

The Osiris Project

Disclaimers: I don't own the recognizable characters from Knight Rider. This is the sequel to The Zephyr and the Storm.

By Emily M. Hanson

Part 1

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Michael Knight's head pounded as he groggily opened his eyes and looked around. He was strapped to a chair with duct tape. Try as he might, he couldn't break the bonds. He was gagged as well. His entire body throbbed with pain.

He and Kitt were investigating a scientist named Dr. Peter Ramsey who worked for a company called Utopian Ventures, Inc. It sounded like a harmless travel agency, but it was actually a research firm. The company specialized in genetic engineering. Michael and Kitt had uncovered rumors of a top-secret project code named Osiris. Dr. Peter Ramsey was the lead scientist on the project. He held PhDs in chemistry and biology.

Recently, Dr. Ramsey had vanished, along with vials of experimental chemicals, just as an assistant was discovered dead in his office. Michael and Kitt were following up on a lead. The very last thing Michael recalled was that he and Kitt had split up to search the property of an old farm in Oklahoma that had belonged to Ramsey's grandparents.

Kitt, where are you when I need you, Michael thought desperately. He wished Kitt's new powers included telepathy. As firecrackers of pain exploded in his head, he clenched the gag with his teeth. Suddenly he felt dizzy and lightheaded. Then his vision doubled, tripled, and went completely blurry. Michael heard the door open, but he couldn't see who was there.

"Michael!" Kitt exclaimed. "Oh, no. What happened to you?" He carefully removed Michael's gag.

"Kitt, where have you been?" he gasped.

"Looking for you. It's been nearly an hour! What happened?"

It hurt to think, but he forced himself to. "I was looking in a desk when someone grabbed me from behind and injected me with a needle before I could do anything. I didn't get a good look at him. The stuff he shot me with knocked me out."

Kitt nodded. He proceeded to carefully remove the duct tape. Then he concentrated. A blue glow shimmered around Michael for a few moments. His eyesight returned to normal and the headache disappeared. But Kitt shook his head in disappointment.

"Whatever he gave you is beyond my power to counteract, Michael. It's already rewriting your DNA code. I can take care of the pain, but that's it. I can't change your DNA back to what it was."

Michael looked shocked. "What's happening to me, Kitt?"

Frustrated, the former AI shook his head. "I wish I knew. We'd better get you back to the semi."

"No way. We're onto something, pal. Someone doesn't want us to find out what's here."

"You're probably right, but you need to rest. Your body is undergoing a major transformation...into what exactly, I don't know."

Reluctantly, Michael nodded. "Okay, Kitt. Let's go home."

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Several hours later, Michael was asleep in the semi. Kitt was keeping an eye on him while Bonnie hacked into the Utopian Ventures network, trying to find out what exactly Dr. Ramsey had been working on. She discovered a password-protected folder labeled Osiris on his computer. Even though she tried the few names of deities she could remember from Egyptian mythology, Bonnie got nowhere.

"Kitt, Osiris was the Egyptian god of the underworld, wasn't he?"

"Yes, Bonnie."

"Did he have a wife?"

"Yes. Her name was Isis, I believe."

"Thank you." Bonnie typed Isis into the computer. There was still no response. Frustrated, she let out a sigh. She tried several combinations of the two names and still couldn't get in.

"Try Anubis," Kitt suggested. "He was one of Osiris's sons."

Bonnie carefully typed it and gained access to the file, then proceeded to download everything that was in it. She turned around and looked at Michael's sleeping form. His face was deathly pale.

"Kitt, do you have any idea what's happening to him?"

He nodded. "His DNA is being transformed."

She looked shocked. "Into what?"

"I wish I knew, Bonnie. I tried to stop it, but it's not in my power."

She shook her head in disbelief. "Can't you do anything for him?"

Kitt concentrated for a few moments, trying to get a sense of what was happening to him. A sapphire blue glow shimmered around Michael's unconscious form. "The chemicals he was injected with are so aggressive that they're nearly finished rewriting his DNA code. Whatever's happening to him is almost over. I've tried to reverse it, but I can't."

"Then we'll just have to wait and see what happens."

Kitt nodded.

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The Osiris Project Part 2

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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As Michael woke up, he noticed that although he was groggy, he felt no pain. He saw Kitt standing near him.

"Welcome to the land of the living," Bonnie said from her seat at the computer.

"Thanks, I think."

"How do you feel. Michael?" Kitt asked.

"Awful. I feel like my insides were turned inside out and put back together again, only they were put back together the wrong way. It's the weirdest feeling I've ever had, pal. I hope it doesn't last very long."

The former AI nodded. "That's perfectly understandable, given that you were injected with foreign chemicals that completely overwrote your DNA code."

He sat up in shock. He didn't like the sound of that. "What?"

Kitt took a deep breath. "I'm afraid that you are no longer entirely human."

Michael gaped in disbelief. If he wasn't human, than what was he? Some sort of freak? He couldn't believe that someone had done this to him. Weren't scientists supposed to have ethical standards? He was an investigator, not a guinea pig. What gave anyone the right to experiment on him? "Can I be cured?"

"I've already tried to reverse the process, Michael. I'm afraid that's not possible. There is now an X-factor present in your DNA. It's the exact same genetic anomaly that Professor Charles Xavier and his students have."

They had worked with the X-MEN recently to rescue some kidnapped students from Magneto's grasp. Then Devon had been kidnapped for his knowledge of Kitt. The mutant had wanted to use the AI to create a more powerful computer than CEREBRO, one that could hold his own personality if he needed to vanish.

But Kitt had tricked him. He hadn't known that Kitt was no longer simply an AI and didn't need the CPU for his existence anymore. Magneto was currently being held in a maximum-security prison, the same one which he had escaped from, in a special cell made completely of plastic so his power over magnetism would be useless.

"So I'm a mutant," Michael said dully. "Great. Just great. Tell me if I grow a tail or turn green or something, will you?" He closed his eyes and laid back down, wishing he could disappear.

Unfortunately, invisibility didn't prove to be one of his powers.

"You look perfectly normal to me," Bonnie replied quietly.

"We should probably let him rest."

"Yeah. You're right. Here, have a look at these files and tell me what you make of them. Genetic engineering is not exactly my forte." She moved over so Kitt could look at them.

As Michael dozed off, Kitt read through dozens of screens of information in the space of a few minutes, which would have taken anyone else hours to dig through. "This is absolutely fascinating, Bonnie. They've been experimenting with the genes that cause humans to age, and they seem to have come up with a way to cancel them out."

She gasped. "They've found a way to stop aging?"

"Looks that way, but it's not without side effects. Anyone who receives an injection of this experimental drug, which is actually several manufactured chemicals designed to target specific genes, develops mutancy. In some cases, the genetic mutations were uncontrollable and resulted in the deaths of the test subjects."

"That's unbelievable. They were actually testing this stuff on humans?"

Kitt nodded. "Volunteers from the prison population. They thought they were getting an experimental vaccine for cancer. As for the ones who died, their deaths were blamed on heart failure. Most of them were age 50 or over. Guess who's funding the project?"

"The U.S. government?"

"As Michael would probably say, bingo. The day before Dr. Ramsey disappeared, he received an e-mail telling him that the project was under review, which means there was a good chance that there wasn't going to be any more funding. It's quite probable that he disappeared on his own."

As the unexpected sound of a growl escaped Michael's lips, Bonnie and Kitt turned around.

"Michael, are you awake?" Kitt asked.

Suddenly his eyes shot open, glowing yellow. Black fur was beginning to sprout over his arms, face, and legs. His fingernails were turning into claws, and his ears were becoming pointed.

Michael felt as though he were on fire. He couldn't speak. Every word that he tried to say came out as a growl or snarl. It was unbearable. He just wished that whatever was happening to him would end. His clothes ripped as his body transformed. Bonnie's jaw hung open. Kitt was obviously concentrating and trying to do something to stop it, but whatever he was doing wasn't working. This change was being forced on him. He only hoped that it was temporary.

A few moments later, where Michael had been laying was a huge panther. Kitt gulped as the black cat stared up at him as if to say, "Why couldn't you stop it? You're supposed to have all this power to change things. You're the wind god, but I'm only human."

"Oh, my God," Bonnie breathed.

"Michael, can you understand me?" Kitt inquired.

The panther nodded slowly.

"Do you think you can change back?"

The panther blinked. Then the air around it shimmered, and in the space of a few seconds, Michael was there. He looked up at Kitt. "I can't live like this, pal. I can't." He closed his eyes, wishing that the chemicals had killed him instead of changing him. Then he felt his partner's hand on his shoulder.

"Yes, you can, and you will."

"Dammit, Kitt! What right did anyone have to do this to me? I'm an investigator, not a guinea pig for some mad scientist."

He growled, then nearly gagged as he tried to stop the animal sound. He was no investigator. Not anymore. The Foundation's board would have his hide once they heard about what happened. He was a freak now. Michael glanced up and saw Bonnie's shocked expression. He'd already lost one family. Was he going to have to lose another?

Bonnie walked up and put her arm around him. Kitt stepped back. As if reading Michael's mind, she remarked, "We'll deal with this together, just like everything else. You're not alone."

He nodded and choked back tears that were threatening to flow. Squeezing his eyes shut, Michael let her embrace him. She was right. They would deal with it together.

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The Osiris Project

Part 3

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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Michael stared at the cup of black coffee in front of him, watching steam rise from the mug. Once, it probably would have smelled good, but now the strong scent assaulted his sensitive nostrils and threatened to overpower him. Miserably, he pushed the cup away. "I can't drink this stuff anymore, Bonnie."

She handed him a glass of water. "Try this."

That, at least, was something he could handle. The cool water was refreshing, and thankfully, scentless.

"Devon's on his way," Kitt said, coming into the back of the truck. He'd been sitting up in front with RC III, who was driving. "We'll rendezvous with him in less than thirty minutes."

"Wonderful," Bonnie replied.

Michael sighed. "Yeah. Great." What would Devon's reaction be? And more importantly, what would he tell the board? He figured that if he lost his job at the Foundation, he'd move up to the mountains for some peace and quiet.

"Don't worry," Kitt said as if reading his thoughts. "Everything will be fine. You'll see."

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Meanwhile, a slightly thin, dark-haired man with a hawkish face and gray eyes huddled in the shadows and shivered. Dr. Peter Ramsey had become sensitive to sunlight ever since he'd tested his own anti-aging formula on himself. He was changing. The mutancy produced by the formula was as random as it was to those born with it. He already found sunlight much too painful to go out without sunblock, and even when he put the stuff on, the light hurt. The darkness was much more forgiving and kind.

He needed to find Michael Knight, the FLAG operative whom he'd also tested the formula on. Dr. Ramsey hadn't planned to use Knight, but when he'd caught the investigator snooping around his hideout, the opportunity had seemed very convenient at the time. Surely Knight was going through similar changes right now and adjusting to his mutancy. Ramsey needed to get him back and document the effects if possible, but that would prove difficult, given that Knight and his partner were after him. He'd have to be very careful.

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The truck pulled over to the roadside and Devon entered. He'd parked his vehicle on the roadside. He looked concerned. "I came as soon as I could. Michael, how are you feeling?"

"I've been better," he admitted.

Devon glanced at Kitt. "Couldn't you do anything for him?"

Kitt took a deep breath. "Devon, the chemicals he was injected with were very aggressive. All I could do was stop the pain. Believe me, I tried." It was obvious from the tone of Kitt's voice and his expression that he was feeling guilty.

"He did his best," Michael added defensively. "It's not his fault."

