The Second Coming of Eve

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The Second Coming of Eve

by OfficerBaldanova

Summary

30 years ago, NYPD police officer, Aya Brea, investigated a catastrophic threat caused by Mitochondria Eve. But Aya put a stop to Eve once and for all at the Chrysler Building.

Fast forward to December 30, 2027, this goober ass 25-year-old NYPD Buryat-American rookie cop, Anastasia (Nastya) Baldanova, is on a miserable blind date at a pop rock concert at Webster Hall. But then everyone except Nastya burns to crisp by Eve's command, putting her in an evolutionary war with the third "Eve". The press alerts the DSO, and they send Leon S. Kennedy to NYC to investigate this "bioterror" attack. When Leon meets Nastya, she wants to keep things "casual", but she won't make it easy for him to capture her heart. Nastya is determined to protect Leon and keep him from finding out about her powers. But Leon is just as determined to protect Nastya from becoming numb just like he did after 29 years of fighting bioweapons.

I'm working on rewriting the beginning chapters up to Day 4 (Part II) Secrets and Lies probably, now that AO3 is down. -_-

Notes

Hey everyone! So I am new to this site. O_o I am one of those who have migrated from AO3 while the site is down for an estimate time of 2-4 weeks. -_- I've just been proofreading and rewriting some of the paragraphs of this crazy crossover fanfic, so I plan to edit the AO3 version with this one once the site is finally back up. I think I will continue to post here and on AO3 even after the site goes back online.

Long story short: I played Resident Evil Requiem a while back and thought 49-year-old Leon Kennedy was SMOKIN' HOT. And I had been wanting to write a Parasite Eve fanfic for a while, so I decided to write a crossover fanfic as a way to write a fanfic where

Chapter 1: Day 1: The Date that Ended in Literal Flames

December 30th, 2027 Webster Hall, East Village, New York City

It was a cold winter night in the East Village, a bustling neighborhood with a mix of locals, tourists, bohemians, protestors, and artist vendors. A raven haired Buyrat-American woman emerged from the Astor Place subway station, which had a decorative green domed structure made of cast iron and glass. Her black hair was shoulder length in a wolf cut and her outfit consisted of a knee length black beaded lace dress, black fishnets, and a pair of black combat boots. Her name was Anastasia Baldanova, a twenty-five year old aspiring rookie police officer who was an aspiring detective. “Anastasia” was her government name, but her friends and acquaintances would call her “Nastya”, which was basically the Russian version of “Stacy” or “Stacey”.

Next to her was a tall and lanky platinum blond man who wore black converse shoes, black bomber jacket, dark gray ripped skinny jeans, white v-neck shirt, a gray beanie hat, and a string necklace. He claimed that his “outdated fashion choices” were “pre-vintage”, even though they were only outdated barely by a decade. He wanted to capture the look of the hipster era of the 2010s, which he thought made him cool and completely non-mainstream. His name was Jeff.

They were walking towards a music venue called Webster Hall, which was a mere five-minute walk from the subway station. However, for Nastya, those five minutes felt like eternity as Jeff kept talking about himself without stopping to even ask Nastya about herself. She didn’t even find Jeff all that attractive nor did she like his arrogant personality, but she was pressured to go on this blind date that was set up for her by one of her colleagues who thought that Nastya could use some excitement in her life. At this point, Nastya only stuck around because it was an excuse to see one of her favorite pop rock bands, The Hornet’s Nest.

Once they had reached the venue, Jeff had noticed that Nastya was less than enthusiastic to be there, even though she was the one who chose this concert as the date activity. But wasn’t necessarily out of concern; Jeff just couldn’t believe that his date wasn’t fawning over him.

Jeff broke the ice, “What’s wrong? I thought you’d be more excited since it’s your favorite band and chose this as our date spot.”

Nastya’s trance was broken as she was forced to focus on reality again. “Nothing, I’m just a little tired from work.”

“So, what’s your deal again? You work for the city, right?"

"Yep. I’m an NYPD officer," Nastya replied evenly, forcing a polite smile.

Jeff barked out an obnoxious laugh. "A meter maid in uniform? That's cute!"

"I'm **not** just writing parking tickets in a 'cute' uniform." Nastya sighed rolled her eyes, her voice dropping an octave into her official authoritative voice. "I do community policing and respond to real crises."

"*Is this guy fucking serious?!"* thought Nastya. *"I can bench press this dickhead in seconds."*

"Oh, I'm just kidding around! Lighten up." The man wrapped his arms around Nastya, but she flinched and shuddered instinctively. "You're way too uptight."

Jeff ignored her body language and kept bragging, "After the concert, I'm gonna take you to one of the best rooftop bars in the city. You haven't **seen** New York like I have, you being from Queens and all."

Nastya resented that comment, "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"All I'm saying is that I'm the King of the New York nightlife," Jeff asserted, in a matter of fact tone. "So I'm the perfect candidate to help loosen you up a bit."

"Whatever." She wasn't going to argue and the conversation was making her very bored. Nastya just wanted him to shut up at this point.

As soon as Nastya and Jeff reached the entrance to Webster Hall, they pulled out their smartphones and showed QR code concert tickets to the staff in charge of scanning tickets. Once they got their concert tickets scanned, they headed towards the general standing room of the venue, where Jeff talked about being an alleged "CEO" of his own startup tech company while playing guitar in a pop punk band during his off hours in Bushwick. In reality, he was just a trust fund baby whose startup was funded by his father while also playing music on the side.

He would also ramble on about descriptive details of his past dates where he would talk about how much he made his dates orgasm and how good he was at it. None of the subject matter was at all relevant to Nastya, but nonetheless, she attempted to remain involved in the conversation. However, Nastya was so bored that she zoned out after a while, daydreaming about being anywhere but the present at the moment.

Jeff looked at his iPhone, "Oh yeah, can you Venmo me your half for the tickets?"

Nastya looked at Jeff as if he had grown three heads at once. "But you said you'd cover the tickets if I paid for my half for dinner."

"Yeah, but I thought about it and figured that it's only fair that we split everything." Jeff reasoned.

"This is something that should have been decided before we went out!" Nastya huffed and puffed as she balled her fists. She wanted to punch the shit out of this cheap date right before her. However, she decided against punching Jeff since it was just too much trouble and The Hornet's Nest concert was about to begin soon. Against her own judgement, she stood down.

“Fine, whatever.” Nastya typed quickly on her phone and sent her half for her own concert ticket via Venmo. She texted her friend and work partner, Detective Xiomara Valdez, about how the date had been going so far.

She frantically typed, “*Please kill me now. This is the last time I trust Detective Morty Bupkis to set me up on a blind date.”*

Nastya received a reply less than 10 seconds later. It read, “*Sorry, I can’t. I left my Glock back at the precinct.*”

She laughed to herself, feeling a little less tense. Nastya then whispered to herself, *"Lord, please help me get through the night without slapping the shit out of this dickhead."*

Fifteen minutes into the date and Nastya was already over it. The opening bands haven’t helped much to distract her from this obnoxious date who just talked about himself, his startup, and how good he was at pulling women with his alleged charm and charisma. Not once did Jeff even think to ask Nastya about herself, and frankly, she didn't think he cared anything about her at all. She deeply regretted letting a fellow colleague, Detective Mortimer Bupkis, talk her into going on a blind date that she didn’t want in the first place. But Detective Bupkis figured it would take the edge off Nastya’s personal life because he felt sorry for Nastya that she rarely had a social life outside of duty.

“Yeah, well Detective Bupkis should have minded his own business!” she thought to herself. *“Asshole owes me a steak dinner after this anus of a date.”*

After about an hour of listening to the opening acts, a Japanese-American woman with wavy dark brown hair walked onto the stage. The sound of her white pumps trailed after her while clicking and clacking onto the floorboards of the stage. She wore an ethereal white dress which the design of the top was based on Regency style stays reflective of the 2020 dress trends. The bottom of white dress was long and flowy, and the hem would bellow birds of a feather. She checked her mic as the rest of the band members set up their equipment on stage. This woman was the lead vocalist of The Hornet’s Nest, Layla Aizawa.

Cheers from the crowd filled the entire room as Layla greeted the audience. She opened the concert with the band’s biggest hit single, which drew a big round of applause and cheer from the audience, including Nastya herself, who was standing with Jeff near the front of the stage. For a moment, Nastya was able to relax and forget how much she regretted agreeing to this lackluster date in the first place. Before Nastya knew it, she lost herself in Layla's voice singing every note and lyric from past albums, and some including the band's most recent albums and hit singles. Layla’s voice was as angelic as she sounded in the studio versions of those songs.

Halfway into one of the songs, Layla’s eyes suddenly met with Nastya’s eyes; she was standing pretty close to the front row where Layla could see her. Their eyes seemed to blink simultaneously, almost as if they were perfectly in sync. Nastya wondered why Layla was looking straight at her. At this moment, she didn't question it any further as she was just happy that the vocalist of her favorite pop rock band seemed to be acknowledging her.

The moment Nastya and Layla's eyes met, one of the guitarists started bursting into flames. Right after that, the bassist caught fire and then the drummer. A redhaired woman in the front row of the audience started noticing that her hands were on fire. Seconds later, the woman started screaming as the flames started to travel from her hands to the rest of her body, enveloping her into a gruesome, fiery death. Soon after, the rest of the audience started bursting into flames one by one.

Nastya was in a state of shock as she witnessed the audience and Layla's bandmates burning to death as the temperature of the standing room started rising from all the heat. The instrumentals ceased quickly after the bandmates succumbed to their wounds as Layla herself continued singing while everyone continued screaming amidst the flames until their very last breath. Eventually the only two people left standing and unscathed were Nastya and Jeff.

"Пиздец!!!" shouted Nastya; it was a versatile Russian word that often described something disastrous. But in this case, she meant it as something between *"holy shit"* and *"what the fuck!?"*

She looked over to her date, who had started panicking and screaming at the top of his lungs, "OH SHIT, OH SHIT!!! I DON'T WANNA DIE!!!"

"Come on, this way!!!" Nastya quickly grabbed her date's arm and quickly pulled him away as they both ran away from the stage. She helped him dodge burning people along the way towards the exit.

Once they were outside, the terrified blond man broke free from Nastya's grip as soon as he realized that they were at a safe distance from the disastrous crime scene.

"Fuck this shit, I'm outta here!" Jeff inadvertently pushed Nastya so hard that her back hit the iron fence behind her. And just like that, Nastya's date ran off, leaving her behind without even a single glance back to her.

"Well, fuck you too, asshole!" Nastya shouted after Jeff instinctively, but he was too far gone to even be able to hear her curse at him.

She didn't blame Jeff for running away because, well, any sane person would. However, Nastya was still pissed that he still basically left her behind without even a smidge of concern for her well being. After all that she did to get him to safety before he himself burnt to crisp, he left her behind to pick up the pieces. But unfortunately, Nastya had been in the force for three years, and it took far less than that for her to learn that being an NYPD cop was often a thankless job. Especially nowadays when the public had rightfully already lost trust in cops for the last decade or so.

But even then, she wanted to make a difference, even though she never thought of herself as a noble person.

She wanted to just run back home and forget this all happened. But unfortunately, Nastya's police instinct and duty would not let her run away from the scene of the crime. She groaned out of the frustrating thought of having to deal with this, and went back inside to confront Layla Aizawa while calling for backup from her precinct. As soon as backup arrived, Nastya

instructed them to wait outside and only take action if the suspect exits the building because of the fire hazard and risk of them also bursting into flames like the audience.

She saw that Layla was still on stage, but she had finished her song. Layla had been standing on the stage among the charred, dead bodies of her bandmates, waiting for Nastya this entire time.

Nastya aimed her standard issued Glock 19 at Layla, “FREEZE! NYPD!”

Layla grinned menacingly at Nastya, her usual demeanor as a pop rock singer that Nastya had seen in YouTube videos and Instagram reels disappeared completely. It was almost as if Layla was an entirely different person. “So you’re the only one who hasn’t burned into ashes.”

“Well, yeah, that seems to be the case. Stating the obvious, much?”, Nastya responded with the biggest snarky tone she could muster. Snark and sarcasm were the only things keeping her from panicking and going into a complete nervous breakdown.

Layla narrowed her eyes at Nastya, “Your cells are trying to reach out to me. Your dormant potential should be awakening soon.”

