

CHANGING META

Written by

Jack Cooper

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY

VARIEL V.O.
Stop, evil do-er!

A woman dressed in spandex looks to a man also in spandex. VARIEL glances down at cue cards that were given to her by the agency, their logo emblazoned on the paper. She looks from the cards to the villain and there is excitement all over her face.

VILLAIN
You cannot stop me, for I am:
Professor Lasor!

Variel looks to her cue cards for a moment, her face showing just a hint of frustration as she reads the instructions again:

Instructions For 1st time Heroes:
1. Do NOT forget your Catchphrase
(Stop Evil Do-er is
sloppily written on the
card)
2. Villain introduction (See Insert
on Villains)
3. Identify yourself!
4. Fight, but not long. Villain
WILL surrender.
5. Let the police apprehend.
6. Meet Mayor/Do interviews

The hero sighs as she checks her notes one last time before putting them away. The cards are placed behind her back, never to be seen again.

VARIEL
I am Lady Meta with the HFP! I will
stop you!

Variel attacks the villain. Variel struggles for a brief moment before she realizes the villain is hardly putting up a fight. Just like the card said, he surrenders in a matter of moments. She sits and stares down at the man, making no motion to do anything. Before long the police show up and apprehend the villain. They thank Variel as they put the villain away.

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY

The police show up to where Variel is sitting with the villain. She stands up for them and shaking their hands.

VARIEL

Here, officers. This man was trying to rob the bank.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Thank you, ma'am. We have been after him for him some time.

POLICE OFFICER #2

Yeah, and this being your first day? Did pretty good! What's your powers?

Variel pales a little before shrugging.

VARIEL

I uh... I can change my power based on what I think of. But I just use it to have super strength.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Interesting. Well thank you...?

VARIEL

Oh! Lady Meta! The name is Lady Meta.

The three exchange another round of hand shakes before parting ways.

EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - MID DAY

Variel stands on the steps of City Hall with THE MAYOR. Cameras are everywhere and Variel has never been more nervous in her life. The Mayor talks next to her, but it is drowned out by her nerves.

THE MAYOR

So, we the people of Megatropolis, would like to thank Lady Meta and the HFP for once again protecting our great city.

A hand extended out to Variel, along with a medal. She shakes the mayor's hand and allows him to hang the medal from her neck. She gets pulled into a photo opportunity from the dozens of paparazzi everywhere. She gives a half hearted smile.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Variel finds herself in a coffee shop after her first day as a hero. She is clearly frustrated and tired. As she slumps down at the bar the BARISTA/WOMAN/GRACE/LAVENDER MOON comes up to her.

BARISTA

Looks like you've had a rough day.

Variel looks up and shrugs before she stares at the blackboard with all of the coffee drinks written in chalk.

VARIEL

Uh... something to help me sleep?

It's just been....

(laughs nervously)

First day on the job. It was not what I expected at all.

The barista nods and goes to make Variel a tea latte.

BARISTA

Do you at least like the job? Or are you in something that you hate?

VARIEL

(pauses to think)

I don't think I can really answer that. At least... not right now?

It's just-

BARISTA

Difficult?

(stops to steam the milk before continuing)

I understand being in a job that you aren't sure whether you want it or not. My family owns this shop, so I work here. I didn't even want it, but mom got sick. So I had to take over.

She turns to face Variel and hands her a lavender tea latte.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

Drink this, it'll help you relax. We are open until 3am, so just sit and chill. If you need anything I'll be over there.

The barista points to her espresso machine and gives Variel a soft smile. Variel returns in and sips on her drink, visibly relaxing at the warm milk and lavender help to calm her down.

She glances up to the television after a while and sees her own face on the television screen. She is clearly uncomfortable with the interview and looks back to the barista, who is watching in admiration.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

I bet it is amazing to be a hero.
You get to help keep our city clean
and help keep our crime down. They
do so much good.

The barista smiles as she watches the interview, mindlessly wiping the same cup over and over. She finally tears herself away from the screen to look at her customer.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

How is the tea?

Variel smiles and gives a nod as she shows the woman how little of the beverage is left. The barista smiles and hands her one in a to-go cup.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

Since you've had a rough day, it's
on the house. See you tomorrow?

VARIEL

Of course!

