

## Pyrite 11.1

Faster than I could have believed it, two years passed.

It felt like the blink of an eye. Like I'd gone to bed in June of 2011 and woke up the next morning to find it was 2013, and everything that had happened in between was nothing but one, disjointed blob of a dream.

Maybe that had something to do with it. Even if we'd taken breaks whenever and wherever we could to keep ourselves from burning out, my team and I had been racing against the clock to have everything finished and ready to go for the final battle. With so much to do, it felt like every spare moment had been packed full with as much work as we could have possibly managed without collapsing.

When I looked at it that way, I couldn't help but think that two years hadn't been *enough*. But then, we could have spent ten years, or twenty years, or thirty years, and it still wouldn't have felt like we'd had enough time to prepare. I wasn't the only one who must have felt that way, either — Dennis, Colin, Amy, Lisa, *everyone* in my little circle had seen Khepri's memories of the end, of Gold Morning. How easily Scion had been steamrolling everything thrown at him, barely reacting to anything that wasn't Eidolon or Glaistig Uaine. How effortlessly he dispatched even our heaviest hitters. How contemptuously he'd destroyed us.

If there was ever a way to light a fire under someone's ass...

Some part of me wished we could have foisted the burden of Scion off on some distant future generation. A century or two of preparation, built off of Khepri's memories of his power and psychology? He wouldn't have stood a chance.

I knew myself too well to think I could have let it go like that, though. It might have been easier to let someone else handle things long after I was dead and buried, but as I'd learned throughout the course of the last two years, I didn't *do* easy. Easy was for the bystanders who stood by and watched everything happen, who stayed back from the fighting and recorded it with their smartphones from safety. Heroes made the *right* choice, even, *especially*, when it was hard. They were in the thick of it, risking life and limb for what they believed needed to be done.

I liked to think of myself as a hero.

And so it was that I woke up on June the nineteenth of 2013, a little over a week since my eighteenth birthday, and in my gut was the lead weight of certainty: Gold Morning was nearly upon us.

Slowly, I pulled myself up in my bed, and in spite of the easy and full night's sleep I'd gotten, utterly bereft of any dreams at all, the heaviness of the days to come settled on my shoulders. The gravity of what I and my Camelot Security Organization would be doing, and what would be lost if we failed.

Against all reason, my right arm throbbed, and the fingers on my hand tingled, like I was losing feeling in them. When I looked down at it, there was nothing visibly wrong, but the feeling persisted, jolting from my fingertips to my elbow, but no farther. A psychosomatic response to remembered

trauma, Lisa might say, because she'd been spouting psychological mumbo jumbo ever since she took those online classes.

My fingers curled into a fist. I watched the muscles in my forearm flex, contract, ripple under my skin.

*So. You're feeling it, too, huh?*

My passenger didn't answer me. Neither did Khepri. I hadn't expected a response from either of them, if I was honest, not in the least because Khepri wasn't Installed and my passenger hadn't given me an overt response ever — not me, and not Khepri, either. The closest it had ever come had been in those final moments, back when Khepri and her passenger had blurred the lines so completely that they hadn't really been able to tell themselves apart.

But I could believe that they were both there. Waiting. Anticipating. Remembering how it had gone in that now-impossible future and holding their metaphorical breaths. I could only imagine that Khepri herself might try to step in, if the moment came where things looked hopeless enough, when the conditions for her summoning would be closest to perfect. I knew myself too well to think she wouldn't.

Or maybe I was just experiencing some residual trauma from Khepri's memories, now that they were so very relevant to my future.

I guess which one it was didn't really matter.

A sigh breezed past my lips and I heaved myself up and out of bed. I gathered up my hair — it was getting a little too long, I'd need to have it trimmed, soon — and took an elastic band from off my bedside table, used it to tie my hair back at the nape of my neck. I reached for my glasses almost instinctively and slipped them on, then remembered that I only even used them to keep my identity a secret and there wasn't a point in wearing them to the breakfast table.

A snort burst out of my nose as I took them back off and changed into a pair of sweats for my morning run.

Dad was waiting for me in the kitchen. "Morning," he greeted, already at the stove.

"Morning," I answered habitually.

As had become my morning ritual, I reached into the fridge and grabbed myself one of those single-serve cartons of applesauce along with the orange juice. While Dad finished cooking, I set the juice down and ate my applesauce.

"Sleep well?" I asked around my spoon.

