

The broadcast came over every channel at the same time. The signal was strong enough to drown out anything else, even Dana Crash's emergency channels. Despite its power, the transmission was just a test screen. A couple circles over a grid with the words, 'Please Stand By' floating in the middle. Then, that faded away to a tall, thin man standing before a huge chalkboard. There was something weird about his face. Dana squinted at her bank of monitors, trying to discern what it was when she realized his face was somehow being blurred.

"Greetings, citizens of the world," he said with a measured, urbane tone. Something like one would expect out of a lecturer. "I am Doctor Eustis P. Vonnergal. I doubt many of you know that name but, I assure you, that will change after today. For now is a time of change!"

He half turned to the board and began to describe his formula, how it took the fabled lost work of Dr. Jekyll and molecularized it thanks to the theories of the late Johnathan Crash. He claimed, in short, that he had made a growth ray. Dana's jaw tightened at the mention of her father. Just what did this man plan to do with his work?

"If you would please, control." The camera panned to the left and a table came into view. On it was a rabbit in a cage and a strange looking device. Dr. Vonnergal let the rabbit out then picked up the device and pointed it at his subject.

"I will now make this rabbit grow to twice its size."

A bright light flashed and a visible beam enveloped the rabbit. Its body seemed to pulse before it began to steadily enlarge. It was not long before the rabbit was over a foot long. The ray faded away as the doctor turned his attention back to the camera.

"Now, you may wonder why I bothered to hijack every broadcast to show such a simple example of my discovery. The answer is over here."

The camera panned once more to focus on a hue device that looked like the one Vonnergal had just used.

"This, dear citizens, is a much more powerful version of my device. And, if I am not paid one million dollars in the next 48 hours, I shall embiggen the moon causing the tides to rise violently. Many major cities will become swamps in a manner of minutes."

He continued to drone on with his threats but, Dana was already leaping into action. She pulled on the shimmering, radiation-resistant duster that had given birth to one of her more well-known monikers, The Silver Coat. She grabbed her goggles and cap from their place on her jetpack. She slung said pack onto her back and then climbed onto the roof of the barn she was living in. Her cap was cinched. Her goggles set. She pulled a scarf around her face. Her grin was wide under the protective draping as she clicked the jetpack's ignition switch.

Taking a running leap into the sky, she was hit by the force of the thrust as the engine that was her mother's legacy began to pull her through the air. She ascended to a couple hundred feet to get her bearings and to let her instruments warm up. She glanced over the grainy map display for her destination. As the apparent evil scientist had rambled, she had managed to triangulate the transmission's source. Seemingly narrowing it down to an area in northern Washington. If things went well it would only take an hour to get there.

Sure, she could leave this to the professionals. After all, there were plenty of them. In the wake of the war there had been so many who wanted to use their technology to make a name for themselves. Overnight, firms popped up all over selling new and exciting inventions. Many of them were based on stolen designs and pilfered development. There were few in this new age of invention who actually were master craftsmen. She was fortunate to have been born to two of the greatest engineers in a generation. She was also an orphan for that same reason.

Since their death five years ago, when she was only sixteen, she had willingly seen hell. She fought for them and their memory. That her parents' lives had been bargaining chips, that their worth as human beings was only as good as their next invention, was why she could not, would not, leave this to anyone else. She had to be the fist that kept her parent's gifts from threatening the world.

Blasting up towards the coast, she had to dodge a few planes and a particularly aggressive flock of blackbirds but, arrived mostly unscathed near where she had calculated. The sleeping caldera of Mt. St. Helens. It looked like a military facility at this point. Guard towers and miles of fence ringed the base of the Dormant Volcano and there was activity as far as she could see in the forests. Fortunately, people never looked up.

Throttling down, she sailed overhead with just enough power to keep from dropping out of the sky with no one the wiser. She settled down near the top of the mountain, near what looked like a bunker entrance. A pair of guards, ex-marines from the emblems on their uniforms, stood on either side of the heavy door. She drew her shock pistol, a tangle of wire and glass containing whirling plasma.

