

Chapter LXXI: Pastimes

The next few days were relatively quiet and peaceful, giving me plenty of time to write up my formal after action report. The more I thought about it, the harder it got to believe that we'd actually been gone less than two weeks, just because so much had happened in that span of time that it felt more like months.

Fittingly, having to put it all down on the metaphorical paper made that feeling all the stronger. The fact that at least as much action as we'd seen in Orléans had been compressed into a stretch of time totaling eleven days did not make those eleven days somehow shorter or the fighting less intense. What it did do was let me excise a couple hundred words that would otherwise have amounted to, "and then we spent a week traveling through the countryside."

My Orléans report had featured quite a number of sections saying essentially that, if in not so many words.

It was boring work, but work I'd gotten used to doing during my stint in the Wards, and more than that, it was a way to pass the time while I counted down the days until we were scheduled to bring Marie back. It was better and more productive than parking myself in Da Vinci's workshop and anxiously watching her work, at least, and frankly, probably about as interesting.

On the other hand, I hadn't heard anything from the twins about whether or not they'd started on their own reports, so it would probably be a good idea to check in on them at some point, if only so they could avoid Marie's wrath. Wouldn't that be a great thing for her to come back to? Her first day returned to life, only to find out two of the Masters who had been left to handle things were "slacking off."

Marie really could be a hardass, sometimes.

Well, it wasn't like I spent the entirety of those days doing nothing but writing my own report, either. Even if we were technically on break after the Septem Singularity was resolved, I still got up every morning and went to the gym so I could stay in shape. Usually, I was alone. If the twins spent any time working out in there, then it wasn't usually at the same time as me, probably because they slept in more.

This morning, I found out I wasn't the first person there.

"Keep going!" Aífe barked from the sidelines. "I want to see some sweat, Rika!"

Rika, doing laps around the indoor track, was panting too hard to give one of her normal quips. She didn't even seem to have the energy or the breath to offer Aífe a glare.

"Back straight, Ritsuka!" Aífe said now, turning her attention to Ritsuka. "Keep that behind of yours in the air! Proper form is important!"

Ritsuka, doing pushups off to the side, grunted and lifted his hips back into proper alignment. On shaking arms, he lowered himself until his nose touched the floor, held for a handful of seconds, and then slowly rose back up.

Off to the side, Mash was watching both of her Masters with pursed lips, looking very much like she wanted to say something but didn't have the courage.

At the entrance to the room, I stood, blinking, and tried to wrap my head around what I was seeing.

Mash was the one who noticed me first. "Ah! Good morning, Miss Taylor!"

Ritsuka, surprised, collapsed to the floor, gasping, "Senpai's here?"

Aífe pinned him with a glare. "I didn't say you could stop! Back into position, Ritsuka! Ten more!"

Ritsuka, miserably, retook his pose and levered himself back up, struggling the whole way. "R-right!"

"Rika!" Aífe barked. "Two more laps!"

Rika gasped and huffed, but couldn't do more than that as she passed by again. Her hair was matted to her head — as Aífe had demanded, she was absolutely dripping with sweat, and it was soaking through her Chaldea standard issue workout clothes. The emblem on the front, normally a rich, royal blue, was a dark navy.

Finally, Aífe turned to me. "Good morning."

"I...guess it is," I replied uncertainly.

I couldn't stop my eyes from going back to the twins, and Aífe noticed that right away. She huffed, somewhere between a chuckle and a scoff.

"My lessons don't stop just because we've left Rome," she answered my unspoken question. "Now that there's nothing else to focus on, I intend to pick up where we left off when Nero arrived at camp."

"I see."

I couldn't think of anything better to say to that. I guess she really was dedicated to the whole "teacher of heroes" thing, even though she had been summoned in her more martial aspects.

"Is...this something you plan on doing every day, then?"

"For the foreseeable future," she answered. "It seems I'll have to find some other method of entertaining myself throughout the day."

Come to think of it, I hadn't really given much thought to what the Servants spent their time doing while we weren't deployed. Shakespeare, I got the sense he could entertain himself, but the likes of Bradamante, Siegfried, and now Aífe? I had no idea what they did to pass the time. It was probably something I should see about looking into, if only to keep unit cohesion smooth.

"Why's that?"

