

Siren's Swan Song.

Circe Castallanos walked along the city sidewalks humming to herself, looking for her first target. What fresh havoc to sew? More importantly, was it worth it? If she picked the right mark, she'd be having a little petty fun and practice at warming up her powers. If she picked the wrong one, some detective in tights would bust her before her grand plan even got underway.

It'd been half-a-decade since she'd last tried to use them for anything more than getting a free meal or a bed. Were she just starting out on the meta-scene, that wouldn't have been too bad. She technically had never worked a day in her life. All she had to do was sing a little ditty into some fool's ear and she'd have them under her spell for up to twenty-four hours.

Free meals. Free beds. Free clothes. It all came straight to her like sailors crashing on the rocks. Being the reincarnation of the mythical Sirens had its perks. If she was smart and random, and didn't victimize too many high rollers back to back, she could live extremely comfortably and quietly if not lavishly. Singing **"Let me in my love"** in tones of deep purple could get her a penthouse for a night or two, as long as she jumped into another random person's car when she was done and sing **"Take me away from here"** in sultry reds to relax in a modest but well furnished house in the suburbs. If she needed money to acquire something discreetly, singing in golds about **"Cash cash cash"** to her mark did the trick.

Singing **"I'll have the chef's special tasting menu and a souffle for dessert,"** directly from the menu in earthy greens used to be enough to get her supper, but that was getting more difficult in an age where crowds recorded buskers and performers with cell phones. The Siren's powers didn't work through recordings. That was a drawback of being gifted a powerset invented before the phonograph was invented. The magic and colors of her songs didn't translate through recordings. It didn't count in the same way that Medusa's reflection didn't count. Such were the limitations of the Siren's powers.

At least Circe didn't need a microphone to amplify her voice. Her singing could fill a stadium and her battle shrieks could shatter glass. Wagyu beef and Champagne were not worth the attention having to entrance an entire restaurant worth of people and the attention that brought with it. Same for going viral online when a French speaking monkey, a datamancer, and a psychic with touch based pre and post cognition learned you were recently at a famous bistro or

burger joint. A garden variety speedster could be on the spot and cold cock her before she finished her meal if she was noticed too soon.

She was mighty and powerful, but the world was filled with heroes who could triumph over the perils of the Odyssey and Heracles's labors in an afternoon. Surprise, discretion, and anonymity were her allies. The mortal part of her understood that and was responsible for her greatest successes.

The Siren part of her was another matter entirely. Unfortunately, as the reincarnation of the legendary sultry bird women who dashed sailors on the rocks, Circe was essentially a living story. She had certain urges that could be delayed or worked around, but never completely ignored. The Sirens of yore were dangers, but they were known dangers; tantalizing dangers that the foolhardy did not prepare for and even the wise and cautious were tempted by.

To Circe's Siren soul, being defeated or overcome was nothing compared to being forgotten. At forty-five, she'd been defeated many times over. She had a nearly three decade career as a "supervillain" so of course that was going to happen, but she'd had some good times too. She was briefly the true ruler of a small Southeast Asian nation; had brought all of West City to the brink of collapse fighting over her, and started a cult that had gotten very close to gaining official religious protections.

The trick to that particular one had been that the people under her songs' spells never saw her but instead whatever person or thing would get the desired emotional reaction she wanted. A few layers of protection made it nearly impossible for her to be tracked down

The cult trick had been ten years ago, however. Presently, she was forty-five, and feeling it in the worst way. Her looks were fading, her hair had turned silver, and her three options for shelter at any given time was prison or a place she'd stolen. That was great in her twenties. Fine in her thirties. Would she be like this in her fifties? Sixties? Did supervillains even make it to seventy?

The Siren would not be denied, however. And finding her name in an article entitled "Thirteen Formerly Fearsome Supervillains You Won't Believe Are Still Alive!" had been the last straw. The part where it said her greatest weakness was earplugs stung particularly badly.

It was time. She had to act! To remind the world that she was still here and to be feared!

“Run awaaaaaay,” She whispered into a passerby’s ear, her haunting melody tinted yellow with fear. “I’m coming for you.” The man in suit and tie dropped his briefcase and dashed away screaming away. She’d timed it just right so that his panicked retreat caught the attention of the sheep around her instead of the source.

Pretending to be one of them, Circe followed their gaze towards the man’s retreating form. There was a brown wet blotch forming on the seat of his pants. Her lips curled inward to hide the satisfied smile. “Still got it,” she said to herself. She wondered what the man saw. It was so hard to tell when they weren’t coherent to talk.

The heroes were easy enough to guess at. You do enough super-brawls and revenge plots and it’s easy to guess what will push a body’s buttons. Circe remembered the time she sang “**Help Me!**” blotted with morbid black. Every single member of the Sentinels immediately fell under the delusion that she was a loved one or a sidekick at death’s door and started fighting each other to save her. Every. Single. One: Uber; The Owl; Glamazon; Techno; Blitz; Neptunia; Emerald Archon. What a glorious day that had been! How she’d loved tormenting the Sentinels and their ilk!

Those were the days. Days that would start again very very soon

Circe didn’t know if it was because she was a genuine misanthrope and thus loved tormenting virtue signaling, false piety loving heroes in general, or whether her Siren’s soul just loved torturing demigods. Frankly, she didn’t much care. The only thing Circe cared about was getting her fix and making sure these peons remembered her name!

