

Waking up the following morning was like waking up after a long case of the flu, only to find that the mental fog and daze had finally passed. Except in this case, the fog had been around for my entire life, and now I could see past it, through it, like it never existed in the first place.

I didn't feel like I was all that smarter. Instead, my mind felt precise, clean, and uninhibited. It was as if the mind-clearing apricot had literally done what its name suggested, clearing out the gunk, dust, and cobwebs cluttering the recesses of my brain, helping the whole system run more smoothly.

I sat in my bed for at least ten minutes, just thinking, running myself through my newly enhanced mind. It was both exhilarating and clearly worth the effort, as I could see this having a significant impact on any fight I might find myself in the midst of. My brain felt beyond hesitation, though that was likely me just being high on my success and the feelings it gave me.

As I rolled out of my bed, I immediately became acutely aware of the effects of both other fruits, the bone-reinforcing plum and muscle-enhancing pear. The first had reinforced my bones using magic, making them both stronger and slightly more flexible, though only by a negligible amount. It was difficult to describe the sensation as anything more than a feeling of sturdiness, one that was unsurprising, bone-deep. As I put my feet on the ground, I could feel my skeleton align naturally, my posture nearly perfect, my bones lining up as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

The effects of the muscle-enhancing pear were significantly easier to describe. I could feel my muscles coiling and shifting, the density and strength I felt in every inch of my muscles significantly increased. Even better, this was affecting my physical body, meaning it was the perfect foundation for my geomantic enhancements.

Now, the effects weren't a flood of strength or anything exponential. I wasn't suddenly at Superman levels, but it was a notable increase. More than that, my muscles became almost more responsive, like they were ready and waiting for my nerves to tell them what to do. My movements were smoother, though my flexibility wasn't affected, so no sudden gymnastics levels of flexibility either.

I stood from my bed slowly and started to stretch, feeling the newfound stability, density, and power built into my body. When I was done, I headed outside and began testing my new limits. I ran and jumped and dove through the forest, eventually joined by some of Kali's dogs, led by her wooden wolf golems, who I had honestly forgotten about. Apparently, they were busy chasing off things like coyotes, raccoons, and other pests that would have otherwise invaded my home.

When I finished my run, I went through my morning routine, chatting with Kali about the effects of her fruits. She had done a fantastic job growing them, and I made sure to praise her for a job well done. Both of us were very excited to try the ones still growing, even though she had barely felt anything from them. They were incredibly delicious after all.

The conversation also drifted to who else should get some of the fruit. Crow was, of course, going to get one of each, something Kali agreed with happily. We also discussed giving Taylor a mind-clearing apricot, since it would likely help with her master abilities.

I was a bit nervous about offering anything to New Wave, as Amy would no doubt want to examine them for herself, and I had no idea how that would go. Magic was a huge part of how these worked, and judging some of her earlier reactions while examining my golem steed, Troy, giving her even more complicated magic to study might have some repercussions I wasn't quite ready to handle yet.

After settling on a wait-and-see policy for anyone other than Taylor and Olivia, I teleport to the hospital to quickly make my rounds. The day was relatively simple, spent healing some injured kids and a few sick and injured adults. I spent an extra hour soothing some of the more painful aspects of aging for a few elderly patients, before calling the day and leaving the hospital behind. Eventually, I ended up back home, where I collapsed into one of the chairs in the lounge area, with a large coffee and a breakfast sandwich in hand. As I slowly finished eating and sat around enjoying my coffee, Alya began to coalesce into a more physical form.

"So, are we simply to sit around, waiting for the PRT?" Alya asked, flowing down to sit in a chair across from me.

"For now, yeah," I responded with a shrug. "The ball is in their court, and I need to be patient. In the meantime, I can pick at smaller projects and slow down a little. I've been more or less working pell-mell for several weeks at this point. I don't plan on using an anti-sleep spell until the director calls me in, either to deny my plan or agree with it."

"What kind of smaller projects?"

"I want to try crack teleportation stations, something anyone can use to go from place to place, though if I'm honest, I'm not sure if I'll actually be able to do that," I admitted with a frown. "My teleportation spell was one of the more difficult tools in my repertoire to design, both due to the level of difficulty and my lack of any previous knowledge about the subject. Teleportation is far from a simple subject, and while my creation subjects can fill in some pretty deep blanks, I'm not sure I have anything high enough to really get it working."

"I seem to remember that taking you the better part of a day to work that spell out." Alya agreed.

"And a full night, too," I added, shaking my head. "I also want to try and convince the hospital to let me put a few rituals around their building to promote healthy healing. I want to start looking for items that would work as spirit guardian anchors, so that once I start reaching out to other cities for permission to help, I can make as many as I need."

"I see..."

Alya and I talked for a bit longer before I decided to head back into the city. Immediately after teleporting into a random alley, I took to the sky, the wind whipping through my hair. I had

only been flying for about five minutes, mostly just enjoying myself while on a casual patrol, when Glory Girl caught up with me, as did Weaver, the slightly younger teen flying through the air using my gifted kit. Glory Girl attempted to stop and talk, only for Weaver and I to shoot past her, our flight systems not compatible with floating in place like you're using cheats in a video game.

I chuckled as Weaver shook her head, both of us angling downward to land on a random rooftop. As we both landed, we skidded slightly before stopping, thankfully stopping with no issues. A moment later, Glory Girl floated down, landing between us.

"Sorry about that, I forgot you guys can't stop and float like we can," she admitted sheepishly. "What are you guys up to?"

"Oh, you guys aren't flying around together?" I asked, looking between the two teenagers, Weaver shaking her head in response.

"My bugs spotted you flying around, so I came up to join you," she explained. "I hadn't spotted Glory Girl until I approached you."

