THE POSTDILUVIAN ROAD

By Aleph

Gauntlet by JamestheFox

It's said that on a good day, one in four Parahumans die in a conflict with Leviathan.

The 15th of May was not a good day.

This is **The Postdiluvian Road**, a canon-divergence fic to Worm in which the fight against Leviathan turns from bad to worse. Brockton Bay is ruined beyond repair. The vast majority of the capes arrayed against him are dead.

You were lucky, for a certain definition of the word. Though it was close, though you weren't unscathed, you survived. And now, you're on a bus, just another refugee on your way out, seeking a better life anywhere else. A seat away, your comrades… or, just your comrade… likewise lick their wounds.

It has been a little over 24 hours since the deluge, and the bus is coming to its next stop.

You are granted **0 Character Points**, as this is a **Gauntlet**. Everything – your Perks, your Items, your Powers – not in your Body Mod is temporarily lost to you. Your Warehouse is sealed shut. Your out-of-Jump Companions and Followers cannot be there to pick you up.

ORIGINS

Let's start with who you are. Perks and Items are as always discounted according to your Origin, with 100CP Perks and Items becoming Free for their Origin. Note that you are not allowed to take any Origin as a Drop-In – you and those who would be connected to you will receive the memories, experience, and knowledge needed to smoothly insert yourself into your role…

GREENHORN (Free)

You were still finding your feet as a Cape when Leviathan swept it all away, and now you're in completely unfamiliar territory: homeless, directionless. You had followed Taylor Hebert – your friend, perhaps, or maybe a sibling – into the world of capes, into her battle against Lung, into her plan to expose and arrest the Undersiders, into the myriad conflicts that have come one after the other… and you followed her into battle against the Endbringer. Because you had to try. Now, **Taylor** and **Lisa** sit in the seat ahead of you, waking as the bus comes to its next stop…

> **TAYLOR (200CP)**
>
> Or… perhaps you *are* Taylor Hebert, actually. Dad is dead. It's just you and Lisa, now. Your arm aches deeply, bruises litter your body, and you have no idea what the plan is. You must take the Battle Consequence **Battered Body** to represent this damage (you do receive the CP for it). You receive Taylor's **Shard Power**, the Master 8/Thinker 2 power to control, sense, and carry the senses of bugs within 1200 feet (with that range permanently growing the more conflicts you win, and temporarily being boosted the more trapped, despairing, or betrayed you feel), for free. You wake up blearily, **Lisa** pressing you against the window as the bus comes to a halt...

VETERAN (Free)

You've been on this kind of road before, traveling the arteries of the country and surviving on whatever you could scrounge up. It's the way you were before Coil shanghaied you into the Undersiders. Before you met Lisa – Tattletale. Right alongside her, you stole and you cheated and you saved for the day when you would tear that snake off his throne. You worked towards your freedom even as you condemned innocents like the bug girl and the precog child to sully their hands and drown in drugs respectively. All for nothing. All for your comrades and plans and captor to be tossed into the meat grinder that is the Endbringer. Now, **Lisa** and **Taylor** sit in the seat ahead of you, waking as the bus comes to its next stop…

> **LISA (200CP)**
>
> Or… perhaps you are Lisa Wilbourn – once, Sarah Livsey, though both of those names are probably better off cast aside. All of your friends, save for Taylor, are gone. You were less than useless against Leviathan, despite you pushing your power well past its limit. You must take the Battle Consequence **Strained Strength** to represent the results of your efforts (you do receive the CP for it). You receive Lisa's **Shard Power**, the Thinker 7 power to infer and extrapolate information far beyond the bounds of what concrete data she's given. You wake up blearily, a shift in the velocity of the bus jostling you against **Taylor** as the bus comes to a halt...

BATTLE CONSEQUENCES

Whatever Origin you chose, the story of Worm is shifted ever so slightly by the contents of your Body Mod (and your additional presence in the Undersiders, if you aren't Taylor or Lisa)… but it was never enough. *You* weren't enough. Not to defeat the Coil of this timeline, and not to stop Leviathan from taking the Bay apart. At best, you provoked Leviathan to knock you out quickly, or caused Coil to take special measures to keep you compliant.