Her first shot knocked one to the ground in a crackling blast. The second flew wide as the guard ducked. She boosted out of the trees with a burst of pressurized air and went to kick him in the face but, he blocked, grabbed her ankle, and proceeded to throw her to the ground. Her pistol skittered away out of reach.

His foot coming down on her chest took the wind out of her. He easily outweighed her by a hundred pounds, gear included. Squeezing her eyes closed, she pulled the chord on her make shift chafe hitting him in chest and arms with tiny fragments of aluminum. The stinging cuts were enough to stagger him and she rolled to her feet.

A diving boost brought her to her pistol. A quickly snapped off shot dazed him and he fell to the ground twitching slightly. She checked her gear, it did not seem like anything had been broken however it was going to take hours to shred new chafe.

The base of Dr. Vonnergal was a labyrinthine tangle of hallways and doors and it took her forever to find the chamber that had been showcased. Just as she rounded the corner into that room, there was an explosion as the professionals showed up.

Lead by a man genetically engineered to be the best soldier, they were a group of the best science and fantasy could produce. There was the legendary Queen of Atlantis, the sprite-like Puck of Avalon, and finally, the man who had been in part responsible for her parents' death, Leonard Heart.

“Give it up, Dr. Vonnergal,” Greatest Soldier said from behind his raised fists. “We don't want to hurt you.”

“Don't want to hurt me? But I very much want to hurt you!”

Two crates opened up and from either side a robotic monstrosity appeared. The sound of whirring gears filled the room as the robots took fighting stances. Even then, they were blocky and clumsy looking. There was no way they would be a match for the world's super hero team. Only this was more of a trap than anyone realized.

With a hearty laugh, Puck knocked Leonard across the room, scattering the pieces of his armor in the process. The Queen of Atlantis swung her trident, grazing the great faerie, but he danced away as the robots advanced on her and Greatest Soldier. Dana had to do something to even the odds!

She steadied her aim on her leg, she would only have one surprise shot and it had to count. With one of the mechanical henchmen in her sights, she pulled the trigger sending a ball of pure energy rocketing towards the construct. There was a satisfying, sizzling crackle and the robot went down hard, its casing cracking open on the floor and gears scattering over the floor.

Dana slunk back around the corner, where she bumped into something. She glanced up. It was Puck. He was much faster than her, knocking her pistol aside before she could even raise it. The glass shattered on the tile and the sound of blazing lightning made her ears ring.

“Well now, little wolf, come along,” he said as he picked her up and carried her into the room. “We can't have you slinking around.”

Both the soldier and the queen were unconscious. The doctor stood over them rubbing his hands together. The other robot was wandering towards Leonard.

“Control, get us back up to broadcast power. The world just lost twenty four hours. Actually, to world just lost a whole lot more.”

There was an acknowledgment over an intercom and the whole room began to buzz. The distant sound of turbines became louder and louder. The ceiling began to retract as the giant ray rotated into position. A man with a camera appeared.

“Greetings once again citizens, it feels like we only just spoke but, I wanted to update you on the status of our arrangement. You see,” he swept his hands past the fallen heroes. “Your hero squad failed to stop me and that they came at all is very...vexing. I think I may have to renegotiate our deal.”

Dana struggled in Puck’s grasp, but the storied trickster would not release her.

“Easy now, wolf pup, you wouldn’t want to miss the show now.”

“Piss off, how could you betray them?”

“I’m not the only one with a grudge...Little. Miss. Crash.”

She clenched her fist, freeing the electrified blade between her coat and her shirt. She stabbed backwards, sinking in into Puck’s thigh. The pixie howled as the tamed lightning coursed through his veins before dropping to the ground, foam bubbling in his mouth. He would live, she hoped.

At this point the good doctor was too busy in his theatrics to notice that things were not as he left them. She had to get to that ray, she had to stop it. Igniting her jetpack engine made him turn to face her. He realized too late what was going to happen. She cut the straps on her pack as the engine began to pull. Freed from its restraints, the theoretical device careened towards the huge beam cannon.

Its impact was in slow motion. She actually saw the jetpack hit and then explode. The device toppled over. In their direction. Just as everything on it began to glow. She moved before thinking about it. Jumping onto the ball like transmitter, she hoped her coat was strong enough to keep the ray’s effects from destroying everything.

