**Deadline 12.5**

I allowed myself a single moment to take in the sight before me, and to panic appropriately. Leviathan wasn’t sending in a small tidal wave to soften us up during the monsoon that he always brought with him wherever he went. Leviathan was standing, proud, atop what looked like a three-hundred-foot tsunami that stretched the length of the bay. I could See his power, a Black & Green tree of Liquid that extended upwards, creating the rain, and extended downwards, controlling the wave he rode, keeping it together and accelerating it *far* faster than it would ever go naturally. I had, at most, three minutes before it hit and *destroyed* the city. Leviathan wasn’t coming to fight; he was coming to *kill* ***everyone.***

A moment to panic was deserved.

Trying to copy Leviathan’s power, my own skidded across it, finding no purchase, as if it was somehow protected. While I could *See* his power, it lacked a certain. . . *realness* that I normally saw when I observed a parahuman. Off the top of my head I could think of at least half a dozen reasons why that was the case, so I took solace in the fact that I could at least See what he was doing, before he did it. Assuming I could keep track of the fastest of the original three Endbringers.

Yes, this was definitely going to suck.

Shaking myself out of that fatalism, I got to work, doing all I could to mitigate this coming disaster.

First, I slotted in the Green & Yellow twisting Flames of Space Warping into the free slot. While not as much of a change as Aerokinesis, I could vaguely feel the groups of people far below, but only because the rest of the city was effectively *empty. Thank god for small favors*, I thought as the original holder of the power asked, “I see it. What do I make and where,” her young voice deadly serious.

“The entirety of the Boardwalk, from the exposed shore to, *fuck*, let’s say about three hundred feet up?” I guessed, shooting for a worst-case scenario. In canon, Leviathan had come with a standard, no-warning swell kind of tidal wave. Quick and stealthy. This? He was eschewing subtlety for all out *destruction*. “Make the distortion rotational, not shrinking, take the top and curve it around to feed it into the bottom going the other way, the bottom middle twists and feed back out the other way out of the top middle, it’ll make one hell of a turbulence and should bleed off some of the force Levi gave it.”

“I. . .” Missy hesitated, sounding suddenly unsure. “I’m not sure I can do that. Sir.”

“It’s clear of *anyone,* so you’re at full power; if you don’t, half the city will be destroyed, *at least;* and powers get stronger when you’re life’s in danger, *and this fucking counts,*” I rattled off quickly, looking around for her. “Eeem. Zillah, where’s Vista?”

“North, Northwest of your position, eighty feet above you,” the Virtual Intelligence replied, and once I had a direction, I was able to pick out the two Flames and one Aura I was looking for. Vista’s power was stretching out towards the what was the shoreline, billowing ribbons of Flame twisting to try to create the monstrous construct of power that I’d ordered, and failing. If she’d had time, or more practice working on this large a scale, she might, but he was moving at well over two hundred miles per hour and *accelerating*.

Calling Space Manipulation to the for of my mind, the working the young Heroine was trying to make glowedwith brilliant light in my mind. She’d set up the basic underpinnings of it, though she was struggling to hold even that together. Stopping myself from reaching out to her physically, instead of trying to help complete it, I poured my own power into hers. It was only from the hours working with Panacea that I was able to do so, relinquishing command of the ability and turning the reins over to the younger girl.

She gasped over the comms, a sound of overwhelmed surprise, before she took what I offered. Power poured from me, through her, and into what she was trying to make. It still wasn’t enough. I pushed it, turning the stream into a torrent, feeling a slight drain, similar to, but only a fraction of, what I’d gone through when I’d. . . I didn’t remember *what* I’d done, only that I’d felt worse.

I could hear Vista grunt with the effort, along with Glory Girl’s “What the fuck?” but the construct started solidifying, ready to stop the Endbringer’s opening move. Leviathan hurtled towards the construct, pushing his wave even faster, hunched down. Despite it being invisible, he’d seen it, somehow.

*The raindrops,* I realized. He’d likely felt the raindrops warped by the construct and was trying to rush it, to barrel through it in the hopes he’d break through. His tsunami struck the Rig with a tearing sound that could be heard above the storm and the progressively loud thundering of the tidal wave as it advanced. The shield holding it in place blazed to light, a blazingly bright glowing marble that quickly disappeared into the dark wall of water rushing towards all of us.

