

W<sup>°</sup>NDER CITY ST<sup>°</sup>RIES

VOLUME 4:

WHOSE DREAMS COME  
TRUE

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EPISODE #9

Wasuremono

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# Wasuremono

Megan thought, *Someday, I need to just buy my own damn van and quit borrowing Zoltan's*, as Watson drove The Divine Sarah, their landlord's Art Deco vintage VW bus, past the Wonder City limits and onto the winding Pennsylvania back roads beyond. Early spring was more visible here on the drizzly day, with the trees just putting out dark red buds and pale yellow-green early leaves, and a few stray daffodils popping yellow onto the landscape. *I'm very nearly cleared for driving again; hell, I'm nearly cleared for getting back on public transit. I think I'm tired of being driven everywhere for a while.* Since the telepathic mucking about in her head two years earlier, she'd had periodic seizures that prohibited her from driving. Since her super-strength was above Class 5, she also couldn't be on public transit when she might have a seizure—to do so endangered the public. She also couldn't be on ladders at work, and the whole thing had put a serious hitch in her informal carpentry apprenticeship. Aggressive medication and careful telepathic therapy to undo some of the damage had mostly controlled them, finally. *It's been nearly six months since the last one. Fingers crossed that was the end.*

She glanced back at Jen, who was staring out the window, her unwieldy wings carefully tucked over the back of the seat, released from the restraint of the leather halter Jen was wearing. *She helped me so much get my life back in order. Why did this have to happen to her?*

Jen looked at her, smiled, and looked away again. "I'm glad there was this harness-thing back at my apartment," she said, "but what the hell does that *mean*, anyway? Why is my apartment completely rearranged for these wings? Why do my students remember me as *always* having these wings when the two of you *don't*?"

Watson's normally calm face was lined with worry as she turned the van down a narrower road. "It means, I think, that there's some timeline rewriting afoot."

"But what does that even *mean*, Watson?" Jen said, leaning forward a little, hitching up on the wings, and then sitting back with a grimace. "And why *me*?"

Megan sighed. "It means that someone is doing something that's changing all our lives backward in time. Your wings could be splashover from something bigger, affecting someone else. You know, something else changed, and therefore one of your genes was

tweaked in a different way during your childhood, and so you got the big wings instead of the little wings."

"Maybe you were exposed to radiation," Watson said, shrugging and pushing her rimless glasses higher on her nose, "or maybe something happened to affect the sperm or ovum that went into making you. It's so hard to tell with timeline fuckery."

Jen rubbed her face, and Megan could see the exhaustion in the bags under her eyes. *Having your body changed without your consent is just fucking horrible.* She reached a hand back and touched Jen's leg. Jen smiled again and set her smaller, darker hand over Megan's. "I'm okay."

"It's okay if you're not okay," Megan said, and then they both laughed. Watson snorted, but she was smiling too.

They turned up the dirt road to Professor Canis's house. Megan was sorry that Jasmine and her kids weren't living there any more—she fondly remembered the first time she rattled up this road and the wolf puppies chased the van and were so very excited to see her and Simon. *Was that really five years ago? Six? So much has happened since then.*

Watson's face had resumed its usual mask of calm as she steered the van into a parking spot. *If I know anything, she's furiously trying to figure out the timeline thing, or at least where to start investigating it.*

As the two of them were helping Jen out of the van and restrapping her wings in place, their friend Tizemt popped out of the kitchen door. Tizemt was darker and thinner than Megan, and was the only woman in Wonder City on hugging terms with Megan that Megan didn't have to stoop to hug. Megan tried not to hug her too hard—Tizemt wasn't para, despite her prodigious height. Apparently, most of her people in her "lost" African civilization were tall.

"I was so psyched to hear you were coming for a visit," Tizemt said in her perfect BBC English, stooping to hug Watson and Jen, "that I made dinner! I mean, I know it's early and all, but I figured we could eat, then go down to the lab. It sounds like you folks have had a bit of a trying couple of days."

"You could say that," Jen said, glancing back at the burden strapped to her back.

"Right, you mentioned that you woke up and those hadn't always been there," Tizemt said, "though I remember you with them. I mean, you had them when I first met you at that book talk I gave at Wonder City U."

Jen said, with a sad smile, "I remember the talk, and meeting you, but I remember having tiny wings when I was there."

