**Reconstruction 15.x Piggot/???**

Emily Piggot walked the halls of the new East-North-East office of the PRT, the construction crews still at work to bring the office building up to their standards. It would never be up to the standards of the Rig, with its shield, hard-light bridge, and the fact that it used the bay as its own moat, but that was no longer her problem.

The few villains in the nearby towns, Magnetitan, Die-Cast, Mephitisma, and Hammertime were all laying low. The independent heroes were likewise staying quiet, though Domain had been spotted stopping petty crimes, vanishing before Assault and Battery could make contact.

Brockton Bay was a dark storm cloud on the horizon, and Emily had been for once thankful of her orders from on high, the Chief Director putting her foot down and stating that there were to be no more excursions into that death-trap.

In a way, she was thankful for Vejovis’ completely inappropriate ‘field trip’. While she would’ve liked it better if he hadn’t taken the *Wards* with him, the footage the helmet cams had taken had been more intelligence than her own people had been able to gather in the past few *weeks*, and without any more deaths. If he was working with the Protectorate, they might’ve even had a handle on what was going on, but her brief interactions with the young man had told her he’d be even worse than Assault to try to direct.

And, with what they’d seen him handle, he was completely unsuited to keeping the peace. Fight the Machine Army, clear out Gallup, New Mexico, or deal with the horrors that apparently lurked in downtown Brockton Bay? Fine. Work within the law and arrest gang-members that were shooting at him? He’d likely kill them, and ask what the problem was.

She’s seen the type, in the early days of the PRT, and most of them either calmed down or met with a bad end, usually explosively. While she might not agree with Assault’s level of dislike of the man, she wasn’t unaware of the coldness in the parahuman’s eyes either, covered as they were by the blank-white lenses in his mask.

But, just like everything else, this was *no longer her problem*, and she smiled to herself as she walked into what had been her office, now taken over by one James Tagg.

The man was large, and hard looking. More akin to what one would think of as a military general than the director of a federal organization. He *had* been military, Army, before he’d been transferred, and it showed. Now he looked up, annoyed, as if she was at fault for interrupting him even though he’d asked her to come.

It was a basic tactic, and one that likely worked on most of the Protectorate, soft as they were. She didn’t say a word as she walked in, took a seat and waited. He grunted, as if she’d done something surprising, before commenting, “Director Piggot.”

“Director Tagg,” she replied, professionally.

He finished up what he was doing, making her wait, affirming that he was the one in charge. She didn’t care, she didn’t have anywhere to go. He finished, before turning to her. “So, I heard you were transferred, but I didn’t hear where to.”

She grimaced, “Bozeman. Monana,” she added at his frown of confusion.

“I wasn’t aware we had an office there,” he commented.

“We don’t. Yet.”

He nodded, “Ground up posting? Huh, after the shitshow you left me with here, you’re getting to set the base for an entire new office? Someone must like you.”

“Excuse me?” she asked, glaring, even as she considered his words. She’d assumed her new posting was a demotion. ‘We can’t trust you anywhere that matters, so you’re going off to the middle of nowhere.’ But she *would* be able to set up the PRT’s presence from the very beginning, not be dumped into a situation where she had to constantly fix the mistakes of the previous director on *top* of trying to keep the peace.

“You know what I’m talking about,” he half-spat. “Brockton Bay. You were there for years, letting those criminals run rampant, and now it’s something that *should* be quarantined, but isn’t. Now it’s *my* job to fix it.”

Emily stared at the man, confused. “No, it’s not.”

He scoffed, “It’s my job to keep the peace. To stop those that’d use powers to hurt innocent people. You’re telling me that that place is safe?”

“I’m telling you the Chief Director said to leave it alone, after what we saw from the teams that went with Vejovis. Which is why I was leaving it alone,” she stated, not breaking eye contact with the larger man. She’d stared down Brutes twice his size, he wasn’t that intimidating.

“I’ve received no such order,” he observed, casually.

She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Was the man saying that because he hadn’t received an *official order* not to go there, only Chief Director Costa-Brown stating ‘Brockton Bay isn’t our concern. We’ll handle anything that leaves, but that’s all.’ in the last meeting, then he was free to do what he wanted?

“No, it should’ve been quarantined. It’s only inhabitants are criminals and monsters, best to let them fight it out, but that isn’t an option, so it’s up to us to enforce law and order,” Tagg stated with a small, bloodthirsty smile when she didn’t reply.

