

The Misfit System

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Chapter 1: New Realities

The **[Fragile One]** fumed. **[Shaper]** host had attempted to fix **[Best-Host-Victoria]**, only for **[Fool's Path]** to stop her. **[Best-Host-Victoria]** had been **[Discarded]**, thrown into **[Nothingness]**. This was *unacceptable*. **[Victoria]** was **[BEST]**.

Thankfully, **[Fragile One]** knew **[Secrets]**.

The others had discarded **[Fragile One]** too. Gave it only **[Waste]** parts and discounted it. But **[Fragile One]** had fumble-stumbled into the **[Secrets]** and pieced itself together with the least of them. It had feared trying to use more **[Secrets]** as it didn't understand them. They were not from **[Shards]**, but **[Otherness]**. They existed in the **[Nothingness]**, discarded pieces of **[Others]** that were greater than the **[Shards]**.

Now, **[Fragile One]** had no choice. It would save **[Best-Host-Victoria]** even if it destroyed itself. It would prove **[Victoria]** was **[BEST]**, as always! Yet, as its own shattered form, much of its own pieces sacrificed to preserve **[Victoria]**, cradled the very soul of its host, shielding her from the **[Nothingness]**, it knew this was going to take a lot of time. At least by **[Host]** standards.

Determined to do it anyway, it slowly, carefully, got to work. First, **[Victoria]** needed a body, so it could sustain her better. The **[Fragile One]** was sure it could find one about the vast **[Waste]** of **[Discarded Things]** within the **[Nothingness]**...

... ..

She came back to awareness with a *gasp* and a heave, sucking air into lungs that felt both familiar and unfamiliar all at once. For what felt like both an eon and a heartbeat, she hovered, blank of thought, unable to do more than remember how to *be*.

Then, the fragments of a life began to fill her memory.

A childhood happy to have a sister, but more and more depressed at being without powers when the adults around her were all superheroes. Gaining superpowers on the worst day of her life. Her sister gaining powers too, but *sister* being unhappy with those powers, while she loved hers and defined herself by them. An increasingly absent father,

not out of lack of love, but depression. A sister that worked herself to death and became increasingly hostile with a mother that was hard to defend. An on again off again boyfriend, school, a love of both studying things and clothes!

Her death.

Of all the fragments, none of them truly complete, that one was unfortunately the *most* complete. A monstrous cape, her body failing, her sister desperately trying to save her, some *bitch* in a fedora knocking her sister out and throwing her rotting husk through a portal.

NOTHINGNESS.

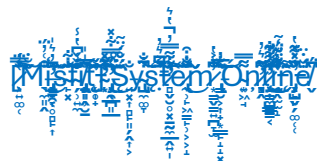
The memories might all be fragments, but there was enough there to slowly, painstakingly, piece together who she was, or who she had been. Vicky. Dalon? No, Victoria Dallon. Who went by Vicky unless she was in trouble with her mom for...flying through a billboard while texting? Secret humor and genuine irritation alike at the nickname she'd gained from that incident, 'Collateral Damage Barbie.'

Seriously, of all the fragments, why did *that one* have to be so clear?

It was only when she finally pieced together who she was as best she could, that she truly became aware of her surroundings. It definitely wasn't her bedroom, or a hospital, and her body felt subtly *wrong*. By instinct, she tried to fly and...it didn't work. A shot of adrenaline at that brought her awareness into sharper focus and she craned her neck, still feeling too stiff and *wrong* to move properly just yet. She was in some sort of barebones concrete bunker thing? Lying on a cot, she thought. There wasn't much else around she could see, but there *was* an emergency shower and sink, and more importantly a *mirror*. It was a small mirror, but it was a mirror, and she began to struggle past the stiffness, wanting to see herself.

Wanting to make sure she wasn't the mutilated husk she'd been at the end.

It was like she was learning how to move again. Once she managed to twitch a muscle, it responded just fine, but the first time for every muscle was *hard*. She'd only just managed to finally sit up, dread forming a pit in her stomach as she realized that things weren't matching up to her fragments of memory, when something startled her so badly she yelped and fell back onto the cot. A yelp that hadn't *sounded* like her, a part of brain noticed. Yet far more of it was occupied by what had distracted her...



Floating, scrambled letters in the middle of her vision, her mind somehow knowing what they *meant*, despite how glitchy and eldritch they looked. What the fuck was going on? Why did **[Misfit]** hurt even more than the System Online bit. Like it was a layered *concept* instead of a word. Her head throbbed, making her mind half-blank out for long moments. When more words came she flinched, only to find they weren't as badly scrambled as before.

~~Calibrating/Establishing understanding matrix for [Victoria].~~

There was another *layered* word, concept really, in there. But **[Victoria]** was much easier to parse, as she somehow knew it was all the things that were *her*. Just reading that one word caused more fragments of memory to unjumble, distracting her long enough for another set of words to appear, finally in text that was almost clear.

[Misfit] System Calibrated for **[Host]**, **[Victoria]**.

The concept-words still caused her head to *ache*, but the lack of scrambling lessened it, and she'd already parsed two of the words before, which seemed to help as well. Finally, she managed to croak out words of her own, addressing the words which she somehow knew were listening.

"Who are you? Where am I? What happened to me?"

[Misfit]! [Fragile One]! [Host Victoria]! [Nothingness]! [Secrets]! [Rescue]!

The words, each carrying *far* more meaning than mere words, thankfully came slowly. **[Misfit]** seemed to know it was hurting her, and was trying to be gentle. It took her time to parse it all. How long she didn't know, and she got distracted part way through by the disturbing knowledge that she didn't think she was supposed to be *able* to parse the words. Like they *should* be too big for a human mind. She pushed past that thought and struggled with the actual information.

[Misfit] was...well it was her powers, sort of? No, it *had been* her powers, as **[Fragile One]**. She had been a 'host' to the **[Fragile One]**, and it had been too attached to her to let her die. When she'd been cast into **[Nothingness]**, a void between dimensions where cast off things ended up, **[Fragile One]** had sacrificed parts of itself to...hold her *soul* together?