The construct finished mere seconds before Leviathan’s wave hit it with a thunderous crash, like a hundred waterfalls all stacked up on one another. The top still spilled over, but it was a bare ten feet of liquid that spilled over while the curved wall of water churned itself to foam.

Leviathan, thrown forward, rode what was left of the wave to the ground, his long, sinuous tail straightening out behind him into a straight line, like a demented horseshoe crab. Before I could try to understand what he was doing he launched himself upward in a leap that did not stop, the water he created behind him as he moved creating a mid-air river as he moved higher and higher, rising above the city. His power ran through the water he created, holding it in place. It was concentrated around his tail, gripping it and. . . *Motherfucker.*

Leviathan could *Fly.*

He created water behind him, which he then used to grab his own tail, kept stiff behind him, lifting himself higher and higher in the sky. He looked like an aquatic comet, leaving a long trail of water that hung in place in the air. Without being able to See his power, it would look like he was flying effortlessly through the air. It was crazy, it was *ingenious* it was. . . unlike anything he’d ever done before.

Suddenly, something punched through the construct that Vista had made, and my attention was wrenched over to it as water poured out a hole in the wall, accompanied by what sounded like an enormous car crash.

The Rig had punched through the construct, enough people still inside to weaken Vista’s power, allowing to burst through in a torrent. I was still feeding Missy power, though not enough to drain me, and she had it handled. As I turned to try to spot Leviathan again, he was easy enough to spot, his power spread throughout the storm and dangling below, like a giant jellyfish. I was so wrapped up in trying to figure out what he was doing that it wasn’t until Herb’s muttered, “Oh, that ain’t good,” that I noticed it had *stopped raining.*

No, that wasn’t exactly accurate. It still was, but the water was gathering high above us instead of falling down. The river that Leviathan made was also pulling itself up as well, rising into the sky. As I Saw Leviathan, his power held it all tightly, having, while not relinquished, but greatly slackened its hold on the sea still straining against Vista’s construct.

Leviathan’s power swirled in thousands of whirlpools over the city, gathering the water for *some* reason. Opening the eyes on my costume to See better didn’t help, whatever was keeping me from copying Leviathan’s power also obscuring its uses from my Sight. Maybe he was-”

“Barrage coming, get to cover!” Æonic yelled over the comms, and I sprang into motion as he finished his first word, trusting my brother even if I didn’t understand why.

Divebombing towards the group that Alexandria led, over two dozen capes all standing and gawking like I had been a moment before, I screamed, “Get to cover!” as I created layer after layer of air wall above us.

Dragon spread her mechanical wings over those around her and a half dozen shields over various types springing up above us in an instant, but most were still looking at me in confusion as the heaven’s opened up and rained down destruction.

Spears of pressurized water, held intact by the Endbringer’s power, rained down on the city in the thousands in an aquatic artillery barrage. They ripped through my defenses, the first two dozen projectiles expending themselves, and some of the others blown slightly off course, but more followed them.

I tried to pull on Space Manipulation, but most of it was tied up keeping the tidal waves at bay, and it was all I could do to continuously create a shield above myself and the four parahumans I’d landed next to.

Herb was next to someone who could make shields of fire, copying and strengthening their power as I did with Vista, protecting another dozen. Dragon’s shield flickered and held, as did several others, while Alexandria was blasted backwards, but otherwise unharmed. Some had jumped inside buildings, which provided some cover.

The rest?

They died.

Those who lacked sufficient defenses, or weren’t protected others, were pierced as water with pressure high enough to cut steel impacted punched through their bodies. I hoped to god all my people survived, but I had to focus on the mission, or this would be the Gala all over again. “*Heavy Casualties, please wait,*” all of the armbands said at once, barely able to be heard under the constant hammering we were experiencing.

As soon as the bombardment let up, our side responded in kind.

Lasers, lightning, flame, energy bolts, and so much more streaked up towards Leviathan as the rain stopped again. Leviathan let go of the water around him and dodged the bolts, zig-zagging far above us as he did so. Only visible because of one very determined laser that chased him across the storm-filled sky.

