

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Who is Lucas going to offer his first deal to? Hmmm~

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Sveta was not having a very good time at the moment. But to be fair, one could argue that she hadn't ever had a very good time. Waking up as an amnesiac floating face without a body will do that to you, obviously. She was what the PRT had labeled a 'Case 53' and what the internet had labeled a 'Monster Cape'.

Of course, even among Monster Capes, your mileage may vary. Some Monster Capes could still live relatively normal lives... or at least relatively independent lives. Sveta could not. Not only did she not have a proper body, but her power... her power was not under her control.

The long, pencil-thin coiling black tendrils that exuded from the edges of her face were extremely hard to control... and extremely powerful as well. They were prone to instinctively crush anything that they deemed a 'threat', which involved even things Sveta herself might not have wanted to destroy... and people she definitely didn't want to kill.

As such, she found herself here in the Asylum, one of many Parahuman Asylums that were made to... contain those with powers that were out of control. Sveta didn't begrudge the authorities for putting her here; to be clear... she didn't want to hurt anyone else. She didn't want to destroy things. So long as she couldn't control her powers, this was precisely where she belonged.

That didn't make it any easier though. Being stuck here was... it was a certain kind of hell. Her contact with the outside world was limited and sometimes Sveta wished that she had died rather than getting these powers. She would have preferred oblivion over this sort of life, really.

In the end, her one true escape... was the internet. It wasn't easy, obviously, but she had, through quite a lot of hard work and destroyed government property,

gained just enough control over her tendrils not to break the latest computer they'd given her. It helped that the computer itself, as well as the mouse and keyboard, had all been reinforced as much as possible.

And so Sveta was able to interact with the world through that medium, through the internet... mostly through Parahumans Online, or as most called it, PHO. She could spend hours every day scrolling the forums, looking at what people were saying, living vicariously through the events taking place all around the world.

Of course, it didn't always work in her favor. She'd both made and lost friends on PHO over the years, in large part because of her need for secrecy. She couldn't send photos without giving away her true nature and location. She couldn't leave the Asylum to meet with anyone in person.

She'd lost more than one friend this way, through her inability to actually reciprocate any kind of deeper, more meaningful relationship. And of course, it didn't help matters that she'd named herself GstringGirl as a joke about her condition, only for it to draw a certain type of user to send her Private Messages from time to time. Sometimes people who Sveta thought were her friends were just expecting her to send them nudes.

Today in particular was a bad day because most of PHO was talking about the most recent Endbringer attack. It happened every time to be fair, especially on the really bad ones. PHO would become completely and utterly obsessed with things, no matter how depressing it was. No matter where Sveta went on the website, she would find mention of it... which was quite the downer when all she needed was something funny to read or just a bit of good news.

Just before she's getting ready to log off for the night and try again tomorrow however, a notification comes through, letting her know she's received a PM. Blinking, Sveta navigates over and opens it up, a small smile immediately alighting on her face when she sees who it's from.

Skywalker: Hey Gstring, you around?

Skywalker was the only friend Sveta had managed to keep for longer than a year at this point. Unlike all of the others, when he'd pushed for more personal information and she'd pushed back... he'd accepted it. He hadn't tried to make her expose herself, he hadn't tried to make her tell him anything more. And best of all, he hadn't blocked her for being 'weird' and 'sus'.

All in all, Skywalker was the reliable, dependable sort... to say she's happy to hear from him would be an understatement.

GstringGirl: Hey Skywalker, I'm here! How has your day been?

There's a brief pause as he types out his response. While she waits, Sveta settles in, relaxing a lot more now that she's no longer trawling thread after thread of Endbringer despair. Her organs settle down on the desk and her coils, mostly wrapped around the computer and keyboard as usual, lose just a little bit of their tension.

Skywalker: Crazy, to say the least. I have powers now.

And just like that, all of the tension is back, Sveta's eyes bulging out of her pale face as she gapes at the screen. He... what?!

GstringGirl: Are you okay? I thought you couldn't trigger!

