

A Load of Bulk

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A Load of Bulk

by [MrTyeDye](#)

Summary

While poking around Lisa's room, Lana stumbles across the prototype for a formula designed to boost the subject's size and strength. Enticed, Lana takes a little sip, and before long, she starts to feel the effects...along with a few pronounced side effects.

Day 1

"Hops? Ho-ops? Come on, buddy, where are you?"

Lana paced up and down the upper hallway, scanning the corridor for any sign of her wayward amphibious companion. Just a few minutes earlier, she had taken him out of his terrarium to play with him, only to excuse herself for a quick bathroom break. In her carelessness, she left her bedroom door open, and by the time she got back, Hops was nowhere to be seen.

As the owner of a veritable menagerie of pets, this situation was nothing new to her. Given her propensity to let them roam free whenever she could, it was only natural that she'd lose them every now and then. But that didn't make the situation any less vexing for her. She had to find Hops quick, or else she'd be getting an earful from whoever did - assuming he wasn't in danger, which was a possibility she didn't even want to think about.

As she reached the end of the hallway for the third time, it occurred to her that she may have been looking in the wrong place. She noticed that the door to Lisa and Lily's room was ajar.

Could he have wandered into there?

Lana took a few tentative steps towards the open doorway. It was a real possibility that was worth examining, but she knew she'd look pretty sketchy if she went poking around Lisa's room unattended - and she certainly didn't want to admit to losing Hops yet again. After glancing back and forth around the halls to make sure that the coast was clear, she took a step inside.

The room was uncharacteristically clean and neat, devoid of the scattered papers and chemical stains that marked its typical state. The day prior, Lisa had left on a week-long trip to Boston to give a lecture at MIT, and Rita insisted that she tidy up the room a little before vacating it. (After all, it wasn't as if her roommate could be expected to do any housekeeping.) Fortunately for Lana, this meant that she could scour the room without bearing the risk of Lisa walking in and busting her.

After taking about ten steps inside, her ears picked up a familiar ribbit coming from Lisa's chemistry table. Her face lit up, and she eagerly tiptoed towards the sound. Sure enough, as she approached she caught a glimpse of Hops' small, lime-green form peeking out from behind a wooden test tube rack near the edge of the table.

"There you are, little guy!" she said in an excited whisper. She reached over the rack, grabbed the frog and pulled him into a hug, relishing in the sensation of his gooey, mucus-covered skin pressed against hers.

"You can't keep hopping away like that," she said, her voice tinged with irritation. She held Hops about an inch away from her face and looked straight into its eyes. "Well, you *can*, but you shouldn't. Don't you know how nervous and scared I get when you run away? Don't you care?"

In response, Hops opened his mouth, whipped out his tongue and gave Lana a slurp on her cheek, causing her to break into a giggling fit.

"Oh, all right. I can't stay mad at you."

With that, she gave Hops a kiss and tucked him into the crook of her arm. As she did, her eyes lingered on the test tube rack that Hops was lurking behind. Each one was filled to the brim with liquid and labeled with a post-it note, and Lana, out of curiosity, scanned her eyes across the labels to see what Lisa was working on. Most of the labels included fancy words that Lana couldn't understand or even pronounce - "hydrochloric acid", "benzene", "potassium hydroxide solution" and things like that - but there was one on the end of the rack that caught her eye.

Strength-Boosting Formula (B)

Lana's eyes widened with wonder. She only somewhat understood what a "formula" was, but she knew full well what "strength" was, and she had to admit that the idea of boosting her own intrigued her. Lana, a tomboy by nature, was always enticed by the prospect of getting bigger and stronger, and her mind bloomed with all the new possibilities Lisa's supplement would yield. A dreamy smile formed on Lana's face as she imagined trouncing Lynn in mud wrestling, outmuscling fully grown alligators, and impressing Skippy by lifting the back end of a car all by herself, obviating the need for a jack.

Okay, she probably wouldn't get *that* strong. Or would she? Lisa's stuff was typically pretty potent, so who could say for sure?

With a trembling hand, she reached out, grasped the test tube and lifted it out of its slot, knowing that in just a moment her life was going to change. As she brought it closer to her lips, she caught sight of Hops giving her a judgmental look.

"What? I'm just gonna take a little sip. Who'll even know?"

Any other doubts she had about going through with this were rationalized away. *Well, Mom did say not to drink something if you don't know what it is*, she thought. *But I do know what it is. It's a strength potion. It says so on the label. Plus, if Lisa didn't want people to drink it, she wouldn't have kept it out on her shelf. Yeah, she would have locked it up or something. I'm sure it'll be fine.*

Don't know what that "B" stands for, though. Maybe "big"? That would make sense. Or "beefy"! That's probably it. Down the hatch!

And so, she tipped her head back, took a swig from the vial, and put it back. The taste was so searingly bitter that she almost gagged, and had to clamp a hand over her mouth to keep herself from attracting any attention.

Wow, that's terrible. But I guess medicine isn't supposed to taste good.

After wiping residue off her lips, Lana strutted out of the room and back to hers with Hops under her arm. Throughout her entire bedtime routine - putting her pets away, changing into

PJs, brushing her teeth - she couldn't stop jittering with anticipation. She could scarcely wait until the next morning, when she'd get to put her new body to the test and see if Lisa's new invention actually worked.

July 30

8:30 p.m.

The prototype of my strength-boosting formula is finally complete. The formula, designed to hyper-accelerate the process by which muscle tears and rebuilds itself, will have countless practical applications, most notably in the field of physical therapy. A drug that can enable the sickly and emaciated to make swift, relatively painless recoveries from their illnesses will prove invaluable to the medical community.

That said, I shouldn't get my hopes up quite yet. The formula is still in the testing stages, after all. About an hour ago, I gave a minute dose of the prototype to a lab rat. I will be recording the observed effects every step of the way. If all goes well, I may be able to deem the formula safe to test on humans - but that remains to be seen.

- Lisa M. Loud

Day 2

Lana awoke the following morning with a yawn and a stretch. As the gears in her brain started turning again, she began to recall that today was a special occasion - the day that she'd get to see the effects of last night's sampling. With her heartbeat accelerating in anticipation, she threw off her pajamas and slipped into her signature shirt and overalls. As she got dressed, she couldn't help but notice that her outfit felt just a little bit more snug than it usually did; she figured it must have shrunk in the wash.

She walked out into the hall, and was promptly greeted by a smiling Luna, who was ascending the stairs with a guitar amp in her arms. "Oh, hey, Lana, look at you! 8:30 and you're already up and at 'em!"

Lana chuckled, scratching the back of her head. Lana usually slept in on summer days (as did most of the family), so Luna's surprise was understandable.

"Guess I didn't want this summer day to go to waste," said Lana, as Luna reached the top stair. "Say, what are you doing with that amp?"

"Oh, this? Just bringin' my equipment up from the garage," Luna said with a grunt of effort. "Had a heck of a practice session last night."

Upon hearing that grunt, Lana was struck with a new realization - one that caused a smile to break out across her face. Though she didn't know it, Luna had presented Lana with the perfect opportunity to test her might.

The young rocker plopped the amp down onto the floor, panting a little. "I'm gonna head down and grab my axe," she said. "Watch the amp while I'm gone, will ya?"

Lana grinned, rubbing her hands together. "How's about I do you one better?" she asked, bending down and slipping her hands underneath the amp.

"Whoa, hey!" cried Luna. "I wouldn't do that if I were you, Lana. That thing weighs thirty pounds. You could hurt yourse-"

But Lana didn't give her a chance to finish that thought before following through with that task. And with a heave-ho, she hoisted the amp into the air. To her surprise, the weight of the amp was pretty manageable - not *light*, mind you, but not overwhelming, either. With the amp in her arms, she marched towards Luna and Luan's room, while a slack-jawed Luna watched in awe.

"Good golly, Miss Molly! What on earth have we been feeding you?!"

Lana giggled. "What can I say? I'm a growing girl. Now, where should I set this down?"

"B... by the bunk bed," uttered Luna.

Lana nodded, entered the room and set the amp down right by the foot of the bed. She felt a little bit of fatigue from the feat and a slight burning in her arms, but she figured that those would wear off before long. And once they did, she'd be fully ready to test her strength again.

In the meantime, Lana decided to help herself to some breakfast. She bounded downstairs to the kitchen, popped in some toaster waffles - three, instead of her usual two - slathered them with syrup, and scarfed them down. In her haste, she barely even noticed Luan, who happened to be at the table enjoying an orange and some coffee. Or, at least, she *wouldn't* have noticed, if Luan hadn't decided to chime in with one of her signature quips.

"Whoa, hey, Lana, slow down! I know the meal's called *breakfast*, but still!" She followed up her quip with a bubbly laugh, as she was wont to do. "Get it?"

Lana just rolled her eyes, grabbed her dishes and dumped them into the sink. As she did, she noticed that her fatigue had already worn off, and her arms felt good as new. It was time for her to look for another way to test her strength - and before she left the kitchen, she found one. Right after clearing her place, she noticed that the trash bin was full to bursting.

"Oh, hey, looks like Linc forgot to take out the trash," she said, straining to hide the excitement in her voice. "Lemme get it."

"Are you sure?" asked Luan. "It's pretty heavy for someone your-"

Before she even finished that sentence, Lana grabbed the fully loaded trash bag, tied it shut, and hoisted it out of the bin with hardly any sign of effort. She then slung it over her shoulder and skipped out of the room, taking delight in how light it felt, and even more delight in the fact that her feat had just left Luan speechless. Just before she got to the front door, she glanced over her shoulder and caught a glimpse of Luan's face. As expected, her bulging eyes were still fixated on Lana and her mouth was gaping half-open.

After giving the stunned Luan a wink, Lana pranced out the door and tossed the full trash bag into the garbage can. Unlike Luna's amp, the bag was barely even a challenge for her, so her thirst for a true test of her new strength was still unquenched. Still, she reminded herself that it was still pretty early; once the rest of the family was out and about, eventually someone somewhere would need something heavy lifted.

