

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

**A/N: Doctor Mother's toxic mindset.**

**-x-X-x-**

This is perhaps the worst case scenario, Doctor Mother reflects. She, like most of the others at the table, starts to say something once the young man standing imperiously in front of them is done lambasting them for things he doesn't understand.

However, in that same instant it's as though all of the air has been sucked from the room. Portent clenches a hand into a fist and none of their words actually manage to make it out of their throats. They've been silenced and it takes a moment for everyone to realize it, to see that they have been cut off from responding to his hard words.

Yes... this is indeed a worst case scenario situation. Not only have they inadvertently invited an incredibly powerful parahuman into the heart of their power and operations, but they also don't even have Eidolon here to manage him.

Though given the discovery that Eidolon had been controlling the Endbringers all this time, albeit subconsciously, that was a whole other can of worms. If only Alexandria hadn't seen fit to advise Portent to take control of all twenty (TWENTY!) Endbringers for himself. Such a force of power would have been better off under Cauldron's control, of that Doctor Mother is certain.

Why? Because Portent is nothing but a child. Oh sure, by society's standards he might be considered an adult at the age of twenty-one. And yet, he's barely out of his diapers as far as she's concerned. He wasn't even a twinkle in his mother's eye when they were first creating Cauldron, when Doctor Mother was laying the foundations for trying to save not just the world, but ALL worlds from Scion's inevitable rampage.

So where did he get off judging them? Where did he get off condemning their actions?

Worse still, Alexandria's plan to seduce Portent with Contessa had clearly backfired massively if the way the two women were looking at him now was any indication. Their contriteness was disappointing. The way they seemed to believe he could solve all of their problems... even more so.

When Doctor Mother looked at Portent, all she saw was a boy with too much power. That didn't awe her, it scared her. It terrified her in a way nothing except for the existential dread brought on by Scion could.

Seeming to register her active hostility even through the ensuing silence, Portent looks directly at her. He waves a hand and Doctor Mother can immediately feel that she's been allowed to speak once more. Her. Allowed. It rankles something fierce.

"You're clearly the leading cause of this mess. Do you have anything to say for yourself? Anything helpful to add?"

Doctor Mother sits straight; her nose slightly lifted as her nostrils flare.

"Everything Cauldron has done has been for the greater good. Condemn us if you will. Punish me if that is your desire. But do not act like there was any other choice."

Portent's eyes narrow and his jaw clenches.

"There is always another choice."

"No. Not when trillions of lives are on the line. There is only action and inaction. Every action I took, that this organization has taken, was to try and save as many of those lives as possible."

"All that suffering beneath our feet... you're really going to tell me it was necessary?"

Doctor Mother... shrugs.

“Yes. The enemy’s loss scarred him. Killing the other half of the pair left him in the state he is in now, something we’ve been able to take advantage of for decades in order to try and prepare for when his grief finally turns to anger and destruction. Part of that scarring involves a preponderance to avoid gazing too deeply at anyone or anything that reminds him of his loss.”

Gesturing down at the table, but in reality down at the prison below the table and their feet, Doctor Mother finishes her explanation with little gusto, her tone measured and calm even now.

“Those below obfuscate this facility. They protect us from the enemy’s gaze. He will never look here... because to look here would be to remember what he lost.”

For a long moment, silence reigns in the conference room. Both enforced and not. Portent stares at her from across the table while all of the others watch on. Doctor Mother wishes that one of them would at least try to do anything. Alexandria and Contessa might be useless at this point, but Legend or Number Man should be doing more than just... sitting there. Even if Legend is upset to learn about Cauldron’s dark side, he should at least understand what’s at stake here.

But no... they all sit quietly. They all sit silently. Only Portent has permission, from himself of course, to break the silence.

“That’s your excuse? Kidnapping people, experimenting on them, putting them through hell... and then locking them up in prison cells for no crime except being failures. That’s your excuse for all of that?”

Doctor Mother scoffs.

“Would you like me to apologize? No, I doubt that would be enough. Shall I show my false contrition in another way then? If you wish to take my life, then

take my life. I have already spent all the value I have. I have done everything I can.”

Yes, perhaps this is the correct path. If the others will do nothing... well, Doctor Mother has no powers of her own. However, if she needs to be the sacrifice so that Portent and the rest of Cauldron can work together to defeat the enemy...

She still doubts Portent can actually defeat Scion, of course. Even with twenty Endbringers at his back, she doubts it. But she doesn't doubt that he could take over the world if he wanted to. And nobody, save for Scion himself, could stop him more than likely.

“... I'm not going to kill you. I'm far more inclined to keep you alive so you can be locked up when all this is over. A prison cell all your own... maybe as small as the smallest cell you've put one of them down there in. I could remove your need for food and water; I could remove your body's need to produce waste. I could even remove your age so you lasted a few decades longer. That seems like a far more fitting punishment to me.”

It sounded truly torturous. Doctor Mother can't deny a small spike of fear at the thought. She keeps her composure all the same, her voice clipped as she responds sharply.

