

Afflicted by DG Davis {Rated: PG}

Synopsis: Logan comes down with the Mutant Flu. Not only does it eliminate his ability to heal, it could kill him!

{Any names, locations or businesses are either products of imagination or used fictitiously and any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental. All copy-righted characters belong to Marvel/20CenturyFox. Features original character Dr. Susan Harris whom Logan is romantically involved with and who is carrying his twins by him.}

The mutant virus, isolated and classified by Henry McCoy and Miora McTaggart as H1N2M1 and now called the Mutant Flu, was still plaguing mutant populations. Magneto and his Brotherhood had been hard hit. They'd been keeping a low profile since Alkali Lake, but took the risk of contacting Charles for assistance. Charles asked his medical staff for volunteers to collect specimens from the Brotherhood and Dr. Susan Harris agreed to go at once.

When Logan heard the news at the end of a gym session with the students, he raced straight from the gym to his wife's office. He arrived as she finished packing a bag of sampling equipment and general medical supplies to take along.

He stopped at the doorway, his eyes blazing with anger. "I'm only going to say this once; I do *not* want you to go."

Susan closed her eyes, tilted her head back and sighed as she struggled for just the right reply. The only *right* answer was to agree with him, however she wasn't going to. She did agree with his concerns, but the research had to be done. She had to have the blood samples from Magneto's Brotherhood. Crossing her arms over her bulging stomach, she turned to face him. "Honey, I'm going to be fine. Hank and I are going. Lensherr is not going to pull anything."

Logan snorted. "You can't trust him."

"I never said I did, but I have a job to do and you have to understand. Do I give you grief when you go on a mission? We have got to get this virus figured out for the sake of all mutants and studying blood from victims is one of the best ways. Come on, we've been through this before when you filled me in on our neighbor. I understand what they're capable of, but they need care too."

He just swore and glared at her.

"Logan, what's the deal?"

His voice rose in volume as he paced. "For God's sake, Susan, what do you think? Magneto's the....enemy. Hell, he's out to get me as much as I'm out to get him." He paused, drew a breath and then lowered his voice. "The deal is.... I'm scared he'll connect us... or even connect you and.... Damn it, Sue, you've got the knowledge that he wants."

"Oh, Babe" she went to him and put her arms around his waist. "I'm not going for social hour. I'm going to get the samples and come straight back."

Logan stepped back from her embrace and ran his hands over her pregnant belly. The anger was gone from his expression and worry replaced it. "I still don't want you to go. Hank and Electra are perfectly capable. Besides, you're not even supposed to be doing that much."

"Honey, I'm fine today and I'll be careful." She locked her hands with his, both of them caressing the twins in her belly.

"You're not listening to me are you?" His anger flared again.

"Yes, I am." She stood on tip toes and kissed him gently. "I'll see you soon." She grabbed her gear, slipped past him and exited the room.

He was left there, his anger, frustration and fears boiling. The thought of her or the twins being in any kind of danger made him crazy and he needed to find a way to work it out or he was going to hurt something or someone. Stalking over the elevator he punched the down button. A session in the Danger Room might cool him off. There, he programmed a track-and-destroy sequence with a holographic Magneto and Mystique. As he got into it,

something seemed wrong. His senses seemed “off” and he couldn’t get a fix on his holographic prey. *This ain’t right*, he thought, *get a grip, bub, you’re lettin’ her get to ya.*

As the session continued, the enemy nearly got the jump on him. At the last possible second, he managed to overtake them. Ejecting claws with a bellow and skewering the holographic images, letting the berserker in him reign free: slashing and gutting and mutilating. He didn’t know how much time had passed before the rage had burned out enough to stop. When it did, he became immediately aware of a significant amount of blood splattered everywhere. *What the hell’s going on?* The blood had come from his knuckles. He retracted his claws and, to his shock, they didn’t heal! He wasn’t sure what was happening or what to do, so he thought he’d better get to the med lab and wondered if Susan had returned. Leaving a trail of blood as he went, it struck him that no qualified medical professional was at school at the moment; even Electra, while on the grounds somewhere, wasn’t quickly available. *What if an emergency came up? Hell, I’m havin’an emergency! Ok, here’s a valid staff meeting topic: a qualified medical professional to be immediately available at all times.* Was he ever going to make sure that was on the agenda at the next staff meeting.

He raised his hands and watched the blood trickle down his arm. The wounds gaped and he could see the glint of his metallic knuckle joints and did it ever hurt. *What the----?* Then it dawned on him. *Holy crap, the virus! I’ve got it!* It nullified his healing power. That must have been why he was so “off” in the tracking simulation. Panicking was not going to be helpful, but he felt the urge to do so. *Nothin’ to do, but wait.* He rummaged through a cabinet, looking for something to wrap around his hands and then went to Susan’s office.

It wasn’t long until she and Hank returned perfectly safe with the specimen’s. They must have run into Electra on the way back to the clinic, because they were chatting up a storm as they approached, but froze the moment they saw him, covered in drying blood with his hands poorly wrapped in gauze. “Oh, my God!” Susan said, emphasizing each word. “What happened?”

As Logan just shrugged, Hank answered, “I do believe we have another case of the virus. I’d thought that maybe he’d be immune”. He’d had been affected, having temporarily reverted back to a more human form, and had just recently recovered.

Logan told them what happened, then asked, “What am I gonna do?”

Sue unwrapped the blood soaked gauze from his knuckles. “This is lovely,” she said with mild sarcasm. “Electra, please get some lidocaine and a few suture kits.”

“What are you going to do?” Logan asked.

“Stitch you up.” She motioned him over the closest exam room. “Come here. Sit down; both hands on the table,” she ordered, putting on her lab coat. “Hank, your choice to stick around or not.”

“I’m sure Logan is in capable hands. I’ll make myself useful elsewhere.”

“You’re going to stitch this?” Logan asked his wife, looking wary.

“Well, yeah! Do you have a better suggestion?”

“Bandages would be just fine.”

“Logan, these go down to the bone. You’ve got the virus and since it lasts about a week, so you’re probably not going to do too much healing on your own,” she explained as she inspected the affected areas.

Electra brought the lidocaine syringes and suture kits.

“Umm, ladies.... this isn’t by any chance... painful?” he asked, wide-eyed.

“Like a bee sting, miho,” Electra answered.

“You’re not going to pass out on me, are you?” Susan joked, remembering how he reacted when she’d extracted the glass from his neck after the motor cycle wreck. Poor guy went white as a sheet and... well anyway.

“No. I’m not going to pass out on you” he answered sarcastically. As Electra injected the area around the wounds with the lidocaine, he added, “but, I think I might not watch,” and closed his eyes. “Ouch, that stings!” he groused after the first injection. “Damn, quit already!” he complained at the second.

“Logan...” Electra said “...shut-up!”

Susan snickered.

“Well thank you for your support, my dear.”

“Hon, this is the worst part. We’ve got to numb each knuckle, so the sutures won’t hurt.”

“Yeah, I know the theory. Just get it over with.” It took about four stitches in each knuckle to close the wounds. Electra worked on one hand and Sue, the other. They bandaged him and told him he could open his eyes. Staring at the bandages, he complained, “Oh, man. How am I going to be able to do anything?”

“You’re not!” both women replied in unison.

“You’ve got a week sick leave, my dear. That’s about how long the virus lasts.” Susan’s eyes twinkled and she added, “I think I’m inclined to put you in a padded room. Seriously, Logan you need to keep your hands as still as possible or you’ll risk ripping the sutures.”

“That just great, Susan! How am I supposed to coach? How am I supposed to work on my class assignments? Typing and writing take just a bit of finger work, ya know. I probably can’t even drive!”

“We’ll deal with it, ok?” she promised and gathered some antibiotic samples from a nearby cabinet.

Electra asked, “Susan, do you think he should have a Tetanus shot?”

She thought for a second. “Yes, I do.” Then speaking to him, said, “With this virus I’m not certain how your immune system will be affected, so let’s not risk Tetanus.”

Electra came in, swabbed his arm with alcohol and jabbed in the needle.

He winced. “Ow! That really hurts!”

“I’m sorry. Tetanus shots aren’t much fun.”

“No kidding. Susan, can we go home now?” he whined.

“Soon, Babe. I’ve got some things to finish up first.”

“Oh, forget about it, Sue,” Electra said. “I’ll handle it.”

“Are you sure? Thanks, so much. I *am* tired.” Susan smiled at her friend and, feeling the babies flutter, unconsciously patted her belly.

That evening, at home, she and Logan were relaxing in front of the TV, her legs propped over his lap while he studied for an exam. He asked, “Do you think its cold in here?”

“No, not really. Do you?”

“No. I’m just makin’ conversation,” he replied sarcastically.

