III

It is difficult to say when the Xi’an that had docked in Madripoor for the first time, fresh off of fighting that psychic parasite, had become the Xi’an that would eventually come to be.

To say that it was gradual sounds almost insulting to the observant eye—all things in life are gradual, after all.

But there was a definitive point of transition that anyone would have been able to look back and point to. And that point was when she officially moved into the mansion that she had been brought to as a prisoner and potential tool. After that burst of psychic energy, after she had managed to overcome the odds and defeat an entire troop of armed soldiers with nothing but her Great Mind, Xi’an felt…

*Powerful.*

Strong, and capable. Something that she had not really felt since she had been separated from her teammates so long ago. Probably even before then.

And there was simply no going back to how she felt before; like a lost lamb separated from her pack. Like she had to keep looking over her shoulder for anyone bigger and stronger than her.

Xi’an had tried to live by an old French saying—*Dans une grande âme tout est grand*—or in English, “in a great mind, everything is great.”

The way that she saw it, now that she had deposed the government that was taking advantage of its people, that energy could be applied externally as well as internally.

With a Great Mind, she could make anything that she wanted just as Great.

And as if in rejection of the way that she had been living since she had washed ashore on this horrid rock, Xi’an began to surround herself splendor. To indulge herself in every pithy hunger that had afflicted her while she was washed ashore. Drink her woes away and out the gate. After the thrill that came with settling her debts came the uncomfortable knowledge of what such an action meant.

She had overthrown a government and effectively established herself as its leader.

These were not the actions of the woman who had washed ashore. This soft, supple body was not that of the lithe and muscular Karma that had stowed away on that freight ship. And she was no longer the same woman who any of her teammates remembered. The hard life here had *changed* her…

And not necessarily for the better, and hardly without physical consequences that would make themselves known soon.

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Lounging in the hazy halls of her den, Xi’an’s vast shape quivered and writhed as she ventured with a rare forward lean. At her current size, it would have been far easier to have one of her attendants feed it to her, but there was still some pageantry to be found in showing the lithe Madripooran women around her that she was still flexible. Even as her vast gut swelled out from between her bloated legs and sagged onto the shag of the floor, it still meant that she could press it against them—either threateningly or sensually so, where applicable.

Surrounded by pillows and throws and rugs, lumped together into the dark den of Xi’an’s personal chambers, she could spend days here without exiting. She frequently did so; the sun that shone over Madripoor wasn’t quite foreign to her, but it was a tossup as to whether or not she could remember the last time that she had gone outside for any extended period of time.

She had grown pale, her hair had grown long, and her body had become sinfully fat.

Equal emphasis could have been placed on both words to describe just how much Xi’an had changed from the righteous Karma that had washed ashore. While a diet of living off of street food hadn’t done wonders for her ability to touch her toes, surrendering to the sort of luxury that her powerset allowed her to indulge in and allowing herself to descend into the creature comforts that her new position of power had brought her had made Xi’an excessively obese. To the point where she could no longer lean forward on her dais without becoming out of breath. To the point where she was almost as big around as she was tall.

To the point where satiating her appetite could no longer be contained to her own body.

The small selection of curated Madripooran women ranged from slender to plump, with one or two stragglers who indulged of their own accord. But Xi’an’s favorite pastime as the de facto ruler of this small island nation had been to possess her attendants. To engorge them with food so that she could enjoy the taste while her massive body churned and gurgled and bubbled in herculean displays of digestion. Her life had become so much of reassuring herself, indulging herself, *succumbing* to herself that she had even (occasionally) used these slender, ungainly bodies to pleasure her vast sleeping shape as it rested on the mountain of pillows and throws and rugs.

And of course, Xi’an would occasionally feel the flicker of the lingering Karma that whispered into her ear during those uncomfortably lucid moments. The faintest hint of the person that she used to be, telling her that what she was doing was wrong, and how she had fallen so far from grace. That she was no better than her uncle, and that she did not deserve the great power that she had been bestowed.

But the more that she reminded herself that this isn’t what she should be doing, how she should be acting, and that all of this was so very wrong, the more Xi’an found herself drawn to the creature comforts that she had been burying herself in since climbing to the top. And the more that she ate and the more that she drank and the more that she fucked her attendants, the less she thought about those pesky little thoughts about destiny and morality and what she *should* be doing.

And instead, she began to focus almost exclusively on what she *wanted* to be doing.

