**Termination 21.Ω (Interlude: Taylor)**

It was easy to forget sometimes how far she’d come sometimes.

While other times, it practically slapped her in the face.

“**We *killed an Endbringer,***” she said to herself, not believing it, despite seeing it, *doing it.* “***I* killed an Endbringer.**”

**Why is this surprising?** her friend asked. **Has Break not done this before?**

Taylor shook her head, starting to disagree, that it was different, but she stopped as she realized that she was talking to her friend, *the Demi-Endbringer*, and that maybe it wasn’t so out of the question after all.

It wasn’t like she’d done it *alone,* like **Lee** had to the other one, but even then, working with **The Morrigan**, along with Break and the others, she hadn’t expected to *win* not really.

Except. . . ***Lee*** had expected to them, had confidence in them, in *her*, so she had to give it a shot.

Speaking of the man, they’d watched what’d happened, as he’d gone from angelic to *lamia*, multiple arms matching the creatures own, ripping it open, until the core had been exposed. Then, when it started to crack like Behemoth’s had, her leader had reached down, plucked it out, and *ate it.*

Then he’d teleported back, nodded to them, gave those gathered a hearty *good job*, and gone back to his office, like that was all there was to it.

The others hadn’t really been sure what to make of it, but Break had stepped up and given a short speech, just under five minutes long, clearly workshopped by abusing Theo’s ability to see the future, that’d left everyone in high spirits, and they’d all gone their separate ways.

Herbert, meanwhile, had asked they go meet **Lee**, as the man was concerned about **Lee**’s well-being, given what they’d seen. Taylor wasn’t, because **Lee** was ***Lee***, as simple as that, and, when he couldn’t handle things, he had *her.*

Realizing her friend was waiting for an answer, the teenager shrugged. “**Just getting used to how things are now, I guess,**” she offered with a smile. “**Less than a year ago, I didn’t have any power. To be like this now? It’s just weird.**”

The plant girl beside her considered that, placing a single bark-covered finger to her chin. **Whereas I have *always* been like this. Mother has talked about the psychological changes of Triggering, but I had not considered it would also apply to you,** she admitted. **You seem more like us than the Hosts.**

*And then there’s that,* Taylor thought, as the Endbringers considered her like *them,* for reasons they couldn’t really explain. It was a category that they’d included **Lee** in, but *not* Herbert or the others, and when she’d approached Break about it, he’d just nodded, and said that it ‘made sense’, but he couldn’t explain *either.*

“**Uh, thanks?**” Taylor offered, not sure what else to say, **The Morrigan** just smiling and nodding back. *Okay good, that was a compliment*.

The two of them made it to **Lee**’s office, Herbert already waiting outside for them, but she could feel **Lee** reaching out to her.

*~****I can feel your worry,***~ he noted, amused. *~****I’m fine.****~*

*~****I can tell, but I still want to talk,****~* she replied, letting out a mental breath. He was a bit much some times. *Most* times, really, but she was glad he hadn’t been trying to hold everything in. After Echidna, he’d been trying, and doing better, but this was the first real big thing that’d happened, and she’d still had some fears.

Herbert nodded to the two of them as they approached. “Okay,” the large man nodded. “I’m gonna need you to back me up on this, because that was some freaky shit and-”

*“You know I can hear you, right?”* **Lee**’s voice called, from all around them.

Break froze, “Uh. . . yeah?”

The door to **Lee**’s office opened, the man behind his desk, smiling slightly as he watched them walk in. Behind him, New Brockton Bay was consumed with celebration once more, though it wasn’t as bad as when they’d killed Behemoth. That time, it’d been almost. . . *desperate,* but now it was calmer. Still happy, like the fourth of July, amped up to Christmas levels, but not like the entire city had won the lottery again.

Herbert took the lead, and Taylor let him, since this was his idea. “Dude, what’d I say about Evangelion being a *bad idea?*”

**Lee** looked at him, confused, before realization dawned. “**Ah, right, that. Completely different,**” he dismissed. “**I don’t need an S2 Organ, as I’ve *already* got infinite energy. I did that so it wouldn’t take out the city. Also,**” he smirked, “**I was curious.**”

“Curious?” Break echoed, incredulous. “How’d you even *do* that?”