“Ok cranky, you want the blanket?” She reached across the couch for the plaid throw.

He brushed it harshly away.

“Suit yourself. What’s with you tonight? You’ve been in a crappy mood all evening.”

“You want the long or short list?” he answered tersely. “My hands hurt, I’ve got a boat-load of studying to do and I’m just a little freaked out about this virus thing....” Suddenly he was hit by a fit of dry, deep in the chest coughing. “Now what’s up with this?” he said, standing up, shoulders hunched, crossing his arms over his chest, obviously still feeling chilled.

“I’d say you’re stressing just a bit, Bright Eyes.” She stood and hugged him. “Hey, you feel warm.” She reached up to touch his forehead. “I think you’ve got fever.”

“Bull! I don’t get sick,” he answered and coughed again.

“Well, maybe you do with this virus.”

A look of extreme concern clouded her face, an expression that didn’t make him feel secure. “What?” he asked.

“Nothing.”

“Nah-ah! What are you thinking?” He was insistent.

“Just that nullifying your powers and immune system might leave you susceptible to all kinds of nasty bugs.”

“I really don’t need this right now.” He sounded frustrated. He went to the bedroom, dug out a sweatshirt, pulled it on then went back to studying even though the coughing kept distracting them both.

“Do you want something for that cough?” she asked quietly.

“No.”

His coughing was driving her crazy. "Oh, for heaven's sake, Logan, do something!"

"Like what?" he responded tensely.

"How about I fix you a toddy?"

"You'd do that?"

"Anything to quiet that cough," she said, going to the liquor cabinet. "I'd have one myself, except it's too strong for the babies."

He sipped on the warm drink she made. It did quiet the cough and warm him up. "I'm going to bed," he said, after about another hour.

"I'm right behind you," she yawned. "Gotta feed the cats and set up the coffee maker."

Logan coughed most of the night. When he wasn't coughing, he tossed and turned, alternating between feeling cold or too hot. Around three in the morning he woke up, his throat so sore he could barely swallow or speak. His whole body ached and he shivered. "Susan?" he whispered in the darkness. She didn't answer. "Susan!" He nudged her.

"HmMMM?"

He coughed again. "I think I *am* sick."

She sat up, stretched and touched his hot forehead. "I'd say so." She got out of bed and retrieved a thermometer from the bathroom closet.

"My throat and stomach hurts," he whined as she put the thermometer in his mouth.

"Sounds a lot like strep or maybe the flu."

His eyes grew wide. "What am I gonna do?"

"Don't talk," she ordered. A few minutes later she slipped the thermometer from between his lips. "102.4. Yeah, I'd say you're sick."

He groaned and coughed again. "That hurts." He rubbed his bandaged hand over his chest. Every time he coughed his chest ached and burned. "What am I gonna do?" he repeated.

"You're going to do what everyone else does. Rest, fluids, Motrin."

"I've got two finals tomorrow."

"Oh, that's right. Well, I can probably dose you up enough to get you through," she assured him. "Let me get you something for your fever."

"I'll get it," he said, getting out of bed. "Gotta piss anyway."

She rolled her eyes. Sometimes he was just a little too expressive. She heard the toilet flush and when he didn't come out after a minute, she called to him, "You ok?"

"My stomach hurts," he mumbled from behind the door. He coughed hard, gagged and then threw up. That was followed by a string of expletives, after which he emerged, shivering and looking pale. "Just shoot me now," he said before swallowing four Motrins chased by water. The Motrin gave him a few good hours of sleep, in turn allowing her a few hours very much needed sleep. A bad night for her equaled a lot of morning sickness the next day.

In the morning, Susan switched off her alarm clock just before it buzzed, so not to disturb Logan. He was sound asleep and didn't even twitch when she slid quietly out of bed. That was unheard of for him. He always knew what was up, even if he pretended not to. She retrieved the morning paper from the driveway as was her next door neighbor, Creed. She asked him if he knew anyone stricken with the Mutant Flu. He told her he'd heard from some former Brotherhood comrades who'd been stricken, but that was old news to her. He inquired about how the school was holding out and she shared that they'd gone through the worst of it and were dealing mostly with the more seasonal type of germs.

"Did the Runt miss out on the virus?"

"Victor, I wish you'd quit calling him that!" she admonished. It didn't bother her that much, but she knew it irritated Logan to no end. "No, he didn't. He came down with it yesterday."

"I'm sorry." He sympathized over Logan's misfortune and sort of apologized for his tease. "I've lucked out, so far," he added.

"That's good." Susan replied. "Aren't your mutations similar to Logan's?"

"Yeah, but not nearly as fast healing."

She nodded and then bid him a nice day. It was cold standing there in the driveway, even if her terry robe was thick.

Later she met Electra at their usual spot for their twice weekly morning walk. It used to be a run, but pregnancy had put a restriction on that. Since she had blood pressure problems and early contractions, even her walk had been reduced to a mere stroll and half the distance, at that. She told Electra about Logan's misery. The two women debated and lamented over how grown men were such babies when sick, which led to the inevitable comparisons of men having to deal with cramps or, heaven forbid, the pain of childbirth. After laughing their heads off, Electra did sympathize that the whole deal for him had to be difficult at best. Logan didn't *do* sick and Susan concurred. They discussed their concerns over the lack of support from the CDC. It wasn't unexpected, but it was disappointing. Government agencies were shying away from any issues that involved mutants because laws were changing, but implementation was, as yet, unclear. They discussed Hank's difficulty with isolating a vaccine and then ended their walk with Susan asking Electra to corner Logan and strep and flu swab him, if Hank didn't get the chance. Susan explained she was going to be out, even though it was her scheduled day at School. Once a week, until her obstetrician decided otherwise, she had to go for an hour long monitoring session to confirm that she was not having contractions and the twins heart rates were doing okay. At least she'd graduated from wearing the portable monitor twenty four/seven. A bit after seven, Susan brought Logan some hot tea with honey. "Logan? Wake up, hon." She gently shook him.

He groaned and coughed. "Don't want to," he whimpered. He stretched and popped his joints and coughed some more. He sat up ever so slowly, took a sip of the tea, wincing as he swallowed. It tasted good, but hurt going down his raw throat. Mug in hand, he trudged over to the bathroom sink, stood there for a while debating whether he had the energy to shower. He didn't and he didn't even care, so brushing his teeth was going to have to be ok for today.

"I've got something to get you through your exams this morning," Susan said handing him the electronic toothbrush handle.

He grunted approval. While he brushed his teeth, she pulled two vials from the small fridge she kept in the lounge area of their bedroom and filled a syringe with a few cc's from each vial.

He eyed the syringe suspiciously. "What's that?" His voice was gravelly from the cough and sore throat.

"B-12 and dexamethasone. Where do you want it? Backside or arm?"

"And this is going to do what?"

"Make you feel ok enough to survive your exams."

"Ok," he sighed and held out his arm, then grimaced when she injected him.

"Take four more Motrins, now and again at noon and you'll be functional for most of the day," she instructed, then reached up and felt the side of his neck. "Open your mouth and let me see your throat."

"No. Why?" He just wanted to be left alone in misery.

"You've got some swollen glands going on, now open up." He scowled and did as told. Then she pointed to the edge of the bath tub "Sit." He was too tall for her to get a good look.

He tried to back away and gagged when she used a tongue depressor. "Quit already!" he complained. "You tryin' to make me puke?"

"Oh, you're ok. When you're through with your exams, I want you to come by the clinic and let Electra strep you."

"Do what?"

"It doesn't hurt; I promise."

“That’s what they all say. Look Sue, all I wanna do is get through this morning, come back home and sleep.”

“I know. I just want to be certain what were dealing with.”

“What difference does it make? I’m sick.”

“It makes a lot of difference. Besides I want to recheck the stitches, too.”

“Fine! Whatever.” His frustration was evident and he just wanted to be left alone. He threw on some jeans and a hoodie sweat shirt. He looked like a bum, but didn’t care. “Gotta go,” he said gruffly.

“Aren’t you going to eat?”

“Not hungry,” he answered. “I’ll stop at ‘bucks’ and grab a coffee and something.” He meant Starbucks on the way to the campus.

“Ok. See you later. Good luck, Bright Eyes. Love you!” she hollered as he made his way through the house.

“Thanks. Love you too, darlin’,” he yelled back and promptly had a coughing fit.

Logan pulled into the parking lot at Westchester Community College. Marie, in her Mustang pulled in right beside him. Marie took a look at an obviously unshowered and generally very scruffy Logan and exclaimed. “Pulled an all-nighter, huh?” referring to the possibility that he had studied all night.

“Nah, kid. I’m sick.” he answered with a cough and a grimace.

“Logan, ya don’t git sick.”

