

TEAM OPTIMUM – SUPERHEROES GET HUNGRY TOO

800-1000 WORDS

[PAGE 1-2]

EXTERIOR. NIGHT. ATOP A TREE-LINED HILL

“The stars are so beautiful up here. Getting away from all the city light really makes a difference...”

“Yeah. In about 15 minutes, the meteor shower will start. You’ve never seen one before, right?”

“Not in real-”

RUSTLE RUSTLE

“What was that noise?”

“Probably just a raccoon.”

“There’s nothing too wild out here, is there?”

“Any of the critters here will be running away from us, there’s nothing to be worried...”

“What’s wrong?”

“I thought I felt something.”

“I can’t see anything”

“Give me the light. It’s a stick.”

RUSTLE RUSTLE

“This doesn’t look like its from around here.”

RUSTLE RUSTLE

“I wonder what kind of tree this-”

RUSTLE RUSTLE RUSTLE

“AAAAAHHH!!!”

“WHAT’S WRONG?!”

“SOMETHING GRABBED ME!”

“I CAN’T SEE IT!”

“IT WON’T LET GO!”

“HEY! HEY! LET GO!”

CUT TO HILL IN SHADOWS. THE COUPLE HAS VANISHED INTO THE TREES. THE METEOR  
SHOWER PASSES IN THE SKY ABOVE.

[PAGE 3-4]

EXTERIOR, MORNING VAN. PARKED OUTSIDE A DONUT SHOP.

VAN INTERIOR. A GIRL SITS SURROUNDED BY GADGETS AND EQUIPMENT. SHE IS DARK SKINNED WITH JET BLACK HAIR TIED UP IN A MESSY BUN. SHE LOOKS TIRED, BUT DETERMINED.

SHE SPEAKS INTO A RECORDER

“Anomaly Log 1113. Time 05:55AM. Based on analysis of incomplete records suggest that multiple people had been infected by anomalies here decades ago. Based on recent evidence, I am concerned that there may be more incidents soon. Today’s task is to set up scanners from the urban center, to hinterlands. Scans will take multiple days, in which I can reconfigure the controls on the Microphaser. After this, I only have one intact unit left, so I need to make this work. Now. Signing off.”

[PAGE 5-6]

EXTERIOR, MORNING, to NOON to NIGHT.

WE SEE THE VAN PARKED IN VARIOUS LOCATION AND SEE THE YOUNG WOMAN SETTING UP THE SENSOR DEVICES. EACH PANEL SHOWS THE DEVICES IN MULTIPLE CONFIGURATIONS, AS WE SEE FARTHER INTO THE PROCESS IN EACH IMAGE. LET'S SAY THE SENSORS HAVE 5 EXTERNAL ELEMENT WE CAN SEE, OVER 5 IMAGES WE WOULD SEE DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND IN EACH ONE WE WOULD SEE ONE MORE ADDED ON AND THEN WE COULD SEE COMPLETED SENSORS IN THE FOLLOWING PANEL TO CLEARLY CONVEY HOW THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK AND THAT SHE HAD TO ACTUALLY PUT THE WORK IN FOR THEM TO PROPERLY FUNCTION. THE LAST COUPLE IMAGES CAN SHOW HER VAN WITH THE MOON MOVING OVER IT AS SOUNDS OF HER WORKING ON EQUIPMENT COME FROM INSIDE. MAYBE EVEN THE HATCH IS OPEN AND TINY WISPS OF SMOKE OR STEAM DRIFT OUT; SOME GRINDING SPARKS, TOO! WE CAN EVEN SEE HER TAKE OFF A FACE SHIELD AND TAKE IN THE NIGHT ON THE NEXT PAGE BEFORE SOMETHING EXCITING HAPPENS.

[PAGE 7-8]

EXTERIOR, NIGHT. OVERLOOKING A SMALL VALLEY

AS THE ACTION UNFOLDS, THE CAMERA PUSHES IN, UNTIL IT IS TOO CLOSE TO SEE  
MUCH OF ANYTHING

A WOMAN RUNS, SPLASHING THROUGH A CREEK. SHE STARTS UP THE OPPOSITE HILL.

A GREAT SHADOWY WOLF WITH GLOWING RED EYES BOUNDS OVER THE HILL SHE IS  
RUNNING AWAY FROM.

