her hand is, how natural this feels, the way Emma's fingers fit his perfectly.

Bells coughs. "Sorry, I, uh, need two hands," he says.

"Hah, no worries, you think your driving is enough to scare me?"

He laughs. He likes driving well enough, but it's not his favorite thing. Moments like these might be, though.



CB: *This was in an early draft when Bells is wallowing in his feelings, and there's a lot of pining happening. After we meet Carlos on the triple date, he continues to hang out with them and joins in cheering on Emma at her volleyball game. I liked the scene for the group dynamics but this was cut because we already had a lot of pining moments and needed to move forward.*

“GO, MUSTANGS, GO!” THE CROWD is minimal, and the few people invested in the game are mostly parents and friends of the players.

The gym is familiar: the smell of week-old sweat, the bright fluorescent lights, the smack of the volleyball hitting the floor. As usual, Jess and Bells are here to cheer on Emma, but this time, Carlos joined them. He brought his dad's pecan pralines, and Jess is munching away, listening to Carlos talk about their English class. He offers the bag to Carlos, who takes one and nibbles on it.

Bells watches the game avidly; he likes the sports the NAC still practice. Sports that require too-expensive maintenance and equipment are no longer played. He remembers a module in his history class about twenty-first century sports that didn't survive the Disasters and the reformation of government, such as the sport that required massive amounts of energy to cool entire stadiums full of ice.

Volleyball, on the other hand, required little investment in energy. Like basketball, it continues to be practiced in the twenty-second century.

Bells likes how much Emma loves the game, how she bites her lip and gets that face of concentration when she's ready for a play.

The other team serves, high and fast, veering for the edge, but Abby hits it back, setting it to Emma, who rushes forward to spike the ball.

"Yeah! Abby! Emma!" Jess yells.

"Go Emma!" he yells.

Emma jumps and slams the ball forward. It crashes down on the Devonport side and hits the ground with a final thud. The opposing team groans.

"Emma! Great job!" Carlos cheers, stands and claps.

Emma turns toward them and blows a kiss. Carlos mimes catching it and putting it in his pocket.

Bells seethes. *Why so ridiculously cute? What is this whole blowing-a-kiss thing, anyway? Who does that?*

A nudge in his side brings him back to reality. "Hey," Jess says, raising her eyebrows.

On Bells' other side, Carlos is cupping his hands to his face, cheering loudly. Bells shrugs at Jess, but doesn't say anything.

His DED chimes with a new message.

Jess: *you ok? you were making a face*

Bells: *I'M FINE. TALK LATER?*

Bells minimizes the projection, as Carlos turns to him with a broad grin. "This is great! I can't believe I haven't gone to any of her games before."

"I can't believe it either," Bells mutters under his breath.

"What?" Carlos gives him with that million-watt smile.

“I said I can’t believe it either; she’s great,” Bells says, returning the smile with exaggerated cheerfulness.

“Yeah, she is,” Carlos says dreamily.

Jess squeezes Bells’ shoulder and gives him a small smile.

Bells spends the entire game watching Carlos: Perfect Carlos, with his perfect hair and cool clothes and tight shirts and biceps—he has muscles!

Bells has muscles, too, but as part of his secret he hides them, either wearing baggy clothes or shifting his body to be less fit. Bells Broussard, average teenager at AHHS, is not physically fit. Chameleon is.

Carlos even gets along well with Jess—okay, not that that’s difficult, because Jess is sweet and the best person ever, but she does tend to be awkward around new people. Carlos is engaging her in conversation—oh, about dates. Ugh.

“We don’t really go out that much? I like museums and stuff, and we did go to the National History Museum together before... mostly we just hang out. Read comics. Spend time together. Talk about books and stuff.”

“And stuff,” Carlos says with a wink, and Jess’ face turns bright red.

“You can do it!” Bells cheers, standing up, ignoring the conversation. Emma is up to serve; she’s really insecure about it, but she’s been working on getting better.

Emma glances up at the stands, and her expression softens, and she smiles at Bells. It’s a smile that’s entirely for him, and Bells basks in it, smiles back and nods.

She tosses the ball in the air and hits it with a definite smack and it sails over the net, fierce and strong, fast as lightning.

The opponents leap but miss, and the buzzer sounds.

“Mustangs win!”

The girls on the team jump and laugh, and the group hug is ecstatic. Bells cheers and takes pictures on his DED: the team, celebrating; Emma, grinning and being congratulated by her teammates.

In Abby's car on the way to the celebratory dinner, Emma chatters away about the game. "Did you see that spike? And you know I can't serve but—"

"You totally aced them," Abby says.

"You were amazing!" Jess says.

