**Deadline 12.8**

“Can you repeat that?” I asked, hoping I’d heard wrong.

“The Simurgh is coming here,” Theo repeated, dashing said hopes.

“. . . . *Fuck,*” I sighed, looking around. Leviathan was nowhere to be seen, but his assault on the city was still going strong, water clones all across the city attacking groups of heroes. A condensed spear of water shot straight at me, from above, but it was deflected into the torn-up street next to me, punching a hole through the bit of turn up asphalt it hit. “What about Behemoth?”

“What?” the kid, far out of his element, asked. “Um, I don’t know. How do I check?”

I sighed, throwing *reading the sensor manual* on the giant list of things I needed to do. The damn thing was at least three-hundred pages long and full of terms I’d need to go look up, since while I knew the basics of radar theory, I didn’t had no clue what a ‘Root Mean Square Error’ was. “I’ve got no fucking clue. Eta on the Warrior?”

There was a long pause as I sensed a water clone form nearby. It barely started its leap before I riddled it with air blades and detonated them, splattering it to mist. “Who?” Theo asked.

“*Scion.* How long till Goldenrod shows up?” I repeated, failing to keep the edge out of my voice. I was getting more options and powers, but it *wasn’t enough.* I couldn’t assume I’d get any more, but it seemed like I would, so I needed to make two plan for what I needed to do next. Actually *making* the plans was easier said than done. “And how long do we have before Ziz touches down?”

“Um,” there was the sound of typing, “The PRT say he’ll be here in twenty minutes, probably.” More typing. “The Simurgh will be here in fifteen minutes.”

*“Fuck,*” I swore again.

“She won’t be here long enough to do that much,” Theo offered, misunderstanding my statement.

Not having the time to explain, especially where I could theoretically be overheard, that it was *Scion’s* coming that I objected to, I looked at what I had, what my team could do, and what Leviathan had already done.

“Is this an open line, or are you just talking to me?” I asked him, wondering why no-one had said anything. Glory Girl never hesitated to add her two cents in.

“Um, just you. I didn’t want to panic everyone if I was wrong,” he replied, sounding like he was worried he’d done something wrong.

“Good call, kid. I’m gonna take a sec to plan, sit tight. Eeem.” Dispersing another two clones, I had to make the same decision I had before: run or fight.

Run was overly simplistic, as it could be pulling back to wait it out or it could just be continuing as I was, holding back as more and more people died. From the sound of constant fighting all around me, I knew that if I still had my armband it’d be reading off more and more names. *They aren’t your responsibility,* part of me argued. *You don’t owe them anything.* *They knew what they were getting into.*

Except they *didn’t*. They thought this would be a bog-standard Endbringer fight, if such things existed. They thought they were fighting together against a foe they knew the measure of, not one that had been holding back to an insane degree. If I hadn’t warned Cauldron of this attack, things wouldn’t be that bad.

*You don’t know that. It could’ve been just as bad, and even if it is worse, it’s* ***Cauldron’s*** *fault*, that part of me argued back. *You’ve fought Leviathan, Charlie likely has, and if Herb hasn’t that’s on him. We’ll just help him prepare for next time. You’re all in the clear, and can get back to the bigger picture of planning to kill an* ***Entity.*** *You don’t have to do this.*

Again, that inner devil’s advocate was technically right, except it wasn’t. Yes, I didn’t *have* to do this, but I didn’t *have* to try and help Taylor or the Undersiders either. Amelia was *objectively* an incredible asset, but getting involved with Taylor, even going out and fighting the ABB, were things I didn’t *have* to do. My father would bring out that ‘great power, great responsibility’ argument, but he wasn’t exactly here helping either. I didn’t *have* to save them, I didn’t *have* to go with the option to fight instead of hide.

But, there was a *large* difference between *have to* and *should.*

Vejovis had fought, he’d flown the flag and shown that he was willing to stand and fight but *Vejovis wasn’t me*, not really. I’d sunk into the mentality, like I always did, but Vejovis didn’t fight with dozens of powers at once. Maybe that’s why I had so much trouble, maybe that’s why I’d been such an idiot. Maybe not, and I just hadn’t been ready.

I tried to think of a persona that’d work the best for this situation: Hopeless fight against an overwhelming foe, maximizing damage while saving lives, and not giving two shits about the collateral. Normally making these things took hours to do correctly, getting everything in place so I could slip into it like a tailored suit. I didn’t have *time* to make a new one, and I ignored a man of Wealth and Taste offering his services in the back of my mind. He’d do better than Vejovis had, but it *wouldn’t be enough.* He acknowledged the point, but brought up a counter-point: Did I need one? While a man might wear a dozen masks, that didn’t mean he lacked a face, after all.

My costume flowed and changed, interlocking grey plates covering me from head to toe. Orichalcum tendrils extended out between them, completely flush with them and sealing me inside as they darkened, turning to shadows along with the rest of me. As they extended, they interweaved themselves into the facsimile of a man, thirty feet tall, with me at the center.

My guns were shifted to thigh holsters, so I wouldn’t forget them, and three dozen tentacles extended from my back, then from the giant’s back, forming the outline of wings. The ends of half of them lit up, royal purple suns forming taloned tips, the metal able to handle the heat, even if barely. The ends of the other half shimmered, the rain revealing long, thin, razor sharp, and otherwise invisible blades made of compressed air.

Rising up, the forearms of my giant smoothed out, azure blue fields of energy forming that quickly darkened to match the fiery tips of my wings, rippling from my hands down to my elbows. A similar process happened to the soles of my feet, from toe to heel, and a third occurring across my back, around the ‘wings’, extending strait out.

Spikes of metal grew and detached themselves in the interior space where I hung, projected metal pressing the created metal against grooves that rippled and appeared in my armor, the foot long orichalcum needles primed and already starting to fill with Momentum, ready to be fired at anything that I wanted gone.

Placing two blood-red suns in the giant’s head for ‘eyes’, I focused on one of the few unbroken pieces of glass around me. I looked god-damned terrifying. *Good.* If I was doing this as *me,* I needed every advantage I could get.

“Zilla, broadcast what I’m saying to everyone, if you can’t reach them then queue it up and play it for them when you can,” I instructed.

“Recording,” was the entirety of the Virtual Intelligence’s response.

