

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

A/N: Lucas goes the online route~

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Once they're both cleaned up and feeling quite satisfied with themselves, Lucas has a decision to make... specifically regarding next steps. Helping Sveta made him feel good... great, even. Her specific situation sounded like it'd been particularly horrifying, so he was glad that he could save her.

But the goal wasn't to save one or two people here and there. The goal was to save the world. And to do that, Lucas needed far more power than he currently had. He needed power on the level of the Triumvirate... no, greater still than even that. He needed to be stronger than the Endbringers... because they were ultimately the greatest threat to civilization left at this point.

Humanity wasn't able to rebuild as fast as the Endbringers destroyed. In some cases, the destruction was so complete that they couldn't rebuild anything. They were being killed by inches... if those inches were in fact more comparable to miles. Every city ruined or quarantined by the Endbringers' actions represented another loss of human life that they were ill-equipped to just bounce back from.

So yes, Lucas needed more power. He needed as much power from as many deals as he could make. Which begged the question... where to go to make deals? He's ultimately of two minds on the subject. On the one hand, he's already proven that he can make deals over the internet with Sveta. Distance is no obstacle for him it would seem, so long as the desire is real, he can make something happen.

However, regardless of his 'notice me not' power, blatantly putting himself out there on the Internet was bound to attract attention from someone... likely a lot of someone's. It was a double-edged sword of sorts, wasn't it? Because on the one hand, he could broadcast his intentions and offer deals to so many more

people online, but he would also be broadcasting his existence to so many more people at the same time.

The only issue is, his only real other idea is to go out and find homeless communities in the city and offer deals to the desperate and downtrodden in person. To be fair, he doesn't think there'd be much risk to it... he can feel that he's tougher than the average human being at this point and with Sveta to act as his bodyguard, it would be fine.

And yet, the problem with THAT idea was there wasn't likely to be much value extracted from the homeless. What could they offer him in exchange for his power? How much potential could he possibly draw out of people who had already hit rock bottom?

He would help them all eventually, of course. Along with the rest of the world. But he needed to be smart about this... and even if it was putting him on the map to too many people to count, Lucas figures he could still rely on his 'notice me not' power to hold the Powers That Be at bay. So... the Internet it was.

Of course, as he sits down at his computer and proceeds to register a new account, he's not surprised when Sveta drapes herself over his shoulders and nuzzles the back of his head.

"What next?"

Chuckling at the feel of her warm, slightly damp body pressed against his, Lucas gestures to his computer screen.

"Going to start a PHO thread I think. To offer my services. We'll see if we get any bites on it."

"Mm... not worried about being taken down by the mods?"

Lucas shrugs.

“I’m going to be... circumspect initially. Hopefully they shouldn’t realize anything is weird at first.”

Nodding, Sveta pauses for a moment... and then pulls away from him. Lucas only finds out why when she drops to her knees and crawls under his desk a moment later. At which point he finds himself a little bit distracted from what he’s doing.

... But it’s not like he’s about to tell her to stop sucking his dick or anything like that so... he’ll just have to deal with it. Chuckling to himself, Lucas leans forward and does his best to focus on the task at hand, even as Sveta’s lips wrap around his member and start nurse his cock under the desk.

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She would show them. She would show ALL of them.

As she sits there in her dorm room at the university, feverishly working on her latest masterpiece, Alice Wong smiles an almost feral smile. The past couple of weeks had been rough for her... unacceptably so. However, everything was going to be better soon enough. She was going to get everything she deserved! She-!

Her fingers nearly slip, trembling as they are in her excitement, and Alice curses, pulling back immediately from her current project. She takes a moment to stare down at the innerworkings of the latest bomb she’d been building, the knowledge imparted to her by her power making it clear that she’d just been a handful of millimeters off from blowing herself sky high.

Staring down at her hands, she realizes she’s shaking... so with a curse under her breath, Alice shakes her head and turns away from the bomb she’d been building. Next to it, stacked up only slightly haphazardly, are another dozen or so bombs that she’s made over the past week. They only wait for their mistress to put them to use at this point.

But she clearly needs a break... and probably something to drink and eat as well. Grumbling, she moves over to the small mini fridge and grabs her last energy drink from within. Then, she goes and grabs her last package of crackers as well, ripping them open and starting to devour them.

Admittedly, she would never let her supplies get this low under usual circumstances... but these aren't usual circumstances. Alice had been *slighted*. Her genius had gone unrecognized and her goodwill had been abused. Things like groceries had to fall to the wayside in the face of the sheer disrespect levered her way.

Two weeks ago now... Alice Wong had received her first B. In her entire life. All she'd done, all she'd strived for... ruined because one idiot Professor couldn't get his head out of his ass. Her straight A record had been tarnished and no amount of demanding it be changed had worked.

This had led to quite a few sleepless nights as Alice tossed and turned, unable to fathom how this could possibly be happening to her. Her life was ruined... no, more than that, she was being victimized! Targeted!

It wasn't fair... and her new powers were proof of that. A week after receiving that unjust B, Alice had triggered. She'd become a Parahuman, gaining a Tinker ability. And it was perfect... it was exactly what she needed to make herself heard. She could create any bomb she wanted to, any sort of explosive device she desired. She could even create things that didn't make sense, like bombs that stopped or sped up time, or that transmuted things instead of destroying them.

The only limit on what she could make was Alice herself... and Alice had no limits no matter what anyone said. She was a genius, after all.

Well... she had no mental limits. As she munches on crackers and chugs her last energy drink, she'll admit that she has some physical limits still. But that's fine... a couple more hours wouldn't hurt her plans. She still had to wait for night to fall before she could plant her bombs all over Cornell University's campus, after all.