SHE CRESTS THE HILL AND IT SNAPS AT HER HEELS. ONE OF HER SHOES FALLS OFF

SHE TUMBLES DOWN THE HILL AND SCREAMS

(PAGE 8)

(THE SCREAM, ALL WHITE LETTERS, IN BLACKNESS TRAVELS FROM THE BOTTOM  
RIGHT OF PAGE 7 UP A NARROW MARGIN ON THE FAR LEFT OF PAGE 8 LEADING TO THE  
TOP LEFT OF PAGE 8, PAST THE MARGIN OF COURSE, TO HER EARS)

THE GIRL AT THE VAN HEARS THE WOMAN'S SCREAM. SHE HESITATES A BEAT (SHOWN  
IN 3 NARROW PANELS WITH HER FACE GOING FROM CONCERNED TO ANXIOUS TO  
DETERMINED), THEN GRABS SOME GEAR AND RUSHES OFF TOWARDS THE SOUND.

VAN GIRL IS WEARING A HEAD LAMP WHICH ILLUMINATES THE SCENE. SHE ARRIVES  
AS THE WOLF IS LOCKED ON THE WOMAN'S ARM. THE WOMAN IS SCUFFED AND SHOE-  
LESS, THE WOLF HAS STRANGE MARKINGS ON IT.

“STOP!!” The girl shouts

The woman and the wolf both turn their attention toward her.

“OH PLEASE! HELP ME!” the woman cries.

“RON’T RISTREN RO RERR!” the wolf growled

“WHAT?!” the girl gawked at the talking wolf

“RII SHRED ROHN-”

The wolf yelped as the woman delivered a sudden blow that freed her arm and knocked it back.

“HOW!?”

“Thanks for the distraction, girly.” the woman said as she stood up quickly.

All signs of fear had vanished from her. She leaned over and hoisted the wolf up to her eye level.

Markings appeared on her skin and she turned it around, examining it.

“You Type Seven-Ones should have all been scrapped long ago.” She tossed it over her shoulder and turned to walk away.

“Wait! What is going on? What are you?” the girl took a step toward the strange pair.

“Oh, yes. Thank you so much!” the woman dropped the wolf carelessly.

She stretched and twisted, the markings on her glowing until they flashed brightly.

The girl threw up her hand to shield her eyes.

“I always forget to tie up loose ends.” the woman trilled in a sing-song voice barbed with a metallic edge.

THE WOMAN STANDS WIDE AND LOW. SHE HAS BECOME SOME SORT OF MONSTER  
WITH EXAGGERATED FEATURES.

“I-In-”

“You humans and your last words.” the beast-woman spat and charged at the girl. She grabbed her by the shoulder and flung the head lamp away.

“INITIALIZE!” the girl shouted and the pack on her back hummed to life.

The beast-woman cocked her head and vanished with a twang.

The girl staggered back with a sigh, clutching the stubby nozzle close to her. She scanned the area and slowly approached the wolf.

The wolf strained to lift his head and asked “A-APEX?”

“Apex?” She asked.

His head dropped and he stopped moving.

“Terminate.” she called. Her equipment powered down, she stowed the nozzle and knelt to lift the wolf.



[PAGE 9-10 or 11-12]

EXTERIOR, VAN. DAY.

INTERIOR, VAN.

THE GIRL HAS THE WOLF SECURED, SHE HOPES.

SHE IS WORKING ON HER EQUIPMENT

THE WOLF TRIES TO MOVE, SEES THAT HE IS STUCK AND GLOWERS

She spins her chair and asks the wolf “Who or what is APEX?”

He turns to face her and stares for a long time.

“I don’t know what you are or what that lady turned into, but I assume you’re related. That’s right isn’t it? I mean, I figured with all the glowing you two did, and her calling out your designation, you two have met before or you know of each other at least.”

The wolf turned away from her and looked around searchingly.

“I know you can talk, so don’t pretend you can’t.”

Silence.

“I’m not the one who got knocked out! In fact, I dragged your hide here in case she came back or one of her friends came around.”

Silence.

“Suit yourself, I’ve got work to do!” she huffed and turned back to her work.

“I’m working on something and I thought maybe you were a part of it. I don’t know if I can trust you, but that lady tried to kill me and you didn’t. I still don’t know where that puts you, but I can’t check out yet. I have a lot of things to do. I also can’t let you go and do whatever you want, if I can’t trust you.

Maybe if you open up, I’ll change my mind. Until you do, get used to the van- Vanguard HQ laboratory

facility, which is here, where you will be staying until I, uh we decide what should be done with you.” she stumbled and stammered. She stiffened and tapped furiously at the keyboard. A few moments later a notification flashed on the screen and she excused herself.