“I’ve got that freakin’ virus. You know....”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah. It’s got my immune system screwed up and Sue thinks I got the flu now because of it.”

“That sucks,” she said

“Big time,” he agreed. “Ready for the test?”

“No. I’m never ready for tests. They just freak me out. How ‘bout ya?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be, I guess. I never did real well in my previous life.”

“Are ya startin’ ta remember some?”

“Yeah, a few things every now and then. Kinda of comes to me when I’m not expecting it. I’ll do something or see something and I’ll remember. It’s weird.” He held the door open for her. “Let’s do it,” he said and found a seat.

“Yep. Good luck,” she said.

He winked and smiled at her. The meds that Susan gave him helped. He didn’t feel exactly himself, but the body aches, sore throat and stomach ache seemed tolerable. He wished he’d taken some of the cough medicine she’d offered, but he could sip coffee during the exam and that helped a little. He finished up the psychology exam in about an hour. It was an essay exam and, not long into it, his hands ached and burned from the stress he put on the knuckle wounds. He had absolutely no idea how he did. Because he was mildly dyslexic, writing was a challenge. Thank heavens for spell and grammar check when it came to typing essays. Unfortunately for the exam there was no computer and he had to write the answers out in longhand. The second exam he took focused on coaching techniques and theory for high school level sports, which was more to his liking, and he felt confident. He hoped he’d aced it, but remembered feeling like he’d aced a test before and had not.

Finally through with exams, he made his way back to Xavier’s School and, remembering his promise to Susan to get checked over, went directly to the clinic. The clinic was packed, overflowing into the hallway with sick kids. Waning were last cases of the Mutant Flu and on the rise was Influenza and a nasty stomach bug. He didn’t really want to be there, because kids puking into any receptacle available turned his stomach. It would be totally uncool for the Great Wolverine to lose it in front of them and he was just barely hanging on. That reasoning, plus the long wait, was his excuse out of it. Besides, hadn’t Susan told him to try and keep away from obviously sick people?

Instead he went to his office. There was an e-mail from Charles stating classes were to be suspended for a few days due to the rapidly spreading illnesses among the students and staff. That was a great relief, since he still had one more exam and didn’t have a clue how long he was going to feel so lousy.

Lunch time came around and, out of habit, he headed to the dining room. He wasn’t really hungry, but, again

out of habit, ordered up a burger and a pile of fries, but when Mrs. Burns set it down in front of him, he suddenly felt queasy and his pallor faded.

Dear old Mrs. Burns sized up the situation and figured out he wasn't quite himself. "Don't panic Laddie, everybody's sick around here." she assured. "Let me bring you some chicken soup." The portly woman removed the burger plate and hurried back with soup. It was much easier to cope with and Logan managed about half a bowl.

Later he checked out the line at the clinic and found it much smaller. Hank spotted him waiting and motioned him directly in. "Your bride clued me in," Hank shared as he settled Logan into an examining room. "Said to strep and swab you."

"Yeah, whatever Beast. I'll spear your guts if this hurts," he joked.

"You know, Wolverine, there's a tradition among medical professionals."

"What's that?"

"The more obnoxious the patient the more invasive the testing we order."

"What the heck does that mean?"

"Don't threaten or I'll get out my protoscope!"

He knew what Hank was talking about and raised his arms in mock surrender. "Yes sir; I *definitely* retract it."

"Good man. Now open up and stick out your tongue," he ordered. Before Logan knew what was coming, Hank swabbed his throat and sinuses. Logan coughed, sneezed and looked extremely irritated in the aftermath.

"What have you been feeling?" Hank asked.

"Like pooh."

"I'm aware of that. Symptoms Logan, tell me about them."

"Throat hurts, stomach hurts, puked last night. Sue told me my temp was 102 or something." He coughed again. "And this damn cough."

"Any diarrhea?" Hank asked nonchalantly

Logan looked at him in utter disbelief and disgust and replied firmly, "No."

"Headache?"

"Hurts, but nothing like a couple of weeks ago."

"You know Logan, you're becoming one of my high-maintenance, frequent-flyer patients."

"Not by choice."

"I believe you. Ok, you've got the Mutant Flu, that's confirmed from your labs yesterday. With your powers being what they are, which is basically off-line, you're probably going to come down with everything and anything."

"Ya got any good news, Hank?"

Hank didn't answer as he read the strep and flu tests. "Not today, my friend. You have strep throat *and* Influenza Type-A."

"I'm just a lucky guy. So, now what?"

"Logan, this could become very serious. I want you to go home, get in bed and stay there until the virus runs its course and your powers return."

"Come on, Hank! I've got another exam. I've got a life."

"Let me tell you, it can get worse. You've got zero immunity," he re-emphasized. "Let me see the knuckles." He grabbed Logan's hand and carefully pulled off the bandages. The wounds were an angry red and pus oozed from a few stitches.

"Do these hurt?"

Logan nodded.

"You're showing signs of infection."

"Ok. Come on, I've been through worse."

"I'm sure. Listen to me, for the duration of this virus you are at its mercy. There isn't a bloody thing I can do for you until it runs its course. With your immunity and healing gone, you are basically a walking incubator for any

disease that comes along.”

“What are ya saying, Hank?”

Hank sighed in exasperation. “Don’t be obtuse! If you have a death wish you might just get it. I have no idea whether you’ll respond to antibiotics. Strep used to kill people less than a century ago. Flu killed millions in 1918, 1957 and 1968 and the infection in your knuckles could become septic. Do you understand?”

“Septic?”

“Ever here of the old fashioned term blood poisoning?”

“Yeah, more Normals die from it than survive.”

“That’s correct. You’ve got the idea. Now get another idea right now---you’re a *Normal!*” Hank’s voice rose as he spoke. He paused to stare Logan directly in the face. “Need I elaborate more?”

Logan looked away, first irritated and then looked back at Hank with resignation. “No. You proved your point. You know, I never had these problems when I was travelin’ around. It’s seems like in the last year or so... Heck, it doesn’t matter.”

“Logan, go home and just take it easy. Watch TV, read a book, sleep. It only lasts five to seven days.”

“It’s not the virus I’m worried about. It’s the other junk that I might get.”

“That’s why I said *GO HOME.*”

“Roger that, Beast.”

“And here,” Hank handed over penicillin and an anti-viral for Type-A Flu. “Take the Pen-VK three times a day until they’re done and Symmetrel twice daily.”

He looked over the bottles carefully and asked. “What’ll these do?”

“Honestly Logan, I’m not certain in your case, but it’s not going to cause harm.”

Logan shrugged and walked away, but, being stubborn, he didn’t go straight home. Instead he went back to his office to gather up some things. If he had to be stuck at home, at least he could use the time to work on plans for the training camp. As he down-loaded files he started to feel bad. The chills returned, his head pounded, the muscles in his neck and shoulders were aching and stiff and his stomach churned. Scott came by to remind him of a staff meeting, but took one look at his glassy eyed, fever-flushed team mate and he immediately excused him from the staff meeting. He made it back home in one piece, but not without having to pull over and be unpleasantly reintroduced to his lunch. When he pulled into the driveway, the urge to be sick again overwhelmed him and he dashed out of his truck, barely making it to the bathroom. When he could finally get it together, he went in search of the anti-nausea medicine Susan kept around, but couldn’t find it, so he called her on the phone.

“It’s the bottle labeled promethazine,” she informed him. “What did Hank say?”

“Why in the hell does it say prometh-whatever-?” Logan was irritated at his own ignorance and just didn’t have tolerance for complications.

“That’s what it’s called. What did Hank say?”

“Strep and the flu,” he answered in monotone.

“And?”

“And what?”

“Logan, what are you supposed to do? Do I have to call Hank?”

“No you don’t have to call Hank,” he snipped. “He gave me some pills and told me to stay home.” He coughed and started to feel nauseated again. “Sue, I gotta go. When ya comin’ home?”

“Probably in an hour or two. You going to be ok?”

“Yeah,” he answered and then clicked off the phone. No, he wasn’t sure he was going to be ok, but hell if he was gonna admit it. How in the hell did anyone deal with being sick? He was stretched out on the couch snoozing when she got home that evening. His normally acute senses were completely off line and he didn’t even twitch as she came in the door. He looked comfortable and peaceful, so she didn’t disturb him.

She changed clothes and set about making some chicken soup out of a can. The lights from the kitchen woke him up. He sat up, looking lost and dazed.

“Didn’t mean to bother you, Bright eyes” she said, standing by the stove. “Can I get you anything?”
“Nah,” he answered groggily and got up and went to the fridge. “I’m thirsty,” he said, staring into the fridge. Nothing appealed.

“I’ll make you some tea if you want?” she volunteered.

He nodded, coughed and sat down at the kitchen table. “How was your day?”

“Not as rough as yours, I think. How’re you feeling?”