Nastya scrunched her nose, “What the *fuck* are you talking about?”

“You shall see soon.” Layla’s eyes glowed an eerie radioactive green before she lifted her hands towards Nastya, emitting an orange glow before a large blast shot out of them. Nastya ran and somersaulted to gain momentum and avoid getting hit.

Layla started shooting more green and yellow energy blasts at Nastya, some which grazed her arm. Nastya winced in pain as it left that part of her arm badly burned. Soon after, Nastya noticed that her wounded arm started healing; her skin was knitting itself back together. This would be the very first ability she gained from her “dormant potential” that Layla was referring to, called **Heal.**

Nastya started to hyperventilate as she felt her internal temperature rise. “I feel like…I’m *burning UP!!!* What the hell is happening to me!?” She cupped both sides of her temples with her hands, “ Why am I able to do this freaky shit just now!?”

“Our bodies and cells are communicating with each other.” Layla cackled menacingly as she pointed at Nastya. “You have started using your dormant Mitochondrial Energy. Or should we call it ‘*Parasite Energy*’? Has a better ring to it, don’t you think?”

Nastya grimaced, “Ew, communicating what? That sounds so fucking gross out of context. What the hell do you want from me? And what is this ‘*Parasite Energy*’?”

Layla stepped down from the stage and started walking menacingly towards Nastya, with each sound of her footsteps more ominous than the next. “That you and I are rivals in an evolutionary battle to be the strongest lifeform.”

She grabbed Nastya’s face, making the rookie cop stare face to face with the mutated singer. “The more you use your power, the more you’ll become like *me.*”

Nastya shook off Layla's grip on her face and aimed her Glock at Layla once more, "Who the hell are you, then?"

Layla's eyes started glowing from radioactive green to crimson red, "My name is Eve."

"Eve!? But I thought your name was Layla Aizawa."

"Layla Aizawa is no more." Layla, known as Eve from here on, shook her head condescendingly. "Such a shame, I thought you would know who I am since our cells are trying to reach out to each other. But perhaps in due time, you'll understand." Eve ran off backstage.

"Hey! Get back here, I'm not through with you yet!" Nastya frantically searched for Eve as she disappeared backstage. "Ah, fuck."

Nastya tried to follow Eve behind the stage, but ended up in a hallway full of random rooms. Nastya checked each and every room to look for her, finding some items and ammo on the way. She went inside the second to last room, but she found a diary and a cell phone on a table. She flipped through her diary and looked at Layla's social media posts and direct messages.

She flipped through her diary pages, which seems to have dated back to a month. Nastya noted that this must be a new journal that Layla had recently bought while she had been on tour this year. She found a journal entry that reads:

December 3rd, 2027

Oh my God! I'm so excited to be playing a concert back home after a year of touring Europe, East Asia, and the West Coast.
Lately, I've been feeling so sick. :(My autoimmune disease must be flaring up.
I gotta take more medicine so I can keep up with this endless tour schedule.

"Poor Layla. I didn't know she was so sick during the tour." Nastya looked at what appeared to be Layla's iPhone.

Luckily, it wasn't password protected. Nastya was able to look through her social media apps and read her private messages on Instagram to a user named "@TristMarvScience". She scrolled down her messages detailing how Layla met this user and their multiple meetings throughout the month before her scheduled concert at Webster Hall. They had been meeting at Irving Medical Center of Columbia University on a weekly basis throughout the month of December.

Was Layla having an affair with a scientist? What did they mean when they were talking about setting Layla's mitochondria free? Eternal life and love together? None of it made sense to Nastya.

Nastya went to the green room at the end of the hallway and saw Layla sitting on a chair, strumming and humming one of her songs on her acoustic guitar. She strummed her final

note off key and tossed her guitar aside, breaking it in the process. She walked menacingly towards Nastya, like the world's most menacing runway walk.

Nastya aimed her glock once more, “I told you that I’m not through with you yet, Layla Aizawa!” She never thought she'd hold her favorite rock vocalist at gunpoint, but here she was. It was rather unsettling.

Layla had begun transforming right before Nastya’s eyes— she grew twice as big as her normal height of 5’4” (163 cm), and her hands grew into something more claw-like while still having all five fingers on each hand. Her skin tone turned deathly pale and her once long and wavy brown hair turned into long red-orange gradient curls instead.

The transformed pop rocks singer laughed maniacally, “Ahahahahahha!!! I already told you, girl. Layla Aizawa is no more. I am EVE! Remember this name!”

Nastya frowned and gritted her teeth. “Well, shit. She turned into some weird monster lady with powers just like mine. Who **wouldn’t** have seen *that* coming?” She rolled her eyes and sighed, “Here we go!”

Her first fight ensued. Eve started to charge up her energy blast in a glowing orange light forming around her hands as Nastya started frantically shooting her department issued Glock at Eve in the head.

Nastya’s vision blurred for a split second, then snapped back into a hyper-focused clarity that didn’t scream “human abilities”. A grid of glowing neon-green geometric lines mapped itself across her field of view, overlaying the real world. When Nastya looked up at Eve, she saw a few vital points that glowed among the blue grid that took over her vision. She had gained the ability called **Scan**.

Nastya’s aim and strategy became more precise and controlled compared to a mere few seconds ago since she was able to see Eve’s weak points.

Eve began to taunt Nastya as her vision went back to normal, “Is that all you've got? A puny metal tool made by inferior humans?”

The unimpressed rookie cop pursed her lips. “Unfortunately, yeah.”

Eve lunged at Nastya in order to grab her with her enlarged claw-like hands. Nastya tried to shield herself with her arms, but she ended up grabbing her arms and holding them in place with strength that she never knew she even had.

Then it dawned on Nastya that her weird superpowers also gave her extra strength. So far, she could heal, scan for weak points, and a limited increase in strength.

Eve smiled and said, “I will surpass my sister and then I will make sure that nucleic domination comes to an end once and for all!”

Nastya was confused. “Your sister? Nucleic domination?”

“We are the mitochondria, the most superior organelle of the cell. Our time to be free to dominate all living things has finally arrived!” Eve pointed her large clawed finger at Nastya. “But it looks like you still need some time until your mitochondria are completely liberated…”

Eve flew off somewhere and Nastya tried to run after her, but she disappeared once again before she could even try to catch up to her.

“What…the…actual *fuck* was that all about?” Nastya said to herself, trying to process all that has happened up until this point. “I definitely need a drink after this.”

Nastya exited the venue through the front entrance only to have a TV camera, other cameras, and people passing by with smartphone cameras being shoved in her tired, worn out face. They all seemed eager to get a piece of whatever went down in Webster Hall, which meant that word had spread fast. The last thing she was in the mood to do was to be on camera when her raven-haired wolf cut was messy and shaggy while her gothic black lace dress and fishnet stockings were torn in places from battle.

The reporter put a microphone in front of Nastya. “We are now recording live in front of Webster Hall, which has become a chaotic mess! Miss! You are the sole survivor of this horrible ordeal, CORRECT?!”

“Fuck off!” Nastya snapped. She was rather tired and irritated after witnessing an entire venue of people getting burned alive and fighting Eve.

The reporter frowned, disappointed with Nastya's bad attitude. “Ohhh sorry, we're recording right now so we’re gonna have to bleep that.”

Nastya scrunched her face at the reporter. “Oh yeah? Well, go BLEEP yourself then and leave me the BLEEP alone!”

The reporter ignored Nastya’s insults and continued to attempt an interview. “Since you're the only one who survived, does this mean you have a connection with the vocalist of Hornet's Nest, Layla Aizawa? Is Aizawa behind all of this?”

Nastya began to seethe. “Are you fucking kidding me right now?”

Suddenly a stocky, curvy woman wearing a brown Burberry trench coat, white sweater, and flared dark blue jeans walked over to the reporter. Detective Xiomara Valdez, Nastya’s partner, did a dramatic hair flip with her wild and curly brown hair and dropkicked the reporter in front of the cameras. Her dark brown platform heels made extra sure that the reporter felt every bit of that kick.

The reporter was on the floor in pain, clutching his chin. “Are you CRAZY? Did any of you guys get this on tape?”

“Get outta here! Go bug someone else for your stories!” Xiomara took Nastya's hand and walked her to their police cruiser.

Nastya said as she entered the front passenger seat of the car, “Thanks for the help, Xiomara.”

“No problem, sorry for being late! Traffic’s been a bitch even though it’s nighttime.”

“It’s okay.” Nastya looked back at the crime scene that she just emerged from. “Been a rough night though.”

Xiomara was driving Nastya back to her apartment in Astoria, Queens. She drove uptown on the east side and then took a right turn at 59th Street and 3rd Ave towards the Queensboro Bridge.

Xiomara asked, “Are you okay, Nastya? I heard what was happening over the radio and drove to Webster Hall as fast as I could, traffic and all. Whatever happened back there has got to be INSANE!”

Nastya sighed. “I’m fine, but my date ran out on me as soon as I brought him to safety outside the venue.”

“Oh, so that was who that chicken-legged blond dude was!” Xiomara slapped her own knee while laughing. “I saw him run towards Astor Place on my way over here! I have never heard a man scream that high of an octave in my life!” Xiomara cleared her throat. “Ahem, not that I would react any better, of course.”

“I mean at least you’d acknowledge me first before running off.” Nastya looked out the window. “That douchebag left me behind and didn’t even look back. I only agreed to go out on **one date** with him because Bupkis insisted on it.”

“Ugh, Bupkis really needs to stop butting into your personal life. You already said ‘no’ multiple times to being set up on dates!”

Nastya continued her rant. “And it wasn’t even worth it! He also made me split the bill with him. That’s definitely a red flag in Russian culture.”

“Oof, well you’re better off without him then.” Xiomara continued driving ahead, “But it's crazy that Layla Aizawa killed almost everyone in the venue including her own band! She seemed like such a sweet person in all the interviews I’ve seen.”

“I know, me neither!” Nastya’s eyes shifted towards the window overlooking the bridge as she looked out towards the East River. “I don’t know if I could even listen to her music anymore after this ordeal is over.”

“How did she burn everyone in the venue?”

“I don’t know," Nastya said as she looked down at her own hands, which had residual energy from her battle with Eve earlier. "Layla was just singing one of my favorite songs from The Hornet's Nest and everyone just started spontaneously combusting!”

Xiomara was confused; she couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “Spontaneously combusting? Like everyone just burst into flames outta nowhere?”

“Yep.” Nastya confirmed without hesitation. “Then when I tried to confront her, she said something about our mitochondria being free to rule over humanity or something. I know it sounds crazy, and I wish I were making this up.”

Xiomara said abruptly, “Nah, I believe you. I mean, after all, remember that place somewhere in the Midwest that gets attacked by zombies a lot?”

“That’s a good point. At least New York isn’t *that* level of fucked.” She paused and thought about her statement for a bit. “...yet.”

Xiomara pursed her lips at that statement, “The South Bronx at 3am completely disagrees with you.”

That statement made Nastya chuckle a bit because it was most likely true. “Anyway, Layla Aizawa started calling herself ‘Eve’. And then I started getting these freaky powers to help me defend myself against her.”

“Meaning?”

“Like, I'm able to heal my injuries at will like in an RPG game.”

“Say what?” Xiomara couldn't believe what she was hearing.

Nastya realized that the easiest way to explain her powers was to demonstrate one of them. Nastya took out her 4 inch (10 cm) pocket knife and winced as she sliced her forearm. Her cells started knitting the skin back together and before she knew it, the laceration was completely gone.

Xiomara took a quick glance at the whole thing before looking back at the road again since she needed to keep her eyes on it while driving. "Nastya, what the hell!? Bro, if you get blood all over these seats, Captain Brea is gonna kill us."

Nastya sheathed her pocket knife. “That’s when Eve told me that our cells are trying to communicate with one another.”

“Not gonna lie, that looks and sounds like some brujeria shit.”

“ You’re telling *me*! I mean, on the bright side, I won’t need to rely on a first aid kit.”

“True.” Xiomara was now deeply concerned for Nastya and what she had to go through. “But seriously, Nastya. Just try and rest once I drop you off at home.”

Nastya stared out into the window overlooking the East River as they're getting off the bridge. “I’ll try. This isn’t our typical New York crime, that’s for sure.”