Dad laughed a little. "Do you even need to ask?"

Not really, no. Eventually, I'd gotten around to enchanting his bed, so getting a good night's sleep was only a matter of course, now.

“It’s polite.”

We talked about our daily inanities for a while until breakfast was finished cooking, then we ate together in companionable silence, I stood, left my dishes in the sink to be washed later, and left on my morning run, Dad’s well-wishes chasing me out of the house.

Normal, routine, the same thing we’d been doing every day for the last two years. The only thing unusual about it... I guess the knowledge that our Gold Morning was so close sat heavily on everything, made it feel strange and a little incongruous, like there was a sense of wrongness that permeated the whole thing.

It wasn’t overwhelming, exactly, and if I had to describe it in any detail, I’m not sure I could have. It was just... a kind of lens that skewed everything just the slightest bit off its axis. A feeling of incongruity with the mundanity of my daily life.

It followed me on my morning run and back into my shower. Dad was gone, off to work, by the time I had stepped out and dried off, because of course, the CSO wasn’t a full time thing, not yet, not now, not until we’d managed to get off the ground and start expanding in earnest. Even when we managed to get well and truly established, I didn’t think I had it in me to force Dad to give up on the Dockworkers. He was a union man, through and through. I wasn’t going to take that from him.

For now, it was just our Round Table and the select few I trusted to man vital positions. After Gold Morning... Well, *then* I’d worry about securing UN funding and filling out our roster. It was a little silly to put loads of effort expanding things when you had to make sure you’d even have the chance to do so, first.

When I’d dried and dressed and was ready to face the day, I snatched up my phone and fired off a text to Lisa and Amy.

#### *Triumvirate meeting*

A minute or so later, I got two affirmatives back, one terse and grouchy, the other sassy and peppy. Amy had never been a morning person, and the last two years hadn’t changed that in the slightest. Lisa, on the other hand... Well, maybe it was just that Lisa liked fucking with people too much.

I made sure to lock the front door behind me as I left, but it felt a little strange to even bother. It wasn’t like any of the defenses around the house had gotten *less* dangerous since I’d set them up. Probably not a good idea to tempt anyone into trying them out, in any case.

Glasses in place, I took a bus to the Docks and got off as close to that old, abandoned pier as I could, then walked the rest of the way. The sight of it, just the same as it had been the first time I’d come here, brought a small smile to my face as I remembered showing it to Lisa, way back when.

A few moments later, I walked off it and stepped into the courtyard of Castle Avalon, where Amy and Lisa were waiting.

Lisa grinned and waved. “Yo, Boss Lady!”

She held out a cardboard tray, the kind fast food restaurants used to hold drinks, in offering. A disposable mug of steaming tea sat in one of the four depressions arrayed at each corner. From the smell, the other one was a coffee.

“Earl Grey, just the way you like it,” she explained.

“Thanks,” I said and took it. She grabbed the other one and tucked the cardboard tray under her arm.

Still hot, still sweet, just the way I liked it, like she’d said. Had to be from Ahnenerbe, too. I didn’t realize they did takeout.

Lisa jerked her head at Amy. “Panpan would’ve killed me if we hadn’t stopped to pick up some coffee.”

“I need my daily dose of caffeine. You wouldn’t like me without it,” Amy said flatly, then took an exaggerated slurp from the cup in her hand. She held up a paper bag, too, with the Ahnenerbe logo on the front. “Got you some breakfast goodies, too.”

“Gotta put that exercise to waste somehow,” Lisa joked.

“Are you kidding me?” said Amy disbelievingly. “I’ve been eating twice as much as I used to ever since I started practicing those utterly broken martial arts of hers and I *still* have a six pack. *I* have a six pack.”

“Forgive her,” said Lisa, grinning, “she’s still getting used to actually being in shape. After *two years*.”

“A six pack, Lisa,” Amy repeated. “I wasn’t even sure I actually *had* abs, before.”

I smiled into my cup, hiding it behind the rim as I took a sip. It was a wonder they even bothered pretending they weren’t friends, these days, when anyone with a pair of functioning eyes could see plain as day that they were.

A... Well, I couldn’t exactly call it an *unintended* side effect, not when I’d hoped they would eventually settle down and make nice with each other, but when they had been almost constantly at each other’s throats in the beginning, for a while, I’d feared it would never happen. I was happy that they had more friends than just me, that they actually were friends, now, in case...