“I’ll live, I guess.” His voice was rough and deeper than normal. “I’ll tell ya though, I’m developing a whole new outlook on my mutation.”

“What do you mean?”

“There were so many times I wished I never had it and now I *wanna* get over this thing and *get* my powers back.” He coughed hard, making him momentarily breathless. “This sucks,” he whined when he finally could breathe again.

Susan smiled and nodded. “The flu is really bad this season. Paula told me Westchester General saw one hundred and fifty cases in the last twenty four hours and School’s got more than its share,” she said, placing two bowls of steaming soup on the table. They ate in silence. She was bone-weary from a poor nights sleep and too long of a day.

Logan noticed her fatigued appearance and commented. “You’re lookin’ tired yourself, darlin’. Not over doin’ it, eh?”

She shook her head, but it was a fib.

He sensed it, but the most he could muster to help her out was to clear their soup bowls and set them in the sink. That would have to do for this evening. “I’ve got to try and study” he said wearily and settled back on the couch.

“When’s the exam?” she asked, as she settled in on the other side of the couch to read professional journals.

“Tomorrow at eleven thirty. Do you think you can dose me with the stuff you gave me this morning?”

“Sure, provided you promise not to do anything until then.”

“No problem.” He patted the couch, “I’m stayin’ right here.”

It wasn’t long before he fell asleep right there. She decided it best not to disturb him and put an extra blanket over him, then settled in for the night alone in their room. Her motives were not completely innocent. She desperately needed a good nights sleep and, since he seemed comfy on the couch, his coughing, tossing and turning wouldn’t keep her awake.

However, when his medication began to wear off a few hours later, he woke shivering and achy from a climbing fever and his stomach was threatening to erupt. There was a new symptom in the mix as well. He was itching all over. “Does this never freakin’ end!” he said aloud and turned on the lamp beside him. Angry red, raised welts covered his arms. He lifted his t-shirt and his chest and belly were covered with them. He trudged to the bathroom to scout up more Motrin and whatever else he was supposed to take.

Susan awoke and mumbled, “Do you need me?”

“No. Just time for drugs.”

“Ok,” she said and snuggled deeper into the covers.

He took another dose of Penicillin, and more Motrin and then stripped off his jeans and t-shirt and crawled in next to her. He tried to drift off to sleep, but the itching kept him from it. He scratched and twitched enough that she sat up. In exasperation she asked, “What’s the matter with you?”

“I got all these red bumps all over and they itch like crazy,” he answered in a pitiful tone.

“What?” she exclaimed and turned on the light. “Let me see. Oh Lord! This looks like hives. Are you allergic to penicillin?”

“I got no clue! I’ve never taken the stuff.”

“Well you need to stop taking it!” She went to the well-stocked medicine cabinet and dug out Benadryl.

“I just took a dose. Is that a problem?” he asked.

"I hope not. Here take this."

"What is it?"

"Diphenhydramine. It's an anti-histamine."

"Could you translate that into something I can understand?"

"It stops allergic reactions."

"Will it stop this itching?" he said while continuing to scratch.

"That's what I just said, Logan." She sounded testy, though she didn't mean to.

"Darlin', I'm sorry to be such a pain in the neck."

"Don't be Bright Eyes." She softened. "This isn't your fault. I wish I had something in my medicine bag of tricks to really help."

"Thanks. Guess it can't get much worse."

"Gosh, I hope not! We'll have to change your antibiotic tomorrow. Now try to rest and *don't* scratch."

"Right!" he replied sarcastically. He settled back and closed his eyes. About ten minutes later he broke out in a cold sweat. "Aww, not again" he muttered and dashed for bathroom just in time for his stomach to rudely eject the medications he'd just taken *and* supper.

The next morning was even slower going for him than the previous. He'd finally slept, but badly, tossing, turning and coughing. Because he'd been unable to keep his medications down, he continued to itch from the hives and his fever remained high.

Susan stuck around instead of going for her usual morning swim and, around nine, brought some tea to the bedside. His appearance, fever flushed with dark circles under closed eyes, was disturbing. She gently touched his forehead. He felt like he was burning up with fever. "Logan, honey, time to get up."

He stirred, moaned and coughed. He cracked his eyes open, squinting at the sunlight streaming in. "Close the blinds," he rasped and shielded his eyes with his arm.

"Brought you some tea and honey."

He nodded and grunted.

"Let me check your temp." She tried to insert the thermometer between his resisting lips.

"Knock it off!" he growled, not wanting to be bothered.

"Hush!" she ordered. "Open up."

He did as told and sat up slowly, stiffly. "Whoa," he groaned. "Head rush."

It didn't take long for the thermometer to register 104.2. "Logan, you really shouldn't be going anywhere."

He waved her off and coughed. "Gotta take that exam."

"You know, you *could* post-pone it."

"Nah, I just wanna get it over with, come home and sleep."

"Well, I'm telling you my-dear-not-so-Bright-Eyes, you need to give it up."

"Just dose me up, doc."

She sighed and looked skyward. "This is *so* against my better judgment," and handed him four Tylenol. "Maybe this'll be easier on your stomach."

He took the pills, chased by tea and settled back. It took a while, but finally he felt a little better and sat up slowly. The head rush wasn't as bad, but every joint in his body ached and his neck and shoulders felt stiff. Just making his way to the kitchen seemed to drain his energy. She'd left toast and more tea and he sat heavily on the stool at the breakfast bar. Just looking at the food made him queasy, but he figured he'd better try to get some of it down. After half the tea and a few bites of toast, he forced himself to shower, hoping it might energize him. Besides, he needed to, though the shower didn't help. It just made him feel more exhausted.

He'd just finished dressing when another head rush forced him to lean against a wall and his stomach turned over. He cursed aloud and quickly made his way back to the bathroom. A few minutes later, bathed in cold sweat and shivering, it occurred to him that he hadn't kept anything down in the past twenty four hours and wondered if

things could get any worse. He managed to get through the exam in a fever-fog and figured he failed, big-time, though, by the time he got home, he was glad to close up the window blinds and bury his head under the pillows. He took some more Motrin, hoping for some relief from the head and neck ache. The headache was approaching levels like he'd experienced with the memory chips, but just in a different place. He was also incredibly thirsty and, with great effort, dragged himself to the kitchen for something to drink. His stomach was so upset, nothing appealed, but he settled on Sprite and took some more anti-emetic hoping to quell the nausea. Finally still shivering from spiking fever, he crawled back into bed and piled on the covers.

In about five minute's time, it became clear nothing was going to work and he barely made it to the bathroom before he vomited. He went back to bed and tried to sleep, but the urge to be sick overwhelmed him again. That pattern repeated itself a few more times before he gave up and just stayed by the toilet. Sitting on the tile floor beside the toilet shivering violently, he wrapped his arms around himself to try to stop shaking. His head still pounded and he barely had the energy to lean over for the next wave of though, nothing came up but stomach acid. He was still coughing like crazy and, between that and vomiting, his abdominal and chest muscles were really hurting, like being on the losing end of a boxing match. His fever was high enough to make him hallucinate and he ejected his claws in response to some threat his mind manufactured, but he was so out of it, all he could do was stare at the blood and infectious ooze running down his arms before he blacked out.

Later the ringing of the phone brought him around, but he was too weak to respond. The phone was Susan calling to check on him. When he didn't pick up, she tried not to worry. After all, he was not the most phone-friendly person in the world. Her day had been stressful. Flu, strep and a nasty stomach bug had the school in its grip and clearly it was going to be a long siege. Her back hurt and she was beyond tired from interrupted and worrisome sleep. She tried to cut out early, but things conspired against it. Traffic was horrendous, the line at the grocery store was special and she wasn't moving very fast or efficiently. When she pulled into the driveway, she noticed the door to his truck was still open and three thoughts crossed her mind: first, *'what an idiot, leaving the door to his new truck open'*; second, *'oh well, he's headed back out for something. I just pulled in at the wrong time'*; and last, *'something is very wrong!'*

Logan jolted back to reality at the sound of Susan's shriek when she found him slumped unconscious against the toilet. Blood was pooled where his hands rested on the floor. She quickly went and got her med-kit from the car. "Logan, Logan! Come on, Bright Eyes, wake up!" she urged, struggling to keep her panic down as she placed a blood pressure cuff on him and pumped it up. He appeared acutely ill, deathly gray-white, with bluish, dry, cracked lips and an odd rash on his arms--definitely different from the hives he'd had the night before.

He opened blackened and glassy eyes just a slit. "Hey," he said weakly.

"You're scaring me, Bright Eyes," she said as she noted his unusually low blood pressure and rapid pulse.

Logan held up a bloody hand. "I ripped 'em." The effort of speaking set off another wave of painful dry heaves and coughing.