"I know," Devon said, a bit more gently. "Just so you know, I don't plan on saying anything to the board right now. We still need to find Dr. Ramsey. Maybe he can reverse this."

"Maybe," Michael agreed, but he sounded doubtful. If Kitt couldn't do anything, what could Dr. Ramsey do? And why would he agree to help them?

Devon looked at Michael thoughtfully. "Perhaps there's a way to use this to our advantage. Er, have you learned exactly, ah, what it is you do?"

"Yes. I'm a shape-changer."

"Oh? Really?"

Michael nodded. The air around him shimmered momentarily. Devon stepped back as his jaw dropped. Then there was a panther standing in Michael's place, looking up at him with glowing yellow eyes.

"Good heavens," the older man breathed. "That is quite amazing, isn't it? I suppose it would take some getting used to. Can you, er, understand me?"

"He can understand everything we say," Kitt answered. "He just can't talk. Cats weren't designed for human speech."

"No, I suppose not. It's a good thing that isn't permanent," Devon said. "Do you know how expensive cat food is?"

The panther glared up at him. Then the air shimmered again as Michael turned back into his normal self. "Cat food? You'd really expect me to eat CAT food?"

"Well, perhaps not."

"Definitely not," Michael responded. "Kitt, help me out here, pal."

"Actually, cat food is pretty healthy, even if it probably tastes bland," Kitt replied.

Michael rolled his eyes. "I am NOT eating cat food."

"No, of course you aren't," Bonnie said.

"Do you have any leads on the case?" Devon inquired.

Bonnie showed him the files. "This is what I downloaded from Ramsey's computer network. It has everything you've ever wanted to know about the Osiris project. In a nutshell, the project has to do with anti-aging research. Unfortunately, the formula developed by Dr. Ramsey produces mutancy as a side effect. Not all of the test subjects survived, but those that did survive experienced complete immunity from the aging process and most, if not all, diseases."

Devon's eyebrows shot up. "You mean, they're immortal?"

"Not exactly immortal, they just live longer but don't experience physical aging. Problem is, after a few centuries, the body starts to wear itself out. So even with this formula, they're not really immortal."

"This is intriguing evidence you've uncovered, Bonnie."

"Thank you, but I couldn't have made heads or tails of it without Kitt's help."

"In any case, we are one step closer to solving this mystery. Michael, do you have any idea who assaulted you in the first place?"

"Dr. Ramsey himself would be my guess. I didn't get a good look, but I'm betting it was him. Kitt and I were in his grandparents' old farmhouse when we split up to snoop around. I was digging around in an old desk when I felt someone's arm around me, and then a needle shot me. Whoever it was tied a blindfold around me before I could see them. Then they tied me up and left. I think I was unconscious for a short time."

"Makes sense," Devon replied.

"Now the question is, do we go back and look for him, or do we look somewhere else?"

"He probably wants you so he can record his data," Kitt said. "He wouldn't have gone far. I'm betting he's still holed up there. Where else is he going to go?"

"Where indeed?" Devon asked.

"Well, pal, should we take the car for a spin?" Michael asked.

Kitt looked at him with concern. "Are you feeling up to it?"

"I am definitely up to it, especially if it means getting more info out of Dr. Ramsey, and possibly a cure."

"Be careful," Bonnie said.

"Aren't I always?" Michael replied.

She laughed. "Yeah. Right."

"Caution is a virtue," Devon added.

"I know. Believe me, I know," Michael said. "We'll see you later." He and Kitt climbed into the black Pontiac TransAm, backed out of the truck, and sped away.

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The Osiris Project Part 4

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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At the farmhouse, Dr. Peter Ramsey had set up a makeshift lab in the basement. This was where he stayed now. The light hurt his newly sensitive eyes and skin, but darkness was more forgiving. Like all the others, he'd become a mutant as a side effect of the formula. He looked relatively normal, though he appeared very pale. His blue eyes had turned silver, but that was easy enough to hide with sunglasses. His black hair was disheveled and unkempt. Usually, he was meticulous about combing it, but he wanted to avoid going upstairs as much as possible, lest his presence be alerted to anyone who might be watching the house.

He had a small lamp in the corner that gave off a soft yellow glow. That was as much light as he could stand. Whenever he walked near it, the shadows seemed to slither closer and devour the light. So he stayed as far away from it as possible.

He hadn't as of yet been able to identify his special abilities, but he'd only been a mutant for nearly a week. There was so much else that needed to be done. Dr. Ramsey needed to gather the test results and

upload them to his computer, where he could analyze them efficiently. That was what he was doing at the moment. His laptop was plugged in and hooked up to an old phone line, which made the connection speed excruciatingly slow. But it would have to do.

Dr. Ramsey was not foolish enough to check his e-mail. He knew that he was being watched. He logged into the Utopian Venture's intranet site under his colleague's user name and password, then got into the main company network. He found the program he needed to use, but then discovered that someone had accessed the files as early as yesterday. His project was on indefinite hiatus due to funding cuts, so it couldn't have been any of his colleagues. He realized it must have been a FLAG investigator, quite possibly one of the young men who had been snooping around the other day.

He had managed to use one of them as a test subject, after having made a few changes to the formula that he'd hoped would avoid the mutancy effect. If that agent returned, Dr. Ramsey knew that he would have to document the results. In his younger days, he wouldn't have stooped to using unwilling test subjects, but circumstances warranted it. Few would volunteer for a project that would turn them into mutants, despite the inherent benefits. Well, he'd have his results sooner or later. Until then, he was going to have to be patient.

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Meanwhile, a sleek black Pontiac TransAm sped down the road, gleaming in the sunlight. Bonnie had restored the system with a backup. The old version of Kitt's program was, however, not present. He could control the car by interacting with the CPU if he wished, but it wasn't necessary. The only thing that still required Kitt to access the CPU was super pursuit mode, and that was for security purposes. The former AI was driving. He braked as a barn cat crossed the road, followed by several kittens.

Instinctively, Michael let out a territorial growl and then sighed. "I hate this, pal. I'm never going to get used to this. Dr. Ramsey had better have a cure."

"What if he doesn't?" Kitt asked.

"We'll make him come up with something. I'm not going to live the rest of my life as a freak just because he decided to use me as his own personal guinea pig."

The unspoken fear, of course, was that he would have to. If Dr. Ramsey didn't have a cure and couldn't come up with one, Michael was going to have to deal with being a mutant for as long as he would live - possibly for more than a century, if the formula worked. That was not something Michael really wanted to think about. Getting Ramsey was the foremost thing on his mind.

Kitt nodded and parked the car beside an old barn, likely overrun with more cats and mice. The door was barred shut on the outside. They got out and approached the farmhouse.

In the basement, Peter Ramsey glanced out the window and noticed the black Pontiac. Then he noticed the two visitors approaching the front door. Most likely, the investigators had come to search the place some more. Knight didn't look like a mutant, but looks could be deceiving. Ramsey realized that they probably thought he was still there. He quickly went to shut off the one light that was still on. Darkness surrounded him like a cloak, concealing him.

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The front door was locked, but Kitt opened it easily with a magnetic jolt, using his connection to the CPU. Michael tentatively sniffed the air and sensed the presence of someone else. "I think he's still here, pal."

Kitt nodded. He could sense the recent disturbance in the air, as if someone had passed through the room recently. The air flows were chaotic, though. "Can you tell where he went?"

"Let's find out." With his newly enhanced sense of smell, Michael followed Ramsey's scent to the stairway. He eyed it carefully and spotted fresh fingerprints to confirm his suspicions. His eyesight was sharper now, taking in details that he'd have missed before. Perhaps there was a positive side to this, but he wasn't quite ready to embrace being a mutant. "Looks like he's downstairs."

Carefully, he reached for the doorknob and turned it. Both Michael and Kitt headed down the stairs into the shadows that awaited them.

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The Osiris Project Part 5

See Part 1 for disclaimers.

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Something lurked in the darkness below. Michael was sure of it. With his enhanced senses, he could smell the scent of a man. Prey, his instinct told him, whispering from the depths of his soul. Michael's instinct told him to change as something in the air shifted, but he resisted.

Suddenly Ramsey laughed. "I see you've come back."

Michael growled. "I'm not your guinea pig! Dammit, Ramsey, where's the antidote?"

"There is none," he responded. "Did you seriously expect one? Why would I make an antidote for a cure?"

Michael snarled. "You turned me into a freak. I wouldn't call that a cure."

"Thanks to me, you're going to live two or three times longer than you would have otherwise, completely free of illness and disease. I would most certainly call that a cure. Becoming a mutant is a small price to pay."

"What about the men who died as a result of your experiments, not knowing what they were getting into? Would you call that a small price to pay?"

"Of course." Ramsey laughed. "I am a man of science, not wishy-washy morals that get in the way of discovery. Those who died were prisoners, Mr. Knight. They were on death row anyway. They were murderers, not juveniles who committed petty crimes. Surely you would like to see justice done as much as I do. I only hastened the inevitable."

"Not all of the prisoners who died were on death row," Michael replied. "Mendez would've gotten out in

several years. Smith would have been released in six months for good behavior. They could have been rehabilitated."

"I did society a favor," Ramsey argued. "How many criminals pretend to be rehabilitated, and then commit another crime and end up back in jail? Besides, I had no idea my experiment would kill them. It wasn't intentional."

"After the first death, you should have stopped. That was why your project was under review, wasn't it?"

There was a long silence. Then a sigh. "Unfortunately, the government is too narrow-minded. They only care about short-term results. I changed the formula in order to prevent deaths, but it still produced the genetic anomalies as a side effect. Still, those who are injected with the formula are completely immune to aging and disease."

"How do you know for sure?"

"Do you think I haven't tested the results? My team injected the volunteers with everything from AIDS, cancer, MS, diabetes, and Ebola, ranging to the common flu. This formula has the potential to transform the human race and cure every disease known to mankind. Think about it! Everything will be cured. Of course, no one will be completely invulnerable. Accidents do happen. But if they are careful, most people will be able to live much longer lives."

"As mutants," Michael pointed out.

"There are some who would pay that price for a longer, healthier life."

"Why don't you turn on the light, Dr. Ramsey?" Kitt inquired.

"My mutancy has caused my skin to become ultra-sensitive to light," he answered. "It hurts me now. But I can see in the darkness just fine. I'm curious, Mr. Knight, what mutant gift did you acquire?"

He growled. "Shapeshifting, though I don't see it as a gift. We can wait for nightfall, Dr. Ramsey, but you'll have to come with us sooner or later."

"Come with you?" Ramsey laughed. "Don't be ridiculous. I intend to finish my experiment and publish the results."

"You're insane!"

"No," Ramsey replied. "I'm a genius, and the world will find out soon enough."

"There's a slim line between being a genius and being a madman, and you crossed it."

There was a threatening growl from Ramsey. Then a purple glow lit up the shadows around his face. Both Michael and Kitt could see that the scientist's skin was very pale, and nearly completely white. The glow was coming from his hands. He appeared surprised to see it, but was not about to waste the opportunity. A blast of energy sprang from his palms and struck Michael, who instinctively changed into his panther form.

The air began to swirl quickly. Blue electricity crackled around Kitt. "Stop this insanity, Dr. Ramsey,

before someone else gets seriously injured. You must take responsibility for your actions and the deaths you've caused."

"You're a mutant," he gasped as the panther growled.

"Why don't you stop this now?" Kitt inquired.

Ramsey's hands continued to glow purple. "If I stop now, then humanity's future will never come to pass. I can't let that happen." Then he let loose with a blast of violet light that struck Kitt with full force.

