

January 17th 2016, Leon's Penthouse, Gotham City, New Jersey 11:00 AM EST

We were NOT finished by the time the knock came on my door. That Stamina buff was a game changer, and I was hopping into my pants as I scrambled for the door, getting them buttoned before yanking it open. Dinah was at the door, of course, and she had Aunt Bonnie and Artemis with her. "Oh, hello!" I said, probably slightly too loudly. "I forgot you were coming over, please, come inside!"

Dinah raised an eyebrow at me as Rose came all but sprinting down the stairs, looked mussed. Artemis was smirking at the younger girl. "Sorry, did we interrupt a little afternoon delight?"

Rose sneered at her. "It's eleven, grandma. Pretty sure that's just morning sex." Her eyes widened and she glanced at my aunt. "I mean uh...there was a leak under my sink. That isn't here. Because this is Leon's place. There was a leak under Leon's sink. And I fixed it."

"I'm sure he was snaking your pipes good," Artemis grinned wickedly.

Aunt Bonnie rolled her eyes. "As pathetic as that backpedal was, it wasn't necessary. My nephew is an adult, and as questionable as sticking his dick in Deathstroke's daughter might be for his health, I'm not his mother. Though I did catch a little disapproval from his replacement mommy, so you might want to watch out."

"I'm sorry, what?" Rose said archly. "First of all, you're right, it's none of your business who he's fucking, and second of all how do you even know that?" She wheeled on Dinah, looking genuinely hurt. "Did you tell her who I was?"

That got another eye roll from my Aunt. "She didn't have to, Rose. We've met. I HAVE been a villain for a while. I worked with Deathstroke a few times when you were younger. You might not have recognized me out of costume. The bone makeup is pretty distinctive."

I tried to remember if we'd mentioned who my Aunt really was to Rose, but I couldn't, and whether she just hadn't made the connection or just didn't know who Silver Banshee was to start with, after a quick mental comparison, she calmed down a bit. "Huh," my badass former assassin said after a moment. "I thought you were older."

"Gee, thanks," my Aunt said waspishly. "Now can we come inside? I need some fucking coffee."

Rose lit up. "Have Leon make it! Trust me. He can't cook anything but omelettes, but he can mix a drink like it's going out of style. His coffee is fucking amazing."

"You wouldn't know that," I told her in an exasperated tone. "Because I refuse to make coffee for you, because I am an ALCHEMIST, not a BARISTA. But fine, you outmaneuvered me. I will make coffee. ONCE. For everyone. Because why not."

To be honest, I'd been working on a few concepts for coffee production in my spare time. Rose drank the stuff religiously, and I wanted to get good at it before I made any for her. But I hadn't really had time to practice, given my XP limitations and time constraints. A few extra XP now wouldn't do much though, so it was as good a time to try as any.

All four of the women looked more excited than I'd expected by that, and I waved them off to talk in the living room while I worked. It was right next to the kitchen anyway (open concept made even this giant ass penthouse seem smaller) and I could listen and chime in while I worked.

First thing I did, obviously, was heat some water. Since I didn't need a coffee machine (because I was better than any machine) I just used a pot of water. Once I filled it, I hit it with a max ranked Purify for a minute or so, just to make sure it was crystal clear. Then I fished out the bag of colombian dark roast that Rose brought with her when she started staying here.

After a few minutes of listening to them make small talk, clearly to distracted by the impending coffee to focus, I dumped it into a bowl, hit THAT with purify, just to be safe, and then triggered Reduce on the beans, flexing my willpower to reduce the whole bag to a fine powder. Then I used Refine on that to boost the flavor and purity, and then Synthesized it with the pot of now boiling water.

I took it off the burner as the water turned a deep, almost abyssal black. Then I pulled out five large cups, poured the liquid into one each, then went to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of cream, snagging a jar of sugar from the other side of the counter as I did. "Anyone wants it black, you'd better get it now."

Rose bolted from the couch, hurriedly snagging the big mug I'd filled for her (which she ALSO brought over) and greedily retreated with her treasured beverage. The others did NOT do that, so I opened the cream and sugar, not bothering to reduce or refine either of them (though I did want to try that later) and Synthesized the two with the other four cups. Once it was done, I took a tentative sup, then hummed in pleasant surprise.

I didn't dislike coffee, I just didn't really care about it one way or another. I'd had and enjoyed it, but it didn't wake me up, so it was just a semi delicious beverage I got from coffee shops sometimes. This though...this was fucking fantastic. But more than that, it had fucking STATS.

[Object found:Turbo Coffee. Grade: Tin. Quality: Common. A delicious and refreshing beverage that increases stamina regen by ten percent and provides an energy boost.]