One long inhale and a determined sigh a second later and the Siren had steeled herself. A flick of her wrist and a snap of her wrist would transmogrify her plain jain jeans and orange blouse into her single piece skin tight nigh indestructible hydra skin suit.

She looked down at her waist. Her suit used to be a two piece, but it was getting harder to hide her tummy. She wasn’t flabby, she just didn’t have the body that she used to. A moment of vanity made her consider fanning some of the scales out like fringe on a salsa dress, just in

case. Hydra skin was good like that.

Circe was about to start the day off right by causing a mass panic, being seen long enough to take credit and then disappearing into the masses, when she noticed that her warm up act had left behind a briefcase.

No one had so much as bothered to pick it up. The milling crowd on the busy city sidewalk simply stepped over and around it, too self-absorbed in whatever was going on in their short and meaningless lives.

“Excuse me,” Cicrce muttered, shoving and sliding her way through the nameless masses. Curiosity overcame her and she felt compelled. That or maybe she was stalling. Afraid. A Has-Been.

Nope. It was definitely the other one. Definitely the compulsion. The super-villainess scooped the briefcase up into her arms and slinked to an alley. A common mugging was slightly beneath her., but only slightly.

There amongst the dumpsters and the rats, she opened up the briefcase and peered at the documents inside. Nothing but papers and designs for something. Patents. NDA’s. Copyrights. Boring business stuff, but also something more on the technical side. Something...something...?

The Siren’s eyes widened as she flipped through the patents in the businessman’s suitcase. “What...do we...have here?” And the more she read, the more she understood. And what she understood the most was that she wasn’t going to be doing a simple street level riot performance. She was going to melt back into the shadows and wait for night to fall.

And after tonight, the Siren would be well on her way back to the top, better than ever.

That night: A.S.T.R.A.L Labs. Long after the doors had been shuttered and locked and all the lights turned off, the Siren made her move.

In full, green scaled regalia, Circe walked up to the back entrance of the sleek and polished

multi story building. During the day, the one way mirror glass plating made the research facility look like a bright and shining beacon that could be seen for miles around. At night, the glass took on a darker, bleaker, more obsidian color.

It was also supposed to be shatterproof. Circe smirked. "Let's test that, shall we?"

She took a deep breath and screeched: "OPEN SESAMEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" She didn't need to say anything, there was no hypnotic magic woven into it. It just felt appropriate. The difference between a supervillain and a common one was presentation. She did feel a little dirty about quoting from Arabian Nights, mostly because the reference was from the wrong set of stories and culture.

That didn't matter. Her scream was The panel closest to her cracked like a lollipop tossed on the ground. Alarms blared and buzzed in howling cacophony that made Circe want to flinch. Instead, one foot in front of the other like a model in a catwalk she strut forward with her hands on her hips.

The token security guards rushed forward from the front. Fit young things in white and black full body jumpsuits. Simpletons looked less like private law enforcement and more like glorified janitors. "Stop right there!" One of them shouted before reaching for his holster. Poor things weren't issued guns, but had to make due with silly crossbreeds of billy clubs and tasers. They'd never get the chance to use them.

One of the others, a guard with a bit of a gut and some gray in his temples gasped. "Hold up! Stop!" He yelled. "That's the Siren!" His calls were almost completely muted by the wailing alarms. "Cover your ears! Get the ear-!"

He didn't finish the sentence in time. His comrades couldn't hear him clearly, and Siren was more than loud enough to drown out every other noise. **"FALSE ALAAAAAAAAAARM! GOTCHA! FAAAAAAAAALSE ALARM NO NEEEEEED TO WORRY!"** Overpowering, enrapturing, and above all very very loud, the Siren's playfully cyan call reached out to every year in the building above street level.

The lead guard, the one with the gut, took out a control pad and punched in a few codes. The

buzzing stopped abruptly, and all the of the guards slumped their shoulders and shook their heads.

“Chuck, you asshole!” The head guard on duty said. “You had us scared half to death!” The others were already muttering to themselves and walking away.

Circe managed a shrug and guilty looking smile. “Sorry boss,” she said. “I guess I just got a little carried away.”

“I oughta fire your ass for this,” he scowled.

“Yeah, Chuck!” One of the other guards returning to their post grunted. He slapped his compatriot upside the back of his head. “Way to screw around dickweed!”

His coworker rubbed the back of his head and flinched away. “Yeah,” he chuckled. “I really do suck sometimes.” He thumbed backwards to where a most bemused Siren stood. “Pretty funny though, you gotta admit. How the hell did I manage to get all the way over there and be here at the same time?”

“How the fuck should I know?!”

Evidently, Chuck was something comparable to the night shift’s resident cut up. Another benefit of her hypnotic songs is that the suggestions didn’t regularly have to make any common sense whatsoever. Siren shrugged again, lowered her voice to a suitably ‘manly’ tenor and said, “Sorry, boss.”

“You better be sorry,” The head guard scowled. “Now go clean this shit up!” He finally walked away, leaving the Siren smirking at her own cleverness.

“Well that was amusing,” Circe said to herself. It was too, almost like a bit of roleplay before the hot stuff really got going. Or more innocently, a fun game of pretend. Either worked for this metaphor. “Now to get down to business.”