She passed through a narrow door on the only wall that wasn't entirely covered with clutter.

In the front seat of the van, she lets out a long, deep sigh. She places her phone on the dash and watches the display as she makes quick notes in a pad propped against the steering wheel. The wolf looks around more and she writes:

‘Pros and cons of keeping this wolf prisoner’

PROS:

-I've never seen a wolf up-close like this before!

-He could lead me towards what I'm looking for, he isn't an ANOMALY, but he and that lady last night sure are out-of-the ordinary

-He could be an ally

-I have to make sure he doesn't hurt anyone

CONS:

-He could attack and kill and eat me

-He could lead me to nothing and wind up eating me

-He could be an enemy who... could eat me

-I don't feel safe leaving him here at Vanguard HQ, LOL!

-What do I do when we need food and other stuff?

She returned her attention to her phone and saw that he was staring right at the screen, as if he was knowingly looking into the webcam she turned on to monitor him.

“Can a talking wolf read? What did I leave on the screen?” She whispered to herself.

[PAGE 13-14 or 15-16]

AN ALARM SIGNALS ON HER COMPUTER AND PHONE SIMULTANEOUSLY.

SHE SLIDES THROUGH THE DOOR AND CYCLES THROUGH SCREENS AND COMMANDS

UNTIL SHE FINDS A LOCATION. A GRIM SMILE PLAYS ON HER FACE.

She spins around and says “Wolfy, we’re going hunting!”

EXTERIOR. VAN DRIVES OFF TOWARDS THE SENSOR NEAREST TO THE ANOMALY.

WE RETURN TO THE HILL WHERE THE STAR GAZERS VANISHED.

SHE GETS OUT OF THE VAN AND FLINGS THE DOORS OPEN. THE WOLF GIVES HER A  
LOOK AS IF TO SAY HE KNEW IT WASN’T ANY FANCY HQ, LIKE SHE HAD PRETENDED.

VIGNETTE OF HER GEARING UP WITH SOME OLD LOOKING EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING A  
LARGE SPHERICAL DOME WITH AN ANTENNA ON HER LEFT, A BACK PACK WITH  
TUBES AND WIRES COMING OUT OF IT AND AN ASSORTMENT OF INSTRUMENTS  
DANGLING FROM A UTILITY BELT

“Wolf the fort!” she salutes him and runs off toward the source of the signal reading the path from a  
hand-held tracking device.

“Anomaly log 1114... I didn’t check the time. Sensors locked on a signal, about 500 linear feet away.  
After impromptu test last night. Microphaser re-calibrated again. Results were inconclusive. I don’t  
know what happened. Subject: Unknown. Result: Unknown. Subject: Not-captured, disappeared, which  
is good, but I think it may have been fatal.”

She climbs to the top of the hill and sees the truck driven by the pair who vanished. The tracker reads 82 feet. She pauses and looks around quickly.

“86 feet from source. Empty vehicle here. Wooded area ahead. I should encounter the anomaly there.”

She checks her equipment again and withdraws the Microphaser.

“I can do this.” she takes a deep breath and blows out, slightly fogging the glass of her helmet

“Initialize.” At her command, the gear thrums with power and she presses past the treeline.

[PAGE 15-16 or 17-18]

SHE WALKS WITH HER MICROPHASER DOWN AND HER TRACKER UP.

70 FEET

60 FEET

50 FEET

She sees a man a lying on the ground, covered in leaves. He is still alive, but he appears to be in bad shape. She places a small object on him and continues.

At 30 feet from the anomaly, she finds a woman slumped against a tree, she too appears to be fine. She tags her and goes on.

20 Feet to source, she sees a tree shaking violently. It sways and rocks and she can here something in it. It is a confusion of sounds. She trips over uneven ground and barely recovers here footing with the ungainly equipment pulling her in different directions. However, her quarry notices her approach.

The beast-woman is wrapped in branches vines and leaves. She crouches and lurches forward slowly, as if the blighted and cracked plant material is holding her back. She twists and snarls and regains control. A tangle of plant and beast, she charges madly and the girl side steps it.

Through the helmet's display she can see a clear anomaly signal located in her foe. She raises the Microphaser, but too late. It gets knocked out of her hand by an unexpectedly fast strike!

She tries to back away, feeling for another piece of gear that will help her. NOTHING! Up against a tree, she pounds her fist against the control on her wrist and falls through the tree.

[PAGE 17-18 or 19-20]

THE WOLF LEAPS INTO THE SCENE AND SNARLS.