"And I remember the little wings too," Megan said, brushing her fingertips over Jen's shoulder sympathetically. "She had them when you introduced us at your birthday party. Watson thinks it's a timeline rearrangement."

Tizemt threw her hands in the air and said, "Wonder City! Let's go inside and eat."

The kitchen was full of rich, savory smells as they came through the door, and Tizemt gestured them all through into the dining room, which was big enough for Jen to rest her wings in a slightly stretched-out way. Once Megan and Watson got her settled, Tizemt brought out a tajine of lamb, eggs, almonds, and plums, and served them out of the big ceramic bowl. "Anyone want some of my mead? I decanted it last week and it's pretty damn good."

Watson accepted a glass, and so did Jen. Megan abstained, since she didn't want to upset the applecart of her neurochemistry.

*Goddamn, I didn't know how hungry I was,* Megan thought, digging into the food. *When was the last time I had a full meal? Before Jen woke up with her wing problem, at least.* The last day had been so strange. They'd discussed taking Jen to Urgent Care, but Jen preferred to try to get an appointment with her usual doctor, who was, of course, on vacation. Then they stopped by Jen's classroom to pick up papers and show the change to her students, but no one reacted to her differently at all. Her students and fellow teachers all said that she'd had the wings all along.

"You know, I've always wondered why you haven't worked on the wing muscles before now," Tizemt said, then she got a peculiar look on her face. "Or, I guess, I *have now* always wondered. This timeline stuff makes my head hurt."

"You're not the only one," Watson said, rubbing her forehead. "Speaking of which, do you have ibuprofen?"

There was more chatter, but everyone avoided further discussion of timelines and wings until the meal was over.

"Okay," Tizemt said, producing her StarLeaf tablet and opening something on it as they ate the rich, fudgy brownies hot from the oven. "I've pulled your para registry record, Jen. Could you take a look at it and see what else you don't remember?"

Jen took the StarLeaf and skimmed down the listing. Megan restrained herself from peeking over her shoulder—there was a lot of private information in the para registry, and while one couldn't keep it from the government, it seemed only right not to pry as a girlfriend.

Almost immediately, Jen got a strange look on her face. "I... don't remember having a levitation power."

Watson frowned. "Levitation... what class?"

Jen said, "Class 6. It says I can lift several tons with it, as well as myself."

"And levitation would let you fly with those wings," Megan said, amazed, "as long as you could move the wing mass with your muscles and deal with air resistance."

Jen stared at her for a long moment, then continued to scroll through the document. "Everything else looks right. Just not the para abilities." She handed the tablet back to Tizemt.

Watson was scowling at the brownie crumbs on her plate. "You're not afraid of heights. Why wouldn't you already have your wings in shape from flying?"

Jen shook her head. "I don't know. Whoever did this didn't think to give me a backstory, apparently." She pressed the heels of her hands against her eyes. "Rewriting my life. Rewriting my *whole* life. Everything that makes me *me*."

Megan put a hand on her shoulder.

After a moment, Tizemt said, "What I'd like to start with, if you agree, is getting a full-body image with the Professor's new body imager unit. It will give us a 3-D understanding of your muscle structure, and I can work with the physical therapist to customize your exercise

equipment accordingly. Otherwise, what I build might end up hurting you rather than helping."

"I assume that kind of imaging will have to be added to her registry record," Watson said, gazing at Tizemt with a vaguely hostile expression.

"I'll talk to the Professor," Tizemt said with a grimace, "but unless I can find a PT within the para community willing to work off the record, yes."

"Oh, I don't care," Jen snapped. "The government can have my damn muscle structure. I want to stop being in so much pain all the time."

Watson's face flickered to stubbornness, then guilt, and she said, "I'm sorry, Jen."

*Well, damn, that's the first time in a while Jen's gotten impatient and Watson's backed down instead of getting defensive,* Megan thought, looking back and forth between them.

Jen smiled a little, possibly also taken by surprise, and reached over to touch Watson's hand. "I know you're just worried."

Watson gave her a little smile, and took her hand. "I can learn to do it in ways that don't piss you off, though."

Megan felt just a little tension ease out of her back then. The stress of being the pivot point of the triad had been growing on her, and she hadn't realized it.

Tizemt glanced at Megan with raised eyebrows, and when Megan gave her a lopsided smile, she said, "Well, let's go downstairs then and I can run the imaging."