The business at hand was, of course, larceny. By sheer coincidence, her terror mark earlier that

day had been a lawyer of some kind working for A.S.T.R.A.L. labs. In his briefcase she found the very basic designs for a new type of sound transmitter, one that specifically mimicked the human voice box and throat. Instead of electronic speakers that blasted out digitized sounds, the synthetic muscles inside would perfectly replicate any recorded voice.

Okay for music. Good for cybernetic and prosthetic advancement. Great for Circe. Perfect for the Siren.

If she could have something that perfectly replicated her voice in every facet, the range of control she could exert would be virtually limitless. If she could record and recreate her voice instead of broadcasting it, all of her technical limitations would be overcome. She could leave mesmerizing songs all over the place hours ahead of time like hypnotic time bombs. She could record herself serenading someone a song of worship and put it on loop at key locations.

With this kind of technology, Circe could do what no one in her field had ever done: She could take over the world!

The high heels of her costume clicked against the tile. She waved herself by security, smiling placidly and pretending to be a very repentant Chuck while heading towards the elevator. All the good experiments were kept in a sub basement deep beneath the city. It was practically an open secret.

The elevator dinged open. "Stop right there, Siren!"

Circe rolled her eyes. "You've gotta be kidding me." Right in front of Circe was another superhero. A new one; one she didn't recognize right off the bat. She was a young black woman with short cropped hair that blinked white light at different points along her skull, and the glowing tattoos on her arm resembled a circuit board. A cyborg of some kind. The belt and wristbands with compartmentalized segments suggested a hint of gadgeteer. "Who the hell are you supposed to be?"

"Wait. Seriously?" The other woman said. "You don't remember me? I'm Glitch."

The Siren put a hand to her cheek. "Glitch? Techno's sidekick?" There was no way that was

Glitch. "Aren't you twelve?"

The younger woman looked offended. "I was the first time you kidnapped me. I'm twenty-two."

Oh god that made her feel so old! Nevermind! Push that thought aside.

A terrible smile blossomed on the Siren's face. "Ten years as a sidekick. Not a bad run. Techno's going to need a new sidekick after tonight."

"He's already got one," Glitch replied.

"I beg your pardon?" Siren asked flatly. Was this some kind of joke?

"I'm a full fledged hero now. Doing my own thing. Techno got a new sidekick. Their name's Binary, which is kind of ironic since-

"Be the love of my liiiiiife." Siren belted out to the young hero and hot crimson. A super hacker or a cyborg would be a good thing to have in her back pocket when robbing this place. Why not make her a love slave?

Instead of fawning over her and showering her with affection, Glitch just stood there. "Yeah. About that." She tapped one ear, one eye, and then her head. "Had a couple upgrades since last time. I'm more wired up than techno, just most of the hardware is internal. I'm hearing and seeing all this, but there's so many gadgets and gizmos in my brain that I'm basically perceiving you through a camera. "I'm basically immune to your schtick."

Shit. She thumbed back towards the guards. "Are they?" A quick deathly sing of **"Security Breeeeeeach!"** It worked on the Sentinels. It would work on these mooks. They might not stop the hero, but they could hold her off and inconvenience her long enough for a sonic blast.

"Chuck?!" They screamed, and drew their batons. "CHUUUUUUUCK!" Well, looks like Chuck was as beloved as much as he was derided. Good for Chuck.

"MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

The men charged forward as Siren sidestepped out of the way.

“BE THE LOVE OF MY LIIIIIIFE.” Pure and lustful and red the melody came out as intense as the first time and much, much, louder. The goons froze and stared slack jawed and drooling with passion and lust. Circe was used to seeing that look in people. But they weren’t looking at her, and with good reason: That song hadn’t come from her lips at all. The men were all looking goo-goo eyed not at Siren, but at Glitch.

“Huh,” the younger hero smiled. “That worked just how I thought it would. Neat.” She turned her gaze to meet the Siren’s. “Thanks for letting me try that out.”

Circe froze; stunned and shocked “How?” she stuttered. “How...how did a little brat like you...manage to do... that...?!”

Without further banter, a bola shot out of the hero’s right gauntlet, spinning through the air and wrapping itself right around Circe’s throat. The Siren gasped for air, feeling like there was a noose wrapped around her neck that had been improperly tied. If she hadn’t been so bewildered at someone using her own powers against her, the Siren might have thought to use a sonic shout to stop the projectile in its path and bust out whatever fancy equipment was in the ex-sidekick’s body.

Too bad. So sad. Too late. Her hands clutched at her neck, trying to rip the cord from around her throat. Defeated again, before she even had the chance to set any kind of brilliant or chaotic plan into motion. By a sidekick no less. How humiliating.

Circe Castallanos didn’t know the half of it.

“Brat, huh?” Glitch said. “You just gave me an idea.” The Siren tried to sing or scream or at least give a sufficiently monstrous reply. All that came out was gargled gasps. “This is gonna sting a little bit. Sorry.” Jinx pressed a button on her wrist gauntlet.

The volts and jolts of electricity did not sting at all. The Siren was knocked out before she so much as consciously noticed anything painful. She’d wake up extremely sore, however.

The Siren woke up on a cold metal slab, surrounded by hues of cobalt blue and foghat gray. Her entire body ached and her head felt fuzzy. Instinctively, she tried to sit up. That was how she realized that her arms and legs were restrained. She lifted her head and took full view of herself, completely naked. Her suit? Where was her hydra skin suit? It should be irremovable unless she willed it so. Where was she?

