**Termination 21.2**

Confronted with the emergence of yet *another* family member, my mind stalled for a second, but if there’s one thing the last almost-year had taught me, it was how to deal with the completely unexpected, and this *still* rated below the Anomaly that reversed everyone’s sex, and the ways their powers worked on a surface level, for a day before fading away naturally and resetting them. My own **Peak Condition** had *not* liked that, and I’d been better after a few uncomfortable hours, but seeing Herbert as a stacked bombshell of a woman was something I neither needed nor wanted.

On the bright-side, Panacea had gotten interested in it, but had refused to explain *why,* and it’d let me get reversed copies of a *lot* of people’s powers. Sadly, Sundancer had disappeared, the girl likely having had died when Echidna had gone insane along with the rest of the Travelers, so I couldn’t permanently gain my ‘polar star’ ability when **Stellar Creation** was flipped.

Regardless, while strange, this was *still* something I could work with, but part of me wondered who *else* might show up. I *really* hoped my mother would not. “Where were you this entire time?” I questioned, even as I used **Acoustokinesis** to contact Overwatch, requesting, *‘Can you scan these women for Tinkertech? One claims to be Dragon, and the other my cousin.’*

“Canada,” she shrugged, tilting her head towards the woman she said was Dragon, but, I supposed, given what abilities Grace had picked up, with **Power Hub** skimming a weaker version of everything around her, the woman might *actually* be Dragon. “You?” she asked in turn.

Simultaneously, my Vizier used the Tinkertech sensor built into my Dimensional Cloak, reporting, *‘A lot of Tinkertech around, and they both have implants, but they appear to be human. Even more than you or Lady Bug are’*

“Khione,” the apparent AI-made-flesh rebuked, “that’s *Vejovis.*”

“Who?” my cousin replied.

Dragon seemed pained, “The *Ruler* of *New Avalon*?”

As I Saw the tanned girl, I had to admit her bearing an Abaddon Shard *did* give her claim some weight, and her confused response of, “But, but that’s *Lee*,” also helped.

“It’s been a busy year,” I commented dryly. “And let’s be honest, Grace, did *you* think you’d be here, fighting Kaiju?”

“I, well, no,” she admitted. “But I’m learning a ton more here than I would’ve at WPI.”

“High risk, high reward,” I shrugged, smiling. “And how did you end up in *Canada?* The rest of us touched down in Brockton Bay. Old Brockton Bay, not New,” I corrected. Turned out, no one *actually* cared that I was from another dimension, at least in comparison to everything *else* I was doing

Grace shook her head, “I did too. How did you *survive*?”

“Wasn’t that hard, aimed for the water,” I smiled, but she just looked more confused. “Herb and I showed up in L.E.O.” The confusion, if anything, got worse. “Low Earth Orbit?”

The look she gave me indicated she clearly thought I was messing with her, as she repeated, “How did you ***survive?***”

Now it was my turn to be confused. “Well, there’s this thing called *superpowers*,” I informed her teasingly, “you might’ve heard of them. I’m told a few people around here have them, but I’m still skeptical.”

“Khione,” Dragon interceded, “Vejovis was active in Brockton Bay a *month* before your arrival on Earth Bet.”

“A month?” I questioned, frowning, getting a nod from the Tinker. “So you showed up after Leviathan’s attack?”

Grace shook her head.

“*During?*” I clarified, getting a nod, “Well, at least with your powers, in a situation like this, you’d be able to throw down, but then. . . why didn’t you? We could’ve used the help.”

“I didn’t get my powers until *after,* okay?” she informed me angrily. “And it didn’t even wait for me to get them before trying to kill me! Where were *you?*”

Hesitating, I glanced towards the A.I., asking Grace, “How much *have* you told Dragon?”

“Everything, duh,” she replied dismissively. “It’s *Dragon.*”

“Um, no offense,” I offered the incarnated program, “but that’s not a great reason.”

“You’ve read the book! You’re the one that suggested it to me,” she argued, frowning.

“Book?” Taylor questioned.

Intervening, I explained, “The Precog vision of one possible way the timeline could’ve gone. The Thinker published it as a web-serial in our dimension. He probably didn’t even know it was *real.*”

“But everything’s different. That was you?” Grace complained.