In case...

“Breakfast goodies?” I asked, cutting them off before they could really get started.

I wasn’t under any illusions about how dangerous fighting Scion would be. I was under even fewer illusions about how perilously close to death I, as the main combatant, would be. Ironically, the more aware I was of the danger, the safer I thought it would be to actually do it.

But there were no guarantees. Not with the stakes this high.

Amy swung her arm around and cradled the bag in the crook of her elbow as she used her now free hand to unroll the top and reach inside. She produced a sugary pastry, wrapped in tissue paper, with one end exposed and oozing a reddish paste. It was pleasantly warm when I took it from her.

“Fresh out of the oven,” Lisa said.

“So you can ruin your appetite for breakfast,” Amy added sardonically.

“Good thing I already ate, then, isn’t it?” I quipped mildly.

Lisa snorted and Amy rolled her eyes as I bit into the gooey goodness of my raspberry danish. Apparently, I’d gotten predictable somewhere along the line.

I kept eating as we headed inside, making sure to take it slow and savor every bite. One way or another, this might be the last time I got to eat an authentic Ahnenerbe pastry and drink their Earl Grey tea. I was going to make it last as long as I possibly could.

By the time I was finished with my pastry and licking the remnants of its sugary glaze off my fingertips, we’d made it to Armsmaster’s lab. Unsurprisingly, he was awake and inside — I was pretty sure he actually *slept* in that lab, and the bed I’d made for him that sat wedged in the most out of the way corner he could manage said I was probably right.

He looked up as we entered, tablet in one hand as he used the other to tap the user interface on-screen. It was linked into all of the monitoring equipment throughout the handful of labs, for the sake of convenience.

Lisa, the sneaky devil, had undoubtedly told him we were coming.

“Tattletale, Panacea, Apocrypha,” he said by way of greeting.

“Morning, Armsy!” Lisa chirped.

Armsmaster backtracked, grimaced, and said, “Ah, good morning.”

Amy mumbled something that might be charitably interpreted as “good morning” over the lip of her cup, and I returned it perfunctorily.

“So where are we?” I asked. “Is everything ready to go?”

I could have answered the question myself; after all, I was the head of this entire thing, and through the efforts of any number of my caster types, I’d been responsible for at least some portion of almost everything. But I wanted to hear someone else say it. I wanted someone else to confirm it, to quell the last remnants of doubt that niggled at my heart and tried to undermine my confidence. I wanted the comfort of a second opinion.

I wasn’t Khepri or Weaver or Skitter. I hadn’t pushed and been pushed anywhere near as hard as she was, and I was keenly aware of exactly how that had affected me.

Armsmaster shared a look with Lisa and Amy, like he wasn't sure how he was supposed to address that, and I pretended not to notice.

"The Eden Simulacra are functioning as intended," said Armsmaster. "Responsiveness is sluggish, but they were never expected to react with any particular agility. They will perform well enough, but they are not of any combat utility otherwise."

Eden. A fitting name, I thought, when I considered the garden of flesh that was the original. What was it I had thought when I first saw it? That it was as though some higher power, some *god*, had been practicing the human form, learning to sculpt it and discarding the rejects and the failures. A literal *Garden of Eden*.

Eden Simulacra had been dreamed up in one of my more poetic moments. It said something about my propensity for naming things badly that it still wasn't particularly imaginative.

"Their musculoskeletal structures are prone to tearing," Amy added, like I didn't already know, "and their organ analogues self-cannibalize to produce the necessary energy to move. They won't hold up for very long, especially if you push them."

"Then it's a good thing they don't have to," I said.

They just needed to last long enough to do their job, and I hadn't planned for them to be anything more than a distraction, a psychological weapon. Beyond that, their functionality wasn't all that important.

The stuff we *really* needed to worry about was the weapons that needed to do more than just look the part, the ones that would actually be used to try and kill Scion.

"The Longinus?"

"All tests have been promising," Armsmaster said cautiously, "but it's a stationary emplacement. The energy buildup is obvious to anything paying attention and the firing arc is extremely limited. If it hits, it should be a decisive blow, but it isn't particularly difficult to avoid if you see it coming. Scion will."

*That* one, I was a little more proud of — Longinus, after the soldier who pierced the side of Christ on the cross, whose spear was said to still be encrusted with Jesus's blood. A fitting name for a weapon designed to deal a killing blow to the creature that had styled itself as a messiah.