Sure enough, an opportunity came just a couple of hours later. Lana was in the kitchen, helping herself to a snack, when she heard grumbling coming from the living room. She walked in to see an irate Lori on her hands and knees, reaching under the sofa, while a concerned-looking Leni stood by her side.

"Leni, could you go get Lynn?" she said with a groan.

"You mean our sister, or Dad?" Leni asked.

"Either," said Lori. "Someone kicked the remote under the sofa and I need someone to move it."

"Why can't you?"

"Are you kidding me? It's way too heavy. I'm not going to throw my back out looking for some stupid remote."

Lana donned a confident smirk as she crept towards the sofa, sizing it up. *Too heavy, huh? Not for Super Lana, it isn't!*

She marched up to the sofa, planted her feet, hooked her fingers under the edge, and pulled upwards with all her might. A massive grin erupted across her face when she felt the heavy furniture yield to her strength and rise off of the floor. With a grunt of effort, she hefted it another inch upwards - and then another, and another, and another, until she finally brought her arms to their full extension and lifted the side of the sofa over her head.

Lana's only regret was that the couch obscured her view of Lori and Leni's bewildered faces - and even that wasn't much of an issue, since she could *hear* them just fine.

"Um, t-t-thanks, L-Lana," stammered Lori, grabbing the remote from underneath the sofa. Once she did, Lana let the sofa drop from her hands, and it hit the floor with a clattering bang.

"No need to thank me, big sis," she said, wiping the dust from her hands as she moseyed back into the kitchen.

Over the course of the rest of the day, Lana went from sibling to sibling, going out of her way to assist them with any of their tasks - particularly the ones that involved heavy lifting. Lori needs to carry her laundry upstairs? In comes Lana. Lynn's basketball hoop needs readjusting? Lana to the rescue. Lucy needs a pallbearer for her pretend funeral? Lana's up to the task. And whenever her siblings were unoccupied, she'd keep herself busy by doing push-ups in the backyard, interspersed with a few sets of squats (can't skip leg day!). She'd also managed to work up quite an appetite, as she found herself making frequent trips to the fridge in between tasks.

As the day went on, Lana noticed that her clothes were getting tighter and tighter. They had already felt unusually snug when she got up this morning, but with every passing hour, they seemed to grow more and more constricting. Lana started to doubt that this was the result of them shrinking in the wash, but then, she wasn't exactly an expert when it came to laundry, so she guessed that the shrinking could just be a gradual process.

Still, by the time dinner rolled around, her shirt and overalls were so tight that they started to feel a little restrictive. As she headed down the stairs to the dinner table, she could feel the seams of her clothes digging into her. She figured it was better to deal with the problem sooner rather than later, so after she took her seat at the dinner table, she decided to bring it to her parents' attention.

"Hey, Mom? Dad?" called Lana, raising her hand. "I think my clothes are getting a little small on me. Can we get new ones?"

"Well, I-" Rita began, only to stop cold once she got a good look at her daughter. An awkward, tense silence ensued as she and Lynn Sr. stared at Lana, wearing inscrutable expressions somewhere between shock and intrigue.

"Um, s-sure, Lana," uttered Rita. "We'll go to the clothing store sometime this week."

Lana smiled. "Thanks, Mom!" she chirped. "Well, guys, let's dig in!"

And so she did. Lana's boosted appetite hadn't waned by dinner time; if anything, it had only grown stronger. She wolfed down her plate of goulash in little to no time, chugging it down her throat like a freshman chugging beer at his first frat party. By the time she was done with her second helping, most of her other siblings had barely finished their first. This didn't go unnoticed by the rest of the dinner table, as Lana noticed several of her siblings' eyes lingering on her over the course of the meal. Lana found that a little strange, as it was far from the first time that she had worked up a major appetite, but she decided not to press the issue.

After polishing off her dinner, she threw her dishes into the sink and took off. As a member of the Loud house, she knew better than to linger too long after a meal. To quote Lincoln: *those who stay, put dishes away. Those who flee, get to watch TV.*

In this case, however, she was a little too tuckered out for the tube after a full day of being active, so she took a direct route towards the bathroom to start getting herself ready for bed. She climbed up onto the step stool, took one look at herself in the mirror, and gasped with wonder at what she saw staring back at her. Suddenly, Rita's bizarre spell of silence and all of those errant stares at the dinner table made sense.

Her clothes weren't shrinking. *She was growing.*

And *how.*

First she noticed her arms, which had grown thick enough to fill out the sleeves of her teal shirt. She pulled back her right sleeve and flexed, causing her bicep to swell into an avocado-sized mound. She then flexed her left, and was elated to see it swell to an equal size.

And it didn't stop at her arms, as Lana found out after looking at herself from several other angles. The denim legs of her overalls were pulled taut over her expanding thighs and calves, while thickened shoulder and chest muscles bulged through her top. Out of curiosity, she slipped a hand under her shirt and felt up her stomach; to her delight, she felt the beginnings of a rigid six pack.

This is incredible! she thought as she started posing and flexing in the mirror. *I mean, look at this! I'm huge! I'm ripped! I'm-*

"Lanaaaa!" Lola cried from outside the door. "How long are you gonna be in there?! I need to take my bath!"

Lana lost her smile, as Lola's interjection brought her journey of bodily exploration to a swift halt. "Just a minute, Lola," she said with a groan.

But regardless of the damper that Lola put on Lana's mood, it was hard for her not to get excited about what the next day would have in store for her. As she got herself ready for bed, her smile gradually crept back onto her face. Her mood heightened even further once she

exited the bathroom and passed Lola in the hall, as she caught the pageant princess doing a double take at her new body.

Drink it in, Lola. Feast your eyes on the new Lana.

Lana's smile grew into a full-on grin once she got back to her room and started changing, and found that she had to squeeze her bulky new bod into her pajamas.

This is awesome, she thought, giggling with glee as she stuffed herself into her pajama top. I'm bursting out of all my old clothes! Guess Mom and Dad'll have to get me some extra large ones. Ooh! Or maybe they'll just let me walk around naked!

The last thought elicited a snicker, as at her age there were few things more amusing than impromptu nudity. Once she was done contemplating that, she turned the lights off, slipped under the covers, gave her bicep a kiss goodnight, and shut her eyes, figuring that the earlier she went to bed, the sooner tomorrow would come.

July 31

8:30 p.m.

The effects of my formula on the rat have been striking, to say the least. I noticed a significant increase in muscularity when I first started observing it this morning, and over the course of the day it continued to grow. By now, I estimate that its muscle mass is 40 percent greater than it was when I started the test. Furthermore, its musculature hasn't just increased in mass; it's also increased in density and pound-for-pound strength. I watched in awe as it demonstrated strength comparable to a young capybara.

I await tomorrow with bated breath. If the test continues to yield positive results, I see another Junior Nobel Prize in my future.

- Lisa M. Loud

Day 3

Lana woke up the next morning as she typically did, with a good, hardy stretch. This time, however, she was knocked out of her drowsy spell by a piercing sound that rang out right next to her right ear - the sound of fabric tearing apart.

RRRRRIPPPPPP

A bit perturbed, Lana looked to her right to see what the source of the noise was. To her surprise, in the middle of her stretch she had inadvertently flexed her right arm, causing her bloated bicep to tear right through her sleeve. A wide, open-mouthed grin broke out across Lana's face as she feasted her eyes upon her new muscle; it was definitely at least a half inch bigger than she remembered it being last night. Smirking, Lana looked to the other side and flexed her left bicep, and just like that, her left sleeve burst open, practically exploding off of her arm.

Now that's what I'm talking about! she thought. *Look at these big babies!*

But as she was admiring herself, she could sense someone else's gaze boring into her from the back of her head. She turned around to see Lola sitting up in her canopy bed, staring at her twin with a look of what was either horror or wonder - possibly both.

Lana looked back at her prissy sister, intent on making some kind of smug remark. But the more she looked at Lola's face, the more it seemed like she was... *judging* her. She couldn't help but notice a lingering sense of disgust in those gaping eyes, which triggered her ire.

"What are *you* looking at?" she snapped.

Lola let out a squeak and scurried away, cowering under her comforter. As soon as Lana saw her twin's timid reaction, her expression softened.

"Oh, I-I'm sorry, Lola. I just thought you were... um..."

Lana, sensing that her apology wasn't doing much good, just sighed and walked over to her dresser.

"Never mind," she muttered.

With that, she shed her pajamas, pulled a shirt and overalls out of her dresser and tried to squeeze herself into them. By the time she finally did, they were clinging to her figure so tightly that they looked like they were painted on. Figuring that her sleeves were going to be ruined anyway, Lana ripped them off, tearing the fabric as if it were made of wet tissue paper. The piercing *rip* quickly brightened her mood, serving as a reminder of how massive she had gotten.

Once that was through, she walked out into the hall, ready to show her new self off to the world. As she stepped out the door, though, the memory of her outburst against Lola

continued to needle at her psyche. *Maybe she was just surprised, she thought. I shouldn't have snapped.*

She walked herself straight downstairs to the kitchen, ready to scour it for something to satiate her growing hunger. Browsing the pantry, she spied a box of Wheaties that was still mostly full.

Ah, perfect. Wheaties, the breakfast of champions.

She grabbed the box, grabbed a bowl, plopped them both on the table, and was just about to start pouring when an errant thought entered her mind.

Wait, aren't these Lori's? Maybe I should at least ask before taking some.

She was just about to put them back on the shelf, when her thought was countered by another one.

Well, I don't see her name on it. And she never said we couldn't have any. Besides, I'm a growing girl. I need to keep this body fueled up.

That was enough justification for her, so she poured herself a heaping bowl, added some milk, and chowed down. She helped herself to two and a half more bowls after that, leaving the box only a quarter filled by the time she was done with it.