“You’ve seen how it *would’ve* gone, and Leviathan decided it didn’t want to follow the script,” I shrugged.

My cousin, however, frowned, “What did you *do?”*

“Exist,” I remarked, “And, if it was going after *you,* then *you* changed things too.” I’d thought having three ‘Endbringer Targets’ in one location had made things as bad as they had, but there’d apparently been *four*. I frowned, the base ‘prompt’ that Abaddon had used to let us pick our powers before yeeting us here vague in my memories, but. . . “Wait, you Triggered *after* you showed up? God, you went with the same thing *Chuckles* did? Only without his luck. It’s a *miracle* you survived, oh, and I’m the one that *ended* the fight, so you’re welcome,” I commented absently. “Grace, what were you *thinking?*”

“It was just a stupid thing, and I didn’t even want to. You *made* me,” she argued, now glaring.

“What, no I didn’t. . . *wait*,” I started to argue, but added before she could respond. “*when* did I do that?”

“After Christmas. You said it’d be cool. Not cool, Lee, not cool,” she chastised, and I could *feel* Taylor bristle beside me at the condemnation, however. . .

I had no memory of doing that, my last memory of my old life shortly after the 4th of July, which. . . had certain implications. Implications which I’d already considered, but put on the backburner until I could get more to work with. It appeared to be that I was getting that *now*. “Did you like your present, at least?”

Grace stared at me, before nodding. “The dragon lamp *was* cool, even if I never got to really use it.”

A lamp which, by *my* recollection, had been sitting in my closet, along with a few other Christmas gifts I’d stashed as I’d seen things I’d thought people would like throughout the year.

This. . . was something I was going to have to address later.

“You’ve always had a fondness for Dragons,” I teased, glancing towards the living A.I., who blushed a little and looked away. “So you showed up, knowing the setting, with targets on your back, and *without* powers. Again, Grace, what were you *thinking?*”

“It all turned out fine,” she deflected, which wasn’t *actually* an argument, at least not a good one, but before I could point that out the ground started to vibrate, barely at first, only perceptible to my **Acoustokinesis**, but it quickly grew.

Looking in the direction of the source, I warned them, “Showtime,” alarms starting to sound and lights flashing right after, Dragon’s own voice announcing that Behemoth was incoming, and to get ready, though the woman herself hadn’t said a word.

All around us, the Hosts started to panic, people rushing about, Grace swearing to herself as she quickly started putting together her open power-armor, while I just shook my head, and Taylor, still clad in her bio-armor, shot me what seemed like a skeptical look, *questioning/annoyance/skepticism* clear in her presence.

Glancing back at me, my cousin demanded, “Why are you just standing there!?”

“Because we’ve got this,” I replied blithely, resting a hand on Taylor’s shoulder. “Also, the guy’s literally an unfettered dynakinetic. Those guns aren’t gonna do *shit,*” I informed the pseudo-Tinker, gesturing to her armaments, “and the temporal missiles aren’t gonna be enough.”

“It worked before,” she snapped, before turning her back on me, promising, “you’ll see.”

Looking to my partner, I shrugged, and Lady Bug shook her head in disappointment. Lifting up into the air, Taylor followed, insectile wings unfolding from her back and buzzing. Normally the lift-ratio would be all wrong, but with wings that were harder than steel, specially designed ‘muscles’, and a bit biological design stolen from some of the creatures that came through the rifts we’d locked down, it was possible.

I could feel my partner reaching out throughout the camp, to all of the spybugs she’d seeded the area with, making sure to keep track of everyone involved, to prevent. . . *shenanigans*. In keeping with that, I created a sphere of hardened air around us, invisible to the naked eye, but something that’d keep us safe, and, if hit, would explode in a way that’d cover our repositioning teleport. Riding her connection, I kept general tabs on the situation, trusting in her greater ability to catch things that I’d missed.

The vibrations increased, as Behemoth neared, and more and more Hosts took to the air, a countdown from Dragon giving everyone a timeline to be ready by, which assumed that Behemoth was moving at its maximum speed, something that Ziz had been clear her ‘brother’ almost *never* did. Given his Dynakinesis meant he was a *telekinetic*, he could just shove himself to the surface with the force of a small nuke if he *really* wanted to, not that the shockwave would hit *us* with me standing guard.

