



PROLOGUE TWENTY YEARS AGO ...

'We're not going to meet every one of them, are we?' Eric Lensherr asked as he looked around the quiet street.

'No. This one is special,' replied Charles Xavier, walking towards one of the houses.

The two men were good friends. Twenty years later they would be terrible enemies.

Soon they were sitting in the living room while Mr and Mrs Grey read the information about Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters.

'It looks wonderful. It's a beautiful place,' said Mrs Grey. 'What do you think, John?'

Her husband looked worried. 'It looks great. But what about Jean? What about her . . . illness?'

'You think your daughter is sick?' Lensherr said angrily.

'Eric, please,' said Xavier. He didn't want anything to go wrong. He turned to Jean's parents. 'We want to help children like your daughter. Maybe we should talk to her alone.'

'Of course,' Mrs Grey replied, and she called upstairs. 'Jean? Can you come down, dear?' Xavier could hear something in the mother's voice – was it fear?

A few moments later the young girl appeared. She was about thirteen years old with beautiful red hair.

'We'll leave you then,' said Mrs Grey.

Jean didn't speak, but she gave the two men a long, cold look.

'That's very rude . . .' Xavier began. Then he used his power to speak silently inside Jean's mind. 'It's rude, you know, to read other people's thoughts.'

Jean looked suddenly surprised.

'Did you think that you were the only one like you?' said Lensherr.

'We are mutants*, Jean,' explained Xavier. 'We are like you.'

A smile appeared on the girl's face. 'Really? I don't think so.'

Slowly both men turned and looked out of the window. Every car on the street was in the air, metres above the ground!

Now Lensherr understood – this girl was special. 'I like this one,' he said with a smile.

But Xavier was very serious. 'You have more power than you can imagine,' he told Jean. 'The question is – will you control that power, or will it control you?'



Ten years later, in another part of the country, Warren Worthington Senior** was getting very worried.

'Son, is everything OK in there?' He knocked again on the bathroom door.

'Yes!' the boy replied, but he sounded afraid.

'Open this door now!' cried the father.

'One second!' Inside the bathroom, twelve-year-old Warren Worthington Junior tried to put away the tools that he was using. But he wasn't quick enough. His father

* A mutant is a person with special powers.

** When a father and son have the same name, the father is called 'Senior' and the son is called 'Junior'.

pushed the door open. He saw his son's pale face and the blood on the floor, and then he saw the things that were growing on his son's back. The boy had tried to cut them off, but Worthington could see what they were – the beginnings of wings.

'Not you . . . ' he said. Worthington Senior was a rich man; he usually got everything that he wanted. Now his worst nightmare had come true – his own son was a mutant!



Over the next ten years Worthington Senior found the best scientists in the world. He gave them the best equipment and laboratories.

Now he watched scientist Dr. Kavita Rao work in his laboratories on Alcatraz Island.

Years ago the island had been a prison, but now it was the home of Worthington's centre for the study of mutants.

Dr. Rao was working on a young boy called Leech. The boy was about twelve years old and he had big blue eyes and a shaved head. He was a mutant with a very special power. Maybe this boy was the answer to the problem Worthington had thought about for so long . . .