"It's ok. I can fix that later," she said as she steadied him through his latest round of misery.

His respirations were shallow and rapid and he wheezed and grunted with each breath. Through her stethoscope, his breath sounded crackly and 'wet'. "Logan, what are you feeling?"

His head lolled back and forth.

"Logan, stay with me!" she commanded.

"The lights.... hurt my eyes...." he mumbled and tried to bring his arm up to cover his eyes, but was too weak. The lights weren't on. It was only the last rays before sunset streaming into the window of the westward facing bathroom.

"Logan look at me!" she commanded. She shone a pen light into his eyes. His pupils reacted slowly. "I want you to move your head up and down, like your nodding."

Logan tried in vain, wincing in pain with the effort. He heaved again and before he had the chance to lean over the toilet, blood spewed from his mouth fouling his clothing.

She helped him strip off his shirt and cleaned him up only to notice more rash on his chest and abdomen. *Dear*

God, she thought, he needs help fast! She debated calling 911 and going to a hospital, but quickly realized that the only option was the med-lab at the school. The problem was getting him there. Xavier's School didn't have an ambulance. She quickly located Logan's X-Team phone. Every team member carried one for missions and emergencies and this was a definite *emergency*. He'd showed her the various codes- just in case. She hit the X-Team's version of 911.

The communication system was monitored twenty four/seven and Logan had done his share. Charles was on tonight. *'Yes, Logan. What is it?'*

"It's me, Susan. I need help. Logan's critically ill." She was fighting to keep raw panic out her voice.

'Where are you?'

"Our house. Charles I need someone to help me get him to the med-lab, stat."

'Understood. Shall I have Kurt teleport?'

"No! Definitely not. I don't think Logan can handle it."

'I'll send Hank and Victor.'

"Charles, have someone bring along the emergency kit from the jet." The kit contained life sustaining necessities like a respirator, IV, a portable defibrillator and emergency meds, like epinephrine.

'Very well.'

Susan clicked off the phone and went back to his side. "I'm here Logan."

He opened his eyes and mumbled something she couldn't understand, then he coughed hard and deep, red sputum filled his mouth. "I can't...." he gasped and choked, "breathe."

She watched him struggle for breath, his chest retracting and nostrils flaring with the effort. She tried to sound comforting, "I know. Help's on the way. Hold on baby, please." She sat beside him and pulled him close, letting him lean on her. She wrapped his oozing, bleeding knuckles with some gauze she had grabbed from the closet. There was nothing else she could do for him until help arrived.

"Think...I'm dyin'," Logan wheezed.

"*No way!*" she answered forcefully. "Not on *my* watch you're not!" Her words were brave, but she had a small, but not unfounded fear that he *could* be right. "Just rest. Don't talk," she soothed.

More deep, rattling coughing erupted from him and blood oozed from his mouth and dribbled onto her blouse. She didn't care about the blouse, but the sound deeply worried her. What in the world was going on with him? She could make some very educated guesses and none of them were very good. "Ssssh," she soothed and stroked his head. *'Please get here'*, she thought, referring to Hank and Vic. It was only a few minutes before they arrived. Susan heard the doorbell and hoped they'd just come in, since Logan had fainted leaning against her. She heard the door open and called out, "I'm back here, in our room."

She extricated herself from him as Vic reached to steady him. Vic was a big man, as tall as Logan and, if Logan hadn't had the metal bones, Vic would have significantly outweighed him. Logan didn't have the strength to move, so Hank and Vic gently lifted him and hauled him to the SUV.

He tried unsuccessfully to hold back a coughing fit. "I'm sorry, man," he choked trying to swallow back blood and mucus. He grimaced from sharp pain radiating through his chest with each breath he struggled to take.

They loaded him into the back seat of the SUV and Susan and Hank sat on either side of him. Hank held an oxygen mask to his face while Susan kept a basin close by as he still vomited and coughed up blood. They raced back to the med-lab paying little attention the speed limits. They pulled Vic's SUV into an infrequently used driveway closest to the med-lab elevator. Electra was ready with a stretcher and Charles and Scott were standing by.

They rushed him to the med lab, taking note of his seriously ill countenance and that he was struggling more for each breath. His complexion appeared gray-blue and he was almost completely unresponsive to stimulus. Hank took rapid control of the situation. The first order was for pressurized oxygen. He took a listen to Logan's chest with a stethoscope, hearing no breath sounds came from his left lung. Collapsed lung? Good possibility. Getting an IV in place took a few tries. Logan had become dehydrated to the point of his veins collapsing. Hank ordered a

multitude of labs: a spinal tap, urine culture and chest X-ray. Susan and Electra set to work simultaneously performing the diagnostics as rapidly as possible. Hank did the spinal tap, as Logan was too heavy for the women to move into the position for the procedure. They all glanced at each other with worry at the 'muddiness' of his spinal fluid. Obtaining a urine culture proved to be difficult. Logan's kidney's seemed to be shutting down, which was a very bad sign and prompted more worried glances. The chest x-ray confirmed the collapsed lung and a tremendous amount of fluid in both lungs. A chest tube to drain the gunk in his lungs became the next order of business. An examination of Logan's knuckle wounds showed worsening infection.

"Staph?" Susan said aloud.

"At the very least." Hank answered. "I'm worried we've got multiple pathogens happening here."

"Electra, how fast can you spin me those cultures?" Hank snapped.

"Twenty minutes."

Hank nodded, but wished it could be faster. He was just about to infuse a broad spectrum antibiotic into Logan's IV, when Susan stopped him and told him about the hives from the night before. "We're going to have to risk it," he replied. "Augment with IV Diphenhydramine. I've got to start him on something to bring this infection under control. We can get more specific when we know *what* we're dealing with."

The labs came back. The spinal tap and blood work indicated Staphylococcus Aureus meningitis, which was rare and extremely deadly.

"Houston, we've got a problem," Hank sighed as he read the lab reports. "Susan, do we have Methicillin in our supplies?"

"No," she said flatly. "But I'll get it."

"How are you going to manage that little trick?"

"Hank, have you ever heard of don't ask-don't tell?"

"I understand," Hank said with a nod. "Sue, you need to make it fast."

Susan eyes glistened with fear. "No kidding."

Susan rounded up Kurt. She needed him to pop into the pharmacy at Westchester Memorial. On the way to the hospital, they stopped by an ATM machine, where she withdrew a thousand dollars. She wasn't planning on stealing the medicine, she would pay in cash or at least leave the money behind. She gave Kurt explicit directions on where he'd find the antibiotic and he smoked into the pharmacy, miraculously unseen, grabbed the needed drugs, left the cash and smoked back to her car parked in the underground garage. They sped back to the med lab.

With no way to fight infection, Logan was slowly shutting down. Blood gases indicated he wasn't getting enough oxygen and carbon dioxide levels were climbing with current respiratory support necessitating a switch to mechanical ventilation. His kidneys were failing and the med lab didn't have dialysis equipment. Another clandestine mission to 'rent' the needed equipment became necessary.

It took Herculean effort, but they managed to stabilize him, though keeping him that way required frequent fine tuning of medications and interventions. After that, there was nothing to be done but watch, wait and pray.

Susan took the first four hour shift at his side, first to closely monitor his condition and to provide a human presence during his critical illness. She wanted to counterbalance the sounds of the machines keeping Logan alive, the incessant beeping of the cardiac monitor, the whoosh-click-hiss of the ventilator, the periodic hum of the blood pressure monitors and the gurgles and bubbles of suction equipment, with her presence. She and Charles feared the ICU environment could trigger bad memories and unnecessary stress. So in addition to the round-the-clock watch they all shared, they also induced a coma to keep Logan as unaware and pain free as possible. There was one tiny silver lining to his loss of powers: medications that normally never helped, helped now.

She checked him over thoroughly, then sat by his side stoking his face and head. His skin felt dry and hot. He was deathly still, the only movement was the forced rise and fall of his chest from the ventilator. He looked pale and emaciated, his marvelous physique seeming to waste away as she sat there. There was dark blue-black bruising where various tubes invaded his body. Though she tended to him often, the stink of sickness permeated the entire room. She spoke to him tenderly and as upbeat as she could muster. "I'm here Bright Eyes. Things are looking

ok. You're doing a great job. Keep hanging tough." She moved closer and murmured in his ear. "I love you so much!" She didn't know if he heard or not, but wanted to believe she was having a positive effect. There really wasn't much else that could be done.

At the end of four hours, Hank came to give Susan a much needed break, even though she protested. "Come on Dr. Harris," he chided, "I don't *need* two patients on my hands. You've had precious little rest in the last twenty four hours."

She sighed deeply and nodded, even though she didn't make a move to leave Logan's side.

Hank came to her side and gently nudged her up. "I promise I'll call if anything changes."