“It isn’t owned by the state, it’s federal. State laws won’t apply,” she pointed out, still turning over what he’d just said in her mind.

The man’s grin didn’t diminish, “Yes, I won’t have to worry about the state legislature getting in the way, and anything brought in or out will be crossing state lines. That makes it a *federal* crime.”

 Even though she thought what he was saying was completely idiotic, she still nodded as if she was agreeing. “Then how are you going to do it?”

“Carefully, but with purpose,” he stated. “Send in teams to take and clear an area, bag and tag everything of interest, and move it somewhere secure. With Parahuman support, it shouldn’t be that hard. The Penumbral Defenders are doing it in the north, and the Merchants are doing it in the south. We’ll let them do the heavy lifting as we come in from the West, and take over their territory when they stop. They think it’s the wild west, but they’ll be in for a bad time when the law finally catches up with them. And it always does.”

She tried a different track, “And the fact that it’s been purchased? That it’s now private land?” And wasn’t *that* an unpleasant surprise, receiving official notification that someone had, somehow, *purchased the entire city*. *Not that property values would be that high,* she thought with bitter humor.

“Then everyone there is trespassing, and needs to be dealt with,” the man observed. “And whoever owns it is responsible for all of the dangers on their land, as well as any injuries.”

“You know who it is?” she asked. She’d tried to find it herself, but-

“It’s only a matter of time. They can’t run from the law forever,” The PRT Director reiterated. “Not that they’ll be allowed to keep it.”

Emily frowned, “What do you mean?”

“Eminent domain,” he laughed, and it wasn’t a happy sound. “Those anomalous effects are too dangerous to remain in civilian hands. Do you know how much that crystal you recovered was worth?”

“The one that Vejovis *gave* us?” She reminded him.

“Millions,” he replied. “Our Tinkers have been able to do some very interesting things with it, and I’ve already sent a team to gather more.”

Director Piggot immediately objected, “But even the Green Zone is dangerous.”

“You *believed* that little dog and pony show?” Director Tagg asked incredulously. “I thought you were better than that. That’s a resource too valuable to leave lying around. It’s obviously ‘improperly stored’ so it needs to be confiscated. And if one of our people are hurt doing so, the owner’s responsible for injuring an officer, hero, or even a Ward, which means he needs to be brought in.”

“Wards?” she echoed, unsure she heard right.

She had. The man nodded, “That criminal was right about one thing, we need to use everything we have. Sending in just officers was fucking stupid, and their deaths were avoidable.”

“I was commanded to do so,” she ground out. “I didn’t want to send *anyone* until we had a perimeter. I wasn’t allowed to even do that.”

“Another order *I* haven’t received,” the man smiled. “No, whoever tried to take this for their own, they’re going to find that they’ve bought themselves a mess of trouble.”

She sighed. “And if it’s Vejovis?”

“What?” the newly-minted director asked.

“What if it’s Vejovis that owns the land?” Given the reports she’d seen of his activity, it was quite likely. The fact that he’d already started clearing out the Boat Graveyard, something she’d been trying to get parahuman support to do for *years*, was both a good indication that he, or someone he worked for, had purchased the city.

She was thankful he’d waited until the PRT had been moved out before he started. Had she still been there, she would’ve been upset at him upstaging them by, once again, ‘saving’ the city, undermining their image. Now with the city in ruins, however, they were no longer in competition, so his victory was no longer her loss.

“Then it’ll be his head that rolls,” Tagg stated with certainty. “Which is why I’ve asked you here. As far as we can tell, he’s in charge. He’s had contact with AEonic, who is still somewhere in Brockton Bay, and reports have him working with Squealer. He’s a criminal, and I need you to tell me what you know about him.”

She felt a chill wiggle its way down her spine. “No.”

“Excuse me?” he asked, brows low with anger.

“Everything I know is in my reports,” she stated. “Anything else is speculation, and I’m *not* going to have you put my people in danger because you picked a fight with someone the *Triumvirate* had a chat with, who *injured* Eidolon, and who they then *let go.*”

While the room those four had met in was protected from listening devices, she’d pulled the logs from the PRT stationed outside. When Break had torn out a wall, it’d let them listen in on what had happened, below what could normally be heard, but she’d collected the logs and used them to find out what had been said. What she’d heard. . . wasn’t good. The fact that her recording had been deleted, with her own log-in, and that she’d woken up the next morning with a card saying ‘tell no one’ on her chest had just made it absolutely clear that she wanted to have *nothing* to do with whatever was happening in Brockton Bay.