Variel finishes off the last sip of her drink then takes the new cup. She thanks the barista again and heads home. She feels happier, having had a conversation with the other woman. There's a bit more pep in her step as she heads on home.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NIGHT

When Variel finally gets home she sets the cup down and heads into the kitchen to feed her cat. She disappears to change into her pajamas before she gets her cup and sits down in her recliner to relax. She puts on the news and scrunches her nose as she is once again greeted with her face. She just accepts it as her cat jumps into her lap, covering the remote.

It is not long before the tea begins to kick in and the woman is fast asleep in her chair.

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - MORNING

Variel has just gotten her second assignment from the HFP (Heroes for the People).

As she reads over the dossier she starts to get sad. Everything is exactly the same as the day before. She sighs and meets the villain at their designated fighting area. This time she goes up against a female villain.

VARIEL
Stop, evil do-er!

And so it begins, another back and forth exchange. A half-assed attempt at a fist fight.

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY

The police show up. This time the police don't even bother trying to talk to Variel.

EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Variel goes to another interview. It is almost dead identical to what was said the previous day.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Variel finds herself back at the coffee shop, at the same bar stool that she was at the previous night. The same barista is there and she is offered the same tea which she gladly takes.

BARISTA
You look like work was still shit.

Variel gives her a look as a tea cup is set down in front of her.

VARIEL
So, what's life like as a barista?

BARISTA
Pretty fun actually. You get to meet people, get to pick their brains. And drink a lot on shift.

Variel smiles and just sips her tea.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NIGHT

When she gets back from her late night cup of tea, she once again feeds the cat. She lays back in her recliner, cat once again on the remote. She blankly stares at her face on the screen.

VARIEL
I guess this is my life now.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

VARIEL V.O.
I have been a hero for exactly 3.2 years today, and I am bored. That is 1168 days of repeating the same thing over and over: Fight a villain. Drink coffee. Feed the cat. Fall asleep watching TV. Wake up. Fight. Drink. Feed. Sleep. Wake. I want to break the cycle, but if I do, I lose my license.

- A) EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY Variel fights a new villain.
- B) EXT. CITY HALL - DAY She gives a new interview
- C) INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT She and the barista drink tea, she sits in the same seat every repeat.
- D) INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NIGHT Variel feeds her cat and falls asleep in the recliner.

This repeats rapidly over the span of a minute. Variel's hair changes, her smile fades, and the barista no longer works at the coffee shop. The barista has left after only 2 repeats. After the flash ends, it is clear a few years have passed.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. HFP LOBBY - EARLY MORNING

Variel walks into the office to see that everyone scrambling over each other, clearly in a rush. She sees lower heroes getting turned away before an ADMIN, grabs her arm to drag her through the crowd.

ADMIN
We have a code wool on our hands.

VARIEL
A code wha--?

ADMIN
A rogue! There's a rogue villain, and she's strong. We need you to get ready for a fight.

VARIEL

What is protocol for this? I mean, I've never been taught how to deal with rogues?

ADMIN

Kick the crap out of her! No script, just take her down!

Variel stops moving at the admin's words, just staring for a moment. She clearly looks excited.

VARIEL

You mean like a real hero?

ADMIN

Yeah, sure. Just get dressed. We need Lady Meta like yesterday. No capping, understand?

The hero hands her card key over to the admin, who hands her the costume. She changes quickly and looks over the notes, scoffing when she sees the name of the villain.

VARIEL

That sounds like a soap...

EXT. MEGALOPOLIS BLOOD BANK - DAY

A large commotion is seen outside of the blood bank. People are screaming and running for their lives as cars are hurtled across the area. Variel stops at the edge of the chaos and sees other heroes fighting the villain. CAPTAIN FISTS is crumpled on the ground while MISS MISS tends to his wounds. THE FIGHTER currently fist fights the villain and losing.

It is only a moment later that he is thrown against Captain Fists by something purple and not wholly human. Variel's excitement shows as she gets ready for a fight. She runs into the fight, thinking of a power that could help her.

VILLIAN/LAVENDER MOON

I am Lavender Moon.

A car is thrown towards Variel. The fight continues for a few moments before Lavender Moon disappears into purple smoke.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Variel enters into the coffee shop after a clearly stressful day. She has a bandage on her lip and forehead.

She goes to sit in her seat only to see another person in her spot. She begins to fidget as she just looks at the woman in her spot.

VARIEL

Excuse me!

WOMAN

Oh! I'm sorry, I didn't notice you there. Am I...bothering you?

The WOMAN takes out her headphones and lays them on the counter top. She looks at Variel hard for a long moment then gives her a smile. Variel relaxes and decides to sit next to the woman. She orders a tea latte and they begin to have a conversation.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You look really familiar... do you get coffee her a lot?