As such, you did not escape Brockton Bay unscathed. You must take one of these special Drawbacks. You may take both, if you wish.

Battered Body (+200CP)
You were carried by the waves, thrown against buildings, maybe even struck by a water echo or Leviathan himself. You survived, but you feel like you shouldn't have. While it hurts all over, a major part of your body – a shoulder, a hip, a leg, a lung – is the worst victim of this abuse, and desperately needs a few months of rest to recuperate. Too bad you aren't in a position to get that rest, and the best healer you know is dead like everyone else… You have to keep going, even though it hurts, until you're good and safe.

Strained Strength (+200CP)
With the Endbringer right in front of you, you threw everything you had, pushed your powers well beyond what was safe… and now it's time to pay the piper. Using any superhuman or supernatural powers – Shard based or otherwise – causes parts of your body associated with that power to hurt, badly. Thinker Powers like Taylor's or Lisa's cause brutal headaches, a Blaster effect that comes from your hands causes every nerve nearby to recoil and spasm like they're being shocked, a Brute effect feels like your muscles might explode… You need time to let your power recover… but you also still need that power to get you to a point where you're safe…

DRAWBACKS

Take It From The Top (+0CP)
Rather than start at the aftermath of Leviathan's attack, you may start your time here about a month earlier, at the first chapter of Worm. Fate will see to it that you, Taylor, and Lisa find yourselves on a bus departing the ruins of Brockton Bay regardless.

Arrogance (+100CP)
You have a tendency to cause trouble for yourself, either by running your mouth, refusing to deescalate, or something else entirely. Normally, your strength or intellect would get you out of those messes as easily as your foolish bravado gets you into them, but you're probably not in the best shape to be leveraging that, are you?

Hydrophobia (+100CP)
Man, Leviathan did a number on you. The sound of rushing water, the feeling of being submerged, the swirl of liquid sloshing about in a cup or bottle, even water metaphors and idioms… it fills you with unease, and the longer you endure it the worse it gets, until you're right back there, in the fight, watching everything fall apart.

Drowned Honor (+100CP)
You didn't want to be a villain. You didn't want to be a criminal. The concept of stealing even just to survive goes against everything you stand for, and whether you're doing it yourself or letting others do it for you it grates against your soul, unsettling you and making you more and more frustrated. This can be gotten around, if you can find someone who deserves to have their bank account drained or safe ransacked… but such people tend to have power or influence of some sort, and won't take kindly to your efforts.

Conflict Drive (+100CP)
Honestly, all of these problems – homelessness, poverty, hunger, being injured and needing rest – all just suck. The worst part is, none of it is punchable. You're starved for a foe, something you can actually fight, because at least then you feel like you're doing… something. Anything. You're not going to be inclined to cut and run when you're outmatched, but to escalate and somehow overwhelm your foes. And when you're not fighting, you're going to get pent up, and the only answer is going to be finding that worthy opponent.

Cut Ties (+200CP)
Teenagers are going to bicker. Especially superpowered, hyper-stressed teenagers. Team cohesion between you and your closest allies is going to struggle as nobody is entirely sure what they're doing next and everyone has their own regrets. This is going to go worse than in the fanfic itself, with a real risk that Taylor and Lisa will alienate or break away from one another. Perhaps Lisa will learn of Taylor's burgeoning crush, and be disgusted, or maybe Taylor will simply have enough of stealing to survive. Either way, this is something that will inevitably see one or both of them critically injured, dead, or in someone's custody. It's up to you to do most of the emotional heavy lifting, to keep this team afloat.

Into the Meat-Grinder (+400CP)
You were so… useless, during the fight against Leviathan. And you can't bear it. If you're Lisa, you have been utterly disillusioned with the very idea of heroes and their human wave tactics, throwing

literal children into the meat-grinder of S-Class threats, and will always struggle to trust the "good guys." If you're Taylor, the guilt is too much for you. You'll have to be convinced not to throw yourself into any conflict, any cause for justice, hoping that this time, this time, you'll make a difference – or else you'll keep pushing yourself until you overextend and die. If you're neither, you choose either.

