**Deadline 12.END**

Taylor didn’t know what to do. She was stuck with Amy, *Panacea,* she reminded herself, and was glad she’d combed the city of bugs on her way here. She’d hidden them in the vents and corners of the storage buildings the PRT had turned into a hospital complex and was slowly pulling them out for Panacea to use to heal people, but even then, she was starting to run low.

She followed the healer, and the capes who’d been assigned to guard them, to yet another bed. It was a woman, maybe Lee’s age, who had her legs broken and was missing most of the fingers on her right hand. Amy put her mesh-covered palm on the woman’s bare neck, reaching with the other into the metal box Taylor carried.

She felt the connection to the insects inside snap, as their bodies were turned into goo, directing more to fly down into the contraption and wait for the slaughter. She wondered if she should feel bad about sacrificing their lives, but she couldn’t bring herself to care. She could always get more bugs; she couldn’t make more heroes.

Amelia placed the goop on the woman’s legs, which twisted and shifted, limbs turning until they turned the right way. The woman let out a shuttering breath and relaxed, not passing out, but not in as much pain. “Legs are fixed, as is the internal bleeding. You’re good for now,” The healer told the woman, already moving on, Taylor following.

Amy had been starting to flag, tiring from using her power constantly, until Lee’d done *something* to her. The healer’s eyes had *burned,* and no-one else had commented on it, but her power had *exploded* in speed while it happened.

Taylor had been following Amelia, watching her heal as fast as she could, and had gotten a sense of how quickly the girl worked. Internal misalignments were fast fixes, but anything that required her to regrow things took a bit, and Lee. . . Lee’d been nothing *but* regrowing parts.

She shuttered, the image of what she’d seen when Lee’d opened his costume. *There wasn’t anything left.* His armor had been the only think keeping his insides inside, Hookwolf’s power the only thing that’d given him the ability to move. With what she’d seen. . . she wasn’t sure she’d ever eat chili again. Or soup. Or anything red, chunky, and *liquid*.

As Amy healed another person, Taylor’s attention drifted, just making sure the box was stocked as her thoughts were dragged back to what she’d seen. He’d been. . . he should’ve been *dead*, and then Amy had caught fire and put him back in minutes and then he’d gone *right back out there.* She could hear the Armbands of those around her reading off deaths, but she didn’t pay attention to them. Even if Lee got another armband, hearing that he’d been taking down again, *or worse.* . . she didn’t know what she’d do.

She wanted to help, to *fight,* but she was the *bug-girl*, what could she do? Lee said he had plans, but she’d *seen* how his plans turned out. Sometimes they turned out great, though there was always a cost. Other times? She still remembered the feeling as lightning coursed through her, when her *hero* had tried to kill her.

She knew Armsmaster didn’t like her, that she’d made him look bad, even if she didn’t mean to. She’d thought he was being nice, not going for the hard-sell when she first met him, never thinking he *wasn’t* trying to help. She still remembered his word: “Keep your head down. Don’t take credit. Fly under the radar.” They were nice words, comforting words, and complete *lies*.

Maybe it was just dying, maybe it was the fact that she’d looked up to him, but she’d believed what he’d said, hadn’t thought about it. Pretending that Armsmaster had taken him might fool the public, but it wasn’t the public that he’d said would bomb her it was the ABB. The same ABB thugs she’d driven away with bugs, who’d Lung had come inches away from burning to death. Lee and Herb had been there, ready to help, but she hadn’t known that, and neither had Armsmaster. He’d get the credit, while all it would take was Lung, or even one of the gang-members she’d driven off to tell Bakuda and she’d be in danger.

It’d happened too, after Armsmaster tried to arrest her for doing nothing wrong. She’d gotten the Tinker talking, and Bakuda *knew* it was Taylor that’d taken out her boss. Said it was why she was going to kill Taylor slowly, to show off how she could take out who Lung couldn’t, before Lee and Herb had come, and stopped her from hurting anyone else ever again.