But Behemoth wanted to play nice, unlike Levi and Ziz, the Endbringer possessing an unexpected degree of arrogance. In some ways, the fact that these engines of destruction had personalities made them. . . lesser, more human, but given that *Shards* had personalities, even if most of them were *brats*, the empowered Shards that made up Endbringers logically would as well.

Apparently, Levi *still* was annoyed that I’d Falcon Punched him into upstate New York moments before he swept through the medical area, killing everyone that’d escaped, and he destabilized Brockton Bay’s aquifer, my attack the Kaiju version of blue-balling him moments before completion, but considering the fucker kept trying to *kill me*, I didn’t much *care*.

Keeping an eye on my cousin, her body shifted to vapor and she *poured* herself into her suit, her **Elemental** power working in conjunction with **Stark Winter,** turning her into some kind of ‘freezing mist’ avatar, which, from what I could tell, *would* work to prevent the very overheating problem I spotted earlier. Toggling her systems on, she jetted upwards, towards us, and I shifted the hardened air to keep her from running face-first into it.

She waited for a moment, looking at Taylor and I, more and more Hosts getting ready, before asking, demanding voice ethereal, “*Well?”*

“Well what?” I questioned, keeping my gaze on Behemoth’s exit-point, and the Darwin Award contestants that thought they’d be able to *ambush* the *Endbringer*. With any luck, I’d at least get to see them use their Shards before they died, and add them to my own cache, but that was about the extent of how much I cared. We’d sent Karen over to try and talk them out of it, and, seeing as how she was back in our ad-hoc base, it clearly hadn’t gone that well.

~***Mouse convince anyone?****~* I asked Taylor over our shared power, using that medium to create a secure line that only *we* could use.

*~****Seventeen. They’re in the observation tower,****~* she replied, and hopefully seeing what we’d saved them from, they’d be more inclined to sign up with us, instead of whatever group let them commit suicide-by-Endbringer. ~***What’s up with her?***~ my partner questioned, passing along the impression of Grace, though an unfairly negative one. *~****She’s kind of a bitch. Reminds me of the trio, but combined.****~*

*~****She’s just not as good at dealing with surprises as I am,****’* I replied easily, remembering previous blow-ups. *‘****And I* am *messing with her a bit.****~*

“Well, aren’t you going to *do* something?” said cousin demanded.

Taking a moment to cast a skeptical look her way, I told her, “We’re good, but we’re not ‘shoot through several miles of rock’ good.”

I couldn’t read Grace’s expression, and she clearly *hadn’t* put in the work Taylor had to be more expressive with her body language to compensate, though I *could* See her Flames whip about angrily. “Then what about those heroes?” the drop-in asked, waving towards the emergence point. “You’re just going to let them *die?*”

*~****See? Bitch,****~* Taylor commented.

*~****We’re used to the realities of fighting, she’s not,~****’* I argued. *~****Come on, you heard her, she was in* Canada. *The worst thing there was Heartbreaker, and I killed him* long *before she apparently showed up.****~*

The yellow-black armored teen sent me skeptical look. *~***If *she’s telling the truth.***~

I shook my head. *~****Grace is a good person, just a little prickly. With her power-set, if she had Triggered before the end of Levi’s attack, she would’ve been fighting alongside us.****~*

*~****What about against The Simurgh?***’ she riposted. *‘****Why wasn’t she there?****~*

That. . . was actually a good point. *~****I’ll ask her later*,**~ I promised, and Taylor accepted that with a slight nod.

“Don’t ignore me!” my cousin reprimanded, flying in front of me, blocking my view.

Drifting to the side, I apologized, “Sorry, but you’re not the only one I’m talking to right now. Problems of command.”

“They can wait,” Grace informed me, blocking my view again.

A little annoyed, I addressed her directly, “You’re the one with a quarter of the power of *everyone here,* why are you talking to me when *you’re* the stronger one?”

“I, what?” she asked, confused and off-balance.

“They want to be there, I’ve already had someone talk to them. You want to pull them out, do it yourself,” I informed her. “I’m not going to stop you.”

