

The Cutting Floor

Notes, concepts, and unused posts for my RP character, Emily Fischer, and her friends; Dallas, Nika, Billy, Sven, and Ben. Everything here is *non-canon*.

Concept - Emily's Timeline

April 24th, 1991 - Birthday
April 24th, 2001 - 10th Birthday
August 2nd, 2005 - 14, Disappearance from New Hampshire
January 13th, 2006 - 14, First boat switch and stowaway meet
April 11th, 2008 - 16, First drink
September 19th, 2008 - 17, Dependence on alcohol
February 3rd, 2009 - 17, Mischief
April 24th, 2009 - 18th Birthday
November 17th, 2010 - 19, Escaped rape attempt and destruction of the Epiphany
December 4th, 2010 - 19, Reemergence in USA
December 11th, 2010 - 19, Temporary imprisonment
January 2nd, 2011 - 19, Enlistment in the U.S. Army
April 24th, 2011 - 20th Birthday
November 27th, 2014 - 24, Survived North Korean Ambush, awarded
March 1st, 2018 - 26, XCOM Project starts
April 24th, 2018 - 27th Birthday

Concept - The Team's Fates

Jack "Dallas" Stewart - Canadian

The Assault. Brazen, confident, and cool under pressure, Dallas doesn't have fear in his vocabulary, but he isn't stupid either. He's calculating and quick-witted, able to shift to parameters to survive even when he's within feet of the enemy. There's a reason this shotgun carrier has lived 30 years in combat.

Dallas is specced into Double Tap and Run and Gun. Dallas [almost dies in the midgame to a Chryssalid](#) (saved by Sven), but is killed for real in the late game by a Muton berserker. His death leads to Amelia angrily sharing her story of sexual assault to Ben.

William "Billy" Campbell - American

The Heavy. Hot-headed, jovial, and skillful. Billy is similar to Mika in that she loves to run into danger, however, he does it out of anger rather than love. Billy gets killed early trying to protect the squad.

Mika Orlov - Russian

The Support. Brash, emotional, and impulsive. Mika is only 19 but her aptitude scores are off the chart, leading her to be admitted to X-COM. A no-man-left-behind optimist, Mika's impulsiveness gets her into trouble, but her passion tends to carry her through rough parts.

After Billy's death, Mika demands to become the Heavy, and Amelia becomes the Support. Mika finds unexpected thrills in firing rocket launchers, but becomes hardened fast. Mika becomes psychically gifted, and sacrifices herself in the ending if no one else is available to be the Volunteer.

Sven Andersen - Dutch

The Sniper. Calculating, nihilistic, and unemotional. Sven, like most snipers, is colored by his work. Years sitting in the dirt behind a scope taking lives tends to dampen your other emotions. His exposure to Mika softens him up slowly.

Sven is specced into Squadsight and stays far from the action. Sven joins the squad once Amelia becomes the Support and Mika becomes the Heavy. Sven gets heavily gene modded unlike the rest of the party. Sven survives the ending.

Gabriel "Gabe" Moreau - French

The Assault. Replaces Dallas once he's killed. Similar in personality, but the crew tends to look on him as more reckless due to having less experience.

Unlike Dallas, Gabe becomes a grenade focused spec instead of a shotgunner as his rank improves. Gabe survives the ending.

Concept: Luxuria's Gift

Luxuria's Curse / Luxuria's Gift

Although a Psion herself, Emily carries the imprint of the Ethereal Luxuria with her, causing both problems and benefits with her progress. Luxuria's brain patterns are different than that of a human, and are painful and confusing to comprehend with a human mind. Emily's individual progress is hampered by this information already in her brain, but decoding it into a human-compatible format would grant her exceptional knowledge and power.

Unlike a standard psionic, Emily needs to accept Luxuria into her brain to further increase her knowledge of Ethereal thought patterns and overcome the mental barriers between colors, altering her personality and security. If Emily and Luxuria are both willing participants, her power will increase, and her mind will drift closer to a Human-Ethereal hybrid. Emily cannot bleed into other colors of psionics without using Luxuria's knowledge, attempting to force beyond a momentary burst of emotion will cause her severe brain damage. Emily may learn special abilities that ordinary humans may not be able to learn with Luxuria's help.