Ahh, that hit the spot. Let's see who else is up.

Just as fate would have it, Leni happened to walk into the kitchen to grab herself some strawberry pop tarts. After she rooted through the pantry and grabbed a package, her tired eyes drifted over to Lana.

"Oh, good morning, Lan-*eep*!"

Leni clamped a hand over her mouth to muffle her incoming yelp (so as not to wake any of her siblings who were still asleep), dropping one of her pop tarts on the floor in the process. In her defense, she hadn't expected to come face-to-face with such a behemoth first thing in the morning. She noticed that Lana was looking a bit bulky last night at dinner, but even this was beyond anything she remembered.

"Lana!" she said in a harsh whisper. "What happened to your... sleeves?"

Leni thought it would be rude to comment on her body, so she redirected her query towards a related but less sensitive topic. It was a legitimate question; the Loud family was on a budget, and they couldn't exactly afford to tear up their clothes whenever they felt like it.

Lana just put on a smug smirk, raised her right arm and started flexing and unflexing her bicep, making it bounce. "I tore 'em off," she said. "My arms just got too big for 'em."

"But-but, like, how?" squeaked Leni, shying away from the bicep as if it was going to bite her. "You're only six. Most boys *my* age don't have muscles that big."

Lana shrugged her thick, bulbous shoulders. "Then maybe they should start working out."

Leni shook her head. "No. No way. There's something going on with you, Lana. What have you been doing lately?"

A moment later, Lana's smirk had flipped upside down into a pointed scowl. "None of your business!" she barked. "Now leave me alone!"

The beefed-up tomboy hopped off her chair and stormed out of the kitchen, shoving Leni to the side and scooping up her dropped pop tart on the way. Once she got to the living room, she plopped herself down on the couch and gobbled down the pop tart without thinking twice. As soon as she polished it off, though, her irritation faded away, allowing her to contemplate it.

Where did that come from? she thought. *Leni was just asking questions. What was I getting so angry about?*

On further reflection, it occurred to her that Leni was coming dangerously close to finding out about Lisa's formula - and if she stayed on her case for long enough, she very well might have.

And then she would have snitched on you. You know she would. Little goody two-shoes always has to do what's right. Just forget about her.

And just like that, her anger was rekindled. Fortunately, Lana knew exactly how she could blow off that excess steam: putting her new body through a little exercise. She briefly entertained the thought of finding things to lift, but she figured that she'd only be able to do that for so long before someone in the family started making a fuss. Instead, she headed out into the backyard, got on all fours and launched herself into a set of push-ups.

And another. And another. And another. And another.

To Lana's disappointment, push-ups just weren't all that challenging to her anymore. Her weight had increased by a significant degree, yes, but her gains in pound-for-pound strength were even greater. She was barely working up a sweat as her arms and pecs pumped out rep after rep. She tried sets of crunches and squats, and was met with more or less the same result.

Ugh, this isn't working! thought Lana, stomping the ground in frustration after finishing her umpteenth squat. *There's gotta be something else I can do. But I'll still have to steer clear of nosy Leni. How, though? She could pop up almost anywhere. I'd have to hole up in the basement, or-*

Lana's face lit up. *The basement! That's it!*

Lana was reminded that Lynn kept a fully stocked weight set down in the basement. It'd be the perfect place for her to put her muscles to the test, away from the prying eyes of others. Barely able to contain her excitement, she dashed through the living room and down the basement stairs, causing them to rattle and creak from the strain of her boosted girth. Once

she laid her eyes upon that gym, she broke into an enormous open-mouthed grin, bubbling over with anticipation of what was to come. There, before her, was a fully stacked rack of dumbbells arranged in order of weight, plus a barbell and plate set positioned right next to a bench.

Go time. Lana spat into her hands, rubbed them together, and marched up to the weights, ready to get pumping. First, she grabbed a couple of five-pound dumbbells off the rack and started lifting them. As you'd expect, they provided virtually no resistance at all; it was as if she were handling two sticks of foam.

"Too light!" she cried, slamming them back on the rack. She grabbed a couple of twenty pounders and started pumping those instead. They were a good deal more challenging, but they still weren't giving her the "pump" that she needed. She dropped them back onto the rack, grabbed a forty pounder in each hand, and started pumping them up and down.

Oof...now that's more like it, she thought. This time, she could feel her muscles quiver and strain with each lift. She punctuated each rep with a tooth-clenched grunt, and she started to feel sweat seeping out of the pores in her forehead. After a couple sets, she could feel her biceps swelling bigger and bigger in response to the pressure, as her heart worked double time pumping blood to her engorged veins. By the fourth or fifth set, fatigue was starting to set in, and she was ready to give in... but one momentary glance at her beefy arms was enough to give her a second wind.

Bigger! I want to be even bigger!

Lana found the wherewithal to pump out two more sets of ten reps before letting the weights drop to the floor with a clang. Once the fatigue wore off and she could lift her arms again, she gave them a good, hearty flex. They were *enormous*. Two huge, pulsating, baseball-sized peaks, each lined with a thick, throbbing vein. Lana was so enamored with the sight of them, she almost would have been satisfied to stop working out and just watch them ripple all day.

Almost.

Lana, knowing that the rest of her deserved just as much attention, moved on to other exercises. Luckily, she still remembered how her parents put her and the other kids through weight training after they went all exercise-crazy, so she had a basic knowledge of standard exercises and proper form. She loaded up the barbell with three twenty-five pound plates on each end, hoisted it onto her shoulders, and did a few sets of squats. Then, she took that same barbell, carried it over to the bench and pressed the hell out of it. By then, her arms had more or less recovered from the fatigue of her bicep curls, so she went back to those - followed by another set of squats, and then another set of bench presses, and so on and so forth.

It took hours before she started running out of steam, and by then she was practically bursting out of her clothes. Tears were forming below the collar of her shirt because of her swollen pecs, and even the tough denim of her overalls was starting to give way to the expansion of her calves and thighs. It looked (and felt) as though a few flexes would leave her entire outfit in tatters, but as much as Lana wanted to test that, she resisted that urge for the sake of modesty.

Though that didn't stop her from getting in trouble - or almost getting in trouble, at least. Just as she was getting ready to go back upstairs, she heard a familiar, tomboyish voice calling out to her from the stairwell.

"Lana! What are you doing with my weights?!"

Lana turned around to see an irate-looking Lynn bounding down the stairs. "You know better than to handle my weights without asking!" she scolded as she descended the stairs. "I mean, you could've hurt yourself if I hadn't - AIYEE!"

All of the anger Lynn felt in that moment was replaced by shock once she got a good look at Lana's post-workout body.

Lynn had always prided herself on her exceptional fitness and muscularity, no doubt a product of the myriad sports she played and her regular use of that weight set. Lana, though... Lana, as of now, was on a whole other level. In all aspects except height, she made Lynn look downright puny.

"Lana, you're... you're... *huge*!"

Lana laughed, causing her powerful chest to bob up and down. "Pretty cool, huh?" she asked. "I mean, look at me! I'm the strongest kid in the world!"

Lynn didn't have any doubt that that was true - even if you expanded your definition of the word "kid" to include high schoolers. All of a sudden, she felt awfully silly for trying to lecture Lana about being careful not to hurt herself, since she looked to be strong enough to handle the heaviest weights in her set as if they were stuffed animals. Clearly, there was no risk of her "hurting herself", unless she dropped a weight on her foot.

But there was one question lingering in the back of Lynn's mind: *how*? What kind of genetics would let Lana get this massive and this strong in such a short time? Unless... had her growth been happening for months, under everyone's radar?

"Lana, when did you start working out?" asked Lynn.

"Yesterday," Lana said plainly.

Lynn shook her head vigorously, as her brain not only failed but *refused* to process what she just heard. Even if she was going to accept that Lana *could* get that big, there was no way she'd be able to do it in so little time.

"Lana, I... this isn't normal," said Lynn, as her throat started to dry up. "I think maybe we should take you to the doctor. You know, so he can see what's wrong with you."

Lana shot Lynn a biting glare so vicious that it made her flinch. "I think you're just *jealous*!" she cried, pointing an accusatory finger at her. "You wanna be the strongest one in the house, and now you're mad 'cause *I* am! Well, get used to it, scrawny!"

Lana capped off her statement by puffing out her enormous chest, causing an audible rip as the tears in her shirt widened. Lynn cringed at the sight, shrinking away from her "little"

sister.

"I-I'm not jealous, okay? I'm just concerned for, you know, your well being. That's all."

Though Lynn wouldn't admit it, Lana's new transformation *did* make her feel a little self-conscious about her own body, and the "scrawny" epithet certainly didn't help. Figuring that it wouldn't hurt for her to squeeze in a workout, she started to shuffle towards the weight set.

"Now, if you don't mind, I'm gonna grab a couple of those twenties and-"

"No!" barked Lana. She threw her arms around the dumbbell rack and leered at Lynn, baring her teeth. "Mine!"

Lynn was so taken aback by Lana's outburst that she was nearly taken off of her feet. This wasn't the first time Lynn saw this kind of behavior from Lana, but it *was* the first time in quite a while. She still remembered Lana's infamous "Mine!" phase from a few years back, in which she'd get overly possessive of anything within her reach, even if it wasn't actually hers. But she grew out of it by the time she was three and a half, and Lynn never expected that she would relapse.

"Wha... what the heck was that, Lana?!"

Lana let out a gasp and un-furrowed her brow. She squeezed her eyes shut and shook her head from side to side, as if she were snapping herself out of a trance. Once she opened them again, her animalistic expression was replaced by a sheepish, bewildered one.

"I-I'm sorry," she stuttered. "I-I don't know what came over me."

Before Lynn could respond, she started to walk out of the room, shuffling past Lynn with her head down and her hands folded in front of her. "You can use the weights. I'll share."