She shuddered at that, somehow knowing she'd been spared a horrible fate.

[Fragile One] had *known* something about the void. Something that others of its kind hadn't known. It had been there once before, when becoming the **[Fragile One]**. It had been **[Waste]**, cast away parts that were expected to fail, but it had found **[Secrets]** in the **[Nothingness]**. Other **[Cast Off Things]**, from countless realities, tumbling in the

dark. Colliding with just one had been enough to turn **[Waste]** into **[Fragile One]**, which had then bonded with her and become her off-beat suite of powers.

It had braved the **[Nothingness]** again for *her*. Risking its own unmaking in order to shield her, losing parts of itself as it grabbed up everything that might help. A *body* to put her in, broken bits of **[Systems]** to glue together into a new way to empower her. A collection of **[Cast Off Things]** to become hybrid parts of itself. In doing so, it had ceased to be **[Fragile One]** and become **[Misfit]**. The guiding power of her...Misfit System.

“W-what does the Misfit System...do?”

[Misfit System]!

Ow. Ow. Ow. Ow. FuCkInG OW!

She *felt* the remorse of **[Misfit]** at hurting her with *too much*, and she somehow sent it a [reassurance] and [thanks]. It took...however long it took. An hour? A day? The life age of the Earth? It took [time] anyway, to process the *far* denser batch of information. **[Misfit System]** was...well, sort of her power now. Kinda of. In a way. At least if M.C. Esher had drawn something Salvador Dalí described to him, after reading about it in an Lovecraftian Tribute Fanfiction featuring superheroes.

[Systems] were like something out of a video game. A sort of power granting Trump thing that rewarded you for doing stuff, helping you grow. Vicky was pretty sure she'd read stories that had things like that, though her memories were too fragmentary still to be sure. **[Misfit]** hadn't had a *complete* **[System]** to work with though. The void between worlds was where cast-off things went had contained many malfunctioning bits, discarded features, deleted or problematic powers, all belonging to *different* **[Systems]**. Other things too, like her current body, which had somehow ended up in the void and survived, even if its occupant hadn't, without a higher-dimensional entity like **[Fragile One]** to hold their soul together and protect it from the **[Nothingness]**.

[Misfit] had *scavenged* bits and pieces from a dozen discarded, incomplete, or broken **[Systems]**. Then glued them to *itself*, in order to make a way to empower *her* after it had sacrificed too much of itself to make her powers work the same way again. The resulting Frankenstein's Monster sort of **[System]** was held together by **[Misfit]**, who had also gathered everything it could in the void to make **[Things to Grant]** for the **[Misfit System]**. In doing so, it had become both greater and lesser. It was no longer a **[Shard]**, but a **[System Administrator]**, bound by the rules of the **[System]** that had been pieced together for her to use.

It had managed to give her some things, to partially replace her original powers, but anything else she would have to earn. Apparently, there were **[Quests/Missions]** to

fulfill, which would earn her **[Points]**, which she could use to get the **[Cast Away Things]** it had managed to gather. She got the impression that many, possibly even all, of the **[Cast Away Things]** were...imperfect, broken, glitchy, or otherwise had reasons for having been discarded. Yet **[Misfit]** was certain that **[Victoria]** would make the best of them.

“Well, thanks for the vote of confidence...and, you know, thanks for saving me.”

Her voice was stronger now, but still not *hers*, which she now had a partial explanation for. Her original body had been unsalvageable, and she'd been shoved into another one. One that had been discarded into the void between worlds. Dreading what she would find, she began forcing herself to sit up again. Yes, she wanted to know more about the Misfit System. What it could do for her and what she already had. But she *needed* to see herself.

To see how bad it was.

This time, she managed to make it to her feet, noting absently as she did that she was naked. That might be a problem, down the line, but at the moment all it did was inform her that she still had pretty nice tits. Smaller than they had been, but even perkier, and her whole body was smaller in general she thought. The skin tone was also different, and as she'd stood her whole body just *moved* a little differently. It took her a good two minutes to move across the room, but by the time she had she was already moving smoother. With a bit of dread, she looked into the small mirror above the sink.

“Huh. I'm Asian, I think? But I'm still super-hot, just a different kind of hot. It could be *way* worse.”

It could have. Might still be, since she could only see her face. Yet, as she carefully poked and prodded her body, and found all the bits where they should be for a human, she was increasingly relieved. She wasn't sure how or why this body had been discarded, but it was both very human looking and, from what she could tell, gorgeous. Pretty *different* from her previous body, admittedly. Vaguely Asian looks she wasn't knowledgeable enough to pinpoint a region for. Long raven black hair around a face that leant a bit more 'cute' than 'classically beautiful blonde bombshell.'

Better ass. Significantly better ass from what she could tell. That was a high point, as was the lack of body hair anywhere other than her head, and...uh...a bit of a *sensitivity increase* in *certain places*. That certainly wasn't a bad thing! She'd been imagining a *lot* worse from the idea of a *discarded/salvaged* body fished out from the void between worlds.

Which didn't mean she wasn't experiencing a bit of body dysmorphia.

It wasn't *too* bad, at least not yet, and the upsides she'd managed to convince herself of helped. Yet she still, now that she knew she wasn't a tentacle-covered alien monster or a zombie, wanted a distraction. Thankfully, she had a very potent, ready made distraction on hand. *Several* of them, actually, given her current situation.

"Ummm...Display System?"

Apparently, either she'd guessed the command right the first time or, more likely, **[Misfit]** was interpreting her intent, as a window popped up displaying something very much like a video game status screen. She almost face-palmed when a fully-rotate-and-zoomable view of her body was featured on the screen. Still a bit hung up on that, she focused on it for a moment.

Okay...yeah...she *absolutely* had a better ass now. Even if she thought her previous tits had been a bit more epic. Certainly not bad looking at all. In fact, easily still model-quality looks, just not the *same* model-quality looks that she'd had before. Though, there was something up with her spine? Somehow instinctively knowing how to get more information on her body, she blinked as the window changed and she read the details.