Her hands linger over the console, entangled in Abby's, and Jess' thumb brushes the back of Abby's palm.

In the back seat, Bells is aware of how close he's sitting to Emma; their hands almost touch. The minimal space between them is electric.

"You did great. I know you've been working on that serve," Bells says.

Emma's curls bounce as she laughs. "Thanks! Oh, I'm so hungry! Ah, here comes Carlos!"

The door on Bells' side opens.

"Oh, sorry, I'm parked really close to this wall," Abby says. "Here, let me back out—"

"I can squeeze in—" Bells makes to scoot over, next to Emma, but Carlos just shrugs.

"No worries, I can hop over." He winks and produces something from behind his back. "For you!"

Flowers. Bright pink hibiscus blooms: the ultimate luxury commodity. Grown only for their beauty, these tropical flowers are expensive "I'm thinking of you" presents. He thought about the sunflowers that he didn't give Emma for Valentine's Day, how it had been a big deal because of the lost seeds. These flowers? They're just *pretty*.

"Oh, my gosh, Carlos!" Emma squeals. "Thank you!"

Both Carlos and the flowers squeeze into the car, and he gently climbs over Bells.

Bells shifts so he takes up less space and shrinks into the seat. Emma buries her face in her flowers. Carlos immediately gets wrapped up in conversation about the game.

Bells shrinks farther into the seat. Would anyone notice if he disappeared?



CB: *I thought this scene was both sweet and a chance to resolve Brendan’s crush on Bells that we got to see a little in Not Your Sidekick. When Jess invites Bells over to cheer him up, Brendan gives him a present: a new supersuit that looks like Bells’ favorite faux leather jacket. This became a really long moment at a critical time in the story, and then later, in the whole rush to escape the rogue MonRobots, I realized Bells wouldn’t have this super-techy jacket with him. I tried to figure out a reason for him to have it and wrote myself in a circle until I figured that it was a lot of work to mention the jacket in the first place and then never to use it. This jacket (and scene) may come back in a later book, but for now here it is in its original form.*

BRENDAN WELCOMES HIM INTO THE Trans’ home with a wide grin. “Hey, Bells! I made this for you,” he says, handing Bells a neatly wrapped package tied with a green bow.

“Uh, thank you?” Bells says, stepping into the house. “Was this going to be for my birthday?”

Brendan beams at him, his cheeks a bright red. “Nah,” he says. “I just thought you would like it. I’ve been working on it ever since Jess told me you were Chameleon. One of my many projects, you know.”

Bells opens the box and pulls out a length of dark, iridescent fabric. There’s a green, rainbow-hued effect, but it’s much more subtle than

his old uniform. “Oh, cool, you made me a new supersuit!” Bells says, smiling appreciatively and tucking the suit under his arm. Not that there had been much to repair after Abby took out the tracking device, just a little tear in the shoulder, but he can’t wander around in Chameleon’s most recognizable outfit.

“Well, yeah, in case you wanted to wear something that was really easy to shift and didn’t take a lot of your energy,” Brendan says. “What was really cool was working with this fabric and learning how to add those features. I mean, working the gamma-protein into the fabric was no easy feat, but I know how much you love your jacket and you do look great in that leather-look...”

At the bottom of the box is something else that looks almost like Bells favorite leather-look jacket with its vintage twenty-first century zippers and collar and lapels. He picks it up, awed, touching the fabric. The leather-look has a slight sheen, and, if he looks at it a certain angle, it shimmers, like the suggestion of stars on a velvet night.

Amazed at the workmanship that went into this piece of clothing, Bells clutches at the collar of the jacket. “I can’t accept this,” he says, but he already loves it.

“Oh, come on,” Brendan says. “When Jess showed me your old suit, I was just gonna make you a new one with the same specs but that looked different, but then I was, like, what would Bells actually wear all the time?”

“Thanks, that’s really cool, dude,” Bells says. He resists the urge to ruffle Brendan’s hair. The kid’s gotten taller; Bells could have sworn he was waist-high yesterday. He reaches out for a fist bump instead, and Brendan bumps gently, looking up at Bells in that mixture of awe and admiration that he’s had for years.

Bells twitches, suddenly nervous. This is a big present, and he wonders what it means to Brendan. Jess did joke about him confessing his undying love, but Brendan’s crush had always been there; it had

never been anything to take seriously. Bells isn't sure when it started, just that Brendan would blush and stumble a lot around him when he tagged along with Jess to the restaurant or if he saw Bells at the house.

Bells always figured that Brendan would grow out of it and he'd thought that, since Brendan was spending so much time with them working on finding the Resistance, they'd settle into friendship.