VARIEL

Every night. You've probably seen me too. You do look familiar as well, now that you've mentioned it.

WOMAN

So, stranger, what happened to your lip?

VARIEL

Would you believe it was my cat?

WOMAN

Hardly, but if you say it with a convincing enough smile I might could.

Variel smiles happily and plays with the woman's headphones.

VARIEL

I just let Mr. Pickles do his thing. He's a bit spoiled and has claws.

The woman makes a face, looking like she could feel the pain of a catch scratch to the mouth.

WOMAN

Well, that's why you get a dog.

Variel just rolls her eyes and thumps her fingers against the side of the cup.

They sit in silence, only exchanging glances back and forth. The woman stands up and throws on her coat before leaning down to write on something.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Gotta head to work. My name is
Grace, by the way. Call me some
time.

Grace smiles as she presses a napkin into Variel's hand and leaves the shop. Variel looks down at the number on the piece of paper and looks to the door, only for the woman to have disappeared. She has a genuine smile on her face for the first time in years as she looks down at the phone number once more.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NIGHT

She feeds her cat and gets ready for bed, placing the napkin on the side table next to her recliner. She changes the news to cartoons and slowly drifts off into a peaceful sleep.

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY

The streets are clean after the fight from the previous day. It looks as if there had never been a fight. She shrugs.

VARIEL

Stop, evil do-er!

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - NIGHT

Variel is on the way to the coffee shop, only to be intercepted by someone.

GRACE

Hey stranger, getting tea again?

Variel looks to the sound and smiles when she sees Grace.

VARIEL

I do it every night. Want to join?

GRACE

I could. Or, we could go grab some
dinner?

Variel stops to think for a moment, having no regard for the other people walking down the side walk.

VARIEL

Well, you already messed up my routine last night so...I guess...why not?

Varie's face shows clear signs of nervousness as she thinks about breaking her routine. She nods and links arms with Grace as they start their walk.

INT. CAPES AND FRIES - NIGHT

Grace and Variel enter a fast food joint, it is themed for children.

GRACE

Listen, I know, I know. It's for children, but you gotta believe me when I say: this place has the best damned food this side of the HFP Tower!

They walk up to the counter.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I would like a Captain Chicken, hold the pickles, with tea and fries.

Variel studies the menu for a moment.

VARIEL

I'll have the... Hero dog? All the way please.

The two head to a booth as they wait for their food.

GRACE

So, what do you do for a living, Variel?

Variel raised an eyebrow and looks around the restaurant.

VARIEL

Office work. Pencil pushing. It's not very fun, but it keeps food in Mister Pickle's food bowl so I can't complain. What do you do?

GRACE

Not much. Take care of my mother, she's gotten sick lately. Not nearly as much fun as pencil pushing.

The two give a half smile as they wait for the food. Both unsure of where to take the conversation.

VARIEL

How long have you been in
Megatropolis?

GRACE

On this side of it? About a couple
of months. I had gone out west into
the manufacturing district to try
and get more money, but... Jobs are
hard here. I can see why someone
would be a hero. It is exciting and
the money is decent.

VARIEL

I'm not sure about the money, but I
think it used to be way more
interesting. Before the HFP. I
heard that they used to be
spontaneous. Like how you see in
comics, flying off in the middle of
the night. Now, it's just a regular
nine to five. About as much fun as
pencil pushing.

Their food arrives and Grace quickly dives into it.

GRACE

(with a mouth full of
food)
Where did you go to school?

VARIEL

I never went to college, but I did
go to a very nice boarding school.
Well, I say nice... It is
prestigious. Nice, eh? But it was a
family tradition. Just like working
in my office. My parents did. So I
did. It just sucks. It's so strict
and the office doesn't allow for
creativity. And the boarding
school? If you even thought out of
line you got in trouble. Which,
made it hard when all you ever did
was think out of line. A couple of
rulers to the hand and you think
straight.

She stabs a french fry into her ketchup before chomping down
on it.

VARIEL (CONT'D)

What about you? Did you go anywhere fancy?

GRACE

Not fancy, but not awful. I actually went to school for medicine, but, ironically, my mom got too sick for me to continue what I was doing.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NIGHT

Grace and Variel are standing outside of Variel's apartment. Variel's hand rests on the door knob.

VARIEL

While the decor of the restaurant was tacky as hell, the food was really good.