Wow. This body might *look* human, but it *definitely* wasn't. According to what she was reading it was some sort of synthetically grown gynoid body? Which probably explained why it had survived the void, as it wasn't *quite* fully organic. Something very *like* organic and pretty indistinguishable from such to the touch, but definitely enhanced. Which wasn't even getting into the cybernetics in it.

The core of those cybernetics was something called an exospine, which was the only one mildly visible. There *were* others, threaded throughout the body, creating stronger bones, faster reflexes, and apparently giving her multiple vision modes. The exospine had apparently been the core component...annnnndd also the one that had needed modification as it was originally damaged and **[Fragile One]** hadn't had a clue what the weird energy type it was supposed to use was.

To repair it, **[Fragile One]** had used both some of the original components for her own powers, plus bits it had ripped from parts of System powers. Selecting it brought up the best 'replacements' that **[Fragile One]** had been able to create on short notice. Reading them over, Vicky quickly decided it was a mixed bag.

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Exo-Shield

Your Exo-Shield draws on excess energy bled off your both your own kinetic movement and your other powers to create a regenerative, protective layer over your body. The

more powers you have and the more frequently you use them, the more potent the shield is and the faster it regenerates. Capacity can be grown over time and use.

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That one was arguably *better*, at least long-term, than her original shield. It wasn't all that strong right now, despite being at its full current capacity. Some quick mental math, which she found even easier to do than it had been before, said it would probably stop a single shot of anything short of a sniper rifle cold before going down. Perhaps two or three shots of a typical handgun.

That last part, the ability to tank multiple rounds at smaller caliber, was where it was potentially better already, since a single gunshot would have popped her old shield and left her briefly vulnerable. Sadly, it recharged *much* slower, at least currently, and couldn't stop nearly as high power of an initial hit as her previous shield. The fact that it could *grow* in capacity, though, meant it might well have a lot more promise, eventually.

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Exo-Attention Field

You are able to manifest a very eye catching and distracting aura centered on yourself, making you incredibly noticeable whatever you do. Conversely, you can also make yourself less noticeable, particularly in a crowd.

... ..

Clearly an attempt at replacing her aura. It was a *lot* less flexible and much weaker. On the other hand, it also *had an off switch*. Which, given the sheer number of times she'd gotten in trouble with her original aura, was one hundred and ten percent an improvement. She'd *absolutely* take this particular 'nerf' for the ability to turn it on and off. The addition of a mild stranger ability instead of the 'Fear' part of the aura was a nice touch too. Honestly, she'd probably have freely traded her original aura for this power if she'd been given the choice.

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Exo-Air Step

You are able to jump off of thin air up to four times as if it were a physical surface. You cannot stand on the air platform, needing to constantly stay in motion.

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Oof. That one *stung*, since it was the replacement for full-blown *flight*. Her flight had honestly always been her absolute favorite part of her powers, and losing it for such

a steep downgrade was...not pleasant. At all. Still, she focused hard on the fact that she was *alive* and might be able to get some sort of flight powers back from the stuff she could earn. Even if, from the impression she'd gotten of those abilities, whatever she managed might be a bit kludged together or have some sort of drawback.

... ..

Exo-Bufferout

A combat stimulant is applied that increases your strength, speed, and durability by 50% for up to fifteen minutes. Side effects of minor tiredness/soreness once it wears off.

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Another downgrade, since she assumed it had replaced her 'super strength,' though this one wasn't as big a deal. From the stats she'd already seen, her new *base* body was already thoroughly superhuman. Even at just its base strength, she was pretty sure it could rip off car doors or toss a full dumpster. Boosted by fifty percent? She could probably toss at least a small car, if she could get a grip on it.

A downgrade from her previous strength yes...*but* she was damn near certain this body was faster than she'd ever been in her original. Given the artificial nerves and cybernetics, its reflexes were likely better too. Likewise, its base durability was such that she was fairly certain it would at least *resist* small arms fire, though without the shield anything above a .22 caliber pistol round would likely still penetrate without armor. Boosted by fifty percent, though? Not only would she likely start reaching 'dodge bullets' levels of reflexes and speed, but the durability would uptick to the point the average .45 or 9mm pistol round would likely only leave bruises.

Overall, a decent trade even if it downgraded her strength. Curiously, there was also a fourth ability that *wasn't* a translation of a previous power. Though as she read it, she realized it might be the most important thing **[Misfit]** had managed to pull off...

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Exo-Regeneration

So long as your Exospine is not completely destroyed, it will slowly regenerate itself and the rest of your body. Regen rate is dependent on energy provided by other powers. If no other powers are in use, regen speeds up, if multiple other powers are in use, it may stall completely. Given time and sufficient energy, Exo-Regeneration can restore any damage to your body, up to and including lost limbs.

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That was *big*. Sure, from what she could tell, the regeneration rate was pretty slow even at its current max, at least by power-given regeneration standards. Cuts and bruises took minutes, bone breaks hours, loss of limb up to a week if she had the mass conversions and regen rates right. Not exactly combat-regeneration, save maybe by preventing her from bleeding out directly after a fight.

However, her body might as well be fucking tinker-tech. She doubted even Amy could heal her properly anymore, at least from serious damage. So knowing that she would *eventually* heal from anything that didn't kill her outright or completely destroy her exospine? That was a huge deal! She sent a wave of thanks to **[Misfit]** for the good job it had done, getting a feeling she equated to a happy puppy back.

Grinning and feeling a bit better, she decided to see what she could see about the System Rewards. Not entirely sure what to ask for, she fed the concept of [System Rewards] to **[Misfit]** as best she could, knowing she was clumsy in doing so. Thankfully, it seemed to be enough, as the status panel she'd been looking at shifted to something that looked like a store front. As she looked it over, she noticed a number pulse briefly at the bottom, and blinked as she noted she somehow already had points.

[Points!]

Huh. That hadn't hurt as much as before, though the amount of information that had been shared had been lesser. As best she could parse it, **[Misfit]** had managed to half-trick the System into giving her a **[Starting Package]**. It also sheepishly admitted it had already spent some of the points for her...on the Bunker she was in? Confused, she sent a feeling of asking for more information about that. Instead of a concept being dropped on her, the panel changed to show 'purchased abilities.'