She hesitated. “But *Alexandria* said-”

“**Then why are you expecting *Lee* to?**” Taylor interrupted, an annoyed buzz overlaying over her words.

Turning an inquiring look towards my cousin, she was motionless for a moment, before the girl admitted, “I heard Vejovis doesn’t answer to the Protectorate,” as way of an explanation. “I thought-”

“**That you’d get him to do your dirty work,**” my friend interrupted. “**You wouldn’t be the first. You won’t be the last.**”

“Who are *you* anyways?” Grace questioned, a touch of scorn in her voice.

“**The Lady, Bug. Head of Arachne Assemblages, and Vejovis’ partner,**” Taylor stated flatly, glancing over to me and reiterating, *~****Bitch.****~*

Before my cousin could say anything else, I told her, “You have thirty seconds before he arrives, so if you’re going to do something, do it *now*.”

The girl’s helmet turned to look at me, before, with a huff, she turned away and reached out. Watching her power, it was interesting to See it work, as there were several hundred hair-thin strands of Flame stretching out around her, so small and insignificant that they slipped my gaze at first, and it was only by Seeing her up above the others that I could get a clear look at it now. One line of **R̷͍͒̂o̷̩̹̅͌y̸͈̟͋a̴̲̽l̵͙̖̄̋ ̷͇̈́B̶͉̒l̴̟̜̾͛ǘ̴͔̚e̷̬̿̌ and Ice White Flame** grew, taking on a shape and character that I could actually read.

*Strider, interesting choice,* I thought, watching her **Perfect Mind** Shard spin up, actually increasing the rate at which she could think, different threads pulsing as she went through them rapidly. *Kind of wish I had that,* I mused, but testing with Herbert and Charlie had shown that, at the very least, my fellow drop-ins had powers I *couldn’t* copy, though if that extended to *all* Abaddon Shards was still up in the air.

More threads were queued, one after another, my cousin working at a breakneck pace, though I wondered what it was like to *her*. Soon, though, another thread blossomed into power, this one a Trump Shard that could cause a power to repeat on command, then another that created a totem that Mastered people while making them tougher, and finally one that could create minions that the Master could see through.

From the directionality of the Flaming threads, I identified each Host that she was pulling from, making a note to track down their powers for myself that Taylor handled, paying closer attention to them, as Grace wove all the powers together, creating first the totems, the Master effect hitting me for a moment before it was wiped from me by my own defensive abilities. I passed a thin black Beam of **Emotional Stability** along to Taylor, who had stiffened involuntarily and had started to gather up a Swarm when her body locked up.

The totems were Strode away to the ambushers, who *themselves* had their bodies paralyzed, unable to move, the lesser version of the power my cousin wielded resulting in a smaller area of effect for each totem than the original user could. Grace then created the Minions, little undead looking bat things made of bone, sinew, and with tiny glowing green fires in their eye sockets.

*A variant of the one that animated Tyrone’s body,* I noted, the previous user of that Shard having died during Leviathan’s attack, the half-rotted hellhound prowling the Red Zone almost killing some of the PD before I put it down like the, well, *dog* it was. The ‘echo’ power, which I sadly couldn’t see well enough to *See* directly, was laid on the flying minions, only *backwards*, attaching itself to the quarter-power **Area Teleportation** that was used to send the created creatures to the ambushers, whereupon they latched onto the panicked faces of the foolish Hosts. Then the Echoes were activated, and the bats returned to where they left, carrying their cargo.

Mid-air.

Six hundred feet up.

With a stomping motion, I used New Wave’s **Kinetic Force Fields** to make a wide purple platform, slightly bowl shaped, catching the recalled Hosts as they flailed and fell into each other.

“I, uh, good catch,” Grace said, clearly not having thought her move through, while Taylor stared at the girl, and I kept my attention on the emergence point, dropping the force-bowl slowly to get the lesser Hosts safely away.

The ground shook, heaving and rolling, as a full marathon’s distance away the earth erupted in a giant explosion that sent stones the size of houses flying in every direction. High, high above us, Tempest did his thing, shifting the weather, directing winds that moved at speeds that’d make most tornadoes blush to create artificial jet streams that pushed the projectiles to land in spots that’d do the least damage, away from anyone.