"I spoke to Da Vinci," said Aífe. "Unfortunately, she's told me that your battle simulator hasn't yet been fully calibrated to account for Servants, and there's no telling if even we Servants can safely go

outside of the facility without being incinerated, so my match with Siegfried has to wait until the adjustments are finished.”

Ah. So that was the problem then.

“And that’s been put on hold until the Director is back.”

“Yes.”

Naturally, that left her without many ways to keep herself busy. There was nothing saying she couldn’t sleep at night with the rest of us, but how boring would that get if she spent her entire stay here at Chaldea napping her days away? I could sympathize with that.

Around that time, Ritsuka and Rika finished their repetitions, and Mash, carrying bottles of water, went over to each of them as they both collapsed on the ground, chests heaving. Watching her as she helped them drink gave me an idea.

“Chaldea has an extensive library, both fiction and non-fiction,” I told Aífe. “You could always grab a book and read, if you have nothing else to do.”

I half-expected her to scoff at the suggestion, like the very notion of stopping her intensely active lifestyle for long enough to read a novel was ridiculous, but instead, she just frowned thoughtfully. Like she was actually considering it.

“I’ll have to see if there’s anything that catches my eye,” she said neutrally.

I guess that was the best I could reasonably expect. I didn’t really have any other ideas to offer her. Video games, maybe? Did we even have any of those lying around for her to try playing?

Another thing I’d have to look into. Although, even so, if they happened instead to belong to one of the deceased members of our staff, then... Well, taking a dead man’s stuff felt a little ghoulish. If it came down to it, I was just going to have to keep their origin and original owner secret.

“And in the meantime, you’re going to torture the twins.”

She snorted. “Hardly torture. They’re in decent shape for a pair of teenagers from the modern era, but ‘decent shape’ isn’t going to carry them through to the end of this. You already know that.”

I shook my head a little. “Yeah, I guess I do.”

I just wasn’t sure I was the right kind of role model for what you did to prepare for the end of the world. Not after everything I’d given up on the way. I wanted the twins to be ready for what was coming, to be better, but that didn’t mean I wanted them to follow in my footsteps down to my shoe size.

“I hope you don’t expect that you’re somehow exempt,” Aífe warned me suddenly. “Just because my focus is on the twins doesn’t mean I’ll allow you to slack off either. As my Master, I won’t accept anything less than your best effort.”

A snort ripped its way out of my nostrils. “Don’t worry. It won’t happen anyway.”

And if it does, I thought humorously, it’ll be because Romani has confined me to bed.

I walked over to the twins and peered down at them, lying on the floor together as they were. They were still red-faced and panting, but not nearly as badly as they had been a few minutes before, and their complexions were slowly returning to normal.

There was that, at least. Even if she was strict and stern, Aífe did actually know their limits and when it was safe to push them.

“Feel like ancient Celts yet?” I asked the two of them wryly.

“Senpai,” Rika moaned, “save us! Super Action Mom is trying to kill us!”

Her brother groaned a wordless agreement.

“Sorry,” I said, merciless. “The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.”

“But what if I start sweating *blood*?” Rika cried melodramatically.

The answer I gave her was both entirely serious and completely flippant.

“Then we call Romani, because something is seriously wrong.”

“I-is that really a thing that can happen?” Mash asked worriedly.

Yes, actually. Putting aside someone who might have a power that worked that way or someone like Dracul, whose blood was a weapon, it was in fact possible to sweat blood. It was just exceedingly rare and probably a sign of a deeper underlying problem.

“Not normally, which is why we’d call in Romani if it happened.”

At that moment, the door to the gym whooshed open, and in walked Fou, strutting across the gym. The little gremlin passed our group, greeted the twins and Mash with a polite, “Fou-kyu fou,” and went over to one of the treadmills, and then hopped up onto the belt and started trotting. Like nothing strange was happening and he did this every morning.

The treadmill beeped and turned on, and Fou didn’t even stumble as the belt picked up speed to match his pace.

“Oh,” said Mash, “so that’s what Fou gets up to while we’re eating breakfast. I’d always wondered.”

What my life had become. Watching a squirrel-cat-dog-thing jog on a treadmill with the casual air of a housewife getting her daily exercise in.

“Fou!” Rika gasped, reaching weakly towards the treadmill. “Help! Save us from Super Action Mom!”

“Fou-kyu fou fou-kyu!” the thing chirped back at her, and then went back to its walk.