“**Instinct, I guess?**” **Lee** shrugged. “**Just felt right. Didn’t know I could do it when I did, to be honest.**”

**The Morrigan** tilted her head, speaking up, **You did not? Mother had wondered why you had not consumed her for her power.**

That brought them all up short. “**Really?**” Taylor asked, incredulous, and her friend nodded. Looking to **Lee**, he seemed just as taken aback.

“**Your mother is working *with* me, and was only doing what she did because she didn’t have a choice,**” her leader stated. “**I’d be somewhat of a hypocrite if I didn’t offer her a second chance, when I do it to others, and, understanding her position, she thought it was useless to try. The moment she saw it wasn’t, she jumped ship, and I can respect that.**”

And, when he put it like that, working with the Simurgh made sense, though she knew that trying to convince *anyone* else of that would be an uphill battle. Taylor had gotten used to the craziness that was **Lee**’s life, to the point this made sense, but while they were changing things, they hadn’t changed them that much.

**The Morrigan** nodded. **I thought it might be such, but mother possesses experiences and. . . biases, that I do not that interferes with her models.**

“Yeah, this is nice and all,” Herbert said, waving a hand, “but *what happened?* You can eat Endbringers now? So you got Bohu’s powers?”

“**Bohu was the one the rest of you fought,**” the other man corrected, “**But. . . well, yes, but actually *no*. I’ve. . . I’ve got it, but it’s. . . *unreachable.***”

“**You mean it’s locked, like STING?**” Taylor asked. It’d make sense, since, while he could copy whatever he saw, the *really* powerful stuff was-

“**No, it’s. . .**” he replied, frowning, prismatically glowing eyes growing brighter, rainbow flames starting to burn in his sockets. “**Actually, I’ve got a better handle on this lately. Would you like to SEE?**”

Taylor didn’t even need to consider it, replying, “**Yes**,” looking to the others. **The Morrigan** nodded after a moment, while Herb hesitated.

“I’ll keep an eye out,” he decided, shaking his head. “You’re gonna do your Sea thing, and you’re always defenseless when you do that. I’ll let you work.”

She frowned, and could see the faint flash of hurt on **Lee**’s face, but it was gone in an instant. He might say he didn’t care about his friend anymore, but he still did, even if he didn’t want to. Given that, even these days, Taylor still occasionally thought of Emma, who’d moved to Newark with her family, she sympathized.

“**Okay, take a seat?**” her leader suggested, and both girls did so. The man reached out to them with his **Tree Growth & Control** power, their shared ability enough to make a solid connection, as the flames in his eyes brightened again, like two small stars, and he ***pulled-***

And then **Taylor** was somewhere else, floating in space, a **Sea of Flame** stretching underneath her, only, looking at it, it seemed more like a muted *sun* than anything else. Holding her hands out to instinctually stabilize her, she saw she was once more clad in the metal, wood, and chitin of what some part of her considered her *true* self, and beside her floated **The Morrigan**, in her full beauty, her real form a pale imitation of *this*.

**Hey, Cool!**

**It worked!**

A voice beside her boomed, and she turned, and froze.

Beside her was **Lee**, but the figure was *enormous*, a giant that dwarfed both her and **The Morrigan**, that turned a titanic head, skin glowing with repressed radiance, like a nebula in human form, slowly darkening as human features were added, filling out its features, though the hands stayed colored, and the figure’s, ***Lee****’s*, eyes maintained an almost terrible intensity that pressed down upon her, almost crushing, but, paradoxically, the more he focused, on them, the gentler it became.

**Gimme a sec.**

It thundered, her body vibrating with the waves of power that passed over her.

**Haven’t done a full body**

**Reformation in a while.**

**Taylor** watched, as, while **Lee**’s upper body was defined, everything from the stomach down stretched down into a long, snake-like tail, *just* like he’d been in the last moments of his fight with Tohu. The tail pulled in, reforming into two enormous legs, and he turned her way, then frowned.

**Why are you so small?**

he asked, and **Taylor** had to shrug.