I let out a long sigh, “Okay guys, we’re at the endgame. Levi’s taken the worst pounding he’d had, *ever,* and he’s still here. Hell, Purity, the Triumvirate, and I cut off his god-damned *tail*, and it’s just made him *pissed.* I know some of you might be upset by me saying this, as you’ve been fighting as hard as you can, but for the rest, it’s time go full-bore. Break, you and your cousins should go mythical. Æonic, I *know* you’ve got a dozen tricks under your sleeves, time to use them. You’ll come up with more in a week anyways. Glory Girl, if you aren’t already, pull out the sword, and if anyone else has got something they think will work, *use it.”*

“We’ve got company incoming in fifteen, and while I can handle her, she’s known for her multitasking,” I said. They’d either get the reference, or they wouldn’t, and either way they couldn’t do anything about it. “Then, five minutes after that, we’ve got *more* trouble, and if we haven’t convinced Leviathan to turn what’s left of his tail and run, there might not *be* a Brockton Bay anymore. Smoke ‘em if ya got ‘em guys, because you might not get another chance to if you don’t.”

I let that statement hang, Zilla’s, “Message sent,” coming through my headset. Nodding to myself, I looked around the empty, abandoned street. Two clones rushed me from opposite direction, my wings lashing out at them.

The suns burned so hot that they vaporized the water they touched, my Aerokinesis kicking in automatically and forcing the steam to expand outwards, blowing off their top halves completely. The lower halves started to reform, but were cut to pieces by the bladed tentacles, not reforming. Water spears shot down from above, but they passed through my insubstantial form harmlessly.

I wasn’t sure if the armbands collected any kind of biological data, they probably did if they could tell when someone was ‘down’ versus ‘dead’, so putting another one on was out of the question if I wanted to keep this form separate from my other identities. That meant I just needed to head towards the fighting, save them, and ask for directions.

The Speed Zone on my back was lightly pushing me forward, even only pushing against the air and rain, my flight keeping me stationary, but I started moving with it instead, picking up speed as I dropped down to the street. I was heavy enough that I dropped through the five feet of flooding easily, starting to move faster as water was sprayed out in dual plumes behind me. Then my feet hit the ground, and I had to struggle to stay upright.

While the Speed Zones were denser than I’d ever used to move, I’d assumed my increased mass and weight would offset it, but I’d forgotten that this power didn’t care about that part of physics in the slightest, but cared instead about *force*, which my short fall had given it in *spades.*

Blasted down the street, I went from zero to a hundred, or even faster, in less than a second, only the fact that I immediately started hydroplaning keeping me from accelerating even more. Shifting mental gears, I leaned into the movement, closing in on the nearest fighting. Trying to turn a corner, I had to use my flight to slow myself down slightly, twisting mid-air and landing on the walls of the buildings on the far side of the street as I closed on a group of fifty or more heroes. The large group, more than were in the entirety of Brockton Bay before I showed up, was fighting more than their number of Levi clones on top of a wrecked parking garage. It was only the clones’ size that were keeping them from overwhelming the defenders, who were fighting within a glowing shield that deflected incoming projectiles but allowed them to fire outwards.

Coming up behind the clones, I turned the outermost layer of my armor completely substantial as I slammed into the first one with enough force to splatter it, my wings moving semi-autonomously to vaporize and cut any clone within range. My giant’s hands glowed as gauntlets of purple plasma formed around them, allowing me to reach out and instantly destroy any within reach as I tore through them like a hot knife through water.

The Levi Clones on the other sides were gaining ground, forcing their way into the bubble shield to slash, stab, and drown the defenders. Opening two holes in the giant’s chest, I let the primed spikes go, alternating arms, firing out in an expanding V pattern with the shield at the center. Using them like this didn’t let me take advantage of the momentum amplifying properties of the metal, but I wasn’t using them for that. I was using them because they were incredibly tough, decently heavy, and I didn’t think people would take it kindly if I used depleted uranium.

The spikes, formed into drills by the firing process, tore through the liquid constructs with enough force to splatter them outward. It wasn’t enough to disperse them, but it delayed them as they reconstituted their forms, the projectiles blowing holes in the building further down the street.

Not missing a beat, the defenders pushed back, forcing the reforming clones out or destroying them outright. The Levi-clones around me shifted targets trying to swarm me with numbers. That just brought them in range.

Extending another dozen ‘wing’ tentacles, and arming them, I leapt into the tide, pressurized metal claws punching through my outer layer to grope uselessly at my giant’s insubstantial innards. One clone reached so far they pierced my back, the Speed Zones grabbing and dragging the entire thing through my body and out my back, impacting another clone that had tried to attack me from behind, only to be pushed away by the very same Speed Zones that through its ally into it with enough force to partially splatter them both.

A few more clones were made nearby, but they were being destroyed far faster than they were being replaced, the air around me a steambath that would’ve cooked a normal person in seconds. As they continued to press in, I created I fall back point above another rooftop, where I was condensing a rapidly spreading, thick platform of condensed air.

I flew towards it, and the clones followed, jumping up onto the invisible platform as if they could see it clearly, surrounding me, clawing for me, as I ‘stood’ a few feet above the hardened gasses. Dispatching another few with almost contemptuous ease, I waited until the bulk were on me, the heroes fighting the last few around the shield and turning to help me.

When the last Levi-clone jumped on top of the enormous platform, easily several hundred feet square, I snapped in place the walls I’d primed surrounding it, making a rectangular prism with an open top. The clones barely paused as I dropped all of myself into Shadow, except for a single, blazingly hot, tendril. Several water claws and tails pierced my insubstantial form, doing nothing but giving me a slightly uncomfortable feeling.

Shooting the single, solid, blazingly hot wing tendril towards a clone, it dodged easily. I didn’t care about the miss, as *it* hadn’t been my target. The tip of the tendril burned through the water, which had already started to fill the chamber, and touched the hardened air. The first time I’d done this had been an accident, but I learned from my mistakes, at least in this respect.

The cage *exploded* into a conflagration, burning and blasting everything inside it as the gasses burned off, the force of which breaking apart the next layer of solid air, which went off, furthering the cycle. The prism’s contained, continuous explosions created a pillar of fire that extended hundreds of feet into the air, only expanding slightly as the flames reached the other end of the walls of air, the slight blast not harming the defenders. I floated out of the fading inferno, tentacle wings slowly flapping for effect, the damaged tendrils that had been tipped with air blades repairing themselves as they were replaced with more suns, as they’d exploded when everything else did, Shadowform not protecting them from the heat.

Water spears rained down from above, all focused on me, but most were deflected, and my wingtips met the once that weren’t, vaporizing them before they could do more than push the tendrils back.

The heroes before me were a motley group, looking tired, wary, relieved and-*is that fucking Armsmaster?* It *was*, standing there, bold as brass, looking angry. Fuck him, he didn’t matter, and even if I’d known he was here I still would’ve tried to save everyone. By the way that some of them were looking towards a man in DESCRIPTION, *he* was in charge.