Mechanics:

- Emily can learn any Orange and most Red and Yellow abilities, provided she has the practice and tutor necessary to do so. These are not included in the list below unless they are different for her. Their power increases progressively.
- Emily learns 1 Unique psionic for each color except Blue at different times (*Cyclonic Rift*, *Elemental Manipulation*, *Biokinesis*, *Ethereal Feedback*, *Illusions*). These are learned directly from Luxuria, and not subject to practice. Some of these abilities may evolve or combine over time.
- Using Green, Blue, or Purple can cause Feedback or Instability depending on her level of control, adding a risk aspect to her psionics.
- **Feedback** - Emily must forcefully tear into Luxuria's knowledge, causing intense migraines and dizziness. *i.e. holding a rift for several minutes causes a blackout and intense headaches until getting medical attention.*
- **Instability** - Emily must supplement her knowledge with Luxuria's, possibly causing failure or side effects from disorientation. *i.e. failing to use telekinesis precisely, over or undercharging abilities.*

Special Abilities:

Telepathy - Emily can read basic thoughts, receive messages clearly, and send thoughts instantly to others.

Cyclonic Rift - Emily's signature ability, unique to her and highly adaptable. Unlike a standard Rift, Emily creates a whirlwind of pure mental energy around her, disturbing any items nearby and causing random physical damage to everyone in its wake. Exertion and practicality depends on the weight of the targets being lifted (i.e. can lift 20 sectoids for 3 minutes or a lone Sectopod for half of a second). Becomes unstable after a few minutes of maintenance.

Elemental Manipulation - Unique. Made as a 'training wheel' by Luxuria, Emily can harness and fire energy (flames, plasma, electricity) from an existing constant source. Requires less focus than conjuring from scratch. Replaces Pyro-Conjuring.

Sensual Biokinesis - Unique. Using her own experiences and Luxuria's research, Emily sets off hormones, pheromones, and nerve endings, bringing a human or sapient target to their knees with carnal pleasure or sending feral alien targets into a breeding frenzy.

Ethereal Feedback - Unique. Luxuria's imprint in Emily's brain fiercely defends her elusive prize, sending crippling pain to anyone foolish enough to try and control her against her will.

Fulfillment - Luxuria's signature ability. Emily creates localized illusions from her victim's minds, confusing the strong and seducing the weak into following her whims. Biokinesis can replicate the effects of what her illusions do, increasing their effects (but limiting them to 1-2 targets).

Unused Memory: Glory

(Right, the border attack. That one is going to be...*difficult*...to remember. But really, it's just a part of my life as anything else. It's just a part of my life that happened to lodge in my shoulder at 1,500 miles per hour. Just don't be surprised if I'm struggling, yeah?)

GLORY //

Smoke, fire, metal strewn between. Reminds me of the ship. Luckily the trucks didn't stray too far from each other.

"They're suppressing," a familiar voice screams. "Eyes on the trees!"

One head popped up behind the branches and was quickly reduced to mist. Another body appeared and I sprayed it down. No time to think of them as anything but. Two more fall to my men before the bastards can even set their weapons.

Impromptu suppressive fire has one major problem: with no one organizing firing pace, reloading overlaps. Listening for a window is like listening for popcorn. The popping is fast at first, then it starts to slow. That's when you pull it out and crack it open.

"Fire, now!" I shout hoarsely, "thin them out!"

My men unleash hell on the ambushers, seven guns poking from windows and car frames, satisfying crimson sprays coming out of at least four of them. Did I get one? Maybe two?

"Please, help me!" a man screams, crawling out of a burning truck frame. Metal rods and sheets of plastic on his legs as he tries to pat out fires around him.

I look forward at the ambushers, hiding behind a stone block as bullets perforate it.

"I'm going for them!"