“**Why are you so big?**” she asked in return. “**And it’s your place, so I should be asking *you*.**”

**. . . Fair Enough.**

The enormous man, bigger than even Behemoth, started to compress, but, as he did so, streams of Flame poured off of him and into the Sun below, until he was Endbringer sized, then human sized, sighing as he did so, shaking his head.

“**Okay, this feels. . . *weird,* but doable. Didn’t realize my scale was off,**” the man joked. “**Kind of the issue when you’ve got no frame of reference. Wonder what that means. . .**” he trailed off, before shaking his head, looking at the two of them, and **Taylor** froze, as she realized that this was the first anyone other than **The Morrigan** had seen her like this.

**Lee** frowned, and, in an instant, he was right in front of her, studying her carefully, running hands that practically glowed with power along her shoulder and arm, in a way that felt *insanely* intimate.

He stared, entranced, taking her hand and examining her clawed fingers, muttering to himself, *“****Beautiful.****”*

*Oh god. Kill me now,* **Taylor** thought, glad she didn’t have skin because she’d be blushing *so hard* right now if he did, but **Lee** wasn’t done, shifting his attention to her face, and she wondered what he saw, because she had *no idea what she looked like.*

“**How did you get the details this exact?**” he questioned, reaching a hand out to run a thumb along her jaw, and *why did that feel so nice!?*

“**I, uh, can you, uh,**” **Taylor** stuttered, not wanting to tell him to stop, but the feeling was *really distracting.*

**Lee** blinked, then seemed to realize what he was doing, pulling away, a wave of red passing over his features like a solar flare. “**Sorry,**” he apologized, embarrassed. “**Not used to, uh, *this.*”**

**Taylor had similar issues,** **The Morrigan** noted, and **Taylor** remembered she was there, having gotten *completely* sidetracked.

The man before her, gave the Demi-Bringer an up and down look with an idle, “**Huh, like the detail,**” before turning his attention back to **Taylor**, which, *what?*

**The Morrigan** was jaw-droppingly gorgeous, but **Lee** didn’t seem to care, his attention firmly fixed on *her.*

*. . . what do I look like?* she thought, almost desperately, and tried to answer his question, if just to give herself time to process. “**I, uh, I’m just this way naturally?**” she more asked than said, having *no* idea what was going on.

“***Really?* But I had to. . . was it the same for you?**” he asked, turning to face the other woman.

**I am as I am,** she responded, which was how ***Taylor*** was, but if **Lee** wasn’t then what did *that* mean?

“**Huh,**” he commented, shaking his head and turning to face the **Flames** below them. “**So, welcome to my power. It’s. . . kind of complicated, but the bits of oddly colored Flames sticking up are my various powers. Like there’s Personal Force Fields, and there’s Strider’s Area Teleportation,**” he indicated, pointing them out.

“**Uh,**” **Taylor** said, catching his attention. “**How do I look?**” At his lifted eyebrow, not understanding the question, she shrugged, “**No mirrors in these places.**”

**Lee** blinked, “**Oh, uh, good! Like a. . . wasp-themed fey queen.**” He looked to **The Morrigan.** “**Right?**”

The other woman considered the girl, then nodded, **That is an applicable description.**

Glancing back to **Taylor**, he asked, “**Uh, what do *I* look like?**”

“***Hot,***” the girl replied without thinking, then winced, seeing his amused smirk, and covered her face with chitinous hands. *“****Oh god.* I mean, like nebula, that turned into a person?** **And your eyes aren’t like the fire thing they do when you’re focusing, but little stars?**”

Looking at his hands, **Lee**’s purple and red hands destabilized for a moment, becoming condensed Flame, before solidifying again. “‘**Hot’ indeed. Well, back to why we’re here-**”

“**Yes, *that!***” **Taylor** agreed quickly.

He paused, sending her another amused look, “**So, the little ones are Minor powers, and that big one there is Acoustokinesis, a Major power.**”

She watched him explain, pointing to what looked like a White & Green mountain, and noticed a braid-like stream of energy extending from the back of his head, fading away into nothing, something that, glancing over, **The Morrigan** didn’t have, but she’d ask him about it later.