*“Losses are as follow,”* our armbands chirped in unison. “A-Train, Achaman, Aesthetic, Air Raid, Andaria, Anemia, Animal House, Arsenic, Athena, Autopop, Aviary, Ax-“

I tuned out the list which seemed specifically designed to hurt morale as I glanced around, seeing that one in five of those gathered was now dead, with maybe one in ten badly injured. Focusing on my foe, Leviathan made a ninety-degree turn, arrowing downward, dodging a glowing blue trident that almost pierced his chest, a piece of rock shot through with lava striking his shoulder and spraying lava behind him to seemingly no effect. Another dodge to the left, then downwards once again, his tail working like a rudder. The pressures it would need to be under must be enormous, but with an Endbringer’s durability the damage would be minimal.

*“Kaleidoscope, Keymaster, Kid Win, Kilimanjaro, Kimono, Kom-“*

Currently lacking any significant ranged capabilities, all I could watch as it jetted across the clouds, responding with a few water spears, but seemingly never in one place long enough to gather more than a dozen at a time. Having Seen what his power was capable of, as it still dragged at the ocean in preparation of another tidal wave and as it sustained the storm which still dropped a torrential downpour upon us, I knew that wasn’t true.

“Pandemonium, Perium, Pied Piper, Pink Panda, Plaster, Puck, Py*-”*

Tracking it across the sky, I could See its power sweeping large parts of the city, as if it was looking for something. On a whim, I used what little Space Manipulation I had that wasn’t tied up to shift the rain so that it wasn’t falling us, which caused those around me to give out shouts of surprise as the brought up their defenses once again.

It took a moment-

“*Sand Shark, Scalder, Sentry, Sere, Sh-”*

And as it’s power swept over our position it stopped, focusing on the minor vector shield hanging above our heads. “Incoming!” I warned, getting ready as Leviathan, who was already moving along at a good click, accelerated to speeds Purity would be hard pressed to match, abandoning all pretense of dodging as it accelerated directly towards us.

From across the city, Blasters of all types fired on him, but he slipped between most of the blasts like they weren’t there, the few that did impact him glancing off without effect as he barreled towards.

Alexandria launched herself off the ground, cape streaming behind her to meet the Endbringer mid-air, but Leviathan had other plans. He reached out like he was going to meet her raised fist head on, only to twist and curl around her as he passed, inches away, and blasted her point-blank with the water he left in his passage. He shot down to land on an eight-foot-tall man wearing heavy plate armor, which folded like paper under the impact, a torrent of water pouring down on us from above.

Not stopping, Leviathan struck out with both hands, gutting one man while a woman threw up barrier of webbing, which Leviathan slammed into, breaking it apart but battering her backwards instead of piercing her with his claws.

Twisting around in a circle, Leviathan’s tail spun tightly around itself, the water it left behind accelerated and condensed by his power into a cutting blade 4 feet off the ground in every direction.

I lifted off the ground as Herb yelled “Duck!”, the blade missing my feet by inches. Some blocked the attack which sped off in every direction with shields, armor, or their own innate toughness. Some dodged, either by listening to my teammate or jumping as I had. Some did neither.

One of the people I’d sheltered from the barrage, a woman with the power to freeze things in ice with her touch, was beheaded, and several others were cut in half.

From landing, until now, had been three seconds.

I charged Leviathan, along with Herb and over a dozen others. A woman whose hands glowed with energy slashed at his leg, leaving hissing gouges that were only an inch deep, and as Leviathan turned to slash back at her his armor was grabbed by metallic tentacles by a man on his other side, who was yanked off his feet but gave her enough time to scramble backwards.

The man was dragged towards Leviathan, but before the hero could be struck a blast of concentrated lightning slammed into the Endbringer from behind, fouling his aim once more. Leviathan’s tail slammed down towards the man, to be deflected by an orange crystal bubble, which shattered on impact but faded to nothing before the shards could hit anyone.

A man with a sword made of black mist slashed at Leviathan’s leg’s distracting the Endbringer enough for me to strike it in the chest, discharging one of my normal shields.

The Endbringer’s scales broke under my strike, and seemed to bleed a dark ichor, but the damage was superficial at best and the creature only took a single step backwards.

It turned to spin, and release another cutting circle of water, but instead of flying outwards the pressurized blade of liquid slammed harmlessly into the ground around the Endbringer, doing nothing as Leviathan was blasted by a glowing beam, a ball of condensed air, and a ghostly spear, none of them doing significant damage.

Leviathan’s head snapped to look at Herb as he casually gutted a woman, his claws tearing through whatever supernatural toughness she might’ve had with ease. The Endbringer launched himself at my friend, who was only twenty feet away from the monster, only for Alexandria to blur between them, catching Leviathan in the face with a punch.

