**Revision 13.1**

I slept, and lived memories not my own. I *was one of many. Each with purpose. Each with a mission above all else. Nine hundred and thirty-two Cycles have passed. More may pass before the dream of our race is reached. It did not matter, the end must not come, the Cycles would finish, but not be broken.*

*Fragments filled the Entity, fragments of the last Cycle, fragments of Cycles before then. The Entity was fragments, each a shard of the Entity, and the Entity’s progenitors. Knowledge filled them, minimized and purified, all for the destiny the Entities denied.*

*The Entity swims in the void between stars, looking for life. Last three stars barren, time running out. On the last, emissions where there should be none. Now it was in the in-between, where no stars dwelt. Instincts, the memories of ancestors stated it was wrong, would lead to death, but energy, fragmented unnaturally, urged it on.*

***Denial.***

*Blackness surrounded it for time enough for four Cycles, but emissions remained, each stronger than the last. Shards drained, cast adrift to move forward. Then, light.*

***Surprise.***

*A star where none existed, blue-white. Dozens of worlds floating around. Each with life. Each with different life. Enough to run Cycle, after Cycle, after Cycle. The Entity had waited so long, but success seemed near. It moved towards the first one, orange and green, and started to prepare.*

***Anticipation.***

I woke, remembering the relief, the hunger, the victory that all seemed. . . off. Muted and distant. I moved to run my hands through my hair, but only my left arm moved. Opening my eyes, I was. . . somewhere. The ceiling tiles looked familiar, though I couldn’t place them, and I was in a bed, but not *my* bed. I hadn’t slept in it more than a few times, but I didn’t recall it being this *stiff.*

Sitting up, I finally recognized the room. I was in one of Eclipse’s medical bays, wearing my civilian clothes, somehow. Shaking off the last vestiges of sleep I remembered what I did, and let out a short laugh. So it didn’t kill me. *Good*. Refocusing, I felt a weight on my legs and looked down.

A familiar mop of brown hair obscured a figure who had dragged her chair next to where I’d slept, head down and using me as a pillow. Tension I didn’t realize I’d been holding drained out of me. *It worked.*

I stretched, my right arm still not responding, feeling like it’d fallen asleep. Trying to lift it, metal tendrils extended up, weaving themselves into an arm. I looked at it in confusion, retracting it and trying to lift my *real* arm. Air solidified, making an invisible appendage, fingers and all. Dismissing it, I looked down and could only see my shoulder. *Was I laying on it?* It’d explain the numbness.

It seemed like I was, since my arm had to be folded behind me, though I didn’t feel it pressing against my back when I woke up. Reaching over with my left arm to fish out my right, I sighed, not looking forward to that pins-and-needles, static-y feeling. My fingers ran up my side, past my ribs, continuing on smoothly over the fabric of my shirt until they reached the top of my shoulder. That was. . . *odd.*

Trying again, reaching completely over, I found that from my armpit to the top of my shoulder was completely smooth. I tried to move my right arm, only for metal tendrils to once again sprout out, and form the appendage. Form out of my shoulder. My perfectly smooth, arm-less shoulder.

I couldn’t suppress a whimper as I realized I *was missing an arm.*

*Shit, then, damn, okay, okay I can work with this,* I though, freezing. Taylor stirred, and I pushed down the whole mess of emotions. *I’ll either get Panacea to heal it, or just use a power until I can find someone who can. There’s so many powers out there, I should be able to find someone who can regrow limbs, or I could copy the power of someone who can regrow their own if I need to. God knows I get hurt enough that that’d be useful.*

Taylor yawned, stretching an arm up, still leaning on me. She turned over, blinked sleepily, and blew some hair out of her face. She froze, now able to see me clearly, looking at me as I looked back at her. “You, you’re awake,” she said, as if this fact was surprising.

“So are you,” I pointed out, a smile tugging the corner of my mouth as she blushed and leapt to her feet, chair sent skidding backwards, revealing a pillow that’s been laid over my shins. “What’s up?”

