

ONCE AGAIN, THE DAY IS SAVED

Written by

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Major Characters

Jeff Ratavan (late-30s) Jeff Ratavan is a white journeyman operative of the Office of Superhuman Affairs, currently operating as a supervillain named the Maleveler. Ratavan is a patriot losing his faith in a government that, he believes, plays favorites.

Brian Bolden (early 30s) Brian Bolden AKA Captain Koa is a Native Hawaiian operative of the Office of Superhuman affairs. Brian is a miner's canary, cracking under the pressure of being the first of his people to become a superhero.

Ernesto Savarin (mid-20s) Ernesto is a Latino engineering student. Ernesto is an idealist, who still believes he can make a difference, and becoming a superhero is the best way to do that. He is a prodigy who invents gadgets in order to be more like professional superheroes.

Ophelia Banks (late-20s) Ophelia is a black media personality. Ophelia is type-A, self-motivated, and determined. Ophelia is suspicious of conspiracy and collusion in large institutions, to the point of obsession. Ophelia has proven herself time and again, but a biased media industry doesn't give Ophelia proper credit.

Dr. Brett Mitchell (late-30s) Dr. Brett Mitchell is the white, paraplegic head of the Office of Superhuman Affairs Weapons Lab. Dr. Michael, a Bendis is a former boy genius who sees the government as a checkbook for his imagination.

Director Audrey Peters (early-50s) Director Audrey Peters is the white bureaucrat in charge of the Office of Superhuman Affairs. Director Peters is outwardly very boisterous and theatrical. She does her job like a combination orchestra conductor/circus ringleader. Though, she sees the ethical quandaries of her department and believes it to be a necessary evil.

Dr. John Bendis (early-30s) Dr. John Bendis is the Latino, newly-appointed Head of Internal Affairs for the Office of Superhuman Affairs. Bendis is a Jedi of bureaucracy. He sees it as the method by which all great things are done.

Minor Characters

Nancy (late-30s) - Jeff's estranged wife. She is a real estate developer in the city of Austin. She is a career woman first, and thought Jeff would be an ideal, low-maintenance partner. His prioritizing of work and battle scars, however, are proving to be too much for her.

Claudia- (mid-20s) Ernesto's Latina, non-exclusive romantic partner. She is pre-law and works as a clerk in the district attorney's office. Claudia is less trusting of the world of superheroes than Ernesto is.

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. JEFF'S BEDROOM - DAY

Darkness.

TITLE: Austin, Texas. 2016.

A red light flashes. It beeps like an alarm clock.

JEFF RATAVAN, gaunt, burdened (late 30s) turns on a bedside lamp and stares at the ceiling.

He fingers a beeping, strobing lapel pin. The pin is shaped like a red flag with a blue Uranium atom in the center.

We look around the bedroom; it's military clean. A lamp, a dresser, a chair, and a night stand are all the furniture on his side of the room.

He looks over to his wife NANCY RATAVAN, fitful, mercurial (mid 30s) still sleeping, and sits up in bed. THE DIRECTOR and AGENT BENDIS converse.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Why do you do your job, inspector?

BENDIS (V.O.)

You really can't beat government benefits, director.

Jeff's pin strobos faster. He closes his fist, and the light and noise become invisible and inaudible, respectively. He opens his hand, and they continue. Jeff sighs.

He climbs out of bed and walks over to the closet. He pushes past the khakis, polos, and his wife's pantsuits. He pulls a release in the back of the closet.

WHOOSH! The back wall of the closet spins.

BENDIS

What about you, director?

DIRECTOR

For my kids, mostly.

The sound has woken Nancy. She watches Jeff pull a copper-colored spandex costume from the closet and place it on the chair.

He reaches back into the closet and, with great effort, heaves a box the size of a car engine, the EARTHQUAKE GENERATOR, into the center of the room.

NANCY
Do you have to go?

Jeff holds up the beeping lapel pin. This is the only answer needed.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Does it have to be now?

JEFF
It's not like I have much of a choice.

Jeff removes his clothes and steps into the costume. Nancy sits up in bed, watching him.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
One wants to be an astronaut. I told him we don't go to space much anymore, but he doesn't care.

Beat.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Do you have a family, inspector?

BENDIS (V.O.)
No.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Two boys. They think I'm a tax attorney.

Jeff struggles with the costume's top. Nancy gets up walks into the bathroom. She exits with a bag of toiletries.

JEFF
What, are you going to stay at your sister's this weekend?

NANCY
For good.

JEFF
Sure. I'll believe that when I see it. You didn't even make it to a week last time.

Nancy slaps Jeff in the face.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
 My husband takes care of them,
 really. He makes lunches, drives to
 soccer practice. I think they just
 see me like a bank account. A
 necessary *evil* in their lives.