The man teleported forward, to the edge of roof, and waved to me. “Thanks for the save. Name’s Jumpstart, yours is?”

*Fuck, I didn’t think of a name.*

“Not important,” I boomed over the rain. He could probably tell I was making my voice deeper than normal, but the nice part about an obvious lie is that, while it was obviously a lie, it rarely gave you the *truth*. “Where’s Leviathan?”

Jumpstart didn’t bat an eye at my declaration and checked his armband, shaking his head. “I don’t know. Maybe you could try tal-”

He cut himself off as the rain stopped, the movement of the water going unnaturally still once more. The hero disappeared, reappearing next to the shield he quickly stepped into. Their position was such that there was no water on the ground, and it looked like they had their bases covered. I floated there, still ‘flapping’ my wings as I looked for the next attack vector.

If I could catch another glimpse of Leviathan, that would help immensely, but the flickering Liquid of his power was nowhere in sight. The ocean surged against the warped space wall I was still providing power to, but it then retreated completely. I didn’t drop the power, not believing for a second that the ocean was no longer a threat, and luckily neither did Missy, who maintained the construct as well.

Staring out at the ocean, the indistinct chiming of the newest deaths from the armbands of the gathered heroes went quiet, and I saw that something was happening over the water. Long tendrils of water, each easily forty feet across, started reaching up from the sea, twisting and turning as they rose higher and higher. They twisted in on themselves, looking to be giant waterspouts, but forming in reverse, not spreading out but gathering together as they started to move towards the city in an enormous, surging, mid-air river, almost looking like a giant, mal-formed hand, the individual streams twisted, spiraling fingers.

I tried to think of what it would be. Was he going to turn the water into a pressurized beam, striking at whatever he didn’t like? Was he going to use the water to start spewing out clones by the thousands? He probably had enough water in the city to do so already, why would he need the ocean? Whatever he threw at me, I could ignore it as long as *he* wasn’t there, but there were probably only a couple dozen other heroes here that could do so, and none of them were a part of the Penumbral Defenders.

The water flowed towards the city, up over the warped space, almost lazily. Lightning strikes from above, explosions that came from nowhere, projectiles of all kinds, and other effects attacked the stream, but it continued, inevitable. Reaching over the center point of the city, high over downtown, it stopped and started to gather into an enormous sphere, rapidly expanding.

I tensed, waiting for the attack. I could put myself between the group I’d just saved and this attack, but that would only give them an extra few seconds of protection. Instead of blasting down, possibly in a stream or machine gun barrage of water spears, the sphere spun, stretching out as it did so. As it stretched, the edges started to drop making a concave shape, a giant swirling bowl that grew larger and larger as more water was fed into it.

It thinned out, until whatever Levi was doing only a few feet thick, but it continued to expand, stretching further and further out and *down*. Flying up I saw that, if it continued, it’d make landfall half a mile outside of the city, encapsulating the railyard to the north, the slums to the south, the medivac point to the west, and the Warped Space wall to the east. It was only then that I understood what Levi was doing. It wasn’t a bowl, it was a *dome*, one that covered the entire city, and I’d be surprised if it didn’t extend underground as well. It’d cut stop any non-teleporter from escaping, locking us all inside. With it in place, Levi could contract it, crushing everyone inside. Something this big, this complex, and this *complete* meant one thing.

*Levi was done being subtle.*

Others had already reached this conclusion and had started to flee, points of light streaking in every direction to try and outpace the walls of water coming in and trapping them, but the slowness, if you could call it that, of the dome’s construction wasn’t done out of need, but for intimidation. As the first heroes started to escape, the dome jerked downwards, five times as fast as it’d been moving before.

Some escaped, most did not.

I watched as the Light of their powers winked out, their bodies caught in the water like flies in amber, straining as death came in waves across the dome, crushing them. Those that could, broke off, but the others that couldn’t stop themselves in time were trapped as well, held until their Lights, too, were extinguished in a wave of pressure that sped from one side of the dome to the other.

I watched, having to push down the horror of seeing that many people who’d just wanted to help die as they fled a foe they had no hope of winning against, surprised that I could still *feel* such horror after what I’d seen today, only distantly noticing as it started to rain again. Looking upwards, I opened my helmet and stuck out my tongue as I brought myself partially out of Shadow. Immune to poisons, I had nothing to fear as I tasted the rain that dripped through my construct. It was salty, but not overpoweringly so. Like tears.

Closing my armor back up, I turned the those nearby. “Ask Dragon where the fighting is heaviest,” I commanded.

Jumpstart reappeared at the edge of the rooftop, pressing the buttons, interrupting the death toll, and did just so. “*DB-3. You are to stay in position Jumpstart, and maintain a fallback point.*”

“Wasn’t asking for me,” he told the AI, but the armband had already started to list the dead once more. I made the giant give him a single nod before folding up my wings and dropping like a stone, hitting the ground and moving for the center of downtown.

As I sped down the wrecked streets, a plow of hardened air blasting debris, wrecked cars, and anything else aside in front of me, I glanced back towards the beach. Seawater was continuing to be pulled from the ocean, slowly thickening the dome that encapsulated the city. Muted thunder rattled as lightning, normal and unnatural, struck the dome, flickering as it dispersed throughout the water wall.

Clipping a building, digging out part of a wall, I focused on my task and centered myself on the road. As soon as Levi showed, *everyone* would jump him, but as long as he continued attacking like this, we’d have to track him down. With him able to easily move through the ground, that wasn’t going to happen in time. Instead I guessed, and I wasn’t even sure if this was going to work, that if his attacks stopped being effective then he’d come personally, and we’d end this.

I didn’t have any open slots, the next major one nowhere near ready and the minor one still several minutes out, but I had two top-tier moves I could use with my loadout. If I could get Leviathan away from the heroes, that is. They both took a bit of set-up, as all of the best moves did, but I could call in Herb, Curtis, and possibly Purity to keep the Endbringer occupied while I did so. I could see flickers of light and the sounds of fighting now, though they sounded. . . *off.* Turning a corner, I had to dismiss the plow and jump, slamming into a building as green and black glowing tank barreled down the road, over a dozen clones in hot pursuit.

It only came up to my thigh, but I didn’t want to hurt someone by accident, which turned out to be a smart move. A blast of aquamarine fire blasted where I would’ve been, had I not jumped. A woman in a similarly colored costume was poking out of the top of the tank and turned to fire at me again, realized I wasn’t a clone, and then joined the man who was unleashing streams of energy that tore perfectly spherical chunks out of the clones behind them, destroying one and slowing a few others as they shrank and reformed.