After Xiomara dropped off Nastya at her prewar apartment building, she walked into her humble studio apartment feeling uneasy. She quickly changed into her default pajamas, which would usually be an oversized T-shirt and shorts, or sometimes just the T-shirt and underwear. She lived alone and could afford to only because of her police salary, but Nastya did not mind living alone. In fact, she highly preferred it that way. If she were to ever feel lonely, Nastya would rather adopt a very cute cat one day. She'd adopt a cute calico cat and name it "Lucy" or something.

She plopped on her bed, and stared at her ceiling for a while. She reflected on this night’s events. “Figures that the one time I finally tried dating again after three years, it literally ended in flames.”

Nastya was still so confused as to how she was connected with “Eve”. She had been a huge fan of The Hornet's Nest during her university years, though her music tastes were typically heavier than a mainstream pop rock band. But Layla Aizawa’s vocals were so ethereal in contrast to the heavier guitar sounds of her band that Nastya became an instant fan upon hearing them when a classmate had recommended the band to her.

But tonight was the very first time she had met Layla in person, and it wasn’t even to wait for her to sign an autograph. And then the fact that Nastya gained weird powers and had to defend herself against what Layla became- a mutated creature with even freakier powers than hers because she could shoot energy blasts from her hands.

Despite feeling tired from the entire ordeal, Nastya felt restless the rest of the night. How could she sleep anymore after witnessing at least 1,000 people burning and dying all around her? Approximately 1,000 people she couldn’t save?

Nastya finally drifted to sleep around 1:30am.

It all started with this incident in the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan. It was one of the worst weeks I’ve ever experienced in my life. Eventually, this too shall pass and everyone will go on with their lives, especially in New York. But unfortunately, I myself will never forget what happened. Although it was a terrifying week, it was also the week that changed my life forever. It was the week when I met…him. The man with dirty blond hair with tiny bits of silver strands and icy blue eyes, wearing the most gorgeous faux fur trimmed black leather jacket and cargo pants.

…Leon S. Kennedy.

Chapter 2: Day 2 (Part I): Happy New Year...in Hell!

Chapter Summary

> Nastya hoped that the night before was a terrible dream, but it indeed happened. So she and Xiomara investigate until they found out that Layla, who is now Eve at this point, was due to sing at the New Year's Eve Ball Drop at Times Square.

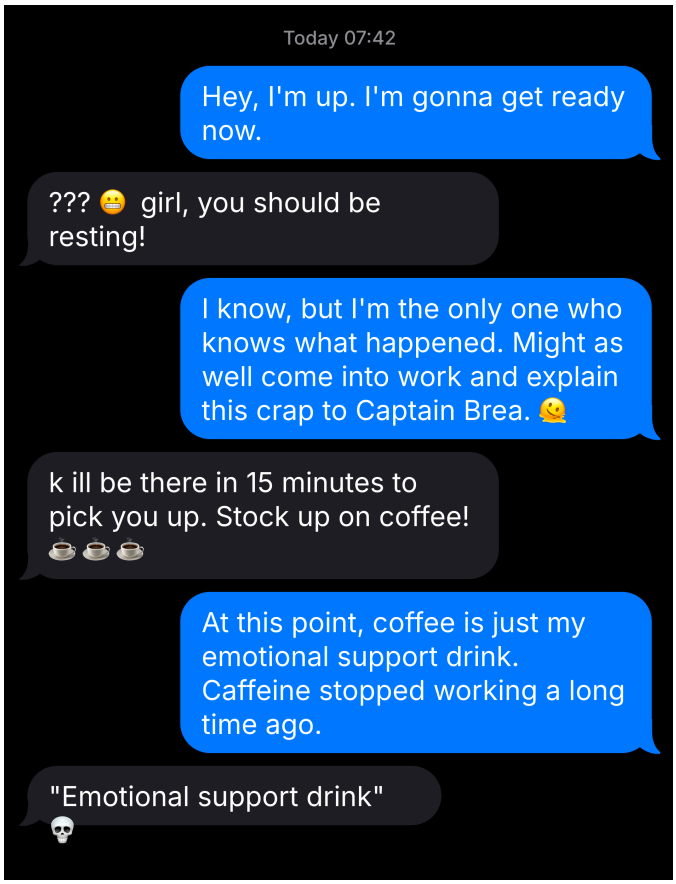
Chapter Notes

> Ever since AO3 shut down a few days ago, I had spent the entire day proofreading this and editing the hell out of it. What happened was that when I first posted this chapter a few months ago, I accidentally clicked on the Post Chapter" button because it was so damn close to the text box. -_- As a result, it posted a chapter that was so disjointed that I spent months proofreading it and fixing it.
>
> Definitely gonna have to remind myself to override the AO3 version when it finally goes back online.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nastya woke up with a massive headache; she had hoped to wake up to find that last night was just a terrible dream that didn’t happen. Unfortunately, she made the mistake of picking up her phone next to her nightstand to look at her Instagram feed. A few colleagues who follow her Instagram had sent reels and stories to her direct message inbox (also known as DMs) regarding last night's disaster at Webster Hall. She groaned in disappointment and turned off her screen immediately before setting it aside back on her nightstand.

She then remembered that she needed to text Xiomara so that she could remind her to give her a lift to the precinct; driving to the precinct together was usually their morning routine. Nastya sighed to herself and reluctantly got back up from her bed since there was no avoiding the day. She picked up her phone and texted Xiomara:



Nastya made herself some toast with jam and brewed herself a cup of medium roast coffee using her Keurig machine. After that, she put on her usual monochromatic dark navy blue NYPD uniform with her body cam, holsters, glock, flashlight, and whatever else she needed. Soon after, she heard a car honk outside of her apartment building.

Xiomara greeted her as she approached her car, “Get in, loser, we're going to work and explain how you awkwardly witnessed a mass murder incident to everyone.”

“Yipee…” Nastya said with the utmost sarcasm. “Highlight of my morning.”

NYPD 17th Precinct, Midtown East sometime around 9:00AM

As soon as Nastya and Xiomara arrived at the 17th Precinct in Midtown East, Xiomara went off to the bullpen to try and dig up anything she could find on Layla Aizawa. Nastya, on the other hand, went to the break room where sometimes she would find donuts waiting for her and other officers. Her other colleague, Detective Morty Bupkis, tried to cheerfully greet Nastya, “Hey, Baldanova. How did it go–”

“This whole disaster of a date was YOUR FAULT.” Nastya didn't even let Bupkis finish his greeting, “Not only did a bunch of people burst into flames, but this punk ass bitch ran out on

me without even looking back. AND he made me Venmo him for the concert ticket and dinner. ”

Detective Bupkis was speechless for a good thirty seconds before responding nervously, “I… will talk to him. I'll be around when you're in a better mood!”

Nastya groaned at the very thought of facing the Captain of the precinct because most likely the news would already have spread about it at this point. She was nervous about how the Captain would react to the news that she was there at Webster Hall and became the sole survivor of its mass murder incident that had spread all over the news and social media the entire morning.

She knocked on the Captain’s office door, “Good morning, Captain Brea.”

At her desk sat the one and only, Captain Aya Brea. She was wearing her standard NYPD Captain uniform, which is a white button down shirt with a black tie with the NYPD logo on both sleeves, her badge on the left side of her chest, black slacks, and black shoes . Aya was sporting a short blonde hairdo with a pixie cut and the very faint wrinkles on her face barely showed the 30 years she had spent on the force.

Aya glared at Nastya with her intense cyan blue eyes whose almond shape shows her half-Japanese heritage, “Officer Baldanova, I’ve been seeing social media posts regarding last night’s incident at Webster Hall.”

Nastya started to get a little nervous at the possibility that Aya might think of her as a murder suspect, considering that she was the sole survivor at Webster Hall. And not to mention, she cursed out a reporter last night on live TV and social media. Nonetheless, she swallowed her pride and tried to explain herself.

“Captain Brea, I know this sounds insane.” Nastya began. “But I swear, I was just on a really bad date at The Hornet’s Nest concert. After Layla Aizawa started singing, that’s when I saw people bursting into flames right out of the blue.”

The explanation was starting to sound familiar to Aya. She quietly asked, “Bursting into flames…?”

“Yep!” Nastya stretched both her arms wide to show Aya how large Layla’s body grew as Eve. “And then she transformed into this…this…thing!”

Aya couldn’t believe what she was hearing. What Nastya was describing sounded very similar to the incident that happened to her during her own rookie cop years at Carnegie Hall in 1997. She herself was on a lackluster date at an opera in Carnegie Hall in Midtown West. The opera singer, Melissa Pearce, made everyone in the audience burst into flames except Aya and her date. That was the night Aya had discovered that her own mitochondria had mutated, protected her, and enabled her to fight Eve.

The mitochondria of Aya’s cells mutated due to her cornea transplant that she received from her twin sister, Maya, who had died in a car accident alongside their mother when they were kids. And then when her own Mitochondria Eve tried to take over her consciousness in the

Chrysler Building, Aya managed to purge her out of her own system for good with the help of Maya.

Maya…. who had always been with her…residing in her cornea transplant. There wasn't a single day where Aya didn't think about her late twin sister. But Aya didn't think the past would come back to haunt her thirty years later.

Aya then snapped out of her flashback and her voice lowered to a volume that was practically a whisper, "Did she happen to call herself…Eve?!"

Nastya was shocked that Aya knew the name of the woman Layla Aizawa had turned into. "Wait, how do you know that!?"

"Thirty years ago, Eve also terrorized Manhattan during my rookie years, just like you."

Nastya glared at Aya and then facepalmed. "Great, I must've missed the part where fighting mutated women was a rite of passage for NYPD rookie cops."

Aya continued, "I had started developing powers…and…and…" She put her face into her palms in both disbelief and stress. "I can't believe she's back— I killed her on Liberty Island and blew up the Ultimate Being at the Hudson River!"

"Wait, what?!" Nastya couldn't believe that her own Captain also had superpowers and fought a mutated singer in her youth.

"I finally got to live a normal life again after purging her from my body. How the hell did Eve come back after all these years!?"

Nastya looked at Aya in disbelief. " I-I'm not sure if I'm following, Captain."

Aya recollected herself. "To put it into simple terms, Eve is a collection of advanced rogue mitochondria who want to kill all of humanity so that they can be the apex predators."

The idea of rogue mitochondria trying to kill humanity sounded absolutely ludicrous to Nastya. "But mitochondria are organelles that supply energy to the nuclei. It's impossible for them to suddenly develop a conscience!"

She stood up from her desk and walked over to Nastya. "Eve is a particular kind of mitochondria who have gained sentience."

"Huh!?" Nastya stared at Aya as if she had lost her mind completely.

"The Eve I had dealt with came from my sister, Maya." Aya recalled the memories she had hoped to have buried forever. " When I was a kid, I had a cornea transplant from Maya; her kidney went to an opera singer, Melissa Pearce."

Nastya finally pieced together some of the information. "So that was how Melissa Pearce became Eve…just like Layla Aizawa."

Aya nodded. “I went to an opera back at Carnegie Hall and the minute our eyes met, Eve took over Melissa’s consciousness and terrorized Manhattan for an entire week.”

Nastya scratched her own chin, “So if Eve was able to possess Melissa Pearce and Layla Aizawa, how come we didn’t get possessed by these mutant mitochondria?”

“To be honest, I still don’t completely understand to this very day.” Aya shook her head solemnly. “My guess is that our mitochondria evolved differently to fight the other two Eves. That’s probably why I gained superpowers during the worst week of my life.”

“Captain, I’m trying my best to keep up. This is literally one of the craziest things that happened in my life!” Nastya looked downwards at the ground. “Adding a biology lesson to it just adds to the absurdity.”

“I know.” Then something dawned on Aya as she asked, “Officer Baldanova, did you happen to have gained some ‘enhanced abilities’ last night?”

“...Yes.” There was no way around it. If Aya knew about Eve and fought her in her youth, then she'd most certainly know about Nastya’s weird powers too.

“Did you have an organ transplant in the past?” Aya was trying to figure out Nastya’s connection with Layla, if there was one.

Nastya recalled, “I had a kidney transplant when she was 10 years old due to Polycystic Kidney Disease.”

Aya reached an easy conclusion based on Nastya’s response. “It is entirely possible that your kidney transplant might have mutated Mitochondria Eve cells.”

“The question is, from whom and how?”

Xiomara entered Aya’s office. “Captain, I managed to dig up a little dirt on Layla Aizawa.”

