

Olivia Interlude -

Watching Will fight from a distance was terrifying. Every time that he dipped and dived out of view, with Leviathan chasing after him, Olivia could feel her heart in her throat, threatening to tear itself out. They were both tearing through the city, nothing standing in the abomination's way. It was shocking how destructive the monster was, knocking over whole buildings, tearing up roads, and generally ruining the city as it tried to keep up with Arcanum.

She did not want to even consider how many people were in each building.

Olivia hated standing back, but she also realized why he sent her away. She still intended to make him pay for forcing her to run, even if, now, watching the horrifying game of cat and mouse he was playing with a city-destroyer, she understood why he had done it.

Arcanum had always outclassed her, his magic more powerful than anything her power could do from the moment he met her. Now, the gap between them was more obvious than ever, as he tanked shots from Leviathan, fighting alongside the Triumvirate as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Of course, to Will, doing ridiculous things was natural. Watching him lift Leviathan into the air, one of the buildings he had taken weeks to build, actually stopping and controlling it, even if it was only for a limited time. That alone would have been astonishing, would have been groundbreaking, as no one had ever done anything like that before.

It was likely this point that people realized that this Endbringer run was nothing like the usual ones. Just the whispers she heard as she ran, the fact that Leviathan was hunting one person, not trying to ruin the whole city. The lack of tsunami-level waves, the lack of heavy rain...

Will was making a deep mark on the people around him, he was showing the world he could compete on a whole other level. And everyone was watching. Endbringer battles were an international thing, and everyone was getting a chance to see how incredible Will was.

Sure, Olivia was aware that Will was already making waves. He was almost solely responsible for cleaning up Brockton Bay, had defeated dozens of infamous villains, including the last cape to give Leviathan such a hard time.

But watching him redefine what fighting an Endbringer was like... it set all of that in another light.

And she was stuck running, staying out of the way, hiding with her tail between her legs. Not too long ago, she wouldn't have needed to be sent away, she would have already been gone. She would have been sneaking along with the first wave of people, hiding in the shadows far from the city. Now, watching Will fight on his own, without anyone to support him closely...

She had just barely made it in time to save him from being slammed around one time, and that had been pure luck. She wasn't sure she could manage it again.

Up to this point, Olivia had mostly denied the idea of letting Will add to her magical equipment. The durability of his strange metal ritual thing... Geomancy, plus her cloak, had been enough. Since then, he has obviously made several leaps and bounds, and now she could see just how far they have come.

The first thing she would do when this was over was demand to be brought up to his level. She refused to ever be forced to run away again.

When she had teleported away from just barely managing to help, she had landed on the roof of a nearby building, one of the taller ones in the area. From her new vantage point, she could see the fight clearly, looking down into the streets rather than over the buildings. Waves of purple annihilation energy, fired by the hundreds of soldiers nearby, poured across the abomination, tearing through the city after Will, who did his best to use that to his advantage, trying to keep the monster from destroying the city. Even so, there was only so much he could do, as it was clear Leviathan didn't care for minimizing collateral damage.

Finally, after what felt like forever, a report came from her arm band, reporting a potential weakness, something to aim for. Unfortunately, it was clear, even to her eyes, that they were doing less and less damage to the water-controlling monster. Even if they knew where to aim, they would still need to hurt it.

She watched as Will pulled back, Alexandria peeling off from his side as he flew higher, eventually landing on a platform that appeared under his feet. Below, dozens of capes, anyone with a blaster or brute rating strong enough to even temporarily stun the bastard, piled onto Leviathan, keeping it down and away from Arcanum. It was a massive effort, and Olivia winced as updates rolled in from her arm band, announcing casualties near constantly.

Despite the effort, it almost escaped twice, but it was just barely stopped. Olivia barely noticed that, however, as her eyes were on Will, who at this point was starting to glow. Not heavily, and not directly, instead seeming to radiate a halo of purple, the same purple that the rifles fired, the annihilation energy.

Something unpleasant settled in her stomach, her heart sinking as the seconds passed, plummeting as Will called for everyone to retreat. People poured away from the monster, and before it could recover, a beam of purple energy tore into it.

But Olivia wasn't watching the beam, she was watching Will.

Her eyes went wide as his staff half exploded in a ball of the same disintegrating energy as he was shooting, the ball engulfing his hands, then his arms. She watched with wide eyes as, once the spell ended and the ball of energy was no longer obscuring him, he dropped to his knees.

With barely a thought, Olivia teleported to Will's side, landing clean on the conjured platform, only to nearly slip on the blood pooling at his feet. With a curse, she grabbed him and teleported away, landing at the entrance of the medical tent, the same one with Panacea inside

"AMY!" She shouted, dragging Will in through the tent flap. "AMY, HELP! He needs healing!"

The inside of the tent was chaotic, but her shout cut above the other talking, and most of the capes and doctors inside went silent. Thankfully, Panacea didn't freeze, and instead rushed forward, pushing her hand around his armor to his neck. Immediately, his arms stopped bleeding, both wrists capping over with skin.

"Fuck, get him on a stretcher, he needs blood badly!" she called, not pulling her hand away. "I'm encouraging his body to make more, but he is still low, and he needs an infusion."

"He... he is going to be three hundred milliliters short no matter what," Olivia explained, helping them carry him to a bed. "Something with his powers, you won't be able to force that back."

"Jesus, okay, he still needs blood."