"Fischer!" I hear panicked yells after me. "Keep firing! Tear through that barrier!"

I grip the burning metal, the searing heat worming its way into my gloves. I lift hard, watching the ambushers hide from my squad's barrage. They don't dare raise a hand into the lead typhoon as it chips away at the concrete.

"Help, help!" a woman cries from underneath.

I clench the bars harder, barely even feeling the heat absorb to my hands even faster. My muscles bulge, my teeth clench, my eyes shut with the curling flames burnt into my eyelids. The frame gives up a centimeter, then an inch, then a foot. A growl cuts through my teeth, and I scream as I feel it swing into the air overhead.

"Thank god! Thank you!"

The woman and two men scurry quickly from underneath, clutching burns and cuts. I begin to feel the lining of my gloves burning into my hands, my adrenaline running out as I watch the last leg pull free of

the wreck, my squadmates reaching out to pull them into cover. The suppression worked...but the guns...*it's like popcorn*.

Bullets tear through the air towards my ears. Then, pain...it hurt...it does hurt. My arms give out and I feel my body cascading onto the floor. My eyes blur and light grows stronger. I barely hear the steel crashing beside me. My fingers dig around the hole in my shoulder desperately...but I can't feel it anymore...I can't feel *anything*.

Unused Memory: Exploration

// EXPLORATION

Discarded in the corner of the bed, two empty bottles labelled in Cyrillic letters and held in place by a bundle of clothes. I lifted the sheet to see a blissed out Zoe, tangled around my body.

"Oh, shit..." I whispered.

I carefully pulled her leg off of mine and her arm off my chest, sidling away from her while leaving her fast asleep. I couldn't say why, it's not like there was somewhere to run, or even another room to hide in. As I slipped out of bed, the mattress shifted and she yawned, her eyes opening.

"Emily..." she said, looking at me happily. "Come back, let's cuddle a little more..."

"Um, Zoe...I don't know what happened last night..."

Zoe grinned. "It was...everything I imagined."

"I may have lied to you about how drunk I was...or we both were. If we did something...it was a mistake."

Her sleepiness began to wear off and she frowned. "N-no, it wasn't a mistake. Emily, I remember it. I was so happy and you were..."

"I was *really* drunk, Zoe...we went through a bottle and a half of vodka in one night!"

"It's not like you were passed out or anything, and I was drinking too, I didn't..."

"I'm not accusing you of anything," I shook my head, "but it was all a mistake."

"N-no, this is the way it was meant to be. Look!"

Zoe leaped forward and pushed her lips on mine, trying to force me into a french kiss. As I indulged her, the kiss was awkward and mechanical. My tongue roamed around hers, but neither of us wanted the lead, and she wasn't that good at taking it herself. The combination of hangover headache and her morning breath didn't really create an air of romance either. Despite all of the detractions, she kept pushing, desperate to make her affection mutual. I felt guilt and sadness just for not being into it like her.

"Emily..."

"I'm sorry...I'm just not into it, I can't explain it. It's not you, I just...don't work that way. I was probably just lonely or bored last night, and no inhibitions..."

"I...I have to go..." Zoe said, putting on a shirt and wiping her eyes.

"Go where? We don't have another room..."

"No, *go*. I need to *leave*."

"It doesn't have to be awkward, Zoe, it was just a mistake...we can forget about it."

Zoe stared at me, the frown swapping quickly to anger, a couple of tears emerging in the corners of her eyes. She grabbed a blue-backed book on her nightstand and threw it at me, barely missing my head. "It wasn't a mistake to me! I've been falling in love with you since I first saw you, and if you won't be with me, then I just need to...get a change of scenery and forget it!"

"Zoe, I'm sorry. You're an important friend to me. I don't want it to be like this..."

She walked towards the vent and opened the cover. "I...I'll miss you, Emily...maybe one day we can..."

I sighed sadly as she closed the vent behind her, disappearing out onto the deck. I slumped down into bed, holding my head in pain as the distraction from my hangover subsided. I thought she would come back, but that was the last I saw of her. Maybe she got caught by the deckhands and kicked off, or maybe she just hopped off at the next port and integrated like Kieran. I hope it's the latter.

