“Y’know, it still amazes me that people used to think that it was *nuclear winter* that was going to kill us all.

“Elly, I don’t want to hear this again.”

“Aw, c’mon, Tully, let me have my fun,” Elly griped.

“No,” Tully flatly remarked back. “Every other trip out with you, it’s ‘nuclear winter’ this, ‘nuclear winter’ that. It gets *boring,* Elly.” The heels of her boots clicked against the concrete the duo treaded upon, until she stopped besides one of the many large metallic boxes in the room; unlike the others which showed a pleasant green light, this one bore an ominous red.

A whine came from Elly as they leaned against one of the concrete pillars that held up this section of the power station, a pleading look on their face as they looked up at Tully. A good foot taller, Tully’s lethal gaze didn’t fade in the slightest as she stared down at Elly. “You’re just saying that because you want to smoke and don’t want to have to respond to me,” Elly complained.

“*Yes*,” Tully replied, smirking. “You’re learning.” With her one good hand, Tully rifled through the messenger bag that rested against her left side, pulling out both a pack of cigarettes and a metallic lighter at once; with some awkward finagling, she was able to jimmy out a single cigarette, hold it in her mouth, and light it with a metallic clink of the lighter before even more awkwardly finagling the lighter and pack back as she took a small drag from the cigarette threatening to droop out of her mouth.

“Did you know –”

“The cancer rates of these things? Yes, Elly, I *do* know them, because not only have you told me them, but you’ve also told me how that compared to the risk of lung cancer from –”

“Air pollution!” Elly exclaimed with a smug grin, though Tully just rolled their eyes at their enthusiasm. “Thirty years ago, it caused twenty-nine percent of all lung cancers. Now, it –”

“Elly, it’s the reason we have to wear the masks if we even think about going outside, I couldn’t give a shit about the exact numbers,” Tully interjected as she crouched down next to box. “Now set the tools down besides me.”

“Are you sure you don’t want me to handle this one? You’ve gotten the past three.”

Under her breath, Tully mumbled, “Because you only shut up when I’m working.”

“You know you love me and my facts,” Elly teased as they did as they were instructed, “after all, I’m the only other technician you ever work with.”

“Just because you’re the only bearable idiot in this damned facility doesn’t mean I like you,” Tully grumbled. With the tools at her side, however, she got to work; in no time at all, she had the relay repaired. “That should be the last one for today, so geothermal should be good for… however long it takes the next one to fail.”

“We should celebrate!” Elly suggested, getting in close to Tully and, once Tully made the mistake of putting her cigarette back in her mouth, grabbing on her arm. “Go check out the city!”

“Ah, because my definition of ‘celebrating’ is wearing a mask and getting drenched in my own sweat to, what, see other people suffering the same thing? Drink awful beer at a shitty bar? Bear witness to –”

“Alright, alright, I get it,” Elly dejectedly interjected before Tully’s rambling could go any further. “I just thought it’d be fun to try and have a night on the town. Y’know, like people here talk about how they used to do that.”

“Elly, I—” Tully began, until she looked down at Elly’s face. With a deep breath in, a shaky sigh, and an extremely small shake of her head, she softly said, “You just want to see a city, don’t you.”

A small voice replied. “Yeah.”

With another deep breath, Tully closed her eyes, rubbing them as she did, and snuffed out the cigarette she was smoking on the heel of her boot before she shoved it into one of the pockets of her uniform. “Gods, you’re insufferable,” she weakly murmured as she did, before opening her eyes. “Are pictures really not good enough for you?”