She’d met Armsmaster, hoping Lee was wrong, but Armsmaster wasn’t even pretending to be nice, so she’d thrown in his face the fact that she knew he’d lied, and she could prove it. It was dumb, she’d talked with Herb afterwards and he’d explained what was going on. She’d thought she was arguing why what she’d done was right, but he’d been hearing how she was going to expose him. Lee and Herb had been there in seconds, but if Lee hadn’t had Amy’s power. . . she wasn’t sure what would’ve happened. Would she have been fine, or would she have been like Sundancer, who would’ve been dead in seconds? She wanted to believe that what he’d used was like a super-taser, but after what happened with Lung, she wasn’t so sure. And then there was what happened with the Undersiders, half of whom were dead.

Sometimes Lee’s plans worked, sometimes they hadn’t. Today it’d been the latter at every step.

Now he’d done something to Panacea, and not only was she not tired, her power was *better.* She was working faster, not a lot faster, but enough for Taylor to notice. That wasn’t the only thing that she’d noticed, and it kept prodding her, kept going *‘you can’t run from me forever’*. It was silly, it was stupid, it was something that shouldn’t matter in the middle of an *Endbringer* attack but the thought didn’t care, pulling at her ever since she’d seen enough that she couldn’t ignore.

*Amelia likes Lee, and he likes her back.* She’d been putting off that thought, thinking that Lee being friendly with her was like how Lee was with *everyone*, but seeing him hug her to his bare chest, something that he hadn’t even done with *her*, made it hard to deny.

*And why wouldn’t he?* she wondered. Amy wasn’t attractive but she wasn’t *un*attractive either. She had a better figure than Taylor did, with actual curves instead of flat, bony *awkwardness.* And anything Amy didn’t like, Lee could fix. She knew he was doing that for other people, and she believed him when Lee said he wouldn’t do it to anyone under eighteen, but he wouldn’t do anything to change someone’s insides. So he could easily tweak Amy’s face to look beautiful, but couldn’t do anything about Taylor’s *complete* lack of breasts, or hips, or anything that didn’t make her look like a long-haired *boy*.

Then there was *everything else* to think about. Amy was a *healer*, known across the country, and what was she? She was just the bug-girl, only useful to help the *real* hero on the sidelines. Amelia even *fought* better than she did, since they’d only found out about how Lee’s healing made someone stronger because *she* kept fucking up and getting injured.

Lee’d said he’d date Taylor when she was eighteen, only he hadn’t, had he? He’d said he would if they were both *single.* And Amelia was older than her. Not by enough, only a few months, but enough to *matter*. Taylor wondered if she’d been tricked, more subtle than the trio, but Lee’d had a lot more time to get better at that, before she shook her head, getting rid of that thought. No, Lee wasn’t *like* that. He was weird, and aggravating, and could go from being invincible to *vulnerable* in an instant in a way that made her heart hurt, but he was *honest.* Even when she wished he wouldn’t be.

He wouldn’t set those conditions just to trick her, he’d really believe them, and he’d likely tell *any* other girl her age who was interested the same thing. And it was obvious that *Amy* was that other girl.

Taylor wanted to hate the girl, but she couldn’t, not really. Lee’d told her about her life, and at least Taylor had *had* her mom, before the accident. Sometimes she thought things would’ve been better if she’d never had her mom, never had someone to miss, but she hadn’t meant it. What Amy’d gone through, that wasn’t just not having a mom, that was like having a *negative* mom, where even home wasn’t a safe place.

And she’d seen the look on Amy’d face when Lee’s costume had opened up, she’d looked. . . she’d looked just as horrified as Taylor was. She seemed to care, not just using Lee to get away from her parents, even if she was a bitch about it sometimes. Taylor didn’t know what to do. Did she give up the first person who’d cared about her in years? He might be happier without her. But Lee’d been there when no one else was, Lee’d seen *her*, been there for *her* and she didn’t want to give that up, no matter how bad a person that made her, sacrificing his happiness to have some for herself. He believed in her being a hero, and the hero thing would to help him, but she didn’t want to. What should she do? She just *didn’t know.*

Amelia had been brought to a bunch of people, all laid out, and was working on them one after another. Taylor put the box down, keeping it stocked, and stepped away from the healer, trying to give herself time to think. Time to be away from the other girl.

