

Sunday, 20th, April, 11:30 PM.

When Dean stepped out of the limo he found his gaze immediately drawn to his best friend, who was standing right at the entrance of the train station, Chris was impossible to miss with his large red suitcase in hand. The limo driver brought his Dean's own much smaller suitcase around from the back of the car and he quickly took it from the man before bidding him goodbye, the man tipped his cap when he left. Dean grabbed the handle of his suitcase and lifted it off the ground with ease, before closing the distance between them.

"Dean!" Chris grinned, holding his hand for a high five. "I had to sneak out of the window, you know, and my dad almost caught me."

Dean slapped his hand with a smile.

"I'm glad he didn't." Dean said honestly, "I'm not sure I would be getting on the train if you didn't come with me."

Dean was lying, of course, he would have gone on his own if he had too, but nevertheless, he was grateful that somebody had actually wanted to come with him. Chris was dependable like that.

"Nah, you still would have got on." Chris denied easily and started to drag his suitcase up the stairs, struggling with the weight of it.

His costume was inside it, power armor, laser pistols, and even his hoverboard. They weren't stupid, there was supposedly a Parahuman murderer running around killing people on trains, they were going to need to be careful, just in case. Chris had already mentioned that the Wards had been told to stay far away from the situation and he was worried that this trip of theirs would be misread as him going against his orders.

Dean, on the other hand, wasn't worried at all, even if the murderer did attack the train, it had absolutely nothing to do with them, they were here for one reason only, but if by some herculean twist of fate, chose Dean or Chris as his next victim, the killer would quickly find that they had come prepared and weren't defenseless. He was privately amused by the idea, that he or Chris might accidentally take down the killer through sheer chance.

Dean bent down and grasped the other handle on the suitcase, helping Chris get it up the stairs. Once they were at the top and through the entrance, they approached the luxurious train before a man with a pristine white suit asked them for their tickets. Chris was staring into the open windows with wide eyes, having never seen anything like it. Dean handed the tickets over to the man who checked them thoroughly before smiling at him and handing them back.

The man helped them get their luggage onto the train before returning to his duties. Chris and Dean immediately went off exploring the train. A couple of girls their age smiled at them when they passed by and Chris was visibly embarrassed when they giggled at him. Dean elbowed his friend in the side before giving them a wink and they descended into peals of laughter. Dean found it relatively surprising that they weren't the only teenagers on the train, but then again

rich adults had rich kids, after all, the ratio was quite strong though, they were vastly outnumbered by the adult presence on the train.

The two boys soon found a large carriage with lots of people sitting around talking with each other. Dean chose a table for them, pulling Chris down into the chair opposite him, before doing a cursory check of the occupants making sure to match emotions they were feeling to their faces. He couldn't see his brother anywhere yet, but he had promised to meet him, he would be here eventually of that Dean had no doubt. The train began to move suddenly, and Dean found himself practically vibrating with excitement, he was finally going to find out what had happened to his mother.

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Sunday, 20th, April, 11:58 PM.

Miss Militia stood in the third carriage from the back as the 'Flying Pussyfoot' slowly left the station, while Battery stood quietly beside her. They made sure to wait for several minutes before they began to slowly move through the train, surreptitiously evaluating the passengers but otherwise remaining unobtrusive.

They were both sans uniform and wore their best dresses, both of which fell short of the kind of clothing that the paying passengers wore. Each of the heroes wore a blue half-mask that covered the bottom of their faces with a large white 'P' stamped onto it, denoting their affiliation with the Protectorate.

Miss Militia was distinctly uncomfortable as she passed by the passengers, she could almost feel them studying her. They had tried to negotiate with Daniel Stansfield to allow them access to the train, but it had not gone well at all, and the man had immediately retreated behind a team of the best lawyers in America, who rebuffed them at every turn.