Scales cracked and flew as the Endbringer was knocked thirty feet backwards, flipping in the air to strike out with his tail at Alexandria like a scorpion. A metallic shield in from the side, embossed with a large eye, blocking the blow for an instant before dissipating into smoke.

Pressing the advantage as the buildings around us collapsed, Alexandria and I flew forward as Dragon jetted past Leviathan, dodging an arm and a blast of water as she dropped something that exploded into intense flames, seemingly burning the Endbringer as it thrashed for a moment, as if it were in pain as it’s outer layer burned away.

It’s motions quickly covered itself with water, which tightened around itself, extinguishing the flames. Alexandria struck him dead center, but it rolled with the blow, blasting her upwards with the water as it flipped onto all fours and jumped for Herb once again, twisting around me to dodge my kick as it did so.

A knight in living armor, the same woman who Leviathan had casually gutted, launched herself up and met his leap with a gigantic bone greatsword, cutting into it’s outstreatched arm and knocking it off course.

Leviathan slashed his claws in her direction, sending out three blades of water that turned to mist as Break, in ankylosaurus form, smashed into Leviathan’s back with his clubbed tail. Leviathan tried to blast him with the water pouring off his form, only for the fluid to be shoved right back in the Endbrigner’s face as my partner copied the Endbringer’s power.

Launching himself forward again, Herb tried for another tail strike only for Leviathan to copy the motion, responding in kind. Mildly enhanced bone met crystalline flesh and lost, the bones splintering to pieces as Leviathan dodged under his own tail to pierce Herb’s body with his razor-sharp claws.

I was too far away to stop the Endbringer, but the water, which had started coming off Break’s form as well, hardened into a shield around him, taking the blow, but not able to negate the momentum as my partner was shot up into the sky like he was fired from a cannon.

I drop-kicked the Endbringer before it could try a follow up attack on my partner, now that he wasn’t in copying range, draining another shield as I knocked it forward, the cutting crescent of water it sent after my friend striking a building instead, glass shattering as it carved into steel.

It turned to strike me and Alexandria struck it as well, knocking it back further as a gurgling voice yelled “Firing!” and a coruscating beam of energy came from the destroyed building to my right, blasting leviathan back even further back, digging a good foot into his chest.

Glancing over as I flew after Leviathan I saw that a Hero had gathered the rubble into herself, like Golem, and her power broke apart and condensed the matter until she shot a high energy beam of molten matter. Leviathan strained against the beam, shoving water into its path to lessen it’s effect before slipping out of it’s path, the last of it firing down the street and carving out the fourth floor of a building, causing it to collapse.

Alexandria blurred behind the Endbringer and struck him, sending him flying towards me. A touch of Space manipulation caused it’s claw to miss me by inches, allowing me to slip past it’s guard and meet it with a flying kick to the head, draining the shield on my other leg as I virtually clotheslined Leviathan.

Mid fall it slashed at me with its tail from below, the appendage blurring nearly to invisibility with the speed it moved, stabbing me in the chest with the tip, trying to pierce my heart. Instead it discharged my chest shield and launched me upwards, my own flight fighting my momentum to slow me down.

 From above I could see the others converging on Leviathan’s position. More importantly the ever increasing amount of water on the street he was fighting us on, not an issue for fliers, had reached four feet in height and it was only now I could see that Leviathan was keeping the water he was creating from leaving the area he was fighting in, the next block over only having an inch of flooding.

A Hero sent a blast of what looked like paper at him, and he replied with a blade of water which cut the source, a woman made of the same paper she was throwing, in half to seemingly no effect. I started flying back down as fast as I could, several hundred feet up in the air.

Alexandria tried to attack him from behind again, only for the Endbringer to twist around in a blur, just as fast as she was, and grab her with one massive clawed hand, shoving her under the now five feet of water that covered the street.

I poured on the speed as Legend and Purity blasted by, raking the Endbringer with their attacks, a blade of water that would’ve struck Kayden nudged out of the way as I dropped down as fast as I could.

The Endbringer took the blows that opened up deep craters on his broad back, holding Alexandria under the water as he reached out with his other hand, taking firmer control of the water in which over three dozen heroes were still standing in, trying to fight while almost being submerged.

The Endbringer’s clawed hand opened wide, and I could See what he was preparing to do. Just as he had before, to Japan and Newfoundland, he was going to crush everyone submerged in the water he’d made sure to pile up across the street.