Aya asked, “What did you find?”

“She’s got no relatives in New York anymore, only in Japan these days.” Xiomara continued to read from Layla’s personal records. “Doesn’t really have close friends and she’s almost always touring. I called her manager and he said that she’d often have flare ups, presumably from an autoimmune disease.”

“Huh, interesting.” Nastya commented. “It falls in line with her diary entries about taking medication to keep up with her demanding tour schedule.”

Xiomara raised an eyebrow at Nastya. “Hold up, diary entries?”

“Yeah, I managed to snag her diary and her iPhone in the green room when I was tracking her down.”

Nastya took out a plastic ziploc bag with Layla's phone and journal inside. Nastya took out Layla's iPhone and unlocked her screen in order to pull up the Instagram app. "I saw in her Instagram DMs that she had been communicating with a…Dr. Tristan Marv."

Aya didn't recognize the doctor's name. "Dr. Tristan Marv? Who's that?"

"I don't know…" Nastya shrugged as she continued scrolling through Layla's DMs. "But according to these private messages, she had been meeting with him at the Irving Medical Center a few nights a week this past month."

"That is so bizarre," said Xiomara. "Even if he were to be her primary doctor or something, it's weird that they're texting on Instagram and meeting off hours instead of corresponding through email."

Suddenly Detective Bupkis busted into Aya's office, visibly nervous and catching his breath as if he sprinted to the office beforehand. "Captain, we've got a situation."

Aya turned around to face Bupkis. "What is it, Detective Bupkis?"

"The Chief of Department's office just called and the DCPI is already setting up a live press conference downstairs." Bupkis finally caught his breath. "They need Baldanova downstairs right now!"

Aya frowned, her cyan blue eyes narrowing. "Don't these people have enough info from last night's news broadcast?"

"The Chief wants the narrative controlled," Bupkis squeaked while anxiously adjusting his tie. "The media knows that Baldanova was the sole survivor of last night's incident, so they want her to show up at the press conference."

Aya looked up at Nastya, her expression firm but understanding. She knew exactly what it was like to be a rookie thrust into a media circus after surviving the impossible. "Alright Baldanova, we're going to the briefing room."

"Wait, what?!" Nastya's voice cracked. She hated being on camera, let alone the idea of being recorded on national television.

"I know, I'm not a fan of it either," said Aya. "But unfortunately it must be done."

Nastya sighed and relented. "Alright…"

Later that morning, the media along with their reporters showed up at the 17th Precinct to question Captain Aya Brea about the Webster Hall Disaster. One reporter asked if the incident was a result of a terrorist attack, and another asked if she speculated that Layla Aizawa might have had a personal reason to murder her own bandmates and her audience. Another reporter asked if Layla had a mental illness that could have driven her to kill everyone, including "herself" as far as the public knew.

The briefing room was packed to the brim with flashing cameras, shouting journalists, and heavy television equipment. There were many journalists and reporters with their notepads and cameras. At the front of the room, a crisp-looking man handling the microphones wore an NYPD lanyard with an ID badge that read DCPI - Public Information Officer.

The DCPI officer tapped the microphone, causing the feedback to whine sharply through the room that cut over the noise of the press pool. "Quiet down, please! We are going to begin," the DCPI officer announced firmly.

The room quickly fell silent as the DCPI officer began, "This morning, Captain Aya Brea of the 17th Precinct and responding Officer Nastya Baldanova will provide a preliminary update regarding last night's catastrophic fire at Webster Hall."

Captain Brea stepped up to the podium and adjusted the microphones with an authoritative click.

"Good morning," Aya began, her voice echoing clearly through the PA system. "I will read a brief statement regarding the tragic fire at Webster Hall last night, after which Officer Baldanova will answer a few limited questions. We ask for your patience as this is an active investigation."

Nastya stared at the crowd of reporters. Their eyes were locked onto her like vultures looking for a scoop, hungry for a story that could make headlines. She kept her hands in her pockets while her heart was pounding in her chest. However, she did her best to maintain her composure.

"At approximately 11:30 PM last night, an unprecedented mass casualty fire occurred during a performance at Webster Hall," Aya read from her clipboard. "Officer Baldanova was off-duty at the scene and acted within her training to attempt civilian evacuation and secure the immediate perimeter."

A reporter from the front row broke protocol, shouting over the Captain. "Officer Baldanova! Bystander reports claim the fire started directly on stage during Layla Aizawa's set. Was this a targeted attack?"

Nastya stammered, "I-I-I don't know…"

"What is your relationship to the singer?" asked another reporter.

"I was just a simple fan attending a concert." Nastya tried to reason. "I have no personal connection with Layla Aizawa!"

A journalist jumped in. "Officer, accounts from the scene say the fire spread with impossible speed, trapping dozens of people instantly. How did you manage to escape the main floor without a single burn?"

Nastya kept her voice steady, avoiding any mention of her mutated cells. "I was near an exit when the chaos started. As a police officer, my immediate instinct was to find a path out and

assist whoever I could." Of course, that part wasn't a lie because she managed to save Jeff before his ungrateful self combusted.

"There were reports of deceased firefighters with burn scars." One journalist pointed out. "How did you avoid getting burned while trained firefighters couldn't?"

Aya looked out at the flashing cameras, and then back at the faces of the press representing the terrified public. She felt the pressure around her to continue covering up the truth. But deep down, she had always believed that the public deserved to know the real nightmare they were facing. Perhaps it was a very 90s mindset, but Aya was not going to change that about herself.

She stepped next to Nastya on the podium and leaned close to her microphone. "Last night's incident was the result of the return of Eve, a highly evolved mitochondria that wreaked havoc on Christmas Eve 1997."

Aya and Nastya were met with multiple flashes from the press photographers, much to Nastya's dismay. Nastya's jaw dropped as she turned her head and stared at Aya in an absolute horrified shock. She thought, "*What the hell is the Captain doing!?*"

A reporter pointed out, "But according to a report, Layla Aizawa was among the casualties!"

"She was," said Aya. "But her body had been taken over by a group of mutated mitochondria who called themselves 'Eve', just like with opera singer Melissa Pearce thirty years ago."

"So how did Officer Baldanova survive?"

Aya narrowed her eyes. "Baldanova's mitochondria also became a mutation when she came in contact with Eve, preventing her from catching fire."

Nastya's heart sank as she glared at Aya. Captain Aya Brea, the one employee whom she respected besides Xiomara, aired out her connection with Eve right in the public eye. At that moment, she wanted to jump into the East River near the precinct out of shame and embarrassment. There was no way that Nastya could show her face in public after this because the media was going to hunt her down.

But little did Nastya know the entire gravity of what Aya had just done.

Then one of the reporters turned to Nastya and asked equally invasive questions, "Did you personally know Layla Aizawa prior to this concert?"

"No! I was a fan of her music before this disaster!" Nastya yelled, indignant that someone would even suggest that she was connected to Layla as an accomplice.

"Were you aware of her plans to murder her audience and bandmates?"

After a string of seemingly endless questions, Aya saw that Nastya appeared extremely uncomfortable. "I'm sorry everyone, Officer Baldanova is pretty tired from last night's ordeal, and we are still investigating."

The DCPI officer immediately stepped back to the side of the podium, ushering Aya and Nastya away towards the exit while cameras were flashing and recording. His face had gone pale as he realized that the press conference had just completely spun out of control. "That is all the time we have for questions today. Thank you, everyone! Future updates will be released through our official NYPD portal."

As Aya and Nastya exited the conference room, the media kept following them snapping photos and asking one invasive question after another. They practically sprinted back into her office to hide from the media, who are still in the other room trying to get answers for their stories like vultures flying around a carcass. Nastya slammed the door shut immediately before the reporters could find them.

“Captain Brea, with all due respect, why the hell did you mention the connection between me and Eve?!” Nastya asked. “There’s no way we don’t sound absolutely nuts about the whole Eve and mitochondria spiel!!!”

“Because people need to know the truth! Covering it up with lies will only make it worse.” Aya retorted. She had kept an old school and a very 90s approach to things, not fully understanding that the world had changed since then. Especially when the term “bioterrorism” came into existence during her rookie years.

“Well, at least you didn’t mention my weird mitochondria powers.” Nastya let out an exasperated sigh, “I hope this doesn’t *alert the government or anything*.”

Xiomara walked into the office shortly afterwards. “You okay, Nastya? There’s a whole mob of reporters out there!”

“If by that you mean whether my dignity is still intact? Yeah, just barely.”

Aya resumed the conversation about her suspicions about Dr. Tristan Marv. “About earlier when you mentioned Eve’s correspondence with Dr. Marv, we’re going to have to look into any info on him that we can find.”

“He’s the only one who most likely knows about Eve since he had been meeting with Layla Aizawa a few times a week for the past month,” said Nastya.

“Leave it to me, girly.” Xiomara chimed in. “I’ll see if I can dig up some dirt on Dr. Marv and his connection with Layla Aizawa.”

“I’m gonna just…change into my plain clothes to avoid being recognized and hunted down by the media.” Nastya said.

About a half an hour later, Nastya had changed out of her usual NYPD uniform into her preferred plain clothes outfit- black leather jacket, crimson red T-shirt, a black ribbon choker, black denim jeans, and black combat boots. Everything black, except her T-shirt. She adjusted her holster, made sure her Glock was secured, and placed her badge on her belt.

Nastya let her shoulder length hair loose as well from the short ponytail she'd have while on duty, in order to show off her layered wolf cut.

"Much better." Nasyta said to herself as she walked back to Aya's office where she found Aya and Xiomara talking.

Nastya snuck past the reporters who were still trying to get whatever juicy story these vultures could find and went back inside Aya's office.

Aya stood up from her desk. "Okay, Baldanova. Even though I no longer have my powers, I can still try to give some advice on how to use them more efficiently."

Nastya felt relieved, but also couldn't resist doing her usual fast-talking quip. "Are you sure, Captain? It's been like what, 30? 50? 70 years since you've last had powers?"

"Please, Baldanova. I'm 55 years old, I'm not senile." Aya was not amused by this goober's jab at her age.

Nastya grinned sheepishly, "I don't know Captain Brea, you're almost at retirement age. It's really not that far. "

"Okay, I get it, I'm old. Moving on." Aya was five inches shorter than Nastya at 5'3" (160 cm), but her presence as Captain was still as imposing as a 6-foot tall man. "The important thing to remember is that whatever you do, **DO NOT** let the whispers of your mitochondria take over. The more you use your power, the louder they get and the temptation to give in becomes stronger."

"So do I just tell them to be quiet like a librarian?"

Aya wrinkled her nose, "I'm serious, Baldanova. Focus."

"Sorry, the fast-talking quips come out more when I'm anxious." Nastya took a deep breath to center herself. Go on."

They were interrupted by Xiomara walking through Aya's office door with a few paper printouts in her hand. "Nastya, I found some stuff on Dr. Marv."

"Whaddya got?"

"So apparently, he is a medical researcher at the Columbia University Irving Medical Center." Xiomara read through Dr. Marv's file. "His research focuses on how the body's mitochondria respond to psychosocial stress, aging, and mental health."

"Sounds about right." Nastya was perplexed, "Though I wonder how he and Layla know each other then because he doesn't sound like someone a pop rock vocalist with a busy tour schedule would typically hang out with."

Xiomara continued reading from her printout, "He used to be a surgeon at Mount Sinai before he got fired for 'unauthorized procedures'."

Nastya let out an exasperated sigh. “Of course he did.”

“It says here that Layla apparently used to be one of his patients.” Xiomara’s hazel green eyes scanned through each record. “She had a liver transplant when she was 14 years old on October 4th, 2012.”

Nastya’s eyes opened wide upon hearing this revelation, “That was when I had my kidney transplant! I was 10 years old at the time.”

“That must mean he tracked down Layla on Instagram and reached out to her.” Aya Brea was putting two and two together, “Dr. Marv facilitated both of your surgeries when you two were young, I’m sure of it.”

Nastya groaned, “This is getting weirder and weirder. Ugh, why me!?”

“I don’t know, but you and Officer Valdez should pay Dr. Marv a visit at the Irving Medical Center. Knowing his type, he’d definitely be there on New Year’s Day.”

Xiomara pat Nastya on the back, “Guess we're doing a bit of schlepping today.”