Wandering away, her eyes caught on a figure sitting in a chair as everyone moved around her. She wasn’t in costume, or anything that marked her as a parahuman, not even a domino mask. Instead she was dressed in a baggy hoody, jeans, and beat up sneakers, the same ‘don’t look at me’ uniform that Taylor had worn for years, that she hadn’t even realized she was wearing until Lisa had pointed it out to her. The girl just seemed lost, staring at one of the screens that was showing a video feed of the city from the cameras on the building’s roof, telling everyone what was going on, in case they needed to protect themselves.

“You okay?” Taylor asked, feeling dumb as soon as the words left her mouth. What was going on outside, she’d heard enough from what the people around them were saying, it was a fight worse than anyone could remember.

“Um, yes?” the girl answered, unsure. “Um, where am I?”

Taylor blinked behind her mask. She’d been expecting a ‘*No’,* a *‘How could you say that?’*, or maybe a *‘What do you think?*’ Not that. “Um, you’re in the medical area?”

*That* got her the flat look she’d expecting, though worry edged in. “I meant what city, this doesn’t look like Worcester,” she asked.

Now it was Taylor’s turn to be confused, she had no idea where that was, and how could the girl not know what *city* she was in? Did she get caught in the crossfire and get hit by something that messed with her memory? “You’re in Brockton Bay.” There wasn’t even a single flicker of recognition at the name. “North of Boston?”

“There aren’t any cities north of Boston that big,” the girl, whose name Taylor didn’t even know, shot back. “Maybe Providence. Do you mean Brockton? I didn’t think it was that big. Did you mean South, not North? What’s going on?”

*Definitely some sort of Memory effect,* Taylor thought. She didn’t know how to tell this girl that an Endbringer was attacking. She thought it would be obvious, but if she didn’t know, she *needed* to. Taking a deep breath, she broke the news to the other girl, “Leviathan is attacking.”

The other girl just stared at her, narrowing her eyes. “The sea-serpent?”

“What? No, the Endbringer!”

“. . . You say that like it means something,” the other girl observed, “and it doesn’t sound good.”

Taylor just stared at her. What rock had this girl been living under? “It *isn’t*.” No, that wasn’t fair, she’d obviously been caught in the blast of some-sort of memory destroying power. Thinking about that kind of thing was horrible, but if it’d worked on the Endbringer? It wasn’t this girl’s fault she didn’t know. “My names Lady Bug, what’s yours?” she tried instead offering hand.

The girl took it, cautiously shaking it before stuffing her hands back into her hoody. “Grace.”

Taylor stood there, awkwardly, before Panacea finished with her patients and started to move on. One of the heroes watching her tried to lift the box that held the bio-goo bugs, and stumbled, not ready for its weight. “Um, I gotta go, Grace. I hope you get your memories back,” she told the girl, quickly escaping the conversation.

She took the box from the woman who was trying to carry it, ignoring the girl’s, “What are you talking about?” as she followed Amelia to the next set of patients.

More attacks came, the defenses holding, the Leviathans made out of water repelled, and Panacea healing everyone she could while Taylor supplied the materials. She’d ran out of fliers, and was now using everything she could, trying to ignore the looks of disgust when a dozen cockroaches, all carrying ants on their backs, ran out of vents, across the floor, up her leg, down her arm, and into the box she held.

She heard Lee’s speech about not holding back and bit back her concern. If he hadn’t been holding back, he might not’ve been hurt, but if he was telling *everyone* not to hold back? That meant things were *Bad.* She watched the screens whenever she could, and she had a feeling that the skyscraper sized pillar of fire that arched up over the city was Lee’s doing, and maybe the pure white, glowing crystals that flashed into exitance over the building nearby a minute later were too, or maybe the sphere of pure darkness that covered a black for several seconds after that.

Taylor felt useless, not able to help, not able to fight beside him, just sitting by the sidelines doing nothing. She wanted to talk to Amelia, see how much she liked Lee, but now was *not* the time, and she’d just be distracting the heroine from *actually* helping people, making her *less* than useless.