Righting myself, I dropped down into the middle of pursuing clones, wingtips blasting them to steam as I sped towards the fighting, the sounds faint and distorted. Turning another corner, I came face to face with a wall of water, a hole in the bottom quickly closing. Somehow sensing my presence, the gap slammed shut and a hundred spikes shot out, ready to impale me.

Turning to Shadow completely, I passed through it as the spikes blindly sought me out, finding the street packed with fully formed, thirty-foot Leviathan clones. On the other side, the sound of desperate combat pounded in my ears, the closest clones turning to strike at me as I dropped back to reality. Re-igniting the suns on my hands, I plunged forward, stripping off the speed zones on my feet so I wouldn’t overshoot the defenders, and flew into the clones.

The force of the steam they created as they burned away slowed me down quickly as I pressed down the street towards the center, my ‘wings’ flailing independently as I tore through their ranks. A clone made from Leviathan’s ‘blood’ struck at me and I moved to burn through it like I had all the others. It caught the blow, the water in its fingers burning off and leaving a gauntlet of steaming, crystalline endbringer flesh behind.

The other clones around us closed in for the kill, but were ripped apart by my wings as I caught the blood-clone’s other hand with one of my own, its hand burning and shrinking down as well. As the water burned off it packed the hardened substance together, holding it together from the back as the heat slowly burned off the water, but not fast enough. It was a good counter to anyone with fire abilities, but I was not so limited.

As its black-blue tail snaked out and pierced the giant’s head, burning itself on my creation’s eyes, I grabbed the desiccation pistol from its thigh sheath as I forced the giant to pull the construct towards me. As I opened the front to fire, dark tendrils of fluid shot out, ready to pierce, crush, and drown me. The weapon in my hands turned substantial for a moment and fired, turning the center of the construct to dust, as well as completely destroying part of the normal clone behind it.

With the center of mass gone, the blood clone fell apart, hardened plates that’d made up its shrunken claws splashing into the water below, carried past me as the flooding was unnaturally directed towards the water wall behind me.

The water Leviathans, all my size, jumped me from every direction but without another fighter made from Leviathan’s blood they burned to nothingness. Forcing my way through, the tides of animated water, a beam of purple light blew through a clone I was fighting, piercing the shoulder of my giant. Breaking through the lines, I found over a hundred people on a raised, glowing, bluish-purple platform, forcefields of several different colors flashing into being to block attacks from the clones surrounding them.

The buildings around them were collapsed, or about to be, barely visible through the sheer mass of Leviathan clones that crowded in from every direction. I caught the glimpse of a familiar set of powers, but there wasn’t time to talk, the attack coming in every direction. The heroes near me faltered, the clones taking the opportunity to strike, and I leapt forward.

A solid blue shield sprung up between myself, and the group, intended to stop me, but working just as well to stop the clones as they slammed into it, sliding off slightly as my wings extended forward past me, piercing and exploding the clones into steam, air control forcing the superheated vapor up and away from the heroes. Landing just outside of the shield, I planted my feet and twisted in a way that normal hips would never allow, turning my back to the heroes.

I could see the swath I’d cut through the Leviathan clones, a gap that was quickly closing as more rushed forward, and I stood at the ready. Dropping everything but my real body into reality, growing out the plates of my body into proper orichalcum armor, I sent out another dozen tendrils, hitting the edge of the point where my power would force them into some other form, and held my ground under the onslaught. The blue shield behind me flickered out, but I yelled, “Keep it up!” over my shoulder, and it sprang back to life.

Blocking an entire street, I could sense most of those behind me turning to focus on the other three. Hands covered in solar gauntlets, I stopped all comers, using my desiccation gun to handle any blood clones that tried to attack me, counting down the shots left: *17, 16, 15, 14*. As many as there were, there were far less than there’d been when I’d stood with Chubster, and for that I was grateful.

For the others, I had an entire street to work with, and even if my powers were limited, I still had quite a few tricks I’d thought of but never used. I had an audience, but they knew I had fire powers, so they’d be explained easy enough. Fighting, I reached out and prepped a latticework of hardened air to appear. When it did so, the clones all the way down the street staggered for a moment before moving through it, watery bodies flowing around it like it didn’t exist. That was fine for me, reaching out with a free hand and grabbing the closest edge of the fractal web with an enormous solar gauntleted hand, and setting the entire thing alight.

Explosions raced down the hardened air, creating wave of pressure I had to fight to keep from blowing past me and into the groups of clones who pulled back, only for the latticework to spike outwards, just enough to catch on their solidified forms for a moment. The foot wide strands lit up like blazing lightning as the cores started to explode, building up pressure as they burned outwards faster and faster, blowing everything they ran through, and everything around them, to mist, dust, and ashes.

In less than two seconds, I’d completely cleared half my street, blowing out remaining windows of everything near me and causing one building to buckle, falling down on the clones which rushed forward as the remaining clones attacked with renewed vigor. It needed work, but as a proof of concept?

*Shatterbird eat your heart out.*

Attacks came from above as well, more than they had before, the shield above the group behind me held, my wings reaching out and intercepting a trio of clones that tried to come down on it at once, having seen that trick before. Firing a pair of Orichalcum needles down the street as the clones closed, more appearing to replace the ones I’d exploded, I splattered a dozen clones, but they were replaced as fast as I could kill them. The clones were faster, more accurate, more varied, and more deadly. It started to push my ability to hold them off, not letting me set up another air-lattice bomb, but it meant that Levi was *personally* directing these clones. *Come on you bastard,* I thought. *We’re holding out against whatever you can throw, come for us yourself!*

Once Leviathan showed, the rest of the Triumvirate would follow, and we could take care of this once and for all, but the guest of honor was not in attendance. There were no larger than average clones watching from a distance, no shifting of earth as he tried to come up between buildings, *nothing.*

I could theoretically keep going for hours, the only limiting factor my pistol, but the Blood clones were showing up less and less. One dropped down from above, hiding above a normal clone to screen itself from sight if I’d been looking through the Giant’s eyes, *9,* but no others appeared, even far away. The heroes behind me weren’t doing so well, a few more having been injured badly, and the ones directly behind me starting to flag, gasping as they fought.

Three clones rushed me at once, and I let my wings take one while I dispatched the others, as I realized why. *The heat.* While I barely noticed it, and was trying to deflect the steam upwards, I still had over thirty arm-sized suns darting back and forth, two car-sized pieces of shaped plasma on my arms adding to the problem. Without Stellar Negation, my powers were starting to effect those I was trying to defend.

I dropped a sun from a wingtip, replacing it with hardened air, but the long cut I made across a clone’s chest was ignored, the clone slipping past me to hit the blue shield behind me. Sparking a sun back on the tip of the tentacle, the hardened air exploded, splattering the clone I’d stuck it in. That had. . . possibilities.