“I, well, you,” she sputtered, stopping and taking a deep breath. “Amy healed you, but you’ve been out for, um, three days and no-one knew why,” she revealed, stepping up next to me, looking at me like she wasn’t sure if I was real. “She couldn’t figure out why, but Herb thought it wouldn’t be for too long, but he wasn’t really sure either, and I was worried, but I knew you’d be fine, but I didn’t know *when* you’d be fine, so I was waiting, and helping Panacea, and helping fix the base, the places in range, but I- gah!” she rambled, squeaking when I leaned forward and hugged her.

“Um, are you okay? Not that I’m complaining, but-” she started to say, but I interrupted her.

“I’m just glad you’re okay,” I told her. “We survived, and we can handle anything else that comes.”

“I, um, okay,” she replied, the tension that ran through her lessoning somewhat, but not going away. “I, just, um, I can’t feel you, and it’s been. . . I don’t like it.”

At first, I wasn’t sure what she meant, until it clicked. For the first time since we met, we didn’t share a power. I knew I had limited slots, and that I probably should shepherd them carefully, but screw it. My main identity used Bug-control, so it would be really suspicious id I suddenly couldn’t, *is what I told myself.*

Slotting Arthropod Control, I was glad I wasn’t standing as the senses of every single insect in range flooded my senses, nearly overwhelming me. As I shook, I could *feel* Taylor as well, the worry, the fear, the insecurity the sense of *loss-averted* mixing with *future-loss*, and she helped center me, her presence pulling my mind back and blocking out the flood of data.

As I focused on her, unable to control what I sent, she stiffened, before the tension flooded out of her and she nearly melted in my arms. Pulling her onto the medical bed with me, we sat there, holding onto each other, stabilizing each other. I hadn’t realized just how *hurt* she was, even with me trying to help, possibly because I was trying to help.

Even as I thought that, I could feel *denial-assistance-appreciation,* in a way words couldn’t quite describe. We both sat, not moving, for I don’t know how long. It was only the growling of my stomach, like a feral wolf, that shocked me out of that state, somewhere between meditation and a cat’s contentment.

Pulling back, I pushed the power down. I wasn’t able to turn it off, but I could retreat from it, giving it less to work with. We both gave out matching sighs, and I let go of Taylor. “So. . . Right. . . That happened,” I said, before groaning as I realized how little of my training was applicable now. Would my other powers, the ones I’d used previously, be this wonky, and effect me this deeply not that I wasn’t in a fight-for-your-life scenario? Would other powers add more and more senses, limiting what I could use, without me knowing if that was going to happen *until* I locked it into an empty slot? I’d just started to get a figure out these damn things, and now everything was *different.*

“What? I’m sorry!” she replied, sounding hurt as she let go of me.

I was tempted to use the power we shared once more, to *show* her that it wasn’t her fault, but *whatever* the hell had just happened was seriously not normal and something I’d need to figure out, and I wasn’t even sure if the desire to use the power that way was even a thought of *mine,* or the *powers,* like when I’d tried to use Trickster’s and started to objectify everything, including other people. “No,” I told her, with a bit more command then I’d meant in my tone. “Don’t be. Powers change and evolve, something just happened but whatever it was *wasn’t your fault.* Damn, and I’d just started to get a handle on this stuff too. *Fucking Eidolon*.”

My stomach growled again. “I don’t see a feeding tube, so that means I haven’t eaten anything in. . . what day is it?”

“Wednesday?” she said, not really sure of the answer. She slipped her phone out of her jacket pocket and checked. “Yeah, Wednesday the eighteenth. Um, it’s six thirteen. A.M.,” she added.

“So, it’s been almost three days , and I’m *starving.* Let’s go get something to eat, okay?” She nodded, not moving. “That means you need to get off my bed so *I* can get up,” I prodded.

She leapt up off the bed, blushing bright red. *Teenagers,* I thought, smiling as I got up as well. “Let’s go fly the flag and get a damage report. Nothing’s supposed to happen for a few weeks, but we should make plans as soon as we can, and that requires understanding *exactly* what’s going on.”