Reputation (+400CP)
It seems your reputation precedes you. Both heroes and villains are now more well-informed about the nature of the Undersiders' powers and strategies and will be prepared to bring you in or bring you down – if not in your initial attack, then in their own retaliation. This battle-readiness will fade a bit the further away you are from Brockton Bay and the longer you go without taking action of any kind, but new waves of recognition will spread whenever you pull a job using identities or powers that are easily connected to you.

Exaggerated Reputation (+200CP Per Purchase, Requires Reputation)
It seems your reputation has gone out of hand. Your enemies treat you as a Parahuman whose threat ratings are 2 points higher than they'd objectively be rated, with at least a 2 in every rating. Anyone expecting you is likely to be prepared for someone a fair bit stronger than you. Might be best to only go after those who aren't expecting you. You may take this multiple times, with each instance boosting your reputation accordingly.

Slushed Funds (+400CP)
If you have no Items in your Body Mod that are affected by this Drawback, you may take this Drawback for 100CP. At some point between joining the Undersiders and fighting Leviathan, you moved your fiat-backed money into a Number Man account for safekeeping… meaning you won't be able to easily get your hands on it until you're well and clear of Brockton Bay. Any Properties you own turned out to be either at minimum five states away from Brockton Bay… or housed in the ruins of Brockton Bay, which is not a safe place for you and yours to stay.

Shed Skin (+600CP)
There was no way. No way in hell he could have survived. But he did. Coil is alive, and wants his pet Thinker back. After a short recovery period, he'll start actively tracking your group down, and will kill Taylor if he needs to in order to enslave Lisa. If you have a useful thinker power, he'll likely aim for you as well. Of course, you won't know he's after you until he defeats your group – after all, he only needs to succeed in one timeline. Even if you escape finding out about his survival, the fact that he's alive will only give Taylor reason to recklessly fight back – if he's alive, Dinah might be, too, after all, and she won't give up until she knows, either way.

Breach (+600CP)
Oh god. She's loose. The monster in Coil's vault was always going to be freed by Leviathan's attack, but now, response to her actions will be too sluggish, too slow… and now, no means of containment will be enough to hold her and her hordes in the Bay. You'll have to deal with a rising tide of cloned capes and other lifeforms nipping at your heels, striving to drag everyone they can into her web.

If you took **Shed Skin** as well, the good news is that Coil himself is no longer after you. The bad news is that Echidna ate Coil and Dinah… and has produced a number of clones of each, whose predictions she is using to quietly expand her repertoire of cloned capes at a disastrous rate. She'll have a specific focus on you and Taylor, at the cloned Dinahs' insistence of your value, which means you will likely find yourself pursued by clones of everyone from Battery and Armsmaster to Vista and Alexandria.

This in particular will only make a bad situation worse – every cape she consumes will weaken cape forces for certain later events – events you will have to deal with in the Worm Jump to come.

You may have to turn around, and deal with her now, even weakened as you are, if you are to survive what is to come…

Back On The Rails (+600CP)
It seems that the Slaughterhouse Nine are en route to the East Coast… and their itinerary just so happens to cross paths with your group's own. Fighting them while mostly fresh would have been a challenge… but fighting them while horribly worn like you are is so much worse. This meeting is likely to happen before you can get somewhere Lisa can get in contact with the Number Man, so you'll be significantly underprepared for what comes next.

Not Power Appropriate (+800CP)
Oh. That's not good. Your enemies across this Jump have been upscaled in power, such that the average threat level 5 Cape is on par with you… with your *full* power. And of course the distance between that and the Endbringers, the Entities, and so on remains about proportionate. You should probably avoid picking fights until Gauntlet conditions fall off.

No Safety Net (+1000CP)
Ah, you'd rather go without the limitations and gaurdrails of a Gauntlet? Very well. Know that if you suffer any of the fail conditions now, it will be a Chain Failure, but that shouldn't be too hard, now that you have all of your stuff. In addition, though, none of the Perks or Items on offer in this Gauntlet become part of your Body Mod when you're done.