Unfortunately, while I could move dozens of tentacles at once, or my power could, we couldn’t create the explosions fast enough to hold them back in time, another three clones getting hits in before I could detonate them. *Damn.* People were dying, and I didn’t have enough power to-

My thoughts were interrupted as I felt a minor slot complete, the surprise enough to make me miss another clone. *Okay, but what do I slot?* I wondered, grabbing it and crushing it to steam, the person it’d been about to kill flinching away from the heat. I had dozens, maybe even a hundred powers that could slot in there, but I had no idea what most of them *did*, and while I could try to split my attention between fighting and looking them over, as soon as I tried to look at the list and read *Anarchic Structure Inducement* more clones slipped by me.

I needed something I knew would work, I needed something I had practice with, and most of all I needed something that would *blow these things the fuck up.* I had a dozen top-tier moves, and I’d thankfully been able to scale down one enough to *help*, but most of them were pretty god-damned indiscriminate in their destruction. I needed something with the force of a bomb but the precision of a knife.

Fighting more, the heroes flagging, another eight down, dead or dying, I picked one of my first, one I’d spent time every single day of the last week training, even if by proxy. It was distinctive, but I’d deal with the consequence after. I slotted it, getting a sense of vertigo, of twisting, of *co̕n͜҉n҉͡e̶͢c̀t̶i̵̸o͟ń̛*, and stumbled, wings flailing wildly at everything in front of me.

Shaking as I was forced into reality, I lit up, blindingly white, a pure radiance which ran down my limbs, down my metal, until I was a pure being, existing in two planes at once. A clone rushed me, dodging my wings, only to explode as it touched me with a harsh, familiar sizzle. As I got control of my powers, I darkened, the light shifting through the spectrum until it was a riotous collection of colors. No longer blinding, but as harsh as a neon sign at midnight, I didn’t know *what* happened, but I knew that I had a full tank of Light and I was ready to go.

If there were any heroes in the air around me, I’d never try this, nor if there were civilians, but *fuck it*, the PRT already hated Boardwalk, this didn’t matter. Dropping the suns from my hands, I gathered Light around them, shining brighter and brighter, pressure building until it was a dam ready to burst. I sent metal tendrils deep into the ground, rooting my giant to the spot to help me deal with the thrust I was about to create. I needed to aim this *carefully* or I’d kill everyone behind me. Sensing something was about to happen, the clones moved as one, those out of reach jumping upwards until they blotted out the sky, all coming down for us.

Reaching deep, I threw open the floodgates of my power as I reached upwards, hundreds of Light filled tendrils coming out of my hands and shooting down the giant’s arms, spiraling as the reached its palms and opened up in a blinding lotus of power. *LIGHT* poured out of me in a rushing torrent, blasting through the clones on either side of me, the clones behind them, and the clones behind me.

I started to spin the giant’s upper body like a top, tendrils twisting around and around as I unleashed a rainbow river of destruction on everything more than twenty feet off the ground. Picking up speed, I raised my giant’s arms, twisting my palms to send arcing prismatic streams spiraling across the sky. I hoped I’d missed any flyers in the air high up across the city, taking respite in the fact that the Light was moving slow enough to be dodged.

These were not the double-helixed rocket blasts of Purity, these were twin floods of shining destruction that drained my entire reserve of Light in seconds, a battle’s full of attacks unleashed in half a minute. The thunderous explosions stacked up on one another rattled through the metal, and the heroes I’d saved would need their eardrums healed, but they would survive. Nothing else did.

Hundreds of clones were blasted to mist, buildings in every direction were destroyed, and the twisting arcs rose higher and higher into the air. As the struck the dome it rippled, exploding outwards from the impact, losing form and creating wide gaps in its structure. I could see the powers of dozens of parahumans making a break for it, flitting through rapidly closing bands of air, many escaping, most of the ones too slow pulling back in time. Another dozen died, but easily three times that number made it to safety.

Slowing my spin, I internally retracted and re-extended the twisted tendrils of projected metal holding together the plates which covered my legs, looking around. Every building within three hundred feet was rubble, the ones past that with giant pieces torn out of them. While I could see some clones in the distance, climbing up buildings and jumping off them to land on heroes in the streets below, none of them were nearby. Ungrounding myself, I turned around to look at the gathered parahumans, many of whom were staring at me in undisguised shock.

I recognized New Wave, and was surprised to see Brandish, but Laserdream was nowhere to be seen. I hoped she was still alive, but I didn’t have time for that right now. “Where’s Leviathan?” I asked them, metal projection forming a cone to amplify my voice over the storm.

A few of them kept staring, while others shook themselves, looking for other avenues of attack. Several, mostly the smaller parahumans, sank down, sitting or on their knees, on the raised platform made of forcefields. A group of less than a dozen moved towards me, only for the rain to stop. Some cried out in anger, fear, frustration, or despair, but most raised shields, engaged powers, and got ready to fight. I constructed an air-shield above the group, ready to spring another around the sides if need be. It’d mess with the acoustics something fierce and give away its presence, otherwise I would’ve done so already.

However, nothing happened. Nothing continued to happen as we all waited, taut as bowstrings. *Simurgh arrival in four minutes,”* Zilla informed me. The armbands of all present, which had gone quite, shouted as one, *Leviathan spotted, CD-1*.

The rain slammed down with penetrating force, blasting the air-shield to pieces, but protecting those that’d left the protection of the force-field bunker as they ran for cover. The rain continued to fall with that force for several seconds before fading back down to an unnaturally heavy downpour, the dome above us slightly thinner from the water used in the attack, though slowly restocking from its connection to the sea. Leaving the heroes behind, I took to the air, metal wings flapping to get a bead on Leviathan.

He wasn’t hard to spot.

A dark, hunched shape, close to fifty feet tall and growing, was rising up from the center of downtown. Light blasts rained into it, seeming to do no damage at all as it continued to swell upwards and outwards. It was an inky, greenish black, the same color as the blood clones, but on a scale that dwarfed even Behemoth. The water construct slowly unfurled, rising high above the wrecked buildings, was Leviathan. From the dim glowing in the creature’s chest, I knew, or at least hoped, that Leviathan was inside the construct, which was easily over a hundred feet tall.

There were no more water clones, no more water spears coming down from above, only the briny downpour, and a foe unlike any this world had faced before.

*You wanted him to show up, he did,* my mind pointed out. *Now what?*

Other heroes weren’t stopped, stunned like I was, and sprang into action. Attacks flew out from across the city, blasts of light, arcs of lightning, and fireballs of every color arced up towards the giant’s form. The enormous endbringer construct blurred to the left, dodging all but the ones that changed direction midair, and dashed forward, reaching down to slam a watery fist down, its enormous tail striking out at another group two blocks over. When it dodged backwards from the constant stream of fire, no more attacks came from where he struck.