**What is that?** **The Morrigan** inquired, pointing one wooden finger towards an odd structure of Flame, multiple colors running together into one large. . . *thing*.

“**Oh, that’s *ANGEL* Creation. I kind of stuck several powers together. Honestly, I’m surprised it worked,**” he offered.

Staring at it, **Taylor** wanted to get a better look, and found herself falling downwards towards it, panicking for a moment, but, looking back, **Lee** was watching her, concerned, and as she focused on him she slowed, starting to rise back up.

“**What’s wrong?**” he asked, and she opened her mouth to ask how to move, but she *already was*.

*Is it just that easy? I think and I move?*

And it was, as she shook her head, turning and heading back down to the Sun, getting a better look at the Shards that rested in them. Seeing them this way, she could *tell* what they were, in ways that were hard to understand, but, remembering **Lee**’s explanations, it started to make sense, though her head hurt a little.

Looking over, she wasn’t surprised to see **Lee** floating next to her, and she asked, “**Is this your Injury Empowerment power?**”

“**It is,**” he nodded, pointing at a large, swirling bit of **Carmine & Beige Flame** that roiled, a contained inferno. “**See that mechanism over there? That’s the reservoir that builds up the power to be used when conditions are met. There’s technically a limit to it, but it’d be several dozen nukes worth of Essence at once, and would refill fast enough from its gathering arrays, over there, that you’d be fine a day or two later.”**

**Taylor** nodded, able to follow that, as the pain in her head got worse. “**Uh, could you heal me a bit?**” she asked. “**Got a migraine.**”

“**Sure,**” he smiled, laying a hand on her shoulder, the warm fingers against oddly sensitive fingers glowing, and the pain receded, replaced with a comforting sense of safety. She wanted to go see the combined shard, but before she could say anything the world blurred, and they were there.

She glanced over, understanding that, connected to **Lee** as she currently was, he was doing what she wanted instantly. Smiling to him, the two of them circled around it, her leader happy to show off what he’d done, the stuck together Flames slowly binding, and mixing, becoming something. . . *more.*

As **Lee** explained, while it was more than the others, it lacked the supports a *Major* Shard would have, and, being shown what that involved, **Taylor**’s understanding grew.

“**But, where’s the Endbringer Core?**” she finally questioned.

Smiling, **Lee** pulled her along the Sun, until, on the other side, a small planet could be seen, a riot of colors blending along its surface.

“**Is it on the planet?**” **Taylor** inquired, as they approached it, the sphere’s surface barren crystal, with deep canyons carved into it.

“**It *is* the planet,**” **Lee** countered, and she blinked, trying to make that settle with what she’d already seen, as they passed the floating bits of Flame that hung about, each a possible power that he hadn’t chosen to take.

Right above the planet, like a burning moon, was a Major Shard the same color as the planetoid, within it three structures that seemed. . . unformed, but ready. If she had to guess, the Shard was **Mimicy**, while the planet was that and *more.*

“**So, I’ve got it, but I don’t really know what to *do* with it,**” he offered, as they landed on the surface. With a gesture, a gout of Flame peeled off of the Sun above their heads, arcing down to pour into the canyon, sinking into crystal which slowly grew, narrowing that gap slightly. “**I can repair some of the damage done, but that’s it.**”

Beside them, **The Morrigan** touched down, looking around, interested. **Perhaps you could reform it into an Endbringer of your own?**

**Lee** blinked, then looked down. “**. . . maybe? No idea *how.* Eh, I’ll throw it on my to do list.**” Looking to her, he shrugged, “**So, I *have* Tohu’s core, but have *no* idea what that actually means. Like, it’s not physically *in* me, it’s here, but. . .**” he shrugged. “**Since you’re here, though, any suggestions on what I should use for my next Major power? I can show you around, and see if you’ve got a better idea on what I should use.**”

“**I. . . okay,**” **Taylor** replied, not sure how else to respond. If he wanted to show her around, she wouldn’t say no!