Well, better get this over with, Bells thinks. It's been a long time coming, and he doesn't want to hurt Brendan's feelings, but it'll better to turn him down now.

"Thank you," Bells says. He actually researched the best way to let someone down easy last year and has a speech ready. *Okay, this is it. Brendan, you're a great kid but...*

"Hey, I want to ask you something," Brendan says.

"Sure." Bells takes a deep breath and waits.

"So, um, there's this guy I like from my engineering class last summer, and we've been messaging a lot. I want to ask him on a date. Like to the movies? Do you think I should, like, ask him if he wants to go eat too? Dates usually include food, right?" Brendan shifts from foot to foot.

Bells blinks, the knot of anxiety in his stomach disappears, and he can feel laughter bubble up in his throat, but he contains himself. "Oh. Um. Yeah, go for it. Do both of those things. There are lots of cool places in that part of town."

"Is it weird if I pay? I mean, I have a lot of credits saved up from my allowance, but I heard that you should split it, or..."

"Since you invited him, the nice thing to do would be to pay," Bells says. "The invitee is the host, although there aren't really rules, so, if he offers to split, you could do that too."

"It's a little weird, since he's my age. I was auditing just to see how the instructor was citing my paper for the first time. I, ah, he doesn't know I'm taking college classes." Brendan frowns. "Should I tell him?"

He kind of assumed I was a freshman at AHHS. I didn't correct him."

"Ah, you can definitely correct him when you guys hang out and talk," Bells says. "It'll probably be easier to do that sooner rather than later. Lying to someone for a long time isn't fun." He grimaces, thinking of the months he kept his secret of being Chameleon from his friends. How many times did he want to say it? He was so tempted when Emma said Chameleon was cute.

"—oh, I'm sorry, this must be awkward, since you know I always thought we had this potential, and you're really cool, but you're a bit too old for me, and I realized, even though I may be incredibly mature, going to college as a teenager and all, that hanging out with kids my own age has been quite refreshing—"

"Wait, what?"

"I know you'll find someone," Brendan says, very solemnly for a fourteen-year-old. He pats Bells on the shoulder.

"Thank you," Bells replies, trying to keep a serious face. "I really appreciate that."

Jess pokes her head out from behind the door to the basement. "How long does it take to give Bells a present, seriously. Oh, good, you got it! Doesn't it look amazing?"

"It's great," Bells says. "Thanks again, Brendan!"

"Hey, I've got pizza, your favorite, with three cheeses!" Jess gestures for him to follow her.

"But you guys already ate; you didn't need to get me a pizza."

She's already guiding him downstairs.

"Also, I think Brendan just broke my heart a little, but I'll live," Bells says dramatically.

Jess chortles. "Good, good, so he said that too. He was all worked up about it all afternoon, thinking of how to tell you he didn't like you anymore like that."



CB: *In a much earlier draft, Emma opens the Kingston’s present before they learn about the new MonRobots and her family starts using the new robot right away. Emma names it and makes a sweater for it. This was going to lead to a funny bit later when JJ goes rogue and pursues Emma and Bells, still wearing the sweater, but I found that the storyline worked much better with them not knowing that this dangerous robot is in Emma’s house.*

“WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING again?” Bells asks, raising his eyebrows.

“Knitting,” Emma says. “Except I’m not very good at it.”

“Give it here,” Bells says, and Emma hands him the needles and the lumpy shape dangling from it.

“Oh, you know how to—? Neat.”

He unfurls it, studying it. It looks like a sweater, toddler-size. “You have some cousins I don’t know about or something?”

“No, it’s for JJ!” Emma says, grinning.

“JJ.”

“JJ, come here!” Emma calls out.

A sharp, electric meep sounds behind them. Bells turns around.

“It’s just our new MonRobot,” Emma says, waving at it. The Robledo family always has the newest tech.

Bells isn’t sure he likes the new design. All the previous lines of MonRobots have been rounded and smooth. There are variations

in size and function, but Bells likes the egg-shape. Emma's new MonRobot has a polygonal head, with sharp edges mounted on the rest of its polygonal body. It's got six edges and he supposes it could be more efficient. People loved the new design when it came out, and Bells wonders how much of that was Starscream announcing how much *he* loved it.

JJ hovers into the room.

"How can I help you, Emma?" It speaks in a monotone.

Bells eyes the thing. Bells really doesn't like the square design. It's all rectangular hard edges, and the programming panel looks eerily like a face. It looks nothing like any MonRobot he's seen.

"Stand here and don't move," Emma says. "Bells, the sweater."

He hands her the lump, and she unravels it and wraps it around the robot. "Perfect, thanks!"