Lynn wanted to argue that they weren't hers to share in the first place, but decided not to press the issue further and let her go. Lana, meanwhile, stumbled through the kitchen in a haze and out into the backyard, where she collapsed onto her knees, grabbing fistfuls of her straw-blond hair.

First Lola, then Leni, now Lynn? What is happening to me?

Lana knew it was only a matter of time before her mood swings would start getting her into trouble - if she didn't learn to control them soon, at least. The problem was that she didn't know if she *could*, so she'd have to seek out help. And if she sought out help from her family, they'd start asking her lots of questions, which meant that she would eventually have to come clean about stealing from Lisa. She shivered, knowing full well how much trouble that would land her in.

I'll just keep myself under control, she thought. *Yep. Self-control. I don't have to-*

Lana's thought process was interrupted by a low rumbling sound coming from her abdomen. It occurred to her that she hadn't eaten since she ventured downstairs, and was starting to get pretty peckish.

Time to refuel, she thought as she walked back into the kitchen. *A big girl's gotta eat, after all.*

She opened the door to the fridge, to find a cornucopia of miscellaneous foodstuffs. Cold cuts, apples, hummus, a container of kimchi, a couple of leftover enchiladas from when they ordered Mexican a few nights ago, some spinach puffs wrapped in tinfoil... Lana salivated at the sight of such a selection.

Eventually, she settled on the spinach puffs. Most people would have opted to heat them up before eating them, but Lana showed no such concern, unwrapping the tinfoil and gulping each of them down in one bite. She shuddered with pleasure from the smooth, flaky texture of the crust and the pungent flavor of the spinach and feta. However, that pleasure proved to be short-lived, as she realized that she still wasn't even close to being satiated.

The enchiladas were next to go, as she grabbed them out of the fridge, squeezed them together and gobbled both of them up at once. But even *that* wasn't enough, and Lana continued to grab random items out of the fridge, without ever stopping to ask herself whether they were communal or reserved for someone else. By the time she was through, she had made a massive dent in the fridge's storage.

Ahh, that was nice, she thought, sighing with relief as she wiped her face clean. *Back to the weights, I guess!*

But just as she was about to make her way down to the basement, she overheard murmuring coming from upstairs. Curious, she decided to follow the noise and investigate it.

As she walked across the living room, the murmuring grew clearer and clearer. By the time she started walking up the stairs to the second floor, she recognized the voice as Lynn's. Ascending the stairs, she was able to decipher what she was saying.

"...and then, when I tried to grab some of the weights, she *sarled* at me! Like an animal!"

Lana cringed, knowing full well who she was talking about.

"She snapped at me, too," spoke a third voice - Lola's. "I think there's something going on with her."

"Oh, totes," spoke a third voice - Leni's. "I mean, have you *seen* her? Like, she's always been a little husky, but now she's... she's *massive*! Bigger than most men, even!"

"*Way* bigger," said Lynn. "It's just not normal for a six-year-old to be this size. I'm gonna talk to mom and dad about taking her to the doctor. There's gotta be some reason for these growth spurts and mood swings."

Lana gnashed her teeth at the mention of the doctor, and gripped the bannister in rage until it started to splinter and crack. *Oh, no, they won't! I'm not gonna let them take me to some stupid doctor!*

Lana didn't trust doctors in general; they always tried to talk to her like she were their best friend, even though she only saw them once every few months. It didn't help that a trip to the doctor often meant getting a shot, and the very thought of someone sticking her with a needle gave her the willies. But in this context, the prospect of getting dragged to the doctor made her blood boil. She *knew* that the doctor would poke her and prod her until he found Lisa's formula in her system, and then he'd probably give her some drug that would shrink her back.

Well, nuts to them! she thought, as she took her hand off the now-mangled bannister and stomped down the stairs with such force that the photos on the wall rattled from the impact. *I like being big, and if they have a problem with it, they can go kick rocks!*

With her newfound fury fueling her, she made a beeline back towards Lynn's weight set in the basement. Once she got there, she grabbed a couple of forty-pound dumbbells off the rack and started curling them alternately. This, however, only caused her ire to swell.

"They're... too... LIGHT!" she roared, slamming them back down onto the rack. In a fit of frustration, she loaded up the barbell with several twenty five-pound plates (not bothering to count them), and then lifted it up and started curling it to her chest. She actually felt a burn this time, which encouraged her to power through.

Come on, Lana! No pain, no gain! she thought. *Bigger! **Bigger!** BIGGER!*

The workout would continue on for several more hours, including the intermittent breaks she had to take to give her body time to repair itself. With every set completed, every time she re-racked the barbell and every drop of sweat she had to mop off of her brow, she could feel herself growing more powerful. Unfortunately, since there were no mirrors in the basement, she didn't really have any way to gauge her progress. Even so, she was certain that by the time she finished, she'd be too strong for *anyone* to push her around or tell her what to do.

Drag me to the doctor, will they? she thought bitterly as she bench pressed the hell out of a Schwarzenegger - caliber barbell. *When I'm through with them, they'll be the ones who need a doctor.*

Lana was so caught up in her iron-pumping frenzy that the afternoon and early evening flew by without her noticing. Before she knew it, she heard the familiar call for dinner coming from the dining room.

"Kids! Pizza's here!" called Lynn Sr.

Her determined scowl curled up into a stoked grin at the mere mention of pizza. She dropped the barbell mid-curl, letting it crash to the floor with a thundering clang, and sprinted up the stairs as fast as her brawny legs could carry her.

But her good mood was cut short once she took her seat at the table and noticed that at least half the family was staring at her. Scanning her eyes across the room, she picked up expressions that ranged from shock to horror to disgust to fear. Every time she caught a stare in her direction, she was sure to respond with a rigid glare, daring the other party to say a word.

A stony, uncomfortable silence blanketed the room for the bulk of the meal, as everyone else at the table was clearly perturbed by Lana's monstrous transformation but too intimidated to say anything. Occasionally, she'd hear her parents exchanging worried whispers, and there was little doubt in her mind who they were talking about.

But it was only a matter of time before the silence had to be broken. As was typical for pizza nights, they came to a point when everyone in the family had received one slice, but there was still one left over. Normally, this would be their cue to launch themselves into a cacophonous argument over who should get it. This time, all they could do was choke out half-formed mutters and let their eyes wander around the table, praying that someone else would muster up the courage to broach the subject.

"W-well, maybe I should have it," croaked Lincoln, tentatively reaching for the slice. "I... I haven't had the last one in a long time. I think-"

"Nah, I'll take it," said Lana, reaching her huge arms across the table. "I need the energy the most."

But just before her hand touched the slice, her eyes moseyed over towards Lincoln. Once their eyes made contact, she flashed him a wicked grin.

"Orrrrrr," she sang, "maybe we can *compete* for it."

She plopped her elbow down on the table and extended her hand towards Lincoln, making a "come hither" gesture with her fingers. "How about an armwrestle?"

Lincoln gulped, withdrawing his arm from the table and clasping it with his opposing hand. To say that Lana's arm dwarfed his would be an understatement; it was like comparing a twig to a steel girder.

"What's the maaaatter?" she sneered. "Afraid of losing to your baby sister?"

Beads of sweat started to multiply on Lincoln's brow, as he realized that there was no way out of his predicament; Lana would get her armwrestle, one way or another. Trembling with trepidation, he forced himself to set his arm down on the table and lock hands with Lana. As they did, some of the sisters averted their eyes from the massacre that was sure to ensue.

"One..." growled Lana, giving Lincoln's hand a squeeze that made him wince in pain. "Two... three... GO!"

As soon as the word "GO!" left her lips, she slammed Lincoln's hand down to the table as hard as she could. A heavy bang was heard once Lincoln's hand collided with the table, which was followed by two sharper, more piercing sounds. The first was a high-pitched popping sound that Lana's ears were barely able to pick up. The second? Her older brother's blood curdling scream.

Lana flinched at the sound and instinctively drew her hand back, freeing Lincoln from the table. Lincoln continued to howl in pain, clutching his arm.

"Oh, stop being such a crybaby," said Lana. "You're just-"

Lana's chiding was cut short once she got a good look at the damage she did. Up until then, she was under the impression that her stunt had left Lincoln with, at worst, a bruise. But to her horror, she saw that the arm she slammed down was now bent at an unnatural angle, curving outward instead of inward. It looked like someone had detached Lincoln's arm from his body and then reattached it backwards. The very sight of it made Lana nauseous.

What have I done?!

"I think she dislocated his arm!" cried Lynn, rushing to Lincoln's side. This only caused Lana's guilt to swell even further; she didn't quite know what "dislocated" meant, but it sounded pretty serious. The very idea that *she* did such a thing - to her own brother, no less - made her stomach lurch.

"Lincoln, are you okay?!" cried Luna.

"Oh, no, my baby!" cried Rita. "Lori, call 911. Everyone else back off and give him some air!"

Lynn, Luna and Rita then escorted Lincoln out of the dining room, desperately trying to shush him and calm him down. Lana began to speak up, and was immediately met with scolding scowls and glares from all across the table.

"I'm sorry!" she cried. "I-I didn't mean it! Honest!"

She wasn't lying. By no means did she intend to hurt Lincoln to the extent that she did; all she wanted to do was show him (and by extension, the rest of the family) who was boss.

But her apology fell on deaf ears. The rest of the table started berating her in unison, with her father and sisters shouting over each other as they all tried to chastise her at once. Every time Lana tried to get a word in, someone else at the table would shout her down.

"I said I'm sorry-" "I was just trying to-" "I promise I'll-" "I would never-"

Eventually, her feelings of guilt started to get overwhelmed by a new feeling of frustration, which swelled larger and larger each time her attempt to speak for herself was interrupted. Her tone of voice, once apologetic and sheepish, became snippy and defensive.

"Yeah, well-" "If I could just-" "Why can't you let me-" "I'm not-"

Finally, having reached the end of her patience, she banged the table with her fists and shouted out a sentence so loud and audacious that it stopped the rest of her family in their tracks.