Unused Post: Luxuria Escapes Violently - Albert executes Avaritia

Good evening, Emily.

"Evening," Emily actually managed a small smile. "Your drug actually worked, the women are on a road to recovery now. I wanted to thank you."

It's relieving to see you happy.

"I may have been...difficult, but seeing those women happy...I know now that you really do want to help, in your own weird way. So I decided I'm going to try to be nicer."

That means a lot to me, Emily. Thank you. I've been thinking something similar.

"Really now?"

Yes. I'm not going to spend my time violating your privacy anymore. If you want my help with your psionics, all you have to do is ask.

"Wow. I actually would like some help, branching out into some more abilities."

Simple. I just need your help again.

"No problem."

Emily stepped over to the controls and turned the dial over three notches, then stepped aside. Luxuria hovered closer as the authorization went through.

Do you know what the most interesting thing about Avaritia was? His knowledge of human culture. When I was talking with him, he would ramble for hours about your history. He once told me of an ancient civilization called Babylon, and their ideas.

Emily looked confused at the Ethereal's rambling, seeing the dampeners behind her slow and quiet.

I personally liked the way you humans presented one of the codes he told me about. "An eye for an eye."

Emily rushed towards the controls but froze in place, the Ethereal's hands glowing red as they slammed against the glass. She felt an invisible hand grasping onto her neck and lifting her off the ground, her body struggling and kicking the glass as she was lifted to eye-level with Luxuria's mask.

"You can't...kill me..." Emily taunted, gasping for breath. "They're going to stop you in a second."

Oh, I know I can't. That's why I put a will-weakening agent in your precious captives' formula, so they would be receptive and pliable. One little message from here, and I can make their bodies rip themselves apart. Each of them will convulse, choke, and die. I'm going to take them away from you, Amelia. Just like you humans took Avaritia from me.

"P-please...d-don't!"

I can feel them from here...their pathetic, dim little lights. I should've extinguished them long ago.

"Lux...Lux...if they die, Morrigan will kill you..."

Good! You have taken everything from me! Without me powering your shield, you will be overrun, and you will each slaughtered!

“P-pl-please, Luxuria...you’re better than this...I know you are...”

The dampeners began to glow again and an alarm went off throughout the room. The grip on her throat barely loosened, and Emily tried to grip the glass with her boots.

And what good has sharing any of your morals done me? Your disgust? Everyone’s hatred? Being used as a battery? You pretend you’re better, but you are experimenting on your own people with Meld. You’re torturing me, a prisoner, for weeks. You deserve to die just as much as me, and I’m giving that fate to us both!

“I don’t...I don’t want you to die, Luxuria...”

What?

“I like...I like seeing you,” Emily coughed loudly, her voice giving out. *You’re the only one who I can talk to about what’s happening in my mind, and I feel like you’re becoming more human. I don’t want you to be a killer again. I don’t want you to die.*

The Ethereal stared at her, the mask unflinching and uncaring in front of her. Half a dozen guards burst into the room with pulse rifles, pointing them at Luxuria’s cell. The dampeners glowed with incredible power behind the Ethereal, barely affecting the raging alien.

You’re lying...you’re stringing me along.

I mean it...I-I can’t lie like this...please...

Emily felt rings of black begin to form in the corners of her eyes, her hands and feet becoming numb. The pressure stopped all at once just in time and Emily collapsed to the ground. As her senses returned to her, she heard the radio chatter of the soldiers as they rushed towards Luxuria. “Shock her, shoot her.” She scrambled to her feet and held her arms in front of the pod.

“Don’t do anything! Not without my say!”

They looked at each other and then at her, lowering their weapons one by one. Emily rushed past them and out the door, leaving Luxuria in a ball in the cell, slumped against its walls. She ran through floor after floor, bursting through the doors to the medical wing. She shoulder-checked the resident doctor harder than necessary and ripped open the door to Sybille’s room.