"I just got out of a late class," She explained. "Amy is driving to PRT headquarters."

"You're not carrying her?" Weaver asked, before quickly continuing when I looked at her with a questioning look. "Spotting Glory Girl and Panacea is like cloud watching for Brocktonites."

"Not any more," Glory Girl admitted, with a frown. "Amy has been enjoying her freedom and driving around everywhere, ever since Dad got her a car."

"Probably for the best," I pointed out with a frown, "Technically, she would survive that fall now, but anyone she fell on would likely die near instantly."

"I wouldn't drop her!" Glory Girl responded with a frown, putting her hands on her hips. "And even if I did, I could catch her before she hit the ground!"

"Yeah, but why risk it?" I asked. "She has alternate means of travel, plenty of time, and independence can make all the difference for people struggling with-"

I froze, cutting myself off when I realized Weaver was still standing nearby, but she only raised her hand sheepishly.

"They explained the general deal to me already," She responded. "I know about her mom."

"Biological donor," Glory Girl corrected with a scowl. "And only for me. "

Weaver nodded in understanding, and I let out a breath, thankfully that I hadn't aired someone else's laundry without their consent. Looking to change the subject away from such delicate topics, I looked to Weaver.

"How have your patrols with New Wave been?" I asked. "I apologize for being so busy, and I wish I could say it's going to get better, but once the PRT makes a decision, it's likely to only get worse."

"I enjoy working with them," she admitted with a nod, a happy note coming through her voice. "I'm learning a lot, I just hope I'm not getting in the way."

Before I could open my mouth to respond, Glory Girl snorted and shook her head, giving the bug controller a doubtful look.

"If I didn't know you better, Weaver, I would say you were fishing for compliments," Glory Girl said, shaking her head. "If getting in the way means tripling our capture rate, then yeah, you're totally getting in the way. You helped us clean up that start-up rally for the E88 splinter group just two days ago. We would have never found that without your help."

"I ... I suppose you're right," she admitted. "Sorry, it just feels like you guys have it all together sometimes, makes me feel like I have so much to catch up on."

"Did you miss the part where I explained our family drama?" Glory Girl asked, raising an eyebrow. "Hell, I'm pretty sure the only reason that New Wave stepped back into the cape scene so eagerly was cause we all wanted to pretend everything was okay again, and we wanted to burn off some steam. We are one good psychologist away from New Wave being dissolved."

Now it was my turn to raise my eyebrow at her, and after a moment she realized what she was saying. She winced, letting out a long, grumbling sigh.

"Sorry, that was probably a bit TMI..." she admitted. "Do me a favor and don't tell my family I said that."

The three of us chatted for a few minutes, discussing patrols, my progress with my Endbringer army proposal, and Taylor's new love of flying. Eventually, after receiving a call from her father, Glory Girl hurriedly said goodbye before taking to the air, spinning once to orient herself before blasting off across the city. I was about to say goodbye when Weaver stopped me.

"I wanted to thank you for recommending that I stop pushing my emotions into my swarm," She said, fiddling with her belt, picking at one of the pouches. "Ever since I stopped, I've had some issues with my emotions getting the better of me. I am finally talking to someone, a therapist, and while her specialty isn't cape psychology, she says it's probably a sign that you were right, that pushing my emotions into the swarm was a bad idea, and this is sort of the backlash of me stopping."

"Well, I'm glad I spoke up then," I said with what I hope was a reassuring smile. "I'm glad you've stopped, and I'm glad you found someone you are comfortable talking with."

"Yeah... it took a few tries, but it's been worth it," She said with a nod. "I've only been a few times, but..."

She trailed off, and I could practically see the embarrassment creeping over her, as the young woman was clearly not used to opening up. I changed the topic to let her unwind, but she soon excused herself and flew away, heading to a place she could change out of her costume and make her way back home.

With our impromptu chat over, I took to the sky again, this time flying away from the city, circling the entire area, before coming around to circle the docks, specifically moving towards the Boat Graveyard. While it was a rather valuable source of scrap, the Graveyard was essentially strangling the city, cutting off what had been one of its primary income sources, and residential draws. Finding a way to deal with the significant problem would go a long way towards helping the city flourish.

The problem was that there was a *lot* of material sunk in the ocean. Hundreds of thousands of tons of metal, plastic, shipping containers, and junk. Any magic I used to get rid of it would either have to be slow but steady, taking a long time, years if not more, or it would be an insanely powerful bit of large-scale magic, a spell at the level I hadn't even come close to achieving. There were problems with each, mainly being my own power level being insufficient, and a lack of time to monitor a long-term spell or ritual effect.

"Any ideas?" I asked Alya, still circling around the massive stack of ships, coming in low enough to see the waves rolling against their rusted hulls.

"A water elemental would slowly clean the area, including these wrecks," She responded, not exactly sounding hopeful. "But one powerful enough to make a noticeable difference would interfere with people on the shore. It would be like chaining a force of nature to the bay, it would do the job, but it would also 'clean' local fisherman, the pier, people playing by the water..."

"Unless I did something similar to you...?"

"Sure, if you had a few dozen charges to invest in soul magic," she responded, her tone getting across exactly what she thought of that idea. "That is still too far out of your power level, more so than what it would take to get rid of all of this junk with a single spell."

"Right... then I guess it's a future project," I said with a frown. "I'm sure I'll come up with something."

I shook my head and focused my attention outward, looking out past the Graveyard to the ocean and, past that, the horizon. The sun was starting to set, steadily approaching its final destination. I landed softly on the rounded hull of one of the capsized vessels, determined to stay there and watch the sunset.

Despite the unfortunate location, it was peaceful, with the sound of waves crashing and water rushing in and out of the boat beneath me.