She hadn’t missed the comment about the Simurgh, though she was pretty sure Amy did. There was no way they could get to the base in time, if things started going bad, so she stayed with the healer and hoped for the best. As if the universe was listening, there was a gasp from around her and she looked around, seeing that everyone was staring at. The nearest monitor, showing the city outside, displayed Leviathan, but it didn’t. Leviathan was lighter in color, and had glowing eyes, and. . . and wasn’t giant.

Well, he *was,* she corrected, annoyed at herself for focusing on something like that when a water-Leviathan at least five times bigger than the original started stomping its way through the city. Behemoth at least was slow about it, this giant Leviathan fast enough to dodge everyone attacking it. Not that it mattered, the water-Leviathan just ignoring anything that hit it.

Someone launched something glowing purple the size of a city bus at it, which pierced the thing’s body, making it stagger back a step, but that was it. The camera wasn’t good enough to pick out who was fighting, but Taylor thought the white blur might be Purity. The woman could destroy a city block, and she was barely putting a dent in it.

“We’re all gonna die,” someone said behind her, other people muttering, some crying, but most of them like her, transfixed as they watched the fight. The Endbringers were supposed to be getting *smaller*, not. . . whatever that was. What must’ve been Legend was shooting as well, and they’d started carving out pieces when a thick tendril of water came down out of the sky and healed it.

“That’s just not fair,” she muttered to herself, as others cried out, yelled, or laughed in a hopeless kind of way. The heroes in the air kept fighting, but the giant Leviathan ignored them, attacking people on the ground instead. Someone shot Leviathan with a beam that seemed to paint it with light instead of hurting it, the glowing sections blowing up like a bomb a few seconds later.

Whatever it was, it *hurt* the creature, as it dodged a second, part of the city blowing up instead. She was *so* glad they’d evacuated the city. Whoever it was tried a third time, and Taylor was reminded about Lee’s advice about Leviathan, how you needed to hit and run. The beam-cape didn’t run, and Levi took the blow to the hand, shoving it where the blast came from. The power must’ve been on a timer, not a switch, as it went off and shot something out, only visible by how the flames trailed off it from the explosion.

The giant Leviathan had lost a hand, but it was already started to regrow as it pulled back, something purple moving up it’s legs. It reared back, hand moving to squish whatever it was when the two brightly glowing fliers let off a blast that mangled its watery appendage, moving it back. The shape stopped at Leviathan’s stomach, before moving up to the middle of its chest. Where it’d stopped there was a hole in the watery body.

Leviathans’ tail arched up and over itself to strike the car-sized purple person, only for it to be knocked back, losing some of its form. There was a distortion, and the view was blocked by a snake on top of the camera, leaning out. Except it kept going, and going, and was the wrong color, and bumped into the remains of a skyscraper, knocking pieces off.

*That wasn’t a snake.*

Whatever it was was enormous, came from where they were, and could *fly.* It sped up, moving for the giant Leviathan, the purple, vaguely humanoid shape hanging tight onto its chest as it opened up a glowing vortex in the giant Endbringer’s chest. It wasn’t until the giant snake ignored every attack Leviathan through at it, slammed into the giant Endbringer, and *kept going* that Taylor realized what, realized *who* it was.

*It was Break.*

Lee’d said to stop holding back, to go *mythical.* She remembered her mom telling her about the monster from legends: Dragons, Unicorns, Medusa, and *Leviathan,* the giant sea-serpent. Taylor wondered if Grace was a precognitive Thinker, not seeing the same thing that Taylor had been, but seeing *this* instead.

The giant Leviathan clawed at the creature from myth without doing any damage before it fell apart, the giant serpent flying through the air, something clenched tightly in its jaws, something with blue-green glowing eyes. Break slammed *Leviathan* down, dragging it along, before rearing up and doing it again. Everything was obscured as Leviathan brought down a crushing wave of water, most of it missing the medical area but Taylor could feel the ground shake as it hit, or maybe that was just Break.