After a whirlwind tour, she realized why he asked her help in the first place, as there were a *lot* of good choices, but she could only go for one. **Mimicry**, while good, was almost like a multitool, most of its power wrapped up in the ability to figure out others powers and replicate them, something that **Lee** could *already do.* **Personal Electromagnetic Control** would’ve been the go to if he already hadn’t gotten electrical immunity from ‘Flamel’’s potions. **Dynakinesis** from Behemoth was on the table, as were the Simurgh’s **Telekinesis**, and Leviathan’s **Hydrokinesis**.

“**I’ve got a number of ways to destroy things,**” **Lee** noted, looking at the Endbringer’s Shards, and there was a tiredness in his voice as she considered the options that was almost physical. “**I’d like to create.**”

**Taylor** froze, and realized that every power she was considering was of the ‘blow stuff up’ variety. But, **Lee** had that down already, didn’t he? And if he didn’t, Break did, or she could talk to her Arachne Assemblages, or any of several other groups they had, but powers weren’t very good at construction.

She had *two*, but both of those powers were being used in ways they’d never been meant to, their original Hosts never touching on these uses at all, and they’d been vital for the development of New Avalon. Considering the powers, maybe **Metal Control** could work?

**Then perhaps use your copy of the other Dead Enbringer’s ability?** **The Morrigan** suggested, and **Taylor** almost facepalmed.

*“****Yes! That’s perfect!****”* she agreed, turning to **Lee**, who, from his expression, had forgotten about that as well. Reaching upwards, the Flames of the floating Shards rearranged themselves above their heads, streams of color spinning about like a kaleidoscope of shooting stars, until the Stone & Metal mountainous blaze of **Infrastructure** hung above them.

Looking at it, **Lee** frowned. “**But this doesn’t let me build, only modify existing buildings. It’s why I hadn’t brought it up. The modifications are pretty extreme, but I can’t create anyth-**”

*“****No,****”* **Taylor** disagreed, cutting him off, and he shot her an inquisitive look. “**You don’t use that power to make it from nothing,**” she explained, calling to the powers he’d gifted her, the wood and metal of her form glowing slightly. “**You make the frame with other powers, and then use this to build outwards from that. Like we make the frames but have other people do all the, you know, ‘fiddly bits’,**” she smiled, using his own term.

He stared, and she wondered if she’d missed something, before **Lee** laughed, a relieved, almost free sound. “**God, Taylor, I don’t know what I’d do without you,**” he grinned. “**Look at me, thinking like an. . . thinking *stupidly*, looking for the one power that’d do what I wanted, when we *both* know that’s not how this works.**”

Taking a step over to her, he reached out and brought her in for a hug, which she reciprocated, feeling warm, safe, and appreciated. When he let go of her, she wanted to hold on, but that, that’d be too much, so she let him step back, as he regarded the Major Shard. “**Alright, I’ll plug it in. You want me to drop you off, or see what it looks like when I do it from the inside?**”

“***Do it inside****,”* she replied instantly, a half second later realizing what she’d just said, and *so* glad he wasn’t looking at her, because *dear god.* Worse, **The Morrigan** looked her way, curious, and **Taylor** mouthed ‘Later’, which the plant woman accepted with a confused nod.

Holding a hand out, **Lee** closed his eyes, concentrating, as the Shard was fired out, the free slot opening up like a blazing flower, tendrils of Purple & Red Fire reaching out towards the descending copy of the Endbringer’s power. **Infrastructure** slowed, spinning about, bits of **Lee**’s Sun grasping the Major Shard and guiding it in, until, with a resounding *boom* that echoed through the not-air of the space, it settled, bits of its own Flame extending out into the greater Sun of his power.

And then the Sun *moved.*

The entire thing rippled, shifted, twisting, in contrary streams, while beside her **Lee** grit his teeth in concentration, as if he was in pain, and she moved to grab hold of his hand, almost yelping as she gripped, *hard*, his body *blazing* with energy that was no longer warm, but almost *burning*.

The ball of Purple & Red Flame continued to shift, Shards sliding over each other, the streams seeming almost like *coils* of Flame as *something* large, burning with prismatic Fire could almost be seen at its center, but the various parts slowly resettled, Shards all facing outwards, the Flame of its greater compacting, until it once more seemed to be a solid sphere of interweaving energy once more.

