

Dishes, Rollerblades, and Duct Tape

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Challenges:

Characters: Tom Cassidy, Hank McCoy, Emma Frost

Actions: washing dishes, rollerblading

A perfectly shaped eyebrow raised in what some might have called inquisition. Of course, when it belonged to this particular face, and this particular woman, it indicated irritation. In fact, something had irritated enough to cause a facial expression.

Not usually a good sign.

The window glass was fairly thick, having to survive harsh New England winters, and muffled the sounds of alarmed squeals and uncontrollable giggling. A flash of yellow passed across her sunglasses, and the eyebrow lowered.

Jubilee had clearly not done the dishes.

In fact, she was outside on the main driveway, ‘assisting’ Hank McCoy with a physics demonstration. Knowing his class, Dr. McCoy had decided that the physics lab that afternoon should be interactive. And involve roller blades. She’d glanced over the lesson plan, involving inertia and Newton’s Three Laws of Physics, and approved it. It would be good for the students to get out of their normal routine, and they were getting restless. Athletics and science combined would probably imprint the lesson more permanently.

It wasn’t, however, conducive for doing the dishes.

Emma allowed a small sigh to escape and turned away from the window. She smoothed her skirt down with one hand and contemplated Jubilee’s next punishment. Obviously, it would have to involve some sort of restraint in order to make her stay in one spot.

A small smile crossed her face at the thought of that.

Her eyes closed as she ran another light scan over the school grounds. The sheer amount of paperwork had forced her to put off the one she normally did earlier. The grounds were clear but...

Emma’s eyes snapped open and she headed out of her office. There was someone in the kitchen and it was a signature that did not belong in her school.

It took a remarkable amount of skill to walk silently in ivory heels. In truth, it took a remarkable amount of skill to walk silently in –any- pair of heels, it just happened that all of Emma’s were ivory, or ecru or other tasteful shades of off-white.

As she entered the kitchen, she saw the back of a thin man, bent over the sink, muttering curses in a thick Irish accent. “Black Tom Cassidy. Exactly what, may I ask, are you doing in –my- school?” Emma demanded. “I somehow doubt you are doing the dishes out of the goodness of your heart.”

The figure at the sink turned casually, and earned an eyebrow raise for keeping his poise. He gave her a polite nod. “Emma Frost. Expected ye sooner.” He had his hands wrist-deep in thick white suds, and there was no shillelagh.

“Figured yuir dishes needed doin’, and it tain’t like ye can get th’ lassies in this country te do them.”

There was a half-beat of pause, and Emma smiled. Tom frowned, and his hands stopped moving in the water.

“Look, before ye scan me mind at least allow me th’ embarrassment of tryin’ te get it out with me voice.”

She placed a slender hand on her hip. “Well, far be it from me to deny someone the pleasure of embarrassing themselves in front of me,” she purred, already knowing that the next few seconds would be rather full of lies and half-truths. At least she would be entertained before she knocked him out.

“Well, I’ve done some thinkin’ lately,” Tom started. “As ye know from watchin’ Sean, I’m getting’ on in me life. There comes a time in every man’s life that he takes a good, hard look at himself and realizes that he doesnae really like where he’s going. I’m tryin’ ta make a new life for meself and where is better than Sean’s very own school?”

“You mean, of course, that there comes a time in every man’s life when he drops his power focus in the sink after breaking into the kitchen of his cousin’s place of employment.” Emma corrected. Arching an eyebrow, she began the unpleasant process of tearing through the man’s hastily erected mental shields. Shields that seemed to be primarily made of thoughts of activities best left unsaid.

“Shite.” Tom spat, and his arms tightened as he found the object he was looking for. No, she sensed, and a second later he swore loudly, pulling his hands from the sink. She caught a glimpse of a cutting block sinking back below the suds.

“Faux wood, Thomas. Do you really expect that I would let the students anywhere near anything combustible?” Emma smiled tightly, continuing to peel away Black Tom’s mental shields.

An expression of rage passed over Tom’s face and he flung the first object he encountered – his cousin’s scotch tumbler. It was not a premeditated attack, and her eyes widened as she saw it coming in real-time. She wrenched her face back, her eyes for some reason focusing on a droplet of the suds that was flying through the air, seemingly in slow motion –

Damn.

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“I think that’s enough for today. If you’d like to proceed back to footwear that is more appealing to your personal tastes, you may do so at this time.”

Jubilee circled him three times, her rollerblades rumbling on the hard black asphalt. “But what if this is the footwear that most appeals to my personal tastes?”