The sea serpent continued to drag the Endbringer along like a dog with a chew toy and anger problems, smacking it into the ground over and over again, and dragging it across anything in range. It went on for so long that people started to laugh, *honestly* laugh, and Taylor wanted to join in. As hellish as the fighting had been, we were winning. Not by a little, but by so much it made Leviathan look almost silly. That relief vanished when Break did, leaving nothing of Leviathan behind.

When the half the screens shifted, showing a stormy sky and a familiar winged shape, people broke. They’d *never* both shown up, but Lee’d *warned* them this might happen. She almost jumped when her comm crackled to life.

“Someone with an armband, I need the location of a Her named Flechette. She might have a way we can kill Leviathan, and we’re running out of option,” Lee stated, tense and commanding, but not hopeless. She hung onto that surety like a lifeline, it meant he had a plan, and while sometimes his plans didn’t work, sometimes they did the impossible.

The words came out before she realized she said them, “Thank god you’re okay.” Taking a deep breath, she focused on the task. She could hear the sounds of fighting from outside, as water-Leviathans, *regular sized* water-Leviathans, started attacking the medical area again. The defenders had held them off before, they could hold them off again, at least until Lee pulled another crazy plan out of nowhere. “Sure I can check,” she told him, but Amy was already working her connection to Dragon, who didn’t give them grid coordinates, but a building location.

“It’s next door,” Panacea explained as she started to walk towards the door, probably having remembered the names of the buildings. Taylor wasn’t so good with names, but she didn’t need to be when she had a 3D map of everything.

“Oh,” Taylor said, as she was surprised at how lucky that was. “Panacea says she’s-”

*The world tilted, veils removed as she saw more, and more, and more.*

“Says she’s,” Taylor repeated, trying to remember what she was saying.

*She stood in a hall, full of the injured and dying, as she stood in a constellation of stars, so close she could touch them. The one in front of her felt familiar, somehow. It was small, scared, but burned brighter than any other near her.*

*“*What’s that?” she asked to herself, half-hearing what she was saying, *half hearing nothing at all.*

*She looked around, seeing dozens, hundreds of other stars all around her on an almost flat plane. In one direction, there was emptiness, but not a blackness, just a lack of substance. In the other direction, she saw hundreds more, some high up, a few down below. Her eyes saw the wall, but something else saw the stars moving, some winking out, like snuffed candles.*

“Lady Bug, I need the info now!” *an angry, familiar voice demanded.* “I don’t know how much time we have!”

“Huh?” she asked, trying to remember what *she saw, as she looked up, then saw a sky that wasn’t the sky. A Sphere made of Platinum & Light far larger than any star around her, though cold as the other were warm, closed off, hung high above.*

*Beyond that, though, she could see a swirling, rainbow hole in the sky, a multicolored whirlpool that reminded her of Lee’s eyes. Lee’s eyes? Who was-*

She pulled herself out, of what was happening, everyone around her quiet as they stared upwards. No, not everyone, every *parahuman* was silent as she heard the sounds of screaming and gunfire outside. “Sorry, it’s just.” She tried to think, was it a Master effect? Who would attack an *Endbringer attack?* “What is that? It’s-”

She felt her mind slip as she *looked upwards into the yawning abyss, larger than anything she’d ever seen, large enough enough to swallow the city, large enough to swallow the* ***world****. It was* “Huge.”

*The longer she stared up at it, the more she could see. The swirling vortex of light and power clearing to reveal something on the other side. Glowing, multicolored clouds that reminder her of Nebulas swirled in a column beyond. No, they swirled* ***around*** *a column of nothingness, though at the edge, the border between this world and the one she gazed into, was a shape. It was just as massive as the vortex, it’s bulk circling the whirlpool, creating and restraining it. The shape was hard to make out as she struggled against the tide trying to keep the her that was* ***her*** *rooted as the vortex pulled against everything below it.*

*When she did see it, the being so great it could encircle the solar system, she knew she was wrong, but it looked like. .* “It’s a giant. . . snake?” *It had too many horns, every scale a thorn that extended upwards and backwards, in a way no animal was shaped. It was familiar, not just to the star-her, but to the her-her as well. She’d seen it before. A memory of blood, and fear, and loss-averted grounded her.*

She’d seen it before. The caduceus Vejovis wore, it *wasn’t* a snake it was. . . *This.*

“Taylor, that’s Break,” Lee said, and she was going to have *words* with him. The anger helped, star-her wasn’t angry, *couldn’t* be angry, but *her-*her could be. “What’s going on? He demanded.