And, looking over to **The Morrigan**, she didn’t seem surprised in the slightest.

*“****Okay, that was different,****”* **Lee** ground out, shaking his head, and relaxing, the burning heat that ran through his body fading once more down to a comfortable warmth. “**Absolute Territory wasn’t *nearly* that bad, but I didn’t have to brute-force the control matrix either,**” he muttered, blinking eyes opened, twin stars fading to his normal glowing orbs.

Looking down, he saw he was still holding her hand, and let go, “**Thanks, Taylor. You helped Center me.**” He laughed, “***As usual.* Endbringer thoughtforms are *fucking weird,* and it’s a testament to your mother, Morrigan, that she’s adapted as much as she has.**”

**I will pass along your compliment,** the Demi-Bringer nodded. **According to my Mother, my own thoughtforms more closely reflect a Hosts, as my Father attempted to ‘teach’ me how to be ‘Human’.**

“**Well, he did a good job,**” **Lee** smiled, staring out, seemingly at nothing at all. “**Oh, okay that’s a *lot* of data. Let’s go take a look at this properly. Hold on,**” he advised, and then, with a *pull/twist/place* the world suddenly snapped back to reality.

“Holy shit you’re back!” Herbert swore, and Taylor looked up at him, reconnecting to the Insect Network, trying to see what’d happened while they were gone. Only. . . everything was fine?

***What’s the problem?***

**Lee** demanded, powers flaring as he did the same kind of check she did, as she piggybacked into his own powers through their shared ones, able to check the air, query the Angels, and more, but-

“Taylor almost *died,* dude!” Break snapped, and she froze, as she felt fine.

“**Um, No I didn’t?**” she offered, feeling *great,* but at the man’s incredulous stare, looking down at herself, only to realize her front was *covered* with blood, her face feeling stiff. With a thought, she grew a mirror, and her mind skipped for a moment, as she saw rivers of crimson had streamed from her mouth, eyes, and nose, dried now, a thin strand of metal from **Lee**’s arm having stabbed into her own.

**Lee** teleported to her side in an instant, hand on hers, pouring his *Get Better* into her at full blast, but, while it felt nice, the sensation she got was the same as when he *over-*healed her, slowly bringing her up to the same ever-rising level that *he* was at, not the ‘becoming whole’ impression that accompanied healing.

“**I’m fine,**” she reassured him. “**Really. Though, could I have a bit to clean myself up?**” Taylor requested, accepting the piece of dimensional fabric she used to wipe down her face, which was so dirty that, while her skin was cleaned, pieces of the half-dried blood crumbled off and hit the floor. “**I guess this was my migraine,**” she offered with a self-deprecating shrug, not sure what else to say.

Her leader gave her a searching look, before he nodded. “**Glad we caught it,**” he smiled, a little weakly.

Taylor looked at him, then blinked, as **Lee** had a shimmer to him he hadn’t before. *Is that his new power?* She looked over to Herbert and **The Morrigan**, but they both shimmered a little too. Break’s was less than **Lee**’s but more than her friend’s, the Demi-Bringer having a. . . *woodiness* to her, even over the parts that were just green skin, and-

“Uh, LB?” Herbert asked, staring. “Your eyes are glowing. Also, they, uh, kinda exploded, before they came back.”

The girl frowned, turning back to the mirror, and shading her face with a hand, only to see that her pupils now gave off a faint yellow light, rimmed with steely gray. She connected the dots, then turned back to **Lee** frowning as she concentrated, the shimmer solidifying into wisps of *very* distinctive Purple & Red Flame, with faint embers of a number of different colors dancing along them.

“**I. . . I can see powers?**” she questioned, unsure. It wasn’t like **Lee** could, stripping away the details of a person’s Shard with a glance, she had to *really* concentrate but. . . *what?*

**Is this unusual?** **The Morrigan** asked, looking her way. **I can as well.**

“**Well *yeah,* but you’re. . .**” Taylor started to reply, her words dying in her throat. She *wanted* to say, ‘but you’re an Endbringer’, but her friend wasn’t, being part-plant, part human, while Taylor was *all* human.