Godzilla, only with super-speed instead of fire-breath, darted to the side, killing another group while his tail struck out and killed a fourth. I started to fly towards it, but I was slow, ponderous, and watched as the first defenders reached it, Eidolon making a giant fist construct and punching it in the face. It looked at him, arm blurring to strike him and, if the suddenly collapsing building was any indication, bitch-slapping him into a department store.

Attacks struck into the construct, seeming to do no damage, but Leviathan still dodged the constant attack where he could, trying to kill everyone around him. A giant blue eagle, with a wingspan close to a hundred feet tall, appeared above me, reaching its claws down. I dropped my speed zones so it could hook its enormous talon’s into my back, the heat of my suns not bothering Mick in the slightest as the replicant burst forward with a prodigious flap of its storm-colored wings.

“Chest!” I cried out as the world blurred, hoping he heard me. Suffusing my body with Light to deal with the G-forces, we both rocketed towards Leviathan who twisted around, dodging a beam of piercing light from Legend, and thrust his tail towards us. Bigger than a train, it arrowed up as Mick twisted, almost skimming it as he rolled around the appendage as small, razor-sharp tendrils extended outwards to try to catch the thunderbird’s wings.

It dropped me, flapping and blowing by the Endbringer’s head, claws racking it’s enormous shoulder as I barreled towards its chest, hoping the real Leviathan was there. Extending out a thin, metallic tail and using the air to push me faster, I held out a giant hand, clad in star, and prepared for impact.

I struck the construct dead on, burning and blasting into it’s chest as the entire thing was rocked backward for a moment, taking a few steps to right itself, burned blood not having enough time to fully form into plates. I stopped, momentum spent, deep in its chest, and saw a flicker of light. Leviathan was in there, but I’d guessed wrong. I was inside it, about where it’s heart would be, and I could barely see the light from its glowing eyes through the darkness, it’s body dead center in the construct, hiding behind where the sternum would be.

The dark water all around me crushed down, ready to kill me, but down here, away from anyone else, I could pull out another of my kill moves, though without nearly the strength I’d like. As soon as I’d stopped firing, my reserves of Light had started to replenish themselves. I was only up to a tiny fraction of my reserves, but it’d work, and I was desperate as this had been *dumb.* I’d expected to blast some water off, or knock it back, not that I’d end up *inside* it. Channeling all of the Light I’d regained, I forced it out of every pore, creating an indiscriminate explosion that blasted everything around me, streaming out of every tendril of my giant.

While not enough to blow apart the construct, it forced the fluid back as it exploded outwards, which left me a choice, *fight or run?* This close to Leviathan I could do damage, but if I didn’t get out now, I might never get the chance, only having two more cards left to play. Then again, why not both?

Grabbing the desiccation gun with my right hand, I fired it towards Leviathan, eliminating the water between us. *8*. Turning it I fired out the back of Leviathan as well, the side I was closest to, *7* while pointing my left gauntlet at Leviathan and letting fly with the full compliment of momentum infused Orichalcum Spikes.

A water wall formed to stop them, but they punched through easily embedding themselves in the Leviathan’s flesh. As the water around me started to close in, I tried to lay a speed zone down on the Endbringer’s side, only for the power to not engage. Suspecting that, I laid it down on the spikes instead, growing them deeper into the crystalline flesh they’d embedded themselves into with metal creation.

Firing behind at my own chest at point blank range, *6*, I destroyed the tendril of water that was about to strike me and flew out towards the back, firing again to clear the way and open up a hole out of there, *5*. The gun had started to flash when I shot myself, telling me it only had five shots left, so I only had 4 shots instead.

Escaping out the back, the construct’s tail came down at me, and I holstered the gun, *needing* those last few shots. Pointing my right gauntlet up, I changed the shape of the momentum that had accrued in the needles stored within, forcing the long, thin drill to compress until it looked more like a carnival tent. Letting them go, the metal didn’t come apart as I’d hoped, but was forced into thin disks instead.

I was blasted backwards when one of them suddenly accelerated, blasting into the dark, bloody tail before the others and exploding in a crackling, lightning wreathed explosion. *The hell?* I wondered as the others just blasted through what little water they hit, sending it splattering in every direction like I’d expected.

The giant Leviathan whirled around, dark claw coming straight for me when a large, round shape blasted past me and slammed into the limb, blasting it backwards. The shape unfurled and Herb turned into a pterodactyl, flapping away and joining me as I retreated. He turned back to himself and flew, seemingly unaided, next to me.

“Asshole in there?” he asked through our comms, all business. I nodded. “That was really fucking stupid,” he added.

“Had four ways to get out, including Theo’s pistol,” I shot back, focusing on distant feelings of the speed zones I’d left behind. Normally, they weren’t useful to aim, but at the size of the thing we were fighting, it was enough.

“You still have yours?” my teammate asked in disbelief. “Why the fuck didn’t you-”

“He’s there,” I interrupted, starting to point where I’d seen Leviathan, but the speed zones weren’t there, they were exactly where I punched through. “Motherfucker.”

“What?” Herb demanded as we started to come around far enough away that we’d have a second of warning before Leviathan struck.

“Either he’s moving around, or he got *all* my tracers,” I told him. I couldn’t tell, but it *felt* like they were all in the same formation they’d been in when I’d left, but that might just mean he’d held them all in place together. That seemed like it might be beyond Levi’s capabilities, but I had *no idea* what was beyond Levi’s capabilities anymore.

Herb laughed, “No shit he’s moving. Everyone watched you go straight through him there, no one thinks that’s where he is.” Leviathan struck out at Legend with his reformed tail, the hero turning into a streak of lightning that bounced back and forth off nothing at all before forming behind the Endbringer and blasting, moving before the Endbringer started to move to retaliate and barely dodging the strike. Purity bombed it from a distance, carving out divots that slowly regrew.

“Need to get close, then I might fuck up the big guy,” Herb mused. “Shit,” he added, looking up. I followed his gaze and a stream of water reached down from the top of the dome to Leviathan’s back. All the damage that’d been inflicted grew back in a second, the chunks taken out by Purity’s continuous barrage now filling back out before the light had even fully faded.