Only that *couldn’t* be Break, because, past the not-snake, past the clouds, she’d seen *stars.* “Break’s in space?” she asked, because if *that* was Break, then. . .

She looked out, towards the scattered stars. A sphere, made of Water & Blood, like the sphere above their heads, was coming near, but past it she could see the stars. Three Burned more brightly than the others. One had a sense of displacement, that seemed foreign; one a sense of change, that felt like Herb; the last, a sense of *growth*, looking different than the other two in ways she couldn’t describe but felt like *Lee*. She couldn’t say how she knew, why she knew, just that she did. “I. . . I don’t think that’s Break, Lee,” she told him helplessly, struggling against the pull from above and losing.

She wanted to cry out, but her body wouldn’t respond as it turned its gaze back upwards, and into the vortex, *seeing what lay beyond. She rose, leaving herself behind as she flew higher and higher, moving yet not as she passed through the gate.*

*Passing through, she saw the creature, the being, the* ***Entity*** *in full. She stayed, just on the other side, held in place. If she didn’t, if she kept moving, she might survive, but she would* ***never*** *return. She felt the others around her, reaching out to the Bone White & Blood Red star she thought as familiar. It reached out in turn, helping, holding her ash she did the same to it.*

*The ruler of this place, this rainbow well among the stars, moved a head that could swallow the sun and gazed at them, judging them. Its eyes, too many to count, weighed them individually. She felt a sense, not of approval, nor of disapproval. She saw her mother, glad she was trying, but worried she’d been hurt, like the first time she’d ridden a bike without training wheels, in the eye that stared into her.*

*A single scale, near its head, detatched, and started to move towards the prismatic pool she hovered over. It grew, larger and larger, until the shard of the Entity that burned ##### & Ice White above her seemed to fill her vision, before slipping by, like an enormous ship passing in the night. The piece of the not-snake slammed down into the surface of the pearly sea below them, disappearing without a trace, invisible in the world on the other side.*

*Looking past it, dark shapes swarmed over the ground, closing on an array of structures away from the rest, flashes of irregular light illuminating the are below. She felt some of the stars around her wink out, gone forever, and she held onto the star next to her tightly, trying to keep it there. The world shook, and she dropped, falling towards the rainbow well like a doomed comet, bringing the star with her.*

*The lustrous depths loomed, and she splashed through them,* stumbling as into Pancea, both falling as a watery claw reached for them, missing by inches. Moving on instinct, she grabbed the smaller girl and rolled, picking her up with one hand and running, other hand reaching for her gun.

*No, that won’t help*, she thought, as another water-leviathan tore it’s way through the wall, killing a kid who was struggling to her feet with fluid claws. Grabbing the gun Lee’d made sure she’d taken. Still carrying Panacea over a shoulder, Taylor aimed and fired, the fifteen-foot cone of dryness coring the monster as it lost form.

“Wha?” Panacea groaned, as out of it as the others around her, struggling to their feet and trying to fight. Taylor might’ve been there too, but her bugs could be nauseous, she was *busy.* Turning a corner, she saw another monster, this one had ripped open the wall and was pulling out heroes, crushing them, and tossing them away like empty soda cans.

Taylor knew it would be safer to stay and hide, but these people needed help, and she had an excuse. Lee could be mad at her later. Charging forward, the monster flicked its tail at her, and lost it to a blast of evaporation. The monster turned, claws nearly as big as she was reaching down towards her, but she got close, close enough that they started to close, and the monster, leaning down into the building, lost everything above the waist.

“Where’s building F?” she demanded as another water-Leviathan took the place of the previous one, and died like the previous one.

“Huh?” a man in a green duster asked, staring at her from behind colored glasses.