"Ok," she answered reluctantly. "I'll be in his old room."

"Good girl." Hank gave her a reassuring peck on the cheek. "He's a tough bird, he's going to be alright."

And that's how things went for the next twenty hours. When Hank was through with his shift, Electra came on, then Charles and finally back to Susan. No one slept much as there were many things to do with providing the intensive care Logan needed: keeping the school and students on track and everything else they were beholding too. Being busy was a good thing though, it kept the mind from dwelling too much on the negatives.

Another night came and Susan was trying to catch a few hours sleep before her turn came up again. A storm had blown in and cold, wind-whipped rain pelted the windows where she slept. The twins were kicking up their own storm and she couldn't turn off her mind. Finally she gave up, wrapped herself in a bathrobe that Storm had lent her and went down to the kitchen for a comfort snack. Standing in front of the freezer noshing on a half-gallon of vanilla ice-cream, she jumped when Scott, who had watch, stuck his head in the door. "Oh, hey. I was wondering who was raiding the kitchen," he said quietly.

She grinned guiltily. "Just lil' ol' me. Couldn't sleep."

He nodded, switched on the light and took a seat at the counter.

"Want some?" She held the carton out.

"No thanks. How are things?"

"No change."

"I suppose that's good, in a way."

"It's one way to look at it," she replied.

"How are you holding up?"

She sagged and leaned against the counter. "All things considered, ok, I guess."

"Guess that's the best you can hope for."

She nodded and flashed a sad and weary smile. "I'm going to check on him. I'll see you later."

"Want me to come along?"

"You know, I'd be glad if you could, but we're trying to keep people away. He's got no resistance to anything."

"Didn't think of that. Well, let me know if there's anything I can do."

"I will." She hugged him. "Thanks."

She pattered down the dimly lit hallway and took the elevator down to the med-lab. Hank was sitting at Logan's side, reading aloud from A Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy. She stood beside him and rested her hand on his fury blue shoulder. "I don't know if he'd choose that for himself or not," she teased.

"I think he'd prefer it to WutheringHeights."

She snickered. "You've got that right."

"What are you doing down here?" Hank asked, his tone parental.

"Couldn't sleep."

"Ah! Well, have a seat then. He'd probably prefer you over me anytime."

"Can't imagine why?" she joked, then sat and, unconsciously stroking Logan's hair, noticed something extraordinary. "Look at this, Hank!"

He didn't immediately notice what she referred to. "What?"

"This *gray* in his hair, right here in his sideburns. That *wasn't* there before!"

Not only did the Mutant Flu cancel his healing and immunities, it now seemed to be aging him! Hank looked momentarily flabbergasted, then worried. "This is a complication I didn't expect."

She nodded in agreement. "I think we're writing a whole new chapter in mutant medicine. I know this sounds callous, but I just wish the subject was somebody else."

"Not callous at all, good lady. Simply human."

She motioned with a wave of her hand. "Why don't you take a break? I need to be here for a little while."

"Alright, I could use a bit of caffeine. Be back in a few."

Susan laid her head on an empty space on the bed, entwined her hand in Logan's and spoke to him like he heard. "I'm here, darling. Guess I'm a little off schedule. How are you feeling? Never mind, stupid question. I can just guess the smart-assed answer you're thinking of. Everybody's been praying for you. You know, it's coming up on five days with this mess soon. With a little luck you should start to improve. Do me a favor, Bright Eyes, go with the five day version as opposed to seven, please." She sighed and realized he probably didn't hear her. Medical science hadn't proved comatose patients heard or understood goings-on around them, of course they hadn't *disproved* it either, so she continued to speak to him. "It's storming like crazy tonight and it's awfully lonely without you. I know what you like to do on stormy nights, when it keeps us awake." She sat up and stroked his face and sang very quietly to him, *'Pray that it's raining on Sunday, storming like crazy. We'll hide under the covers all afternoon. Baby, whatever comes of Monday can take care of itself 'cause we've got better things that we can do.....'* Suddenly emotion swept over her and, instead of softly singing, she began to softly weep.

Hank found her that way and immediately embraced her. "It's ok. Let it out. You've been extraordinarily brave."

She leaned into his embrace and soft weeping gave way to controlled sobs for a few minutes. Then she straightened, grateful for the moment to unbend, but embarrassed just the same. "He hates tears."

"Well, he can simply get over it," Hank answered with gentle levity, having sensed her embarrassment. "Now off to rest with you. Doctors orders, Dr. Harris."

Charles took over from Hank a few hours later. "How's the patient?" he inquired, whirring into the room.

"No changes on the monitors. I'm about to draw some labs. Susan noticed something intriguing."

"Go on."

"Notice the graying in his hair and beard. Honestly Charles, I wouldn't have noticed; but..."

"I see. This is rather disconcerting. Do you think its cause for alarm?"

"In this situation, everything's cause for alarm—except full recovery, of course."

"Agreed. If past clinical history is a guide; he should begin to turn the corner very soon."

"Five to *seven* days. We could still have a bit of a stretch."

Charles felt mildly defeated at the thought of another forty eight hours. "Indeed."

Hank prepped Logan for blood draw. "Let's see what the numbers say." He quickly siphoned two vials and left Charles to monitor the patient.

As Charles stood his shifts he would telepathically communicate with Logan. When he had been stricken with the altered Cerebro many months ago, Jean had done the same for him and he was convinced it made a significant difference in his recovery. As a psychiatrist, he'd undergone medical training, but with his telepathic powers he was more suited to assessing Logan's mental and emotional capacity to hang on and fight the virus. Mentally, so far, Logan continued to fight the good fight and had an understanding of what was going on. Hours passed and Charles began to notice a significant increase in bruising all over Logan's body. Blood seeped from the chest tube and IV site. The urine collection bag was filled with blood and there was bright red blood coming through and seeping around the nasogastric-tube. Charles scanned the monitoring equipment and noted his blood pressure was dropping at an alarming rate and his heart rate was becoming more rapid and erratic. The only stable vital sign was

respirations and they were controlled mechanically. Realizing the signs of Multiple System Organ Failure, Charles called for assistance, all the while trying to keep in increasingly weakening mind link to Logan.

'Logan, stay with me!' Charles thought to him.

He didn't respond right away. Finally in broken impulses, Logan thought back, **'Hurts. . . .bad. So . . .tired.'** There was another long pause and Charles could feel Logan trying to make his mind work. **'Tell . . . Sue . . . love . . . her.'**

'Tell her yourse...,' Charles telepathic words were suddenly cut off by the shrill alarm of the cardiac monitor!

The sound sent anyone within range into instant action. Electra, working in another room nearby, sprang from her work station and raced back to the lab where Logan lay. Charles sent a frantic, loud telepathic message to Susan, who was sleeping in Logan's old suite, **'Susan, get down here now!'**

In the next instant Charles summoned all the physical strength he could muster and crashed his tightly fistted hands into the center of Logan's chest! The thump to his sternum registered on the monitor, but failed to correct the haphazard squiggle on the monitor screen or silence the warning klaxon.

So powerful was Charles telepathic message, that all of the adults and even some of the older teens on campus sensed it. In addition to Susan and Hank, Scott, Kurt, Vic, Storm, Marie and Bobby all heeded the psychic order. Suddenly, there was a mutant traffic jam at the elevator leading to the med lab. As they rode the down in silence; they seemed to share a common sense of dread. Their fears were powerfully reinforced when the elevator doors opened at the lower level. The squeal of the cardiac monitor buffeting their ears could not be missed.

Meanwhile, Charles and Electra set to work and in less than a minute had Logan off the ventilator and manually 'bagged' for respiratory support, then Electra placed her hands on Logan's chest and was about to use her power to jolt his heart.

Charles shouted, "No! Metal bones, remember!"

Electra backed away quickly. "Ay yi! Mi Dios!" then immediately began chest compressions.

Susan and Hank bull-dozed through the throng of students and Team mates. Susan took one look at the prostrate form of her husband and paled. No amount of professional training was going to get her through this. Hank noticed the look on her face and grabbed her as she swayed, then smoothly deposited her in a chair. Quickly and efficiently, he took note of several things at once, none of which were particularly promising, and relieved Electra. Her arm strength was woefully inadequate for effective chest compressions on Logan.

Vic, Kurt and Storm took note of Susan's state and gathered around her as Scott took charge of the clearly frightened students.

With Hank performing chest compressions, Electra could focus on providing oxygen, which left Charles free to attempt re-establishing his mind link to Logan. **'Logan!'** No response. **'Logan!'** There was only mental static.

"Come on big guy!" Hank huffed as he compressed Logan's chest. He glanced at the monitor, noting the distinct tracings of ventricular fibrillation. "Damn," he muttered.