“I think he just said, ‘you’re on your own!’” Ritsuka rasped.

Rika’s arm flopped back to the ground bonelessly. “I’ve been betrayed...”

Mash sighed, but the smile on her lips was fond. “Here, Senpai,” she said patiently, “why don’t you have some more water? You have to keep your fluids up so you don’t get dehydrated!”

“You’re an angel, Mash...”

I gave my head a little shake and stepped around the twins as Mash administered to them like their own personal nurse. My eyes turned towards the treadmills, but a shiver crawled down my spine at the idea of running beside Fou, so I decided to walk further out and take the indoor track this time. Neither, of course, was a good replacement for taking a run along an actual route through the streets of Brockton or Chicago, but modern treadmills could at least mimic changing terrain by increasing or decreasing the incline. I appreciated that, when the only place to get my workout in was a sterile room.

I just had to make sure Fou and I were never working out at the same time.

The indoor track was at least a decent size, so my run didn’t feel claustrophobic or short, and I tacked on an extra lap or two before my cooldown to push myself a little further than usual. Aífe was right that I shouldn’t be slacking off either, and I’d been sticking with the same distance every day as a matter of routine. It was high time I changed things up a little.

The twins had already moved on by the time I finished my run, and Aífe drilled them through more exercises designed to build strength and endurance as I continued on to the rest of my workout. At some point, Fou had finished his walk on the treadmill and had moved to stand with Mash, watching Ritsuka and Rika as Aífe put them through their paces.

For a moment, I felt a twinge of nostalgia, and a strange kind of melancholy sat in my belly. It had been over two years since I’d last seen any of them, and it wasn’t like I was incredibly close to most of them, but just for that moment, I missed the Chicago Wards. Training with them. Teaching Theo how to fight. Those moments of camaraderie whose brevity and rarity I’d come to regret by the end.

I wondered how many of them had made it through Gold Morning. Like I had with Lisa and the remaining Undersiders, if they were, even now, living their lives, picking up the pieces of Scion’s aftermath, or if they too had been incinerated with the rest of mankind.

Just more names to tack onto the list of people who were counting on me to do the impossible a second time.

At the end of my workout, I left the gym, sore and sweaty, but satisfied, and the twins remained behind a while longer, lagging their way through a few more exercises. Aífe really was being hard on them, but she’d probably ease up as they got closer to whatever she was using as a satisfactory baseline.

It probably wouldn't take them *too* long. They were starting from a much better point than Theo had, and it wasn't like I hadn't been trying to ease them into it on my own, so they didn't have as far to go as someone like, say, Greg Veder would have.

God, I hadn't thought about him in forever either, had I? Maybe Meunier was a more recent comparison.

A shower was next on my morning routine, and I may have stayed an extra few minutes to enjoy the hot water, because a camp in the middle of the wilderness naturally didn't have a shower. The only place I'd been able to enjoy getting clean again was the bath in Nero's palace, and from my perspective, I'd gone most of two weeks without anything else. I figured I was entitled to luxuriating a little bit for the first few days back.

Once that was done and I'd gotten dressed and ready for the rest of the day, I made my way to the cafeteria so I could have breakfast.

I wasn't expecting what I found there.

"Siegfried?"

Or more accurately, who. Because it looked like the rest of our Servant roster had decided to squeeze into the room, waiting in lines for the counter, all so they could get a taste of Emiya's food.

Siegfried turned to me when he heard his name, and he smiled a soft, understated smile. "Forgive me, Master, I didn't realize you were there. Good morning."

"Good...morning."

I looked past him at the others in line. Well, I'd called it "the rest of our Servant roster," but it wasn't like we had hundreds of them, so it was really more like Bradamante, El-Melloi II, Arash, Siegfried, and Shakespeare, all of whom were in the same room at the same time for the first time since...ever, I thought.

Arash, having apparently heard Siegfried, turned, saw me, and offered me a smile of his own. "Good morning."

"Good morning," I repeated. "Are you...all here to eat breakfast?"

"It seems that way," Arash answered.

"Why?"

"Well," he said, "of course, you already know, we don't really need to eat."

Yes, but that didn't mean they couldn't enjoy good food. We'd already had a conversation about that during Septem.

“But then it got out somehow that Emiya’s cooking is really good,” he went on, “and those of us who have already had it decided that we might as well get a taste while the newbies are getting their own.”