Khepri had used something similar. The difference was timescale, because it had taken a collection of Tinkers working almost nonstop for...I wasn't sure how long. Hours, maybe, but it was hard to be sure around the tinge of delirium to Khepri's memories after her botched brain surgery. This weapon, though? We'd had fewer Tinkers to help, but we'd also had two years to try and build something even better, even stronger.

"So we just have to make sure he's sufficiently distracted when we go to fire it," I reasoned. That was the plan, after all. "And the backups? The WFSDs?"

“The tests have been promising,” Armsmaster repeated. “They appear to function as intended. However, there is no way to be certain of their efficacy until we make use of them against their intended target, and as with the Longinus —”

“He’ll see them coming,” I finished for him.

WFSD, Waveform Synchronization Device. Dragon had nicknamed them “Seeds of Yggdrasil,” and I had to admit, I liked hers better than mine. The way they were supposed to work was to broaden the channel between the world we were on and the world where Scion’s main body was stored, to synchronize world states by turning the entirety of his human body projection into a portal and throwing it wide open.

Scion was currently using it like a river; power and mass flowed out and into this world, but only information traveled back. The Seeds, the WFSDs, would turn that river into a door — and this was a wacky metaphor, but whatever — because doors might open only one way, but things could go through them from either direction.

If the Longinus failed for whatever reason, then the WFSDs would give us access to his main body and we could blast him with more conventional weaponry or powers. Like Excalibur. Or Galatine. Or Balmung. Or Vasavi Shakti. Any Noble Phantasm of sufficient power and destructive potential, basically, to say nothing of the warheads Dragon had been making based upon what she’d studied of Bakuda’s leftover stash and the Blasters like Legend that we could count on to be there.

“So he’ll have to be distracted sufficiently to not know he has to dodge them.”

I sighed. No matter what I’d said to Cauldron, I didn’t really like the idea of relying on a plan with what amounted to a single point of failure. I didn’t think there was anything else to do about it, though. A battle against Scion was always going to be high stakes with terrible odds, no matter how much I stacked the deck or how many contingencies we built into the plans.

“And we come back to the crux of it,” I lamented. “The Eden Simulacra have to work in order for the rest of it to work. Or else...”

Eidolon would have to fight. If Scion was distracted with fighting *him*, that might leave him sufficiently open to a decisive blow. The only trouble was...

Those four words. If they came out of Scion’s mouth again, then the result would be the same as it had been in Khepri’s world. I wasn’t in the business of trading lives, or at least I was trying my hardest to avoid it, and the idea of sending someone into battle who I knew could be undone and disarmed so easily struck me very much as trading a man’s life for time, no matter my personal opinion of him.

But even if I was leery of relying on anyone who could be taken apart by four words, even I had to admit that Eidolon was a formidable ally to field.

“Is there anything else that needs checking or refinement?” I asked. “Laplace’s Eye? The Near Future Observation Lens?”

“All complete and functioning as intended,” said Armsmaster, “or at least as much so as we can reasonably expect within the timeframe available to us.” He tilted his head a little. “You’re nervous.”

Lisa snorted. “Understatement.”

I shot her a short glare. “You’ve seen what he’s capable of. Aren’t you?”

Armsmaster hesitated. “I am,” he admitted. “However, we’ve — *I’ve* come farther in the last two years than I thought possible. We’ve made every preparation that we feasibly could, in the time we had. We’ve tailored our tactics and strategy around one that we *know* he is particularly vulnerable to. I *am* nervous, but I’m also confident that we have a solid plan, reasonable contingencies, and that we *will* make it through this. Scion won’t.”

I held his gaze for a few seconds, but he didn’t look away and he didn’t waver.

Good grief. When he had that much faith in us and what we were doing, it really made my concerns seem kind of pointless and silly, didn’t it?

“And if all else fails,” Lisa chimed in, “all we have to do is ‘accidentally’ let him destroy Amy’s favorite restaurant. Scion doesn’t stand a chance against Panpan on the warpath.”

“Fuck you,” Amy drawled.

Almost against my will, a smile tugged at the corners of my lips. I carded a hand through my hair.

“Okay,” I said. “Okay. Is everyone else ready?”

“Well,” Lisa began with a saucy grin, “you’d know *all* about whether Clockblocker is ready, wouldn’t you?”