GENERAL PERKS

Shard Power (Mandatory, Free/100 or more CP)
You are a Parahuman, and that means you have a Parahuman power. The cost of this power depends on what an unbiased PRT analyst would rank its threat level to be. The higher the threat assessment, the higher the cost. You may have, for free, up to two subratings, with each being at maximum half of the next highest rating or subrating (for example, you could be a Shaker 8, Thinker 4, Brute 2). Additional or higher subratings requires 100CP per purchase.

For Free, a Threat Rating of 1 means that this power is only just barely above human norms – even a normal human could probably beat you. A Threat Rating of 2 would require that human to be well-prepared or exceptional.

For 100CP, a Threat Rating of 3 means mundane enemies are going to need to gang up on you to have a chance against this power. A Threat Rating of 4 means those enemies would need to be well-trained.

For 200CP, a Threat Rating of 5 means that your Power ensures that mundane foes on their own can't reliably win, but the average Parahuman could turn the tide against you, though they might want mundane backup. A Threat Rating of 6 posits that the Parahuman actually needs mundane backup or proper training to win against you.

For 400CP, a Threat Rating of 7 means that thanks to this power alone, anyone wanting to swing at you would want to bring multiple Parahumans, and they might want at least two full squads of mundane forces, with full equipment loadouts, to back them up. A Threat Rating of 8 mandates that additional firepower, and means most law enforcement will be prioritizing evacuation of civilians before coming after you.

For 1000CP, a Threat Rating of 9 means that anyone coming after you needs a plan to deal with this power, and should not engage otherwise – fighting you gets complicated fast.

For an additional 100CP for each rating higher, your power is such that any opposition requires multiple teams of Parahumans, preferably with several high-end Parahumans, ready to do battle with you.

As a reminder, the Power Classifications are Mover (speed or mobility), Shaker (area of effect), Brute (strength or durability), Breaker (shifting into a temporary state of being with its own strengths and weaknesses), Master (control or create minions), Tinker (super science tech), Blaster (long ranged effects), Thinker (information gathering or management), Striker (short ranged effects), Changer (physically transforming body), Trump (manipulating other powers), and Stranger (stealth).

GREENHORN PERKS

Punching Your Problems (100CP)
Brian of the Undersiders taught you enough, while you worked with him. You know some basic self-defense classes, and can reliably break noses and dole out concussions with your bare hands. You're even better with a weapon, of course, but even unarmed and heavily injured you've got what it takes to hold your own.

Push Through (200CP)
You got hit by Bakuda's pain bomb, and now other pain… just doesn't rate, comparatively. Sure, this isn't stopping your injuries from getting worse from continued strain, but you're able to function, and sometimes that's all that matters. If you happen to have some kind of Master power, like Taylor's bugs, you can push your reaction to pain into your thralls, further smoothing your actions.

Inventive Host (200CP)
Necessity is the mother of invention. The higher stress you're in, the more easily you come up with new tricks and techniques and stunts for your existing powers. You still can't make a power do something it just can't do, but you can far more easily make it do things others wouldn't consider, especially when the chips are down. These impromptu experiments tend to go right the first time you try them, too, though you'll still need to practice them to be able to use them reliably.

We're Not Defined By This (400CP)
You're more than just a talent. You have likes, dislikes, hobbies, goals… and so do other people. You're very good at remembering that, and seeing people as more than tools. You're also surprisingly good at connecting with others and getting them to open up about their pasts and the things they want to make of themselves. This effect is greater still when you're trying to get through to people who have a history of being used for their gifts.

VETERAN PERKS

Back to Basics (100CP)
Ah, yes. Pickpocketing. You might be a bit rusty, but it's like riding a bike. You're good at snatching valuables out of an unwary victim's pockets while they're distracted – and good at getting them distracted, too. This would work better with an active Thinker power helping you out, but it's enough that your average mark won't know what got them… at least for a minute or two.

Drifting on the Streets (200CP)
You're a decent judge of character – good enough that when hitchhiking you're at least able to notice whether this latest driver has ulterior motives or is safe to ride with. When looking for shelter you can likewise tell which places will be safer than others.