Pulling dozens of powers together, Grace lit up in a corona of combined abilities, **Perfect Mind** giving her the time needed to thread them all together, before portions of her armor popped open and twenty-five small missiles, *all* of them glowing with Shard-based enhancements, including a quarter-strength ***STING****,* were fired. The air rippled as the missiles were accelerated from standing to supersonic several times over in a fraction of a second, their own thrusters barely having time to start before they were a third of the way there. The powers used to ‘throw’ them faded as the rockets flared to life, *themselves* enhanced by other powers, to, if anything, *accelerate* the attack, hitting the tiny seeming Behemoth at the edge of the horizon in a handful of seconds.

Every insect nearby the target, outside of Behemoth’s thirty-foot ‘Kill Aura’, instantly died, or winked out of existence, or had the connection stutter for a moment before doing one of the first two. Ones further away watched as explosions twisted and warped unnaturally, a temporal effect *clearly* at work, as bits of Behemoth’s body rippled and shredded.

But not that much of him.

And, Seeing the near-blindingly bright Flames made of **Lava & Lightning**, I could tell his core was completely undamaged, the harm superficial, tearing away a measurable percentage of his mass, but if it was a percentage in the *double digits* I’d be surprised.

“What?” Grace demanded, another power flaring as Dragon flew up towards us, and seven missiles reappeared in her armor, then two more after that, then one more, the ‘reload’ power running dry at only one-quarter strength. In the distance, Behemoth turned to face the one that had harmed him, his power starting to condense, **Acoustokinesis** tingling as something happened around the Endbringer.

“**Don’t fire again,**” I warned, but my cousin, with a snarl, did *just that*.

This time, the missiles stopped a few hundred feet short, slamming into an invisible shockwave and detonating early, her partial **STING** carrying it through the first layer, but not the second, and they harmlessly spent themselves, the explosions warping and twisting as the temporal effects of her missiles were uselessly expended.

And then Behemoth answered *in kind*.

Creating a purple, flaming, Marked dagger with **Pyrokinetic Weaponry**, I teleported to it, interposing myself between the Endbringer and my newly discovered family member, pitting my powers *directly* against that of the engine of Shard-powered destruction.

The leading edge, the invisible focused shockwave, was negated with **Acoustokinesis**, my specialized Shard able to punch above its level in its narrow field of use as compared to Behemoth’s more varied **Dyna**kinesis, which I still couldn’t fully See the way I wished to. The visually imperceptible attack was *clearly* meant to take someone by surprise when they could only see the lightning-capped flames barreling at them at *ten times the speed of sound,* and, understandably, focused on *that.*

After the kinetic offensive was the spear of radiation, equally invisible, but *just* as deadly, and I reached into my **Sea of Flame**, redirecting the flow of my **Essence** to empower **Stellar Negation**, turning the deadly torrent of charged particles into nothing at all as soon as it got in range, the area-overwriting nature of the Shard caring not a *whit* how much more energy was behind the current attack, only that what was currently in range didn’t surpass its threshold, which had temporarily been raised to handle levels found in the center of the *Sun*, so I was fine.

*Really kicked the hornet’s nest, haven’t you, Grace*, I thought, this degree of attack *not* the norm for Behemoth, but, well, Simmy *had* said he was an arrogant prick, and the *worst* thing you could to do someone like that was inflict a *small* injury.

Next was the lightning, moving with the slowness of power-created electricity, the tip of the visible spear, and one that’d would’ve worried me had Flamel *not* come through last month. She was *still* trying to figure out the extent my flesh worked as an alchemical ingredient containing distilled ***Permanence***, but she’d come through and made me immune to electricity. The draughts took up someone’s ‘slot’, dropping the number of Flamel’s potions one could drink without ill effect by every permanent ability gained, but they were *absolutely* worth it, the woman, with my permission, having already made herself biologically immortal, with a whole *slew* of other powers as she, herself, *had* no use limit.

But my ‘weakness’ to electricity was a known fact by Cauldron, so appearances needed to be maintained.

