January 5th 2016, Kane Estate. Gotham City, New Jersey, 9:00 PM EST

Pulling up outside the estate, I groaned to myself. That had been a rough day. I had ended the day on my ninth remaining dose of Recovery Draft, meaning my health was full and I was physically fine, but without the energy boost, I was pretty damned exhausted. That energy didn't come out of nowhere, it just sort of overdrafted my body for a while. Still I couldn't complain about the results.

[Northern Broad Strike (Un) level up! Northern Broad Strike (Un)- Lvl 7 > Lvl 9]

Eight hours of sparring had gotten me two levels in my sole combat Skill, and while that wasn't nearly enough to make me competitive with Ted, I'd gotten a few more shots in at least.

If I had to put a number on Ted and Dinah, I'd have said their Skill level in unarmed combat would be in the eighties or something. Assuming the leveling capped at one hundred, that was…terrifying. Granted, they were only using normal human martial arts, but still, they had to be some of the toughest people around. Like…Batman tough.

I force myself to focus. I was distracting myself. I had decided to do this because it was long overdue, and meeting Ted and Dinah had reminded me of just how lonely I'd been since cutting contact with my family.

Still, it was scary. My oldest friend in the world lived on this estate. She and her twin sister had moved when we were all eleven, and Lizzie, her twin, had died along with her mom not long after that. When they moved back to town, I had already been on the outs with my family, and I hadn't been willing to reach out to anyone. I'd never called Katie.

Climbing out of my car, I circled around the estate on foot. I found an old crumbling spot on the wall I'd used a hundred times as a kid, then climbed nimbly over and dropped down smoothly into a crouch.

I knew the exact route to take to the window I wanted. Climbing up the tree next to it, I took a few deep breaths, letting my heart settle, then tapped lightly on the glass. There was a pause, then the curtains were yanked back, and a familiar beautiful redhead glared out at me. When she recognized me, she raised her middle finger, then yanked the curtains shut again.

Tapping again, I waited. "Get the fuck off my property Leon." Said the muffled voice of my best friend through the window.

"You know I'm not going to do that." I said calmly.

She laughed bitterly through the window. "Oh, why is that? Because we're so close? Because we're best friends? Did I miss the part where you've spoken to me since I moved back to town? Because you seemed perfectly ok with leaving me alone before now."

“I know.” I grimaced. “And that was my bad. I…don’t have a good excuse. I got wrapped up in my own bullshit. Can I at least try to explain?”

Yanking open her curtains, she glared out at me again, a snarl painted across her features. “Explain? You think there’s an explanation that will excuse abandoning me after my twin sister was abducted and killed? That there’s ANY reason you can give that would convince me to even hear you out?”

“I got superpowers.” I said bluntly. I’d considered the variety of ways that I could fix things. Some would be long term, some wouldn’t even work, some would be emotionally draining and hard to deal with, but they would all be…insufficient. Katie was my best friend. A few years only talking on the phone followed by some radio silence didn’t change that.

She froze, staring at me with wide eyes. Then her shoulders slumped and she opened the window. “Fine. Come inside asshole.”

I chuckled, climbing through the window easily, and once I got in…I stopped and took in the space. It had been years since I’d been here, and it looked exactly the same. She hadn’t bothered to redecorate.

Katie’s room was done in hunter green, with lots of soothing paintings and art her mother had helped her pick out.

“I swear, if you were lying just to get in here, I’ll-” I rolled my eyes, waving her off.

“I wasn’t.” I assured her. “That was what put me off my mom’s life plan. I had no intention of wasting my time in medical school when I could be…well that’s complicated to explain. But I figured I could trust you, even if you were pissed.”

She snorted derisively. “Trust me? You were the first person I told when I figured out I liked girls. I trusted you with my whole life. Do you know what my gun toting republican dad would do if he found out his baby girl was a rug muncher?”

I chuckled. Katie was still a little sensitive about being gay, even after all these years, and she HATED being sensitive. So she purposely talked about it in the crudest possible terms so everyone who knew (so me) would know how disaffected and hardcore she was. She’d always been like that. It’s hard to show weakness in a family like hers.

“I never told.” I reminded her. “Though I still think you could have trusted Bette. You know she wouldn’t have judged.”

That got a small smile from her. “No, but my cousin is the biggest loudmouth in Gotham. I might as well have rented out billboard space. She’d have let it slip to her mom, who would have told

my dad to show how ‘supportive’ she was, and he’d have disowned me. Which would kill him because with mom dead and Lizzie gone, I’m all he has, but the stubborn ass would still do it.”