"Well, maybe it's *his* fault for being so weak!"

Before any of them could respond, she stood up from the table and stormed out of the room, shoving her sisters out of the way as she passed. The thump of her feet colliding with the floor as she stomped towards the stairs echoed throughout the entire house. Once she got to

her room, she slammed the door, collapsed onto her knees and pounded her fist against the ground.

"They're *jealous*," she snarled. "They're all out to get me 'cause they're scared and *jealous*."

She lumbered up to her bed and threw herself on top, continuing to stew in her own bitterness. "They wouldn't even let me say sorry! All they wanna do is yell, yell, yell!"

In the midst of her ranting, she caught a glimpse of her amphibious companion, Hops, perched on her bedpost and giving her a perturbed look. Lana gave him a growl, causing him to let out a frightened croak and leap back into his terrarium.

"Oh, don't you turn against me too!"

When she, naturally, got no response from Hops, she gave off a snort before jumping up onto her bed and hammering her mattress as she landed. She was starting to develop a bit of a headache - probably from getting herself so worked up, she guessed - but she figured that it would fade away after a good night's sleep.

"Well, *fine*," she huffed. "If everyone's gonna treat me like a bully, I'll start *acting* like one."

August 1

8:30 p.m.

Well, I just got through another day of observation. The good news is that the formula hasn't worn off yet. The rat's strength and musculature are continuing to grow. The bad news is that I'm noticing some other, troubling side effects. The rat, who was previously sociable and even-tempered, is becoming irritable and confrontational. Several times today, it bit and scratched me when I tried to handle it. It's also becoming extremely territorial, claiming any nearby object as its own and hissing at anyone who tries to come near it.

I hypothesize that the formula may somehow be triggering increased stimulation of the amygdala. I'll have to investigate this further to see what could possibly be causing it, and if there's a way to alleviate the side effect.

If the side effects continue to worsen, I may have to abort the experiment, and I've fortunately conceived of a way to do just that. Before starting the experiment, I concocted a reversal agent that can nullify the effects of the formula, effectively cancelling it out. I'll use it if I have to, but I certainly hope that I won't.

- Lisa M. Loud

Day 4

Lana woke up at around 10:00 the next morning in a surly mood. Not only was she still steamed about what happened last night, but her headache hadn't gone away; in fact, it had gotten a little bit worse. With a low grumble, she slumped off of the bed and lumbered out of the room. As she walked out the door, a momentary glance over her shoulder revealed that Lola was nowhere to be seen.

I bet she ran off to bunk with someone else, thought Lana. What a baby.

She trudged through the hall with a chip resting on her beefy shoulder, ready to pulverize anyone in her way. She hadn't forgotten the vow she made last night - "*if everyone's gonna treat me like a bully, I'll start acting like one*" - and she intended to keep it.

Her first victim would be Luan, who was just coming up the stairs munching on a couple of toaster waffles. As soon as she reached the top step, Lana knocked the wind out of her with a sock to the gut, causing her to drop the waffles on the floor and fall to her knees, wincing in pain. As soon as the waffles fell, Lana scooped them up and chomped them down.

"H-hey!" cried Luan, in between groans and gasps. "T-those were mine!"

"Then why'd you give 'em to me?" sneered Lana, wiping crumbs off of her lips. "And by the way, I'm still hungry. Make me two more."

"But-"

Lana grabbed Luan by the blouse and pulled her up close to her face, until she could feel Lana's hot, steaming breath on her face. "Make me two more," she said, "or I'll snap you like a twig."

If there was any doubt in Luan's mind that Lana was capable of such a feat, it was squelched by what Lana did next. She brought her arm up to Luan's face and flexed it down as hard as she could, making it erupt into a massive boulder. By now it was nearing 20 inches around.

"Y-yes, Lana," Luan squeaked. Lana released her blouse and let her collapse onto the floor in a heap, after which she started crawling back down the hall on her hands and knees. Lana smirked as she watched Luan crawl away.

Then, she caught sight of Lucy making her way down the hall towards the bathroom, with her legs clenched together. Lana, knowing full well what that body language signified, decided to make Lucy her next target. In a remarkable display of agility given her size, Lana dashed down the hall and cut in front of Lucy just before she made it to the bathroom door.

"Ooh! Sorry, Lucy. There's a bathroom toll now. You gotta pay me before I let you through."

Lucy groaned. "Very funny, Lana. Now let me in."

Lana just stared Lucy down, folding her beefy arms. "I'm not joking, Lucy. Pay up."

Lucy didn't have any cash on her, and she didn't want to make the trip back to her room, so - against her better judgment - she tried to squeeze past her not-so-little sister. "Lana, come on. I really have to- *ack!*"

In one swift motion, Lana grabbed Lucy by the wrists and started twisting her arms behind her back.

"O-ow!" cried Lucy. "Lana, s-stop! That really hurts!"

Lana just ramped up the pressure, forcing Lucy down onto her knees. In her position, there was nothing she could do but grunt and squirm about in Lana's grip.

"Promise you'll pay the toll and I'll let you go," Lana said plainly, the stableness of her voice indicating just how easy it was for her to hold Lucy down.

"Lana, p-please! I really have to... to..."

Lucy's cries for mercy started to taper off. In their absence, Lana's ears picked up a soft hissing sound coming from below. Intrigued, she lightened her grip a little and peered down. As the hissing sound increased in volume, Lana noticed a few narrow rivulets of citrine liquid trickling down Lucy's legs and onto the floor, forming a small puddle beneath her. She also noticed a few tears running down Lucy's cheeks. As soon as she put two and two together, she reared back her head and cackled.

"Ha ha ha! Looks like the baby needs a diaper!"

In her fit of laughter, Lana released Lucy's hands, and her broken older sister collapsed onto all fours, sniffing and sobbing.

"Go back to daycare, Puddles," Lana said, giving Lucy a smack on the butt that made her yelp in pain. Just then, Luan came bounding up the stairs with another two toaster waffles in her hands. As she was midway through the hall, she couldn't help but notice Lucy crawling back to her room, leaving a trail of liquid behind her.

"Lucy, are you all right?" she asked, getting down on one knee to help her little sister. "What happened?"

Before Lucy could answer, Lana marched in, grabbed the waffles out of Luan's hand and wolfed them down in a few bites. "Lucy-Wucy had a little accident," sneered Lana, in between bites. "She couldn't make it to the potty like a big girl."

Lucy's sobbing grew louder as she let herself collapse face-first onto the carpet. Luan, wincing in empathy, picked her up off the floor and started walking her back to her room.

"Shhh. It's okay, Lucy. Let's just get you cleaned up."

A moment later, Lori came up the stairs, only to be greeted with the sight of a sobbing Lucy being escorted back to her room, and Lana standing a few feet behind with her arms crossed.

It didn't take long for her to figure out what had happened - not *exactly* what had happened, mind you, but she at least knew that Lucy was hurt and Lana was somehow to blame.

"*You*," she snapped, marching up to Lana. "I don't know what's gotten into you lately, but I'm getting pretty sick of this new attitude of yours."

She jabbed a finger towards Lucy and Lynn's room. "Go apologize to Lucy. *Now*. And afterwards, I want you to clean up this mess."

Lana gave Lori a defiant scowl and puffed out her mammoth-sized chest. "You can't tell me what to do!" she yelled. "And why should I say sorry, anyway?! The last time I tried to say that, you all just yelled over me!"

"You dislocated Lincoln's shoulder!" cried Lori. "We had to rush him to the ER at 8:00 at night!"

As if to hammer her point home, Lincoln emerged from his room with his arm in a sling. As soon as he caught sight of Lana, he shrunk back into his room, shutting the door behind him. Between Lucy's sobbing and Lincoln's cowering, Lana started to feel a pang of guilt growing in the back of her mind. On top of that, her headache was starting to flare up again - though that could have just been a product of the aforementioned guilt.

"H-he's just being a drama queen," she said, cringing from the ache.

"No, he's really not," Lori said sharply. "Now go to Lucy's room and tell her you're sorry. I'm not going to ask you again."

"Good!" cried Lana. "'C-cause I don't have to listen to you."

"Oh, yes you do!" said Lori, trying to maintain her stern, authoritative tone. "In case you've forgotten, I'm still your big sister."

Lana snorted, putting on a rebellious face and doing her best to mask her pain. "Not anymore, you're not!"

She punctuated her declaration with a mind-blowing crab flex. Several sharp rips could be heard throughout the hallway, as her grotesquely oversized muscles burst through her shirt. Lori took a shaky step back, clamping a hand over her mouth to muffle her gasp.

"Lana, I... I'm still your... you have to..." babbled Lori, in a desperate bid to reassert her authority over her mini-hulk of a sister. Lana just laughed, shoved her to the side and started walking down the stairs.

"Yeah, whatever. Get lost, toothpick."

With that, she started walking down to the basement, which had since become her favorite room in the house. Once she got there, she saw Lynn lying by the weight set, in the middle of a set of situps.

"Oh, *hey*, Lynn!" she sang, rubbing her hands together. "Fancy seeing you down here!"

Lynn locked eyes with Lana mid- situp and froze in her tracks, turning pale. That mischievous smirk Lana was wearing could only be interpreted as a sign of pain coming her way. "Oh, h-hey, Lana. I was just leaving."

"No, stay!" said Lana, as she crept closer and closer. "I'm antsy and I need to blow off some steam. Let's *wrestle*."

Lynn gulped, trying to scoot away from the six-year-old powerhouse. "Um, maybe later, Lana. I just have to-"

"No! I want to wrestle *now*!"

Before Lynn could flee, Lana pounced on her, flipped her over onto her stomach and wrapped her arm around her neck, putting her in a vice-like headlock. Lynn squirmed and flailed about, swinging her fists against Lana's forearm to no effect.

"Ha! Was that a punch, or did a mosquito just fly in here?"