Sybille laid still in her bed, her eyes shut and her lips barely curled into a smile. Emily rubbed her arm gently, avoiding the rash around her injection marks. She woke up and smiled softly.

"Amelia? Is it time for more water?"

"N-no, just making sure you're okay. I'm sorry."

"I'm tired, too tired to work..."

"It's okay, go to sleep."

Sybille let out an irritated mumble and drifted off again, her sedative-induced sleep looking enviously deep mere moments in. Emily breathed a sigh of relief and walked out of the woman's room, thumping her head against the wall and sliding down to the ground.

Unused Post: Luxuria Escapes - Didn't get her body after learning about Conquest

The doors to the Alien Containment Facility opened around Emily, and she put her personal feelings aside as she prepared for another meeting with the Ethereal. She almost anticipated it now, being something that she could understand, unlike Ben's problems or Dallas' recent actions. As she walked into the room containing Luxuria, she was again surprised that the Ethereal did not instantly turn towards her. Instead, she was enraptured by her computer, looking over several windows of notes, apparently reading them all at once. As she came close enough, Luxuria sensed her presence and shut down the computer, floating closer towards her. She didn't summon her avatar as usual either, instead addressing her directly as her Ethereal self.

Emily...it's good to see you. I assume...

"He's dead," she nodded. "He put up a fight and had quite a few troops, but our squad got out relatively scotfree. He didn't suffer, for what it's worth."

I did not care for him...but I suppose I'm glad he didn't spend too much time in agony. I will even reward you. I will give you more knowledge.

"I'm not going to complain about that," Emily smiled.

Yes, yes...if you would lower the dampeners, please.

"Sure thing," Emily nodded, walking up to the controls.

Luxuria hovered closer and closer as Emily moved, within an inch of the glass as her hand turned the dial down. The thrum of the dampeners began to quiet, and Luxuria's four arms fanned out, each glowing a

powerful gold. Emily backed away at the display, feeling her grip on reality slipping. As it did, her feet moved forwards instead of backwards, and she barely registered sitting comfortably by the cell before blacking out.

Pressed comfortably along her back and across her rump was perfect, soft fabric, cradled softly in gleaming, fresh-polished gold. On either side of the clawed armrests of her throne, Jack and Luxuria's illusion stood dutifully, dressed in peasant rags. As they saw her, they rushed to her side.

"Is there anything I can get you, my queen?" he bowed.

Luxuria took Emily's hand into hers, holding her soft fingers carefully and kissing the ornate ring clad to her third finger. "How may I serve you?"

"Um...how about a massage?" Emily smirked.

"Anything for my immaculate, intelligent queen." The girl got onto her knees and eased the slipper off her right foot, her dexterous hands rubbing over the pale white skin of her leg, relieving the tension in her ankles and muscles. "Do not forget that your chair has a massager as well. Simply turn the dial on your armrest."

She looked down at the tan, ridged dial in between the fingers of her right hand, wondering why she didn't notice something so out of place. She turned it to the right and it did nothing, then back to the left. Although she couldn't feel her chair changing, her comfort and happiness increased with each click to the left. Right before it bottomed out, it stopped suddenly, and she felt a rising alarm.

"Why...why isn't it going all the way? Why are my ears ringing?" Emily wondered. She turned towards the windows and noticed that it was pulsing, rings of red bursting from it in waves. She realized that it was a red strobe, like a modern alarm. "This isn't real...this is an illusion!"

"Of course, my queen," she stood. "You are far too brilliant for me. I suppose...the jig is up, as you would say."

The Ethereal snapped, and reality ripped apart, being replaced by the cold walls of the bunker. The alarm was gone, as were the intruding sounds. She noticed a familiar office in front of her, and stepped through the doors, instantly being greeted by Morrigan holding a box of the personal things that once sat atop her desk.

"It was a pleasure, Ms. Fischer," she nodded.

"What...what was a pleasure?"