Taylor put Panacea down, steadying her as she swayed on her feet. “Where’s building F?” she asked the healer, who didn’t seem any better than the man. A third water-Leviathan stuck its head in the gap and lost its head, though it started to reform, just smaller. Taylor shot it again and it splashed down. “We need to find Flechette, you said building F, *where is building F?*”

“It’s,” the healer said, trying to get her bearings. “It’s next to the comm center.”

“Where’s *that?*” Taylor asked, killing a fourth monster. *Maybe we shouldn’t stand right here?* she thought, but looking at the capes starting to get up, those that *could* get up, she could stay here while Panacea got her directions.

She raised her hand to point the way they’d come. “It’s over-*aah!*” she screamed as a claw of solid water ripped through the roof, right down into Panacea, running her through.

Taylor vaporized it, along with the Endbringer made of water above them, as she rushed to Amy’s side. She expected to see a bloody mess, like the girl before, but while Amy’s cloak had been torn apart, her armor was intact.

“*Fuck*,” wheezed the healer, gasping through the pain. “***Fuck,*** broke my shoulder, ribs, don’t know what else. *Fuck,* go get Flechette.”

“What? *No!*” Taylor told her. Lee’d told them to split up, and, despite what else she might think, *or feel*, she didn’t want Amy to die! As a *fifth* Water-leviathan tried to claw its way in, only to be destroyed by Taylor, the man with he Green duster firing an energy blast a half-second too late, that’s *exactly* what would happen if she left the healer alone. Amy could heal anyone *but* herself.

“Sorry,” Taylor apologized before reaching down and picking up Panacea, who screamed in pain. She tried not to listen to the other girl sob as she ran for the door, opening it up to come face to face with another Water-Leviathan, four more on the rooftop of building F.

She vaporized the first one, hoping the gun would hold out, when shots from above blasted one of the others, everyone who’d been injured and carried to what should’ve been safety starting to fight back. Taylor ran on through the pounding rain, Panacea crying in pain, when she turned the corner and stopped. On top of a building at the edge of the city, several hundred feet away from the medical area, was Leviathan, the real one, watching everyone die as his creations killed the injured, and more streamed from between the buildings towards them. There were dozens upon dozens, loping across the open areas, more than Taylor could hope to fight as she started to back up where she came.

She’d go around to the back, find Flechette, whoever that was, and all three of them would hunker down until help arrived, if help *did* arrive in time. She took a step back, muddy ground suddenly slippery ice and fell, twisting and rolling to make sure she didn’t land on Panacea, who screamed and went limp. *Oh, don’t be dead, don’t be dead,”* Taylor though, scrabbling backwards and lifting out of the flooded water.

The girls weak coughs sounded bad, but they sounded alive. Taylor glanced back up at Leviathan, who was staring back at her. No, not at her, at one of the other buildings. It tensed up, ready to jump, when it stopped, and turned around to look back across the city, towards the ocean.

Then the sky tore, and a day so dark it was almost night lit up in hellish light.

An explosion exploded into being where Leviathan was standing, its flames a familiar Royal Purple and Blood Red, a streak of fire the same color stretching out in a perfectly straight line across the city. A shockwave blasting outwards and rocking her back as she held onto Panacea.

The Water-Leviathans, every single one of them, lost form like a switch had been thrown, dropping down to flood the alleys between buildings.

The rain stopped, petering out in seconds, the city quieting down for the first time since everything had stared.

As the explosion cleared, Leviathan was gone, a dark shape falling where it’d been. Every building around that point was collapsing, and the figure bounced bonelessly off the still-dropping wreckage. Before it hit the ground, a dark shape rocketed down so fast it was hard to see, grabbing the figure as they both flew away, nearly vanishing as they left the city.

Taylor just stared at what happened, holstering her gun to carefully pick Amy back up. The girl groaned, but it got her out of the water. Looking up, she saw the winged form of the Simurgh high above, getting higher every moment as it flew up through a hole in the slowly breaking cloud cover.

Heroes rushed to help the injured, one helping her carry Panacea back inside as a golden glow appeared on the horizon over the bay.