Michael transformed into his panther form and leapt as Kitt staggered from the strange energy that seemed to drain him. Ramsey yelped as the panther's claws scratched his sensitive flesh, but he instinctively fired another energy blast. The huge black cat went down with a whimper, though he was still breathing.

Kitt felt weaker momentarily, but was able to recover. Angry that Ramsey had hurt Michael, he released a lightning bolt that hit the scientist just as he was about to release another blast of that strange energy. Kitt couldn't sense what it was. It was unusual and seemed to have no natural composition, as far as he could tell. Whatever it was, the force drained his power.

Ramsey stumbled into the table that he'd been using to set up his lab equipment. The panther scrambled to his feet and growled threateningly. Suddenly Ramsey grabbed a vial that contained a particularly combustible chemical and hurled it towards them and hit it with an energy blast. The vial exploded, setting the farmhouse ablaze.

Kitt created a gust of wind to put out the flames as Ramsey shielded his eyes from the light. Strangely, the glow from the fire began to dim even before the wind started. It grew rapidly dark as the energy from the blaze was drained. Then Ramsey himself began to glow as a purple light surrounded him.

Michael regained consciousness and transformed into his normal self, wearing ripped clothes. "Give up, Dr. Ramsey. You're outnumbered."

"Never," he responded. "I won't let you destroy this opportunity." The aura around him was glowing so bright that Michael had to shield his eyes.

The air crackled with electricity as Kitt glared at him. "You'd rather destroy people's lives?"

"A few lives are nothing compared to the world's future!" Ramsey let loose with a blast of purple light that hit Kitt with full force.

As the former AI staggered, Michael aimed a punch at the scientist, hitting him in the jaw. Ramsey fell backward, losing his concentration. The purple glow around him vanished. Kitt straightened up and released a bolt of lightning that struck Ramsey, who was rendered unconscious.

"It's finally over," Michael said.

Kitt nodded. But was it truly over? Michael would have to live the rest of his life as a mutant, and it would probably be a much longer life than he'd expected. He'd have to deal with being different. He used his connection to the Pontiac's CPU to alert the local police.

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Later, after Dr. Ramsey was hauled away by the cops, the two of them walked back to the TransAm, which gleamed in the late afternoon sun. Michael called Devon, who was happy to see that they were all right.

"Michael, Kitt, I'm glad to see that you're in one piece. What happened?"

"Dr. Ramsey was arrested by local authorities. He agreed not to use his powers to resist arrest when he regained consciousness."

"Good. I see you need a new change of clothes. I'll wire some money so that you can stop at a store on the way back and pick up something decent."

Michael looked slightly embarrassed. "Uh, yeah. Thanks, Devon."

"Were you able to find an antidote for the formula?"

"No. I wish we were."

"Oh. I'm sorry to hear that, Michael. I know you were hoping for one. Perhaps Dr. Ramsey will be able to come up with something yet."

"Maybe, but I doubt it. He didn't sound very motivated. You might as well go ahead and tell the board about me, Devon. I don't think we'll be able to keep this a secret for too long."

The Englishman nodded. "I think the board might be persuaded to see the positive aspects of this new development. Keep your fingers crossed, Michael."

"I'll do that."

"Kitt, is there anything you want to add?"

The former AI shook his head.

"All right. I'll see you when you get back to the semi." The view screen went dark as the transmission ended.

Michael carefully backed out and drove slowly down the long, dusty, gravel road towards the highway. The farmhouse disappeared from the rear view mirror, but Ramsey's legacy wouldn't disappear so quickly. What would FLAG's board think? Would they be able to accept him as a mutant? He couldn't help but wonder as the black Pontiac sped down the highway.

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The Osiris Project
Part 6

See Part 1 for disclaimers.

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Devon, Bonnie, Michael, and Kitt sat in a conference room on Foundation grounds with the board members. Jennifer Knight was at the head of the table. She was dressed in a black suit and sharply contrasting white blouse. Most of the other board members had gone business casual with khakis and a comfortable shirt. Bonnie wore a navy dress and Devon had a charcoal gray suit. Michael wore his black jeans and a red shirt. His leather jacket hung on the chair behind him. Kitt was dressed in black, as usual. None of the board members who he was. He'd been introduced as a consultant.

"So," Jennifer said, "before we begin, may I assume that everyone has already received a copy of Devon's report?" Everyone nodded. "Good. Then you know that we're here to discuss the future of FLAG."

Michael leaned over and whispered, "I don't know about you, but I'm getting a feeling of *deja vu*."

"Indeed," Devon replied, remembering the last time Michael had actually attended a board meeting. Jennifer hadn't been happy with him then, either. She'd very nearly destroyed FLAG, but they had turned things around at the end.

Jennifer cleared her throat. "Thank you all for paying attention." As Michael straightened up with a slightly embarrassed look, she continued, "FLAG stands at a crossroad in a pivotal time. We can either continue to run things as the way we have been, or we can change for the better. We can become a more flexible organization and adapt to the changing times. Change is often a good thing, though many people are afraid of it, and for an excellent reason. Change doesn't come without risks."

"That doesn't sound good for us," Kitt whispered.

"Keep your fingers crossed, pal. Maybe she's onto something," Michael said. However, he knew that Jennifer was probably going to let him go. He couldn't really blame her. It was what he would have considered doing if he'd been in her shoes. But in the end, he had Wilton's dream to consider. The old man would be rolling in his grave if he knew his daughter was about to consider discriminating against someone. Wilton Knight would have never stood for it. Was it his imagination, or did Jennifer actually have a tear in her eye?

"Michael, you've given us many years of service. You even saved my life, and for that, I am very grateful."

He nodded. "I get the feeling there's more coming."

"There is. If we desire to be a useful organization, we will need to be ready to fight modern-day criminals. More and more terrorists are using violence to strike fear into the hearts of people everywhere. Recently, Michael Knight and Kitt captured the mutant terrorist Magneto, who abducted our very own Devon Miles and several students of a private school in Westchester, New York. Magneto sought to use Kitt's processor as a means to build a super computer of his own, but thanks to the FLAG team, he failed. We must remain on our toes if we expect to be able to continue to fight crime. So I have renewed Michael Knight's contract for another five years. I hope you will continue to serve us to the best of your abilities, Michael, no matter what they may be."

Michael's jaw dropped as he stood up. That was not at all what he had been expecting. He and Jennifer shook hands. "I don't know what to say, except thanks."

"Oh, that's wonderful," Bonnie exclaimed.

"Yes, it certainly is," Devon agreed.

Michael grinned as he sat down.

Jennifer cleared her throat. "There's another matter which has recently come to my attention. Devon, what do you know about a top-secret file regarding the Knight Industries Two Thousand that is inaccessible, even to board members?"

Devon answered, "I believe that Kitt himself created that file. He must have uploaded it to the Foundation's network before destroying the old CPU that he allowed Michael to give to Magneto. I'm not sure what's in it, myself. Probably nothing too important." That last bit was a slight lie. He knew the file was Kitt's personal log of the day he'd discovered he was no longer an AI. But it was strange that Jennifer would have known about it, unless she'd discovered it accidentally.

"I see. Does anyone have anything else they would like to bring up? If not, then we can bring this meeting to a close."

Kitt and Michael exchanged glances. There was silence in the room.

"I do have one question," one of the board members asked, glancing at Kitt. "Why exactly is this new consultant here? What is he doing?"

"Ah. Good question," Devon said. "K...Christopher Xavier has been helping us on our most recent case." The last name just popped into his head. He was sure that Charles wouldn't mind.

"It's a pleasure to meet you. What exactly is your area of expertise?" Jennifer asked.

Kitt nodded. He hated lying, but sometimes it was a necessary evil. "Science. I'm a scientist."

"Excellent. Welcome to the team. Does anyone have other business to take care of?" No one brought anything else up. "This concludes our meeting," Jennifer added.

She made a mental note to ask if Christopher was related to Charles Xavier. There was an uncanny sparkle in his bright blue eyes. And of course, the jagged silver streak in his black hair resembling a bolt of lightning at night was very unusual since he could not have been a day over 23. As the board members filed out of the room, Jennifer touched Kitt's shoulder and felt a static jolt. He turned around, startled.

"Sorry," she apologized. "I just wanted to ask you something. Are you related to Charles Xavier, by any chance?"

Kitt shook his head. "No." But the corners of his mouth turned upward into a quirky smile. "You think I'm a mutant, don't you?"

Jennifer blushed. Then she noticed that her hair was being tousled by a gentle breeze that had sprung up out of nowhere. She gasped.

Kitt's eyes sparkled as he replied, "I'm not exactly a mutant."

"But you do have powers." What was it about him that seemed so familiar? She couldn't put her finger on it. "I know you from somewhere," she said. "We've met before, haven't we?"

Kitt took a deep breath. "You don't know me, Ms. Knight. You never did."

She watched him turn and walk away. The mystery of Christopher Xavier remained unsolved, but Jennifer knew that one day she would discover who he was. It was only a matter of time.

* * * * *

The End

The Zephyr and the Storm
Disclaimers:

I own none of the characters from the X-Men or from Knight Rider. As far as I know, Marvel owns the X-Men and Knight Rider is owned by Universal Studios. This is sort of an alternate version of the X-Men movieverse, btw. This is the sequel to "Knight of the Zephyr." Cari is mine, however.

* * * * *

New York City, New York

The Cybernetic Analytical Robotic Intelligence project, otherwise known as Cari, scanned the crowd inside a downtown shopping mall. The android was searching for several particular teenagers. She had the ability to scan DNA and look for the genetic mutations which distinguished mutants from normal humans.

Cari was visibly indistinguishable from a normal human female. Her long, blonde hair flowed around her shoulders. She wore a professional-looking navy blue skirt, a light blue blouse, and navy high heels. Around her neck was a silver necklace with a Celtic cross pendant. In the center of the pendant was a sapphire which hid a comm link. She also had a fake driver's license in her purse that identified her as Cari Snow.

On the other side of the hallway were Bobby, Jubilee, Rogue, and a teenager named Jack Smith who had his hair in blue spikes and went by the name of Cypher. He was Bobby's new roommate since John, otherwise known as Pyro, had joined the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Everyone gave Jack strange looks, not because they thought he was a mutant, but because they assumed his hair was dyed. Blue was, in fact, his natural hair color.

Suddenly Cari spotted them. "Locked onto targets," she transmitted.

"Excellent," came the response through her pendant, turned down so low that only she could hear it with her enhanced audio receivers. "Capture them, but don't harm them. I don't care what happens to anyone else," Magneto said.

The android looked at the mutants and opened her mouth, emitting a loud, high-pitched screech that drove everyone to their knees, mutants and humans alike. A security guard raised his gun, but she pointed a finger at it and fired a laser beam, melting the weapon. The guard yelped and dropped the smoldering piece of plastic and metal. He raised his hands into the sky in surrender.

Bobby glared at the blonde, whom he'd wrongly assumed was a mutant. Concentrating, he formed an ice javelin and hurled it towards her. However, Cari raised her right hand. With the twist of her left hand, she removed what was now clearly a fake appendage and displayed a flamethrower. Then she melted Bobby's oversized icicle in midair.

"She's an android," Jack gasped in sudden realization.

"No, really?" Jubilee responded with dripping sarcasm.

"I can use my power to control her."

"It's too dangerous," Rogue protested.

He shook his head. "I'll show you guys. After I pull this stunt off, we'll see who the big superhero is. The X-Men will have to ask me to join their team."