“Amy.”

Dutifully, Amy jabbed a finger into Lisa’s forearm, and Lisa jerked as though she’d been shocked. “Ow! That’s getting really old, you know!”

“Behave,” Amy told her flatly.

Armsmaster glanced at them, but didn’t comment. He’d had two years to get used to their particular antics, after all. “Mouse Protector is currently in New York. She should be back later on tonight, however. Vista has recently finished the school year; she has no commitments that will impact her availability. Riley Davis...”

“Won’t be fighting,” I agreed with his unspoken thought. She’d made a lot of progress in the year and a half or so she’d been with us, but the damage Jack Slash had done wasn’t so easily undone. “Neither will Mimi, I think. She’s been trying to avoid using her powers, ever since the Slaughterhouse died. Dad has vacation time saved up just for this occasion. Dragon?”

“Dragon will be moving her suits into position overnight, tonight, to avoid catching attention. They will be in place for the fight with plenty of time to spare.”



“And the Endbringers?”

“All accounted for. There has been no change to their patterns or behavior since the last attack.”

Which might not mean anything once everything started, but at least we weren’t going to be kicking the final battle off while an Endbringer was on approach somewhere else. That was just *asking* for something to go horribly, horribly wrong, especially if it was one of the Endbringer battles where Scion showed up.

The last thing we needed was a reputation for being Truce-breakers while we were trying to kill an omniscient threat that everyone *currently* thought was the world’s greatest hero.

“So the only preparations left to make are to tell the people who don’t know,” I concluded. I sighed. “And that’ll be up to me, won’t it?”

“I don’t envy you that one,” Lisa said seriously. “Neither of them is gonna be happy about it, especially with such short notice.”

“I...could talk to Director Piggot in your stead,” Armsmaster offered. “It may improve her receptiveness if she is told by an old work colleague, instead of someone who used to be a subordinate.”

“No,” I said, although I really wanted to take him up on it. “Better she hears it from me. It does us no favors if she thinks I’m not willing to do it myself.”

“And the other?” Amy asked.

I grimaced. “Well. I’m not exactly their favorite person to begin with, am I?”

“You didn’t make the greatest first impression, no,” Lisa snarked.

I flipped her the bird, but it just made her laugh.

“No use putting it off, either,” I said reluctantly. “Just... Do me a favor and double check everything? Make sure it’s all in working order?”

One of Armsmaster’s eyebrows rose a little, but he nodded.

I stepped away, and between one moment and the next, I’d donned my costume and pulled on my powers. The Hero I needed slotted into place quickly and easily.

“Door Me.”

A pane of light drew itself in the air, then opened up. On the other side was Cauldron’s meeting room.

I glanced over my shoulder. “Be right back.”

“Tell Alex I said hi!” Lisa called after me.

And then I stepped through and onto the floor. My Door snapped shut behind me.

I could have gone looking, and maybe another time, I might have, but it was easier to let them come to me rather than running about through the whole complex trying to find someone who knew it a whole lot better than I did. Instead, I picked a seat facing one of the doors, sat down, folded my hands, and waited.

It didn't take long. I was sitting there for maybe thirty seconds before the door swung open and a familiar dark-skinned face zeroed in on me. Behind her, I saw Contessa lurking, silent and unsurprised. There weren't too many people who could waltz into their main base without triggering one of her paths, after all.

"Apocrypha!" the Doctor exclaimed.

"Hello, Doctor." I nodded at the woman behind her. "Contessa."

The Doctor's brow furrowed. "You've already extracted the favor you wanted from us. Are you... You're not intending to extract another? A formula?"

"No," I said. "I actually thought about heading directly to Alexandria about this, let her tell the rest of you, but as much as I might not like her, I'm not going to bust into the Chief Director's office and start talking about tightly held secrets like I don't have any idea what the term 'infosec' means."

The Doctor arched one eyebrow. "A courtesy I'm certain she'll thank you for."

"I might have gone to Legend, instead," I went on, "but he's less involved in this than the rest of you are. Eidolon... Well..."

I didn't dig up his dirty laundry. No point in dragging all of that into the light. Not so close to the final battle.

"So here we are," I said, "because you're the one who can get into contact with all of the rest."

The Doctor, for all her faults, was not slow on the uptake. She realized exactly why that was important almost instantly.

"Two years," she mumbled. "It's time already?"