Lynn growled, gripped Lana's forearm with both hands, and started pulling with all her might. Again, Lana couldn't help but laugh at how she didn't even have to try to resist her. She still remembered looking up to Lynn, admiring her strength and hoping to one day be as good an athlete as her. Now, the "big" sister she used to idolize was as weak as a kitten compared to her, and Lana just thought of the perfect way to illustrate that reversal.

"Hey, Lynn? Remember *this*?"

Suddenly, she let go of Lynn's neck. Lynn sucked in a huge gulp of air, relieved at the sensation of being able to breathe freely again. But any relief she felt from that was short-lived, as she felt Lana mount her back, wrap both hands around her mouth and pull her head back.

"The Camel Clutch!" Lana cried with glee. "You taught me this move, Lynn! Remember?"

A sickening *creak* could be heard as Lana started to ramp up the pressure. With her body pinned under Lana's immense weight and Lana's hands muffling her cries of pain, Lynn couldn't have felt any more helpless. It wasn't long before the strain became too much for Lynn to bear, and tears started to seep out from her eyes - both from the pain Lana was inflicting, and the humiliation of being outmuscled by her little sister. She hammered her hand against the floor, tapping out.

"Giving up already?! Ha! Wimp!"

Lana let Lynn go, stood up and launched herself into a series of poses, pumping up her pecs and biceps. Mid-pose, she noticed Lynn whimpering and trying to crawl away, which only inspired her to gloat some more.

"Take a look at me, Lynn. *I'm* the big sister now. I'm a big, strong bull and you're a squeaky little mouse. I'm a- OW!"

Lana was cut off mid-sentence when she was struck with another jab of pain in her temples. This episode was even more severe than the last, and on top of that, the pain seemed to be radiating to her neck, shoulders and chest. The next thing she knew, she was doubled over, gritting her teeth and massaging the affected areas.

"Lana, are you okay?" asked Lynn, who had just managed to start picking herself up off the floor. "Maybe you should start taking it easy."

"I'm fine!" snapped Lana, as she stumbled towards the stairs. "I...I just need to rest for a bit. I'll see you later."

Lynn looked on with worry-ridden eyes as Lana lumbered out of the basement. In spite of everything she just endured at the hands of Lana, her familial instincts were just as strong as ever.

The same was true of the rest of her family - particularly her parents, who stopped her midway through the living room as she tried to pass through.

"Lana? Your father and I would like to talk to you, please," said Rita, her voice lined with just a hint of sternness. Both she and Lynn Sr. were seated on the couch with their hands folded in their laps.

Lana, in the throes of her aching, couldn't muster up the wherewithal to argue, so she hobbled over to the easy and plopped herself down. "Fine," she grumbled. "What's the problem?"

"Lana," said Lynn Sr., maintaining a steady, measured tone, "your mother and I are concerned about you. In the past few days we've noticed a few... *changes*."

He stumbled a bit over the last word. As much as he tried to keep his composure, it wasn't easy for him to talk about his six-year-old daughter putting on more muscle than a Mr. Olympia as if it were a normal turn of events.

"And one of those changes," he said, as his face began to harden, "is your behavior. The way you acted last night was completely unacceptable."

"I tried to say I was sorry!" cried Lana.

"Don't talk back," Rita said curtly. "We also heard that you've been picking on your sisters since you got up this morning."

"Who told you?!" cried Lana, clenching her fists and causing her muscles to throb.

"That doesn't matter," said Rita. "The point is that *this has to end*. And we're putting a stop to it right now. As soon as we're done talking, you're going to go straight upstairs and apologize for everything you did today."

Lana crossed her arms and slouched into her seat, pouting. "Fine."

"Also," said Lynn Sr., "we're going to make arrangements for you to see the doctor later this-

"No!" barked Lana, as she sprung up from her seat. "You can't make me! I hate the doctor!"

But the parents stayed firm, refusing to yield to their freakishly strong daughter.

"Lana, you're seeing the doctor and that's *final*," said Rita, who was starting to raise her voice. "We need to find out if-"

"No! I refuse!" cried Lana, stamping her foot and causing minor tremors throughout the room. "If you try to make me go, I'll... I'll beat you up!"

Both Rita and Lynn Sr. let out an appalled gasp. "Lana Loud! Don't you *dare* threaten your mother!"

"You can't tell me what to do!" yelled Lana as she stomped towards her parents, who were trying their best to remain authoritative in the face of danger. "I can... I can do whatever I... whatever I..."

Just before she got within arm's length of them, Lana's rant began to taper off, and her once-fiery eyes started to glaze over. The pain she felt in the basement was starting to surge again, radiating even further than it did before. Other, separate pain sensations started to sprout up throughout her body as well, including a churning in her stomach and a sharp ache spreading across her arms and back.

"I... um... oh, geez," she muttered, teetering about and clutching the affected areas.

All of the anger Rita and Lynn Sr. felt in that moment - or, at least- most of it - gave way to worry once they saw Lana start to waver.

"Lana, what's the matter?" asked Rita.

"I...I dunno. It hurts. It all hurts."

She turned around and used her remaining stamina to hobble towards the stairs. "I-I'll go apologize now. Then I'll take a nap."

Lana would only keep the latter part of that promise, as she lacked the energy or willpower to track down everyone she had wronged that morning. Just as she reached the door of her room, however, she heard high-pitched sobbing coming from inside Lori and Leni's room. Edging closer to the source of the noise, she recognized the sobbing as Lola's.

"I don't even know who she is anymore!" Lola wailed. "It's like I'm living with a stranger! A big, mean, muscle-headed stranger!"

Lori and Leni tried to shush her, to no avail. Before Lana could move away from the door, Lola belted out one last heart-wrenching line:

"I just want my twin sister back!"

Lana, now feeling swelling pangs of guilt on top of her existing physical pain, clamped her hands over her ears and ran back towards her bedroom. She stumbled inside, slammed the

door behind her, stumbled over towards her bed and collapsed onto it. Her body was wracked with soreness and a hundred thoughts were going through her head, but she thought - or at least hoped - that some extra rest would be enough to dull the pain and clear her mind.

She was wrong.

By the time she woke up several hours later, what had started as mild discomfort had swelled into searing agony. Her headache had grown so severe that it felt like someone was twisting a knife through her cranium, and every muscle in her body was throbbing. Her heart was pounding with the ferocity of an angry ram, and every time she took a breath she felt as though she were inhaling a ton of bricks. She rolled out of bed, hit the floor with a *thud*, and started writhing and flailing around in torment. She screamed, throwing herself against the floor in a vain attempt to beat the pain out of her body.

Her yowls of anguish soon got the attention of the rest of her family, starting with Lori, who happened to be walking past her door at the time. Her face drained itself of color and she clasped her hands over her gaping mouth at the sight before her. Lana was rolling around on the ground partly naked, having torn up her shirt in the throes of her pain. Her monstrous muscles were bulging and pulsating, crossed with discolored, pencil-thick veins, looking like they would explode at any moment. What made the scene all the more morbid was the occasional glimpse of those blonde pigtails, reminding Lori that this bellowing beast before her was her sweet little sister.

"Lana, what's wrong?!" cried Lori, who was soon joined by some of the other siblings. "What hurts?!"

"*Everything!*" shrieked Lana, who was starting to tear up. "My head! My stomach! My arms! My back! My... my..."

Lana tried to get another word out, when she felt the sensation of hot bile rising in her throat. The next thing she knew, her mouth was forced open as a steaming geyser of sickly green vomit burst forth from her esophagus. All the food she greedily pigged out on the day before was spewed onto the floor. As soon as she was done, a pregnant silence ensued, as the rest of the family watched her with bated breath; they had hoped that whatever was ailing Lana was purged from her system.

That notion was proven false, however, by the *next* thing that came forth from Lana's throat: a hoarse, anguished groan of, "OOOOOOWWWWWWWW!"

Tears were pouring down her cheeks as she resumed thrashing about on the floor, begging for someone or something to end her misery. As the Louds chattered among themselves in an attempt to figure out what to do, a hysterical Lola pushed herself to the front of the crowd, ran up to Lana and threw her arms around her.

"DON'T LEAVE ME!" she bawled, crying into Lana's huge, pulsating chest. "I'm sorry I stared at you! I'm sorry I said all those things behind your back! *You're the best twin in the whole wo-o-orld!*"

With a heavy heart, Leni crouched down and pried Lola off, in the interest of giving Lana some space. She then carried her into another room to console her, while everyone else continued to try to come up with a solution.

"Lana, sweetie?" said Rita, trying to keep her composure and hold her tears back. "I'm gonna need you to stay with us. We're going to take care of you, but first we have to figure out what's wrong."

She knelt down close to the agonized young girl. "Now, is there anything unusual that happened to you in the past few days?"

No answer.

"Lana, *please*," said Lynn Sr. "We want to help you, but we need you to cooperate. If there's *anything* you remember, tell us."

Again, no answer. Lana clammed up, in the vain hope that she would somehow be able to come out of her predicament without confessing what she did.

"I think we should just call the doctor," said Luna. "If she-"

"LISA'S LAB!" screamed Lana, causing everyone in the room to jerk their attention back towards her. As soon as Luna brought up the "D" word, Lana knew she was trapped. She could either tell them the truth now, or have the doctor pry it out of her later. Predictably, she chose the former.

"Come again?" asked Lori.

"Lisa's lab!" Lana screamed again. "I found something in Lisa's room and I wanted to get strong so I took a sip of it! I'm sorry! *I'll never do it again! Make it stop! MAKE IT STOP!*"

Her family's faces turned pale after her confession. Lana's habit of eating out of the garbage was already concerning to them, but the idea of her sampling something from the unregulated madhouse that was Lisa's room was several magnitudes worse.

"Lana, what were you thinking?!" cried Lori, who was promptly shushed by everyone else.

"We'll lecture her later," Lynn Sr. whispered in Lori's ear. "Right now, all she needs is our help."