Can't Predict Random Chance (200CP)
You've gotten pretty good at evading thinkers and schemers, and recognize that sometimes just… leaving major things up to chance can scramble their attempts to find you. Spin in place to choose a direction to go in, roll some dice to decide when exactly you're going to head out, flip a coin to decide whether you'll take a specific action or not, and you'll find that even precogs will have a tough time figuring out exactly where you're going or what your plans are. It might make actually executing that plan a little bit harder, but that's the tradeoff.

What's In a Name? (400CP)
Lisa, Tattletale, Louise, Hexcat, Laura Williams… lots of names and identities to sort through, keep straight, and play out under stress. You're incredibly good at maintaining multiple identities, and can manage to not be so attached to any given mask that you won't throw it away when it's stopped being useful to you. You're exceptional at playing a role and building up a persona that is utterly different from your true self, from a cosplaying tarot nut to a local maintenance engineer to someone far more interesting than you ever were. You're also good at teaching others how to do the same.

GENERAL ITEMS

Old Enough to Fight Endbringers, Old Enough To Drink (100CP)
Whenever you need it, you'll come across some guys you can bribe to buy something mundane that you want but probably can't legally have. A six pack of cheap booze, for instance, considering you're probably a teenager.

Burgers Fished From The Brine (400CP)
Alas, Fugly Bob's, drowned by Leviathan with everything else. We hardly knew ye… except, with this, you'll find that the Number Man will happily incorporate inheritance of that fast food chain's IP rights into a new identity for you. This will come with all of their local secret recipes, iconography, and so on. Turns out they were even planning on going nation-wide right before Leviathan showed up, and there's a few franchises just about ready to open up. It'll turn out to be fairly successful, surprisingly. For the duration of this Gauntlet and the Worm Jump as a whole, you and the Number Man will go 50/50 on profits, with you ending up being the franchise's face and him handling business behind the scenes, but in future Jumps you'll find this fast food franchise is yours and yours alone.

Whether it serves as a legitimate source of income or a front for whatever other business you have is ultimately up to you.

Thundering Falls (400CP)
Niagara Falls, a set of three waterfalls on the border between Ontario and New York. Great place for a beer, a date, and maybe a gay awakening. You get a copy of all three waterfalls, and the space around it, connected to your Warehouse for you to modify as you see fit. The nearby hyrdoelectric power plants are also included, and since they're stored in your Warehouse and aren't bound by international treaties you may choose to manage power generation and water diversion however you like. At the end of a Jump, or every ten years, you may rewind this copy to the state it was in at the start of any of the last 5 Jumps, or reset it to the state it was in when you first obtained it. Finally, if that's not enough for you, in future Jumps you'll find that you have a lifetime pass to visit the local Niagara Falls whenever you like – in case there are significant differences between the local one and the one you've been messing with.

GREENHORN ITEMS

Waterlogged Costume (100CP)
The Cape Uniform you wore during the Leviathan attack, minus any masks or other headgear. Made of spider silk, it's highly cut resistant and fairly water-resistant. It's skintight enough that you can wear it underneath normal clothes, though others can notice if they look too closely. Comes with either a collapsible baton, pepper spray, or knife for defending yourself.

An Archive of Your Own (200CP)
Maybe Tattletale's right – there really are only three book stores in the world? In every town and city you'll be notified of the locations of three different kinds of bookstores: a generic corporate bookstore chain, an independent store with a coffee shop attached, and an obscure store filled with donated books on shelves that cover the walls. In all of these, and in every library, you'll find an out of the way nook where you can read in peace and quiet. Reading or studying here can give you a sense of calm and ease, enough to cool your heels while waiting for your allies to finish whatever work they need to do so you can get back to the action. You'll also find your reading speed increased while here, and if your location stocks a particular book you're looking for you'll always know where exactly to find it. People won't disturb you so long as you give them no reason to, though you won't be able to hide there if someone's actively pursuing you.

VETERAN ITEMS

Rainy Day Funds (100CP)
A number of accounts with varying though significant amounts of money inside… though you're going to have to pay to get access to them. Thankfully, there is a single Number Man account with twenty-four thousand and five hundred dollars sitting within it, which should be enough to get you access to the rest. Unfortunately, at least until the Gauntlet is over, you'll need to get to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, or (if you're trying to avoid hero or Coil scrutiny) somewhere further away from Brockton Bay, like Chicago.