Ahead of him in line, El-Melloi II grunted. “If there’s one thing you can say about Emiya, it’s that he’s a good chef. Which makes up for all of the other things he lacks, I suppose. Like common sense.”

“I’m sorry,” Siegfried added. “I wasn’t aware that Sir Emiya’s culinary prowess was something to be kept secret. If anyone is to blame for it spreading around, I’m afraid it’s me.”

“It’s...fine,” I said, for lack of anything more eloquent.

At the head of the line, Shakespeare got his tray and strutted off with a boisterous, “Exit, stage right!” leaving Bradamante to take his place, bouncing eagerly on the balls of her feet. With a smile and the patience of a saint, Emiya served her up her own tray of food. The smell wafted teasingly into my nostrils and made my stomach gurgle.

“Is...this going to be a regular thing?”

“For now, no.” And I nearly jumped out of my skin as Romani’s voice spoke up from behind me. I might have whirled about to face him faster than I really needed to. “I agreed to let them do this today, but until we can establish a stronger supply line, we can’t afford to start feeding the Servants all the time, too.”

“A stronger supply line?” I asked.

“We have enough rations to last the original staff of two-hundred for about six months, plus emergency rations to last another two,” he answered. And then he grimaced and took a sip of his coffee to hide it. “Now that we’re down to about twenty, we should be able to stretch that out at least a little, but since we can’t rely on the UN supply shipments anymore, we have to be a lot more careful not to waste anything.”

“So we Servants agreed,” said Arash. “One day of meals per week for each of us. If things change later on, then we can revisit that idea then.”

That was...very reasonable, actually. And very fair, I thought. Food was too important to us humans and our continued survival for the Servants to eat three meals every day, but once a week was still conservative enough that we wouldn’t be going through our supplies too fast while still giving them something to look forward to.

Chaldea, I thought with a bit of humor. *Come to save the world, stay for the world class cooking.*

“Stronger supply lines?” I asked Romani again.

“Right.” He blew out a breath. “Well, you sending us back crabs and bugs for Da Vinci’s project proved the concept, so there’s no reason that you guys couldn’t send more supplies back while you’re out in the field, right? We’d have to get everything set up for it first and figure out the storage

for anything you send, but in the long term, we can use that as a method to...I guess 'replenish' isn't really the right word here, is it?"

"It's good enough," I told him, because the important part was that it was a really good idea. A lateral solution to a straightforward problem. "This your idea?"

The line moved forward again as Bradamante all but flounced off to go and eat her breakfast. Romani ducked his head bashfully.

"Well, I guess this is just the sort of thing you have to think about," he said, which was its own kind of answer. "When you're the one in charge of this place, I mean. Knowing the Director, she probably would have figured it out before we even sent you into Orléans."

Don't sell yourself short, Romani.

Sure, he wasn't the best Director of Chaldea ever (for what that was worth when I only knew about two others), and I'd lamented his mistakes more than once since he took over after Fuyuki, but the fact that he was trying his best *did* count for something.

"Still," I said, "it's a good idea, Romani."

He laughed, self-deprecating. "Somehow, hearing you say that just makes me feel like I really should have figured it out sooner."

He really needed to learn how to take a compliment.

"Anyway," he went on before I could say anything else, "I already ate, so I might as well get back to work. I'll let you enjoy your breakfast."

Coffee in hand, he turned away and left. The door swished shut behind him, just in time for El-Melloi II to walk away with his own tray of food. My nose wrinkled. Thank goodness there were rules about smoking in the common areas of the facility, because I didn't enjoy the idea of having to deal with the acrid smell of tobacco while I ate.

Siegfried and Arash both offered to let me go next, but I declined and let them get their own meals first, and about five minutes later, I sat down at a table — with the two of them, fittingly enough — and dug into another one of Emiya's delicious meals.

He could make toast into a gourmet meal, I was sure of it.

It was as I was finishing up and sipping from my own morning cup of tea, brewed from the secret stash in my room, that the twins finally dragged themselves in behind Aífe and Mash. In her exhaustion, Rika wasn't even able to get excited about the food, although the grunts and groans that escaped her mouth as she ate said enough to cover for what she wasn't saying verbally.

"Looks like they've been having fun," said Arash, smiling.

"Is something wrong with them?" asked Siegfried.