Or. . . was she?

**Lee** had been changing, that was obvious to *anyone* with *eyes*, and, with her permission, he’d been trying to bring her up with him. The man had becoming more and more inhuman, though she’d argue half of that was from the sheer *stress* he’d been through, enough to break people, and it *had* broken him, a little, but, with him making her *like him,* that meant that ***she*** was changing as well.

And. . .

She was okay with that.

*You said you’d be there for him, Taylor. Can’t back out now. And, what, you’re gonna freak out because you can see even* ***better?*** she chastised herself. *Didn’t complain when Amelia made it so you didn’t need glasses then, so why now?*

And they weren’t the same thing, *she knew that,* but, *unlike* her BioTinker friend, she wouldn’t abandon **Lee**.

Not now.

Not *ever.*

“**Okay,**” she nodded.

“**. . . Okay?**” **Lee** questioned, concerned.

She smiled, “**You apparently enhanced me enough that I started getting superpowers. *More* superpowers,**” Taylor corrected, as she was already a Brute 2 through pure enhanced physiology, while **Lee** was a Brute 3 from his well-trained **Peak Condition** power alone. “**And now I have eyes a bit like yours. That’s cool. Eye-buddies?**” she teased, holding up a hand

The tension in **Lee**’s shoulders eased. *“****Eye-buddies,****”* he replied, completing the high-five. “**And thanks, Herbert. We apparently had this under control.**”

The man grimaced, “I tried to help her with Panacea’s power, but whatever what was happening to her was *weird*, and I wasn’t gonna touch her brain. It’s, uh, a little weird now. Like yours. Or *hers*,” he said, jerking a thumb to **The Morrigan**.

“**That was already happening,**” Taylor reassured him, getting the attention of both men. “**It wasn’t a big deal,**” she offered to her leader, who looked like he wanted to say something, but stopped, and just nodded, accepting her decision, which made her smile a little.

“Yeah, well, now it’s a *lot* happened,” Break stated. “Your Pollentia’s a solid fucking *block* now, and I don’t know *why.*”

“**Better understanding of powers?**” she offered with a shrug, turning to **Lee** and changing the topic. “**So, uh, can you show me what I looked like? In there?**”

The man blinked, unsure, before he realized what she was talking about, and shrugged. “**Sure.**”

Watching Taylor could **See** the shimmer of his powers, as **Projection** was brought to the fore, the bit of normally invisible Flame blooming for a moment it settled into a yellow, black, wood, and steel shape that made Herbert jump, the human sized anthropomorphic wasp-woman snapping into existence.

She watched, entranced, seeing what she *knew* was herself, but was only really seeing for the first time. The limbs were familiar, the honeycombed material the same that she remembered, but her *face. . .*

It was still recognizably *her*, though more the her she’d become as **Lee**’s general, unguided overall improvements had made her *more* in every way than how she’d first looked, before she met him. She could also see the ‘Fey’ bit he’d described, as she looked almost *too* perfect, to the point it was almost unnatural, and the fact that this other her still looked that good while *clearly* inhuman only heightened the effect.

The Projection lacked skin, a flexible pale-yellow carapace forming a face that contrasted well with the more vibrant yellow of her body, features *almost* too sharp, still with a mouth that she’d originally thought was too wide, but had gotten used to. Her already thin lips were even thinner, almost a thick line, but were now a jet black she rather liked the effect of, though she knew that if she wore that kind of lipstick, it wouldn’t work with how she *now* looked.

Taylor expected her eyes in that form to be multifaceted, but they weren’t, though they didn’t *quite* look natural either. The whites were a bit *too* white, and the Projections pupils were hexagonal, glowing the same grey-rimmed yellow that her eyes now did, but it. . . *fit.*

“What the *fuck* is *that!?”* Herbert demanded, having taken a step back, looking at the Projected version of herself with a distaste that she hadn’t expected, and oddly *hurt,* until she remembered what ***Lee****’s* reaction had been, at which point she had to force down a blush.