Admittedly, their relationship wasn't entirely one of equivalent exchange. Skywalker had told her more personal facts about himself than she had. Like for instance, the cancer scare he'd had a couple months ago that had resulted in an MRI. The good news was, he didn't have brain cancer. The bad news was, he also didn't have a Corona Pollentia, which meant he was incapable of gaining powers.

... Or so he'd told her. The fact that he had powers now, supposedly... it doesn't make much sense. But that doesn't mean Sveta doesn't believe him. There are a lot of things that don't make sense happening in the world these days.

More than that though, Sveta knows full well what a 'trigger event' is. She's heard things from being here in the Asylum. Not every Parahuman here is a Monster Cape... some are just normal human beings who lost their mind somewhere along the way of gaining powers.

So yeah, she knows better than most that trigger events are... awful.

Skywalker: I'm fine Gstring, I'm fine. Or at least I will be... once I start helping people.

Sveta bites her lower lip at that, fighting against the smile that immediately threatens to bloom on her face. That sounded just like Skywalker. Only...

GstringGirl: Please be careful and stay safe. The horror stories of what happens to most new independent capes are all over PHO, you know that as well as I.

She's not surprised that Skywalker wants to be a hero. They've talked about it often enough. But she still can't help but be afraid for him. Hell, what powers does he even have?

Skywalker: Yeah, I know. That's why I came to you first, Gstring. Because if anyone deserves my help... I think it's you.

Wait, what? Sveta is about to type a response... when she feels something reaching out to her. Her eyes rapidly blink and a shudder goes through her face and organs and even the tendrils wafting off of her. What... she was...

Skywalker: Can you feel that? That's me, by the way. I'm really glad it seems to work over the internet. I know you would never have wanted to meet in person so... this is the only way I can offer you my help."

She... she reads the words while not fully comprehending them. Except no, she understands... she understands more than she would have thought. It's kind of instinctive, really. Right now, Skywalker is reaching out to her, connecting to her... on some sort of weird, metaphysical level. He's offering her a

metaphorical hand and the impression she's getting is distinctly 'let's make a deal'.

Skywalker: Gstring? I can feel you but... please respond.

Flushing a bit, Sveta finally manages to type a response.

GstringGirl: Skywalker, what is this? What... I don't really understand.

Skywalker: I'm not an idiot, Gstring. I know whatever your circumstances are, they aren't ideal. I can tell you would want things to be different if you could be. If you could wish for a better life, if you could have your heart's desire made manifest... you would want it, right? That's what I'm offering you right now. That's what my powers allows me to do. It allows me to make deals that help people.

Somewhere along the way as she's reading his latest message, Sveta's vision begins to blur as she starts to cry. Which is a problem, because her tears are not normal tears. They're black for one, and if she cries too much her face will begin to shed bile through her tear ducts.

Even though she'd been as secretive as ever with him, even though she'd done her best not to open up just like with all of the others... Skywalker had still read between the lines. He'd known that she wasn't... whole. And yet, he'd stuck around anyways. He'd stayed her friend, even knowing that there was clearly something wrong with her.

Skywalker: All you have to do is think about what you want, Gstring. I think the power will do the rest. There will be a cost of some kind associated with it I think, but I'll do everything I can on my end to lower that cost for you, I promise.

He was too good for her. And yet... Sveta can't just say no. She can't turn down an offer like this. Not when she can *feel* that it's real. Not when she can reach out and touch it, metaphorically speaking. Doing precisely that, Sveta senses the connection between the two of them.

At first, when she concentrates on what she wants, she tells herself all she wants is a real body. To no longer be a face with her organs all miniaturized and trailing behind her. However, even as she's pushing forward that desire, Sveta realizes she wants... no, she NEEDS more than that. She needs a body, yes... but she also needs control.

After all, she's killed people with her powers. Not on purpose, purely outside of her control, but it's still happened. Wanting her own body is purely selfish... wanting control of her powers on the other hand, is something she has to wish for in order to protect everyone else around her.

Pushing forward her twin desires, to be made whole with complete control over her powers, Sveta gasps as she feels the connection between her and Skywalker grow stronger and more... real for lack of a better word. She shudders again, even as she feels as though the power is calculating things. And then... a cost.