The Commander bumped by her, leaving her to explore the executive office space. The beautiful desk had been cleaned bare, except for a small piece of paper, bearing the official seal of the Council. It read 'Commander Replacement Vote,' herself just a couple digits above Aya and Atka. She turned around the

small nameplate in the center of the desk, reading the brass etched into onyx. 'Amelia Fischer – Commander.'

"I'm the new commander?"

"Yes, ma'am," Peggy smiled behind her. "It's an honor to stay on as your secretary."

"I don't understand...the Council wouldn't do this...is this another illusion?"

"Illusion? No, the Council was none too happy with Morrigan for so long. Despite all of our best efforts to keep her on, she had to be replaced. It was becoming a distraction from the project's real goals. Remember the report from the last mission, in Chicago?"

"Right...right, of course."

"Good! I have begun scheduling appointments. Would you like your first visitor?"

Emily sat in the Commander's chair, smiling a bit as she sunk into the cushions. "Sure, why not?"

Aya and her assistant Eve walked in, clutching a clipboard as usual, giving a brief bow before looking back up at her. Aya seemed disappointed to be talking to her instead of Morrigan, but she built enough of a rapport to make her not be openly hostile.

"Hello Em...Commander," she began. "We need your final witness account for the Ethereal's death, to close the file on it."

"I didn't witness it," Emily shook her head.

"Well, whatever you know, please."

"He was assassinated by the Horsemen, by Conquest's orders and by Death's hand, I believe."

"Death...the other Ethereal on the base. Good. And the method?"

"Some kind of plague bio-weapon thing that kills Ethereals?" Emily sighed. "They engineered it here and then poisoned Avaritia with it. The technical specifics I don't know."

"Of course...a chemical that kills all Ethereals, that they can use with impunity," Aya hid a look of concern, then smiled. "Not a bad idea for us, either."

Emily's head tilted at the comment, which seemed out of place. Even though Aya was a soldier like her, bioweapons usually brought looks of doubt even with trained killers, if not from memory, then from fear of retribution. The assistant scribbled rapidly then nodded towards Aya, who turned back towards Emily.

“Lastly, we need you to head to the observation box of the Alien Containment Facility. The authenticator upstairs needs testing.”

“Authenticator?”

“Yes, you know how turning off the containment works, it requires input from the upstairs observation room and the controls at the base of the pod. We need someone to test a scenario of release.”

“I need to go upstairs...and authorize the release,” Emily said softly.

“Yes, just for testing purposes.”

Emily stood and followed Aya, being led through the halls and over to the containment facility. Emily began shaking her head as she walked, realizing things were wrong. Why would they be doing testing with Luxuria’s cell?

“No...no, no, this isn’t real either. She’s tricking me.”

Aya noticed Emily freezing in place and quickly turned around, grabbing Emily by the wrists and pinning her against the wall. She ordered Eve to help restrain her as she struggled, kicking and pulling away from her.

“It’s not real! It’s not real!”

Emily kneed Aya in the stomach and shoved her into the wall, punching her clean across the face and knocking her out. She sprinted down the hall as fast as she could, but the walls kept stretching longer and longer. The sweat rushed from her brow and her lungs dried, her breath becoming shallow. Her vision swirled and her body gave out, the last image of a set of stairs she had run up slowly fading to black.

The tiredness began to subside and her legs felt good as new. Young even, better than they were before. She felt drool running out of her lips and onto her arm, her eyes heavy and unresponsive.

“Am-ee-lee.”

She felt a tug on her blouse, pulling her towards consciousness.

“Am-ee-lee! Wake up!”

“...Aria?”

Her eyes opened and she found her head tucked in her arms, her bright red hair longer and smoother than she remembered. She wiped her small hand against the table quickly, trying to cover up the bit of drool from her nap. She looked down at her sketch pad, a large pentagon shape with a cross going through it, flanked by a picture of a brave soldier and an ugly alien. She looked down at her sister, her arms wavering idly and her face smiling at her with unrestrained excitement.

“Am-ee-lee!” Aria shouted up at her. “Are you writing your story again? Can you read to me?”

“I thought we decided on ‘Emily?’”