“**That’s what I look like if I’m just my powers,**” she stated, with a bit of coolness in her tone, still annoyed at him. Turning back to the man whose opinion she *really* cared about, she asked, “**Can you do The Morrigan?**”

**Lee** nodded, and a moment later the more complex form her friend had taken the place of her true self, the body made *entirely* of shifting plants just like she remembered it.

Break looked back and forth, while **The Morrigan** didn’t seem nearly as interested as Taylor had been, but she knew if she asked her friend, the Demi-Bringer would reply with something like ‘I already know what I look like’.

The dark skinned man winced. “Oh, uh, sorry LB. Didn’t know. You, uh, look nice? Very buggy?”

While she could tell he didn’t mean it, he was at least *trying,* so she nodded. “**Apology accepted. So, Lee, how’s your new power?**”

“You got a new power?” Break asked, jumping on the safer topic.

**Lee** nodded, and, reaching out, Taylor eagerly accepted the connection, as did **The Morrigan.** “**Yeah, *Bohu’s.***”

With a flex of almost visible Flame, Taylor could **See** him flex it outwards, the Major Power spreading out in a wave, as, in **Lee**’s head, the information passed to the two of them, she suddenly could *understand* the city of New Brockton Bay in a way she *never* had before, despite building large parts of it herself.

“**Oh, *wow!***” Taylor gasped, and, seeing Herbert’s confusion, lifted a hand, creating a metal table upon which she used **Metal Creation** to grow a 1:50k *exact model* of the city, growing outwards as **Lee**’s power rolled further and further away, the stream of information all-encompassing, and she realized why he’d had so much trouble with it, as it was pushing the limit of what *she* could handle, and the man had readily admitted how she was better at this kind of thing than *he* was.

Hitting the edge of their progress, and continuing outwards, their own construction, compared to the natural, if damaged, parts of the original city were night and day, Accord’s designs a work of art as opposed to the hodgepodge fingerpainting of Brockton Bay’s original structures.

And then there was Lotus Row which was. . . *ugly.*

The original buildings were. . . *basic,* most of them built decades ago, while Æonic’s section had the techniques, the materials, the *capability* of being better, but just. . . *weren’t*.

“**Your brother’s an *idiot*,**” she stated flatly, getting a surprised bark of laughter from **Lee.**

“**You won’t get any argument from me,**” he smiled, directing his attention to a building slated for demolition, Quinn able to keep Dekotara’s Deconstructor running, and, focusing, he tweaked the building, broken walls shifting and swaying, starting to repair themselves, material coming from the power itself in places, but he pushed too hard, and took out a load-bearing wall, the entire thing starting to fall.

With a flick of her will, the floor rippled, a steel support beam shooting up, slamming into the falling ceiling, and **Lee** worked with her, incorporating it into the structure to undo his mistake. Together, with her supplying materials, support, and more, they were able to restore the building, then *improve* it, incorporating elements and material, Taylor using the IN to query what was planned, **The Morrigan** assisting in transporting out the personal effects as they shifted things about, more and more, bringing it in line with what they’d planned.

It was rough, it was *really* rough, but the nature of the power meant that undoing their mistakes just took a little more time, and a little more power, and they had both to spare.

Bit by bit it all fell into place, **The Morrigan** offering the occasional suggestion, knowing the capabilities of their Crimson Oak better than anyone, until, with a few finishing touches, they added the artwork, and both, carefully, let go of the building, pulling back into themselves.

Taylor and **Lee** both sighed in unison, looking at each other, then at the two trays of food laid out, Herbert gone, while **The Morrigan** sat nearby, sipping her tea. **He left half an hour ago,** the Demi-Bringer told them. **I See why you wished to create. It is surprisingly complex. Perhaps we could improve my home on Luna next?**

Looking to her, **Lee** smiled. “**You want to?**”

Taylor grinned back, happy in a way that was different than helping to kill the Endbringer whose power she’d just used, but no less intense.

She’d come a long way from the friendless loser that’d been stuffed in that locker.

And she was *perfectly fine* with the places her new life had taken her.

“**Dinner first, Lee, then let’s go to the moon!**”