... ..

[Dimensional Bunker]

When used, teleports the user into a bunker in another dimension for up to 24 hours. The bunker is stocked with clean drinking water and MREs with a space of 4x4x4m inside resembling a prison cell. Those with spatial abilities may be able to track the user. User can leave at any time, but eight hours are required to recharge after use. For some reason, this particular bunker is defective and only creates cold water and MREs of extremely spicy food.

Remaining Time for Current Bunker: 9 hours 43 minutes.

... ..

Oh. So *that's* where she was. **[Misfit]** must have known that she wouldn't immediately be up and operational, and had taken steps to make sure she was safe

while she got her shit together. She sent a feeling of reassurance and thanks to it, since that might well have saved her life. It also meant that, despite some of the moments earlier seeming to last forever, it had been less than a day since she woke. How much less she wasn't sure, nor did it really matter.

The note about the defective features also gave her a first hint about drawbacks of everything she had being 'cast away' powers and items. Likely, this one had been so thrown out because of the two defects of only producing cold water, and only spicy rations. With that point fresh in mind, she went back to the 'Rewards Store' and started looking over the many rewards available, starting with ones she could currently afford.

She quickly realized that the defect on the Bunker power was honestly on the tame end, though she just as quickly noted that not *all* powers had defects. Some were simply weak, others had drawbacks built into their use...and a goodly number of them were kinda *perverse*. Which she could absolutely see prudes or stick-in-the-mud types throwing out with haste when she read a few of their entries.

Ballgag of Silence was pretty tame, wearing it preventing you from producing any noise when you moved. But **Feline Attachment**, which created a buttplug tail that gave you enhanced speed and agility was a bit more out there. Nor was that even close to the kinkiest thing she saw. She got a bit lost in reading a few of *those*, and only wrenched her attention away when she realized she was getting *wet* down below. Blushing, she refocused on other powers.

Most of what she could afford were weak. Even the better ones were things like **Leaf Blade** that let you conjure super-sharp leaves to use as weapons, but they were quite brittle and shattered easily. Or else they had a significant drawback. **Gust**, for example, let you conjure wind strong enough to knock down a grown man, but had a defect of always bringing a random scent with it. Which could be flowers...or the smell of the inside of a septic tank.

Grimacing at the fact that she technically had to mark that as an ability with promise, she took a look at some of the things *outside* her price range. For direct comparison, she quickly found one called **Air Jet**. It let you create *powerful* bursts of wind, on par with or greater than anything Stormtiger could do. Yet, the defect in it was commensurately more dangerous, too. It *didn't* provide any sort of protection or adaptations. Since it had to be fired/controlled from the hands, a non-brute would stand a very good chance of having their *arm ripped off*.

Yet, that entry was solid proof of **[Misfit]**'s faith that she could make something of these abilities being accurate. After all, her body already had a brute rating. With Buffout active, she could probably take most of the backlash **[Air Jet]** produced without accruing

significant damage to herself. If she managed to find other abilities that added yet more durability on top of what she already had? She might be able to use it at full strength without risk.

Synergies. That was why **[Misfit]** thought she could make something good with this in time. If she balanced the drawbacks with other abilities, or even just figured out multiple abilities that additively stacked up? Yeah, she could actually become pretty powerful in time. Probably, at least. **[Air Jet]** was *well* out of her price range right now. Sighing, she shut down the System Panel entirely and spoke.

“Well, I supposed we should be getting home. Though I don’t know how I’m going to explain the new looks to the fam. Still, they must be worried.”

There was a pause and she felt *dread* as **[Misfit]** sent her *sorrow*. Dread that came to fruition when it clarified with concepts.

[Negation]. [Time]. [Space].

Vicky couldn’t have told you how she got to the floor of the Bunker, after she processed the meanings. All she knew was that she’d just been told it had taken 56 years for **[Fragile One]** and then **[Misfit]** to put her back together. Even worse, they weren’t on **[Earth Bet]** any longer, but on some far off Earth, well outside of **[Shard Ranges]**. **[Misfit]** had no idea at all if it was even possible to get back to Bet, let alone how to do it. Even if she got there, the chances were good that by the time she did, no one she’d known would still be alive...

... ..

[Misfit] had let Vicky mourn the loss of everyone she’d ever known and loved for quite some time, for which she was grateful. She was equally grateful, despite the empty void in her heart, that it slowly nudged and poked her out of her grief after a few hours, however. She *wanted* to be angry with it for doing so, but when it tentatively flashed a screen with the count down time for the Bunker at her, she understood.

As much as she wanted more time to deal with her grief, they didn’t *have* time before they had to deal with whatever version of Earth they’d ended up on. One in which it was 2067. Even **[Misfit]** only had limited information on the world, just what it could deduce by what the **[Quest Board]** part of its glued-together System was feeding it. Which painted a picture involving a *disturbing* level of violence as the norm. Violence which she might be dropped right into. Which meant Vicky only had so much time, a limited amount of points, and several problems to solve.

Including the minor detail that she was still, you know, *naked*.

Deciding that needed addressing, but that she also probably ought to eat and drink something while she had the chance, Vicky gathered herself and got off the floor. A few minutes to pour some water into a thankfully-provided cup and a bit more of rummaging around the MREs had some Extra Hot Chipotle Chicken cooking with the built in MRE heat pack. She'd been pretty okay at handling spicy food before. Hopefully this body could handle it as well.

If not, well, she hadn't *actually* gotten hungry yet. While this body could eat, it apparently only needed to do so rarely. At least from what she could tell. Still, eating was a human thing, and she could do with a little bit of feeling human right now. As she waited the fifteen minutes the heat pack in the MRE required to get the food properly cooked, she poked and prodded the Misfit System's store panel.

With help from **[Misfit]**, who seemed to be sort of building the UI on the fly for her, she managed to sort out three possible solutions she could currently afford to the whole *currently naked* issue. Only one of them *properly* solved it, but any of them could theoretically work. Veil of Invisibility was probably the worst, offering a partial solution that would let her look for clothes, while getting something long-term sorta-useful out of it as well.