The Protectorate had wanted the entire Brockton Bay branch to guard the Flying Pussyfoot, it was the obvious next choice for the Rail Tracer to target. It fit the time pattern and the train itself was such a tantalizing target that it was all but assured. Daniel Stansfield didn't seem to care, and they were immediately declined, he absolutely did not want a bunch of Parahumans running around on his train.

Daniel had offered them an olive branch eventually, exactly two heroes would be allowed to board the train and there would be many conditions. No weapons, no armor, no men, they had to sign non-disclosure agreements, they would not be able to discuss anything they witnessed during the course of the Flying Pussyfoots journey, the only concession being that of the Rail Tracer, they would not harass, interrogate, interact or otherwise engage with any of the passengers unless they were approached first, they would have to wear clothing appropriate to the venue, no visible weapons, which wasn't too bad as she had a blade hidden in the belt tuck away under her dress pulled tight against her thigh a benefit of her power, she was never truly unarmed, she could easily turn that blade into a gun in an instant if the Rail Tracer appeared. Battery didn't need to carry a gun or a knife, as her body was already a weapon.

It was the most constricting circumstances she had worked under in years, but it was also the only offer they had received that involved letting them enter the train at all. No armor, no tools, no opening carrying. Hannah felt awkward wearing the dress, a small, tight, blue thing that left her feeling awfully exposed. Battery had helped her pick it out the day before on an impromptu shopping adventure once they had gotten notice that they would be riding the train.

Battery was dressed in a similar item, it was not quite the same design, and hers was black. Assault had let out a loud whistle when he had seen them back at the base, while Battery had been embarrassed but pleased at the appreciation, Miss Militia was simply embarrassed. Hannah found that the high heels were easy enough to walk in, once she got used to them at least, but they would quickly become a problem if they needed to move quickly, she would have to rip them off or snap the heel if any hostiles made an appearance.

The fact that the Protectorate had agreed to this at all told her enough about the people they were dealing with, absurdly rich and powerful, with a team of lawyers that could tie up even an organization like the Protectorate for weeks on end. Hannah refocused her attention on the present before continuing to burn every face on the train into her mind, for later consideration. When she saw Kid Win in civilian clothes sitting next to a blonde boy she just stopped in the middle of the carriage and stared without comprehension.

What?

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Sunday, 20th, April, 11:58 PM.

Joining Chorus had definitely been the best decision of Dune's life.

Dune stood in his assigned staff carriage, where all of the servers and other staff were able to rest between their shifts. The uniform he was currently wearing had once belonged to a man named Tony, the man had been approaching sixty years old, and he had looked every year of it after Dune had taken his uniform.

Tony had been the train conductor that would have been serving the second shift on the Flying Pussyfoot. He was supposed to alternate shifts with the other conductor every six hours, of course, by the time the second shift actually rolled around, everybody would have much bigger problems to worry about.

Dune knew that if any of the other members of Chorus knew about what he had done they would be terribly upset, especially after he and the other non-powered members of the Chorus had been given such strict instruction. They had been given the addresses, names, and faces of their targets. They were then supposed to use the sleep bombs that Swallow had created with her power to knock their targets out. Once they had been knocked out, restrained, and locked up, they would take their uniforms before infiltrating the Flying Pussyfoot as members of the staff.

Nice, simple, and clean, but Dune hadn't felt like using the bombs.

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Sunday, 20th, April, 11:59 PM.

Felix Walken was the assistant conductor that had been assigned to the Flying Pussyfoot, he had only been working as an assistant for about a month, but his mentor had put in a good word for him when this opportunity had come up. It had made all the difference in getting the job, although he had needed to do some sleuthing behind the scenes to make sure it had worked out.

Felix's job wasn't terribly difficult, the conductor would give him instructions and he would carry them out, quite simple all in all. Sometimes that was just completing some inane paperwork that needed to be taken care of, other times it could be something as simple as fetching them both a nice cup of coffee.