“I do not think your headmistress will approve of rollerblading in the house, Jubilee.” Dr. Hank McCoy did his best impression of an impassive, professorly expression. It didn’t last very long, as Jubilee popped a bubble in his face.

“C’mon, Big Blue, I don’t think she’d – oh suckage, dude!”

Monet looked up, her expression disinterested, before she went back to her perfectly laced rollerblades. Untying them was going to be a huge production, Hank could feel it coming on. Why destroy the symmetry of the laces by untying them? He should have looked for a pair that attached with elastic only.

He glanced over. “Jubilation, was there any particular reason for the loud, blasphemous outburst?” he inquired, rolling past her slightly and not bothering to turn around.

“Well, duh. Geez, Frosty goes and gives me a completely bogus ten minute lecture on leaving that stupid window closed and now it’s, like, totally open!”

Hank glanced over his shoulder and frowned. The window was, indeed, wide open and he had overheard the lecture on not air conditioning the entire state. As all the students had been outside during the physics class, the blame could not be placed on Jubilee’s classmates. It would be terribly out of character for Emma to open the window after lecturing Jubilee, and Sean was in Westchester, visiting Theresa.

“Indeed, this is perplexing. But, to misquote the great detective, when you have exhausted the logical solutions to a question, the answer, no matter how improbable, must be true. “ He grinned toothily. “Come my young and vivacious friend. We are off to investigate a mystery.”

Going up the stairs in rollerblades was no trouble for Jubilee, who had possibly been born on wheels. Going up the stairs in rollerblades was no trouble for Hank, who decided to walk on his hands instead of his feet. He had inserted thick leather pads into his own oversized rollerblades to prevent his toe-claws from puncturing the toes of the sneakers-turned-rollerblades.

The kitchen door was open, and there were sink suds all over the counter beneath the sink. The window was positioned just above the sink, and the mess could have been created by, say, a stray meteor. The dishes had all been removed from the sink, and overflowed into a pool on the floor.

“In that case, I found, like, a clue, and this is so totally Scooby Doo here.” Jubilee held up two large pieces of glass. “Bansh’s gonna completely freak, cause this is his, and somebody broke it, and I so know that like, Frosty’s gonna blame me, cause I was supposed to do the dishes, only I kinda, you know, didn’t?”

“Ah, but my dear pyrotechnically inclined girl, your neglect to complete your chores has provided us with a vast store of information about the culprit, not only in opening the window, but in breaking that tumbler, and, leaving these puddles of water on the floor.” With a flourish, Hank indicated the wet patches on the tile. Shall we follow this watery trail?”

“Dude, one joke about me being Scooby to your Shaggy and I’m totally going back outside.”

In truth, Hank was slightly concerned. Jubilee was messy, but the goo on the dishes had clearly been soaking in water for some time before it was removed. And Jubilee had come bouncing out just after the exercise had begun, which hadn’t given her enough time to soak the dishes and then pile them all beside the sink.

Hank curiously peered into the sink, but the water was murky. It was impossible to tell if more dishes lay in the depths. Jubilee had already headed out of the kitchen with the telltale ‘whirrrr’ of wheels, and he pondered a moment before setting off after her, again on his hands. In the case of an invading evildoer, there was no point in giving them warning. Jubilee was more than capable on wheels, and no one could make a better diversion.

Whoever had come out of the kitchen was wearing solid shoes, like boots or sneakers, with a decent tread. Maybe even new. They were walking heavily, and the thick oriental runners were soaking the water in deeply. If their intruder had continued deep into the house, there was a good chance their lead was going to . . . dry up.

The pun was so perfect he found himself grinning toothily, which was quite inappropriate for a re-enactment of a very serious cartoon. There was no sign of blood, and Emma was somewhere in the house, so he wasn’t particularly alarmed. All the students were still outside, and, for the most part, safe.

The footprints turned the corner for the main garage, and Hank was not surprised to hear raised voices.

Tom Cassidy was furious, partly at himself and partly at the very loud, bellowing girl in bright colors in front of him. Everything had started to go as planned -- Sean was off campus for the first time in weeks, the students had been in the middle of a class outside and he had expected Frost to discover him.

He hadn't expected the newly purchased power focus to not fit just yet and he really hadn't expected the thing to fall off as he climbed in through the unlocked window. That inconvenience would have been enough but the fact that it rolled into the sink had been the last straw.

Thankfully, Tom's unplanned assault with the tumbler had taken Emma out and he hadn't wasted time finding the power focus under the dishes and then dragging her body from the kitchen into the garage.

But the child would have to be dealt with. With a curse, Tom raised his hand and aimed at Jubilee. "Would ye shut th' bloody hell up, ye screamin' harpy?" he snapped as he fired a warning shot.