“So be it.”

For a long moment, Portent just stares at her. Then, he shakes his head and turns away, ignoring her completely. Another wave of his hand and the voices of everyone else in the room are returned. Doctor Mother moves to speak up... only to find she suddenly can't once more. They all can talk, but she has been silenced. Sidelined, effectively.

“I'm going to deal with Scion once and for all. But where you all have been preparing for a war, I don't see why I should bother with that. I should be able to handle him just fine with my abilities and without ever even provoking him to boot. I just need some more practice.”

Number Man leans forward; his head tilted to the side.

“What sort of practice, exactly?”

Doctor Mother can't help but scowl. Portent had a truly stupendous ability for turning her comrades to his side it would seem. Either that or Kurt had run the numbers... and come to the simple conclusion that cooperation was more valuable than dissent. Loyalty to someone like him was never an emotional thing... it was a transaction.

“... The people down below. I can practice on them while also fixing them and putting them back to how they were before. As I restore them, I will learn more and more about how parahuman abilities work... the aliens behind the connections. Even if they're all dead connections down below... it should still be illuminating.”

Doctor Mother scowls harder. Did he not hear her before? Those down below provided obfuscation! If he started 'healing' them, he would only turn Scion's attention in their direction. Unfortunately, she can't say as much. Fortunately... Legend of all people clears his throat, glancing to her.

“Is that not... risky? If the Doctor is to be believed, those below are providing camouflage. A camouflage that might be lifted if you... help them all too soon or too fast. Scion might come after you faster in that case.”

Portent tilts his head to the side and for a moment Doctor Mother dares to allow herself to feel just a smidgen of hope that he's actually considering the issue. But then just as quickly, he shakes his head.

“We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. I refuse to leave thousands of innocent human beings suffering untold tortures due to misfired powers. Those below are my greatest priority at this point... not just because of how they might help me deal with Scion.”

She wants to scoff. What a fool. Him and his bleeding heart were going to get them all killed. And while she was more than ready to die, if the rest of Cauldron died, if Portent himself died... so did humanity's chance at survival.

"I suppose that's settled then. I'll head downstairs right now and start working. You lot can help by providing me with a proper list of the most disadvantaged of your prisoners. Those that are suffering the worst due to their powers should be brought to my attention first, to be clear."

As everyone nods in agreement except her, Doctor Mother wants to sigh. This really was the worst case scenario...

Just as that thought is crossing her mind, both Alexandria and Legend start to... beep. Urgently. It's their phones and the two of them pause in shared consternation for a moment before glancing over to Portent of all people to see if they should check on them. That rankles something fierce as well, because normally it would be Doctor Mother they checked with.

The amount of effort it had taken to make sure there was always a connection from here to Earth Bet so that they got service here in case of emergencies... and they were looking to Portent for instructions on how to proceed. Tch.

Portent just nods and gestures for them to see what it is, prompting the two members of the Triumvirate to pull out their phones and check them. Much to Doctor Mother's surprise considering Alexandria's powerset makes her much less emotive... the two of them share the exact same reaction. Their eyes widen, their jaws drop open... and they both look suitably horrified by what they're seeing.

"What is it?"

Portent's terse voice is the only thing that cuts through the horror enough for Alexandria to snap out of it and look to him.

“Its... its Eidolon. Ten minutes ago he... he attacked Scion over the Pacific. Confirmation is in... Scion is fighting back. And neither of them is holding back their strength.”

What? Doctor Mother blinks in honest confusion. Why would Eidolon do that? Why would he pick a fight with Scion unless he had a suicide wish? No... even if he did wish to die after learning about his subconscious actions regarding the Endbringer, he wouldn't bring down the rest of the world, or rather worlds, with him... would he?

Legend chokes on his tongue as he gets another alert on his phone.

“... Scion has just teleported to Houston, Texas. Eidolon followed but it... it's gone. The entire city is gone. And it doesn't look like he's stopping. Or that Eidolon can stop him alone.”

The Leader of the Protectorate is on his feet in an instant.

“I need... I need to go. We all need to go. Portent, I know you're not happy about any of this... I assure you I'm not either. But it's happening. The moment they've been preparing for all this time. It's happening.”

Legend looks around the table helplessly.

“Eidolon... has started the end of the world.”

Doctor Mother just stares back uncomprehending. They'd always known the end was approaching. But for one of them to initiate it... to piss Scion off enough that he went out of his way to retaliate and begin destroying things... why? Why was this happening? How could Eidolon be so stupid?

... Was this her fault? Had she made a mistake all those years ago, giving David power? No... no...

-x-X-x-

Legend is right, unfortunately. Jason would love nothing more than to be able to ignore Eidolon and Scion's fighting and focus on the horrors beneath his feet, but the news of Houston's destruction puts everything in stark relief and quickly reorders his priorities for him.

With a single nod, he signals his agreement with Legend. This prompts Alexandria to rise as well and call out 'Door!' at the top of her lungs.