“Aífe has taken it upon herself to make sure they’re both in the best shape they can be,” I summarized their suffering. “As you can see, she’s not taking it easy on them.”

Siegfried looked over at the woman in question. “She has?”

“Well, everyone has to have their hobbies,” said Arash. “It’s probably as much about having something to do as it is about making sure Ritsuka and Rika are prepared for when things get tougher.”

“She mentioned something about not being able to spar with Siegfried with the simulator still not working right for Servants.”

“I see,” said Siegfried. “I’ll have to apologize to them later. Miss Da Vinci and Director Romani both forbade us Servants from fighting in the facility directly, for fear of damaging something critical. I didn’t think it would drive Queen Aífe to seek out entertainment elsewhere.”

“I think she would have started training them anyway, no matter what,” Arash told him. “I think helping you to improve yourself... It’s part of how she shows she cares.”

Siegfried turned to him, bemused. “Truly? I don’t think I can say that I myself have ever known a person like that, but if you say so, Lord Arash, then I will believe it.”

“Really?” Arash’s eyes turned to look at me, mirthful. “I guess I just have keener eyes than most, then.”

I arched one eyebrow at him, unimpressed. That wasn’t any funnier the second time.

“Unfortunately, getting the simulator set up to work for Servants properly is going to have to wait until the Director is back, so it’s going to be at least another week,” I said. “In the meantime, I suggested she could find a book to read. Chaldea’s library is pretty comprehensive.”

Siegfried paused. “Chaldea has a library?”

It turned out that our Servants had seen a lot of Chaldea’s common areas, but we had never actually given them a tour of the entire facility — the parts that weren’t off limits for one reason or another, at least. It was a pretty big oversight that we were going to have to correct at some point in the near future, because with El-Melloi II here now, we officially had a “proper” Caster on our roster, and while he was the first, he probably wouldn’t be the last.

All of those supplies we had squirreled away? The reagents and the catalysts and the ingredients that any proper magus would need to ply his craft? The ones that had been sitting mostly untouched since so many of our prospective Masters were out of commission? There was now actually someone else who could make use of at least some of them. Someone who wasn’t our organization’s perpetually overworked genius inventor.

Da Vinci was just going to have to learn how to share.

When the opportunity presented itself, I stood from the table and excused myself, telling the two of them that I had a few things to discuss with Da Vinci. It had the benefit of being true.

“I guess if there was someone to talk to about setting up a tour, she’d be the one, wouldn’t she?” Arash mused.

“There’s no rush, Master,” Siegfried assured me. “We’ve gone this long without needing to be shown everything in the facility. There’s no reason we shouldn’t be able to wait until a more convenient time.”

“It’s not just that,” I told him. “I’ve got one or two things I’ve been meaning to ask her about myself, so that’s just another thing to add to the list.”

I took my tray back to Emiya, who accepted it and then handed me a new one, laden with more of that delicious smelling food.

“Here,” he said. “Since you’re going to visit her anyway, take that to Da Vinci for me, would you?”

A few smart comments floated in the back of my head, but I kept them off my tongue and took the tray with me as I left. A glance in the twins’ direction on my way out showed Bradamante had sat down with them as they ate, chatting amiably.

The halls were mostly empty as I made my way out of the cafeteria and towards Da Vinci’s workshop, but I passed a few of the staff who were either coming off or going onto their shift, and they all eyed the food I was carrying with naked desire. All I had to do was say it was “for Da Vinci,” though, and even the ones who looked tempted to actually ask me for it backed down.

I guess no one was daring enough to risk her ire. “Do not meddle in the affairs of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger.” Yeah, I wouldn’t want to risk Da Vinci getting creative revenge either.

“Hello, Taylor,” Da Vinci said without turning around as I walked through her door, and I paused, blinking.

So that’s what that feels like.

“Emiya sent some food,” I told her.

She chuckled. “How kind of him!” She waved over at the general area of her table as she continued tinkering on some strange contraption whose purpose I could only guess at. “Set it down for now, I’ll eat in a few minutes.”

I did as she said, setting the tray down on the table. I even did her the kindness of conveniently putting it right in front of the empty chair.

“You heard about the arrangement then, I take it?”

Da Vinci chuckled some more. “Romani’s idea of having a day where Servants can eat, once a week? Yes, I have. Quite an elegant solution, don’t you think? Romani really can surprise us sometimes.”