THE BEAST-WOMAN SPINS AROUND TO ATTACK HIM.

THE MARKINGS ON HIM GLOW AND FLASH AND HE TRANSFORMS INTO A BLUE BEAST-MAN, COVERED IN WHITE, BONE-LIKE MARKINGS.

THE TWO TUSSLE AND THE GIRL REGAINS HER MICROPHASER. SHE SHOOTS AT THE BEAST-WOMAN AND THE BEAM PASSES RIGHT THROUGH HER.

THE DARK, CRACKED TREE ENGULFING THE BEAST-WOMAN RELEASES HER AND IT BOWS AND FLAILS AS A WRITHING PINK MASS EMERGES FROM WITHIN IT. THE GIGANTIC WRITHING WORK-LIKE CREATURE IS COVERED IN SHORT TENTACLES TIPPED WITH SUCKERS. IT PUTS ITS SUCKERS ON THE THREE.

“What is with this town?!” the girl cries. She regains her composure, adjusts the Microphaser and fires it again. The creature nearly vanishes as it shrinks to a manageable size and drops to the ground.

“Get back!” She shouted as she scrambled to ground where it fell.

The wolf-man, beast-woman and walking tree were each injured by the now-tiny creature. The tree takes hold of the wolf-man while the beast-woman flees. The wolf-man attacks the tree, but it holds its ground.

“LET ME GOOOO!!!!” the wolf-man snarled and pawed and scratched at the tree.

“I MUST STOP APEX! I MUST STOP APEX!”

The tree wrapped around him and dug itself into the ground, lifting him into a cradle like a cage he couldn't escape.

"I got it!" the girl raised herself triumphantly with the strange creature in a glass and metal jar.

"VANGUARD! HELP" the wolf-man cried.

"Let him go! We need to stop that monster." she cried

"Not need catch that, need help this." The tree said serenely, even as the wolf-man continued to thrash and struggle.

"I won't let you hurt him!" the girl warned, retrieving her Microphaser.

"We friend." The tree offered, swaying slightly

"Wolfy?" she called uneasily

"MUST DESTROOOOY APEX!!" he thrashed and bashed himself against wooden bars.

"I- Wh- Do-" she stammered and stepped back, overwhelmed by the ardor of his rage.

The tree plucked one of the strange fruits from its crown and crushed it. Juice dripped onto the wolf and into its roaring maw and he fell silent.



[PAGE 19-20 or 21-22]

She stepped forward and leveled the Microphaser again “What did you do to him?”

“Friend help.”

“Yes, I’m trying to help him.

“Friend sad.”

“I don’t care whose, sad. I want you to put him down. I need to make sure he’s ok!”

“Friend good” the tree person, gently laid the sleeping wolf-man down,

She examined him “He looks banged up, but he’s breathing, so that’s good.”

She looked in the general direction the beast-woman had run, then back to the tree.

“What about those other people?” she bolted up. “Can you hold him?”

The tree bent down and she ran off.

[PAGE 21-22 or 23-24]

EXTERIOR, MORNING VAN. PARKED OUTSIDE A DONUT SHOP.

VAN INTERIOR. THE GIRL SITS SURROUNDED BY GADGETS AND EQUIPMENT.

SHE SPEAKS INTO A RECORDER

“Anomaly Log 1121. Time 07:75AM. It has been a week since my first big breakthrough. Thankfully the folks who had been injured have been released from the hospital. Their ailment was unclear. They lost memory of what happened and they don’t even clearly remember me. Sage explains that when the anomaly infected it, that it went mad, starving. For some reason it was able to get into it, but not out. I suppose that the parasite was not able to properly function inside of a unique plant body like Sage’s. Sage didn’t handle it well either. Unable to draw nutrients from its normal source, it drained energy from those people. I think I can trust it. Wolfy, I mean, Kanis has stuck around. I think he wants to keep an eye on Sage. If Sage does anything it shouldn’t, I bet Kanis will bit first and ask questions later, which should give me time to figure out how to deal with Sage, if I need to. I am unsure how this will affect my plans going forward, but I have a specimen to study and I can’t just walk away from these two. I guess I am stuck here for a while. I have to make the best of the situation and be ready for another incident. How long have these parasites been active again? Did they ever go away? How can they be stopped? I’ve come this far and I am going to keep forging ahead. I guess, I’ll have to do what Wo- Kanis said and be the vanguard against these anomalies since I’m the only one who knows of them. Signing off.