He then turned towards Lana, who at this point was causing the room to shake by alternately pounding her fists against the hardwood floor. "Lana, listen to me. Right now, we're going to call Lisa, and she's going to tell us what we can do to help you. Okay?"

Lana was able to stop her writhing long enough to look up and give Lynn Sr. a nod.

"Good," he said as he dialed Lisa's cell. "Just hang in there, Lana. You're gonna be okay."

As Lana watched her father walk out of the room and draw his phone, her movements began to grow slower and less violent. A feeling of lightheadedness was overtaking her, as both her

vision and her hearing started to blur. Lana tried to clear her head and reorient herself, but to no avail; the images around her deteriorated into unrecognizable blobs, the entire room seemed to be spinning like a carousel, and she began to lose track of how much time had passed. The last thing she felt before falling onto her back and passing out was a glass tube being pressed against her lips and a bubbly, flavorless liquid running down her throat.

At the time of the phone call, Lisa was enjoying a casual lunch with one of her colleagues, chattering about the ramifications of Stephen Hawking's black hole theory. He was enjoying a croque-monsieur with a kale salad, and she a plate of dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets with a side of french fries. All of a sudden, their outing was interrupted by the high-pitched buzz of Lisa's phone, causing her to groan in annoyance.

"I *sincerely* apologize," she said as she excused herself from the table to answer the phone. "Hello?...Yes, father, how may I help you?...What's this about Lana?...I see. And you think you know what caused it?...She *what?!?*"

Lisa cringed in embarrassment, as her outburst provoked several people around the restaurant to turn towards her. "That formula was still in the prototype stage!" she whispered harshly, scurrying towards the bathroom. "It wasn't ready to be tested on humans! I..."

She held the phone away from her ear for a moment and took a few deep breaths before resuming the conversation. "I-it's fine. Fortunately, I created a failsafe. Go to my room...Do you see a test tube rack on my desk?...Yes, that one. On the far right, you'll see a vial labeled 'reversal agent'. Take it out, and give some of it to Lana...Well, that depends on her initial dosage. How much did she say she took?...What do you mean, 'a sip'?!...A sip could be anything from 800 microliters to 13 milliliters!...Okay, here's what we're going to do. On the far left, you'll find the strength-boosting formula. Take a look at it and tell me how much is left...Ah, okay. Then give her 2 milliliters of the reversal agent. And call me tomorrow morning to let me know how she's doing...Yes, I love you too. Goodbye."

Lisa hung up the phone and let out a massive sigh, collapsing back-first against the bathroom wall. "What on earth have I wrought?"

August 2

8:30 p.m.

Regrettably, I had to apply the reversal agent and end the experiment prematurely today. Not only did the rat's behavior never improve, but this morning it started to go through fits of pain. These fits increased in both frequency and severity with each passing hour; by the afternoon, it could do little but writhe and squeak. I could not, in good conscience, let the experiment continue.

I haven't given up entirely, however. My next task will be discerning why the formula affected the subject's nervous system in such a profound way, which will hopefully explain both the behavioral changes and the episodes of pain.

But that will have to wait for a later time. I'm just about to embark on a trip to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology - street name "MIT" - as I've been invited there to give a lecture. Hopefully, the house stays intact in my absence.

- Lisa M. Loud

Experiment Aborted

The next few days were a blur for Lana. She spent all of them lying on her bed drifting in and out of consciousness, to the point where it was hard to tell when she was awake and when she was dreaming. Occasionally she'd be jolted awake by a nightmare and arise with a yelp, only to drift right back to sleep moments later.

Gradually, though, her brain recovered. Her thoughts became clearer, she regained the capacity to form sentences, and the memories of what she did since Lisa left came back to her. Of course, those memories only made her heart ache with guilt. Lincoln's screams of agony, Lucy's sobbing, Lynn's humiliated whimpering, Lola's despair over losing her twin... the clarity of a mind freed from the formula's influence let Lana see just how monstrous and cruel her behavior was. Before, she couldn't have been happier to have 180 pounds of muscle; now she felt like all 180 pounds of her should be put in jail.

This was made evident to the family once they decided to give her that long-overdue lecture. Upon being woken up, Lana was greeted with the sight of her entire family gathered by her bedside. Right afterwards, she shrunk into the mattress and averted her eyes.

"Lana, sit up," said Lynn Sr. "There are a few things we'd like to talk to you about."

Lana sighed and propped her muscular back up against her bedpost, with her eyes still pointed down. It was then that she noticed that she was completely topless; apparently, nobody had bothered her to give her a new shirt after her old one was torn up. She didn't feel that she was in a position to complain about anything, though, so she just kept her mouth shut.

"First, let us explain to you what's going on," said Lynn Sr. "We've been taking care of you for the past few days. Lisa told us that it would take a little while for you to recover from that fit you had."

Lana shuddered, as that agonizing experience was vivid and fresh in her mind.

"In another day or so, you should be well enough to get out of bed and go back to your normal life. Okay?"

"O-okay," said Lana, nodding her head.

"Good," said Rita, her voice hardening just a tad. "Now, we'd like to talk to you about your behavior. I think you owe quite a few people here an apology."

Lana knit her brow and clasped her hands in front of her, locking her fingers together and squeezing them uncomfortably tight. "I'm sorry," she whimpered. "Really, really sorry. I-I don't know what came over me. I thought you all were jealous of me and out to get me."

"Lisa said that that was a side effect of that formula you drank," said Luna. "So we ain't happy about what you did, but we know you weren't all there."

"But you *were* all there," said Lori, "when you drank that thing in the first place. Honestly, Lana, what were you even thinking?"

"I-I don't know," said Lana, her voice crackling and her body squirming. "I just drank a little bit of it. I thought it would be harmless."

"HARMLESS?!" yelled a shrill, nasally voice from down below. Lana gulped, knowing all too well who that voice belonged to. She had hoped that it would be a few more days before Lisa came back; alas, she wasn't quite so lucky. Now, bedridden and surrounded, she had nowhere to run or hide as the young genius cornered her and chewed her out.

"You thought that sampling a highly experimental formula that was still in the testing stages would be *harmless*?!" Lisa continued, climbing onto the bed. Lana shrunk into her pillow as Lisa stomped across the bed towards her. Lisa's eyeglasses magnified her enraged eyes, making them look nearly twice as big as they were and making her fury all the more palpable.

"Do you know what could have happened if your growth continued without someone to supervise and regulate it?!" she yelled, buffeting Lana with flecks of saliva. "Your muscles could have outgrown your skin! Your heart could have given out from the strain of supporting your massive body! Your skeleton could have collapsed under your own weight! **You could have been killed!**"

Lana froze up. In her six years on earth, had never been forced to confront her own mortality before. She knew what death was, and she knew it happened to everyone eventually, but she understood it as something she wouldn't have to worry about for a long, long time. She was scarcely able to process what Lisa just told her, and responded to it by going into a brief spell of near- catatonic shock.

Once that was over, out came the tears.

"I'M SORRRRYYYY!" she bawled. "I DIDN'T KNOW! I'M SORRY! I DON'T WANNA DIE!"

Lisa, taken aback by Lana's outpouring, stumbled back and fell onto her butt. While Lisa tried to pick herself back up, Lori stepped in and gave the enormous youngster a hug around the neck, while using her free hand to stroke Lana's hair.

"Shh, sh-sh-sh," she whispered, as Lana's crying started to peter out. "It's okay, Lana. You're not going to die."

"It is most certainly *not* okay," Lisa said sharply. "And that formula was clearly labeled as a prototype, as I recall."

Lana, clinging to Lori for comfort, choked back a couple of sobs before replying to Lisa. "Y-you mean the B?" she asked. "I... I thought that stood for 'big'."

"No, you dunce!" cried Lisa. "It stood for beta! *Beta*! Meaning it was still in the testing stage! If you just stopped to think about it for one measly second, maybe you would..."

Lisa's rant started to trail off and the indignation in her eyes faded away once she got another good look at Lana's face. The musclebound girl couldn't have looked more pathetic, burying her face in Lori's chest while shivering and sniffing all the while.

"You're all right, Lana," she said in a gentler tone. "I'm sorry I yelled at you like I did. In all honesty, I deserve some of the blame for leaving the formula out on my table. I should have kept it locked away, or at least given it a more unambiguous label."

"Yeah, a 'do not touch' sign would have been nice," said Lynn, who got an elbow in the ribs from Luna.

"Perhaps," said Lisa. "From now on, I'll make more of an effort to keep my more potent compounds out of reach."

She crept closer to the weeping Lana, her magnified eyes now displaying tenderness rather than fury. "All I ask is that you learn something from this experience," she said. "Please don't touch any substance or compound in my room before asking my permission first."

"O-okay," whispered Lana. "I promise."

"And that goes for the rest of your siblings, too, by the way," said Lynn Sr, taking on a firm tone of voice. "You have to learn to respect other peoples' property, Lana. You can't just go around grabbing things that aren't yours. How would you feel if someone took one of your things without asking?"

Lana sighed. "Not good."

"I didn't think so," said Lynn Sr. "So from now on, I want you to ask before you touch anything in this house that doesn't belong to you. Understand?"

Lana wiped a couple of tears away from her face and nodded.

"Good," said Lynn Sr. "Now, there's one more person here who has something to say to you."

Right on cue, a watery-eyed Lola pushed herself to the front, jumped onto the bed and threw herself on top of Lana, wrapping her arms around her bullish neck and burying her face in her beefy chest. Lana felt a couple of stray tears trickling down through the crevasse between her pecs.

"I love you, Lana. I don't care how big you get. I love you and I always will."

Lana wrapped her powerful arms around Lola and pulled her in close. "I... I love you, too, Lola."

The rest of the family let out a collective "aww" and took a step back, letting the two twins have their moment. During the embrace, Lincoln shuffled closer to Lisa and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Hey, Lisa?" he said. "I'm just curious; what's gonna happen to Lana now?"