With the powerset I had now, I wasn’t sure I could get Herb close. I considered trying to form a giant construct of my own, with air instead of water, to cut a hole in the constructs chest, but trying to match an Endbringer strength for strength *didn’t work.* I needed to get in, I needed to hold it open, and I had to do so *without dying.* If I had access to another power, I might be able to make it work better, but I didn’t have one available. The progress on the next Major slot had barely moved since I’d left the hospital, meaning it might be *hours*, and I wasn’t even a tenth of the way there for another Minor slot. I was building up momentum for another set of orichalcum needles, and what I’d accidentally done before *scared* me. While I didn’t care about fire, and explosions could be avoided by going insubstantial, the lightning contained within that blast looked like it could’ve *killed me.*

That left my speed zone enhanced pistol, which would do *nothing* right now, and my desiccation pistol, which had four shots left. While a single shot wouldn’t get me to Leviathan, two might, assuming I had his position correct. From there, it’d be a measure of keeping the passage open. Light glimmered in my palm, and I was reminded of the time Boardwalk, the time *I’d,* broken out of the Rig. Working along that theme. . .

Leviathan continued to move killing people as I planned, but rushing wouldn’t help and the Triumvirate were keeping him off balance, only striking out at a group once every ten seconds or so, and even then not always effectively. I was glad that Herb had gotten rid of his armband, hearing those that dies because I wasn’t thinking fast enough wouldn’t help. Herb himself was quiet as we slowly flew, and I put together mental models. It’d have to be in self-contained, layered pockets, but this *could* work.

“Ya got something?” he asked, somehow knowing I’d figured out an approach despite not being able to see my face, buried as I was in my armor.

My giant nodded as I reconfigured it’s shape. Still humanoid, to keep my power armor, but smoother, sleeker, in some ways more like Leviathan, thickening the tail as I grew segmented plates out of it, in some ways not at all, eschewing thicker arms for more streamlined ones, covering it from head to toe with speed zones that all would move me forward, and anything that I touched backwards. Pulling in my ‘wings’, I shifted the suns to cover my hands, feet, and the tip of my tail. It was awkward having one, and I could feel that my power didn’t really like it, but I needed it and added to the ever-growing list of things I needed to train.

“I’ll get close and call you. You start in, and I’ll open up a hole to Levi and do my best to keep it open,” I told him our comms carrying the conversation easily. Over the storm, the sounds of death and destruction only matched by the constant hammering of the salty, punishing rain. “Go for the bright spot, I’ll make sure it doesn’t hurt you. That’s where Levi is. Don’t miss, I can only do this twice.”

He nodded, and took off in the opposite direction, of Levi, while I dropped down towards the street. Pushing my flight to move, I touched down and blasted forwards, everything I touched just moving me faster. Grabbing onto the middle of my tail with aerokinesis, the only part of me not covered in suns or speed zones, I forced myself to go even faster.

I blasted by a group of heroes still running, moving so fast they barely had time to register me, and past another, the same group I’d given Rune to, still trying to save survivors. Leviathan’s gigantic construct loomed above me, his tail striking down at me from above, like a solid column of death dropped by god himself.

I moved to dodge, and the tail moved to intercept me. Dropping down to all fours, tail pointed straight out, I contorted my frame to lie my knees and arms along the ground, moving so fast that I could barely dodge obstacles, outpacing the construct’s tail. It started to come down and follow me, but Alexandria punched through it, splattering it as it reformed, giving me enough time to open up a lead and for Leviathan to go after Eidolon instead, who’d returned and shot a pale red beam that struck the constructs flesh and seemed to just stick there, before it all went off in a giant explosion that blasted the Endbringer backwards.

Eidolon blasted again, but the endbringer dodged, the beam missing and blowing up a string of buildings in the northeast of town, near where Taylor lived. As Eidolon prepped another beam the Endbringer leapt forward, taking the beam to the hand and shoving it in the parahumans face as it exploded, sending Eidolon flying off across the city as the Endbringer grew back his hand in seconds.

Following the Endbringer, I reached its foot and flipped myself upward, flying up the creature’s body. “Now Herb!” I yelled over the comms as I streaked past its knees. Dark tendrils of endbringer blood reached out, but found no purchase, sliding off or outright burning off as I followed it to where it’d fled, hiding out in the construct’s stomach.

I fired my desiccation pistol, *3*, but Leviathan moved upwards, once more hiding behind the creature’s sternum. I followed it, firing again, *2*, As I formed a drill of air and pressed it into the depression, spinning it in a miniature tornado that ripped into the healing hole in the construct. I fed what little Light I’d regained into the vortex, letting it out in small packets that detonated as the water tried to push close, keeping the target zone clear. I looked back, and almost started to dodge as Herb seemed right behind me, until I saw the remains of a skyscraper between us, half a mile away.

My friend had turned into a giant serpent, easily a mile long, purple and gold easily over a mile long, with two sets of deep seated, glowing green eyes, the same color as Leviathan’s own. It had coiled in itself, but was rapidly coming my direction, picking up speed as it did so. Looking from its enormous head, to the hole I’d made, I redoubled the power I was putting into the wind, pushing the gap wider, shoving a bit of my own power into it. I still hadn’t fully recharged from when I’d supercharged Panacea, but Leviathan was fighting me now, as it looked at the oncoming threat.

Water spears rained down Break’s scale-covered hide, sometimes piercing but never deep enough to matter. A wall of water surged up, hardening until it was stronger than steel, and Herb broke through it easily. Water gathered at the top of the dome and shot down in a car-sized cutting stream as my partner passed Alexandria, and the attack that would punch through a fallout shelter did little more than press him down slightly as he continued to come, as inexorable as the tides.

Barreling towards me, I shot my desiccation pistol one more time, *1 shot left,* and moved to body-slam the water construct, which hardened before impact. Grateful for the Endbringer’s cooperation, I used the hardened material to rocket up and off, gaining height as Leviathan, the Endbringer, was struck by Leviathan, the mythical, mile long serpent as I watched in awe, seeing what I’d overlooked. I’d seen animal transformation and looked a the *lower* limit, Herb had looked in the opposite direction.

I inverted the light packages in the vortex in the construct’s chest, blowing it open even wider, as Break’s head impacted the two-hundred-foot-tall construct, punching clear through the blood-powered creation and out the other side, Leviathan caught within break’s enormous jaws. Muscles strained as Herb’s teeth sunk in, but not through, the Endbringer who flailed, sending water everywhere to try to strike the monster that’d caught it.

Herb’s power flared, running the length of his body, and Leviathan’s construct, which was trying to dig its claws into the serpent moving through it, fell to pieces, the dome above coming down as well. Literal tons of sea water came down on the city, some of it moving to avoid the medical area, but most coming down on the city.

I flew after Leviathan, dropping down onto Break’s body and riding down his length as he continued to drag the Endbringer through the gravel, slamming him down into the ground over and over again as the Endbringer flailed, shooting blasts of condensed water that turned to harmless mist after a few feet.