"You're nuts," Bobby replied. "Just because you can control a PC doesn't mean that you can control an android. Who knows how intelligent that thing really is?"

"Just watch," he answered.

Concentrating, Jack used his mutant power to create a mental link to the android. He'd done it so many times with his own computer that it was second nature to him. But he was unprepared for this artificial intelligence.

Suddenly he found himself outside of his own body and with his awareness trapped inside the android's virtual mind. It was cold and dark, like being inside a giant refrigerator with no light. The space was actually quite vast, but Jack still couldn't escape it. In a panic, he started to run. He kept running until he ran into some sort of wall that felt like metal.

Surely there must be some way out of this place. He tried to will himself into his own body, but that didn't work. Then suddenly, through the android's eyes, he saw himself lying on the floor in the shopping mall, resembling a comatose person. Rogue tried to revive him, but her efforts were useless. Slowly, he kept getting closer and closer to his friends. He realized that the android must be moving. Then everything went blank.

* * * * *

Los Angeles, California

One day later...

It was the perfect day for a picnic. Michael and Kitt had taken Bonnie out for lunch. Kitt lay on the grass and gazed at the clouds. The car was nearby. He'd recently discovered that he really was the wind god Blue Feather had spoken of, and that he could project himself in human form outside the car. He still didn't know all that he was capable of, but he was finally getting used to the idea of being able to control the wind, not to mention being able to move outside the Trans Am. Kitt didn't think he'd ever fully understand it.

"It's a great day, isn't it?" Bonnie asked.

"Yeah. It's absolutely beautiful, and so are you," Michael replied.

She blushed.

Suddenly, Kitt became aware of a transmission coming in on the Trans Am's video phone. "Devon's calling. He says it's urgent."

Michael gave a frustrated sigh. Why did Devon always have to call when he was having fun? "That figures. Couldn't you use your powers to keep him from getting through or something?"

Kitt gave him an incredulous look. "I have control over the wind, not the telephone lines. Besides, that wouldn't be right."

He shrugged. "It was just a suggestion, pal."

Michael stood up and offered Bonnie a hand as Kitt scrambled to his feet. The very concept of having feet was still strange to him. It was something else he'd have to get used to.

Devon appeared on the video phone as Kitt lowered the window. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to interrupt your day off. Something's come up."

"What is it this time?" Michael asked, obviously annoyed.

"An old friend of mine from Oxford, named Charles Xavier, runs a private school up in New York. Some of the students were kidnapped yesterday at a shopping mall. According to several police reports, the teenagers were abducted by a robot of some kind. There is one additional thing you should know, but you must promise to keep it to yourselves."

"What's that?"

"This isn't an ordinary school. All of the students and teachers are mutants."

Michael's jaw dropped as Bonnie gasped. They'd heard about mutants on the news after the recent incident in the White House that turned out to be not an assassination attempt, but a very strong message sent by an anti-mutant extremist who'd been trying to start a race war. Luckily, it hadn't worked. Mutants were rarely seen in public, and those who could pass for human were still very much in the closet. Relations between humans and mutants were distant at best and downright hostile at worst.

"Kitt, this would be an excellent opportunity for you," Devon continued. "There's a lot you could learn from Charles."

"You didn't tell him about me, I hope."

"No, of course not. That's your decision. Just consider it."

Kitt nodded. "I will."

"We won't tell anyone about the school," Michael promised. "Bonnie, we'll drop you off at the semi, okay?"

"All right."

The humans climbed into the black Trans Am. Kitt vanished, temporarily going back inside the CPU. As they sped down the highway, he couldn't help but wonder if anyone other than his closest friends would accept him for what he was.

* * * * *

They reached New York early in the morning the next day, having used super pursuit mode during the night. Kitt had driven for several hours, allowing Michael to rest. Now, Michael was awake and behind the wheel. As he and Kitt approached Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, he was surprised to see that it was really an enormous mansion.

"Charles Xavier must be a very wealthy guy," he remarked.

"Indeed," Kitt responded. "I'm detecting several private jets located underground."

"What kind of jets?"

"Blackbird. They appear to be more technologically advanced than usual. I get the feeling that this place is more than just a school."

Michael nodded as he pulled into a parking space. With a flash of blue light, Kitt appeared outside the car in his human form. He was tall with bright blue eyes, and a silver lightning-shaped streak ran through his otherwise dark hair. He wore a black T-shirt, dark blue jeans, and sneakers. He waited for Michael to get out of the car.

"I don't know about you, pal, but I'm still getting used to that."

"You're not the only one."

The two of them entered the building to find a well-dressed bald man in a wheelchair and a beautiful, dark-skinned woman with long silver hair waiting for them. The female mutant was dressed in black.

"Hello. You must be Michael Knight and Kitt. I'm Professor Charles Xavier, head of this school. This is Ororo Munroe, also known as Storm. She's one of the instructors here."

"Pleased to meet you," Michael replied and shook hands.

When Kitt looked at Storm, their eyes met. He gazed at the lovely woman in front of him. He felt as though he'd fallen into an ocean vast and deep, but he didn't want to be rescued from the churning waves that surrounded him. Kitt had never experienced such an emotion before. Intellectually, he knew that what he was experiencing must be love, but he'd never imagined that such a thing would ever happen to him. He'd had no idea that it was possible until now.

Suddenly a gentle wind sprang out of nowhere. Ororo's mouth hung open slightly because she wasn't causing it. This handsome stranger had to be creating the breeze. What were the chances of meeting another mutant with an ability similar to hers? She knew they were infinitesimally small. There was something different about him, something that Storm couldn't put her finger on, but she knew that she was very much attracted to him.

The zephyr picked up in strength as her mutant power surfaced. Michael gaped as he realized both of them were causing it. They had to be. Storm's eyes had changed to a milky-white hue. How could she have Kitt's powers? What if the two of them suddenly lost control?

"You really should relax," Charles said, realizing that Michael was getting very agitated. "Love at first sight is a beautiful thing, don't you agree?"

Michael's jaw dropped. "Uh...sure." Not long ago, he would have scoffed at the idea of Kitt and love in the same sentence. But anything was possible now.

Slowly the breeze disappeared. Kitt and Storm gazed into each other's eyes. She extended her hand. When he reached for it, a spark of static electricity jolted him slightly. "Wow," he said, referring not to the static, but to what they'd just experienced.

Ororo smiled. "You should really learn to control your mutant power a bit more. I could help you."

They shook hands. "Thanks, but I'm not exactly a mutant," Kitt replied.

"Then how do you explain what just happened?"

"It's very complicated," he answered.

Charles Xavier was definitely intrigued. "What do you mean, you're not a mutant?"

"It's a long story, and I don't think you're going to believe me."

"We have plenty of time. Would you like to join Storm and I for breakfast?"

"That sounds great," Michael said.

"I don't need to eat," Kitt replied. "But he could probably use some food."

"Excellent," Charles replied and turned the wheelchair around.

As he followed, Michael wondered just what he'd gotten into this time.

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Part 2

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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In his secret hideout, Magneto turned to face the android he had created. "Excellent. You have succeeded in your first mission. I have a second mission for you now."

"What is that?" Cari inquired.

"Bring Devon Miles to me, preferably unharmed. If anyone gets in the way, incapacitate them. Try not to kill them, but if you do, make sure you clean up the mess."

"I will do as you command."

"Good. Here is the description of the FLAG semi and its location, as well as the location of FLAG's headquarters in Southern California. You should have no trouble locating Mr. Miles. Since he is not a mutant, and neither are any of the people he will most likely be with, you should not have any difficulties."

Cari nodded.

"I'd wish you good luck, but I doubt you'll have much use for it." After all, Magneto thought, an artificial intelligence had no need for luck.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Michael, Kitt, Charles Xavier and Storm were having a breakfast that consisted of scrambled eggs, hash browns, sausage, fresh fruit, orange juice, and coffee. Kitt tentatively sniffed the coffee and set the cup down. "How can anyone stand to drink this stuff?"

"It grows on you, pal," Michael responded. "Trust me."

Kitt looked at it dubiously. "Uh huh. I think I'll stick to old-fashioned orange juice."

"Between you and me, I prefer juice to coffee myself," Professor Xavier replied. "So, Kitt, would you like to explain how it is that your powers are similar to Storm's?"

"That's a long story." He took a sip of orange juice. "Several years ago, Michael and I were working on a case that involved a land dispute between a corporation and a Native American tribe. The company wanted to drill for oil on the reservation, but there was a burial ground there that legally prevented them from doing so. They tried their best to swindle the tribe out of the land, but ultimately failed because Michael and I stopped them. Anyway, there was this seemingly eccentric, but harmless fellow who declared that I was the reincarnation of the ancient wind god. At the time, it seemed completely ludicrous. I wasn't anywhere close to being human then."

"What do you mean by that?"

Kitt took a deep breath. "This is going to sound crazy, but please hear me out. I began life as an artificial intelligence created in a lab. Up until very recently, my existence was inside a CPU that is currently located in a 1982 Trans Am." There, he'd told them. Hopefully, the beautiful woman called Storm wouldn't hate him. What if she thought he was making it up, or worse, insane? How could she love him now?

For once, Charles Xavier was completely and totally stunned. His mouth dropped open as Storm gaped at Kitt. How could it be possible, Charles wondered? The fact that Kitt's powers were similar to Storm's spoke for itself. Perhaps their powers over the wind had something to do with their attraction toward one another. If the young man truly was what he claimed, then it would be natural for there to be a connection between them. This was truly remarkable.

"He's telling the truth," Michael said. "We've worked together for over five years. Even before, he was a lot more than just a fancy computer program. He's my partner and my friend. I trust him more than anyone."

Charles leaned over. "I would know if either of you were lying," he said. "You see, I am a mutant. My powers include telepathy. While I'm not into the habit of prying into anyone's mind without their consent, I can sense their surface thoughts."

Michael's jaw dropped in disbelief.

"It's quite true, I assure you. Please believe me when I say I have no intentions of harming you. Neither does anyone here. All I want is to see my students returned safe and sound."

"We'll do our best to bring them back," Kitt assured him. He glanced at Storm, whose eyes were still wide with surprise. "I, uh, hope you're not too mad at me."

"For what? Being honest?"

He swallowed a lump in his throat. "For not being human, or even a mutant, and..." Kitt paused. Dare he say it? If he voiced the words, would the emotions vanish as if they'd never existed? He hoped not.

"And what?" Ororo gently prodded him.

He took a deep breath and continued, "Falling in love with you."

"How could I be mad at you when I feel the same way?"

Kitt stared at her in amazement. "You do?"

She smiled. "I think it is very safe to say that our attraction is mutual."

Closing his eyes, he gave a sigh of relief. He was so new to emotions. Although he'd experienced them as an AI, they were not nearly so raw and powerful. He'd needed to hide them behind walls of logic in order to gain acceptance from the humans around him. Only Michael and Bonnie had known that he felt any emotions, and even they had forgotten at times. He couldn't blame them. It was easy to forget that when he'd been just a "fancy computer program."

The air stirred around them all, swirling gently.

"If you keep that up, pal, you're going to make the coffee cold," Michael said.

Kitt opened his eyes and looked slightly embarrassed. "Sorry."

Ororo smiled. "Don't worry. You will learn to control your powers sooner or later."

After they had finished their breakfast, Charles Xavier led Michael and Kitt to his office. Storm had a class to teach.

"What can you tell us about the kidnapping?" Michael asked.

"This was no ordinary kidnapping, I'm afraid. Whoever took Bobby Drake, Jubilation Lee, and Jack Smith knew what they were doing. My guess is that a very powerful mutant who calls himself Magneto had something to do with it."