"Here, right to here is how big it needs to be."

Bells takes the sweater back and knits another few lines. It's relaxing; he hasn't done it in a while, but it's a useful skill to have and he always enjoyed working with his dad on his craft projects. Emma starts talking about classes, and then it's like old times.

"Do you think Jess and Abby are having sex?" Emma asks.

"Maybe?" Bells shrugs. "She'd tell us. Or maybe not. It's up to her. You know she's weird about things."

"Did you know that when they were working together, Abby was pretending to be two different people?"

Bells laughs. "I remember that." It's hilarious now, thinking back on Jess talking to them at lunch, being super excited about "M" and getting to know her better, and at the same time also working with Abby and trying not to fall over herself.

"And Jess didn't figure it out until..."

"Well, she tends to miss very obvious things."



CB: *While funny, this scene dragged when we really wanted to get to the action. Also, my editor, Annie, pointed out that showing Bells succeeding in doing his final shift here made would have lessened the impact of the Big Moment, and I agreed. It's still a lot of fun, though, and I loved showing them have a bit of mischief.*

THEY GO BACK TO TRAINING Bells' powers. It's not working out well, though. No matter how he tries, Bells can't make himself invulnerable again.

"Maybe you can only do it if you think you're in danger," Abby muses.

"Hah, how are you going to do that, randomly attack me?" Bells laughs. "This isn't going to work."

"No," Abby says, but a quirk of a smile makes him suspicious.

He's helping his parents, Christine, and Chloe with the corn in Cavern Two when Jess, wearing a mask, jumps out of nowhere, waving her arms and legs erratically.

Bells starts laughing. "Who are you supposed to be? The killer from season one of the *Gentleman Detective*?"

"No?" Jess pulls off the mask and sticks her tongue out at him. "But you *were* surprised! Did you shift?"

Bells shakes his head. "I knew it was you!"

The next is Emma, who drops from the scaffolding and tackles him. Bells immediately drops into a defensive position; they roll on the ground, and Bells freezes when he realizes it's Emma.

"Did you shift?" Emma asks.

"No." Hoping he's not blushing, Bells rolls off her.

"Hmm, there has to be something we can do. I mean, Abby says you have to think you're in danger, but so far I can only think of surprising you..."

"What about something that seems dangerous, but we can catch you in case you fall?" Brendan asks.

So Bells finds himself putting on a contraption that Jess is calling a harness. "Chloe has a bunch of this stuff so she can access and do maintenance on the cliff-side solar panels," she says. "Isn't that cool?"

"Cool as in absolutely terrifying. Why would anyone do that?" Bells asks, trying to imagine a person dangling at the cliff face.

"Okay, and this part goes over your hips—"

"People do this for fun?" Bells asks, horrified, and follows along with Jess as she shows him how to tighten the straps.

Jess shrugs. "Yeah. And it's good exercise."

"You hate exercise."

"I know, but this is like, different! It's fun. I mean, I didn't really think of it before but after that day in the desert when I was trying to find water, I mean, I was scared to death, but it was pretty cool. I ended up liking it."

Bells eyes the wall, where a combination of small- and medium-sized holds have been screwed in. At the top is a large bar built into the cavern ceiling. A bright yellow rope hangs from it, all the way down the length of the wall to the ground. Jess picks up one end and ties an intricate-looking knot—

“It’s an eight,” Jess says, and Bells supposes it does look like the number eight. Jess nimbly loops the end of the rope through his harness loop and then back through the eight, tightening it.

“This is gonna hold me up?”

“Trust me, this can hold up ten times your weight.” Jess grins with confidence, and she’s got another device that she’s feeding through her own harness. She pulls the rope through and holds it steady. “All right, I’ve got you. All you have to do is climb up.”

“Jess, you know I’m afraid of heights.”

Jess nods. “That’s why Emma and I thought this would be perfect to help you use your powers! You’ll be safe the entire time, I promise.”

Bells takes a deep breath. “Look, I trust you, and I know you’ve got me, but heights and I do not mix well at all.”

Emma, Abby, and Christine are sitting behind them. Abby has her pencil and notepad ready to go, and Christine gives him a thumbs up. Emma has a sign, of all things. It reads, “YOU CAN DO IT, BELLS!”

“I understand if you don’t want to do it,” Jess says. “We can do something else.”

Bells takes a deep breath. “It’s not that far up,” he says, looking up at the wall. It goes up fifteen, twenty feet? “I’ll give it a shot. But you’ll get me down if it gets too intense, right?”

“Of course.”

Bells faces the wall. “Okay, I’m ready; do I need to do anything?”