The Number Man Account is absolutely secure, using a 16-part alphanumeric code you will always perfectly remember and which you will never mispronounce on accident. In future Jumps the account will be similarly secure and discreet, and will always start with spending power equivalent to the twenty thousand dollars of this world, and you may choose for other money Items you've purchased to be stored in this account at the start of each Jump. You may purchase additional undiscounted copies of this to boost the amount of money that starts in the account.

You Needed Valuable Opponents (200CP)
Score. You have a sealed dossier that, when opened, reveals a great deal of information on a local group you wouldn't mind taking down a peg, whose power level is enough to challenge you… that is, challenge you if you only had your Body Mod, and if you were on your own. You're not *both* of those, are you?

There is of course a reward for raiding their base. Invariably, somewhere in their base they'll possess four suitcases, chests, bags, or similar containers you can easily carry away. Three of these bags will contain liquid assets (coins or bills or similar) in amounts of about equal value to twenty thousand dollars in 2011's cash. The fourth, however, always contains at least one object of about equal plot importance, utility, and value to the Jump as bundle of Cauldron Vials has on Earth Bet. This final container may well draw unwanted attention to you, so it's ultimately up to you whether you take it when you raid this victim's den.

You get one dossier every 10 years, or every Jump, whichever comes first.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

So, did you made it to safety? Or were you witness to the fall of your remaining comrades? Or perhaps you were the one to collapse? Instead of asking you whether you wish to return home or move on to the next Jump, your choice is likely already made for you:

If you died, you may **Go Home** or **Go to the Next Jump**. Simple as that.

If you lived and Lisa or Taylor died, you lose any purchases you bought here, and immediately continue your adventure using a Worm Jump of your choice. You will need to rebuy your existing **Shard Power** for continuity's sake, using the points from that Jump.

If you lived and both Lisa and Taylor lived, however, you immediately continue your adventure using a Worm Jump of your choice. Any CP you have left over is added directly to your starting CP for that Jump. Your **Shard Power** is made a part of your Body Mod, allowing you to use it in Gauntlets and Power Lockouts. You may invite **Taylor and Lisa** to join you on your journey – they possess their Shard Powers, as well as all of the Perks associated with their respective origins, which are considered part of their Body Mod, whenever it matters. They take up a single Companion Slot and are imported into the Worm Jump for free.

If you were Taylor Hebert and made it through with only Lisa by your side, you've assumed the name Tina Brown and will continue your adventure using a Worm Jump of your choice. Any CP you have left over is added directly to your starting CP for that Jump. You may invite **Lisa** to join you on your Jumpchain – she possesses her Shard Power and the Perks for Veteran, all of which is considered part of her Body Mod. She is already imported into the Worm Jump for free. Likewise, you'll also find that your **Bug Control Shard Power** becomes part of your Body Mod. You also gain the following Perk:

Pseudo-Dinah

You're not Dinah Alcott. Dinah is dead. But you're almost as good. You can tell the rough likelihood that someone you can perceive will regret a decision they're about to make. You also get an idea of an alternative – either a decision they'd be more likely to regret, or a decision they'd be less likely to regret. Which you receive is randomly selected, but is always a possible and valid choice they might make, and you always know which is which.

If you were Lisa Wilbourn and made it through with only Taylor by your side, you've assumed the name Laura Williams and will continue your adventure using a Worm Jump of your choice. Any CP you have left over is added directly to your starting CP for that Jump. You may invite **Taylor** to join you on your Jumpchain – she possesses her Shard Power and the Perks for Greenhorn, all of which is considered part of her Body Mod. She is already imported into the Worm Jump for free. You'll also find that your **Inference Shard Power** has become part of your Body Mod. You also gain the following Perk:

Pseudo-Amy

You're not Amy Dallon. Amy is dead. But you're almost as good. A few minutes of massaging, poking and easing strained muscles, provides a minor boost to others' natural healing, and improves the effects of healing abilities used upon them. You can also tell when someone needs more care than you can provide.

Regardless of how you ended this Gauntlet, your Perks, Items, Warehouse, and Companions are returned to you, though the Gauntlet’s safeguards are lost. Might I suggest you take time to rest?