Her mind began processing both past and present simultaneously. The plan to return to greatness that didn't so much as get off the ground. The humiliating and sudden defeat at the hands of a sidekick. That was the past.

Presently, she was in some kind of laboratory. It had to be a laboratory. Too many computers and screens and keyboards and what she assumed were fragile monitoring devices to be a holding cell. The lone entrance way had neither a laser grid nor the slight wavering crackle of a forcefield. There were none of the minor comforts or conveniences for it to be a medical facility or hospital. No mattresses or chairs. No sinks. No televisions. Scanning her body she found no evidence of I.V. bags or other basic medical equipment. Both a proper holding cell and a proper hospital would have someone nearby on guard for when she regained consciousness.

Unless she wasn't considered a threat...

That intrusive thought, that single bit of half baked analysis almost sent Circe into a frothing rage. How dare she not be under strict monitoring conditions. She was Siren! THE Siren! She was a walking weapon! A threat to global security! Anything less than a gun directly to her head and a clear threat to her life should she so much as whisper was an insult!

They would pay! They would PAY! Starting with that bitch, Glitch.

Circe slowed her breathing and forced herself to calm down. Even her screams required a degree of breath control. She'd need her screams. She saw more than a few A.S.T.R.A.L. Labs logos in her immediate vicinity. She hadn't been moved very far, then. There were no windows or outside source of light; only the ever buzzing fluorescent lights overhead illuminated the air.

She was likely in one of the very sub-basement labs she'd been meaning to break into. Probably not the lab with the sound systems she'd planned on stealing, sadly. No one would be that utterly stupid.

Her do-gooder captor was immune to Circe's charms, but she could likely still scream her into oblivion or cause some major damage to all of this fragile equipment. Circe wasn't sure how she could get out of her present restraints with that strategy. She'd shattered bones with her screams before. Could she break her own wrists and ankles to get out of the restraints?

That seemed like a bad idea. The Siren in her didn't much care about escape, per se. If need be this slab could be her rock in the middle of the sea of monsters again. Wreck the place apart and ensnare the fools that came to the rescue. Chances were that not enough time had passed for Glitch to alert the authorities and lacked a proper holding cell. Even if the heroes came at her call armed with earplugs, she could be satisfied at the damage she'd done.

The point of being the reincarnation of a monster wasn't specifically to win. Circe smiled, despite herself. She was breathing easily enough. Nothing was regulating or obstructing her airway. She licked her lips. Time to test out the equipment.

"Hmmm..." she let out a light hum to herself. Good. Her throat felt undamaged. Nothing rattled or made her want to choke. Nothing felt forced. "Time to bring the house down," she said a little louder. Perfect. Now to follow through on that threat. She laid her head back and with a deep breath she took all the air she could into her lungs and screamed out as loud as she possibly could.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH?!" Circe ended the near deafening shriek on a rather confused note. Pink? Soft baby bootie girly girl pink? She'd never sang or screamed in that color before. Sophisticated rose pink, sure. Fun and bright poppy punk rock pink, yeah. But never pink-pink. Little girl pink? Baby bonnet pink? Training panties pink? Never. Never that color.

She hadn't meant to scream in any color whatsoever. She'd been going for pure volume. She tried again, and got the same result. "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" Another try.

"WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH-AH-AH-AH-AH!" Circe was left gasping and slightly winded. She was trying to bring down this place like the Walls of Jericho; not...whatever this was. "What

in the name of Tartarus?”

The quiet sound of quick yet confident footsteps drew Circe’s attention to the entrance way. In walked the cybernetic superhero, with glowing circuit board tattoos beneath her skin and various points of her skull lighting up and shining through her hair. “Good morning,” Glitch said chipperly. “How are you feeling?” Over her more tactically minded form fitting jumpsuit that was so common for people in their specific line of work, Glitch wore a white lace apron with a pocket.

“Let me out!” the Siren called. “Release me you little whelp!”

“Subject has regained consciousness,” Glitch said. “Temperament; hostile. Cognitive faculties appear to be operational, and judgment such as it is unimpaired; or at least unaltered from previous encounters.” The comment into the upturned palm of her hand like it was some kind of recording device. If she’d gone the route of Techno, it very likely was. That was the problem with tech based heroes in Circe’s mind. They were never quite what they seemed. It was so...disingenuous. The blatant hypocrisy considering her own power set didn’t occur to her. “Glad that you’re awake.”

“You’ll wish I wasn’t,” Circe sneered. “Let me go, you freak of science!”

Glitch’s hair glowed and twinkled, but her face remained passive and preoccupied with whatever was going on with her hand. “Nope.”

“Mark my words, girl, you have made a powerful enemy!”

Glitch lowered her hand and seemed to consider the threat. “Objectively? Yes. Your abilities are quite formidable.” The Siren felt herself filling up with pride. Finally! Some acknowledgement! “You could do a lot of good with them if you wanted.”

“I don’t,” Circe spat.

Her captor went on, ignoring it. “In this particular instance and circumstance, though? To me specifically? No. You’ve got nothing. Don’t feel bad, though. Most one-on-one super fights are

about power compatibility and susceptibility over tactics or brute force. It's rock paper scissors, and I'm your scissors."

