

Jerk

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Jerk

by [ceiland](#)

Summary

Royce introduces Grant to a certain part of the Process. Grant isn't exactly reassured.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

The thing stands tall and still in the center of the lab, watching the two of them without moving. It's larger than all the other units of the Process he's been shown thus far, towering over them. Massive, disjointed arms with flat ends that he wouldn't quite call hands float at its sides, and the detached base of it looks like a larger version of the so-called cells he's been shown previously. White metal shines under bright light.

"Are you sure this is safe?" Grant says, looking up at the red, slitted eye of it apprehensively. The cells, or the little tripod thing from Royce's first demonstration, those are all different. Cells are harmless, immobile things meant only for recycling; the other creature wasn't quite innocuous but certainly more so than this, whatever this may be. The idea of Royce working with something so seemingly risky doesn't exactly put him at ease.

"No more dangerous than the others, I'm sure. This one is, ah, even more docile than the other ones, so I've found. Docile—but I wouldn't want to get on its bad side, no." Royce stands at his side, Transistor in hand, looking at the Process rather than him. Grant's hardly seen him without the Transistor lately, always working on something, even more singularly focused than before. It's a change; subtle but noticeable, and hard to describe. Royce has been wearing himself down to the bone over this. Not a new habit, but a worsened one, and one that never fails to make Grant fret in his own way. "The thing has fists larger than our heads, Royce."

"Pistons, it has pistons, for, land development, I'd imagine. Could be good for clearing plots of land." Pistons. Because that's so much more reassuring. "Pistons for when it gets pissed off, more like." Royce rolls the handle of the Transistor in his hand, still propping it up on his shoulder. "So long as I have the Transistor, I should be in control. Should be." Even with the Transistor, Royce would have a tough fight if that thing went astray. Useful as the Process is and will be for their plans, Grant still holds firmly his misgivings. At least for Royce's sake. "What exactly can it do?"

"Step back," Royce says, taking the Transistor in both hands now. "Stand clear. It can do some... pretty heavy damage to its surroundings. As I'm sure you've already guessed." He does so, giving the thing a wide berth. At Royce's command, it whirs into action, the low hum of machinery accelerating into a roar as it spins; it pounds the floor with its piston-hands, cracking and pulverizing the tile in a circle around itself. Land development indeed—it could destroy a whole city lot just on its own!

Eventually it winds down, reminding him of a top losing its momentum. Royce finally turns to him, a trace of a spark in his eyes. "Docile. Relatively docile. But not to be trifled with." A motion with the Transistor, and the ruined patch of floor heals itself before their eyes. Knits itself back together like broken bones. The whole city is built on that power, he reminds himself. They could destroy—but they can also create, build a better, longer-lasting city for the benefit of the people. A Cloudbank with a long-term legacy instead of a fragmented, puzzle-piece history. "You have a strange definition of docile," he says, folding his arms in front of him.

"It's—cooperating, isn't it? Stopped when I told it to stop."

End Notes

you have no idea how long i ruminated over including the piston/pissed off joke. hopefully it wasn't too jarring of an inclusion, aside from the bad wordplay.

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