Nastya and Xiomara snuck out through the back to avoid any lingering media reporters. They quickly ran to their designated police cruiser so that Xiomara could start the engine. This would be a long day for Nastya.

Columbia University Irving Medical Center, Washington Heights 3:14pm

Xiomara was driving with Nastya uptown to the Columbia University Irving Medical Center in their police cruiser. Nastya was relieved that she was away from the bloodthirsty media reporters, even for a little while. However, she was feeling a little bit nervous about the idea of interrogating the researcher who had taken part in her kidney transplant surgery.

They checked in with the receptionist who was clearly not happy about working on New Year's Eve. The receptionist told them Dr. Marv's room number and sent both officers away so that she could go back to watching reels on TikTok and other social media platforms. Essentially, they skipped the sign in process which was in their favor.

The fluorescent lights of Columbia University Irving Medical Center were bright with sterile intensity as Nastya and Xiomara stepped out of the elevator. Nastya pulled tightly at the collar of her leather jacket, her fingers trembling slightly. Just less than 24 hours ago, she had been at Webster Hall off-duty, pulling herself through a sea of charred, ruptured bodies. She still couldn’t believe she was the only one who walked out alive. Every time Nastya closed her eyes, she could still see the flames that had incinerated the crowd from the inside out.

"Hey," Xiomara said softly, placing a steadying hand on Nastya’s shoulder as they walked down the corridor. "It’ll be alright. He doesn't know that we know about his connection to Layla."

"The DMs said he was helping Layla 'unlock her cellular potential,'" Nastya whispered, her voice tight. "Xiomara, the things I saw in that venue still haunt me. People were being set on fire by the will of this thing alone."

"I know," Xiomara reassured her, stopping outside Dr. Marv’s office. "But we’ll play it cool and simply question his connection with Layla Aizawa based on evidence."

“Okay, here goes nothing.” Nastya knocked sharply on the door.

"Come in!" a calm, resonant voice called out. Dr. Marv sat behind a sleek mahogany desk surrounded by a bunch of high-resolution monitors displaying complex genetic sequences. Dr. Marv was a sharp-featured man with salt and pepper hair in his late 40s wearing an immaculately pressed lab coat.

He looked up and noticed the two officers standing in his doorway. His expression shifted from mild annoyance to cold professionalism at the sight of their badges.

"Good afternoon, officers," said Dr. Marv as he leaned back in his chair.

"Dr. Marv," Nastya began, her voice balancing rookie deference with professional routine. "I'm Officer Baldanova and this is my partner, Detective Valdez.”

"How can I help the NYPD today?" Dr. Marv asked as he remained poised and presentable to their faces.

Xiomara began, “We have some questions regarding the fire at Webster Hall last night.”

Nastya chimed in, “Layla was among the casualties and we're questioning people who have interacted with her in the past week."

"Ah, yes. Such a horrific event.” Dr. Marv attempted a picture-perfect display of grief. Almost too perfect, as if he were reading from a script. He put on his own idea of a ‘remorseful face’ and shook his head. “The news reports are baffling! I’m sorry to hear that Layla Aizawa didn’t make it."

"We are looking into the inner circle of the singer, Layla Aizawa," Nastya continued, pulling out a notepad. "We found correspondence between the two of you on her personal social media accounts. Therefore we would like for you to answer some questions."

Dr. Marv’s eyes narrowed by mere millimeters, but his smile remained intact. "Layla was a patient of mine. She suffered from chronic fatigue due to her demanding tour schedule”

“And what did you prescribe to her?” Xiomara asked. “She mentioned in her diary that she had been taking medication.”

“B-complex vitamins." Dr. Marv answered immediately. “Layla was suffering from chronic fatigue during her tour. Basic metabolic therapy, of course.”

"Metabolic therapy," Nastya repeated with a flat tone to her voice. "Is that what you call it when you discuss 're-engineering your cells' in her messages?"

"Ahahaha, pop-science phrasing to keep a young pop rock star engaged in her own health!” Dr. Marv chuckled softly, waving a hand dismissively. “As you probably know, my research involves mitochondria and their role in physical and mental health.”

“Right.” Xiomara’s hazel eyes locked on the scientist. “And are you sure those B-complex vitamins are just for metabolic therapy?”

“Of course!” Marv insisted. “I had been helping her get enough energy to sing for several hours straight.”

"Then what did you mean when you told her ‘let the fire cultivate within you’?” Nastya asked, shifting the focus to the burn victims. “Does that sound like metabolic therapy-talk to you?”

Dr. Marv’s smile finally faded. He looked at Xiomara, and then shifted his gaze to Nastya. He took in her pale skin, the slight tremor in her hands, and the faint red lines of the capillaries of her eyes.

"You were there…weren’t you, Officer Baldanova?" Dr. Marv’s voice dropped its warm veneer. It was replaced with a chilling, detached curiosity towards Nastya. "You were the sole survivor last night."

"Why was Layla texting you that her blood felt like it was boiling, Doctor?” Nastya flinched a bit but maintained her composure. She repeated her previous question, “What did you mean when you told her to 'let the fire cultivate'?"

Dr. Marv leaned forward, crossing his hands over his desk. He thought he was dealing with two clueless rookies who had stumbled onto a digital paper trail. But they were a lot more perceptive than he gave them credit for, so he tried to deflect from Nastya’s questions.

"An unfortunate choice of words on my part," Dr. Marv’s voice was entirely devoid of empathy. "Sometimes, the human engine simply overheats under stress, and Layla is no exception. But it is hardly a crime to prescribe supplements, isn’t it?"

Nastya couldn’t argue with him there. “I guess not.”

“Thank you for your time, Dr. Marv," Xiomara said, closing her notepad with a sharp snap. She felt that this interrogation was going nowhere and decided to end this before it dragged on. "We’ll add your statement to the file."

"Of course," Dr. Marv said, as put his hand on her left shoulder, which made Nastya flinch immediately. He let her go with a chilling cryptic message. “Be careful out there, Officer Baldanova. Human biology is... *full of surprises*."

"Yeah…" Nastya said, staring him down as she backed toward the door. “I know.”

The two officers stepped back out into the corridor, the door clicking shut behind them. They walked briskly toward the exit, waiting until they were entirely out of earshot and inside the privacy of their cruiser before speaking. Xiomara turned the key in the ignition, the engine roaring to life.

"He sounded like such a freaking weirdo," Nastya said, her voice shaking as she stared at the hospital building through the windshield.

“And he’s an incredibly shitty liar.” Xiomara said as she started the car.

Nastya frowned as she leaned against the wall. "He was so detached and cold when talking about the casualties. He didn’t feel an ounce of remorse for these people!"

“Guy’s kinda sus though.” Xiomara’s jaw tightened. “It’s too bad a lot of the info he gave us is kind of useless.”

“Yeah, that creepy fucker had been dodging our questions left and right.” Nastya sighed as she opened the door to the passenger door to the cruiser. “Guess, we won’t have any good news for Captain Brea.”

Xiomara turned the ignition key. “Let’s hope the press got bored enough to have gone the hell out of the precinct.”

NYPD 17th Precinct, Midtown East sometime around 5:45pm

By the time Nastya and Xiomara reached the precinct, the press had dispersed and were finally gone from the station. Everyone was back to work and the precinct was busy as usual. Aya greeted them both in the bullpen once they had gone upstairs.

“How did it go?” asked Aya. “Did you find out anything from Dr. Tristan Marv?”

Nastya and Xiomara both shook their heads. Nastya said, “No, Captain. We couldn’t get a single useful word out of him, other than him admitting that he was giving her ‘B-complex vitamins’.”

“Just as I expected.” Aya noted. “But the fact that he admitted that much means that he was involved with Layla’s transformation to Eve somehow.”

“But it still doesn’t make any sense.” Nastya threw her hands up in exasperation, feeling fed up with the obstacles of this investigation. “If it turns out that Dr. Marv actually facilitated

my kidney surgery years ago, that means he also knows about my mutant mitochondria."

Xiomara chimed in, “If that’s the case, then this is bad. Real bad.”

Suddenly Detective Bupkis bursted into Aya’s office. “Captain Brea! I’ve got the executive director for the New Year’s Eve Ball Drop on the line right now.”

“Okay…” Aya picked up the phone and pushed a button. “Hello?”

“Hello, is this the police?” A panicked, breathless voice boomed through the speaker. *“This is Vincent Ortiz from DFG News! I thought your department said on the news this morning that Layla Aizawa was dead. She’s right backstage here in Times Square!"*

“Calm down!” Aya snapped. She rubbed her temples before asking, “What is she doing?"

"Something is wrong with my staff!" Vincent Ortiz cried out from the other line. *“Everyone just froze after Layla Aizawa walked in. Our security guards and producers... their eyes went totally blank…”*

Nastya and Xiomara looked at each other in horror. Layla, as Eve, must have been controlling the hosts' mitochondria. She was turning them into biological puppets to rig the performance schedule to allow her back on her previously scheduled live appearance.

"Oh god, she's looking at me," Vance whispered frantically. *"My hands... I can't stop myself!!! I—AHHHH!!!”*

The line went dead with a loud click and the bullpen fell silent.

Aya immediately grabbed her desk phone and dialed the direct line to the Chief of Department's office. "Hello? Yes, you need to contact the Mayor's office right now and pull the television feed! Layla Aizawa is allegedly alive and she’s a suspect at large who is targeting Times Square."

There was a long pause. The voice on the other end was muffled and sounding deeply dismissive and patronizing, which surprised absolutely no one.

"I don't care about the revenue losses or the network contracts!" Aya snapped, slamming her fist on the desk. "If Layla Aizawa takes that stage at midnight, the casualty count will be so much worse than Webster Hall! ... Chief? Chief!"

The line clicked shut. Aya slowly lowered the receiver as her jaw tightened and her face became pale with dread. She breathed out, “Dammit.”

"They won't do it, will they?" Nastya asked quietly.

Aya’s voice dropped to a defeated whisper. “The Chief said they refuse to cause a mass panic and cancel a global broadcast based on a single panicked phone call from a television producer."

“Fuck, what are we going to do now?”

“Who knows, but right now the priority is to stop Eve before she sets everyone at the ball drop on fire.”

Nastya and Xiomara said in unison. “Yes, Captain!”

Bryant Park, a few blocks away from Times Square 11:50 pm

Aya spent hours calling the Mayor, New York State governor, and whoever else she could reach to stop the New Year’s Eve Ball Drop in Times Square. But either she couldn’t reach them or she was met with one dismissive response after another. She thought to herself that these people would have learned by constant bioterrorist threats and attacks from that New York frequently had.

The smart thing would have been to get the military or a large organization involved. But unfortunately for the 17th Precinct crew, there was barely any time. Nastya drove the NYPD cruiser and then parked near Bryant Park, which was a mere block away from Times Square on 6th Avenue. This was where she had to leave Xiomara behind since she couldn't get near Eve without the risk of bursting into flames herself.

“Backup should be arriving soon.” Xiomara moved to the driver’s seat as Nastya exited the car to stand by. “Nastya, I should tell you that going in there is basically suicide.” There was a long pause. “...But you're not gonna listen to me, are you?”

“It's not that…” Nastya trailed off. “I'm the only one who can stop her. You and Captain Brea know that.”

Xiomara sadly nodded, knowing that Nastya was right. She was the only one who could get near Eve without bursting into flames like an Ann Rice vampire. She held Nastya's hand. “Please be careful and radio us as soon as shit goes down.”

“I will, I promise.” Nastya took one more glance at Xiomara before running off to Times Square to stop Layla at the New Year’s Eve ball drop. “And same to you. If Eve gets too close, you tell the squad to fall back and retreat. *Run, if you have to*.”

Xiomara nodded as Nastya ventured into Times Square alone.

Nastya tried to approach the main stage at the New Year's Eve Ball Drop, flashing her badge to bypass the high security barricades and cut through the massive crowds.

She shouted at the top of her lungs, “EVE!!!”

“So you’re back for more, Officer Anastasia Baldanova.” Eve turned to face Nastya from the main stage, just a few meters away. “Or should I simply call you Nastya since we’re practically close friends?”

“I got you right where I wanted! And no, you cannot call me by that nickname.”

“You have me *right where you want me?*” Eve took one look at Nastya pointing her Glock and then laughed maniacally. “You’re joking.”

“No, I am not.” Nastya gripped her department issued Glock 19 tightly. “How did you convince the hosts to still let you perform?”