"Do you have any proof?"

"Yes, but it's not something that could be used in court. Both of you must promise never to tell anyone outside this room about it. There are very few who know about it, and those who do are among my most trusted friends."

"Okay," Michael replied. "I promise."

"You have my word," Kitt said.

"Good." Charles took a deep breath. "You already know that I am a mutant. I have a device called Cerebro that can enhance any telepath's natural abilities. It is an extraordinarily advanced computer. With it, a powerful telepath can locate every mutant on Earth. I have a general idea of where my students are, but the area is too well-shielded to get specific details. Only Magneto would have known how to get around Cerebro's capabilities, which leads me to believe that he had something to do with it."

"Where do you think the students are?" Michael asked.

"Southern California, somewhere in the middle of the Mojave desert. I believe they are underground, which may account for the fact that I cannot locate them precisely."

He nodded. "Any other clues? Have you informed the police?"

"I talked to them already. According to their report, a woman who at first appeared to be a mutant but later seemed to be some sort of human cyborg, was responsible for causing a disturbance at the shopping mall. The teenagers attempted to fight her using their powers, but disappeared during the chaos that followed. I believe that this woman is neither human nor mutant, but an android."

Kitt's bright blue eyes widened in surprise. "Computer technology isn't advanced enough to support an advanced artificial intelligence within a positronic neural network." He had to admit that the idea had intrigued him ever since he'd gone through the works of Isaac Asimov in his databanks. Unfortunately, such technology did not yet exist.

"Not that we know of," Charles admitted. "But Magneto has always been a student of science, especially robotics and artificial intelligence. It was he who helped me build Cerebro. Perhaps he has found a way to create an android."

Michael and Kitt exchanged glances. Suddenly, Michael got a call on his comm link. It was Bonnie.

"Hi, Bonnie. This isn't exactly a good time."

"I'm sorry, Michael, but it's an emergency. Devon's missing."

"You're kidding!"

"I wish I was. He didn't show up for work this morning. RC III and I went over to FLAG headquarters,

and Devon's room was ransacked. One of the security guards was shot. He's in the hospital now. All he could tell us was that it was some kind of robot woman. I know it sounds crazy, but we don't have anything else to go on."

"This has to be related to our case," Kitt said. "How many other androids can there be on this planet?"

"Good point. Bonnie, we'll be in California as soon as we can."

"All right. I'll see you soon." Michael looked at Charles Xavier. "What else can you tell me about Magneto? Why would he kidnap Devon?"

"Devon Miles and I have known each other for years. He told me once that a friend of his, Wilton Knight, had met an amazing boy when he was in Germany at the end of World War II helping the Holocaust survivors. He could levitate coins and bend metal objects with his mind. Devon never told me the boy's name, but it may well have been Eric Lenhsherr -- now known as Magneto."

"We have a connection, but not a motive. I guess we'll find one when we find him. Anything else we should know?"

"Be very careful when you deal with him. Magneto's mutant power gives him control over all forms of metal, including the iron in blood. I would come with you, but I must stay here. Perhaps I will send another, though." He checked his wristwatch. "Storm's class should be over soon. Come with me, please."

They followed him to the classroom and got there just as the class ended. About twenty teenagers filed out. Some of the kids gave Michael and Kitt wary glances, and a few others said hi to Professor Xavier, but most just ignored them. In the classroom, there were various formulas on the whiteboard. Michael couldn't make sense of them, but Kitt recognized them as having to do with weather forecasting.

"How was your class?" Kitt asked politely.

"Very good. The students are catching on. Learning science is challenging enough, but having something practical to apply it to makes it easier."

"Storm, would you be willing to take a few days off to accompany Michael and Kitt to California? That is where I was able to track Jubilee, Bobby, and Cypher with Cerebro. I have reason to believe that Magneto is involved in the students' disappearance. I could have Scott fill in for you while you're gone."

"Well, my class has an exam coming up in two days. Tomorrow will be the review. So yes, I don't mind going, if Scott doesn't have any objections." She looked at Michael. "You don't have much experience dealing with mutants, do you?"

"Not really, no," he admitted.

"Magneto is one of the most powerful mutants on this planet. You wouldn't stand a chance against him alone."

"I wouldn't be alone. Kitt would be there."

"Michael," Kitt replied, "it would be foolhardy for us to go charging in when we don't even know what

we're up against. Besides, I may have super powers, but I'm not entirely sure what I'm capable of. Having another ally with us would be logical under the circumstances."

"Aw, come on. This Magneto guy can't be all that tough."

Charles Xavier raised an eyebrow. "Never make the mistake of underestimating him. If Magneto wants something, he'll do whatever he has to in order to get it. He would not hesitate to kill you, Michael. He has the power to make blood vessels implode or explode at will. That is only one of the reasons why he is so dangerous. If it were in my power, I would not let you fight him at all."

Michael couldn't believe this guy. Who did he think he was, King of the Universe? "Wait a minute. You wouldn't let me fight him? Excuse me, but that's part of my job. I may be just a normal human being to you, but I have skills, too. I didn't survive over five years of working for FLAG by being incompetent."

"I am very much aware of that," Charles replied, knowing that he had to keep the situation calm. Michael was evidently uncomfortable in circumstances where he wasn't in control. Not to mention, he wasn't used to dealing with mutants, and the idea that some mutants could kill people with just a thought terrified him, though he'd never admit it out loud. "However, I must insist that you not let your fear of the unknown cloud your judgment. This isn't just your fight, Michael. This is our fight, too."

"He's right," Kitt said. "We're all in this together, pal."

Michael finally relented. "Okay. Let Bonnie know that Storm will be coming with us."

"Of course."

"Thank you," she said.

"I quite agree," Charles added.

It was going to be a very long drive back to California, Michael thought, even in Super Pursuit Mode.

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Part 3

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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Devon Miles awoke with a splitting headache to find himself surrounded by three teenagers, one of whom was a young man with blue hair who appeared to be comatose. There was also a girl with Asian features who looked about 14 or 15. The other teenager was a young man who appeared to be 18 or 19. They were in a room about 10 feet by 10 feet, with no furnishings and nothing remarkable except a large steel door, which appeared to be locked.

"It seems that we are all prisoners here," the Englishman remarked.

"No, really?" said the girl sarcastically.

"Jubilee, chill," the young man replied. "Yeah. Magneto's got this robot that looks like a blonde woman. It captured us. Jack's still stuck inside the robot's brain, or CPU, or whatever. And we're stuck in here until Magneto decides to use us as bait for the trap he's planning."

"I remember the blonde. She used some sort of gas on me," Devon replied.

"Us, too. It must've been knockout gas," Bobby said.

"What about your friend there? Is he all right?"

"Jack? Who knows? He tried to link to the robot. For all we know, he's stuck permanently. Professor X is probably the only one who can get him out, but he's not here."

"Excuse me...what do you mean, he tried to link to the robot? He has some sort of comm link?"

Jubilee rolled her eyes. "He has no idea what you're talking about, Bobby. You're going to have to tell him."

Bobby sighed. "Don't panic or anything. We're not going to hurt you. We're mutants, and so is Magneto. I'm Bobby Drake. This is Jubilation Lee, otherwise known as Jubilee. Sleeping beauty over there is Jack."

Devon's eyes widened in sudden recognition. This was an unlikely coincidence. "You must be Charles Xavier's missing students!"

"How do you know Professor X?" Jubilee asked suspiciously.

"We've been friends for years. We met in college at Oxford. I'm Devon Miles. I work for the Foundation for Law and Government, a private organization that helps people in trouble. I offered assistance, and Charles accepted. We've been looking for you."

"Oh, great," Bobby remarked. "Anyone coming here to rescue us is going to walk straight into a trap."

"What sort of trap?" Devon asked.

"Well, we were both semi-conscious when the android brought us here, and we heard her talking to Magneto. He's trying to find some way to create a machine that will store a person's consciousness. There's some really powerful computer Magneto really wants that you guys have, something called the Knight Industries Two Thousand."

Devon gasped. "He knows about Kitt?"

"All I know is, he wants this Kitt thing, and..."

The Englishman shook his head. "Kitt is not a thing. He's much, much more than he was ever meant to be."

"Woah. He? I thought Kitt was just a computer."

"He's not. I'm afraid this Magneto fellow is probably listening to us, so I'd better not say any more."

Devon stared at the white cement wall in front of him. Would he ever get out of there? Would Michael and Kitt ever locate him? Would tea ever become more popular than coffee in the United States? Would he ever be able to convince Michael not to use so much hair gel? And what was the meaning of life, anyway?

* * * * *

Kitt looked into Storm's gaze and felt as though he were falling from a vast height, yet somehow miraculously held aloft. How he could have existed for so long without experiencing such emotion was beyond him. He felt as if he were caught up in a whirlwind, spinning out of control. Nothing in his past existence could have prepared him for this.

If he were given a choice between pure logic and chaotic emotions, knowing what he now knew, he'd chose the later. Logic was a safety net in a sea of irrational humanity, but it was also as cold and unyielding as stone. Going back to that bleak existence after experiencing love would be like walking into a prison. Kitt couldn't imagine being his former self again.

"This is amazing," Storm said, glancing at the speedometer. It read 210. "I can't believe we're going so fast. It's almost like flying."

"You should see this car turbo boost," Michael said.

"Hopefully we won't have to," Kitt said.

"You don't like flying?" Storm asked.

"Not really. From a practical standpoint, when you're a car, it's much easier to stay in control on the ground than when you're trapped inside an airplane with no place to go."

Storm nodded. She didn't like being in close quarters any more than he did. "That's understandable. I don't like being in enclosed spaces very much, either. Given a choice, I'd much rather fly under my own power."

Michael gaped. "You can fly?"

"Yes."

He shook his head in disbelief. "Amazing."

Kitt gazed into Storm's eyes, wondering how fate had brought them together. If they'd met a year ago, the idea of them falling in love would have been laughable. He would have had to hide behind the walls of logic that had shielded him. It would have taken a lot of effort on her part to coax him out, if she'd had any idea that he could have felt anything for her. The air felt as if it were charged with electricity. Kitt leaned over and gave Storm a passionate kiss, on a whim.

She looked surprised, but smiled. "Not bad, for a guy who used to be a computer. That must have been strange."

"Not really. It was all I knew. But it's very refreshing to be able to express myself. I don't know what I'd do if I ever had to go back to that existence."

"Hopefully you won't," Storm replied.

Michael had been keeping tabs on the FLAG semi. They were less than 10 miles away. "We're almost there. I'd better let Bonnie know we're home."

"Bonnie?"

Kitt nodded. "Bonnie Barstow wrote most of my programming code. You could say that she's like a mother to me, even though I didn't exactly have a childhood."

"Oh."

Michael phoned Bonnie from the videophone. Her face appeared on the screen.

"Michael, thank goodness. Where are you?"

"Less than five minutes away."

"Great." She looked relieved.

"Any word from Devon's abductor?"

"None that we know of. I wish we had a lead for you, Michael. I really do."

"That's okay. I may have one. That female-looking robot you mentioned appears to be the same one who kidnapped the missing students we were looking for. If we find the android, we'll find Devon and the kids. Charles Xavier thinks we may be up against an extremely dangerous mutant terrorist, so he sent someone along to help us."

"Which terrorist?"

"Magneto."

Bonnie gasped. She had, of course, seen the news clips of the incident at the Statue of Liberty. "My God. We don't have the resources to deal with him."

"Actually, we just might. I'll explain later."