Olivia watched as the doctors and Amy worked, watching as the healer cape had to grow a hole for the infusion needle, since they couldn't get through his skin without one. Eventually, the panic slowly faded, and he stabilized. Amy apologized for the bot being able to heal his hands, promising to do it later, before everyone moved away to keep working.

Not long after that, word finally reached the tent that Levaithin was dead. Many celebrated, but Olivia simply stood beside Williams' bed.

Legend Interlude -

Legend was one of the most experienced capes on the Eastern Seaboard. There were a few that had been active longer, but when it came to the pure breadth of experience, the thousands of crises he had responded to, the fact that he had participated in every Endbringer battle since Behemoth first appeared in that oil field, his experience trumped even the oldest capes.

Not that many capes lived long enough to get old.

During that time, the popular hero had witnessed many strange things. His membership in Cauldron only amped up that scale, exposing him to things he would have never seen otherwise. For all they knew about their Agents, for all they knew about the Enemy, the world was still a strange place, mixing in the craziness of capes only made it more obvious. By now, he had grown a tolerance for the strange.

And yet, somehow, Arcanum stood apart from the usual weirdness he encountered, both as a Protectorate leader and a member of Cauldron.

It wasn't his level of power, as powerful capes did happen. Even ignoring those born from Cauldron Vials, there were plenty of capes who leveraged their abilities to do some incredible things. And, to be fair, Arcanum didn't personally seem all that powerful. He was far from weak, but Legend could list two dozen capes that could beat him, and a few that could beat him in a straight-out, fair fight. No, while Arcanum was potent, it wasn't his power that made him stand out, it was how easily he broke most parahuman rules.

Exotic tinkers could often create powerful items, but what they traded for power, they lost in control. Exotic tinkers could often barely direct their ability to create, and out of all those who could, none of them could be considered precise. Except Arcanum did just that, able to create precise bits of equipment with supreme control. And the list only started there.

Unlike any other tinker Legend had ever seen, his equipment didn't fail over time and didn't require constant maintenance. In fact, in many ways, it was more durable than normal equipment. Even the few other tinkers who could mass-produce their work still required a certain amount of maintenance.

Not to mention just the pure amount of equipment he could pour out. Almost all tinker tech worth mentioning needed to be made by hand, and those that didn't were usually inferior. And yet in just a few months, Arcanum was able to build up an entire army, four thousand soldiers, in gear that turned them into a serious assets, even without their weapons. With their weapons, each soldier would have been considered a powerful cape. After all, he had seen what those annihilation rifles could do even before they stripped more body off of Leviathan than anything he had ever seen.

And to top it all off, the pure level of flexibility he was capable of tinkering was astounding. Exotic tinker specialties by nature were often broader than most, and yet what Arcanum could produce was increasingly shocking. From shields to healing items, strength augmentors to thinker equipment, the breadth he could cover was astounding. Now seeing he could build an actual tinker building with incredibly powerful uses...

Despite standing out like that, after all the waves he had made, it was still shocking to see him actually *kill* an Endbringer. Leviathan, the sinker of continents, murderer of millions, now lay dead, unmoving. Something that great swathes of people thought would never happen, that a good chunk of the population had given up hope on, had finally happened.

Legend was flying high over Brockton Bay, overlooking the whole city, a large part of him wondering if it was actually real, or if he had been Mastered by someone. The city was remarkably intact, with hardly any water damage, and only twenty-eight buildings in total being destroyed.

People were moving through the streets now, working on clean up, carefully sifting through buildings. With the massive amount of resources on sight, there was a shockingly low amount of civilian casualties, at least compared to most Endbringer fights. As Legend continued to watch, Alexandria rose up to float beside him, joining him in his momentarily silent vigil.

After a few minutes, Alexandria finally spoke up.

"Eidolon has already returned to Houston," she said, her voice clear and precise. "He was even more agitated than usual. I sent him home before he could do anything stupid."

"It's been getting worse lately," Legend pointed out. "You would think the death of an Endbringer would cheer him up."

"We can't lose sight of the mission," Alexandria pointed out. "If he becomes a liability..."

"If Eidolon becomes a liability, we are in serious trouble," Legend agreed. "I'll try talking to him. Have you considered my proposal?"

"Yes," She responded simply. "I think the idea has merit, especially considering today's victory, but we should wait for some of this to settle before we decide for sure."

With his pure flexibility and increasingly powerful creations, it was becoming clear, at least to Legend, that Arcanum was a Triumvirate-tier hero. To him, it only made sense to bring him into the circle.

"Considering what we face, can we afford to not bring him in?" Legend asked, though he didn't expect a clear answer from Alexandria. "He has changed the game considerably, if he knew about what our mission was... he could change the game completely."

"I don't deny that," she said with a nod. "But we need to sit down and discuss it first, preferably after everything calms down."

Legend nodded, holding his thoughts for later. He had known Rebecca for a long time, and despite her helmet covering her face, he had gotten good at reading her. She agreed with his suggestion, but didn't want to say until she had time to fully consider the ramifications. It would be easier to get a definitive answer out of her later.

They stayed floating above the city for just another minute, before they both once again descended, both of them returning to help the recovery efforts. With the amount of spirit guardians and golems, as Arcanum called them, working around the many knocked-over buildings, a lot of progress was being made to rescue those inside them that had survived their collapse.

Legend did a quick sweep of the beach, watching as the water was slowly let back into the bay, the gigantic energy barrier slowly rising. He then pulled back into the city, dropping by a group of capes to help delegate the clean-up and recovery.

Despite the destruction, today was a victory, one that he hoped marked a turning point in their mission. Only time would tell.