She completely ignored it. "Irony so totally dictates that Bansh should scream your monkey head off, but since he's off being all family-man, I guess irony will have to suffer, huh?" The girl taunted, cracking her gum. "And dude, if you're gonna taunt, like, at least learn my name, okay? Jubilation Lee, or Jubilee, or Jubes, or Jay, but not Sparky, cause that's Jono, even though he hates that."

Tom blinked. Obviously, this particular student of Frost's was some sort of retard. He vaguely remembered the young Asian girl, but couldn't quite place what she –did-. Whatever it was, it must've been ineffective, or else she wouldn't be chattering like some kind of hyperactive squirrel. He snapped out his arm, sending a crackling beam of energy towards the girl.

Jubilee dropped into a low roll, coming back up and grabbing the bumper of one of the cars to avoid sliding on her blades out of the garage. "Your aim bites –hard-, man, and when Frosty there wakes up, she's gonna be so completely honked off that you're shooting all over her cars. Not a happy camper at all."

"Speakin' of cars, lass, do ye have a recommendation?" If her powers were useless against him, there was no point in sticking around. Sooner or later the noise was going to attract the kind of trouble that would be harder to ignore.

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Hank crept forward, still on his hands, as silent as three hundred pounds of blue fur could. Black Tom was down there, from the sounds of things, and the blasts had been his. Jubilee wasn't puffing back, and her temper was as hot as her powers, so there had to be a reason. What reason could there possibly be?

The stairs to the garage were fairly narrow, and they turned a sharp left. It wasn't the best angle for sound to clearly travel, and their conversation was muffled. He crept down the stairs, two at a time, trying to avoid hitting his roller-bladed feet on the walls.

"Speakin' of cars, lass, do ye have a recommendation?"

Hank paused, at the final stair, and peered around. He was very accustomed to having to assess a combat situation upside-down, so this was not extraordinary. It appeared that Black Tom had somehow incapacitated Emma Frost – possibly related to the broken tumbler. He had slung her across the hood of the Bentley, and he was standing just in front of her.

It explained Jubilee’s reluctance to attack – she was still uncertain enough in her powers to fear missing her target and striking her schoolmistress.

But, as he’d predicted, she was putting up a great diversion, and as a bonus she had positioned herself on the far side of the garage. It kept most of Black Tom’s back to him, and thus gave him an excellent opening. His eyes went to the ceiling, looking for handy holds. He located one, too far to simply jump and grab.

Damnation. There was no way to get there without giving himself away.

Oh well. He quickly calculated the distance and the amount of time he was going to be on his feet. While agile, the wheels added a significant change to his plans. He saw Jubilee smile, and realized she’d spotted him.

“You could always, y’know, take the ‘vette. Of course, we have bugs and stuff to track your pathetic would-be kidnapper butt down, so it isn’t like you’d actually get away or anything.” She paused, clearly searching for more inane babble to keep him occupied. “Besides, dude, didn’t you like drive here yourself in something?”

Hank noticed that Black Tom’s arm was still raised, still pointing at Jubilee, and decided to make as much noise as possible.

“FORCE EQUALS MASS TIMES ACCELERATION!”

By the time he’d gotten to the word “TIMES” he was on his feet, and with a mighty launch he leapt off the ground and caught the hot water pipe. It was fairly warm, but thick and stable, and he aimed a foot for Tom’s turning collarbone.

There was a flash of surprise on Cassidy’s face, and then he was struck. The force of the blow threw Cassidy almost five feet, over the hood of the Bentley, and he landed in a crumpled heap on the opposite side. Now cleanly away from Emma, Jubilee popped her gum and gave a small paff.

“Don’t, like, move or anything. ‘Kay?”

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Jubilee was feeling quite giddy. After Hank had totally kicked Black Tom’s ass and tied him up, he had dumped him in the bathroom, where there was no wood for the villain to

channel his power through. After begging, pleading and making the kitty-eyes at him, Hank had finally allowed Jubilee to have a little fun.

“Like, dude, you totally realize that this is going to hurt for days, right?” she chirped, grinning. “I mean...Logan’s only slightly hairier so, well, eewwww. But this should, you know, take care of most of that for you. And to think—for free!”

She held up her hands. “Which color of duct tape, dude? Plain, boring silver. But classic at the same time, sweet isn’t it? Or we have blue and yellow, kinda like when I was with the X-Men. Or! Red and white stripes! Very festive and stripy, which won’t make you look fat in your mug shot. And that’s important. So, let’s, like, get to tapin’ kay?”