“You’re good to go,” Jess says.

Bells reaches for the first hold and pulls himself up. It’s easy enough, like climbing a ladder. All the holds are evenly spaced, and he can pretend that his pulse isn’t skyrocketing and that the floor isn’t getting farther and farther away.

The rope rises steadily with him as he climbs, and Bells glances down to see Jess nod firmly. She's holding the rope, keeping it taut in a tight belay.

This is no taller than the tallest tree he had to climb when he was doing hero-work, rescuing cats. *This is fine.*

It is not fine. Jess and the ground *are* far away, and he wavers, gets dizzy, and slips off the last hold.

He prepares for the fall, but it doesn't come. He feels a sharp jolt and he's hanging in the air in a seated position, legs dangling. Bells yells and grabs the wall, but he still sways, too far off. "Let me down let me down!" he shrieks, any thought for his dignity far, far away.

"All right, here we go," Jess says, but nothing happens.

Bells closes his eyes and waits for the magical rope system to do its thing, but he's not going anywhere. He's holding on to the wall for dear life—

"Bells, you've got to let go if you want to come down—wait—"

Bells lets go of his clutch and then falls backward. For a terrifying moment, he falls toward the ground, and his stomach hits the floor long before he does. He panics, thinking of something unbreakable, willing his body from soft flesh to something else.

The fall lasts only a foot before the rope catches. People are shouting at him; someone is letting out a high-pitched shriek. It takes a moment for Bells to realize what's happening, how heavy he feels, how he's dragging the rope down and hitting the floor with a heavy clang. He's fine, though, he's all rock solid again.

He feels different, as though his thoughts are slower, as if he's thinking through a thick layer of mud.

"Bells, you did it!"

"What?" The word is thick as molasses on his tongue.

“That was great!” Emma rushes to his side and bounces up and down. She strokes the side of his arm. “Wow, you’re like a living rock.”

“A heavy rock,” Jess says from above him.

Above?

Jess is dangling in the air, halfway up the wall. “A little help here?”

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THESE deleted and extended scenes from *Not Your Villain*. For more information about the book and other extras, you can visit me at cb-lee.com or find me on Twitter at [@author_cblee](https://twitter.com/author_cblee) and on Instagram at [cblee_cblee](https://www.instagram.com/cblee_cblee).



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C.B. Lee is a bisexual writer based in California. She is a first-generation Asian American and holds a BA in sociology and environmental science, which occasionally comes in handy in her chosen career, but not usually. Lee enjoys reading, hiking, rock climbing and other outdoor pursuits.

Not Your Sidekick was named a finalist for the 2017 Lambda Literary Awards and 2017 Bisexual Book of the Year Awards. Her first novel, *Seven Tears at High Tide*, was a finalist for two Bisexual Book of the Year Awards and won a 2016 Rainbow Award for Best Bisexual Romance. Lee is a Lambda Literary Emerging LGBTQ Voices Fellow.

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"The heroic story we need right now."

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BEING A SHAPESHIFTER IS AWESOME.

BELLS BROUSSARD THOUGHT HE HAD IT MADE WHEN HIS SUPERPOWERS MANIFESTED EARLY. BEING A SHAPESHIFTER IS AWESOME. HE CAN CHANGE HIS HAIR WHENEVER HE WANTS AND, IF PUTTING ON A BINDER FOR THE DAY IS TOO MUCH, HE'S GOT IT COVERED. BUT THAT WAS BEFORE HE BECAME THE COUNTRY'S MOST WANTED VILLAIN.

AFTER DISCOVERING A MASSIVE COVER-UP BY THE HEROES' LEAGUE OF HEROES, BELLS AND HIS FRIENDS JESS, EMMA, AND ABBY SET OFF ON A SECRET MISSION TO FIND THE RESISTANCE. MEANWHILE, POWER-HUNGRY FORMER HERO CAPTAIN ORION IS ON THE LOOSE WITH A DANGEROUS SERUM THAT RENDERS META-HUMANS POWERLESS, AND A NEW MILITARIZED ROBOTIC THREAT EMERGES.

SOMETIMES, TO DO A HERO'S JOB, YOU NEED TO BE A VILLAIN.

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NOT YOUR SIDEKICK (2016) WAS NAMED A FINALIST FOR BOTH THE LAMBDA LITERARY AWARDS AND THE BISEXUAL BOOK AWARDS. LEE'S FIRST NOVEL, SEVEN TEARS AT HIGH TIDE (2015), WAS ALSO A BISEXUAL BOOK AWARDS FINALIST. SHE IS A LAMBDA LITERARY EMERGING LGBTQ VOICES FELLOW.


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