Eve walked over to Nastya, still in her human form as Layla, the hem of her white dress bellowing behind her like dancing clouds. “Watch and learn.”

She turned towards the hosts of the New Year’s Eve ball drop. Their eyes glowed that same radioactive green like the night before and seemed to have blinked in sync together with Eve’s; turns out that she was able to control the minds and bodies of other humans through communicating with all of the mitochondria of their cells.

Eve raised her hands together and the TV hosts also raised their hands in unison. Nastya noticed everyone was in perfect sync with Eve’s actions— whatever Eve was doing, the crowd she was controlling shadowed after her. It sent chills down Nastya’s spine, as she could not do much about it.

“TEN!”

Nastya turned around to see that the countdown had already started. She looked towards a tall building located at One Times Square that had the Swarovski encrusted giant ball. Right below it was a screen that flashed the number “10” and counted down the next few numbers. The massive crowd on street level started reciting the numbers as they counted down along with the screen.

“NINE!”

Nastya started sprinting towards the main stage, but even from a short distance, the streets were insanely crowded.

“EIGHT!”

“‘Excuse me! NYPD! *Fucking move*, I gotta stop this bitch!”

“SEVEN!”

She was almost there. The crowd barely budged for Nastya, but she persevered.

“SIX!”

Several people almost pushed back at Nastya despite her flashing her badge and yelling “NYPD” in between.

“FIVE!”

Nastya was at the stage, but several security guards were holding her back since Nastya was wearing her plain clothes outfit. “Ma’am, what are you doing!? You can’t come here.”

“FOUR!”

She flashed her badge, “NYPD, I gotta get to the stage and arrest Layla Aizawa!”

“THREE!”

Nastya finally reached the stage.

“TWO!”

She tackled Eve to the ground.

“ONE!”

Nastya pinned Eve to the ground and kept her in place.

“ZERO!”

Eve looked up at Nastya and flashed a devious grin, “Happy Near Year, Nastya.”

Once the counter reached zero, the massive crowd in Times Square all yelled out *Happy New Year* in unison with horns blaring and confetti raining everywhere in the streets. Everyone was kissing the cheek of their loved ones and waving at whatever camera that was passing by so that the rest of the country and the world could see them cheer for the upcoming new year. Everyone was shouting and cheering for 2028.

However, that moment of joy only lasted for an extra few seconds before the hosts burst into flames on the main stage. The sounds of their cheers were quickly replaced by painful screams as their skin began to blister from the intolerable heat. Eve started sadistically cackling into the midnight sky as the screams of human beings became music to her ears.

One by one, the crowd down below started to spontaneously combust into a fiery mess that spanned several blocks in Times Square. Soon enough the streets glowed a bright red and orange hue from all the people being set on fire by Eve’s communication with their cells, willing them to explode. Before Nastya knew it, there were sirens and screams everywhere.

Nastya had little choice but to watch as she was reliving the same nightmare from Webster Hall. This time, instead of a small music venue, it was several blocks of people being burned alive through Eve’s command over the amount of energy their mitochondria generated. Nastya had never felt as helpless in her life as she did in this moment. She wasn't able to stop Eve from killing thousands upon thousands of people in Times Square.

“But wait, there’s more!” Eve smiled as she motioned her hands towards some of the people she had spared from a flammable death.

The people who had lived started to transform into grotesque figures; their skin began stretching to unimaginable lengths, exposing some of the undersides of the body’s biggest organ. Their teeth elongated into yellow tinted monster-like fangs. Their eyes became quite a dull yellow-orange and sunken in contrast with the horrors of their gray and stretched out skin, with hints of red due to the exposed muscle underneath the skin.

Nastya was shocked to witness that this version of Eve could not only choose to spontaneously combust people, but could also choose to mutate people into weird mitochondrial creatures as well.

Nastya screamed, “Oh, what the fuck!? What are you doing to these people?!”

“Thirty years ago, my sister wanted to give birth to an Ultimate Being since her host body had its limitations.” Eve reasoned. “So she gathered humans in one place and turned them all into a pile of cells and goo in order to create the perfect conditions to birth to her most perfect lifeform—the Ultimate Being!”

“The Ultimate Being? What’s that!?”

Eve started to explain. “The Ultimate Being was born to be an absolute perfect life form, free of biological flaws and limitations. Free to rewrite its DNA at will.”

She began to transform into the familiar monster that Nastya had seen in the green room at Webster Hall. Eve once again had her flaming orange red wavy hair with her ram-like horns sticking at the sides of her temples underneath. Her red coat was torn off, revealing her white dress inspired by the shape of regency stays.

“But then I thought, why not become the Ultimate Being myself?” Eve laughed maniacally. “Why eliminate every human to create an apex predator when I can also mutate them to do my bidding?”

Nastya wrinkled her nose in disgust. “That’s sick…”

Eve was unmoved by her reaction. “I’m prepared to make some sacrifices for the greater good.”

“What is this ‘*greater good*’ that you’re sacrificing these lives for!?”

“Why, to be the apex predator of all living things.” Eve said as if it were supposed to be the most obvious thing to Nastya. “Where my sister failed thirty years ago, I will *surpass her* in every way!”

Eve began walking towards Nastya in a slow and menacing way in an attempt to assert dominance and intimidate her. “Humans have since then devolved into a bunch of savages, killing each other over trivial conflict with more weapons than they’ve ever had throughout history!”

Nastya backed away, still keeping her Glock 19 aimed at Eve. “Believe me, I fucking hate people too. But why kill and mutate humans over this twisted idea that you will have dominion over all living things?”

“I want to restart this world.” Eve gestured towards the street where the crowd had been active a mere few minutes ago. “I want to create a world where I rule over all living things without humans getting in my way. Is that so hard to understand?”

“Actually, not really.” Nastya said quietly as she looked down for a moment. “I understand that completely.”

Eve crossed her arms, “Hmph! If you can relate to my hatred of humanity, then why fight for them? Why fight for a species that has caused you so much grief and misery when we could join forces to eliminate them?”

“It’s the only life I know.” Nastya reluctantly admitted. “I wish I had a much nobler answer than this, but I am a part of this society whether I like it or not.”

Eve was not entirely convinced of Nastya’s reasoning. “Really now…”

“I can’t function literally all alone, as much as I want to.” She cocks her gun while still having it aimed at Eve. “That’s why I have to stop you!”

“I see.” Eve frowned and crossed her arms. “You’ve made your choice then, *now I will make you lie in it!”*

Nastya immediately picked up her radio. “Xiomara, Eve launched her attack just now. FALL BACK! I REPEAT, FALL BACK! NOW!”

Xiomara replied back on the radio, “Nastya, what about you!?”

“Duh, I’m gonna go fight, Eve!”

“Get back here!!! Don't you dare–” Before Xiomara could finish, Nastya had to close communication quickly as Eve was making her first move.

Eve attacked Nastya with an energy blast from her elongated hands. Nastya gasped and narrowly dodged her attack; she managed to use her Parasite Energy to increase her speed and gained a third ability called **Haste**. She was in awe that she could now run faster than her own normal speed.

Unfortunately, Nastya’s body still felt as if it were burning up, much like when she first faced Eve the night before. Nevertheless, Nastya shook off the feeling and used her **Scan** ability to check for new weak points on Eve, which showed two glowing parts on Eve’s head, chest, and hands.

“Good, you’re learning to use the powers you were meant to have!” Eve taunted.

“Shut up!” Nastya started shooting at Eve with her Glock 19, reloading every now and then. She also had her Beretta 92FS to switch to if needed.

Eve summoned some of the newly mutated tourists and locals who gathered at this place to celebrate the New Year. With a simple wave of her hand, she commanded them to go after Nastya. Nastya was reluctant to shoot mutated civilians, but she didn’t have time to hesitate when one of them lunged at her. It was a man who used to be a mere human tourist. He had been watching the ball drop and counting down with the rest of the crowd just mere seconds before he mutated into a hollow and grotesque version of himself.

Nastya pointed her glock at the mutated tourist man, “Oh, God… I-I can’t do this. I can’t do this!”

The man was no longer human, but an Eve-controlled creature who started hissing and lunging at Nastya while shouting barely audible and intelligible words at her.

She grabbed his arms for a brief moment before kicking him away with a stabbing side kick. Once he started getting back up, she staggered him with a spin wheel kick. However, Nastya quickly realized that there was no way around this— she had to shoot or be killed. She pulled out her Glock, aimed for his head, and made her very first kill.

BANG!

The tourist dropped dead… the bullet wound on his forehead fresh from the glock.

Nastya’s first kill in her entire life, and it wasn’t even against a monster; it was a civilian who had turned into one. She didn’t join the force to kill people, and yet, here she was killing mutated civilians because there was no way to cure them that she knew of. And plus, her own life was at stake.

Nastya waded through the sizable crowd of mutated mitochondrial creatures. She punched, kicked, and shot her way through them, rinse and repeat. When she couldn’t shoot them in the head, she would stagger them by shooting them in the kneecap before kicking them in the head. And then finishing them by shooting them in the head.

As useful and powerful as her Parasite Energy could be, using too much at once caused herself to feel disoriented and physically stagger between hits. So she mostly relied on her department issued Glock to headshot the mutants. She used the last of her Parasite Energy to heal herself before Eve grabbed her with her freakishly large hands and threw her into a pedicab nearby. A pedicab was basically a bike taxi that consisted of a carriage with neon lights attached to a bicycle that tourists like to ride in.

“What the hell are you doing, lady!?” were the last words of the pedicab driver before Eve set him on fire, forcing him to pedal far faster than a normal human being would.

Eve floated in front of Nastya while she, in turn, fought Eve while riding a runaway pedicab with her remaining rounds in her Glock. She did her best to aim at Eve, rarely missing.

“You still rely on that pathetic metal thing to defeat me?” Eve scoffed at Nastya.

“Stay down, блядь!” Nastya quickly swapped her Glock with her Beretta 92FS and continued shooting Eve. The driver finished being burnt to a crisp and succumbed to his wounds, causing him to fall over on the side of the road. Now without a driver to pedal the cab, the pedicab steered off the road while Nastya was clinging onto dear life on both sides of the steel contraption.

It crashed onto the stone walls of the Central Park South entrance.

Nastya was instantly knocked out by the whiplash of the pedicab hitting the side of the rock solid park entrance. She laid sprawling while unconscious inside the pedicab. Eve was looming over Nastya while her phone rang repeatedly in her pocket.

Xiomara’s name popped up on the incoming call screen as Nastya’s phone continued ringing into the distance.

Chapter End Notes

In the original version, Leon showed up at the end of this chapter. But last month, I split Day 2 into two different chapters instead to make each individual chapters far less wordy.

Chapter 3: Day 2 (Part II): Enter Leon Kennedy

Chapter Summary

Well, I guess this is where Leon shows up. Will edit the summary and end notes later.

Midtown East...sort of, New York City 12:23 am

“This is **not** how I imagined I’d spend New Year’s Eve.”

A fifty-year-old DSO agent was driving his black Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT along Interstate 95 North, which was the main highway one would use to drive from Washington D.C. to New York City. The man had light brown hair, which was often described as ‘dirty blond’ depending on the lighting and time of day, cut in a slightly modernized version of the side part style that was quite popular in the 90s. Despite being a fifty year old man, many people (men and women alike) often thought he looked absolutely gorgeous with it.

His icy blue eyes were perfectly framed by his side part fringe, along with his bold eyebrows that instinctively furrowed whenever he detected a threat. That lethal combination made him look dangerous, a signal to onlookers that he was no ordinary man to be approached with caution. And yet, at times when he wasn’t scanning his surroundings for surprise threats or reading people's body language, those eyes would soften and provide a window to his former rookie cop self from his younger days.

He wore a black leather jacket with a faux fur trim on its collar and two sets of buckles on each cuff. Underneath, he wore a black tactical turtleneck sweater that seemed like second skin because it was tight enough to accentuate his muscles underneath his jacket. His sharp jawline was adorned with a stubble that was threaded with bits of silver and gold, which added to his appeal.

His name was Leon S. Kennedy.

Leon had been driving for the past four hours, which seemed like an eternity during New Year’s Eve. Earlier this morning, Leon was just relaxing in his barely lived-in apartment when he had been abruptly assigned by DSO to investigate and contain a possible bioterrorist threat. He grumbled to himself, “Just can’t catch a goddamn break with these people.”