With that in mind, Alice takes a moment to turn to her phone. She'd already completely cannibalized her PC for components for her creations, but her phone remained intact for now. Using it to navigate to Parahumans Online, Alice lies back in bed as she begins to scroll through new threads looking for something to entertain herself.

Eventually, she hits upon a strange little thread by a user called 'LetsMakeADeal' and the title... well the title catches her eye, she supposes.

Unhappy with life? Frustrated with how things are going? Let me help you!

The contents of the thread are pretty much more of the same. A handful of paragraphs talking about how the user is looking to help people, 'anyone who needs it' and basically asking for people to reach out to them in PMs if they want to talk further.

Total scam, obviously. At least, that's what Alice immediately clocks it as, genius that she is. Though, most of the other posters in the thread seem to feel the same way about it. It's a whole lot of derisive comments about how this is silly and wondering whether the mods will leave it up since its obviously a joke or take it down for being too weird and what not.

There's only one user defending the original poster, someone going by 'NoStringsOnMe'. Very cliché in Alice's always correct opinion. They're probably a sock puppet, given how they're just backing LetsMakeADeal up and trying to provide testimonial that the services are good and on the level.

It's all so silly... but that's what makes it the perfect distraction, Alice figures. She just needs to kill some time and get her hands to stop trembling quite so much. Strangely enough, the energy drink she just quaffed and the crackers she just consumed don't seem to be helping with that as much as she'd hoped.

But eh, her hands are more than steady enough for her to type out a quick message on her phone and then post it.

This is some Grade A troll bait, but sure if you want to help me, feel free. What can you offer me?

She sends the message to the thread itself, of course. She's not about to get sucked into PMs with this guy. Even though that's the very next thing he asks, if she wants to 'move this to PMs'. Snorting derisively, Alice shakes her head even as she types out a response.

Nah, I'm good. Why hide it? Let the people see you negotiating in action, fucko!

She's pretty proud of that last bit, smirking smugly as she waits to see if she'll get a response or not. There's a slight delay, long enough for a couple users to express their derision and disbelief over the situation once more. But finally LetsMakeADeal responds with a simple 'Very well. What is your heart's desire?'

And in that moment, Alice feels something. Her eyes widen, her chest tightening up as she feels... a presence looming over her. She's alone in her dorm room, she knows she is on a rational level. However, she doesn't feel alone anymore. Instead, it feels like someone (or something) is there with her, asking what she wants, pushing for her to confess.

Her fingers move without her really realizing it, darting across her smartphone's screen as she types out a message.

I want to be respected. I want the acknowledgment for my genius that I deserve.

And even though the words feel forced out of her, she doesn't regret answering. Because she knows they're the truth. She knows that that is what she wants more than *anything*.

Even as other posters in the thread continue to react with derision, now directed as much at her as the original poster, Alice just stares at her phone screen, waiting for LetsMakeADeal to respond with bated breath. She can feel the presence with her building alongside her anticipation... the more she wants it, the stronger that sense of not being alone gets.

Until finally she sees a response from LetsMakeADeal. 'Let's continue this negotiation in person'.

Abruptly, in a single instant, Alice really isn't alone in her dorm room anymore. Suddenly there's a man and a woman with her, appearing right in front of her as she yelps and scrambles up off of her bed. Only, they appear *between* her and her bombs, leaving her... a little defenseless.

"H-Holy fucking shit!"

The man, his eyes yellow and glowing as he stares at her, holds up a hand.

"Its alright. Your own desire brought me here, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to come. I'm not going to hurt you."

The woman with him is clearly a parahuman as well, given the strange look of her 'hair'. She looks around Alice's dorm room curiously, her eyes settling on Alice's bombs for a moment before turning back to look at her. Alice, meanwhile, fidgets a bit as she stares at the two of them.

"What... what are you offering me, exactly?"

She's definitely not going to let her confusion take the lead here. She's way too smart to ask dumb questions like 'what's going on' and 'what are you doing here'. The answers are obvious to a genius like her, after all.

Still, the yellow-eyed man stares at her for a long moment before smiling.

"Everything you desire. You want respect, right? You want acknowledgment?"

Alice narrows her eyes.

"I deserve those things. I'm a goddamn genius. Some people are just too stupid to see it properly. But I can make them see... I don't need you for that. I was just playing around and killing some time."

And yet, even to Alice's own ears, her words ring a little hollow. She can still feel the connection between them after all... and somehow she instinctively knows that he can tell she's lying... that she does want to see what he can do for her. Fuck. Stupid power bullshit.

Looking around, the man's eyes fall upon Alice's stockpile of bombs as well. He pauses for a bit longer than the girl did before looking back to her with a slight smile.

"I'm sure you could make everyone acknowledge you eventually."

Alice straightens up at that, swelling with pride. Damn straight she could!

"The question becomes... what sort of acknowledgment and respect are you looking for, exactly?"

That... what did that even mean? Alice frowns, not wanting to ask such a question out loud. She's not stupid... she's not! After a beat, the man continues on, lifting up his arms and opening up his palms, offering one and then the other as he speaks.

"Do you want the world's acknowledgment to come from love... or fear?"

That... what kind of question was that? What did it matter, in the end? Sure, it would be great if the everybody loved and adored her for the genius she was... but Alice wasn't an idiot. She knew full well that the world didn't work that way. There would always be morons incapable of acknowledging her genius.

And yet... part of her yearns for it anyways. Part of her yearns for what is being offered here.

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