

reboot

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by [bwug](#)

Summary

a little surge character study set before the events of impostor syndrome.

Notes

cw: gaslighting & implied physical/psychological abuse. you know, canon typical.

The Doctor is speaking to her. Well, her and Kit. On some level, what he's saying is probably important, but Surge isn't listening.

The specifics of this particular test don't matter anyways. All she needs to do is go in and wreck whatever he wants. Or not wreck it. Or something. Kit will fill her in later. She tries to remember their last assignment—

and falters.

A shudder wracks her body. Memories, disconnected and hazy, flash in her mind. Trying to banish them, she grinds her teeth and sets her jaw, a low growl rumbling in her throat.

"Surge? Are you alright?" The Doctor's call snaps her back to reality.

"Yeah, 'm sorry. What were you sayin'?"

Irritation flashes briefly in his eyes before he returns to his explanation.

Surge tries to listen to him this time; she can only manage for a moment, until her attention wanes

once more. She stares out the window at a little blue Flicky flying away from its nest.

The sight makes her heart ache.

—

Surge was right not to pay attention to the Doctor. Today's test: a basic training course against a couple of badniks. She and Kit are done in record time.

They emerge from the testing chamber, Kit trailing sheepishly behind Surge. The Doctor watches them with an inscrutable expression.

"How was that?" Surge laughs, bouncing over to his side. "Pretty damn awesome, huh?"

"You did fine. Now, do it again."

Again?

"Yes, again. Were you not listening to me?" Oops. She hadn't meant to say that out loud. "I need you to run a number of tests multiple times today. Optimizing this data is crucial to the success of our project."

"Hear ya loud and clear, doc. Let's do it again."

—

She and Kit clear the course once again.

"Again."

And again.

"Again."

And again.

"Again."

And again.

—

Surge isn't used to feeling exhausted. She can't remember the last time she felt this tired. Her limbs tremble, hot from exertion, electricity crackling weakly along her arms.

She drags herself from the testing room. The Doctor is waiting for them on the other side of the door, looking as prim and put together as ever. Resentment roils in her stomach like a budding storm.

"How are you feeling?"

Surge stares at him. "Tired. Are we done yet?"

"Almost. I'd like you to run it again."

"Again?"

This time, she means to say it out loud.

The Doctor's voice softens—slightly. "Just once more. I need to gather a bit more data."

"No!"

"No?"

"No, we're not doing it again! I'm fuckin' exhausted! Drippy here—" she thrusts her thumb over her shoulder at Kit "—can barely stand up. We're done."

The Doctor's gaze hardens into steel. The words that leave his mouth are stiff and cold. "You're 'done' when I say you're done. Run it again."

A dull ringing floods Surge's ears until it's all that she can hear. She rushes forwards, grabbing the Doctor by the collar. "I'm *not* running it again! You want data?! *You run it!*"

The Doctor wrenches himself from her grip and

before

she

even

knows

what

hit

her

everything

turns

white.

—

"Oh, heavens! Surge? Are you alright?"

Static pops and fizzes in Surge's mind as she slowly regains consciousness.

"Wha... what happened, doc?"

"Thank goodness you're okay!" The Doctor reaches out a gloved hand to pull her up. "You took on more than you could chew with that last test, I'm afraid. You pushed your cybernetics past their limits and blacked out. I only barely managed to retrieve you in time."

No matter how hard she tries, Surge can't remember what just happened. It's all a haze. The Doctor must be right.

"Geeze. Thanks for havin' my back, doc. Dunno what I'd do without ya."

The Doctor's bill curls into a smile. "I'm always looking out for you, Surge."

The Doctor dismissed Surge and Kit to their rooms for the night. *I'm worried about you both, I really am*, is what he said.

Surge sits on the edge of her bed, idly playing with the corner of a bedsheet.

Distantly, she hears the pipes in the walls creak and shudder as someone begins to run the water.

"Ah..."

The sound of water rushes through her ears and rattles against her brain. Bile churns in her stomach.

Water...

Why does she hate the sound of water?

I... I can't remember...

When Surge tries to reach for the memory, there's nothing there.

Why can't I remember...?

Her mind opens up before her like a gaping black hole. She gazes upon it and feels ice seep into her veins.

She tries to think about why she's here with the Doctor. She tries to remember why she hates Sonic. She wonders why she never thought about this before and the ice hardens.

She can't breathe.

Maybe I have thought about all of this before... and I just forgot.

A shuddering gasp escapes Surge as she falls to her knees. Distantly, she thinks she must be shaking. A voice in the back of her mind chides her for being so emotional. She isn't sure who it belongs to.

It takes a moment for her surroundings to stop swimming. They slow, and Surge gets to her feet.

She knows what she has to do.

The door to the Doctor's study is an impressive thing. Large, built of heavy metals and dark wood, it stands proudly in contrast to the pallid grey walls surrounding it. When Surge looks up at it she feels very small.

Taking a deep breath, she throws open the door.

The Doctor is sitting in a large wing-back chair when Surge enters. He can't even be bothered to look up from the papers he's leafing through.