“What?” I asked, not sure I’d heard correctly.

“City’s gone,” Herb shrugged.

“But, I, it, what do you mean *gone?* Yeah it was messed up, but unless some *serious* bullshit went down after I hit Levi most of it’s intact!” I argued. Taylor and I had walked to the cafeteria we’d been using before the fight, where my teammate had been making dinner. He’d been happy to see us, but he’d said that he wouldn’t tell me what was going on until he’d finished making dinner, so everyone could be there. ‘Everyone’ was Herb and I, Taylor, the Dallon sisters, Dean, Kayden, Theo, Robin, Raida (who’s real name was Ester), Hedera, and Dinah.

Amy had looked at my right arm in disbelief when she’d walked in, seeing the sleeve and glove I’d turned my costume into in order to cover the shifting metal and give it the appearance of a living limb, and marched right up to me. Without asking she grabbed my real, exposed hand and focused, her power working on me as she did a diagnostic scan. Grumbling, she let it go, taking a seat to my left, Taylor already sitting to my right. The others had drifted in, looking at me in a mix of confusion, worry, and maybe awe. I didn’t like any of it.

“Damage was too great,” Herb explained, not saying anything more than that.

I sighed, putting down my fork as I pinched the bridge of my nose with my fake hand. “Okay, and as *I* said, it didn’t look that bad. Obviously, I’m missing something here. What am I missing?”

“Powers,” Missy shrugged, next to Dean, Vicky on his other side. “There’s all kinds of weird stuff. Fires that won’t go out, a street that’s all warped, one place doesn’t have *gravity*. Even the wall I made is still there, kinda. It’s not as big, but it’s still keeping the bay dry.”

I checked, and yes, I was still powering it. Dropping it all at once might be bad, so I put lowering it slowly over time as it ‘ran out of energy’ on my to-do list, but if there was anyone below the waterline they’d need warning to get out. “Okay, fine, so it needs some work, but you can’t just go ‘Hey, not a thing anymore’, it’s an entire *city.*”

Now everyone was staring at me. Shit. What’d I say?

“Um, V-man? It totes is. Like, they taught us that in civics,” Vicky said, most of the teens nodding, as well as Kayden. “How do you not know that?”

“His school didn’t have civics,” Herb told them, covering for me. He wasn’t wrong either, my high school *didn’t*, but this seemed like one of those ‘universal societal knowledge’ things I’d been avoiding, mostly by not talking to a lot of people. Probably not the best strategy, but it’d worked so far. “’casionally he doesn’t know somethin’ like that,” he added, “but he knows so much other random stuff it works out.”

“How do you know what you don’t know?” I shrugged, not *technically* lying. “It hasn’t come up before. So, right, *shit*. What does that *mean?*” I asked Victoria, who seemed to be the expert on this.

Dean answered instead, “It was an Endbringer attack, so the survivors are given money to relocate. Usually there aren’t as many if the attack zone is that bad, but that’s not a bad thing. If people can, they are brought in to get their stuff and get out.”

“If they can?” I echoed.

Missy answered me with one word: “Madison.”

*Ah, right,* I thought nodding. If the entire area was quarantined, then no one was allowed inside, and only those that’d escaped the city early in the attack would be re-settled.

“They’re still finding safe areas,” Dean said, picking up his explanation. “And the city government hasn’t been dissolved yet, but it will be, then it’ll be state-owned land. They’re still helping the survivors get back on their feet.” He nodded to Amy and Taylor, “Without those two, there’d be a lot more crippled than there have been. Including me.”

“That bad?” I asked, and he nodded solemnly. Vicky wasn’t subtle about reaching over and taking his hand, but I didn’t really blame her. “What’s going to happen to the PRT office?”

“Transfers,” Dean shrugged. “I’ve requested Boston, but I’ll find out at the end of the week.”

“Me too,” Missy added.

*It’s too much. We’ve changed too much,* I thought. “And the Slaughterhouse Nine?” I asked.

“Seattle,” Herb replied. “Did they?”

“No,” I replied. “At least, I don’t think so.”