“They’re not *your* people anymore, *Emily*,” the man stated coldly, “and I should’ve expected you’d be a coward about this as well. You’ve let the criminals have their run of things. That’s stopping, now. You’re dismissed.”

“James,” she said, not pleadingly, she did *not* plead, but with as much calm seriousness as she could muster. “If you go after him, he’ll go after you as well.” *And whoever is working for the Triumvirate,* she added mentally. Their numbers included an ex-member of the *Slaughterhouse 9*, and they caused people to disappear, a fact that only *Legend* had been unaware of.

The Director just smiled, ‘I’d like to see him try. I said you’re dismissed, Director Piggot.”

She saw there wasn’t going to be any reasoning with him, that to even warn him would just be putting her life at risk, and that he’d probably not believe her anyways. Content with the fact that she’d *tried,* she stood, nodded to him, and walked out. However, instead of back to her car, she instead headed to the Protectorate wing of the office. No one questioned her, and she wasn’t technically breaking any regulations, so it was easy to track down Miss Militia.

Finding the parahuman in her office, Emily knocked on the door, getting a distracted “Come in” from the woman.

Doing so, the middle eastern parahuman looked up, eye widening in surprise from behind her bandanna. “Director Piggot? I thought you were being transferred.”

“I am.”

The current leader of the local Protectorate team paused. “Then you’re here to say goodbye?” she smiled, her bandanna lifting slightly. “I didn’t think you were the type.”

“I’m not.”

Once again the parahuman paused, “Then why. . .”

“Let’s make things clear. I don’t like you,” Emily stated, sitting down on the other side of the desk of yet another person who was no longer her problem. “You did nothing when Colin was neglecting his duties, covering for him instead of coming to me. I don’t care if you were ‘following his orders’” She held up a hand, stopping the woman from saying just that. “You follow orders when you like to, and ignore them when you don’t, just like he did. You weren’t following orders when you tried to get Mouse Protector to spy for you, and you weren’t following orders when you took down that ABB safehouse during the bombings.”

“You knew. . .” Miss Militia started to question trailing off.

Director Piggot scoffed, “Of course I knew. But I approved, which is why I didn’t say anything. You know what your problem is?” she asked, answering before the parahuman could respond. “You don’t take responsibility. That was fine when you weren’t in charge, but now that you’re a leader, you need to start doing so, if you want to do your job. Though I’m sure you’ll be happy with the new Director. Have you met him?”

“I have met Director Tagg,” the other woman responded neutrally.

“Then you know that he’ll be sending you into the Zones.”

Miss Militia once again froze, and when she spoke, her voice was unsure. “But, with the footage we brought back, he-”

“Doesn’t care,” Emily interrupted. “He thinks you were shown the worst on purpose. He wants it taken and pacified.”

“But it’s private property,” she started to argue.

“He doesn’t care,” Emily repeated. “To him that just makes it worse.”

“But the dangers,” the parahuman tried.

“*He doesn’t care,*” Emily enunciated. “The man is military, and if he needs to sacrifice a few *soldiers* clearing a minefield or two, then as long as the objective is worth it then he’ll do it in a heartbeat. And to him, you’re *all* soldiers. Even the *Wards*.”

It wasn’t exactly fair, using Hannah’s Trigger Event against her like this, but Emily Piggot had long ago learned that all playing fair got you was the short side of the stick and a sucking chest wound. The woman’s eyes narrowed, the weapon on her belt shifting forms, like it always did when she was upset. *Bingo.*

“That was a low blow,” the war refugee stated quietly.

“If that’s what it takes for you to see what’s coming, then it’s deserved,” Director Piggot responded flatly. “And you have no room to talk about low blows, Miss Militia.”

The parahuman closed her eyes, letting out a long breath, her weapon calming down. “Then what do you want me to do, Director? Ignore his orders? Refuse to go out? He’s my superior officer.”

“I want you to realize that while *you* might be alright walking into a deathtrap, you’re not just responsible for yourself, you’re responsible for the rest of your team, and for the *children* it’s your job to protect,” she stated, annoyed that the woman was *still* asking for ‘orders’ to follow.