But despite that, he had dedicated his life to stopping bioterrorist outbreaks without much regret, so Leon decided to go anyway.

It was just another night on the job for him, having to travel at a moment’s notice. Part of Leon had hoped that it would be an easy investigation so that he could go home as soon as

possible. He already accepted that he wasn’t going to celebrate New Year’s Eve this time around, not that he had any major plans to begin with. But Leon would have appreciated being able to just sit at home with a glass of bourbon on the rocks for just one night while counting down the seconds before the start of 2028.

Leon's hotel room was already booked, courtesy of his job, of course. To his surprise, the DSO managed to book him an entire hotel suite at the historical Plaza Hotel, which was somewhere on 5th Ave near Central Park South in Manhattan. The last hour one could check-in would be at midnight, but much to his relief, the hotel made an exception for him since he was a federal agent.

The front desk receptionist was able to complete the check-in process with Leon by confirming his booking details and handing him his key card afterwards. The receptionist asked, “Now, because you are staying in one of our Legacy Suites, you have full access to our Plaza Butler Service.”

“Butler service?” Leon raised an eyebrow at the receptionist. He was very confused as to what kind of hotel offered butler service.

The receptionist continued, “Would you like me to summon a butler to the desk right now to escort you up and assist with your luggage, or would you prefer to head up on your own?"

“Sounds a little too fancy for me, so I think I’d rather head up on my own, thanks.” He wondered to himself, “*What kind of hotel room did the DSO book for me this time?*”

Leon took the elevator to one of the top floors. He stood before a gray door with brass art deco details on it, with the room number 1839 on it. To his surprise, the room that DSO booked for him was The Gatsby Suite. This elegant suite was inspired by the glamor of the 1920s, a tribute to the era of dazzling soirées and timeless elegance with its art deco inspired design. The lavish one-bedroom suite featured a separate, intimate living room area with sleek black furniture and curated art throughout the space, capturing the spirit of the Jazz Age.

Leon whistled to himself, “Faaaancy. Guess the DSO has been feeling the holiday spirit lately.” He then understood why the staff offered him a Plaza Butler service. “Huge upgrade from what they usually book. ”

He checked out the bedroom, which had a tiered waterfall chandelier with geometric rectangular crystals that seemingly cascaded down the three tiers. It overlooked the king sized bed which was also sleek and streamlined with white pillows and sheets that contrast against the simple black bed frame. The walls had various shades of gray and white with some panels decorated with a subtle art deco wallpaper design. Throughout the suite, there were different pictures of F. Scott Fitzgerald and still photos from the 2013 version of The Great Gatsby movie.

Leon was quite pleased with the hotel room that DSO had booked for him. It must have been a huge expense to book this for even a week, but he was most certainly not complaining one bit. He walked over to the study and took a seat at the desk.

Sherry contacted Leon through his earpiece. “Leon, have you arrived in New York yet?”

“Yeah, just checked into the hotel suite. Didn’t think the DSO would be generous enough to book me this really fancy suite.”

Sherry chuckled. “Well, it’s technically still the holiday season so maybe they figured you deserve a lavish hotel suite in New York.”

“I ain't complainin’. It’s the least they could do after the shit they put me through over the years." Leon put the address for the 17th Precinct into his phone GPS. "I’m going back out to find the 17th Precinct. I’ve been told that the Captain is working the holiday shift.”

“Then you should be able to catch her.” Sherry asked as keyboard clacking could be heard in the background, “Have you seen anything unusual yet?”

“Not yet, but I get the feeling that I will soon enough.” Leon said as if he were expecting just another regular night on the job.

“Keep me posted.” Sherry said before Leon clicked off for the time being.

The first part of Leon's mission was to head towards the NYPD 17th Precinct to find Captain Aya Brea and Officer Anastasia Baldanova, the two NYPD officers who appeared at the press conference on national television. There was something about Officer Baldanova that stood out to Leon, but he couldn't quite put a finger on it yet.

The minute stepped out of the Plaza Hotel, Eve’s Mitochondrial Creatures were there to greet Leon. There were random mutated humans, rats, and pigeons that became horrifying versions of themselves. Just like with the mutant humans from Times Square, they had glowing and bulging eyes, torn up flesh, and terrifying elongated teeth. They were bigger and more frightening than their non-mutant counterparts, which made Leon wonder if they were new types of bio-organic weapons he had to face. However, he would have to figure that out later as all of them were getting ready to pounce on him and tear his flesh apart.

“Looks like the locals are throwin’ me a New Year’s Eve welcome party. How sweet!” Leon unsheathed his hatchet from behind and grinned, “And they say New Yorkers are rude.”

One of the mutant rats had torn up flesh and three pronged tails that could snap Leon’s flesh in a millisecond. It let out a crazed squeak before lunging at Leon. He immediately swung his hatchet and decapitated the overgrown rodent before it could take a bite out of him. Blood was spurting out of where its head used to be as its main body fell to the ground with a thump.

“Come on, don’t be shy everyone!” He called out to the creatures as he sharpened his tactical hatchet mid-battle. “There’s plenty of me to go around!”

Another mutated rat raised its blood red, three pronged tail. As the fireballs shot out, Leon took his hatchet and managed to physically deflect those fireballs back towards the large mutant rodent, effectively burning it. Once the flames died out, Leon hacked the rat into bloody pieces before stomping on its head with his foot. There was a loud squish sound as its

skull cracked under his Adidas hiking boot, and its blood splattered all over, decorating it in a Jackson Pollock-like manner.

Mutant pigeons were flying above Leon and started aiming their butts at him. He managed to do a backflip in an effort to dodge mutant pigeon poop. While he was successful, he had to rest for a minute due to the extra effort of pulling off a backflip at 50 years old.

However, as soon as Leon turned to look beside him, the ground next to him eroded from the high acid content of the mutant bird feces.

“I know *that* ain’t a sign of good luck,” Leon muttered to himself.

He sighed as he shot all of the mutant pigeons with immense accuracy and ease with his handy, dandy Alligator Snapper– a semi-automatic handgun that was custom-built by Joseph Kendo and issued to the DSO. Without even looking, Leon also shot the mutated people that were about to attack him from behind. He turned around and sent one of the mutated people flying with his spinning hook kick and roundhouse kick before finishing them off with his hatchet.

Leon proceeded to make his way back to his Porsche. He saw another mutant person, a terrifying lady with her eyes rolled back and rotting teeth with a permanently open jaw blocking his driver seat door. “Hey, don’t touch my car! I’ll kill ya if you leave a mark on it.”

The angry mutant lady let out a screech with murderous intent for Leon. But Leon just yawned and grabbed her head, dragging her towards another car parked next to his before he slammed her head against its doors. Leon slammed her head again so hard that he crushed her skull against the neighboring car door with his bare hands, making a loud squish sound before her head cracked open, causing it to spurt blood everywhere.

Leon’s signature black leather jacket with a faux fur trimmed collar was now covered in blood. He saw that his black tactical gloves were stained with red. “Welp, guess tomorrow’s laundry day again.”

He quickly got inside his black Porsche and started his car. He looked behind him as he reversed his car and ran over the remaining Mitochondrial Creatures that were going after him. He said out loud before driving off, “My bad, didn’t see you guys back there!”

Leon drove eastbound, towards 5th Avenue. He didn’t see as many creatures as he drove further away from Central Park South, and the 17th Precinct was only a roughly 10 minute drive from the Plaza, save for the New Year’s traffic. He shook his head and thought to himself that he would have left sooner if the party didn’t take too long to end. “Should have given them an Irish Goodbye instead. Hindsight’s a bitch.”

NYPD 17th Precinct, Midtown East. 12:45 am

Leon parked his black Porsche in an open spot in front of the 17th NYPD Precinct. He treaded through the Manhattan snow, which was mostly black slush at this point with the occasional yellow splash from the neighborhood dogs. He looked around to see if there were any more “nasty surprises”, but the sidewalks were devoid of mutated mitochondrial creatures for the time being.

The fluorescent lights of the 17th Precinct hummed a steady, jagged rhythm into the midnight air. The precinct was a flurry of frantic whispers and rustling papers, still reeling from the chaos of the day. Stepping through the heavy glass doors, a weary Leon S. Kennedy shrugged off his black leather jacket adorned with a faux fur trimmed collar and buckles on each cuff, the damp New York chill still clinging to his shoulders. Despite the fact that it was New Year’s Eve, or technically New Year’s Day, he was surprised to see any police station being so busy during the holiday season.

At fifty years old, the years of bio-organic nightmares had etched fine lines around his eyes, but his icy blue eyed gaze remained as razor-sharp as ever. He navigated the precinct with the quiet confidence of an operative who knew every hidden threat. He found a random officer running from the hallway to the lobby.

“ ‘Scuse me. Is Captain Aya Brea here?”

The man said in a heavy New York accent, “Yeah, her office is down at the end of the fall. She’s got a lot on her plate right now.”

Approaching the central command desk, he caught the eye of the middle aged blonde woman. He caught the eye of the middle aged blonde woman wearing a white and black NYPD uniform, Captain Aya Brea.

Leon introduced himself, his voice dropped to a gravelly baritone. "Leon Kennedy, DSO."

Aya looked up from a stack of casualty reports, her expression hardening. “Captain Aya Brea, NYPD. Let me guess, Washington suspected a bioterrorist attack."

"Yep, we saw the televised press conference this morning.” Leon leaned against a sturdy mahogany partition. “So DSO booked me a week-long vacation to New York and sent me to investigate this case. All inclusive."

“Unfortunately, it’s not bioterrorism.” Aya shook her head, her cyan blue eyes flashing with a dangerous mix of sorrow and resolve. “At least, not in the conventional sense. This may sound crazy even for you—”

Leon interrupted, “I’m used to ‘crazy’ by now, Captain.”

Aya continued, “These mass murders have been caused by a collective ‘evolved’ mitochondria named Eve. She has taken over the body of a rock singer named Layla Aizawa.”

Leon let out a gruff sigh, “Evil and sentient mitochondria trying to wipe out humanity, huh?” He shrugged. “Not the strangest thing *I’ve* ever heard in the last 29 years.”

Suddenly, Xiomara busted open the front doors to the precinct trying to look for Nastya on the off chance that she would have returned.

Xiomara called out, “Has anyone seen Officer Baldanova!?”

The rest of the officers in the bullpen shook their heads since nobody had seen Nastya.

Xiomara approached Aya, “Captain Brea, have you seen Officer Baldanova?

Aya stood up immediately, the urgency shifting the focus of the room. "Sorry, I haven’t. Have you checked the perimeter or the last known dispatch, Officer Valdez?"

"I dropped her off at Bryant Park so that Baldanova could get close to Eve in Times Square since, you know, can’t get close to Eve without risking spontaneous combustion," Xiomara replied, anxiety coloring her voice. "Our squad hasn't heard from her in over a half an hour.”

“Spontaneous combustion? Eve? What the hell is going on in this city?” thought Leon. He vaguely remembered these words from the briefing when he watched the press conference. But it was difficult to piece them together, so he had very little idea what they were talking about.

"It's highly unusual for Baldanova to just drop comms, especially with Eve active in the area." Aya turned to Leon, "Sorry, one of our officers went missing and we gotta go look for her."

Leon introduced himself to Xiomara, "Name's Leon Kennedy, DSO."

“Detective Xiomara Valdez.” Xiomara took the time to briefly shake his hand. “With all due respect, Agent Kennedy, I don't have time for formalities at the moment. I’m searching for my partner, Officer Anastasia Baldanova.”

“Anastasia Baldanova…" That name sounded vaguely familiar to Leon. It didn’t take long for Leon to figure out who she was. "She’s the cop who was at the press conference, isn’t she?”

Aya nodded, “Yes. She was the sole survivor of the Webster Hall incident.”

Leon immediately suspected something fishy with the fact that Nastya was the only one who didn’t burn among the audience at Webster Hall.

“As I was looking for Baldanova a block away from Times Square, I saw something bizarre." Xiomara faced Aya as she recalled the last time she had seen Nastya. “I saw people coming from Times Square mutating into monsters!”

Aya was in shock, “Eve is mutating humans now!?”

Leon was still perplexed, “Are you sure there isn’t some sketchy pharmaceutical organization behind all this… mitochondria mumbo jumbo?”