"Storm, get over here, bag him. Electra, I want a bolus of epi- no, make it vasopressin-STAT!"

In seconds Hank's orders had been carried out and it only took just a few more seconds to see that it didn't work. Continuing with chest compressions, Hank's arms ached and he was sweating buckets. "Dammit Wolverine, give me a sign here!" There was none, even Hank didn't have the power to effectively compress Logan's adamantium-clad sternum. "Electra, try amiodarone, NOW!"

Susan made a move to comply with Hank's order. He glanced at her in surprise and concern. "I can't just sit here," she offered, then injected the medication into Logan's IV line. Hank nodded, though he looked away from her, not wishing she see uneasiness in his eyes, but also to ignore the pale mask of fear on her face. A second patient was the last thing he needed and there was no time to debate her level of fitness.

Charles, filtering the distracting noises and activity around him, continued trying to 'find' Logan. The professor's concentration was rewarded when he heard a very faint thought.

'Hurts bad....make stop...'

Charles felt Logan trying to emphasize the last word, but his thoughts were weak, very weak. **'What? Logan,**

what are you saying? Another wave of mental static was the only reply.

“We’re getting nowhere,” Hank said, his voice reflecting ardent frustration. “Bolus of Mag. Sulfate, now.” It took only moments for Hank to be painfully aware that the last drug in his arsenal clearly failed. Suddenly aware of the audience that had gathered he bellowed, “Get these kids outta here!”

Scott immediately began ushering the protesting kids out.

Marie protested the loudest. “I wanna stay, *please* Scott. Ya’ know I can handle it. I’ve got him in my head.”

Scott shot her a scrutinizing glance, then nodded. “But stay in the ante-room,” he instructed just as he disappeared into the elevator.

Meanwhile, Hank rapidly debated his few remaining options. With indirect electrical stimulation out of the question, there was only *one* other long-shot remaining. At this point, everything he knew about medicine, both Normal and Mutant, told him it was probably moot; but he owed Logan the effort. “Electra, scalpel please.”

Susan gasped, aware of what Hank had in mind. She’d not undergone rigorous shock-trauma training for naught.

Electra glanced at him in surprise, unsure of his intent.

Her hesitation and Susan’s reaction added to his frustration and stress and Hank took it out on Electra. “Did you hear me? Scalpel, STAT!”

“It’s not a sterile field,” she reminded as she handed over the instrument.

“Least of my worries right now,” he answered a bit more gently, as if trying to convey his verbal roughness was in no way meant as a personal attack. “Storm, cease for a moment.” Hank placed the scalpel against Logan’s sternum and cleanly sliced.

Susan gripped the edge of the stretcher and swayed.

“Kurt, get her away,” Hank demanded quickly. “Susan, I’m sorry.”

She didn’t faint, but went completely white faced. She weakly nodded acceptance as Kurt lead her back to a chair, all the while cursing her own weakness and the fact she’d ignored a ‘doctor rule’ that you never treat a critically-ill or injured close relative. In a few moments she composed herself to some extent and was not in danger of a flat-out faint. She took Kurt’s clawed hand and they redoubled their prayers, more than fully aware of the heroic, last ditch effort Hank was attempting.

Marie stood in the ante-room, faced pressed against the glass. Tears streamed down her cheeks and she struggled to choke off the sound of her sobs. ‘*Come on, Logan. Ya kan’t be doin’ this,*’ she silently begged. ‘*Somebody fix him,*’ she demanded with her mind. Just then she felt a gentle hand on her shoulder and started.

“You ok?” It was Scott.

Marie turned and then buried her face in his chest.

“This is our last chance,” Hank warned. “Electra can you get your fingers directly on his heart without touching metal?”

Electra looked momentarily panicked, but nodded and moved into position. With deliberate care and summoning all the courage she had within her, she worked her small hand down between the peeled back skin and muscle. Then, as quickly as she could, snaked her hand between organs and made contact with Logan’s quivering heart muscle. As she worked, Hank steadily fed her guidance: where to touch, how much pressure to exert, how quickly to compress, all the while silently praying the open-chest cardio-massage would work.

Even in his nearly clinically dead state, Logan felt what was happening, yet somehow deep within his wasted body, wracked with pain, and being surgically ‘assaulted’ once again, he managed to muster the strength to clearly enunciate a thought back to Charles, “*Do you trust me completely?*”

Charles flinched in recognition of Logan’s echo of his words from a couple of weeks before. ‘**Yes, I trust you Logan. What are you saying?**’

There was a pause before Logan pleaded his thoughts: strong, yet fragmented, ‘*Stop...Gotta...shut....down.*’

Hank studied the monitor again, hoping for a positive change, but Electra’s efforts showed none. “Are you clear of the metal bone structure?”

She whispered, "Yes."

"Give him 150 volts."

"I'm not that accurate, Hank."

"Do your best."

"Clear," she said, uncertainty tainting her tone.

Charles thought hard about Logan's last message. The monitors kept screaming, Hank and Electra continued their efforts and he could feel Logan's thoughts weaken with each jolt, could *feel* Logan shutting down. **'My God,'** he thought, **'shut down! I understand, Logan!'** he thought, but there was no reply, not even mental static. Wanting to trust Logan's instincts, yet deeply uncertain, Charles made the difficult decision. Taking a deep breath, he quietly said aloud, "It's time to stop."

They all flinched and froze at his words, but he simply nodded his head toward the monitor with its shrill alarm and now flat line.

"Susan cried out "No! Oh, God no!"

Charles continued, "Hank, it's been over twenty minutes, is there any hope?"

Silently Hank shook his head and stepped away from Logan's body. He turned and stumbled back to the chair next to Susan, his expression a mask of disbelief and grief. Aided by Kurt, she struggled to her feet, tears streaming down her face and the three of them collapsed into a hug, soundlessly crying. They felt Electra and Storm come up and expanded the circle. Marie and Scott, both feeling even more helpless and out of place, quietly came into the room. Charles heard their unvoiced question and simply shook his head 'no', after which they joined the outer perimeter of the group hug.

Unobtrusively as possible Charles shut off the monitor, rolled close to his Team and then cleared his throat.

They loosened their grip on one another, uncertain of what to do next. The realization of what had just happened would not sink in. Logan, the Wolverine, was supposed to be invincible! Even when Marie had drained his powers, first in self-preservation, then later when it had been given willingly, Logan *had* lived.

Susan, in shock, but pulling every ounce of strength and grace she had within, stood, walked to her husband's body and urged everyone to leave her. "I'd like to be alone with him, please."

They protested. They were a team and they wanted to deal with this as a team. Marie, who had a special connection to Logan, especially objected.

Susan's voice was even, strong, but kind. "I *need* to care for him. Please leave us."

Charles surfed her mind and caught her meaning and quietly urged everyone away. Kurt, Storm and Scott gave her a quick embrace. Electra gave her another quick hug and whispered in her ear, "I'll be in the lab across the hall if you need me." Hank, feeling like he'd failed one of the biggest challenges in his life, simply shook his head, muttered "I'm so sorry" and disappeared to his quarters.

Marie was frozen in place. Scott doubled back to gently take her by the arm, but she shrugged him off. "He can't be dead. Logan doesn't die. He promised he'd always be there--to take care of me."

"Marie, come along." Charles said to the grieving irrational teen.

"No, I won't leave him."

Sensing a scene coming on from Marie, Charles used a mind control technique to force her compliance, imposing a trance-like state making Marie slowly trudge from the med-lab, where she collapsed sobbing in Storm and Electra's waiting arms.

Charles rolled out in silence, but sent, **'I'm not far if you need anything'**, to Susan's mind.

"Thank you," she spoke in return and did not notice Charles stop and turn around to listen into the lab from just outside her range of vision.

In the now empty and silent med lab, Susan began to unhook Logan from all the invasive monitoring and life support equipment. She knew he would loathe it if he'd been aware. Beginning with the incision in the center of his chest, she deftly pushed the edges of flesh together and secured them with surgical tape. Next came the EKG leads and she couldn't help but notice the few gray hairs sprinkled over his chest. He looked pale and wasted, which

contrasted starkly with the deep bruises from internal bleeding. Carefully, almost like she was afraid of causing damage, she removed the endotracheal tube protruding from his slack mouth. She almost laughed out loud at herself for her pointless caution. She pulled the last of the IV's from his arms and let them clatter to the floor. Then she pulled a chair next to his body and sat heavily down. She clasped his chilled hand in hers and stroked his wavy, dark hair with her other hand. "Oh, my love," she whispered. Her tears began to flow. "Logan, don't go away. I need you so. I love you." Her tone took a sound of desperation. "Please, dear God," she began to pray. "I *need* him. Our children *need* him." She sobbed deeply, laying her head upon his still chest.