Bonnie looked dubious. "Okay. I'll see you soon."

Several minutes later, they pulled into the FLAG semi. As the black Trans Am rolled to a stop, Bonnie approached them.

"Michael, I'm so glad to see you."

"You're definitely a sight for sore eyes," he replied. "Bonnie, this is Ororo Munroe, an associate of Charles Xavier."

"You can call me Storm," she said while shaking hands. "I am a mutant, and I'm trained to deal with

threats like Magneto."

"Oh...all right," Bonnie said, feeling somewhat awkward. She caught the look that passed between Storm and Kitt, and felt a little envious. They were in love. That much was obvious. If Storm's nickname was any indication of her mutant powers, she and Kitt were a good match.

"What do we know about Devon's abduction?" Michael asked.

Bonnie told him everything she knew. "The security guard said that Devon had been getting ready for a meeting, when suddenly a woman walked up to his door. The guard asked for her security clearance, and she didn't have any, but she took off one of her fingers and revealed some sort of mechanical nozzle. The next thing the guard knew, he was in the hospital."

"So that's how he knew she was a robot," Kitt mused.

"Yes," Bonnie answered. "I just wish I knew where to look for her."

"We already do," Michael said. "We have reliable information from Charles Xavier that Magneto is probably located somewhere in the Mojave desert. We just need a little more detail. Can you punch up some satellite photos of the area for us?"

"Of course."

"What are you thinking?" Kitt asked Michael.

"I'm thinking that we could use a little aerial reconnaissance. There's got to be something odd or unusual. If he has an underground hideout, wouldn't the area around it look different?"

"Good thinking."

"He has probably camouflaged it," Storm said. "It would be easier if we could fly over the area."

"Are you volunteering?" Michael asked.

She nodded.

A few minutes later, Bonnie had the photos for them. They all looked normal except for one, which had an oddly discolored area in the middle of the sand. The satellite had detected an unusual amount of lead in the area as well.

"I'll bet that's what we're looking for," Michael declared. "Shall we find out?"

"Yes, let's," Kitt replied.

"Good luck," Bonnie said. "Be careful."

"We will," Michael said. "And we'll bring Devon home."

A short time later, Michael, Kitt, and Storm were in the Trans Am heading down a long, dusty road towards the desert and whatever danger awaited them.

* * * * *

Part 4

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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As they approached Magneto's lair, Kitt sensed a vast amount of lead through the car's scanners. Even in his physical form, he maintained a close connection to the Trans Am. "This has got to be it," he said. "There's a lot of lead underground."

"How are we going to get inside?" Michael wondered aloud as he pulled over onto the sand and put the car into park.

Kitt, Michael, and Storm climbed out of the vehicle to take a closer look. There was no clear entrance. Wherever it was, the sand had buried it.

"This is like looking for a needle in a haystack," Michael remarked, frustrated. "Any chance either of you two can do something?"

"Allow me," Storm said. Her eyes became milky white as she concentrated, feeling her natural bond with the elements. Gently, she coaxed the air to form a gust of wind, which swept the sand away and revealed a trapdoor.

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it."

Michael reached for the trapdoor's handle and was rewarded with a jolt of electricity as the trapdoor opened. He yelped and jumped several feet back, but the lightning bolt arced across the sand and struck him with full force, knocking him out.

"No," Kitt exclaimed. Why hadn't he foreseen a trap? It was logical, after all. He should have insisted on going first.

Storm knelt over him, feeling for a pulse. A look of dread passed across her face as she performed mouth-to-mouth for several minutes with no results. "His heart's stopped! We need to get him to a hospital immediately."

Kitt shook his head. "There's no time!" There had to be something he could do! What use was having the power of the wind god if he couldn't help his friends? He felt waves of anguish cascade over him as he tried to think of a way to save Michael. Something had to be done. He was supposed to protect his partner, not let him die like this! Suddenly he knew instinctively what to do.

As Kitt concentrated, the air around Michael suddenly shimmered and began to glow with a sapphire blue aura. A few moments later, the human coughed and sat up. He remembered walking down a long, dark tunnel with a light like a flame at the end of it, beckoning him closer. Then he looked at his partner in astonishment. Kitt must have brought him back.

"I was dead, wasn't I, pal?"

Slowly, he nodded. "We tried to save you the conventional way. It didn't work."

"Thanks. I'll probably never be able to repay you, but I owe you one."

He shook his head. "Don't worry about it. Just let me go first, in case there are more traps waiting for us."

"Good idea," Michael said.

Kitt went forward, feeling for the rungs of the ladder beneath him as he climbed down into darkness. Storm and Michael followed closely.

* * * * *

Magneto smiled evilly as he watched them on his computer screen. Michael Knight and Storm had taken the bait. The third man must be another mutant, perhaps a new student of Xavier's. No one else could have the power to heal like that. He hoped they would lead him to Kitt. FLAG's artificial intelligence was what Magneto needed to complete his goal. The Knight Industries Two Thousand was the most complex and advanced AI on the planet, possibly more advanced than Cerebro.

He knew from the Foundation's files that he'd hacked into that Kitt had been designed to evolve and learn like a human. But something else had happened lately. There was a new file on Kitt, one that only three FLAG employees had access to: Devon Miles, Michael Knight, and Bonnie Barstow. All of his efforts to access the file had failed. He suspected that it was located in Kitt's CPU. Whatever it was, it had to be important. Magneto knew that he would eventually gain access to that file. He always got what he wanted because he was willing to do whatever it took.

The android stood across from him, guarding the prisoners. She was detached as only a robot could be. Pure logic was a beautiful thing. Emotional beings were prone to error. That was why he hadn't let the Brotherhood in on this scheme. Although they were mutants and therefore superior to humans, they couldn't be trusted with something this important. Magneto knew they would have let him down as they had in the past. So he'd created an android. The symmetry of logic and intelligence melded with silicon and steel.

Still, Cari's intelligence was not as flexible as it could be. Magneto needed something that evolved and changed as it learned, something that could adapt easily to his needs. He planned to build a neural network even more complex than Cerebro, one that he could use to store his own consciousness in. Then he could telepathically link to any mutant on earth and control them. With that, Magneto would have an unlimited army of mutants to do his bidding. They could wrest power from the humans' governments and finally take what should be theirs. His chilling laugh echoed throughout the room.

* * * * *

"I think we're almost there," Kitt said. Suddenly he stopped as uneasiness passed through him. He didn't know why, but something didn't feel right.

"What is it?" Michael asked.

"I'm not sure, but something's not right. I get the feeling we're walking into a trap."

Without warning, bright florescent lights flashed on all around them, illuminating the passageway. There was a doorway dead ahead, but it was closed. There was no clue as to what lay behind it.

"Yeah, so do I, pal."

Kitt approached the door cautiously, looking for any wires or other indications of a booby trap.

"Did you find anything?" Storm asked.

"Nothing. Maybe I'm just being paranoid, but after what happened with the trapdoor, I don't think we can be too careful," he said.

"We're dealing with Magneto," she replied. "There's no such thing as being too careful."

Kitt reached for the door and opened it, coming face to face with a tall man with silvery hair who wore some sort of strange-looking helmet, and was dressed all in black.

"Magneto," Storm gasped.

Their enemy grinned. "Welcome to my lair. Shall we play cat and mouse, or would you rather talk like civilized people?"

"Civilized people don't kidnap children or take hostages," Michael said with conviction.

"Of course not, but these are no ordinary children, as I'm sure you know by now. They're bait, and they've done their job rather effectively. Now, would you rather be killed while you're standing here, or would you like to talk?"

"I've already died once today," Michael admitted.

"Ah. Dying twice in one day would be really bad luck, wouldn't you agree?"

Kitt stepped forward. His blue eyes blazed with anger. "You killed my friend."

"That booby trap was rather efficient, wasn't it? Too bad you were there. If I'd known about your mutant abilities, I would have planned more effectively," Magneto said.

The air suddenly became very hot and felt charged with electricity. Kitt struggled to gain control of his temper, which he was at risk of losing. This man had killed Michael, had abducted Xavier's students and Devon, was a known terrorist, and dared to call himself civilized. He couldn't believe it. How could anyone do such things?

Kitt's eyes were glowing as if they had an inner light of their own. Lightning danced across his fingertips, dangerously arching back and forth as if looking for a target. Michael's eyes went wide, since he had never seen Kitt do this before. Storm stepped back. Magneto reassessed the situation and took a few steps backward. "Cari," he shouted, "get them!"

The android stepped forward. She took hold of her left hand with her right, and pulled it off, revealing a

laser pistol. Kitt aimed a bolt of lightning at her. Blue lightning met crimson laser beams and lit up the air, forming an intricate web of energy briefly before the lightning won out and hit the android with full force.

In Cari's CPU, Jack suddenly found himself flung loose. He ran blindly, hoping to find a way out of the darkness. In the distance, a silver strand of light shimmered. Knowing instinctively that this was his escape route, he grabbed onto it.

* * * * *

Jubilee gasped as Jack coughed and opened his eyes. "You're back!"

"Where are we?" he asked.

"Who knows," Bobby answered. "Magneto captured us." Hearing the sounds of a scuffle outside, he added, "But I think the cavalry's arrived."

"Thank goodness," Devon remarked.

Jack blinked. "Who's the old English guy?"

"That's a long story," Jubilee answered. "And I don't think you should call him old. He's probably about the same age as Professor X."

"Why, thank you, Miss Lee. Also, technically I'm an American citizen, not English."

Jack sighed. "Whatever. I just spent the past few hours inside a robot. My head is killing me." He leaned against the wall.

"Pardon me, but did you just say you were inside a robot?" Devon asked.

"Yeah. Look, I'm a mutant. I can connect my mind to a computer, as long as it's advanced enough. I couldn't link to a microwave or a digital watch, but to a PC, no problem. I tried getting inside the android, but I got lost and couldn't find my way out again."

"Amazing."

"Let's just hope whoever showed up to rescue us is powerful enough to take on Magneto," Bobby said.

* * * * *

The battle raged in the room just beyond. The now-defunct android lay smoldering on the floor. Kitt's lightning strikes had been enough to seriously damage her positronic network and render her useless. Now, Magneto faced the intruders. He glared at Kitt, wondering how the mutant could have destroyed his creation.

"Who are you?" Magneto demanded. "Why are you working for Charles Xavier? You're obviously a powerful mutant. Join me, and you'll have all the power you could ever ask for. Together, we could rule the world."

Despite himself, Kitt laughed. The irony of the situation was remarkable -- a mutant offering him the world. He had more power than Magneto ever would, but the last thing he wanted was to use it to control anyone. If he did that, there was no way he'd ever be able to help anyone again. Neither mutants nor humans would trust him. He'd alienate his closest friends. He'd be more alone than he was as an artificial intelligence existing inside a car. "If you only knew."

"Give me the Knight Industries Two Thousand," Magneto said unexpectedly. "All I want is that computer. Bring the CPU to me and we can end this. I'll let the hostages go."

Kitt stared in disbelief. "That's what you want?"

"Yes. That's the only thing I need."

Kitt shook his head. He couldn't believe it. This could have been over so much sooner, if only they'd known. "Michael, why don't you go back to the Trans Am and get the CPU?"

Michael was stunned. "Are you sure about this, pal?"

"Yes."

"I'll go with you," Storm said, "just in case there's something waiting for us out there."

Kitt crossed his arms and glared at Magneto. "I'm staying here. I won't let him go anywhere."

"All right," Michael said. He headed back to the surface as Storm followed.

Magneto narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "I'm glad you're finally listening to reason. Who are you, anyway? One of Xavier's students?"