Wave after wave of burning sensation crashed over her as her body was subjected to who knew what kinds of radiation. For a moment, everything went black. Then she hit to floor as the sound of turbines wound to a stop.

Her body jolted like being shocked. Her heart pounded, becoming a deafening roar. It felt like every inch of her was pulsing, her body tightening and relaxing, only to tighten again. There was a tearing noise. The cool circulated air of the volcano base brushed against her thigh. It had begun.

Weakly she struggled out of her coat, dimly aware that she would probably be bigger than it in a moment. She staggered to her feet as her shoulders began to strain her shirt. She bent to get her boots off, but it was already too late. With a pair of pops, her swelling calves tore the seams. Soon after, her growing feet pushed the leather away from the rubber. The feeling of her feet widening, of her toes and tendons thickening, was at the same time bizarre and enjoyable.

Strength surged from her core as her whole body jumped up a size in a brief moment. Her pants shredded the rest of the way, her waist and hips surging wider to destroy the waistband as her legs stretched out. Her shirt's hem crept up as simply more of her swelled into being. She gripped her coat with her toes, hoping she would find it later.

Before she even had a moment to acclimate to her new stature there was another surge and another faster burst of growth. None of her clothes survived this time as she expanded both up and out. Muscles throbbed from head to toe as they grew more defined, her body developing an athleticism she had never dreamed of before.

The next surge hit before the last had even faded and another came almost at once behind that. The frequency of the surges kept increasing until it just felt like she was vibrating with growth ray energy. A couple inches of extra height became four which became eight--and there seemed to be no end. Over and over, her size doubled.

When her shoulders were pressing against the ceiling, she scooped up the heroes, even Puck, and held them to her chest. Her legs, with nowhere to go, were bent under her to take up every square inch

of floor space but, she had a feeling that would change shortly. The base shook as her growth pushed the roof apart and let in cold night air.

Standing to stretch, she finally felt the vibration of her growth dying down. It was hard to tell how big she had gotten, the dormant volcano was still much larger than her, but the heroes in her grasp were like dolls. She set them down in the doorway of a bunker, her coat with them, then turned her attention back to what she had come to do. The giant ray gun was about the size of her pistol in her vast hand. She crushed it with a clap.

With the mission over, she began to stride down the mountain only to have something grab her arm. Turning, she was faced with the other robot seemingly grown to match her and still growing as more and more of its grabber hand enveloped her bicep.

She swung a palm into one of its glass vacuum tubes, but found her blow deflected by the material. It appeared that the growth had thickened its delicate circuitry. It bent her other arm back, pushing her to the ground.

There was a crunch as her knee smashed into the remains of the ray. The pain seemed to ignite something inside her. She felt her whole body shudder as her musculature suddenly bulked up three times. Merely flexing her bicep was enough to break the significantly larger robot's grasp. With a swipe her fingers dug into the metal shell. She pulled away the metallic casing and began to hammer whatever she could reach inside.

The robot shuddered, the sound of its mechanics sputtering. She grabbed its legs and heaved. Her body seemingly responded to the demand as even more power surged through her. The robot left the ground, they both tilted backwards. The ground was hard and she bounced surprisingly well for her size as she and her foe tumbled down the mountain side to finally come to a stop in the lake at its base.

Chill waters swallowed her and the machine. As she sank beneath the surface, she could feel her body contracting. As fast as it had happened, she was shrinking. Her head broke water just as the wave

of their impact crested. Pulled by the current, she hurtled to shore. The last thing she remembered was hitting the sand.

She woke later wrapped in a blanket and in the company of the Queen of Atlantis. There was a brief conversation to ensure that she was okay and to reprimand her for acting without heroic clearance. She was informed they would be returning to the Hall of Heroes within the hour. Then she was left alone with a change of clothes and her coat. As she pulled on the the tights, she felt her body throb as her muscles swelled just once, At the edge of her mind she could still feel the power, the ability. She just had to figure out how to use it.

“Well, first I need to figure out a suit that won’t shred when I get bigger, then I can think about being a hero.”