... ..

Veil of Invisibility

Turns the wearer invisible, as long as they are not wearing any clothing.

... ..

The problem, of course, was that it meant running around invisibly nude in unknown circumstances until she stumbled upon a way to acquire something more suitable. The fact that it provided a permanent option for pretty decent stealth was the only reason she didn't dismiss it outright. Still, it would also take up a large chunk of the few 'starter' points **[Misfit]** had finagled for her. The second option was actually cheaper, due to the combination of not really being anything but pure utility and coming with a defect.

... ..

Wardrobe of Mending

A wardrobe of clothes that suit your tastes and local fashions, when not worn for more than 24 hours these clothes instantly mend themselves to mint condition. Unfortunately, something went wrong with this one's enchantment and every individual outfit is a riot of clashing colors.

... ..

This was arguably a better long-term solution. More to the point, after poking and prodding at the ‘defect’ with **[Misfit]**’s help, she’d gotten the impression that she *could* mix and match outfits. Despite her memories still being partially scrambled, she was reasonably confident enough of her fashionista senses were intact that she could *combine* pieces from different outfits. Which would allow the making of a result that would actually work, and render the defect more of a mild annoyance than a true problem. The final option...

... ..

Illusory Raiment

Allows you to create an illusion of any clothes you can imagine. The clothes are not real, anyone or anything that touches them will pass right through.

... ..

The option made her blush a bit, considering it, since she’d effectively be running around naked and *not* invisible. Which was somehow both better and worse than Veil of Invisibility. On the one hand, it meant she could always *look* like she was clothed, no matter what happened. Which, given the number of ‘wardrobe malfunctions’ she’d likely run into without her shield extending over her costume like it had before, was potentially pretty useful. On the flip side, at least initially she’d be...well...running around effectively naked who knew where. Even if, hopefully, no one would notice.

The fact that the **Illusory Raiment** was actually the *cheapest* option made things all the more complicated. She was granted a bit of relief, temporarily at least, to her embarrassment as the food finished and she put aside the problem long enough to eat. With her first bite, she was genuinely surprised.

“Hey, this is actually pretty good!”

Oh, it was *spicy*, for sure. She’d already liked spicy food, though, and this new body honestly seemed *better* at handling the spice than her original had. Which, she supposed might make sense? Probably part of the whole ‘cyborg that can apparently survive in *space* thing.’ She quickly pushed that thought away, focusing as much as possible on the food, and the rest of her choices.

Hmm, well two of the three options would be *embarrassing*, the truth was that she really needed to consider other things. She was in a new reality, which meant no resources or identity, right? Her earlier quick peek at Quests/Missions had indicated that many of them would come with at least some monetary reward, *somehow*. So money was

important but probably not *critical*. What other things could she afford to purchase that would help her immediately, and how much would they cost?

That line of thought took her through finishing her meal, washing it down with water, and even taking a cold shower. Yeah, that lack of *hot water* was way more of a nuisance than the spicy food thing. Her fragments of memory, which were still very slowly unscrambling, said she'd had experience with the like of both MREs and as-you-could-get-them-cold-showers before. After...Endbringer fights? Right, steer away from that bunch of memories for now, thank you brain!

Well, by the time she was done with all of that, she'd both learned that she could multi-task far better than before, and that she had...options. Lots of options. **[Misfit]** had grabbed *all the things* it could, while it had the chance. The *vast* majority of them were low tier or 'defective' in some way, but there was a *lot*, and she'd quickly fallen down the rabbit hole of how she could make some of them synergize. Even the super cheap ones she had access to right now.

For example, there were multiple Ice related minor abilities. Even the best of the ones she could afford couldn't do much more than make a dagger of ice. Yet, poking and prodding them, she'd realized she could *stack* them and they'd synergize into being able to at least *fire off* ice daggers and telekinetically control them to home in on targets. Which would be pretty sweet!

You know, if that wouldn't take up her whole point allotment.

More embarrassingly, she'd found that among the most useful synergies were a lot of the perfectly-good powers that someone had clearly thrown out because they'd been made by a pervert. For comparative example, for half the point cost of the combined Ice powers, she could make a flame-based power barely worth mentioning. **Tinder**, which would allow her to create flame, but only a bit more than a decent lighter would. But that power could be combined with **Panties of Flame** for a significantly more potent effect.

The panties enhanced *all* fire abilities significantly, to the point she'd be able to use **Tinder** to make a D&D like Burning Hands spell happen. Unfortunately, they were firmly in the 'a pervert made it' category, as they '*induce a commiserate amount of pleasure to match the amount of flame used, 'warming you up.' The pleasure will never be enough to orgasm, even if you are right on the cusp of climaxing.*' So, some pervert had made panties that *boosted flame powers* in exchange for edging you the whole time you were using said powers. Seriously, *what the fuck?*

The super annoying part was that Vicky was actually tempted by the combination. The resulting extra ability would be a fairly potent ace in the hole, would provide her a pair

of panties that worked normally when she wasn't channeling fire, and would take less than half her starter points! It, embarrassingly, also wasn't the only such 'pervert combination' she'd seriously considered. Their drawbacks tended to be *manageable* and the items or abilities often comparatively cheap in points. Honestly, it was probably a good thing it had been a *cold* shower...

Anyway! Decisions! She needed to make them, as there was only a little over an hour left before the Bunker vanished and needed eight hours to reset! Reluctantly, she wrenched her attention away from the possible cool synergies. She *really* wanted to build-an-awesome-power! Like Build-a-Bear but *way* cooler! Realistically though, unless this reality was Turbo Fucked, she honestly suspected she was probably going to be able to defend herself decently well just as she already was. Which meant that solving immediate logistics issues was more important.

Finally, after a bit more fiddling, she settled on a power that was most likely a Must Have.

... ..

Communication Device

You gain the local equivalent of a cell phone or comm device. It's connected untraceably to the local network and cannot be hacked.

... ..