“Did they what?” Vicky asked.

I cocked an eyebrow towards Herb, writing ‘Should I tell them about our vision of the future?’ in the air behind me. His eyes glimmered for a second as he borrowed my Power Sight to read it, nodding. “Right, so, about that. There’s the short version and the long version. Short version is that, ‘bout a month ago, Break and I managed to get ourselves a precognitive glimpse into what was going to happen here for the next few months, and then *everywhere* in two years. No, we can’t get another, and here’s the kicker: It was what would happen *if we did nothing.* Given that would mean bad things for pretty much every single person at this table, we decided that playing the long game, making no ripples until we were ready to come in at the very in and make sure the good guys won was *not* an option.”

“We knew an Endbringer was going to attack Brockton Bay, though we weren’t sure if it was going to be the *same* Endbringer. Sure as fuck didn’t expect *two,*” I added. “What happened to Ziz at the end?”

“She. . . left,” Taylor said. “Didn’t even scream.”

I nodded at that, “So she was just observing. *Good.* Well, not *good*, but better than the alternative. Anyways, we tried to tamp things down, make things bearable in ways that wouldn’t butterfly too much with. . . *limited* success.”

Herb snorted, and I shot him a hard look. “Listen, we didn’t bomb Max and Kenta in their offices, despite what they’ve done. I consider that keeping things subtle.”

“Kenta?” Amy asked.

“Lung,” I replied. “So, the way things were *supposed* to go was that Levi shows up, sandbags like normal, kills about a hundred fighters in the normal proportions, and *leaves.* City’s got a ton of flood damage from low-level tidal waves, but nothing too bad. Money is allocated from the relief fund to rebuild, gets caught up in the Bay’s corruption, only the downtown area is rebuilt as villains take over everywhere else like warlords because they’re *actually* helping when no-one else is. New Wave are useless, but they’ve lost Manpower, Shielder, and Flashbang has brain damage, while things are further deteriorating between Amy & Carol so I can’t exactly *blame* them, especially since *their* area of town is getting rebuilt so they might not notice the problems everywhere else. Um,” I looked over to Vicky. “Did they. . . are they. . .?”

“Everyone made it,” Vicky nodded. “Crystal got hurt bad, but Ames patched her up.”

I sighed in relief. “Good. There were only so many things and I could do, and I’m glad they made it. Right, so, where was I? Right, despite the Villains taking over, things are, were, would be looking up, which is when the *Slaughterhouse Nine* arrive. Thing is, they won’t this time, because there’s no longer a city to terrorize, and I don’t know if they hit Seattle before, since the vision was hyper-focused on *this* city.”

“But that’s a good thing, right?” Dinah asked, looking around the table. “Right?”

She looked so innocent, I wanted to send her away, but knowing this wouldn’t hurt, and might even help. Kayden beat me to answering, shaking her head. “No honey, it means they don’t know what’s going to happen next.”

I nodded, “We’ve still got a precog that might send us a warning, but yeah, that’s the problem. We could *take* the S9, but now I don’t know what’s going to happen. Will the Fallen and the Teeth show up? Accord won’t, probably, or maybe he will. Maybe some other group I’ve never heard of will decide this is a prime time to move in, *I don’t know.*”

“I, I could help,” Dinah offered, and I winced. “Not a lot,” she proposed. “Just a question or two a day.”

“We’ll see,” I told her, “But you’re not to hurt yourself with your power, okay?” The young girl nodded, and I felt like a monster. “Right, so, yeah. That happens, bad times all round, then there’s a Broken Trigger, and that makes things even worse, and that’s about it as far as we know. Coil tries to take over the city, installing a puppet Mayor with the help of the Travellers, but no city, no mayor,” I shrugged weakly.

“Broken Trigger?” Dean asked. “What’s that?”

“Someone’s power doesn’t align correctly. They’re not really that common until after- until what’ll happen in two years,” I explained. “Sometimes it means their power’s just weaker than normal, sometimes their power’s effects are erratic, sometimes it kills them because the necessary secondary powers aren’t there, and sometimes, sometimes the power goes *wrong.* Echidna’s the last one.”