I was impressed. That was a pretty useful drink for a common. Most of my low level stuff showed its real value for people like me, but this seemed to be a pretty general benefit. I only got thirty XP for the batch (ten for the first one and five for the other four) and as I passed the drinks out, I was pleasantly surprised to see what exactly I could do in terms of coffee making. So I took a long, slow sip, and savored the flavor.

Dinah groaned appreciatively. "Marry me," she said almost lustily.

Rose glared at her. "Get your own coffee boy, bitch. Besides, don't you already have a man? Have him make you coffee."

"Ollie will understand," Dinah said sighed pleasantly. "There are more important things than love. Like coffee. This is the best thing I've ever tasted. I want to bathe in this every morning. If the god of coffee was real and could cry tears of joy at the best coffee he's ever tasted, THIS would be those tears."

Aunt Bonnie let out a happy sigh of her own. "Alright, this is pretty amazing. You really need to market this. Open a coffee shop, you could take over the world."

"As tempting as world domination ISN'T, I don't have time to spend hours a day making beverages," I said with a laugh. "Though I do wonder if I might be able to make a coffee machine." I considered the logistics, but eventually decided I didn't have the skillset. I'd need some kind of enchanting probably, to imbue my skills into items. Maybe I could recrete something with Jewelcrafting once I maxed it out. I'd look into that as a gift for Rose.

"As nice as it is to be appreciated," I told them dryly as I sipped my drink. "That isn't why we're here. And since she's in a good mood now, you can explain your favor to my Aunt. I'll weigh in for you if needed, but honestly I don't entirely understand what you need, so convincing her will have to be your job."

Dinah rolled her eyes, setting down her coffee (albeit grudgingly). "Fine. Recently, we attempted to apprehend the criminal Black Mask, with Leon's help, in order to help the two of you avoid trouble with him. We tracked his operation to the docks, where he was receiving a shipment of a psychic drug called "Bliss". Do you know it?"

My Aunt looked sick. "...I've heard of it. It's horrible stuff. People like me, people whose powers straddle the line between psychic and magic, we're especially vulnerable to that kind of thing. More than that, the production method is really sick. Brain didn't make any friends in the villain community with that one. Even we have limits. Most of us won't work with that sick son of a bitch anymore."

Dinah nodded solemnly. "Yeah, but when we showed up to round up Mask to try to track his supplier, we ran into serious problems. Someone or something attacked us so he could escape. His supplier was with Intergang and used a portal of some kind to flee, and the only one left alive, though not for lack of trying on Mask's part, was one of his minions. A minion who had a vile of Bliss smashed in his face."

"That's...horrible," my Aunt said slowly. "But what does it have to do with me?"

“Zatanna tried to help Miss Martian reconstruct his mind,” Dinah said grimly. “It was heavily damaged, but they made some progress. Zatanna seems convinced that if we can do the reconstruction, we can hijack the link to the Bliss anchor to track the supplier. But she can’t unravel the magic portion of the spell. I recognized the energy signature as being similar to yours. I thought it might be Irish or something, because I’m not exactly well versed in mojo, but based on what you just said, I think it might be someone who uses both psychic and magic power.”

Aunt Bonnie grimaced. “That might complicate things. Magic and psychic energies are tricky to mix. It’s not a surprise that the martian brat and the magic girl can’t make much out of it. But if I help with that, it’s going to do more than just connect THEM to the supplier. It’ll connect ME to the supplier. And it’ll get their attention. Bliss is a predatory drug, and I’m the perfect prey.”

“Look,” I said slowly. “You don’t have to do this. You want out, you’re retired and I’m so glad. I wouldn’t even ask if the stakes weren’t so high but...they’re torturing KIDS, Aunt Bonnie. They’re making LOTS of this stuff. And we think there’s more coming. That means those kids are still suffering, and they might be grabbing more of them at this exact moment. I know this isn’t your problem, but...”

She looked grim. “It’s not,” she admitted. “But it could’ve been. My dad was a sick bastard. The things he did to me in the name of training...well, if I hadn’t been as strong or useful as I was, I could have seen the old man tuning me up for a power boost.” her eyes went vacant, expression haunted. “This one hits a little too close to home for comfort.”

“So you’ll help?” Dinah asked in surprise. “Just like that?”

“I don’t want to get sucked into all this bullshit,” Aunt Bonnie said grimly. “But some things you can’t stay out of. Not if you want to sleep at night. I’m not a good person. Never really wanted to be. But I have a code. I don’t ignore things like this. Not kids. Most villains don’t. I honestly think Brain would be dead for what he did if he wasn’t so slippery. If someone else has taken up the torch with Bliss...yeah. I’ll help.”

Beaming at her, I leaned forward and wrapped her in a tight hug, strangling a laugh at her squawk of surprise. Eventually, she hugged me back, patting me awkwardly until I let her go. She looked...frazzled. Between that and what she’d said about my grandfather, I wondered about the exact circumstances under which she’d become a supervillain. Maybe my dad and I ought to have a talk sometime soon.