She startled when his body seemed to twitch, but realized that was not necessary abnormal upon death before rigor-mortis began setting in. She pulled back from him, stood, then gathered up sponges and alcohol to clean him up. Every part of her knew how useless the gesture was, but she needed to make sure the job was done thoroughly. She went back to his side and began wiping away droplets of blood from the IV sites. Lifting his arm, she noticed there was no sign of the puncture and thought it was her imagination that the bruising seemed less than a few moments ago.

Out in the corridor, Charles sat in silence. He dared not even think about Logan's last thoughts to him. Instead he focused on Susan and wondered how much longer he should wait before mentally checking on her. Since he respected her privacy, he was simply listening with his ears in case she needed any help. He heard her cries of sorrow, which he expected. He was starting to worry about the extended silence and decided to open his mind and simply listen passively, just to make sure. Almost as soon as he closed his eyes to open his mind though, he snapped them back open with a start.

Inside the lab Susan's grief had given way to puzzlement and anger. "What the hell? You can't do this to me," she said a little too loudly. She leaned closer to his body. "I know all about bodily functions that continue..." and choked back another sob, "...that continue after death. Like some stupid...like that stupid Energizer Bunny." The last words came out as choked laughter. "Just hanging on at some cellular level, is it?" She felt the twins flutter in her belly. She grabbed his shoulders and shook him with all her strength. "You *can't* leave me, you *can't* leave your babies! Not now! Bright Eyes, *please!*" Her knees buckled and her sobs renewed as she bent over his body.

After a few moments she stepped back, wiped the tears on the sleeve of her lab coat and wondered what to do next. Her emotions vacillated wildly between grief and despair, denial and anger; even an odd touch of black humor. She looked at the bloody bandages around his hands. "Ok, I'm not messing with those without gloving." She didn't realize she was speaking loud enough for Charles to hear in the corridor and for Electra, hovering in the doorway of her lab, not far beyond Charles. Electra looked at Charles, but he simply held up his hand and shook his head. He didn't want anyone to interfere with her right now. Electra smiled sadly and even though she didn't understand, she pretended to go back to her work.

Susan gloved and searched for the scissors to cut away the bandages. Returning to his side she lifted his wrist, which was limp and not stiffened as she'd expected, then his body seemed to twitch again. She jumped, then chastised her imagination. "This is why I never went into forensics," she said aloud. Steeling her nerves, she cut away the bandage on one hand, peeled it back and almost screamed at the sight---the pus was gone! She lifted his hand up closer to the lights above the table and examined it thoroughly. Not only was there no sign of infection, the wounds had closed themselves. She stared in disbelief at the pink, healthy flesh between his knuckles. She dropped his arm and turned back to re-examine his body. The bruising *was* fading and the incision Hank had made an hour ago, if that long, had closed and only a red line marked the spot. Ok, it might *not* have been her imagination, but *something* was clearly still happening on a cellular level within in his body. She didn't understand what it was and had no will to perform an autopsy, though it was warranted. While someday she might have the stomach to study and understand the less obvious 'whys' of the virus and what it had done to him, she couldn't just now. She really began to doubt her sanity when she thought she saw his chest rise. For a brief second, she dared to hope for the impossible, for a miracle, but the stark, ugly reality was stronger. The man she loved *was* dead and there was nothing she or anyone else could do about it. With this, any remaining resiliency drained away and she could only sit by his body and cry.

As time ticked by, Charles began to feel less certain of the decision he'd made. While no clue had been given as to what to expect; he expected *something* by now. What if he'd misinterpreted what Logan had tried to convey? During those last few moments before he declared Logan 'dead', he had sensed no activity in his mind and he still could detect anything. An electro-encephalogram would probably indicate brain death at this point, but the brain, the mind and finally the spirit occupy different planes. He sent a message to Susan's mind.

"Go away!" she both thought and choked out between sobs.

Logan's body twitched yet again and then suddenly, violently, he gasped. His chest rose! He breathed!

Susan shouted in shock and joy. She grabbed her stethoscope and pressed it to his chest. She heard a heartbeat. Not terribly strong, but beating just the same. "Charles, Hank, anybody!" she yelled.

The doors to the med lab burst open as Charles and Electra nearly ran each other down trying to get there first. "He's not gone!" Susan cried.

There was no doubt, he was breathing. They took turns at the stethoscope, hearing his faint, but steady heart beat. In a short few moments, Hank, who had been summoned telepathically by Charles, joined them, quickly followed by the other Team members. A sense of euphoria of the miraculous, of beating impossible odds was palpable. Just as quickly, the realization of what would be left of Logan, who had been clinically dead for more than an hour, soured the positive mood. No one dared voice the concern. They'd just seen one miracle. Let's keep the faith, the positive and give Logan's healing abilities a chance.

A moment later, at the end of her own physical and emotional rope, Susan slowly sunk in an exhausted faint, landing, surprisingly, in Charles lap! Fortuitously, he had positioned himself directly behind her. She came-to quickly and, when she realized her awkward position, flushed bright red with embarrassment, but he simply smiled, "I haven't been in a position to help a lady like that in years."

She didn't know what to say. She got slowly back to her feet and moved closer to Logan. He was breathing steadily and the EKG that had been re-attached showed a healthy heart rate and all traces of wounds and bruises had completely disappeared. "Do you have any idea what just happened here?" she asked Charles, mostly. The question was on every one's mind and there were nods acknowledging the fact.

Charles sighed and swallowed, trying to find the words to explain what he still wasn't completely certain of himself. "Logan told me to make it stop, the interventions, that is. He said he needed to shut down completely. He used a phrase I used with him when he and I spent that day working on his memory integration problems."

Susan looked puzzled. Logan had still not told her all the details of his meltdown and therapy with Charles.

Charles continued, "He used a certain phrase to jog my memory, repeated my own words because he needed to find a way to tell me he knew he could heal himself and we were preventing him from doing so." Charles paused and looked Susan in the eye. "I suspected as much, but dared not express it. What if I had been wrong? What if I had told you, after everything we'd done, he was going to be all right simply because Logan thought so and then he really did die?"

Susan gave him a slow smile and nodded in understanding. Fresh tears of joy fell down her cheeks.

Charles turned away from her and addressed Logan's unconscious form lying on the bed. He touched his temple transmitting his thought and also spoke out loud. "I don't know how you knew Logan, but please forgive us all the pain we ignorantly, but well intentionally put you through." He received a weak, but intelligible, *'It's ok,'* from Logan's mind.

It wasn't much longer before Logan's eyelids fluttered and his head lolled from side to side as he moaned. It seemed like every cell in his body screamed in pain. He could hear a constant, sharp blip-blip-blip and then a low hum and then felt pressure on his bicep, but somehow couldn't get a bearing on where he was and what was happening. Cold, creeping panic seeped into his mind and he felt a surge of adrenalin. The blip, blip, blip increased in pace. He heard voices from what seemed like miles away: "*Our boy's coming around*".... "*Yes, and I don't like the numbers I'm seeing on the monitor*"..... "*Give him a chance, Hank.*" That last voice was familiar, safe---Susan! Something warm and soft touched his face.

"Logan, easy does it. Come on, open your eyes."

He opened his eyes. Everything was gray black. "Hey," he struggled to speak, his voice barely a whisper. His throat was parched and raw from the ventilator and he swallowed hard. "Sum'in's wrong...dark!" he slurred weakly. He tried to raise his hand to make contact with anything, grimacing at the effort it took.

Susan smoothed her hands over his face and hair. She glanced at Hank in deep concern. The lights were on full. She clasped the hand he tried to raise and gently squeezed. "I'm right here, Logan. So is Hank."

Raw panic crossed his face. "Can't see! Whaz goin' on?"

"Sssh. It's going to be ok, Bright Eyes." She glanced pleadingly at Hank for some sort of an explanation to Logan's apparent vision loss.

Beast's answer was gentle, yet guarded. "Logan, your senses aren't all back yet. You've been through a bad one."

He barely shook his head. "Wha' happen?" he asked, his speech still slurred.

Susan asked gently, "What do you remember?"

He exhaled deeply, trying to focus on the last thing he remembered. "Was home...." His voice came out stronger, but raspy and thick. The struggle to remember was written clearly on his face. ".....really sick...." He just shook his head. It was too much effort for now.

"It doesn't matter, Bright Eyes. You're ok now."

He nodded and sighed deeply. Completely exhausted he needed to fall into healing sleep, closed his eyes and murmured, "Gotta slee...."

Susan smiled understandingly, then bent to gently kiss his lips. "I know, I'll be here." She pulled the bed sheet and blanket up, then tucked him in as she would a most precious child and he drifted off into a convalescing coma.

The End

D.G. Davis enjoys feedback, so please send any comments to: fiction.zone@yahoo.com and they'll be passed on.