She wasn’t wrong. Jake Kane was my father’s best friend, and a staunchly prideful man. He believed things should work a certain way, and if he found out his daughter was a lesbian, he would absolutely kick her out of the house and never speak to her again, no matter how much it would break his heart.

“Yeah…I’m sorry Katie.” I said lamely. “Meet any cute girls since you’ve been back?”

She shrugged. “This redhead at the library with an ass that just won’t quit, but I don’t think she bats for my team. I could introduce you?”

“Thanks, but I’ve got enough on my plate.” i chuckled wryly.

Her eyes narrowed. “Right. Because you have superpowers. That’s…something. How exactly does that work?”

Reaching over, I picked up an ash tray (giving her a stern glare because smoking kills) and then used Purify on the object. There was a flash of light and all the ashes and cigarette butts vanished. Purify was a weird one, because it cleansed anything I considered dirt (though the mana cost varied) so it could completely empty a vessel if I pushed. Then I tossed it to her.

She blinked at it. “You moved out of your mom’s place and severed contact with your family because you can magically clean stuff now? Truly, yours is a mighty destiny. Just think of all the people with really crusty pots and pans you can help. What a heavy burden.”

“Bite my ass.” I said with an eye roll. “That was just to prove I’m legit. I can do other stuff. Not a ton of other stuff, but stuff nonetheless.” I explained all about my entrance to the Club, how I’d gotten lucky and gotten in, and all the training I’d been doing. It wasn’t a short story, but by the time I was done, she was staring at me, jaw gaping.

I smiled smugly at her. “See. Shit has been crazy. Is that a good enough reason to be late getting in touch?”

“Who cares about that.” She said excitedly. “You’re getting martial arts lessons from Black Canary? Jesus Christ, you have to take me along. She’s my idol…not to mention a total smokeshow. I don’t care how rough she is. If she smothers me to death with that candy ass I’ll die a happy girl.”

I chuckled at that. I’d had similar thoughts before Dinah had beaten them out of me. I was still attracted to her, but it was a distant kind of appreciation, like enjoying the beauty of a T-rex. Like me teacher had said, too much car for me. For now at least.

“Will you admit you’re not mad at me if I bring you along?” I asked with a laugh. “I wish I could get you into the Club, but buying a membership card costs more money than I’ve ever seen in my life.”

That was one interesting thing about the Club. As mentioned, Luck was considered an attribute that could prove your worthiness, and that included making friends. It was possible to buy someone’s way into the Club, but it cost a hundred gold for a membership card on the Tin grade market place.

By the time most people reached that level of wealth they were no longer Tin grade, and once you hit Iron you weren’t eligible for access to the first level of the market anymore. It was something of a test, if you were willing to grind for long enough to afford it.

She shrugged. “It sounds…interesting. But I can live without it. I’m pretty decent in a fight already, and with some training from someone like Black Canary I could be a real monster.”

“You haven’t said you forgive me.” I held out a hand. “I want a spit swear.”

We’d grown up together, and as children had made up a lot of dumb rituals. Probably the dumbest was the spit swear. She rolled her eyes, groaned, but held up her hand and spit into it. She wiped it on my outstretched hand, and we both slapped ourselves in the face and said “Swear.” In unison.

I laughed as I wiped my face off, and she tried to strangle a smile. “You’re such an idiot.” She said in a begrudgingly amused voice. “Now where the hell is my hug.”

I stepped forward, grabbing her in a tight embrace as she crushed me against her. Katie had WAY higher Strength than I did, even without being a Club member. “Sorry about Lizzie.” I murmured into her hair.

She pulled back, turning around and sniffing suspiciously, but I didn't mention it. “You couldn’t have done anything. Besides you told me that over the phone when it happened.”

“It’s not the same.” I disagreed. “I should have been here when you got back. You should have been the first person I saw.”

She nodded tightly. “I went to your house when we moved back in.” She admitted. “I saw your mom. She was as put together as usual, but I could tell she missed you. Damnedest thing though? I think she’s proud of you. I could tell in the way she was talking about it.”

I chuckled. “Sounds like her.” I admitted. “I wouldn’t be surprised if I finally make something of my life and go to see her and she tells me she expected it all along.” She laughed, then walked over and collapsed onto her oversized hunter green bed. Her covers were military neat, of

course, but I didn't care as I walked over and flopped down next to her. "So, you heard my story. What about you? What have you been upto the last few months?"

And she told me. She told me every little detail of what had happened since we last talked. She mentioned some of the girls she'd dated, her new hobby (she'd taken up sketching), her new fitness regimen, and even told me about her new job as a personal trainer (she'd needed to get out of the house, since it reminded her of Lizzy and her mom). We talked for hours, and eventually just passed out. I slept like a baby after we did. I'd really missed my best friend.