He could indeed. How ironic, that he might finally be getting comfortable in the role of Director right as we were getting ready to bring Marie back.

“That wasn’t all you came here for though, was it?” Da Vinci looked back at me over her shoulder. “Was there something else you needed? Perhaps you were wondering at my progress on returning our dear Director to the flesh?”

Well, it wasn’t one of the things I came to her workshop for, but I wouldn’t mind hearing about it.

“Is there any change in the timetable? Complications or anything like that?”

“Of course not,” said Da Vinci. “My original estimate was spot on. It’s meant pulling some all-nighters to reach the deadline I set, but things are on track exactly as I expected they would be.”

“Then that’s all I need to know about it.”

It wasn’t like I would understand the details if she tried to explain all of the nuances to the process. There was a reason I took Huginn and Munnin to her for maintenance instead of trying to do it all myself.

Although maybe I should see about changing that at some point. Being a puppetmaster was a natural enough extension of my old skill set that it hadn’t taken any adjustment, but being able to make and repair my own puppets was a skill I’d mostly thought out of my reach because of how far behind I was in terms of my magecraft education.

“I actually had something else I wanted to discuss with you,” I said. “Something I’ve been meaning to ask about since we came back from Orléans, but there was always something else that needed attention.”

“Something else?” Da Vinci set down what she was working on and turned around to face me fully. “Well, you have my full attention now. What was it you needed to talk about?”

“It’s...” I grimaced. It was going to feel ghoulish no matter what, wasn’t it? “I know I never put in an official request for a workshop, but in light of the fact that my powers came back, I wanted to see about setting up a terrarium.”

Da Vinci’s eyebrows rose. “A terrarium?”

“One of the things I used to do was have spiders spin silk clothing,” I told her, revealing only the most relevant part of it. “Black Widows at first, and later Darwin’s Bark Spiders. They have —”

“The strongest silk of any spider species in the world, yes,” Da Vinci cut in. “And you...had them weave clothing?”

“It saved my life more than once,” I admitted. Using spider silk was, in hindsight, one of the best early decisions I made. “I figured Chaldea could have some use for that as well, if only to make more comfortable mystic codes.”

“And while you’re deployed into a Singularity —”

“Are you trying to tell me that you couldn’t make a bounded field that kept them confined to that room and stopped them from infighting while I was gone?” I asked pointedly. “The great Leonardo da Vinci, genius extraordinaire?”

She smiled. “Playing to my ego, are we?”

“If it works.”

“I never said it didn’t!” She shook her head, still smiling. “And I suppose your interest was galvanized by my little request to send back all of those bugs, wasn’t it?”

“It proved to me that it was *possible*.”

“It was always *possible*, at least theoretically,” Da Vinci said wryly, “just harder to justify to the UN and the Mage’s Association. Neither of whom, I suppose, are technically here right now to raise a stink about it.”

She rapped her fingers thoughtfully against the tabletop, and for a long moment, didn’t say anything else. I had to assume she was going over the logistics in her head, planning out how it could be done and how she could do it with the resources on hand. She reminded me of some of the Tinkers I’d known in a past life, at least in some ways.

I just had to make sure she didn’t get carried off into a fugue the way those Tinkers did.

“So?”

She smiled a little. “Well. The really tricky part will be finding the right time and place to retrieve these bugs you want, seeing as none of the previous Singularities and none of the ones we currently know about seem to cover Madagascar, and I confess, I’m a little hesitant to bring a species as venomous as the Black Widow here...”

She hummed.

“Frankly, it would be more convenient to simply build a handful of puppets for you that could accomplish the same thing, but getting the structure and tensile strength of the silk just right is going to be a challenge without a sample.”

My brow furrowed. I could see her point, even if I didn’t really agree with it. We could have a whole menagerie of the most venomous spiders and insects in the world, and as long as I was here and Da Vinci configured the bounded field right, there wouldn’t be anything to worry about.

Although I couldn’t say that the prospect of more and more varied puppets to use was an unwelcome one. It would be more for me to carry into the Singularities, instead of having to just make do with whatever local bugs were available.

“Do you still have my old costume? The one I was wearing when I came here?”

Da Vinci’s eyes lit up. “Oh! Now that you mention it, I think I do!”

If I had to settle for that, at least for now, then it would have to do.