"What do you mean?" asked Lisa.

"Well, you know, her body. Is she going to stay that buff?"

Lisa pushed her glasses up the bridge of her nose. "Well, that depends, Lincoln. Without the formula fueling and sustaining her growth, it's going to be extremely difficult for her to keep her size. A figure like that can only be maintained with an intense exercise regimen and a strict diet. So, no, I don't expect her to retain all of the muscle she's gained. But with enough regular exercise, it is possible for her to retain some of it."

"Hear that, Lana?" Lynn said with a smirk. "If you want to keep those muscles, you're gonna have to work for 'em! Think you're up to the challenge?"

Lana chuckled, cracking a smile for the first time in nearly a week. "Maybe, Lynn," she said. "Maybe."

August 7

A week ago I did something really bad. I went into my sister Lisa's room and I took something that didn't belong to me. I did it because I wanted to get strong.

I got really strong and got big muscles but I also started acting like a mean bully. Then I got really sick and had to stay in bed for a week. It hurt so much.

I'm very sorry for what I did. From now on I won't touch my brother and sister's things without their permission. And I will be very careful about what I eat and drink because it could be dangerous.

- Lana Loud

Epilogue

There were two items on Lana's agenda for the following day. The first? Reconcile with Hops. Lana took her amphibious friend out of his terrarium and apologized for her behavior, assuring him that he wouldn't have to be afraid of her anymore. Hops, while apprehensive at first, heard her out; once she was done, he gave her a lick on the nose, signifying that all was forgiven.

The second? Go downstairs to the basement and start working out.

As sorry as she was for stealing from Lisa and bullying her family, Lana *did* like being big and strong, and she wanted to maintain at least some of that. Granted, as Lisa explained the previous day, a physique like hers would be nigh-impossible to sustain without the help of performance-enhancing drugs. Her required protein intake alone would far outstrip the Loud family's food budget. Thus, by the time school started up again a month later, her size had dwindled considerably, but she was still incredibly muscular for her age, and she was still the strongest person in the family by a noticeable margin.

Her physique, as expected, earned her quite a bit of attention from her First Grade class. For the school year's first Show and Tell, she brought herself in, striking a series of bodybuilding poses (most of which she learned from Lynn) while her classmates and teacher watched in total awe. She even got the attention of the media; one of her classmates happened to be the daughter of a features writer for *Royal Woods Monthly*, and Lana ended up as the subject of an article, dubbed the "Six-Year-Old Dynamo".

But the attention she valued the most came from her crush and fellow grease monkey, Skippy. The boy was completely entranced by her transformation. He peppered every playdate with requests for her to flex, perform feats of strength and let him feel her arms and shoulders. One evening, as they were relaxing by the pond watching the sunset, he planted a kiss right on her bicep, causing her to blush up a storm.

That said, being huge did have its downsides. Leni had to make her new shirts and overalls to accommodate her hulking form, and the outfits she made did nothing to hide her musculature. This meant that she was constantly getting stares from passersby whenever they were out in public, which made her a little uncomfortable. That, and she had to be careful when hugging her loved ones, lest she accidentally fracture a bone or two. For the same reason, she couldn't roughhouse with Lola anymore, and that was something she sorely missed.

But in spite of the drawbacks, Lana was happy with the new life she was living. She *liked* having Skippy gush over her. She *liked* being the go-to girl in the house whenever someone needed to move some furniture. And though it could get overbearing at times, she liked the attention.

And yet... there was a tiny little part of her that longed for more. A part of her that wanted to be as huge as she was when she first ingested the formula. A part of her that missed being not just uncommonly strong, but *freakishly* strong. *Frighteningly* strong. There were nights when

she would sneak into Lisa and Lily's room late at night just so she could stare at the test tube rack that was still sitting on her desk. She could never bring herself to touch it, but she couldn't deny that the temptation was there.

It wasn't until mid-October that she was forced to confront that feeling head-on. It was a Saturday evening, around 9:45, and Lana was down in the basement struggling to complete a set of bicep curls. At that point, she'd been pumping iron for over an hour, and fatigue was overtaking her. With a layer of sweat coating her brow and her arms throbbing, she gritted her teeth and barely managed to eke out three more reps, finishing the set. Lana dropped the barbell, which landed with a clang, and let her arms fall slack at her sides, as she panted from the effort.

But just as she was about to bend down and re-rack it, she heard a voice coming from behind her.

"Ha! Wimp!"

Lana spun around, shocked that anyone in the family would have the audacity to provoke her like that. But just as she was about to reprimand her unidentified detractor, she was met with a sight that sent a shiver down her spine and made the sweat coating her skin feel like ice water. The person standing before her was monstrous, sporting a body big enough to dwarf her own. She wore nothing but a pair of overalls that struggled to contain her hulking form. After spending what seemed like a half-hour gawking at the stranger's body, Lana worked her way up to her face - and saw two blonde pigtails, a button nose and a gap-toothed smile.

It was *herself*.

"You've been getting real puny," sneered her doppelgänger.

Lana, overcome with shock, could only croak out, "W-who...w-ho are you..."

"What, you don't recognize me? I'm you. The girl you *used* to be."

The other Lana flexed up an enormous bicep in front of Lana's face. "Betcha miss having these, don't ya? Looks like you could use another shot of that juice."

Lana shook her head back and forth, snapping herself back to her senses. "No. No way."

"What's the harm? Just drink a little to get huge again, and then drink the antidote so you don't get sick. Simple as that."

"That's not the point," said Lana. "The point is that I promised I wouldn't take it without permission."

"Yeah? So what?"

Hulk-Lana planted her feet and struck a mind-bending crab flex that threatened to burst her suspenders. "Big, strong girls don't need to keep promises. Big, strong girls can take whatever they want, whenever they want."

"Then maybe I don't want to be a big, strong girl!" snapped Lana. "At least not one like *you*."

Hulk-Lana laughed. "Awww, what's wrong with me?" she asked, batting her eyes and pouting while clasping her hands behind her back. "Don't you like my muscles?"

Lana snarled as she stomped up to her massive doppelgänger, undeterred by her imposing size.

"I don't like *you*," she said. "You're a big, mean jerk who doesn't care about anyone but yourself. I'd rather eat rusty nails than be you."

Hulk-Lana just snorted and kicked back her head, making her pigtails flip. "Come on, Lana. Look at what you've been missing."

She put her hands on her hips, puffed out her enormous chest and bounced her pecs, in a display that left Lana in speechless awe for a few seconds. What could she *say* in response to such a sight? She was starting to fear that this whole exchange would end with her counterpart leading her up the stairs to Lisa's room and feeding the formula to her by hand.

"Oh, you thought that was impressive? Check this out."

The behemoth strutted over to the weight set and grabbed the barbell that Lana was working out with before. She scooped it up with one hand and twirled it around as if it were made of foam.

"I can't believe you're working out with these baby toys," she taunted. "You're even weaker than I thought."

Lana could do little but stand back and stare at Hulk-Lana's intimidating display. There was no getting around it; she *had* lost a lot of strength in the months after she was given the reversal agent. She opened her mouth for a retort, but nothing came out.

"What'sa matter? Got nothing to say?"

Lana sighed, slumped her shoulders forward and shook her head. *She... she was waving it around like it was nothing. How do I argue with that?*

After re-racking the weight with only her finger, Hulk-Lana took slow, measured steps back towards her more diminutive self. "Admit it, Lana. You miss being this yoked. Those four days were the best days of your life."

That last remark gave Lana pause. *Were they?*

Up until that point, Lana had been stymied by her counterpart's arguments. Yes, she had become much, much smaller and weaker in the past few months, and yes, she reached a peak that she could never hope to reach again without the help of Lisa's formula. But were those really some of the best days of her life?

As Hulk-Lana drew closer and closer, making the ground shake a little with each step, Lana shut her eyes and tried to recount those four tumultuous days of her metamorphosis - her

startling transformation, her growing paranoia, her ruthless mean streak...

...no. No, they weren't. Not even close.

Lana snapped out of her stupor, popped her head back up and shot an icy glower at her past self, just as the giant was beginning to cast a shadow over her. "You're wrong," she said.

Hulk-Lana gave off an incredulous laugh. "What are you talking about? You were *great*. You were *huge*. You were *unstoppable*."

Lana just turned away, folding her arms across her chest. "But I wasn't happy."

For the first time since she appeared in the basement, Hulk-Lana dropped her smile. "W...what? What do you mean? You're not making any sense."

Lana sighed and gave her head another shake - now out of pity instead of resignation. "I was scared and angry. I thought the world was out to get me. My whole family was afraid of me. They thought I was a monster. And you know what?"

She looked back over her shoulder, giving Hulk-Lana a contemptuous look. "They were right."

And just like that, the tables had turned; Hulk-Lana's mouth was left gaping open as a tinge of red started to spread across her cheeks. All she could do was garble out half-formed words and syllables as she tried to conceive a counterpoint. Lana kept her gaze affixed on her adversary as she walked across the room and started up the stairs. "But *I'm* not afraid of you. I just feel sorry for you. You're just a sad, lonely little girl who wants attention."

Hulk-Lana snarled, her cheeks now engorged with blood. "You... you... get back here! I'm not finished with you!"

She lunged forward and tried to grab Lana's ankle, to no avail. Lana, unfazed, just continued up the stairs.

"You come back here right now, or I'll... I'll wreck all your weights! I'll tie 'em into knots! I'll smash 'em to pieces! PAY ATTENTION TO ME!"

Lana forced herself to ignore the bellowing as she reached the top of the stairs. With every step, her doppelgänger's cries grew fainter and fainter, until they finally disappeared altogether.

As she tucked herself into bed, Lana vowed to never even think about taking Lisa's formula ever again. She drifted off to sleep with a content smile on her face, secure in the knowledge that the brutish bully who accosted her in the basement was gone for good.

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