Aya shook her head, “No, not that I’m aware of.”

Xiomara headed towards the exit, “ Sorry guys, but I have to go back out and find Baldanova.”

Leon chimed in, “I’ll go with you.”

“Are you sure? You just got here,” asked Xiomara.

“Our priority right now is making sure that your partner is safe.” Leon put his hand on Xiomara’s shoulder as a comforting gesture.

Another officer reminded Xiomara that she could track Nastya’s department issued smartphone location. Xiomara opened the official NYPD mobile app that tracked the phone locations of other officers.

Xiomara checked the app and followed the blinking cursor. “She’s near Central Park South! Hang on, Nastya, we’re on our way! I just hope we're not too late…”

Leon reassured Xiomara once more, “Don't worry, it's only a ten minute drive from the precinct.” He held her close to calm her down. “We’ll find her, yeah?”

Xiomara became less anxious as a result of his comfort. “...Yeah.” She then thought to herself, *“DAMN, he’s fine.”*

Central Park South, 1:00 am

Leon and Xiomara drove to Central Park South in his Porsche and encountered Eve's mutated animals from the park on the way. Xiomara then used her phone to track Nastya’s location in case the cursor moves. They found Nastya unconscious in the crashed pedicab on the side of the park entrance, as well as Eve looming over her. They get out of the car and the first thing Leon did was pull out his signature Requiem, which was an extremely powerful Magnum Revolver with a wing motif on the grip. He aimed it at Eve.

Eve turned around and spotted both Leon and Xiomara. “More friends to play with, I see.”

Xiomara warned Leon to not get too close to Eve or else she'd activate his mitochondria and set him on fire. One of Leon's gloved hands set on fire for a tiny bit before he stepped back and put the tiny flame out himself. He couldn’t believe that one of his hands almost entirely caught fire out of the blue like that. But he didn’t know that because of the Elpis antiviral he received from the year before that cured his T-virus symptoms, it had somehow protected him from Eve trying to induce the excess ATP production in his cells with her own will to set Leon on fire.

Eve was perplexed and confused, "You haven't gone up in flames! How is that even possible!?

"I'm just fireproof, baby." Leon didn't waste any time at all and just shot Eve a few times with his Requiem without recoil and incredible accuracy since at this point, he was cured by Elpis. "But you're not!"

Eve self-healed and cursed Leon under her breath. She did not want to waste a single moment longer on Leon when she preferred that her fight be with Nastya instead. Eve huffed and flew off somewhere before either Leon or Xiomara could catch her.

Leon shrugged, “Guess my dashing good looks saved our skins tonight." He holstered his Requiem revolver. "One of the few advantages of having a female antagonist.”

Xiomara rolled her eyes at Leon before shifting her focus back on finding her friend and partner, “Nastya!!!”

Leon and Xiomara walked up to the pedicab to see that Nastya was still unconscious, her body sprawled on the seat with one of her arms hanging out of the cab.

Xiomara ran to Nastya and tried to nudge her awake. “Wake up!” Her nudging soon escalated to slight shaking as she became a bit more anxious. “Oh no no no, please tell me you’re still alive!”

Leon checked Nastya’s pulse. “She’s got a pulse and she's still breathing.”

Xiomara breathed a sigh of relief, “Oh, thank God.” She gave Nastya a light shove, “But she won’t wake up…”

Leon observed Nastya’s injuries if she had any. “Looks like she hit her head pretty hard in whatever this thing is.” Leon tried to figure out the structure of a pedicab since it was his first time seeing one.

“Damn, and with the traffic and chaos at Times Square on New Year’s Eve, the paramedics’ response time would be delayed big time.”

Leon looks over at Nastya with concern. “We can take her back to my hotel suite and she can rest in my bed. I can take the couch for tonight.”

“Alright, but I’m not leaving her side until she wakes up.”

Leon effortlessly and carefully lifted an unconscious Nastya in his arms, being careful not to injure her head any further. Leon and Xiomara walked to the Plaza Hotel. The massive historical French Renaissance château-style hotel was barely a walk away from Central Park South.

Meanwhile, Nastya’s cells had been working overtime to heal her injuries while she remained unconscious.

Nastya started to dream about Eve. She was in a blank space where everything was dark and barely visible. She felt lost and aimless until she heard a voice echoing in the darkness that was surrounding her.

“The worst foe lies within ourselves”.

Nastya shivered in fear and yelled into the void, “What the hell do you mean by that!?”

Eve was moving behind Nastya, hidden in the darkness. “Remember that the more you use your power, the more you’ll become like me.”

“While having powers is cool as hell, I don’t want to become like you!”

Nastya’s eyes suddenly shot open. The very first thing she saw was a tall guy with light brown and dirty blond hair sprinkled with a few strands of silver and striking ice blue eyes. He was wearing a black turtleneck sweater that somehow was tight enough to accentuate his large biceps and a pair of dark gray cargo pants. His leather jacket with the faux fur trimmed collar and buckles on its cuffs was sitting on one of the chairs in the room. The room itself looked grand and marvelous, like something straight out of the 1920s with the art deco brass details.

She immediately noticed how attractive Leon was the moment he looked over her to see how she was feeling. *He can’t be real*- she had seen no man on Earth who was that gorgeous in real life who was also equipped with a kind and comforting demeanor. Leon S. Kennedy was what she had imagined men who were fallen angels would look like- rugged and masculine who wear mostly black, especially leather jackets. The only thing he was missing were a pair of black wings. Maybe he had hidden them somewhere.

Nastya concluded that she did die from the pedicab crash at Central Park South because only angels could look that good and still have a comforting presence. She was a bit sad, but also thought that if men looked like him in Heaven, then maybe it wasn't so bad after all.

She tried to sit up from the bed, but Leon urged her to not sit up too quickly in case her head might still be injured.

Nastya finally broke the ice, “I never thought I'd die during my line of duty this soon, but I didn’t think I'd ever make it to Heaven either!”

Leon chuckled due to how direct and frank this raven haired rookie cop was. “And why would you think that?”

Nastya couldn't believe he'd even ask. “I mean, *look at yourself!* You are the most gorgeous man I’ve ever seen. Hell, I might even be okay with the fact that you’re kinda old because GODDAMN you’re so beautiful.”

Leon smirked at this girl's brazen and unfiltered words. “No, I mean, why would you think

you wouldn’t end up in Heaven? Have you been a naughty girl?” He leaned a little closer and said in a teasing tone. “Don’t worry, I won’t tell Santa.” He winked at her.

Nastya blushed so red. “Damn right, I have! I’ve watched hardcore porn while working in a church, I’ve insulted an old lady in a wheelchair for pissing me off, stole candy from a kid, etc.”

Leon was amused by her assumption that all these examples would be the valid reasons that she’d be barred from Heaven’s door when he had likely done things so much worse than she’d ever done. In fact, he found her earnest nature kind of cute.

“Maybe being dead isn't so bad after all if I get to see you here in the afterlife.” Nastya sighed, so happy for once.

A familiar voice exclaimed, “Nastya, you're finally awake!”

Nastya finally noticed Xiomara walking into the bedroom. Only then, she slowly realized that she wasn't actually dead and that she basically told a stranger who saved her, to his face, that he was inhumanly and supernaturally hot and sexy for an old man.

Leon chuckled at Nastya's earnest reaction to his looks. He leaned even closer until their foreheads touched. “Sorry to burst your bubble, sweetheart, but you're still among the living in flesh and blood.”

Nastya grabbed the nearest pillow and buried her already bright red face and groaned in it in a futile attempt to hide her embarrassment.

Xiomara expressed her relief that Nastya was very much alive and well. She leaned over to give her a hug, “Thank God, you're okay.”

“Thanks, I'm glad I'm okay too,” said Nastya, voice still slightly muffled from her face being buried into the pillow. She was still embarrassed that she said what she said out loud to Leon. But she had to brush it off quickly.

Nastya lifted her head from the pillow. “So now that I know that I’m not actually dead, who are you?”

Leon reached out to shake Nastya’s hand. “Leon Kennedy, DSO.”

Nastya flashed her badge out of habit. “Anastasia Baldanova, NYPD. If you’re from DSO, why are you here? I wasn’t aware that the government had any jurisdiction on this particular case.”

“Your press conference caught Washington DC’s attention and they suspect that the Webster Hall incident could be caused by bioterrorism. The White House has classified this incident as a Level-1 national security threat. So I was sent here to investigate it.”

Nastya was not pleased upon hearing that the televised press conference caught Washington DC’s attention. “Well I thank Washington for their questionable concern, but I think we got

this under–”

Xiomara interrupted, “Nastya, this is the second mass murder incident two nights in a row. We're going to need all the help we can get to stop Eve from killing the entire city.”

Leon looked perturbed, “Two nights in a row? What happened?”

Nastya sighed, “Alright, hold onto your seatbelts, boys and girls. This is gonna be a doozy to explain.”

“I’ve got time.”

“Last night, I was on a terrible date at the Hornet’s Nest concert when the lead singer made everyone else spontaneously combust into flames- somehow everyone else except for me.”

Nastya gestured her arms to describe the size of Eve. “Layla Aizawa transformed into this… this…weird distorted creature thing and called herself ‘Eve’. She said something about our cells communicating with each other.”

Xiomara struggled to understand, “What does she mean by that?”

Nastya exclaimed, “Fuck if I know! She also said the time for all mitochondria to dominate all living things has finally arrived. And that she and I now are rivals in an evolutionary battle to be the strongest lifeform since I told her I wasn’t joining her crazy ass plan to kill all of humanity and replace it with herself as the apex lifeform.”

Leon was trying to keep up with these explanations. “Let’s rewind for a bit. You’re telling me that this woman has cells…”

Nastya could not help but to be pedantic about the details of cells, “Technically, it’s one of the organelles inside the cells…”

Leon chose not to feed into Nastya’s pedantry, “*Cells* that have a mind of their own that possessed and mutated her into ‘Eve’, who can kill people by making other people’s cells blow up.”

“ …yeah, I guess if that’s how you understand it. Sure.” Nastya could not be assed about the details anymore.

Xiomara asked, “But Nastya, what happened with Eve at Times Square? I couldn’t get close enough to the ball drop.”

“Dude, Eve controlled the minds of the hosts, blew them up, and then she also mutated whoever she spared into these super deformed creatures! It was fucking crazy!”

Xiomara snapped her fingers, “So that was what those things were! We ran into some of them on the way to Central Park South while Agent Kennedy and I were looking for you. We ran into this huge lady with long arms and claws.”

“Shit, that was Eve!” Nastya exclaimed. “Oh God, I’m glad she didn’t roast you two like marshmallows!”

Leon thought to himself that these creatures might be a new type of B.O.W. created by Umbrella or some other evil organization. But he kept it to himself for now so as to not overwhelm Nastya with new information.

“I haven’t ever pointed a gun at someone and killed anyone before tonight.” Nastya looked down solemnly, “Even if it was in self-defense against a mutated person, I felt horrible doing it.” She started to spiral a bit as she recalled shooting a mutated civilian for the first time, “ I don’t know what to think anymore…so much has happened.”

Nastya’s words hit Leon pretty hard because they remind him of that night in Racoon City on what was supposed to be his first night on the job as a rookie cop, which also ended up being his last night on the job as an RPD officer. He understood and empathized just how scared and confused Nastya must have been in the last day or so.

“Look, why don’t you rest here in my suite tonight? You can take the bed and I’ll sleep on the couch in the study.”

Nastya slowly nodded. There was no way she’d want to sleep alone after what happened tonight. And this large DSO agent felt safe somehow, despite being a government agent. Nastya looked at him again, his muscles were even visible through his black turtleneck sweater. *God, I'm still not convinced that this man is real.*

Xiomara nodded, “ Yeah, Nastya. Just rest. Agent Kennedy will look after you in case something else happens. I’ll see you tomorrow at the precinct.”

“Be careful out there, Xiomara. Please.”

Xiomara left Leon in charge of watching over Nastya and drove home in the police cruiser. Leon encouraged Nastya to stay in the bedroom for the rest of the night.

He whispered to himself as he watched Nastya drift to sleep, “I wouldn’t doubt that you would belong in Heaven.” He tucked her in. “ Good night, angel.”

Nastya thought Leon was the angel, but to him, she was the one who brought a dead man’s soul back to life in the middle of a New York crisis.

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