Circe picked her head up and screamed. **"LISTEN TO ME!"** More little girl pink notes sailed into the air. That was supposed to have taken the hero's head off.

"You didn't really think that would work did you?" Glitch stood with one hand on her hip, head tilted and unblinking. Circe held her tongue, confused as to what was going on.. "Did you?"

She didn't know how to answer that question. She was more used to being on the other end of the hostage captor dynamic. And the younger woman's unblinking, unafraid gaze was unsettling. It wasn't angry or cruel, more annoyed than anything. Disappointed? It had been a long long time since anyone had ever looked at Circe that way. "Why is everything coming out pink?" she heard herself blurt out.

Glitch righted her head and looked somewhat confused. "Pink? What do you mean pink?"

Ugh," Circe rolled her eyes indignantly. Had she not been restrained she would have crossed her arms. "My voice turns different colors depending on the songs I sing."

"Iiiiiinteresting," Glitch remarked. She leaned in closer. "So you're saying that you perceive the different vibrational frequencies that your hypnotic songs produce through a form of synesthesia?"

The Siren blinked, confused. "Um..."

Glitch leaned in even closer. "When you sing do you see colors in the songs?"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

The hero winced, slightly, but still had a head. Damn. "And that was pink to you?"

The Siren felt her temper rising. "That was supposed to destroy you!"

“I’m well aware. Was that pink?”

“What did you do to me?”

“Was that scream pink?”

Circe allowed herself an indignant huff. “Yeah. Why?”

“Good.” Glitch spoke again into her palm. “Sonic modulation is successful and working well within expected parameters.”

“WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?” The supervillain hadn’t even tried to do a sonic scream or a hypnotic song that time. All she’d done was raise her voice and everything came out princess baby pink.

Glitch lowered her palm. More flashes of blinking lights shone through her hair. Did that mean she was thinking or something; like a computer doing complex calculations? The kid used to wear a weird skater helmet back in the day. Circe had no idea. “Okay, I’ll catch you up to speed,” the hero finally said.

A screen lowered down from the ceiling. “As you know, you mugged and stole designs from an employee of A.S.T.R.A.L. Labs.” High angle footage showed Circe’s deed replayed in front of her from the vantage point of a traffic light. “Based on your reaction, you didn’t know what you were stealing right off the bat, you just knew you were assaulting a Lab employee with a secure briefcase.” Circe hadn’t even known that much; not that she’d admit it. “Due to your innate understanding of sound waves and vocal chords,” Glitch lectured on, “you figured out what you were looking at and realized the potential for strategic power enhancements; hypnotic time bombs, subliminal messages played on loop and such. The only problem is you lacked the resources and technical expertise to build this yourself. How am I doing so far?”

She took the Siren’s silence as a sign of how accurate her synopsis had been.

Circe was treated to a replay of her break in. Sonic scream and false alarm and all. “So you decided to break in and steal the prototype yourself. What you clearly didn’t know is that

A.S.T.R.A.L. Labs is my base of operations and that I invented the technology you were seeking to steal. So from the moment you stole that briefcase, you were on my radar and effectively walking into a trap.”

“**GRRRRRRRR..**” Circe shoved her anger and her volume deep down inside herself. “Typical hero,” she spat. “You claim to be for the greater good, but you’re just as selfish as the rest of us.”

Glitch fiddled with the lace apron straps. “Um...no? I’m inventing new technology to revolutionize broadcasting, communication, and hearing. You’re trying to sew discord and stuff. We are not the same.”

“So you’re not getting paid?” Circe smirked, starting to enjoy the battle of words. She’d bait this girl into doing something stupid.

“Not as much as I should be getting paid,” Glitch replied, “but yeah. Saving the world is pro-bono. I still need to eat.”

“Spare me,” the Siren rolled her eyes. “Just send me to prison, already.”

“Nope.”

There was a pause. “No?”

“Nope.”

“**WHAT DO YOU MEAN NO?**” More pink! Why was it always pink?!

Glitch put a finger to her temple and one of her irises turned bright blue like a computer screen booting up. “That scream was pink, too, wasn’t it?” Circe gave no response. Her face was enough of a tell. “Iiiiiinteresting. To answer your questions, your voice is coming out ‘pink’ because of the collar I put on you.”

“What collar?” The television screen above her patched through to what could only have been

the cyborg hero's point of view. Around Circe's neck was a delicately thin pink ribbon with a decorative heart shape in the middle; a choker of sorts. "This isn't a standard power neutralizing collar." It was so thin that she hadn't noticed the foreign (and only) article of clothing until she saw it on the screen.

The younger woman suppressed a proud grin. "Yeah. Nah. Those things are too bulky. Lowest bidder tech. You'd find a way to break it or pick the lock or something and break out." This was true... Circe had been counting on that. "So, I made you a new one. Synthesized your hydra skin costume and got rid of the fire weakness. Oh yeah, apologies for burning up your hydra skin costume. It was the only way I could get it off of you while you were unconscious."

Hearing that her costume had been destroyed bothered her. It felt like more of a violation than just laying naked on a metal slab. **"LET ME GO!"**

Glitch ignored her and went on. "Thanks to the decades of data you've provided the superhero community, I've been able to isolate the unique frequency that your voice operates on when you're singing or screaming. That little heart around your neck is constantly scanning and anytime it picks up something coming from you that is either too loud or too similar to your songs, it turns the sound 'pink' instead. Your sonic screams work on the same basic principle of sound manipulation, just kind of inverted, so it was easy enough to modify those too."

