

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

A/N: Cole steps up.

-x-X-x-

Cole stares at the back of the gargantuan green monster. By all accounts, he should be turning and walking away. He's got a fuck ton of money in his arms and nothing but fucking cleaning magic to his name. Sure, Raven might be able to do something... but he would never ask her to go and risk her life while he ran away.

It should just be both of them. They should both be doing everything they can to get themselves out of this situation.

And yet... and yet, the longer Cole stares, the more *certain* he becomes that he needs to intervene. It's hard to describe where that certainty comes from exactly, but it wells up from deep within him, pushing at him. He could probably ignore it... but his own morals make it even harder to do so. People will get hurt... and if there's anything he and Raven can do to stop that, then...

“FUCK!”

Cursing at the top of his lungs, Cole drops the plastic bag full of money back into the hole that he'd excavated with his magic. He doesn't want to, obviously... but he's not about to start running at a big green monster with a bunch of stolen cash held in his arms, now is he?

“Cole?”

Raven's concerned tone draws his attention over to her. She looks like she doesn't know what to make of his actions. Which... fair.

“We're going to see if we can stop that thing, Raven.”

His words cause her eyes to widen as she looks between him and what they can see of the threat through the trees. At the moment, the gargantuan green monster still isn't turned in their direction, but it's certainly not being idle, slamming into the ground and the buildings around it as screams fill the air all around them. The ground continues to shake beneath their feet intermittently, though not badly enough to unbalance them.

"I... it's too dangerous. I can go if you want, but you should get to safety Ma-Cole."

Ignoring the slipup, Cole shakes his head.

"No. I'm not leaving you... and we're not leaving all those people. Now come on."

With that, he starts moving forward, forcing far more confidence into his stride than he's actually feeling in this moment. This decision he's made is the height of stupidity. They just found more money than Cole had ever seen in his entire life, enough cash that he wouldn't have to worry about financial concerns for years even if he didn't do a single under the table job for the entirety of that time.

And now he was leaving it behind in an open hole in the middle of the park so he could go and face some fucking massive kaiju. Ridiculous. Insane. Utterly baffling behavior.

Yet he was doing it anyways, and as he and Raven step out of the park and onto the half-destroyed street, he finally gets his first inkling of why all of his instincts are screaming at him that he *has* to. In front of them, filling the creature's footprints and splattered all over the ground and buildings and cars haphazardly... is what Cole can only describe as toxic sludge, radioactive waste, and all around nasty fucking shit.

He'd thought some of the small businesses that he cleaned up for the first time were nasty. Sometimes, even as he was washing away decades of gunk and other forms of vile buildup, Cole honestly felt like he was on a crusade of cleanliness or something.

But none of that has ever drawn out a reaction from him like this does now. The mess, the chaos... it all fills Cole with such a righteous anger that he could honestly howl. He doesn't of course... but he does lift his hands with a snarl and begin working the biggest cleaning spell he's ever performed.

Before their eyes, the toxic sludge, radioactive waste, and chemical byproducts strewn all over the street begin to... vanish. Cleaned up by his cleaning magic, they disappear into nothingness, leaving behind just general destruction.

That, Cole can't do much about. He cleans things, he doesn't repair or fix them. The ground is soon spotless, save for the massive holes in it from the creature's footprints. The cars are no longer coated in radioactive contaminants but they are still melted in some places where the truly toxic shit had just burnt right on through like acid or something. And the buildings still have broken windows and acid pockets in their brick work.

Better than it was before though. And more importantly... multiple people who had previously been trapped in various locations surrounding by the toxic sludge are suddenly freed from their confinement and able to scurry out of their hiding places, rushing down the street away from the big green monster and flee the scene entirely.

Standing there at the end of the street with Raven by his side and the park at their back, Cole's nostrils flare as he looks around them. About a block up ahead, the monster is moving away from them... but it's a monster Cole recognizes now at long last.

"Chemo."

He'd heard about the damn thing once in the news when he was younger. Something about it not exactly being human but definitely being man-made. It was everything you ever heard about human pollution... turned into a massive fucking monster who stood as a testament to hubris.

Supposedly, a scientist had created Chemo as a benchmark of all things. A huge plastic vessel in the shape of a man that the scientist could fill with the chemical byproducts of his failed experiments... all for the purposes of motivating himself to eventual success.

Yeah, younger Cole had thought that sounded fucking stupid as well. Current Cole just felt nothing but *hate* for the messy creature currently making its way down the street away from them. Chemo's origins might not have been its fault, but its actions now, intelligent or not, were representing unacceptable levels of chaos. Cole couldn't allow it to stand.

"Raven. Get its attention, please."

His half-demon familiar turns to give him a Look with a capital L at that, but Cole will not be deterred.

"We can beat him together. But not if he's running away from us. Come on. I'll clean; you provoke."

With that, Cole does what nobody else is doing and starts making his way further down the street rather than away from it, walking with purpose while everyone else flees in the opposite direction.

Raven follows after with barely a moment of hesitation and as Cole continues to clean up the toxic sludge that Chemo is leaving in his wake, Raven reluctantly summons up a black ball of energy... and fires it at the radioactive green giant's back, striking him where his shoulderblades would be if he had a human physiology.

