

Paul Kensington had been a busy man the past couple of days. His position on Seattle's city planning council had always been a sedate low key background job. He liked it that way. He was feeling more than a little frazzled since everything had been turned upside down.

Seattle's mayor had been out of town, and the city council, made up of elected politicians dithered and avoided making decisions. There was an obvious leadership vacuum and bit by bit the city planning council had stepped up and made the necessary decisions.

With everything down and out, unplugged and dark those in the planning council were in the thick of it. It was largely that small group who were the ones getting their hands dirty and making the decisions and orders in trying to get things back up and running. Paul's background and expertise was such that he understood why. He had without waiting for advice or permission managed to acquire a portable power generator to get the larger generator for City Hall running. That was just the beginning.

Most of the city's motor pool had been jumpstarted and was back on the roads. So too were a large number of tow trucks, for the sole purpose of clearing every arterial without waiting for permission. If it was abandoned it was to be moved. Police were beginning to resume patrols, although it was mostly by bike before their own motor pool got underway. Preparations for the return of the various services were progressing, but the anxious waiting continued. It was going to take time, and everyone knew it. By the end of the first day things were slowly coming together.

Then night fell and the city took several steps backward. The city's looters, anarchists, thieves and other criminal element came out and took, burned, assaulted and even murdered. Then something unexpected happened. Just after midnight a dragon was sighted over Harbor Island. At the report, Paul and many others were close to throwing in the towel.

Ready to make the walk home he instead took the time to witness the flying dragon for himself. He stood on the large veranda of City Hall looking to the west amazed. He saw that it was actually putting the massive fire that engulfed Harbor Island out. While not the all encompassing solution everyone was hoping for it was just enough of a bright spot in the dark time to give everyone a little bit of hope. Paul stood with several others and made a decision. They would push back against the lawlessness. They managed to make it through the night.

Then more reports started coming in. A large number of people had witnessed others suddenly become encased in a glowing spheres of white. It was most often described as an egg or cocoon and impregnable. An hour later a wave of reports changed. The eggs had burst and revealed a wide variety of odd and new creatures. In many cases these new creatures were simply the same people that had been trapped inside, but changed physically. They got the reports, but they didn't really need them to be convinced.

A member of the city council was one of those transformed in one of the mysterious cocoons. She came out of it one hour and twenty two minutes later. They knew the exact time because Gregg Taylor was timing it. She stood up as a brand new, something. No one was sure what she was supposed to be. Paul went to see for himself and walked in to see she was fielding questions from others.

The first impression was birdlike, bright feathers like a tropical parrot but her body shape was more like that of a large cat. She was able to stand on her hind legs and stood a touch over six feet. Her face was more dog like with a long muzzle but instead of whiskers she had two tendrils that sprouted an inch behind her nostrils. From the way she was answering the questions she appeared mentally unchanged and even pleased with her new body.

It wasn't long after she emerged that Lisa discovered she also had an extra ability. She could move objects with her mind. As she experimented small things, like books and phones and cups were fairly

easy. Her limit seemed to be about fifty pounds. While not being human anymore was a bit of a shock Lisa was giddy with her new power. By morning she had exhausted herself, her limit had dropped to empty coffee cups and pens and a bottle of Ibuprofen she took a couple pills from. As the sun came up she retreated to her office and got some rest.

While Lisa had played with her new power the reports had continued to come in, everyone believed them. There were now a wide range of creatures in the world. Lisa, was a visual example. There was also the dragon everyone had seen, and was now sprawled out on top of the Space Needle sleeping the night off the same as Lisa. There were reports of at least three centaurs. Even more people that had turned into half human and half lizard. A smattering of half canines, half felines, half mustelid, and many more. Amusingly the largest number were raccoons. Many thought it due to the recent series of very popular movies. Oddly, there were no reports of half trees. At least not yet Paul thought to himself.

Once things were back under control later that morning Paul was picked to head over to the Space Needle to attempt to make contact with the dragon. He collected a few things before setting out. He was also assigned an escort of two patrol officers. They walked the distance to just under the Space Needle and put Paul's plan in motion. A couple helium balloons some kite string and a banner with their message up at the level of the top of the Space Needle they only had to wait for a response.

As Paul let out the kite string the two cops stood watching, craning their necks up to watch the cluster of balloons. Mark was tying the string around the rearview mirror of a car as his mind wondered to the past

Paul's boss had been urged to join the council the year before and had brought him along as an advisor. He and Roger Kenos had a long history actually. It was usually Paul that had the ideas, who found solutions to the intractable situations, who figured out the ways to get things done no one else had considered, who was valued for his golden ability to 'Think Out Of The Box'. He knew he was often taken advantage of and Roger was often the one to stand in the spotlight and take the credit. As a huge introvert Paul didn't mind all that much. Besides, if things went to shit his head wasn't the one that was likely to be mounted someone's wall.

Now standing under the Space Needle, and the roosting spot of a dragon it was his literal neck on the line this time. Should this dragon turn out to be even halfway belligerent Paul and the two cops standing with him would be among the first to know. After a few minutes they walked to the side of the circular parking area and leaned their backsides on the trunk of a parked car. They'd watch and wait for results from there.