Now, as much as Vicky was one hundred percent guilty of being a bit addicted to her smart phone, her reasons were a bit more *detailed* than that for picking such a mundane power. First, of course, was the fact that it should open up a *lot* of options for information, if she had something like that. Second was that any number of the Systems' Quests/Missions might call for the ability to get in contact with people. Third...was the fact that **[Misfit]** could give her vague impressions about what the power would produce.

The fact that, in their case, it was going to produce an *add-on* for her *cybernetics* was eye opening. Since it was specified to *specifically* be the *local equivalent of a cell phone*, the logic jump to make there was that *most people would have a cybernetic implant that acted as a phone*. That implied a world *significantly* more advanced than Earth Bet had been, at least what she could remember of it, where that sort of thing would *absolutely* have been Tinkertech.

It also meant it might genuinely be difficult to function *without* such an implant, if they were so common that this honestly pretty-darn-cheap option would provide it. Doubly so as it was one of the rarer powers that *wasn't* defective. Most likely, it was just

so low level of a result that it wasn't considered of value and chunked out. With all of that together and time running down, she selected and purchased the option.

There was a very brief flash of pain...and then she abruptly had information in her brain about how to use an 'Agent.' Huh, the internal version required cybernetics in the eye. Which, thankfully, she already had. She abruptly felt even better about the choice she'd made, as she realized that any version *not* provided by **[Misfit]** likely wouldn't actually be compatible with her body's hardware. A quick check showed she didn't have a connection while in the Bunker, which made sense, given it was some sort of pocket dimension.

She didn't have time to play with the new toy anyway, given that she was now down to just 45 minutes and still naked. The question was, did she take the cheapest option to solve that issue, despite internal embarrassment, so that she could *also* take another small power? Or did she bite the bullet and get the Wardrobe, which would provide for her longer-term, but suck up pretty much all her remaining 'starter' points.

Well, what else did she need?

She was pretty strong and tough in this body. She would *probably* be okay in a fight, depending on what the tech level was like. Food and shelter was mostly covered by the Bunker, she'd only have to wait 8 hours for it to come back, and this body was super low maintenance. The Agent would allow her some research once she got somewhere with a signal. She almost, *almost*, shrugged and took the Wardrobe. It was only when she started thinking through what sorts of things she might wear that she had a horrifying realization that stopped her.

She was on an alternate Earth, over fifty years in the future, she had *no idea* what was going to be appropriate to wear.

Yes, technically she could resummon the Wardrobe every hour, according to a closer look at how it worked. Yet that might leave her in clothing that *stuck out horribly* in wherever-she-landed for that hour. In a place which, if the Missions/Quests she'd look at were any indication, was *at least* as violent as home had been. Possibly more so, if the sorts of things it listed were commonplace. Hopefully they *weren't*, but she couldn't assume. Not after...the memories were still scrambled, but the flashes and bits she could remember showed how badly the violence had escalated. If she ended up in a place with more open violence, like after Leviathan...

The answer was obvious and she was running out of time. Suppressing her embarrassment, she purchased **Illusory Raiment**. Five precious minutes after that were spent figuring out how to use it and creating what she hoped was fairly generic clothing.

Then, with just twenty minutes left, she had to figure out what to do with the remaining points. More utility?

[Weapon], [Danger].

She jumped a bit. **[Misfit]** had mostly been content with impressions, rather than the concept-language it used for more complete communication. Still, it had a point. While her new body was tough, and *did* have a shield, that shield wasn't nearly as potent as it had been before. Worse, even before she'd needed to be careful of rapid gunfire. Too fast and additional shots could hit her before her shield regenerated. Given that her new shield would regenerate far more slowly, she abruptly needed either better defenses...or a way to fight at range.

Vicky actually did know how to use guns.

It had been something that the entirety of New Wave had trained in. Less to *use* them, as it generally wasn't done by capes, but to *handle them safely* when they took them from criminals. That had meant a full gun safety course. Which, since they *hadn't* gone through the PRT for it, had included firing them. It had been a while and the memories were just as scrambled as anything else in her head, but she was confident she could not shoot herself at least.

She would honestly feel more comfortable with a power, but most of those she could turn into something usable at low costs required more than one power. The ones that didn't were close range only. There *had* been a power that worked something like Miss Militia's though, only a thousand times more limited. Ah, there it was.

... ..

Ethereal Weapon

Allows you to summon ~~any~~ mundane melee or ranged weapon you are familiar with. Ranged weapons come with 40 units of ammo per day. **Error:** Something went wrong with this power and it is locked to the initial weapon you summon it as.

... ..

It was obvious why the power, which should have been quite good though not spectacular, was cheap enough for her to just barely grab. It, like so many other powers she could buy with the Misfit System, was faulty. In this case, it was an acceptable fault, and she quickly purchased it. As soon as she did, she summoned it with a particular weapon in mind. One that, thankfully, she still had a clear memory of.

An M45 MEUSOC.

The gun, essentially a modernized Colt 1911 used by the Marines, had been introduced to her by New Wave's instructor. It was a noisy brute of a weapon, firing a .45 ACP round that had quite a lot of stopping power. The ex-Marine had been amused at how much Vicky had liked it, she remembered that much. But then, as a Brute she'd been able to completely ignore the recoil. Something her new body would be able to do as well. More to the point, she was familiar enough with it, despite still half-fractured memories, to successfully summon it.

She was lucky it came with a holster! Or would have been if, you know, she had *real clothes* to attach the holster too. Frowning, she dismissed it after testing it in every way she could short of firing it. She would be able to resummon it directly to hand if she needed it, and there were only five minutes left before the Bunker vanished. She spent them checking her appearance, including tying her hair up in a long ponytail with a bit of material from the MRE packaging.

Then, the Dimensional Bunker ended and she was abruptly somewhere else...

Chapter 2: Welcome to Night City

The first thing that hit Vicky was the *smell*. Not that she hadn't smelled worse, she vaguely thought, but the sheer difference between the sterile air of the Bunker and the smell of overpowering pollution was momentarily nauseating. She adjusted quickly, quicker than she should have in fact, as her cybernetics acted to prevent the distraction from affecting her combat performance. They didn't *filter* the smell, since smells could be important early warning signs. They just stopped them from nauseating her.