A moment later, the three of them are moving through into a burning sky... the skies over Texas covered in fire. The ground isn't much better. It's as Legend had said, Houston is gone... and the destruction is spreading.

Finding Eidolon and Scion's fight amongst the chaos is the work of a moment. The two powerhouses are also in the sky, though to say they're facing off with one another would be incorrect. Eidolon seems to be chasing Scion... who is all but ignoring him as he continues to destroy civilization under them.

"Eidolon! What are you doing?! What have you done?!"

Legend's call to the other Triumvirate Member finally stops him in his tracks for a moment. He turns to face them... and to Jason's confusion and surprise, he actually smiles when he lays eyes on him in particular.

"Portent! Good, you're here! Together we can do it! We can finish him off!"

... Had the man gone insane?

"You helped me! My powers, they've been waning for years. I didn't understand why... I worried I was getting weaker because my abilities came from the dead one of the pair. But after you took away the Endbringers, I realized what was happening! I felt it! They were what was dragging me down. Once the connection was broken, all my power... it took time, but it came surging back!"

Letting out a laugh, Eidolon puffs out his chest.

“I’ve never felt better! I’m the strongest I’ve ever been! So it’s time to end this. The threat of the Endbringers are gone, thanks to you. Now... now we put the final threat to bed! Together!”

His words, spoken with such joviality despite his home city literally being completely destroyed beneath him... yes, Eidolon has clearly snapped. He’s lost his mind. Of course, telling him as much right now seems a little counterproductive... they probably do need his power to distract Scion long enough for Jason to do something about this.

In fact, they would probably need all hands on deck, meaning he should summon over the members of Covenant as well as all twenty Endbringers, even the ones not connected to one of them, asap.

It’s just... he can’t help but be annoyed at what could have been. If only he’d had more time... even a day or so to study how the alien connections that provided parahuman abilities worked... he might have been able to terminate the threat posed by Scion without anyone having to die.

Now though, they were effectively forced into a knockout fight for the fate of the world... of all worlds if what he’d been told was true. And here he was, not even remotely prepared for the battle ahead.

... Fucking Eidolon. Fucking Cauldron.

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

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**A/N: Will try to keep this up to date at the end of every chapter, get on me if I forget please. Though if it gets too out of hand, I might have to change it at some point.**

**Jason's current banked points:**

## **400 Celestial Points**

**Jason's current banked power:**

**Darkin Weapon (400 Points)**

**Jason's current powers:**

**= Flash Air (Gained in Chapter 1)**

**= Transformation Pendant (Gained in Chapter 4)**

**= Keen Eye (Gained in Chapter 4)**

**= Blood, Death, and Demons (Gained in Chapter 6)**

**= Alchemical Prodigy (Gained in Chapter 8)**

**= Staff of Magnus (Gained in Chapter 13)**

**= Bind and Seal (Gained in Chapter 17)**

**= Hero of a Hundred Faces: Everyone's Leader (Gained in Chapter 20)**

**= Minor Regeneration via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 23)**

**(Taylor got Major Agility, Vicky got Major Intelligence)**

**= Restraining Order (Gained in Chapter 25)**

**= Focus (Gained in Chapter 28)**

**= Scarborough Fair (Gained in Chapter 30)**

**= Chaos Magic (Gained in Chapter 36)**

**= Major Regeneration via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 40)**

**(Taylor, Vicky, and Amy all got Minor Regeneration)**

**= A Collection of Magic Rings (x6 Cursed Rings, x12 Drawback Rings, x6 Buff Rings) (Gained Chapter 44)**

**= Jason: T3 Armor Ring + Blue Ring, Taylor: T3 Armor Ring + Expert's Ring, Vicky: Red Ring + T2 Heart Ring, Amelia: T3 Armor Ring + T2 Heart Ring (Handed out Chapter 46)**

**= Lucky Charm (Gained in Chapter 51)**

**(Currently worn by Jason as of Ch. 51)**

**= Presidential Suit (Gained in Chapter 52)**

**(Currently reshaped to be Jason's new costume while still looking like the old costume Parian made for him as of Chapter 56)**

- = Taylor, Vicky, and Amy all get Major Regeneration via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 57)**
- = Jason gains Major Intelligence via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 58)**

**(Crystal and Lisa both get Minor Regeneration)**

- = Second Skin (Gained in Chapter 58)**
- = Iron Fist (Gained in Chapter 63)**
- = Exceptional and Lucky (Gained in Chapter 69)**
- = Safety Minded (Gained in Chapter 72)**
- = Oathsworn – Deathless Knight (Boosted by Major Regeneration) (Gained in Chapter 81)**
- = Covenant Connected to Endbringers – Taylor/Behemoth, Vicky/Leviathan, Amelia/Simurgh, Crystal/Unnamed Endbringer, Lisa/Unnamed Endbringer, Sherrel/Unnamed Endbringer (Gained in Chapter 82)**