“I can say it. I just need to practice,” she whined.

“I like Emily,” she smiled, “it’s a special name. Just for you and me.”

“Okie-okie, Emily!”

Emily hooked her arms under her sister, pulling her up onto her knee. The younger girl giggled loudly as she soared up, then sat impatiently waiting for her story.

“What’s the story? Tell me!”

“This one is about a big fat ugly man, he’s lazy and he likes to bully little girls because he’s so ugly. And he has a big three-headed monster that wants to eat people!”

Aria whined loudly, tussling her hair as her hands darted to her mouth.

“But that’s not going to happen,” Emily smiled, “because of the hero!”

“Who’s the hero this time?”

“It’s an older lady named Ashley. She acts really mean and tough, but she’s actually a doctor and a mommy, too.”

“Yay!” Aria raised her hands high, dropping them onto the pad and crumpling the paper. “What’s she look like? Is she pretty?”

“Um...yeah, like a princess, except with armor. This is her,” she pointed down to a stick figure with a laser gun. “Just...a little better drawn.”

“It’s okay, Am-ee-lee. You’re the best drawer I know, even better than daddy.”

“Speaking of which, when are they coming home?”

Aria leaped off of her lap, scrambling to her feet and giggling. "Who knows? We should go on an adventure!"

"Adventure? Where?"

Aria dashed away, stopping every few steps to see if Emily was following. She got up and stayed with her, letting her lead the way with her arms flailing and her lips humming an adventure tune. Aria slowly climbed up the stairs, then ran through the hallway, reaching her hand up to the doorknob of the master bedroom, coming only a couple inches short.

"Help!" she shouted.

"You know the rules, Aria," Emily crouched beside her. "You're not supposed to go in mommy and daddy's bedroom."

"But it's an adventure! Let's go on an adventure!" She stretched again, bouncing to tap her fingers against the doorknob.

"Okay...just this once," Emily smiled.

She opened the door and let her sister inside, the little girl surprisingly uninterested in the king-sized bed and array of perfumes on the dresser. She rushed to a closet in the far side of the room, the door made of a thick looking glass, her mother's red and gold dresses locked safely inside. Aria bounced up and down next to a large button beside it, reading 'release' on its surface.

"Push it!" Aria shouted giddily. "Push it, push it, push it!"

"Why?" Emily asked.

"So we can touch all the dresses! It's important, just push it!"

Emily's hand hovered over the button, and realization sunk into her through the fog. Her heart wrenched like a knife was sinking into it, feeling like she was losing everything all over again. Her hand dropped from the button, shaking with rage.

"Emily...please push it. Please, please push it..." Aria begged.

"How...dare you...use this memory against me..."

"I...I need to be free, Emily. What if they...use this weapon against my home?"

Emily looked darkly towards the image of her sister, trembling and on the verge of tears.

"You...will suffer."

The image of her birth parents' home shattered like glass, each piece falling into nothingness as her consciousness awoke from the onion of illusions Luxuria had buried her in. She woke up in the observation box of the ACU, her body only inches away from the last release step. Jean was knocked out at her feet, and alarm lights blared in the corner of the room.

She ran down the stairs and reached the controls at the foot of Luxuria's cell, tears forming in her eyes. Luxuria began to speak until Emily launched forwards, her hand cranking the dampeners to their maximum and slamming down on the shock. Blinding blue and white fired from every corner of the room, sinking into Luxuria's body. The Ethereal whimpered and screamed in agony as the volts went into her.

"Die..." Emily screamed, her voice cracking. *"Die!"*

Emily...I'm sorry! Please!

"I will kill you! I'll erase you from my life, with a smile on my face!"

I...had to! What if...someone had a weapon...that could kill your family! That could kill...Sunny, and Dallas...and everyone else! I need...to go home! I need...to warn them!

Her finger slid off the button as tears streamed from her eyes, her voice giving out to heaving sobs. Long buried images of her little sister flashed in her mind, reminding her of their finality. The reason she left. The reason she lost everything.

Emily...I never meant...to...