"Why pink?" Circe asked.

"Couldn't have you seducing everyone in earshot by turning into their crush or making them think you were a dying loved one, could I? I chose the vibrational frequency that would do the least damage."

"What does pink do?"

A bit of confusion crossed Glitch's face. "You don't know?"

"I mean... I know what it does, but do you? Did your data or calculations tell you the exact power of pink? Are you prepared for it?" Circe was both a fantastic liar and a godawful one. She'd grown so used to manipulating minds through her particular brand of magic that she'd all

but forgotten how to bluff the old fashioned way.

“You really don’t know, do you?” Glitch asked. “Heh. Heh-heh. You don’t know your own powers!” Glitch started to lose composure and began laughing quietly yet condescendingly. “You poor thing! Has all of your havoc through the years been the result of poor impulse control and guess work?”

“SHUT UP!”

The hero's eyes went pure white, glazed over and static filled. “Compiling all known data and running through psycho analytic profiling algorithm,” she said. Circe saw a glimpse of binary code flash by. Maybe even some two’s. One second later Glitch’s pupils came back and she gasped. “It has!” Glitch smacked her own forehead, seeming reminiscent of a teacher or nanny that finally understands a childish misconception. “You’re not a super villain, you’re a victim of your own lack impulse and insecurities!” She gave a full belly laugh, folding her hands over the pristine white apron and doubling over in hilarity.

Stupid Glitch! Stupid ex-sidekick! Stupid know it all technology user! Stupid hero!
Stupid..stupid...STUPID! **“SHUT UP YOU BRAT!”**

The super-scientist stopped laughing, yet a smug, somewhat cruel smile remained. “Oh yeah. That. You calling me a brat gave me an idea...” The Siren suddenly did not like the look on her younger foe’s face. “All things considered, I think you’re the real brat, Circe.” Circe flinched at being called her real name instead of her proper title. What was more embarrassing, the Siren realized, was that she couldn’t return the insult. “I was going to just humiliate you before I dropped you off at the nearest police precinct with a note...or maybe the nearest metahuman preschool.” Preschool? What was that about? ”But the more I’m figuring out about you and your powers, the more opportunities I’m seeing for advancement.”

“Do your worst,” the Siren sneered. “I was once imprisoned in the Hell Pits of Malboge!”

“Yeah,” her captor said bluntly. “You were twenty three then, and haven’t grown from any of those experiences, successes, or defeats. I was looking to embarrass you. I’m not going to break you. I might actually end up helping you.”

“You? Help me?” The supervillain scoffed. “Get real. How?”

“For starters?” Glitch replied. “A new wardrobe.” Her arm tattoos lit up, buzzing almost as brightly as the fluorescent lights above, and the sounds of something just out of eyesight moving haunted Circe’s ears.

“Fuck you!” Circe spat. She could feel the slab tilting back. “Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, fuck yooooou!” She tilted her head back as far as she could and rolled her eyes to see behind her. A panel in the floor had slid open, revealing only a deep dark hole with only empty blackness inside. In seconds she was hanging upside down at a forty five degree angle. **“FUCK YOU!”**

“See you on the other side. Brat.” With a snap of her fingers, the restraints released, sending Circe sliding into the abyss.

“FUCK YOOOOOOOU!”

Down she plummeted, yet never did she achieve freefall. It turned out that the hole she’d been dumped in was dark, but not close to empty. Slipping and twisting and turning; corkscrewing backwards and forwards, Circe braced and gripped at the sides with everything she had but couldn’t get a grip. Friction was not on her side. Either this ramp was greased up beyond belief or it was made of a frictionless substance. Given where she was, she supposed the latter.

The darkness was disorienting and her increasingly pinkish screams and gasps fell on deaf ears. She had no idea how long this insane roller coaster would last. A sudden sudzy splash, head first, gave the villain a new metaphor. “A water slide?”

Circe’s lips drew back from her teeth. A bit of bitter, metallic tasting, almost burning liquid had slipped into her mouth. If this was a water slide, someone had gone overboard on the chlorine. She brushed her sopping silver hair out of her eyes, and cursed when she tried to open them. “Agh! Soap!” That explained the taste.

A dry piece of terry cloth dabbed at her eyes and she was able to see. “Thanks,” she said accidentally. “I mean-!” But when her vision cleared there was no one in front of her. “Huh?”

Lights snapped on, forcing the drenched and sudzy Siren to squint and force her eyes to focus. Looking back up at the slide, a ride that didn't seem so hazardous now that she was at the bottom and could see- she estimated that she'd traveled only twenty-five to thirty feet vertically. She felt her skin take on a more pinkish hue.

Speaking of pink, the walls around her were a kind of rosey salmon colored. Calming, gentle colors to the point of boredom. At about waist height, she noticed a white border going around the room's perimeter. Stenciled in the border were simple shapes like circles, triangles, squares, stars, and hearts, all in the same calming salmon.

Three of the four walls were solid, and other than the oddly childish border running along the middle, and an open doorway, they seemed fairly unassuming. The fourth wall wasn't, with a pane of glass peeking out into a well lit hallway. It reminded Circe of the viewing glass window in a hospital's newborn unit.