GRACE

(cheering loudly)

See! I told you! Didn't I tell you? This side of the tower. Best food.

VARIEL

But what about the other side?

She smirks before Grace plants a soft kiss on her cheek.

GRACE

Maybe next time. Catch ya later, V.

Grace leaves and Variel slips into her apartment, giddy and excited. She had not been kissed since high school. She never had time. She feeds her cat and this time, falls asleep in her bed with a smile on her face.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

- A) EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY Variel fights a new villain.
- B) EXT. CITY HALL - DAY She gives a new interview
- C) EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - NIGHT Grace and Variel are on dates. (These change with each succession)
- D) INT. VARIEL'S APT - NIGHT Variel starts to sleep in her bed again.

This repeats until almost a year has passed, the two women growing closer with each passing day.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. HFP LOBBY - DAY

It has been almost a year since the rogue villain had disappeared. When Variel walks into the office to see everyone scrambling she knows she's in for a fight.

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY

Variel locks eyes with Lavender Moon as she fights along side her co-workers. Everyone is soon defeated, leaving only Variel and the villain. A huge fight takes place. Variel breaks the rules that had been set in place for her and uses her powers to the fullest extent. Sparks of blues and purples clash as the two fight with magic and psychic abilities. The fight lasts for some time before Variel gets the villain down, pinning her to the concrete.

VARIEL

Who are you?

She pulls off the mask from the villain's face and sees bright green eyes staring up at her. Her heart sinks as she realizes the villain is Grace.

VARIEL (CONT'D)

Grace?

GRACE

Hey, V. You finally got me.

There is a soft smile on Grace's face. Variel stares in shock, getting up to just stare at the woman. She's at a loss for words.

The police show up shortly after. They pat Variel on the back as they put the villain in the back of the car. As they drive off Variel sees Grace mouth 'Thank you' out of the window.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - DAY

Variel skipped the interview with the news. She skipped her tea. She skipped feeding the cat because it's too early. She hides from the world. She is clearly lost.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NEXT DAY

Variel does not go back to work. She does not leave from her bundle of blankets on the recliner.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - LATER IN THE WEEK

Variel's costume is strewn about the apartment, pieces of it are cut up into rag tag bits. A sewing machine is on the kitchen counter.

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS - DAY

Variel ducks into an alleyway before emerging in a new outfit. It is different, more dramatic than her last. She spots a hero on duty and starts a fight.

VARIEL

I am Madam Metamorphosis and you
will never defeat me.

A fight breaks out and Variel defeats the hero. She's so excited to not have to wait for the police or the paparazzi. After the fight she disappears and reappears in her normal clothing.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Variel works on her powers, testing how far away she can be to pick things up. She picks up a ball and throws it. She sets up a few boards to test how strong she can be.

INT. VARIEL'S APT. - NIGHT

Variel feeds Mister Pickle's and turns on the news. The ticker briefly mentions a new rogue villain and she smiles.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

-Variel fights the heros

-Variel's apt is covered in blue prints and fabric

-Variel no longer gets tea.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MEGATROPOLIS PRISON - DAY

Loud explosions are heard and Variel walks through a cloud of smoke and debris. Guards are running away from the explosion while prisoners, who had been freed, are running past her. A few guards try to stop her, but she uses her powers to throw them across the prison.

VARIEL

I control this prison now! Anyone
who wishes to fight for themselves
should join me.

There is cheering coming from almost every cell in the prison. Variel smiles at the response she had received. She makes her way through the prison until she finds Grace in her cell. Grace looks at her through the prison bars and sighs.

GRACE

V, what did you do?

VARIEL

What I've always wanted.

Variel rips off the door of the prison cell and extends a hand to Grace.

VARIEL (CONT'D)

Now, come with me.

Grace shakes her head and stays by the back wall of her cell.

GRACE

I've left that life behind, Variel.
I want to be like you used to be.
You were, are, such a strong woman.
But you're better than this. We are
better than this.

Variel lowers her hand and looks to her. She feels the same way. Grace was always so strong, no matter what she went through.

VARIEL

And I wanted the same. We can leave
now. Leave Megatropolis behind.
Just you and me.

Grace smiles and shakes her head again, this time pushing herself away from the wall. She closes the gap between her and Variel, giving her a quick kiss before pushing her shoulders.

GRACE
Stop, evil do-er!

Variel smirks and turns, cape flourishing behind her. As she disappears with henchmen, Grace stays put in her cell.