It was all so *strange* he mused; his mind truly was an interesting place.

Felix could admit that the Flying Pussyfoot was a truly majestic creation, even if he had seen it many, many times before, he even had a visit from his dear younger brother to look forward too, what an absolute treat. It had been quite a few years since they had last met, almost a decade even.

Felix idly noted that a person had just flashed past the window of the train, before darting upwards onto the roof and out of view, thirty-seven thin wires branched out from under his clothing, glinting in the passing lights. The young man was wearing a ceramic oval mask and a black coat that split at the front, a couple of locks of loose black hair hung, just in view beneath the hood. The boy was one-hundred and ninety-three centimeters tall and weighed seventy-four kilograms; his forearms were not quite identical in length, the left one slightly shorter than the right, and there was an inch-long scar on his neck. It was the same young man that had been watching him yesterday when he had been helping an elderly woman onto the train. The elderly lady had been struggling with her bags and the boy had been sitting on a bench nearby.

"How curious," Felix wondered aloud.

It was such a shame that he had been placed on the first shift, Felix probably wouldn't get to see very much of his mentor during the trip.

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Sunday, 20th, April, 11:59 PM.

I couldn't believe it, I was late.

I stepped off the roof of my apartment building and started to fall downwards, I angled myself north-east while staying low to the ground and weaved my way between the alleyways to avoid anyone seeing me in the sky, It was best if I didn't attract any cape attention tonight. If the Flying Pussyfoot was under watch I would be looking very suspicious flying straight towards it at full speed from across the city. Once I was actually out of the city I would be able to really pour

on the speed and try to get ahead of the train, then maybe I could work my way back along the tracks until I intercepted it.

I had tried for a nap earlier today so that I would be at the top of my game when it was time to go, only I had not woken up when my alarm went off, I somehow slept through the damn thing.

Fate or Destiny was clearly scheming against me, but I would fight against it and succeed despite the odds. The buildings were finally starting to thin out as I got closer to the edge of the city, it would not be long until I was free.

I hoped that the killer hadn't decided to start early, I checked my watch briefly, or a late one in this case. I cleared the city boundaries before pushing myself to go faster, with no obstructions to worry about I could reach speeds that just wasn't possible within the city. A couple of minutes later I spotted the train tracks, and to my complete surprise the train was almost completely level with me, I had barely made it after all.

I came in at an angle towards the front carriage and then zipped up over the front window and onto the roof, landing without a sound, with nobody the wiser. I cheerfully made my way towards the back of the train, making sure to check for any stowaways on the roof.

Heh, I still got it.

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Monday, 21st, April, 12:03 AM.

"Oh I'm so sad, so very sad, I feel as if I could never, ever reach a state in which I am happy again!" Graham Spectre said mournfully, with his hand placed dramatically upon his face.

Chané Laforet on the other hand was conflicted, not being able to speak had made some very tense situations a lot worse during her masked adventures as Aural, not being able to explain to people that she *wasn't* trying to kill them does that, she supposed. On the other hand, she had never felt pressured to speak up when she didn't want to, not like she had seen others do when confronted with the sheer intensity of Climax.

Chané hid her smile behind her hand.

Perhaps it would have been better to have had the choice to speak, and choose not to use it, rather than having the choice taken from her entirely, but she had a long time to make peace with her fate. It certainly wasn't something that was likely to change at this point, and so she watched Climax lean backward until he was almost parallel with the floor, before burying his face in his hands.

"How could I ever reach happiness again?" Climax sobbed, grabbing the giant wrench off the table before thrusting it forward to emphasize his point, "When 'happiness' is just a category that we have created? It's not even something that *exists* within nature, it is nothing more than a label that represents a set of common outcomes that we call happiness!"