Thankfully, no one was in the hallway. If they were, they would have seen her standing naked, waist deep in a large jacuzzi like vat with bubbles providing the only form of modesty. Modesty, at the moment, didn't matter so much; escape did.

The Siren made it three sloshing shuffling steps. Little did she know that right behind her, like a sea monster rising from the depths, a robotic manacle was rising up from the suds. Before she could so much as swing a leg over the rim of the tub, Circe heard and then felt a definitive click as the massive steel cuff locked itself around her waist.

"The fuck?"

"Ah ah ah," Glitch's voice was piped in from an unseen speaker. "Don't want you falling down. You could get hurt."

"Keep talking, brat..." Circe growled. "See what happens."

"Just relax. Enjoy your bath. Get pampered..."

Circe didn't understand the chuckle that followed. She would soon.

The manacle around her waist dragged her splashing and screaming back to the center of the tub. Where the previous terry cloth had come from became immediately evident. Panels in the ceiling were coming down and robotic hands lowered from them armed with towels, wash cloths, and bars of soap to spare. The only thing they were missing was little white gloves.

Right above the still unoccupied viewing window, An electronic sign came to life. "BATHING..." it read.

"What is this?" Circe demanded. **"A FUCKING CARTOON?"**

"No," Glitch's voice chimed back in. "Though cartoons would be very appropriate, all things considered."

The Siren would have dropped another F-Bomb, but a mechanical arm forced open her jaw so that another could shove a spare bar of soap into it. She tried to spit it out but the extra appendages held her arms down and the bar firmly pressed in. Trying not to retch her tongue retreated up and back to the roof of her mouth to keep her from either tasting or swallowing the stuff. The next few burbled screams came out as pink, too.

Washcloths and towels whirled around her and scrubbed her skin just roughly enough to be uncomfortable at the intrusion. Shoulders, armpits, breasts, bellybutton, and behind her ears were all attended to; more sensitive and delicate areas were not spared. Simultaneously shampoo was massaged into her scalp and rinsed off.

Some kind of advanced filtration system wicked the bubbles out of the pool as soon as they were rinsed off her body. The soap came out and she was allowed to wash her mouth with the last bit of rinse water falling atop her. A final spit almost banished the terrible taste.

Almost.

The water didn't drain as much as it dropped out of the massive tub through fine grating on the bottom of the floor. Circe hadn't felt the grating before. The bottom must have dropped out from underneath her with only grating left to hold her weight. "Wouldn't a hose and delousing powder work better?" Circe complained.

She was dripping and miserable. The air conditioning made her shudder, and she resembled less like a person and more like an alley cat that had gotten caught in a sudden downpour.

WOOOOOOOOSH!

In place of a smart aleck reply from the techno-brat, deafening gusts of hot air erupted out of the floor and blasted her hair up like Frankenstein's Bride. A second blast from the ceiling pushed her hair back down. Fluffy towels came spinning and softly dabbed away the few remaining water droplets.

The electric sign above the viewing window flashed. "Drying."

"Very funny." Circe said. "You're trying to teach me a lesson by putting me through a glorified car wash."

"Wait for it," Glitch came in over the speakers.

A buzzing noise signaled another change on the sign. "Hair styling?!"

The mechanical appendages returned, now wielding scissors, spray bottles, razors, cream and curlers. The manacle on her waist held her fast, while terrible, invasive hands erupted from the floor to hold her legs and arms steady.

"STAY THE FU-!" Circe started to scream. A bar of soap riddled with teeth marks lowered from the ceiling and she corrected herself before it was lodged back in. "Fuuuuuuudge!"

"She's learning!"

Circe's building anger and resentment at the know-it-all's taunting were the only thing keeping her calm while the mechanical monstrosities cut, brushed, curled her hair. The cream and razors weren't for her head. Not just her legs, either...

When the job was done and everything was left, A full body mirror was transported in from a side panel. The only hair left on the Siren's body was right on top of her head, and in place of

her long seductive locks, were snowy curls that bobbed up and down around her ears and over her forehead. Every other follicle had been shaved down to a molecule with laser sharpened steel. "I look like a toddler!" she gasped.

"Mmmhmmm..." Glitch said. "Guess what's next?"

The styling arms ascended and another buzz from the sign above the viewing window drew Circe's attention. "Diapering?!" This had to be a joke. There was no way the superhero was serious about this! Had to be a typo. That bitch couldn't possibly-

But she could.

The mobile restraints lifted Circe into the air as easily as if she were a ragdoll and held her parallel to the floor until another slab raised up beneath her. Only the manacle around her waist released itself, and that was only so that a similar metal tendrel could wrap around her, securing her. The hands that had been lifting her were similarly traded out.

This particular table was the same base rectangular shape as the one she awoke on, but was much softer. Not quite so soft as a bed, however. It was closer to the sturdy couches of a state mandated psychologist's office or the massage tables of a five star resort she'd once sung herself into.

This was neither of those things she realized.

"Is that a diaper?" The Siren cried out looking at the ceiling. The hands had returned, and in them was a neatly folded, thick, fluffy, shining white plastic backed diaper. If she had any doubt about it, the bottle of baby powder and the jar of diaper rash cream sent the message home. "I AM NOT WEAR-!" The pacifier that zoomed in cut off the rest of her sentence.