Gesturing, a void opened in front of me, Deleter’s purloined power forming a shield, the air around me roaring as I let it be sucked into the circle of nothingness. Meanwhile, Taylor worked, the ground below me rippling as an enormous black sword blade, two hundred feet tall and covered in golden hexagons, shot up, taking the hit. Lightning surged along its length, arcing for me, but the tongues of ‘deadly’ voltage were sucked into the void, before the blade *exploded* backwards, the pieces that would’ve struck me annihilated, the others flying backwards even as Tempest wove winds down to deflect them away from anything important, and I let the unmovable void flicker and fade, the last component of Behemoth’s attack roaring towards me.

The column of fire that bore down like a bullet train made of the flames of hell certainly *looked* impressive, but, ultimately, was the easiest of them all to work with, as while it had control of flames, I’d long since learned how to work *plasma.*

In one motion, shifting the flow of **Essence**, I called forth a sword made of burning purple star-stuff, extending it out ten, twenty, *thirty* feet, looking *every* inch an anime character as I slashed down at the attack, my own power reaching out and pitting myself, Shard versus Shard, against Behemoth himself, who fought me every step of the way, my focus narrowing to this metaphysical wrestling match.

It was ***Unstoppable Power****,* by its very nature, running over everything in its path, a hammer that smashed any obstacle, but it had none of the *skill* one could have even with a tool as blunt as that. Wielding such a weapon, it was not just power, but stance, timing, angle, and a *dozen* other such things that could let one smash through any opponent with graceful exactness.

Behemoth had *none* of that.

It *was* power, and that was the *totality* of what it was. That had worked, after all, crushing every foe before, turning every fight into a base struggle, so why should it do anything different? Even if it could get nicked, as it just had, it wasn’t like it could be *defeated*, so why worry, why push forward, why *progress?*

In short, it was *everything* that I ***despised*** about both Scion, and *Cauldron*.

Meanwhile, even as I was weaker than it was in *pure* terms, I was not only able to bring his attack to a standstill, but started to take it over completely, the scales slowly tipping in my favor, but I could feel it start to dig its heels in, start to give this struggle *its* all, and while I *might* still be able to take defeat it that way, did I really need to, when it was so *weak* in every other respect?

Reaching across the space between spaces, the line formed over our clashing powers, I called out to my opponent:

***YOU LAZY PIECE OF SHIT.***

I could feel its surprise, as it faltered for a moment, and replied,

**What?**

And that moment of hesitation was all I needed, to seize initiative, and control, starting to tip the scales firmly as I told it,

**YOU HEARD ME.**

**YOU’RE SO PATHETIC, I’M NOT EVEN GOING TO KILL YOU.**

**I’LL HAVE MY *MINION* DO IT INSTEAD.**

It was amusing, to hear an Endbringer *offended* of all things, Simmy doing her best to stay composed at all times whenever we talked these days.

***What!?!***

With it’s attention fully shifted, launching half a dozen *more* attacks at me, instead of redoubling the one I was trying to fight off, I wormed a tendril of ***Power*** into its core, shifting the flows of energy that made the entire thing work until the burning flames, raging against my starblade, a few feet away from my head, the very air burning in bursts, shifted color from yellow-white, shot through red, to a deep purple that flowed past me harmlessly, expanding up and out in two enormous plumes, my Shards intercepting the other attacks as they had the first set, the lightning caught harmlessly within the plasma I now wielded, the power I’d rested control of from the Endbringer tipping things *heavily* in my favor.

But I *hadn’t* been lying.

Lifting a hand, I dispersed the fire, not needing it, contacting Herbert and his clones, telling them, *“****It’s Time.”***

“‘*Bout,* Time*!”* Boojack yelled, the other Replicants making similar statements, and, as one, they leapt up from the sparring arena, my **Acoustokinesis** suddenly stressed as I contained the shockwaves they left behind, Break following a half second later.

Moving almost as fast as Behemoth’s attacks were, they soared several thousand feet into the air before turning over and **Jump**-ing off the clouds themselves, setting off another set of shockwaves as they rocketed for the Endbringer, moving fast enough that Tempest and I had to stop the winds from blasting everything away as they passed by me, moving faster and faster until even *I* could barely see them, and then they slamming into Behemoth hard enough that it was all I could do to keep everything fifty-feet above ground level near it intact, clouds thrown away in every direction like they were discarded by god himself as they each hit with the force of a small nuke, bodily picking up the Endbringer and blasting it a few miles back.