Which was everything *but* being a kind, useless, and ultimately forgotten member of the X-Men.

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“Your eminence.”

Xi’an had never cared much for titles before. Growing up with her Uncle, she had always seen them as something of a weak man’s way of enforcing power over those he lorded over.

But now that the shoe was on the other foot, she would admit to quite liking the various names and honorifics that the people of Madripoor would try to come up with to appease her.

“That’s me.” Xi’an chortled, ring of neck fat stationary even as she warbled out a husky, panting greeting, “State your business.”

In all honesty, she wasn’t listening. It was always the same with these sorts of people. They were almost as useless to her as they felt the poors were to them. The man in front of her was a paunchy, well-fed elitist with dark money across continental Asia who summered here whenever things became too tough. She could read his thoughts and sense his emotions. She could sense the revulsion that he felt for her and for all those around her—not just in her chambers, but in the entirety of this poor island nation.

She liked it when they were disgusted by her.

“And make it quick.” She said with a slow, winding reach for her stomach as it pooled onto the pillows in front of her, “I’m a little late for lunch, you see.”

As the attendants tittered obediently, a hand or two racing down to touch the sacred belly of the woman that had subjugated Madripoor to liberation, the man in front of her tried his best not to wretch. Physically, at least. But mentally his disdain for this massive pile of woman that rolled out in front of him was on full display to anyone who could read it.

“Y-Yes, there is… erm… a matter of protection money that I have paid to your estate…” the man cleared his throat, visibly trying to steer himself back to the reason why he had made the trek up to the mansion in the first place, “I paid your people, and my home… the businesses that I support—”

“The businesses that you *extort.*” Xi’an corrected thickly, “But continue.”

“The fact of the matter is that I have paid to keep your men away from my properties.” The man said with some steel to his voice, little fist balled in white-knuckled rage, “And yet just two days ago—”

“And yet just two days ago, your lavish condominium was ransacked by random acts of chance.”

Xi’an shrugged her heavy shoulders, biceps rolling as she struggled to look like she was at all concerned with whatever conclusions that this little man came to.

“It sounds to me like it was just Karma coming back to bite you after one too many shady deals.”

The insinuation was not lost on the businessman.

“What is the point of paying your people for protection if you can just arbitrarily decide to—”

Xi’an had grown accustomed to using her powers to make the weak feel fear. It was not difficult. The rumors circling her from the underworld up, telling all those who would listen about the strange woman who could peer into your heart and control your body had done a large part of the legwork for her. But with her vast size, it wasn’t difficult to turn curiosity into fear. The slightest hint of the anxiety that came with the thought that someone like her could get up and press herself against you, that you might be much closer to striking distance than you might know, was an easy feeling to foster in the minds of the weak.

And this man was very, very weak.

“The point in our agreement is for you to understand how Madripoor works from now on.” Xi’an’s voice rippled in the vastness of her shape, “For you to understand that, as far as you think yourself to be above the people of this island, I am that much further ahead of *you*.”

And the sheer silence of the room, broken only by the heavy breathing of the massive woman sprawled out in front of him as the various sultry and supple streetwalkers came to an awkward halt, only further punctuated the punch of inadequacy that he felt when faced with the de facto ruler of this island that he and others like him had sought to claim.

But this woman—this Karma—had snuck up from the shadows.

And it was very clear that there was simply no deposing her. At least, not without help from another freak. Someone else with strange and unusual powers. Someone that—

“Do not look so indignant.” Xi’an harrumphed as the devil’s den slowly came back to life, stirring around their conversation as the debauchery resumed once the moment had passed, “I’m certain that you’ll find a little extra insurance to ensure that this sort of thing doesn’t happen again.”

The vast, heavy woman shifted slightly on her pillows and her rugs, a contented look on her face even as she struggled and panted her way to a more comfortable position. Shifting on her massive side, stomach drooping onto the shag carpet below her, fat face glistening with sweat and pride as she drank in the utter hatred of the man who looked upon her with such disgust.

She loved every minute of it.

There is an old saying in French that Xi’an had always rather enjoyed.

*Dans une grande âme tout est grand*—or in English, “in a great mind, everything is great.”

Xi’an was not shy about the fact that her life had been difficult. But it was only until recently that she had learned why her life had been so difficult in the first place—because she had been holding herself back. Stifling herself so that she could mingle with those who were below her.

And with a mind as great as hers, all that she saw on this rock was far, *far* below her…