Kitt gave him an odd look but didn't reply.

Several minutes later, Michael and Storm came back. He carried the small metal box that had been Kitt's previous home.

"Here it is," Michael said. "This is Kitt. You can let the hostages go now."

Magneto nodded. "If nothing else, I'm true to my word." He opened the locked door that had previously kept the mutants and Devon prisoners.

"Michael," Devon exclaimed. "I am so glad to see you and..." his voice faltered as he realized what was in Michael's arms. "Kitt!" Immediately knowing that it had to be a bluff, since Kitt was there in his physical human form, Devon pretended to be angry. "How could you do this? How could you just give him up like that?"

"It was the only thing I could do," Michael answered. "I'm sorry, Devon, but Magneto can easily kill us with a single thought. He's much more powerful than you could imagine."

Looking completely devastated, Devon Miles placed his hand on the CPU. "I wish you could hear me, Kitt. I'm so sorry this had to happen. We'll find a way to get you back, I promise. Bonnie must have a backup of your program somewhere."

"Hand it over," Magneto demanded.

"Right," Michael said. Appearing as though it pained him, he gave the box to the silver-haired mutant. "Sorry, pal. I hope you can forgive me for this someday. I wish I had a choice."

Standing behind Michael in his physical form, Kitt resisted the impulse to roll his eyes. Storm placed a hand on his shoulder.

"We'll miss you, Kitt," Devon said, wiping a very convincing tear from his eye.

"At last," Magneto remarked. Using his mutant power to bend the lead walls around them until the metal creaked and groaned, he shouted, "Get out!"

No one argued. Jubilee, Bobby, and Jack were the first to flee to the surface. Michael, Storm, and Kitt followed as the walls around them became warped and bent. The hot California desert awaited them.

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Part 5

See part 1 for disclaimers.

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"Okay, Kitt," Michael asked after they'd all reached the surface, "what exactly is your plan?"

The former AI grinned. "Let's just say Magneto's not getting what he expected."

For a few moments, Kitt closed his eyes and sensed the connection he had with the CPU. The mutant was installing it into his system. Kitt felt the electricity flow into the processor through Magneto's network as the CPU was switched on. In its current state, the only method of communication that would work was an old-fashioned keyboard. Kitt sensed his nemesis begin to type.

>Hello, K.I.T.T.

>Magneto, you will not get away with this.

>On the contrary, I already have.

>Not quite.

Suddenly a power surge came from out of nowhere, cascading through the delicate network, and causing a system wide failure. The mutant swore colorfully as the electricity took out his computer network, even the emergency backup system he'd put in. The surge protection he'd added did nothing to stop it. One by one, the lights in his underground chamber went off until only the computer screen glowed.

>I underestimated you, K.I.T.T. I won't make that mistake again.

>Of course not. You won't have the chance to.

Magneto cursed as all the data in the CPU was wiped and the remaining power shut off, leaving him in the dark.

Up on the surface, everyone watched in astonishment as Kitt's physical form began to fade. The air around him shimmered with a sapphire blue aura. Slowly, the wind began to swirl.

"Kitt," Michael asked, "what are you doing?"

"What I have to," he answered calmly. "Don't be afraid, Michael. I'll be fine. This was meant to happen."

"Wait," Devon protested. "You're not thinking logically. We need you."

Kitt laughed. Oddly, it almost sounded like the wind. "And I need you. I'm not going anywhere, Devon. I'll still be here. Don't worry."

With that, he vanished completely, leaving behind several very astonished onlookers. Suddenly the wind began to pick up speed as the zephyr flowed around them all. Then Storm understood. Kitt was there. He had become the wind itself. She gasped. "It's him," she said in awe. "I can feel it."

"Wow," Michael said. It was totally amazing. He couldn't believe that he was actually witnessing a miracle.

Kitt could feel the earth around him. As the wind itself, he could sense everything that was going on. It defied logic completely. Physically, it should have been impossible. Yet it was happening and the feeling was incredible. Then he sensed that Magneto was about to get his revenge. He had to return!

The air suddenly shimmered with a blue light and coalesced into Kitt's physical form. He grinned. "Told you I wasn't going anywhere."

"Incredible," Devon remarked, relieved that Kitt was still in one piece.

"Cool," Jubilee said. "I've never seen anyone do that before."

"Magneto's coming. We'd better get ready," the former AI said.

Then Magneto levitated several feet above the ground, out of the trapdoor. He was obviously enraged. "You betrayed me, and for that, you'll pay!"

Michael felt as if his insides had turned into boiling lava. Groaning, he crumpled to the ground in pain. Kitt blasted Magneto with a lightning bolt, breaking his concentration. Then Michael's insides turned back to normal. "Whew," he gasped. "Thanks, pal."

Storm's eyes turned milky white as she summoned thunderclouds, and Jubilee let loose with fireworks. Bobby flung a barrage of hail at Magneto.

"I think we'd better sit this one out," Devon panted as he ducked behind the gleaming black Pontiac. "Are you all right?"

Michael nodded and winced in pain. Then he gaped as Magneto levitated the Trans Am several feet off

the ground, directly over their heads. "Oh, no!"

Devon looked up in horror. "I'm afraid we're done for, Michael!"

Storm blasted Magneto with a lightning bolt she'd summoned from the thunderclouds, and Kitt caught the Trans Am with a whirlwind. The car floated to the ground undamaged. Devon and Michael sighed with relief.

Jubilee's plasma bursts lit up the sky as Bobby's hailstones struck hard. In addition, Storm's lightning strikes were leaving Magneto battered. He was losing and he knew it. He glared at the unidentified mutant who had proved to be at least as powerful as Storm, but for some reason was holding back. "Who are you? What did Xavier offer you? Money? I can give you all the power you could ever dream of."

"I don't work for the X-Men, and anything you can offer me would be meaningless." He decided it was time that Magneto knew who and what he was dealing with. "I am Kitt, formerly known as the Knight Industries Two Thousand. I was once an artificial intelligence, but I'm no longer bound by the rules of logic or programming code." He could see disbelief and shock set into the mutant's expression. "I'm not a mutant, either. You wouldn't believe me if I told you what I really was."

"What are you?" Magneto asked.

It was time for honesty. "I'm a god, Magneto. I have all the power I could ever want, but I don't wish to rule the earth or control people. All I want is to help make a difference. That's all I've ever wanted."

The mutant gaped at him. "You're insane." He levitated the Trans Am again and hurled it towards Kitt.

Kitt sighed. "No, but I'm afraid you are." A sheer wall of wind sprang up, forcing the car to fly in a safer direction. He created a whirlwind beneath it so it wouldn't crash, and set it down gently.

"I may not be able to harm you, but I can harm your friends," Magneto declared.

Suddenly Devon gasped. He felt as though he were in a blazing inferno and every part of him was on fire. He writhed on the ground in pain.

"Devon," Michael exclaimed. "No!" He bent down to try and help.

Kitt felt a new emotion surge through him -- anger. This was rage that he'd never felt before. He'd always been shielded by programming code that forbade him from harming a living being, but not anymore. While he detested hurting anyone, he needed to do something to stop Magneto from harming others. He had the power to take lives as well as save them, but would he have to kill in defense? He hoped not. Kitt glared at his nemesis. "Now you've gone too far," he said in a dangerously low voice.

The air around Magneto shimmered with a sapphire blue glow, and he found it very difficult to breathe all of a sudden. As he landed on solid ground, the mutant staggered forward. He had vastly underestimated Kitt, mutant or not. "Please," he gasped.

"Will you surrender to the authorities?"

"Yes," Magneto croaked.

"Do you promise not to harm anyone here?"

Magneto nodded and gasped for air.

Michael's eyes widened as he looked up from Devon's pale face. He couldn't believe that Kitt would really do this, with or without programming code to hold him back. There was something about the look on Kitt's face he'd never seen before, an emotion he'd never recognized in his partner. Then Michael realized he'd never seen Kitt angry.

As an AI, Kitt got annoyed, moody, and even happy, but stronger emotions had always been tempered by logic. Now that the safety net was gone, he was just as vulnerable to emotions as anyone else, if not more so because he had so little experience with them. Michael was both awed and a little frightened. He knew Kitt would never harm him, but with all that power, Kitt could wreak havoc if he wanted to.

Michael looked back at Devon, who had drifted into unconsciousness. He remembered the long dark tunnel beckoning him towards an untimely death. Magneto had abducted Xavier's students and Devon. Before that, he'd been a terrorist. Whatever Kitt did to the mutant, he probably deserved it. Michael only wished that he had the power to take out Magneto himself. Then the blue glow around Magneto disappeared, and he drank in sweet air, not taking a single breath for granted.

Kitt ran to Devon's side. "How is he?"

"Not good," Michael replied. "Whatever you can do for him, pal, I suggest you do it."

He nodded. Then he used his newfound healing powers.

Devon's eyes opened and a look of relief passed across his face. "Thank you, Kitt."

"Anytime."

Glancing at the defeated Magneto, Kitt was grateful he hadn't had to kill him. He shuddered to think at how easily he might have done so. He and Michael helped Devon stand up.

"Wilton would have been so proud of you both," Devon told them. "You really can make a difference."

Michael grinned. "That's for sure."

* * * * *

Later that day, Kitt and Michael waited with Storm and the teenagers at the airport. "I wish we could go home in the blackbird," Jubilee said.

Bobby elbowed her. "We're supposed to be keeping a low profile, remember?"

Jubilee rolled her eyes.

Storm and Kitt gazed at each other. Love was a wonderful feeling, Kitt thought. He just wished he didn't have to say goodbye.

"I will not forget you," Storm said. "You are amazing."

"So are you. I'll always care for you."

She smiled. "I know."

They kissed just as their flight's arrival was announced over the loudspeakers.

"We'd better go," Bobby said. "Bye, guys. Thanks for everything."

Jubilee gaped at Kitt. She couldn't believe she was sitting so close to him. "Are you really...?"

His blue eyes sparkled as he nodded and put a finger to his lips. "Ssssh. Don't tell."

She grinned. "Cool."

"Come on," Jack said. He was standing up. "Let's go home."

Storm and Kitt kissed one last time. Then they finally stood up. "Good bye and good luck. I have a feeling you'll need it."

"Thanks."

He felt as though his heart would break as she departed with the students, leaving him with Michael, who looked sympathetic.

"Somehow, it just doesn't seem fair," Kitt said.

"Life isn't fair, pal. Luckily, we're here to do something about it."

"Good point."

Closing his eyes briefly, Kitt sensed the world around him. Life flowed around them, and whether it was fair or not, they were there to make a difference.

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The End

Knight of the Zephyr

This is a "what-if" story based on the 4th season episode Burial Ground. I do not own the recognizable characters from Knight Rider. This takes place about a year after the series ended and is in an alternate universe. Thanks to Knightshade for the beta.

By Emily M. Hanson

* * * * *

Dr. Bonnie Barstow tapped away on her computer keyboard as the Knight Industries Two Thousand, the most complex and advanced artificial intelligence in the world, watched her silently. The red scanner on

the prow of the 1982 Firebird traced back and forth slowly. The AI's CPU was currently housed in the vehicle, which contained a number of technologies used to fight crime. Bonnie thought of the AI not as the Knight Industries Two Thousand or even K.I.T.T., but rather as Kitt, a person as complex as anyone she had ever met.