The moment the rubber bulb came into contact with Circe's tongue it started rapidly inflating, filling her mouth until it was impossible to spit out, yet alone suckle on it. It was more akin to a ball gag with a cute little mouth guard and knob at the end. She looked down past her nose and caught a glimpse of lily pad green. At least it wasn't pink...

The massive diaper was unfolded and her legs were forced up by the tendrils keeping her restrained to the robotic changing table.

She was helpless to resist. Of all the times that her legs had been hoisted up over her head (very few since she preferred cowgirl), this was by far the worst. The thick, smelly diaper cream had an unpleasant smell that reminded her of hospitals. Circe could only moan around her bulb, while the goop was pasted onto and between her cheeks. The cold yet dry baby powder that followed had a pleasant aroma that calmed her down.

Her bottom was lowered down onto the diaper, and she became intensely aware of the thick padding that crinkled beneath her. Some extra powder was dusted on her now hairless mound and sprinkled onto her belly button for good measure.

Inhaling more and more of the perfumed dust, Circe felt more and more of the fight go out of her. Her breathing slowed. Her fists unclenched. She stopped testing the strength of the restraints every three seconds. She was completely aware, but much of the fear and outrage and emotion was gone; numbed. The monster in her was silent and she became a curious observer in her own body.

She lifted her head and examined herself as the diaper was brought up between her legs. An adult diaper, obviously, but...not? It had four tapes to accommodate her wider more womanly hips, but there was a childish decoration, a blue dog on the front. Only baby diapers had cute little decorations on them; likely so as to not repulse the poor parents tasked with changing them. No self-respecting adult would wear something this obviously infantile.

Circe was beginning to wonder if she had such a thing as self-respect.

"THat's right," Glitch's voice came back in. "Breathe deep, baby girl. Smells nice, doesn't it?" Reluctantly, Circe nodded her head. "This should make the rest of the process go much smoother. I figured you were immune to pure hypnotism given your background, so I whipped up a little cocktail to help you relax. Nothing like a little aromatic chemical restraint."

Aromatic chemical restraint. Her mind, foggy as it was parsed the words out. The baby powder. She was being drugged. She should be afraid, the Siren realized, but couldn't muster the effort. Better to just lay here. In her nice, snug, and comfy diaper.

“Good girl,” the speakers whispered. “I’d leave you like this but you’re not likely to learn anything. Enjoy it while it lasts.”

Joy, or any strong emotion was beyond Circe by the time the board changed to “Feeding”

A bottle came down and the pacifier was removed. Circe’s slackened jaw did not try to resist the fresh nipple as it was inserted between her lips. Completely aware, but powerless to resist, she suckled lightly on the milk, letting it dribble and drip down into her mouth and swallowing. Dribbles and drips turned to trickles turned to gushes. Practically of their own volition, her lips started sucking and draining the overlarge bottle while her belly extended.

The rubber teat slipped out as easily as it had gone in and the last bits of milk leaked down the sides of Circe’s lips. The tendrils propped her up. She read the flashing sign. “Burping.”

A foam paddle in place of a warm hand did the deed, patting her back up and down her spine until she inevitably burst. **“BLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARCHK!”**

The hands came down a final time to lift the diapered and bloated woman up into the air and deposit her in a newly arrived crib. The pacifier found its way back into her mouth, but didn’t inflate so much that it hurt the second time. The sign flashed one final word that Circe was able to read. “Nap.” Nap? Already? Well...alright. She felt uncomfortably full. Sleep would dull the sensations, no doubt. Something must have been in the milk.

The viewing window rushed by Circe while an unseen force propelled the adult sized crib through the singular doorway. On the other side of the threshold was a room very similar to the one she’d existed, but much less sparsely decorated. She caught sight of a giant highchair, a large baby bouncer and of course, a more proper looking changing table with shelves stacked full of the same babyish print diapers that she now wore. It still had the same salmon colored paint job and preschool level shapes stenciled in along the border.

Her ever dimming view was cut off by Glitch. “Welcome to the nursery, bratty baby girl.” Circe finally understood the frilly white apron: Major nanny vibes. The younger hero stared at her wrist. “Everything should be kicking in about three...two...one...”

Circe's knees bent and raised up to her stomach. Without meaning to, she felt herself start to push. The once feared villainess was passing muffled farts and more. Warm, mushy stool shot out of her and into the back of her once clean diaper, causing it to balloon out slightly to accommodate. She was pooping but too stoned to care. Her bladder finally relaxed for good measure, soaking the padding between her legs and mingling with the mess for a moment before being completely absorbed.

"Right on time," Glitch said. "Go ahead," she coaxed. "Sleep. The bottle and the power should conk you out for an hour or two. Rest up. You'll need it."

Rest. Yes. That sounded good. And this crib and these 'clothes' felt oddly comfortable, even in their current state.

"Okay everyone," Glitch called. "Experiment complete. Cloaking fields off."

Circe managed to see the viewing window to the giant nursery fill with the blinking forms of a dozen or so scientists in white lab coats deactivating personal invisibility devices. Her complete and total degradation had been witnessed and likely documented by those pathetic sheep. Sleep was now more than a relaxing suggestion, but a much needed emotional retreat inside herself.

She woke up, Circe promised herself, she'd find a way to get out of this and make Glitch pay. Glitch, that upstart. That brat. That....that....that...