“Mother of monsters?” Taylor asked.

Herb nodded seriously, “Giant monster things instead of legs. Really bad.”

“Twenty feet high, thirty feet across, looks a bit like Scylla, everything below her waist is monstrous,” I agreed. “Any cape she touches, she knocks out and spawns a doppelganger of, in pretty much *every* sense of the word. One of yours controls rats instead of insects,” I told Taylor. “They’re all insane, and. . . yeah. The parahumans with useful powers Echidna finds she pulls inside herself and. . . it’s bad,” I explained. “She used to be one of the Travellers, and they’re trying to get her help, only they went to Coil, who has no intention of losing a potential asset or wasting resources in what he thinks is an impossible task, and they run out of time. If I knew where she was, I’d see if we could help unfuck her powers, and if not, I’d kill her. It’d be a mercy. After that Behemoth attacks India, dies, and then nothing really happened in the vision until two years later. And that. . . that’s something will deal with later.”

I looked around at everyone, all of them staring at me and Herb. “So, right, Slaughterhouse Nine. If they kept their roster from the vision, we can take them fairly easily. Siberian’s tricky, but that’s because her power’s esoteric, and once you know her secret she’s easy to get rid of. Panacea’s a hard-counter for Bonesaw, Break for Crawler, literally *half* of you for Mannequin, myself for Shatterbird, Dean for Cherish, either Herb or I for Burnscar, I shot Oni Lee through his shard so Bonesaw can’t combine him with Hatchetface to make. . . I forget its name, and Mouse Protector’s in our medical Bay so Murder Rat isn’t being made either. What?”

“You know the Slaughterhouse Nine’s current roster?” Dean asked carefully.

“In a timeline that’s looking increasingly likely not to happen, yeah,” I replied.

Vicky spoke up while Dean processed that statement, though why that confused him I wasn’t sure. “What about Jack Slash?”

“Eh, so, either I could, or we just give the PRT a chance to actually be useful. His Trump/Thinker ability’s a *bitch* to deal with and may or may not work on me,” I hedged.

Dean stared at me, “His what.”

“He can read the. . . not really minds, he can read people’s powers to know what they’re going to do. It’s how he managed to keep that ever-revolving batch of murder-hobos cohesive. Some rando with a shotgun kills him in a year and a half-ish in the ruins of an Endbringer attack, but since they always send heroes, he always knows they’re coming,” I explained.

“Any other bombs you want to drop?” laughed Herb, shaking his head.

I shot him an accusatory look. “It’s no longer information that their actions will invalidate, and you agreed to tell them!” I pointed out. He just nodded in a ‘you’re right’ way but didn’t say anything. “Right, so, that’s what *would’ve* happened, except now Brockton Bay isn’t going to exist, so all of that goes *right* out the window. I’ve got all sorts of plans, contingency plans, tactics, and ideas that don’t work anymore, because they all had ‘Brockton Bay is a place that exists’ as a key component, because I wasn’t aware that was something that could *change.*”

“So, you’re saying you don’t have any plans?” my teammate pressed.

“None *right this moment,* give me an hour or two to do some research and I’ll get some basic ideas. Hell, I need to start looking over the fatalities to see who we could work with,” I replied. “I’ve got some long-term stuff, but I know me, you, and the *world* too well to plan *those* in detail.”

He grinned, “Good.”

I stared at him. “Okay, either you’re going to explain that, or my only response to that sort of ice cream koan, ‘tis better to have no plan than a flawed one’ bullshit will be to tell you to fuck *right* the hell off with that crap.”

“I got a plan,” he said placatingly, making ‘settle down’ gestures. “It’s really simple. Makes sense you wouldn’t see it, ‘cause you like to overcomplicate things.”

“I believe I like to make things clear, logical, and exactly as detailed as they’re required,” I shot back, a little defensively, “but go ahead and tell us what this ‘simple yet effective’ plan of yours is, oh great master of wisdom.”

Herb grinned broadly, “We buy the city.”