"The last Endbringer attack was a month ago, which means we have at least a month before the next one," I reasoned. "Our preparations and our plan are as complete as they're going to get. There's no point in waiting and risking that something might go horribly wrong in the next attack. Now's the best time to take the fight to Scion."

"Now?" the Doctor asked, sounding alarmed. "Right now?"

"Tomorrow," I clarified. "We're taking the rest of today and tonight to make sure everyone and everything is in place and ready to go. The closer to the deadline we keep that, the less time he has to realize anything's happening at all."

She looked me over, like she was truly seeing me for the first time. I knew her opinion of me hadn't been the best, exactly, but had she really thought I was going into all of this *that* ill-prepared?

Apparently, she had. I wasn't sure if I should blame her, considering how I'd come off in the two times we'd actually interacted, but I couldn't bring myself to care either way. Whatever her opinion was and had been, it didn't really matter to me at all.

"Do you expect us to rally the troops, as it were?" she asked coolly.

"Honestly? That was another mistake you made in Khepri's world," I answered her. "People...aren't going to fight if they don't think they can make a difference. You can try and drum up your army, if you want to, but there's a reason Khepri had to take control of everyone and force them to fight during Gold Morning. Really? I just came here so you could let Eidolon, Legend, and Alexandria know. I'm not so proud that I'd turn down having the Triumvirate there during the final battle."

"Even though, as you said before, we failed?" asked the Doctor. "Even though you don't truly trust us?"

"Here's the thing you don't understand, Doctor," I told her. "At the end of the day? I may not agree with everything she did and all the choices she made, but Khepri and I are the same person. Our experiences shaped us into different kinds of heroes, but at our core? We're not so different. When the end came, Khepri put aside all of her tough feelings, all of her grudges, and fought alongside her worst enemies to stop Scion. Do you think me so petty that I'd cut off my nose to spite my face?"

"Where will the battle take place?" Contessa cut in before the Doctor could say anything else.

I turned to her. "We're going to be fighting across multiple worlds. The goal is to draw him to the most habitable uninhabited Earth, where the only thing he can destroy is the landscape, hammering at his emotions the entire time. Run a path on Mouse Protector — following her should lead you where you need to be when you need to be there. I'd like you to give my team and I Doormaker permissions, too, so I don't have to swap to Khepri mid-battle unless it's absolutely necessary."

Contessa inclined her head to show she understood.

"And when this plan of yours fails?" the Doctor asked.

"Did you think I only had the one?" I retorted with confidence I didn't quite feel.

Her lips pulled tight. I didn't give her time to think up any more digs or ask any more questions. I grasped at Khepri again, pulled on her Noble Phantasm, and turned away from her.

"Door Me."

A pane of light drew itself in the air, unfolding into a portal that I stepped through —

And a moment later, I walked into an empty alley in the Docks. Between one step and the next, I shed my costume and powers, and when I came out of the alleyway, plain, ordinary Taylor Hebert stood there, alone.

“There’s that taken care of,” I said to myself. “Next...”

I looked up towards the sky and closed my eyes, reaching out with a nebulous other sense along the thread that connected me to my familiar and yanking on it. A minute or so later, a familiar bird made of glittering crystal swooped down, and I held out a hand for it to perch on.

It surprised me, sometimes, how little use I’d made of her. It. Well, I thought of it as her, so her. Khepri wouldn’t have been able to even comprehend the idea, since she’d relied so heavily on her own powers, her swarm, and turned them into an extra sense with which to perceive the world.

I frequently forgot this familiar of mine even existed.

My view twisted, and an instant later, I was seeing things from another perspective. My familiar looked up at me as I looked down at it, and I looked up at myself as I looked down at myself.

She took flight as I flung out my arm, and the tinkling of her wings flapping trailed behind her as she took off deeper into the city. It really was trippy to watch her from below and see through her eyes at the same time, but I managed to keep myself from getting tripped up by it as I turned away and made my way towards the Boardwalk so I could find a place to sit.

I had one more stop to make, and then, *then* it was time to start getting myself ready. Putting everything in order and making sure all of my metaphorical t’s were crossed and i’s were dotted. This was it. The end, in a very real way, the goalpost I’d been sprinting for, knowingly or not, some way or another since I got my powers. Even if there would be things to worry about after, this was the biggest thing, the most important, and I couldn’t give it anything less than my all.

Tomorrow, the battle for mankind began.