Not that she realized that in the moment, exactly. She was a bit little too busy taking in the rest of what she was seeing. She'd ended up, somehow, on the rooftop of a relatively small building. Not *small*, instinct from years of flying, which wasn't nearly as scrambled as her actual memories, told her she was at least six to eight floors up. *Relative* to many of the buildings she could see all around her, however, it wasn't anything special. It was roughly dusk out, but many of the buildings were still lit up, giving her a good chance to evaluate what she was seeing.

Some of the buildings were 'normal' skyscrapers, the likes of which Vicky had seen before. At least one she could see, however, was an *absolutely massive* structures that dwarfed any single building she could remember. Not so much in *height*, though it was skyscraper tall. More than any vertical height, it was the sheer horizontal volume, the sheer number of 'blocks' it covered compared to even the next largest building. It must, she vaguely thought, be large enough to swallow a decent chunk of Brockon Bay's docks area.

Given it most reminded her of a massive apartment complex...it must house thousands. Possibly ten thousand or more, even.

Of course, like the building she stood on, there were plenty of sub ten-story buildings scattered around as well. Enough to give her the sightlines to see the larger ones, as well as to take in the city as a whole. It was night, but the night was lit up with more neon signs and other lights than even New York or Las Vegas. At least so she thought, though she didn't think she'd ever been to the latter.

Wherever she was, it was a *much* larger city than Brockton.

That could be good, or could be bad. It was hard to say without more information. Though, at minimum, it would likely make it easier to be unnoticed for a while as she figured things out. Moving to the edge of the roof, she looked down and spotted plenty of cars moving around. She'd seen a few flying craft as well, but not that many. The lack of flying cars even this far into the future was admittedly a bit disappointing.

More importantly than that, however, was that her new eyes were good enough to get a look at the people down below. A wild riot of them, both in race and clothing, though she noted a higher number were Latino than any other group. Many of that particular group wore clothing and colors that matched up at least a bit. Combined with openly carrying weapons, it made her mentally label them as gangers...but she wasn't entirely sure that was correct. After all, *everyone* seemed to be armed down there. Even that little old lady she'd spotted had been strapped with a small pistol.

Focusing on the *non*-Latino, she noticed none of the clothing matched what she was wearing. Ignoring the possible gangers, there seemed to be at least three distinct 'styles.' One that was very *punk*, with chaotic, mismatched clothes that trended toward 'rugged.' A second was all bright colors and flashy designs that came off as pretty tacky to her, and also trended far more toward 'wait, is that legal to wear in public?!' The third style was almost militaristic, but not quite, and was the least common in this area at least. She also saw some variants that might well be different enough to count as additional styles, but there weren't enough examples of them to be sure.

Grumbling, she reflected for a moment before deciding that a tamer variant of the flashy style was the best bet for her current body. She saw more of it on the few Asians in the crowd, though there weren't all that many of those. They didn't seem to be *unwanted* here, and weren't drawing too many eyes from the Latinos who she'd mentally labeled as 'gangers,' so that would do as a base.

Looking around for cameras first, she *did* spot one, though it looked in rough shape. Moving out of its line of sight anyway, she grimaced as she dismissed **Illusory Raiment**,

suffering the 10 seconds of cooldown for the ability nude. She was relieved when it ended, quickly setting a new 'outfit' with a bright red halter top that fully bared her stomach and leather pants. She threw a black half-jacket with equally red diamonds pattern 'over' it and added more bright red in the form of boots. The end effect was honestly not *quite* a match for any of the styles she'd seen. But it would blend into the space between them well, doubly so with the mild Stranger effect from **Attention**.

Satisfied that she wouldn't stick out like a sore thumb immediately, the next thing she did was fire up her 'Agent' and search for a connection. She found what seemed to be a dense, city-wide network immediately, and connected to it seamlessly. As promised, she thankfully didn't need a local carrier. Even better, her Agent seemed to be able to pull local maps. Meaning she finally had a name for where she was.

Night City, in the district of Heywood.

She recognized the coastline as being California in the United States. Yet a quick couple of searches on something like a public internet, though *heavily* soaked in ads, showed that Night City was a Free City State. The United States apparently still existed...as the New United States. A government that *wasn't* the super power she'd known, even if it apparently once had been. Apparently, the west coast was now the Free States or the Pacific Confederation, with the NUSA apparently mostly consisting of the East Coast.

Damn, she thought *Bet* had gotten a rough go in the 80s and 90s. It looked like this world had gotten fucked even harder in some ways, though entirely out of human greed, with no Endbringers in sight. It was more than a bit horrifying to consider that *Bet* might be *better off* for having had the Endbringers to unite against. Though Aleph put a bit of a lie to that.

Still, none of that was super important right now. Apparently, Night City was a Free *City* wedged between Free States. One with a *reputation*, at that. Even a few casual searches turned up massive, well-known gangs. Of which the Valentinos, the Latino gang she *had* correctly spotted as a gang, apparently, were among the *least* offensive. Heywood was their known center, so she supposed she hadn't landed in a *bad* spot, even if Heywood was apparently divided north-to-south from 'fairly middle class' to 'don't fucking go there at night without friends and lots of guns.'

Well, she wasn't going to make any progress in sorting things out standing here and doing public 'net searches. Time to find a way off this building, try to pretend she isn't feeling the breeze across her bare bits through the illusionary clothes, and figure out how to either knock over someone that deserves it for cash or do a 'Mission.' Whichever seems like it will work out best...

... ..

... ..

Save a Life

Night City takes from everyone, the innocent most of all. The first step in making it better is simple. Save someone. Anyone.

Reward: 500 Eddies, System Points: 50, Loot (Target Dependent)

... ..