Closing in on Herb’s head, my teammate reared back to slam Leviathan down again, the Ednbringer’s attacks suddenly were effective, tearing out large pieces of my friend’s jaw. In great spurts of blood and scales Leviathan ripped itself free, dropping toward the ground. Herb turned to follow, as did I, but as soon as the Endbringer got thirty feet away the water around him condensed and Leviathan shot down into a whirlpool of churning dirt, and disappeared.

The rain didn’t stop, and five waterspouts once again started to form out at sea.

Herb’s form shrank, in an instant his normal self, a small part of his cheek torn and bloody. *“FUCK!”* he roared. “*WHAT DOES IT FUCKING TAKE TO KILL THIS MOTHERFUCKER?”*

I moved down towards the buildings, gesturing Herb to follow. We landed, and I hoped the rain would slack off, but no such luck. Retracting my current armor, Herb still swearing up a storm, I grabbed his arm, his suit torn and bloody, healing him quickly.

“We spread out,” I told my friend, not sure what to do. Herb had nearly bitten him in *half,* the Endbringer’s chest sporting a long series of gouges before he’d disappeared, “He shows up again, don’t carry him off, bring him to Eidolon. We can do this again, we’re *so close.* I’ll track down Flechette, even if it outs me, I can figure out a way to buy her silence, and we’ll *end* this.”

Part of me, a part that didn’t really feel like *me*, ***really*** didn’t want to do that, for no reason I could think of, but what choice did I have. I hadn’t heard her die, but I hadn’t had an armband for the last twenty minutes, and even then, she might’ve been evacuated. It’s what *I* would’ve done if I was in command and didn’t understand what her power was. Herb nodded and leapt up into the air so hard the roof caved in, and I flew up as well, trying to find a good vantage point.

While it wasn’t exactly a skyscraper, I found a building tall enough to give me a view of most of the city, the skyscrapers that would’ve gotten in my way no longer standing. “Eecee, someone with an Armband, I need the location of a Hero named Flechette. She might have a way we can kill Leviathan, and we’re running out of options.”

“Thank god you’re okay,” Taylor said, relief vibrating through her voice. “Sure, I can check. Oh, Panacea says she’s. . . says she’s. . . what’s that?” she asked curiously.

“Lady Bug, I need the info *now!*” I snapped. “I don’t know how much time we have!”

“Huh?” my teammate said. “Sorry, it’s just, what is that? It’s. . . *huge.*”

What was going *on*, this was *not* like Taylor. Taylor was many things, prone to escalation, likely to bite off more than she could chew, but she was always tactical and *never* vague about anything related to fighting. “What’s huge?” I prompted, trying to find out what was going on. The leviathan clones were back, and there was fighting throughout the city. No, there was fighting in *half* the city. The other half was completely silent, and I could barely make out Leviathan clones streaming over rooftops, down streets, past where the distant glow marked out a group with powers, but they weren’t fighting.

“It’s a giant. . . snake?” she asked more than told, sounding worse than she had when she’d been concussed by Bakuda.

“Taylor, that’s Break. What’s going on?” I pressed. When she’d talked I thought I heard gunfire, and could see distant flashes in the medical area, which no longer seemed alive with motion.

“Break’s in space?” she asked, unsure. “I. . . I don’t think that’s Break, Lee.”

There was *definitely* gunfire, and yelling, and screaming. The Leviathan clones had reached the medical area, and they looked to be besieging it, attacking everyone there, but almost no-one was fighting back. *There’s a Master*, I thought. Someone had seen this, and decided now was a good chance to strike. Was it the CUI, some stupid, misguided Cauldron plot? I didn’t know who’d done this, but they were going to *die.*

“Fuck. Anyone still around and Lucid, check in,” I ordered, straining to look for Leviathan. Some of the storm seemed to be clearing, so were the clones a rear-guard action, to give him time to escape.

“I’m good, Vista’s hurt but Robin’s looking after her,” Theo responded.

He was the only one who did.

Break was probably in another form, as was Mick, but *where was everyone else.*

A circle of clouds opened up, perfectly circular and allowing the light of early afternoon to pierce the near twilight of the city. Down from it emerged a winged figure. Feminine, almost angelic, were it not for the fact that she had *far* too many wings, and I could see her powers reaching out like Gooey questing tentacles into the city.

The Simurgh was here.

Could she’ve taken out everyone below, stunned them so they couldn’t defend themselves? I looked around at the roof, I had everything I needed for a long range ‘will get you Birdcaged’ level of power use, and the time to implement it. Lifting a hand, metal plates grew out of the ragged top of the roof, growing into supports from which more pieces rose, starting to curl together.

I *SAW* The Simurgh’s power, though I could barely scratch the surface. Pre- and post-cognition I knew about, as I did the telekinesis, but she had six others, none of which felt like they meant everything. I could push it, as I did before, but if I managed to incapacitate myself, *everyone died.* What I *did* know was that, whatever had rendered my team insensate, Taylor mumbling about rainbow wells, it *wasn’t her.* That *didn’t* mean I wasn’t go to take the bitch out.

Metal continued to form, twisting, speed zones starting to appear and layer themselves into interlocking patterns, Orichalcum forming and stars spreading.

One Gooey tendril of The Simurgh’s power wasn’t moving blindly, it had a purpose, and reached down towards a target, a moving target that was on its way to the medical area. I wanted to be wrong, but I saw a flash of movement, the Liquid of Leviathan’s power flashing into being for a moment as he directed all of his clones throughout the city, and the rising streams of seawater which had connected and were starting to flow high above the city once more.

It was obvious where he was going, he was heading for the medical area. For the sick, the injured, the ones he hadn’t managed to kill the first time.

Leviathan was heading for Taylor and Amy.

Growing out the base of my construct some more, I changed the vector of initiation, prepping a new corridor of vacuum with aerokinesis.

“Got your message, you see find the bastard?” Herb demanded.

I checked what I’d built, what I’d prepped, made sure all the parts would function as I hoped. I hadn’t tested this, *couldn’t* have tested this, especially the way I was about to use it, but there was no way I could make it across the city in time to save them. This was the only way.

“He’s heading for Amy and Taylor,” I told him. Speaking over his *“Fuck!”* I instructed, “Simurgh’s above the city. If I can’t do it myself, get me to safety and tell Æonic to kill the bitch, we’ll deal with the fallout afterwards. Scion’s here in five, but I might get his attention. See you on the other side. Eeem.”

What I was doing was stupid, it was suicidal, it was going to get me yelled at by *everyone.*

But they’d be alive to do it, and that’s what mattered.