Climax gripped the chest of his blue overalls as if he were having an attack of the heart, and emotional attack, not an actual physical one, his face was scrunched up in painful emotion. When Chané had first met him, she had thought that Climax had simply been putting on a show, that he was an attention seeker that would say whatever he could to draw eyes his way. Which he certainly was at least a little, and the man definitely thrived in the spotlight. But nothing ever left his mouth that he didn't wholehearted believe in, even if he only believed it for a single moment, Climax would wax and wane, reach highs and lows that she could never come close to reaching, she almost envied his mood swings at times.

Climax would then immediately turn back around and attack his own arguments, with no one there to attack it for him, the man was filled with some kind of unrelenting energy and Chané could already see his counterargument forming.

"But," Climax said suddenly, with manic energy, "If 'happiness' is nothing but a category, so too must 'sadness' be, so it stands to reason that I could not truly feel sad in the first place?!"

Climax gripped his head between his hands as he grappled with the notion, but Chané just smiled and looked out the window of the carriage. Nice would be back soon, and then they could finally get to work.

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Monday, 21st, April, 12:03 AM.

Nice Holystone stared at herself in the bathroom mirror, the right side of her face and her right arm was a mess of burn scars, a single eye-patch covered her empty eye socket. Every time she saw herself in a reflection there was a surge of something painful in her chest and her eye started to water, her scarred face was a sick reminder of everything that been done to her, and all that had been taken. Tomorrow would mark an entire year since the attack that had done this to her, a year since a maniac had decided to blow up her neighborhood, a year since she had watched her boyfriend's crushed body get dragged out of the rubble, a year since she had triggered.

Nice pushed the feelings away as best she could, wiping at her eye in frustration, she had hated everything and everyone for a long while, she didn't have any family and friends, there was no support structure in her life after her boyfriend had died and there no way for her to pay for the hospital bills. In exchange for all of the pain and misery she had received, she found that she could suddenly make things, things she would never had dreamed of before.

As long as what she decided to make had some kind of explosive component, she could do it. Nice made hundreds of crazy variations, with thousands of different effects, she had turned to crime to pay her bills, she made a bunch of small explosives, shaped them like birds and named herself Swallow. But there was still no color in her life, nothing that made it worth a damn thing, and she had fallen into a depression, without a chance in the world of pulling herself out. It had gotten so bad that she had attempted to kill herself to escape the hell that had become her life. Which is when she met Chané Laforet and Graham Spectre, they saved her, pulled her out from her apathy, they gave her a purpose. Nice was now one of them, the three

of them a team.

They were Chorus.

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Monday, 21st, April, 12:03 AM.

Hannah slowly made her way over to the two boys, her mind was racing to figure out why he was here, and the moment Chris noticed her approach his entire face went a pale white.

"Miss Militia," Chris said in horror. "What are you doing here?"

Hannah almost sighed at the words already dismissing him as the potential threat, so she switched her attention to the unknown boy that Battery was currently looming over. The blonde boy didn't look fazed by the attention at all, he just calmly looked between them both before turning back to Chris and speaking up before Hannah could think of what to say.

"Don't worry about it, man." The unknown boy said evenly, "You have a ticket, remember?"

Hannah blinked at the news she knew firsthand just how much money the Wards received and there was absolutely no way in hell that Chris could have bought his own ticket.

"Oh yeah," Chris said surprised, before recovering his composure in record time. "What's up M.M? You look lovely in a dress."

Chris said it with a cheeky smile on his face and Hannah had to stop herself from smacking him over the back of the head. Chris turned to face Battery, no doubt to make another comment on her attire but when she took a step towards him aggressively he leaned right back into his seat as far as he could go, before shutting his mouth with a clack.

"Hey, Battery." Chris stuttered nervously.

Battery let an amused huff of air as he cowered.

"What are you doing here?" Hannah said firmly, finally managing to interject. "You were told to stay away from this investigation."

Dean's eyes glanced over to her and he raised a single eyebrow.

"If I didn't know any better," Dean said curiously, "I would almost think that Chris was one of the Wards."