"Surge, what have I told you about knocking?"

She ignores him. "We need to talk."

He still isn't looking at her. "Talk about what, exactly?"

"I..." The words stumble over themselves in her mind and splatter against the ground. Surge looks down at them in horror.

I hate you what's going on I don't understand why am I here why can't I remember anything why are you doing this to me!

The Doctor sighs. He puts down his papers and—finally—looks at Surge. "Close the door."

She does, because the Doctor tells her to.

"Take a seat."

She does, because...

"Now, Surge, what seems to be the problem?"

In that instant, the Doctor changes. As he faces her now his demeanor is completely open, the way he looks at her earnest and—almost—empathetic.

"Doc, I can't remember anything." It's as good a place to start as any.

"Oh, well, that *is* cause for concern." He fidgets fretfully at this. "Do you truly mean *anything*?"

"I—no, not *anything* —I know, like, I'm Surge, and you're Doctor Starline, a-and Kit..." This is so much harder than she thought it would be. "But I try to think about what happened today, or any other day, and it's all just... one big smear..."

The Doctor frowns. "I see..." He shuffles through some of the papers on his desk in thought. "Ah. I think I know what the problem is." With swift fingers he plucks one of the papers from its stack and passes it to Surge. She stares at it blankly, unable to focus enough to read what it says. The words slide off her brain like water from a duck.

"I'm afraid it's a side effect of your cybernetic enhancements. When they become overwhelmed, the amount of energy causes a type of post-traumatic amnesia." He shakes his head. "You'll have to be more careful with yourself, Surge. I don't want you to get hurt."

Surge pauses to consider this.

"It should be temporary, which means the memories will return to you in time, though I'm not sure how long that might take." His pensive look shifts into a small smile. "If you'd like, I could even set aside some time to help you recover your memories."

Surge sizes the Doctor up. He's small. Pale. Skinny. Gangly limbs. A mess of a bad perm and an ugly suit. Not exactly what anyone would consider threatening.

"I don't believe you."

"I'm sorry?"

Surge stands up. Her gaze narrows, boring straight into the Doctor's red eyes.

"I think you're lyin' to me, Doc. I think you know exactly what's goin' on here and it sure ain't any '*post-traumatic amnesia*' ," with a sneer, she adds, "Not unless you're the one doing the traumatizing, anyway."

He lets out a laugh at that; a cold, brittle thing that makes Surge wince.

"Oh, Surge, you must think yourself very clever. You've got me!" A smirk dances across his face, every ounce of warmth evaporated from his expression. "Unfortunately for you, I still need your help for quite some time."

"Well, I'm done!" She shouts. "No way! Nuh-uh! I'm not gonna let you use me for your experiments any more!"

He tilts his head quizzically. "And how, pray tell, do you propose to stop me?"

Suddenly, Surge hears the door click behind her. Locked. Panic seizes her chest. She glances over her shoulder at the door then glances back to see Starline, placing a small remote down against the desk.

Trapped. She's trapped. Her heart beats against her ribcage. Surge lets out a guttural roar, counting on her strength and speed to carry her as she throws herself forward—

but Starline is too fast.

With fluid, practiced movements he steps out of Surge's way. She crashes into the floor. She's back up in a second. It doesn't matter. It's too late.

"Go to sleep for me, will you?"

Hypnotic waves from his open palm fill her gaze. Against her will, Surge's mind and muscles slow to a crawl. She can barely manage a strangled "No!—" before collapsing against the ground in a limp heap.

As Surge's consciousness begins to fade, Starline mutters to himself.

"*Tch.* These outbursts are becoming more and more frequent. The problems inherent to basing something off of that hedgehog's personality... mmm. Perhaps I need to make some adjustments..."

—

Surge wakes up, and everything is fine.

"How are you feeling?"

Hm? That's a little weird. The Doctor's in her room, sitting at the foot of her bed. What's he doing here?

"Fine, thanks. What's it to you?"

"Simply checking up on you. I want to make sure you're in top shape for our exercise tonight."

"Yeah, okay." Surge snorts. "What *are* we doin' tonight, anyways?"

"There's just one more test I need you to do for me." The Doctor smiles at her as he stands up. He offers her a hand, but she shakes her head. Walking over to the door, he continues, "A little more training. After that, I hope to finally put you in the field. You've been doing quite well lately, Surge."

Surge's chest puffs out at his praise. "Really? *Finally* is an understatement!" She grins. "I'll show

you just how ready I am for the field tonight, doc."

"I can't wait." He smiles. "Well? Are you coming?"

Surge nods, scrambling off her bed and out the door after him. Outside, the smell of breakfast fills the air. Surge's stomach rumbles. Kit is probably already eating downstairs.

Excitement bubbles in her chest at the thought of getting out of Starline's lab and into the real world to wreak some havoc. The strangeness of the morning is already forgotten as she rushes down the stairs.

The Doctor might be a bit of a weird nerd, but it's not like Surge has any reason not to trust him.

Right?

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