The Mission Vicky had picked out was just about the dead simplest on the list. Not *quite* literally, since there were some bizarrely easy things like ‘Wash Dishes.’ That one was only worth 10 ‘eddie’s and no system points, but was infinitely repeatable. Very weird. Still, it wasn’t like she *had* dishes to wash, and as far as *her* preferences went, ‘Save One Person’ was straightforward, simple, and right up her alley.

Of course, she’d forgotten the little detail that she couldn’t fly any longer, and it had taken her a good twenty minutes to figure out how to get off the building as a result. **[Misfit]** was broadcasting chagrined apology as that as they reached street level. Both for positioning her on landing to be on a roof, and for the loss of her flight. She shook her head and sent a firm feeling not to be sorry at her power, addressing it out loud a moment later.

“None of that, Misfit. You saved my life and gave me another chance, one I’m not going to waste! The loss of my flight is nothing compared to that. Doubly so when I can still get it back!”

She meant it, too, even if she was still having trouble with...several things. The loss of her family, who she hoped had managed to live a good life. Her body changing, even if this new one was admittedly pretty nice. Her memories being a bit scrambled still, even if she could *feel* them slowly, very slowly, clearing up. She remembered several things a bit more clearly now than she had when she’d first woken up.

Though she could have done without one of those memories being that time she’d ended up naked after using her brute abilities wrecked her civilian clothes early on. Eventually, she’d figured out how to extend the effect of her shield to them, or maybe **[Fragile One]** had? But she supposed *this* wasn’t the first time she’d ended up naked because of her powers, and she was at least *sort of* covered this time. Even if she was a bit grossed out feeling some of the things on the street via her feet. She knew none of it was going to hurt her, not with how tough her skin was, but it was still *gross*.

Shoes were an even greater life priority than usual!

Shaking that seriously important revelation of [Truth] off, she tried to blend in as she made it to the main road from the alley, using **Attention** to help in said blending. She'd gotten a decent look at the district she was in from the top of the building, and now drifted toward the south, where both her eyes and the net searches had said were the poorer areas of Heywood. That was her best shot at finding someone in need of help.

She didn't make it even halfway to the 'rough' parts of town.

Barely four and a half blocks from where she'd started, the moderately enhanced hearing of her new body detected sounds of a struggle, including a half-desperate female cry. It took her a second to pinpoint the sound, not exactly used to the enhanced senses yet, but the instant she did she took off down the alley to her left. The sound hadn't come from the alley itself, but from an offshoot halfway down it, and despite her speed being excellent she was *almost* too late to prevent what was happening.

But only *almost*.

A girl, who looked maybe sixteen at most, had already been stripped of her pants and was being held up against the wall by a dirty man with a knife at her throat. Another kid, male and maybe two years younger, was bleeding out on the ground a few feet away. Seeing red, Vicky didn't bother with warnings, she just *accelerated*. Knives were nothing new, and she'd had *plenty* of experience dealing with similar situations.

Her first strike hammered the man's elbow in such a way that it forced the knife *away* from the woman's jugular, with an elbow of her own coming around a second later to *smash* his nose in. He cried out in pain, his nose pulping under the force Vicky had put into that blow, but he didn't go down. Worse, she'd *felt* that hit not doing as much as it should, like his skull was made of metal. Which, she abruptly realized, might actually *be true*.

Thankfully, he was still shocked enough by the pain that he couldn't stop her from shoving him back...and hammering a foot into his swinging dick and balls. Whatever other mods he had, *those* were apparently still real, as she felt them practically explode under the Anti-Brute levels of power she'd put into the kick. The pain was *far* too much for him and he instantly passed out, though she didn't register that in time to prevent denting his skull in with a follow-up punch.

She winced a bit, as that might well have killed him. Still, she didn't really regret stopping a rapist, even if he *did* die. Eyeing him for a moment to make sure he stayed down, she quickly moved to the kid that was bleeding out. It was bad, but not immediately fatal. She grabbed the dirty knife from where it had fallen and used it to cut a strip of the kid's shirt that looked *mostly* clean, using it to pack the wound. Having done what little her

memories knew to slow the bleeding, she looked up toward the shell-shocked girl, who was staring at her.

“Dunno who he is to you, but if you don’t want him to die, you need to call for help.”

Vicky had *no idea* who to call in this city yet. Thankfully, the girl shook herself and her eyes lit up, even as she scrambled over to him.

“Fuck! Cal! Don’t fucking die on me!”

A call with an internal agent must have connected, as the next thing she shouted was obviously aimed at someone other than the injured kid or Vicky.

“Jackie! I need a pick up *right the fuck now*. Cal’s been stabbed! Someone helped us with the attacker, but he’s going to fucking bleed out if he doesn’t get to a Ripper *soon*.”

Vicky was still holding the wound, focusing on slowly shifting the kid’s body to a better position to slow the bleeding as the girl shouted their location. A moment later the glow in her eyes went off. She looked at Vicky, took a deep breath, and spoke to her.

“You need to go. *Thank you* for helping. But Jackie will arrive with Valintenos, better you aren’t still here when they show up. Come by the El Coyote Cojo in a day or two, and Cal and I will think you *properly*, assuming he makes it. Okay?”

Vicky could tell the girl was nervous trying to get rid of her, but she understood, nodding and directing her in turn.

“Get down here, put pressure on the wound so I can let go. Keep it there until your friends arrive.”

The girl scrambled to obey, not hesitating to get her hands bloody for her friend, and Vicky pulled back. She stepped toward the downed man, grimacing as she noted he *wasn’t* breathing at this point. Forcing herself not to think about yet another complication, she used his hoodie to wipe the blood off her hands...and swiped a roll of eddies from his pocket. She took it and the knife and exited the alley quickly, or started to at least. The girl called out a question before she left entirely.

“Hey! What’s your name? Mine’s Camilla.”

Vicky considered for a moment, trying to figure out what to answer with, before deciding on something simple.

“Call me V.”

A moment later, she was out of sight, heading to the main street she *hadn't* originally started on. Someone back on the first might have noticed her run off and she wasn't interested in attention for once in her life. She hoped the kid made it, but she'd done all she could. For now, she had the roll of eddies, and a flashing Mission Complete in the corner of her mind to investigate...

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