The blast barely moves Chemo... but it *does* get his attention. Whipping around, the personification of radioactive waste zeroes in on Raven and Cole almost instantly. And when it sees what Cole is doing, when he sees that Cole is cleaning up his fucking mess... well, he doesn't respond happily.

"████████████████████!"

The roar makes Cole grimace and flinch back... but he stands his ground all the same, gritting his teeth and continuing to cast his cleaning magic in every direction. More trapped people rush out of corners and cars and other locations they'd been confined to, fleeing the scene as fast as they can.

Raven continues to fire black blasts of magical power at Chemo, her eyes blazing now with energy, her body floating slightly off the ground. As far as keeping a low profile went, they'd certainly fucked that up... but Cole can't bring himself to really regret it... not any of it.

He needed to do this. It would have gone against the very essence of his being to not. And no, he didn't fucking know what that meant. Only that every time he cleans up some of Chemo's bullshit, it feels better than anything he's ever cleaned before. And every time Chemo lets out another roar of outrage, it makes him grin wider rather than feeling a single ounce of fear.

The great green radioactive monster finally finishing turning its immense bulk in their direction and begins to stride towards them. As it does, its body glows brighter and brighter... until it opens its mouth.

That's the only warning they get before Chemo unleashes the greatest, largest, thickest deluge of radioactive waste and toxic sludge yet. It comes flowing out of his fake gullet and Raven lets out an alarmed shout as she puts up a shield to protect them both from the river of steaming chemical byproducts.

Cole, meanwhile, waves his hands as well, reducing the amount of toxic sludge specifically coming at them down to almost nothing before it even hits Raven's shield, ensuring that the wedge of black energy will hold.

Chemo's attack flows all around them instead, pouring down the street like a damn wave. Cole immediately looks back, afraid that he'll see people fleeing get overtaken by the sludge and reduced to nothing but corpses. However, to his great relief, pretty much everyone has managed to evacuate the street at this point, his earlier actions giving them paths to safety and the time to escape.

To his great dismay though... the river of toxic sludge continues on past the street and right into the park from whence he and Raven had come. It flows over the trees without stopping, reducing the beautiful park to a massive radioactive pit in mere moments as the acid melts the trees and everything else in the park... including the money they'd been forced to leave behind.

Cole feels a pain in his very soul at that... along with a fresh new rage to go right along with the strange, unnatural anger he'd already been feeling at the messes Chemo had been making.

They really could have fucking used that money... whipping back around, Cole's eyes narrow as he sees Chemo's attack finally abating, the monster leaning back as he stops regurgitating toxic sludge at them.

White hot fury coursing through every fiber of his being, Cole takes a step forward, planting a hand on Raven's shoulder.

"Drop the shield, please."

Raven obeys him instantly, freeing a direct path between him and his target. With a sense of finality, Cole lifts his arm above his head... and then brings his hand down in a chopping motion directed at Chemo.

Don't tell him how he knows it will work. Only... it's definitely the most powerful magic he's ever cast. It's not a wave like Chemo just produced, but rather a slice... a massive blade of cleaning magic, invisibly cutting through the air and eventually through Chemo itself.

For a moment, nothing seems to happen... and then a thick vertical bar of Chemo's 'body' suddenly vanishes, cleaned up by Cole's magic. With a snarl, Cole brings his hand up and does it again... and then a third time. The third slice taken out of Chemo finishes the job even if the previous two didn't. The monster can't hold itself together at that point with three huge columns of its toxic body completely erased by Cole's cleaning magic.

What remains collapses to the ground in front of him and Raven and Cole's glaring eyes focus on it all as he swipes away with his magic until nothing remains of Chemo's rampage except for the sterile damage that it had done. The street and buildings and cars are still destroyed, but the radioactive waste is cleaned up entirely by the time he's done.

Of course, also by the time he's done... the sirens have started to sound in the distance and Cole knows it's only a matter of time before someone shows up. Frankly, it's a testament to how short this entire fight was, spanning maybe a minute or two in its entirety, that nobody has shown up yet.

Cole really has no desire to talk to the police or any other first responders, and he certainly doesn't want to get caught out by a member of the Justice League or something like that. Looking past at the smoking crater where the park used to be, now cleaned of the toxic sludge but still irrevocably destroyed... Cole lets out a sigh and shakes his head.

On the one hand, he still felt like he'd made a mistake, losing all of that money. On the other hand, there's a part of him that feels immensely satisfied with his actions today. He'd dealt a blow to chaos... and that meant something, though he was hard pressed to say what it meant in the moment.

Still, there was no denying that his and Raven's personal position had been in no way improved by this whole debacle. They'd saved a bunch of people and in doing so probably put themselves both at far greater risk while gaining nothing in the process.

Looking to Raven, Cole arches a brow.

"Can you get us out of here discretely, Raven?"

When she nods, he waves to lead the way.

"Alright then. Let's... let's go home."

Raven leads him into a nearby dark alley... and they both vanish into shadow just as the first flyers arrive overhead.

-x-X-x-

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