Pulling the material of my costume off of the back of my knuckles, revealing the orichalcum gauntlet beneath, I twisted space to shorten my decent and to hit him, not downwards into Alexandria, but down the street, and pushed my flight as far as it would go.

The world blurred slightly as I entered the tube of warped space, bringing my fist forward to strike with the full force of one of my precious crystalline shields. The world spun and I was in Leviathan’s face, the Endbringer’s tail already coming up to strike me, but either I was too fast or it was too arrogant, because I was able to strike it dead center in its chest.

The world slowed, just for a moment, Leviathan staring down at me as my fist hit flesh harder than diamond, and the metal of my gauntlet creaked in protest. Then, with a thunderclap, Leviathan was gone, hurtling down the street as fast as he’d batted away Break, claws outstreatched and tearing furrows out of buildings to try to slow himself as he left a river of water between us, which blasted towards me.

I spun a vector shield in front of me, backed by a cone of air, directing the blast around me and into the buildings on either side, the water hitting with enough force to tear the masonry apart. What water made it through the shield struck the cone, which destabilized and pushed it back into the shield, and out, leaving me untouched.

Leviathan stopped, three hundred feet away, and stared at me for a moment before he blurred, taking off running to the side, Legend and Purity, far above me giving chase as he headed north.

The water below me, no longer held in place, drained out in every direction, sending heroes to their knees as they struggled for breath, while some didn’t move at all.

Alexandria was one struggling, vomiting up water as she slowly floated upwards, looking all around us. Her outward appearance was completely calm, but the fluctuations in her Aura showed her true emotions as she fought off panic and centered herself.

“You might be nearly invincible, but you still need to *breathe*,” I told her looking around as the Armband continued to call out names.

“*Hardcore deceased, BD-6. Requiem deceased, BD-6. Weevil deceased, BD-6. Fierceling deceased, CD-6. Class Clown deceased, CD-6. Gru-”*

“It wasn’t like this before,” Alexandria stated, staring at me. “But you knew.”

I shrugged, noting that somewhere in the fight I’d gained another space for a minor power, and it felt like I was on the cusp of a second major slot, though it wasn’t yet ready. “I guessed. They seem to meet the force presented. You got more warning, had more time to prepare. Is it any wonder he’d going harder?”

Alexandria turned to cough up more water, and when she spoke again her voice held the promise of violence, “We will talk when this is over.”

“Maybe,” I replied, not feeling charitable as I looked at the dead around me. “But first we need to beat Leviathan.”

“*Kill* Leviathan,” she corrected coldly.

*“Gawain down, CC-4. Watchdog deceased, CC-4. Young Buck Deceased, CC-4. Wallman Deceased, CC-5. Dreamer deceased, CC-5. Je-”*

“Keep telling yourself that,” I told her as a dark, small shape dived towards us.

Break shifted back to human form, glancing around at the dead and injured. “Fuuuuck. Sorry, had to fly back to the city,” he apologized. “What’s the plan.”

“You at Lung levels yet?” I asked him, and he shook his head.

“Like, half,” he admitted. “Maybe third?”

I sighed, slotting in Metal Projection. I’d need every bit of strength I could muster, and I grimaced as the invasive feeling of metal threading harmlessly through muscles, bones, and organs spread across my body. I was down One Crystal shield, but the rest were already back.

*“Journey Deceased, AC-3. Hydra Down, AC-3. Guesstimate Deceased, AC-3. Shadeblade Deceased, AB-3. Victorious Deceased, AB-3. Lig-”*

“Plan?” Break prodded, somewhere between eager, nervous, and fearful.

I sighed again as I considered the situation. If I had enough time, if I could get people to listen, if I had intel, I could make this work and turn things around. I was good with tactics, but I needed to stop thinking of this like a general, maneuvering other to win in the best manner possible. I needed to think like a warrior, *ironically*, and lead from the front. Others would help, but against this Endbringer speed was *everything,* and that meant command networks wouldn’t work.

General plans wouldn’t work. Leviathan was too fast, too unpredictable, and there were too many factors at play for any workable strategy other than the obvious. One we could only pull of because of how strong we’d become. “The plan’s simple. We get in his face. We beat the shit out of him. We don’t die. We both get strong enough to kick his tail back to the god-damned ocean that he loves.”

Break grinned, and it was a savage, joyful, feral thing. “Works for me.”