Sveta blinks at the cost, even as Skywalker immediately sends her a message.

Skywalker: Shit, I'm not... hold on a second Gstring, let me try and work on this. I'm not trying to enslave you or anything, I swear.

GstringGirl: No... it's okay.

Sveta giggles at the 'silence' that follows, both on the other end of the connection and in their PMs. Because the cost, as it so happens... is service. She can feel it in her nonexistent bones. If she takes Skywalker's deal, she will owe him big time.

And the way his power has decided she will pay off her debt is by serving him. Specifically, in exchange for both a body and control over her power, she'll be expected to serve Skywalker indefinitely.

Skywalker: It's not okay. I don't know why it costs so much. A couple years to get you out of a bad situation would be much fairer. I think I can work it down, just give me a second.

And that right there is why Sveta knows it'll be okay. Because not only can she feel that he didn't decide the initial cost... even now Skywalker is trying to be the hero. Even now he's trying to help her out.

But the truth is... Sveta is asking for quite a lot. And if his power really can do this all for her, then she should have to pay for it. More than that, if there was anyone Sveta was willing to owe her eternal loyalty to, it would be Skywalker. Helping him help other people, being a hero alongside him... making sure he was happy... Sveta couldn't imagine anything better than that.

GstringGirl: It's okay. I accept.

For a second, Skywalker is typing... but whatever he might have said never gets sent, cut off as they both feel her acceptance bring the deal to a close. Even if it feels reluctant on Skywalker's end... he doesn't fully stop it from happening. The deal goes through and Sveta feels it crystallizing within her very essence... before a moment later, she gasps as she feels her entire being start to *change*.

It doesn't happen in the blink of an eye. And truth be told, it's an extremely disturbing sensation. But it also doesn't hurt as she's made whole. There's not a single ounce of pain, even as her new body forms over the course of the next minute. Suddenly, she's not just a face... she's a head. And then she's a neck and shoulders and arms and torso and on and on until she's standing there.

Standing. Not hovering. Not crawling. Not anything. Sveta stands there in the middle of her room (her cell) on two proper feet with five toes each. She stares down at the hands she hadn't had mere moments before, wiggling her five fingers. Then, she looks down at her completely nude body, humming at her pale, hairless form.

She's still hairless all over in fact, because the 'hair' on her new scalp isn't hair at all... it's her power, writhing and wriggling around her. Except... with a single easy thought, Sveta takes control of the black, coiling tendrils that have plagued her every living moment since she first woke up memoryless all those years ago.

The tendrils wind and slide back into place along her skull, gliding down her back as she forms them into a complex braid in an instant. At first glance, they'll hopefully look indistinguishable from hair. But of course, looking closer one will see how strange they are.

Not that Sveta is expecting to fly under the radar even with her new body. She still has the little 'C' tattooed on her cheek, the same identifier every Case 53 has somewhere on their body. But... that doesn't matter. Not nearly as much as this does.

Skywalker: Gstring? Are you alright?

Sveta smiles as she takes a step on wobbling new legs back over to her desk. She brings brand new hands down on the keyboard, having to hunt and peck out her message over the course of the next minute or so since she's so unused to having actual fingers again.

GstringGirl: I'm more than alright. You've freed me, Skywalker. You've made me whole again.

Skywalker: I don't fully understand, but I'm happy if you're happy.

GstringGirl: I'm ecstatic!

And she means it too, a broad smile stretching from ear to ear across her face. Hah! She has ears now! Take that, world!

Of course... she could already feel an insistent little tug reminding her of her debt. She owed Skywalker her servitude for this. Sveta knew he wouldn't take advantage of her, but she also knew she had to get out of here and get to his side as soon as possible.

To be fair, that was something she wanted anyways... and she can actually feel something offering up easy transport. Teleportation? That's what it feels like anyways.

Staring around the room she's lived in all her remembered life; Sveta considers for a moment whether she owes her caretakers any sort of goodbye. Dr. Yamada, maybe... but she also knows they won't want her to leave if she does say anything.

So maybe... maybe she should just go? Maybe she should just... get out of here?

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!