Teleporting back to Taylor, Grace yelped, then looked to me, yelling, *“What the fuck, Lee!?”*

My partner just laughed, informing the girl, “**Watch. You might learn something.**”

A moment later *Herbert* struck the Endbringer, but the others had already shifted forms, growing into what I could only call *Titans,* and were holding Behemoth *down*.

Each one was easily seventy-five-feet tall, each humanoid figure dwarfing the largest of the Endbringers, though each kept to his theme, Boojack covered in thick hair with tusks on his face, Nick covered in bright red chitinous armor, Tyrone and Truth with shorter hair and Canine/Feline ears respectively, and so on, while Herbert grew larger than the others, a scaled draconic beast that grabbed the rock-skinned Endbringer by the head and started to slam enormous claws into its chest, again and again.

Clearly panicking, the Endbringer’s ‘Kill Aura’ flared into life, then expanded, to two hundred feet, then five hundred, then a *thousand*, until everything within several miles of it *burned,* but Herbert’s **Immunity** was absolute, and could not be overcome directly.

Blasts of every kind of energy leapt out from it, trying to strike the Replicants holding it in place, but through the interactions of power I could see that they’d all aimed true, and gotten close enough to the Endbringers core for their *own* **Copycat** Shards to work, which meant that one Shard struggled against *six,* each one with as much power as the first had, *and then some*.

Plumes of energy were torn up, twisted, and compressed, cladding each and every one of the Titans in glowing armor, as they overcame Behemoth’s supremacy over energy and started to *burn it alive.*

***NOOOOOOOO!!!***

It screeched, and I couldn’t help but *laugh*. The Endbringer’s power set was obviously meant as a test, asking ‘can you wield more esoteric forces?’ But rather than come up with the *proper* solution, Herbert had punched the proctor in the face, walked up to the gradebook, and gave himself a grade of *125% correct*, because ***fuck you****.*

And the longer it struggled, the longer Herbert and the Replicants fought, the *stronger they became*, not even bothering with **STING**, but winning through sheer brute strength, because *why the fuck not?*

Then, the draconic Titan screeched in victory, reached deep into the thrashing golem, and pulled out a pulsating orange core, from which **Dynakinesis** writhed uselessly.

“**Gotchya bitch,**” I muttered to myself, taking the power for myself, trying not to flinch as a *ridiculous* amount of power streamed into my Constellation of Possibility, a distant star larger than any Major power, more akin to the combined *True* Shards I’d picked up fighting Echidna’s creations. It bloomed like a second sun, not under my control, but with the distant promise of *obscene* amounts of power, once I could handle it.

Taking the core in both hands, plasma claws digging into it, the Endbringer’s true form shook, until, with an ear-ringing *CRACK* that wasn’t physical in the slightest, it started to give way, fracturing in my teammate’s hands, the power turning in on itself as, in one final move, Behemoth tried to go critical and kill us all.

Which might have been a danger, if it wasn’t using the power that *six others* already had, even more than *it* did.

Having warned them of what might happen, the other Replicants tossed the Endbringer’s corpse to the side, to capture and turn it over to Panacea to fuck with later, all of them focusing on the broken sphere, holding their hands out, like the enormous creatures were trying to warm themselves beside a campfire.

Then, with a sound I had to work **Acoustokinesis** hard to keep from being ear-shattering, it *detonated,* a small sun blooming with blinding brightness, had Herb not positioned himself between it and the base, light intense enough to start *fires* pouring out as day turned to night, each enormous figure casting pitch-black shadows by comparison as they contained the blast for several *long* seconds, until as it started to fade. At that point they lifted it up into the air and used their power to fire it up into the sky in a flare that could not only be seen from space, but entered it and *kept going.*

And, in the distance, I could see the telltale golden glow of **The Warrior**, hauling ass to find out what the *fuck* had just happened to one of its pet kaiju.

Turning to Grace, I smiled, and told her, “**That’s my queue to leave. Come ‘round New Brockton Bay! I’ll always have time for my family!**”

Holding out a hand, Taylor took it, and the two of us Strode back to Eclipse, as this was just *one* victory of *many* to come.