The slender brunette poured herself into her work, trying to forget that she had been recently dumped by a man who couldn't understand why any woman would want to make work her priority or spend more time with computers than people. Aaron Wilson had seemed like a nice guy. He was charming, funny, and cultured enough to meet her at an art museum and a theater for about a dozen dates. But when she'd had to cancel their last three dates due to work at the Foundation For Law and Government, he'd been more than annoyed. He'd been rude and called her names, and she thought he would have hit her if Michael and Kitt hadn't shown up to give her a lift at the right time.

When she was upset, Bonnie tended to throw herself into her work and ignore the rest of the world. Kitt was the only exception. She knew that he could never hurt her. He was safe. He was a machine, and he would never hurt her. Besides, having him there to talk to was good therapy.

"Bonnie, what's wrong?" Kitt asked. "Was it that jerk you were dating?"

"If you mean Aaron, yes. It's a good thing you and Michael showed up when you did. I don't know what he might have done."

Kitt wished more than anything that he could comfort her. She needed a human friend; someone who could really understand what she was going through, not a computer like him. He had access to all of Shakespeare's works in his data banks, and those of other great writers as well. But reading about love and experiencing it were two very different things. He wished more than anything that he could reach out and touch her gently.

A moment later, Bonnie's hair was tousled as a light breeze sprung up from out of nowhere. She glanced around. They were in the Knight Industries semi and the truck's door was closed, so there was no apparent source of wind.

"Kitt, where did that breeze come from?" she asked.

The red scanner tracked back and forth as the AI studied the vehicle. "I'm detecting no cracks or ruptures anywhere, Bonnie."

"That's strange."

"It's probably nothing to worry about," he replied.

"Yeah. I'm sure you're right."

As Bonnie tapped away, Kitt wished that he could do something to make her feel better. "Would you like me to play some music?" he asked.

"Only if you want to," she replied. As the soft strains of a jazz song filled the semi, she managed a smile. Somehow, he'd known exactly what she wanted to hear. "Thank you."

He watched her relax just a little, but she was clearly still tense. "Perhaps you should ask Michael to

give you a massage," Kitt suggested.

Bonnie turned around. "Michael?" she asked, as though the idea was ludicrous.

"It was only a suggestion," he replied.

"Of course, Kitt. I know you mean well, but Michael is really the last person I need to be with right now. In fact, you're about the only person I want to talk to."

"Because I'm technically a machine, so I'm not really a person," he reasoned. "And because the sound of my voice is the only thing that makes me 'male'. You could have just as easily programmed me with a woman's voice -- yours, for example."

"You and I both know that you're a lot more than just a machine."

"That is illogical."

"Maybe, but it's true. Face it, Kitt. You're a lot more human than Aaron."

"Thank you...I think."

It wasn't the first time he'd wondered about that. Was he more human than machine? If Kitt was just a computer, then why did he care about Bonnie's feelings? Why did he care about Michael, for that matter, or even Devon and RC III? There were very few times that logic escaped him, but this was one of them.

The AI couldn't understand why he felt anything at all besides logic. In fact, he'd tried to deny his feelings in the past and hide inside the walls of his CPU, pretending to be nothing more than a fancy computer. Michael and Bonnie had both figured that out long ago, and he trusted them more than anyone else. He could tell that Devon still thought of him as a machine, although an extremely advanced and expensive one. It was true that on paper, he was nothing more than software, silicon, and wires hooked up to a fancy car. But reality was defined by perceptions, not ink.

The gentle breeze came to life again, brushing against Bonnie's skin and blowing through her hair. She looked startled. "Kitt, where on earth is that wind coming from?"

As the scanner moved, the wind increased until Bonnie's hair was blowing as though she were in a convertible with the top down, and not inside a semi. Kitt was getting the most bizarre readings he'd ever gotten. There was no apparent source of wind anywhere that he could see, but he got the strangest energy reading ever. As he focused on the energy, it became apparent that it was emanating from him.

The wind suddenly picked up, gusting so much that a paper cup filled with hot coffee tipped over. Luckily, it missed Bonnie's keyboard. Just then, Michael climbed out of the truck's cab where he'd been talking to RC and made his way into the semi.

"Hey, Bonnie, what..." His jaw dropped in astonishment.

"I have no idea," she admitted.

"Kitt, what's going on?" Michael asked.

The AI nearly panicked. If they knew he was somehow causing this phenomenon, they might report it to Devon, who would, in turn report it to the board of directors, who would almost certainly decide to dismantle him. They would be afraid of him, and probably with good cause.

The wind gusted so strongly that Bonnie and Michael had to grab onto shelves riveted to the semi's walls to keep from falling over.

"Kitt, what's happening?" Bonnie shouted.

"I..." he started. What was he going to tell them? How could he explain it? He didn't even know how he was doing this, only that he was, and the lack of any logical explanation frustrated him. He began to run self diagnostics and searched through his data banks for anything that might help.

A few moments later, Kitt ran across a record that went back two and a half years to the time when he and Michael had helped a Native American tribe fight for their land. One of the tribe's members, Blue Feather, thought he might have been the reincarnation of their wind god. Of course, logic dictated that that was impossible and Michael had agreed wholeheartedly at the time. Now Kitt wondered if, in fact, Blue Feather had been right all along.

Focusing on the bizarre energy, Kitt willed the wind to calm down. Slowly, it did. Both Michael and Bonnie were visibly relieved.

"Whew," Michael said, releasing his grip on the shelf. "What was that?"

"You're not going to believe this," the AI replied. "I'm not sure I believe it."

"Believe what?" Bonnie asked.

Kitt hesitated. "Do you remember the time we were out at the reservation a couple of years ago?"

"Yeah."

"Does the name Blue Feather ring any bells?"

Michael thought about it. He remembered a seemingly crazy, but harmless man. "The guy who thought you were the reincarnation of their wind god?"

"That's him. I'm afraid he might have been right after all."

He and Bonnie exchanged glances of disbelief and shock. She couldn't believe what Kitt had just said. It was completely illogical and against his programming, yet she couldn't come up with a reasonable explanation for what had just happened any more than he could. What if he was right?

"When was the last time you ran a self diagnostic?" Bonnie inquired.

"Less than a minute ago. All of my systems are fine."

Michael gave the Trans Am an incredulous look. His partner couldn't be a god, not even a reincarnated one. It wasn't possible. Kitt was an artificial intelligence. He might be more human than machine, but he wasn't a deity. "No way. I don't believe this. It can't be true. You're a computer, Kitt. Use logic!"

The red scanner moved back and forth. "I have. I detected an abnormal energy source when the wind came. It is no longer present, but it was clearly emanating from me. I must have caused the wind somehow."

"Maybe someone messed around with his code."

Bonnie shook her head. "Even if they have, none of his functions have the ability to create that much wind outside of the car without him moving. It's not possible."

Michael looked at his partner, wondering what might happen if Kitt was right. Maybe they'd better find out for sure. "Do you think you can create a nice breeze, pal?"

"I'll give it my best shot."

The AI concentrated with all of his circuits, focusing on trying to create the wind. What was he thinking about when it first happened? Bonnie. She'd brought out his feelings. Emotion, not logic, was the key. He thought about reaching out and suddenly the air came to life, gently flowing around them all.

Michael gasped in surprise. "Unbelievable."

Bonnie turned around with an expression of awe on her face. "Kitt? Is that you?"

Somewhat hesitantly, he answered, "Yes."

She grinned. "I'd give anything to be able to hug you right now. This is incredible."

"Anything?" he asked, curious as to whether she really wanted to touch him.

"Almost anything."

The AI wished that he could look into her eyes. Suddenly there was a blue flash of light and the wind picked up slightly. When the light disappeared, a man stood in front of the Trans Am. He was tall, handsome, and well-built with bright blue eyes. His hair was black with a lightning-shaped silver streak down the middle, though he did not look a day over 25. He wore a long-sleeved black T-shirt and indigo jeans. Bonnie gasped as Michael's jaw dropped. Kitt smiled. When he spoke, it was without an accent.

"Don't be afraid. It's me, Kitt."

"How did you do that?" Bonnie asked. "Not that I'm complaining."

"I'm guessing it goes with being the wind god."

Michael stared in shock. He could not believe this was happening. "How come the Trans Am is still here?" he managed to ask. "Aren't you and the car the same?"

"The vehicle is not me. I'm part of it, but it's not me."

"So you're outside of the car."

"Correct." Kitt concentrated for a moment, focusing on the car. Its engine revved. "However, I still seem

to be linked to it."

Bonnie looked at Kitt. "Are you still on for that hug?"

"You bet."

She wrapped her arms around him, then kissed his cheek. "You have no idea how long I've wanted to do that."

Kitt smiled. "Did it make you feel better?"

"Oh, yes."

Just then, Devon entered the trailer. "Is everything all right?" The Englishman's eyes widened as he saw a stranger. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"It's all right," Michael said. "You're not going to believe this either, but this is Kitt."

"Surely you're joking. We all know that's impossible."

Kitt stepped forward. "I'm afraid he isn't joking. It's really me. I'll prove it. I know his real name is Michael Arthur Long, that Wilton Knight saved his life, and that he gave Michael his own last name and his son Garthe's face."

Devon gasped. It was true! "Dear God." He started to sit down on the Trans Am's hood, then thought better of it and sat down on a nearby chair.

Unable to resist, Michael gestured towards Kitt and said, "Right here, Devon."

"What?!" The Englishman turned several shades paler.

Kitt gave his partner an annoyed look. "You're not helping."

"Sorry, pal."

Bonnie put her hand on Devon's shoulder. "This isn't any easier for him to deal with than it is for us. If all you'd ever known was logic, how would you deal with something that completely defied it?"

"Probably not very well," the older man admitted. "Kitt, do you know how this happened?"

"I believe so. When Michael and I were helping that Native American tribe a couple of years ago, I met a shaman named Blue Feather. He told me about an ancient prophecy which said the wind god would be reincarnated as a horse. Well, he figured that since it was the twentieth century, why not an automobile? Of course, I realized that was completely illogical, but I played along for a while to make him happy. As it turns out, he may have been right after all."

A slight breeze sprang up out of nowhere. Devon looked around in amazement and finally met Kitt's brilliant blue eyes. "That's you?"

He nodded.

"Incredible! Kitt, do you know what this means?"

"I can finally experience the things I've always wanted to. I can go anywhere and do anything. I'm not confined to the car anymore." He grinned.

"Do you realize that you have the ability to realize Wilton's dream? You could create a world where there are no injustices, where no one would have to fear becoming a victim of violent crime, and where there is, in fact, no crime?"

"Devon..."

"You can do anything now. You've been given the power to change the world. Think of the difference you could make, Kitt." Suddenly his face fell as he realized what was inevitable. "I'm sure you'll want to leave FLAG."

"No, actually, I don't."

Michael and Bonnie exchanged glances. What did he need them for? After all, he was the wind god.

"Look, I still need you. You're my friends and family. Besides, the entire world can't know about me just yet. They wouldn't understand," Kitt said. "They'd just be afraid of me. I'd be a threat to their way of life."

"Perhaps you have a point," Devon replied.

"Think of how everyone else would react. I'd be an outcast and unable to help anyone because they'd be too frightened of me. I don't want that to happen."

"He's right," Bonnie remarked.

Michael looked at his partner. "Are you sure you still want to put up with me, pal?"

He grinned. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Devon managed a smile. "Then I promise I won't tell the board of directors. If we can manage to keep this a secret for a while longer, who knows what good might come of it?"

"Who knows, indeed?" Kitt responded.

The zephyr swirled around them, creating a myriad of possibilities. Transformation was in the air. However illogical it might be, it was happening and the world would be altered forever.

* * * * *

The End

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