Hannah had a moment of incomprehension before her eyes snapped back over to Chris, had she misread the situation entirely and just unmasked him by accident? A dawning horror grew in her stomach at what she had just done.

"Dude stop," Chris snickered at her reaction, "He already knows who I am, you didn't reveal me."

Hannah breathed out of her nose noisily for a moment and she had to take a moment to squash the surge of annoyance that cut through her at the trick, she noted that Dean was now smiling.

"I'll ask again," Hannah said seriously, "Why are you here?"

"Dean bought me a ticket," Chris said simply. "He is meeting up with his brother and I came to support him."

Chris looked over to Dean to make sure he wasn't stepping over a line by telling her their reason, but his friend just nodded, unbothered. This 'Dean' had simply bought him a ticket for the Flying Pussyfoot? And another one for himself evidently, just exactly who was this boy, who had such absurd access to money? A trip just to meet his brother, what a ridiculous mismanagement of money, it almost physically pained her.

"What's your last name?" Battery asked curiously.

"Stansfield," Dean said easily.

Oh, Hannah thought in understanding, that explains it.

"Oh." Battery said in understanding, "That explains it."

Hannah blinked at the glitch in the matrix.

"Why are *you* here?" Dean asked evenly, directing his attention at Battery. "Is the Rail Tracer going to eat us or something?"

Hannah noted that he didn't sound terribly upset by the idea, in fact, the boy seemed to have a rather flat emotional response to the things around him in general, if she was reading him correctly.

"We are here to make sure that doesn't happen." Battery said calmly, not giving up any details to what was essentially a civilian.

Chris abruptly leaned over the table to whisper something into Dean's ear, and Hannah watched the exchange with narrowed eyes. Dean leaned back in his chair after a moment before nodding hesitantly.

Chris turned towards them both and gestured towards himself, both of them leaned down to hear what he to say and Hannah made sure to be on high alert for any sign of an attack. None was forthcoming but she immediately noted that it took Chris a few moments before he managed to drag his gaze back her face. Hannah raised an eyebrow at him, and Chris coughed into his hand embarrassedly, his cheeks now red.

"Dean's going to join the Wards," Chris said quietly, no longer meeting her eyes. "As soon as I can ask the director about it, anyway."

He was a parahuman? Hannah felt a terrible feeling rising in her chest at the news as everything seemed to fall into place, an unknown parahuman on the train, where an unknown parahuman was supposed to be trying to kill someone. A parahuman with an unknown power, Hannah felt her adrenaline spike in anticipation that they had somehow managed to accidentally stumble upon the killer. Hannah glanced over at Battery; their eyes met in understanding.

"I am *not* the Rail Tracer," Dean said abruptly, sounding annoyed, he could feel the disgust, horror, and anger directed towards him. "Jesus Christ."

Hannah had a chill run down her spine at his sudden response, how had he known?

"What?" Chris said in alarm, "They were thinking that?"

Dean simply nodded to his friend, giving no further explanation.

Hannah stared at the boy in horror for a moment, he could read minds. Battery suddenly stepped even closer to the table and towered over him.

"What are your powers?" Battery demanded.

"He isn't the killer-" Chris began angrily.

"I don't have to tell y-" Dean started, at the same time.

This is when the doors on the other side of the carriage were suddenly slammed open and people began running into their carriage. The passengers shouted and clawed their way past each other on the way past them towards the next carriage.

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Monday, 21st, April, 12:05 AM.

When the screaming started Urchin knew that someone, somewhere was laughing at him.

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Author Notes(old):

Woouooooo boys. I'm not sure I enjoy skipping around this much with the perspective, but I wanted to establish some solid reasons why everyone was on the train. Hopefully, it makes it a bit less coincidental that so many capes were all in one place.

Author Notes (9/05/2020):

Another one down, I have noticed that the further along I go the smaller the number of edits needed, which is kind of a cool realization.