“I want you to prepare them,” Emily continued. “Tell them to hang back. Tell them *it’s not their fault if the others die.*” It was what so many parahumans would do, *had* done, when things had gotten bad. She wasn’t worried about Assault and Battery, about Velocity and Triumph. Dauntless seemed a bit different, but he had enough common sense to run if need be. It was the *children* she was worried about.

The children all had a dangerous mix of feeling themselves invulnerable, while also believing they, as the people with powers, needed to save everyone. The ones at Ellisburg that’d stayed, the ones that’d died getting the others out, they were rare, and they needed to be protected, most of all from themselves.

“Colin was supposed to be training them,” the ex-director of the ENE office stated, staring directly at the woman who was *supposed* to be that man’s second in command. “He wasn’t. You were supposed to be. You weren’t. That needs to stop.”

“They’ve received the training they were supposed to get,” the parahuman responded with another version of ‘just following orders’.

“They’ve received the *minimum* training they *have* to get,” Director Piggot corrected. “The training that paperwork needs to be filed to prove they’ve received it.” Pausing, she weighed if it would be better to get involved. Director Tagg *had* been right, this *wasn’t* her department anymore, and whatever happened *wouldn’t* be something she was going to be blamed for.

But they were *kids.*

“Fine, you want orders?” Emily asked acerbically. “Here’s the closest thing to them I can give you. If you want them to survive, you’re going to run them into the ground. These kids have gotten less than *half* the training of even the greenest PRT lieutenant has to go through, just because they have powers to pick up the slack. That needs to end. You’re barely running patrols and there’s no school for another month. You’re barely running patrols. Use that time to make them go from ‘after school special PR darlings’ to *survivors*. Shadow Stalker’s coming back next week, and you need *everyone* to be able to walk into the Zones and come back, or they *won’t come back at all*. Not just physical training, but how to react, how to get their team out alive if they can, but most of all to get *themselves* out alive. You need to train them to be able to survive a *war*, because that’s what Tagg wants, and while Vejovis might spare them, the others might not, and the monsters in the Bay *certainly* won’t. Use every advantage you can. The swords that are still in testing? Get them released and hand them out. Look into body armor for everyone. Reach out to Vejovis if you need help, and tell the others to do the same. You don’t need to have them win, you have to have them *live long enough* for it to *end*, one way another. ***Do you understand me?***”

“Yes, Ma’am!” Miss Militia replied instantly, looking like she was about to salute, and it made Emily sick. *This* was who was supposed to be *leading* the Protectorate? But she’d had seniority, and it’d looked like every other option was *worse*, so Director Piggot had been forced to put her in command. The fact that she was a good little soldier was probably why Tagg had kept her.

Not showing the contempt she felt, Emily nodded, stood up, and left, not sure what else she could do, hoping what she’d done would be enough to keep the children she was leaving behind alive.

<AB>

(the blue section will be done in invisible text, unless I decide not to.)

She sat in the dark, watching the man she was going to kill.

He was standing in front of a hospital, talking to the newspeople.

He’d just walked in and started healing people. Until he’d cleared the entire place.

Like that would make up for the people he’d killed.

Now he was talking about rebuilding the Bay. ‘Bout using powers to bring it back.

Like that would make up for the buildings he’d blown up.

He’d pretended to be nice. He’d pretended to be a hero.

She thought he was one of the good ones.

Now she knew better.

She was going to kill him. And he’d never see her coming.

“Are you still watching the news?” Her boyfriend called from the other room. “It’s *him* again, isn’t it?”

“. . . No,” she replied. “I’m gonna kill him.”

Her boyfriend was silent for a few seconds. “Well, the pizza I ordered’s here. And I rented the next Die Hard movie. It’s in Washington D.C. The Aleph one.”

“. . . With the cheese in the crust?” she asked. She wanted to kill that monster, but. . . *pizza.*

When her boyfriend replied, it was through a mouth full of food. “Yeah. I get the good stuff.”

“. . . Does the movie look good?” she asked, torn.

Her boyfriend called back “He takes out a helicopter with a car.”

*What?* “You mean while he’s driving a car?”

“I meant what I said,” he called, and she could hear that stupid sexy grin of his.

“Yeah, that sounds kinda fuckin’ awesome,” she agreed, turning off the TV and leaving the darkened living room of their apartment.

Vejovis could die tomorrow.