

Tim was staring at Einstein with a hard frown, but something had changed. The anger had drained away. He looked back at his friends, black eyes focusing on the twins with knew understanding.

Tim faced Einstein. He was no longer the predator, the hunter, the angry beast, but rather a boy. A teenager fighting against a world that was trying to destroy him and everyone else he cared about. He stood straight, his arms hanging by his side, his fists unclenched and his head raised, but not defiant.

‘I am going to protect them,’ said Tim, eyes gleaming. ‘But not because you asked me to.’

Despite the situation, a faint smirk pulled at Einstein’s lips.

Tim was still holding onto Stevie’s arm, and black eyes flickered her way, before refocusing on Einstein.

‘I’m going to protect *all* of them. And I’ll do it better than you did.’

‘Humans have strange notions of the forces that control fate,’ said Einstein, and his posture relaxed ever so slightly as he—just like BK had—tilted his head to stare up toward the ceiling. ‘I have always had trouble understanding this idea that there is some other being at work controlling your lives. While although *I* have controlled many things throughout their lives—,’ he gestured toward the twins, encompassing BK and Zach in the motion. ‘You are the one thing I did not foresee. You are the one human who has made me think, for just a moment, that Fate is, perhaps, possible. For I was unquestionably lucky, the day you entered their lives.’

A smile cracked Tim’s lips. ‘And don’t you forget it,’ he said.

Without another glance back, Tim turned, gesturing for Ant to follow him, and began pulling Stevie out of the room.

The others left, following their friend's lead, the twins not even sparing their older brother a second look, even as Genie threw one last longing look at the alien who had created her.

Zach paused in the doorway, glancing back at Einstein with a small frown.

'What about James.'

'I will take care of him.'

Zach took another step, one hand on the doorway. He stood half in, and half out of the room, knowing he had to go, but not quite ready. 'What about you?'

'I will be fine.'

Zach hesitated one last moment, taking the alien in.

He looked so lonely, in the nearly empty room. So small, after the weight of all those voices. Zach knew that this was just a head start. That Einstein was going to buy them time. They'd come for the twins, surely; but first, they would come for *him*. The man who had tried to save them, and the man who had destroyed their plans

'Go,' Einstein whispered.

Zach went.