Jeff pulls on the top of the costume. Nancy rushes into the closet, and throws a suitcase into the bedroom.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
 With the power to punish them. My
 husband leaves that part to me.

Jeff affixes two GAUNTLETS to his arms. He turns a dial on the back of one hand. They hum and glow yellow. He turns it off.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
 He can't stand being the bad guy to
 them.

Nancy, now dressed, exits the bedroom with her suitcase. Jeff pulls on a copper-colored mask and follows her into the

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

JEFF
 There's nothing I can do. The
 country needs me.

NANCY
 (Haughtily)
 Do you really think you're making a
 difference?

Beat. Jeff looks away.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 I thought you were asking for a
 reassignment anyway.

JEFF
 (Quoting)
 I did... they turned me down. Said
 I'm doing the most good right here.

Nancy turns and walks out the front door. Jeff goes to follow, but realizes his mask is still on. He pulls it off, and pulls a trench coat from the rack by the door and exits the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. JEFF'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jeff looks left down the street and can see Nancy turning the corner down the block. He watches her go.

She passes by a neighbor's flag, swaying in a soft breeze.

Jeff sighs. He returns to the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUSTIN SAVINGS AND LOAN - DAY

Jeff, in his overcoat, stands outside the bank watching people enter and exit.

He rolls his earthquake generator, attached to a handle and wheels, behind him, making it look like luggage.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
It's funny.

BENDIS (V.O.)
What is, director?

Jeff sighs. He takes off his overcoat and pulls on his mask.

He powers on both gauntlets.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
They're the superheroes. Why are we
the ones with secret identities?

Jeff kicks open the door to the bank.

JEFF
You know what this is. I'm not
having the best day, so hands up,
and maybe some of you see 5 PM.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - DAY

Students walk to class, play frisbee, and converse in front of a dorm building.

CUT TO:

INT. ERNESTO'S DORM ROOM - DAY

The dorm is overflowing with junk. Disassembled home appliances. A dozen computers, all broken, line shelves. A huge TV seems to be the only thing that works.

The walls are adorned with posters for various heroes, Second Hand, a time-travelling hero, and Captain Koa, a man with living wood for skin.

ERNESTO SAVARIN, all-limbs (early 20s) watches news coverage of the robbery, beginning with Jeff's entrance into the bank.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

Security camera footage cross-referenced with the OSA database confirm, the Maleveler strikes again, this time at Austin Savings and Loan. Eyewitnesses believe he has a new version of his earthq...

The TV shuts off. CLAUDIA DAMARAN, well-dressed, centered stands at the doorway, holding the remote. She stares at Ernesto.

CLAUDIA

Are you going?

Claudia makes her way into the room, stepping over a broken flight simulation joystick.

ERNESTO

I have to. A bank robbery, it's *classic*. This is what I've been training for.

CLAUDIA

You know I want you to go...

ERNESTO

But?

CLAUDIA

How did you know I was going to say
"but"?

ERNESTO

I can hear it in your voice.

Claudia sighs.

CLAUDIA

But, this guy looks a little out of
your league. Couldn't you wait for
a fire or something?

Claudia pleads with her eyes. Ernesto looks away.

ERNESTO

I gotta know if any of this stuff
actually works. I gotta know if my
tech measures up.

CLAUDIA

I know you've put a lot of time
into this, but you've got to be
patient. Something more your speed
will come around soon.

ERNESTO

I don't have time to be patient,
Claudia. This is all I've got. It's
already March, and I don't have
much else going on. Either this
stuff starts my career, or I have
to go back to El Paso.

Ernesto reaches under his bed. He pulls out his MULTI-TOOL.
It looks like a cattle-prod on the end of a selfie-stick. He
reaches further and pulls out a domino mask and a green cape.

CLAUDIA

If you insist on going, for the
love of god, leave the cape.

Ernesto stashes the cape.

ERNESTO

Thanks for understanding!

CLAUDIA

I don't think I do. If you don't
die, come over tonight. I'm
studying for my constitution final,
but I could use a break.

ERNESTO

Done.

Ernesto dashes out of the room. Claudia looks on, worried.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS - DAY

TITLE: Somewhere in Iowa

The control center looks like the bridge of a starship. Agents, all wearing the same pin as Jeff, run back and forth amongst advanced computer systems.

DIRECTOR AUDREY PETERS, poised, unencumbered (mid 50s) and AGENT JOHN BENDIS, doughy, meticulous (early 40s), the voices from the first scene, walk in through an automatic sliding door. Each wears the same pin as Jeff.

DIRECTOR

And this, Doctor, is our control room, the nerve center for US activity.

BENDIS

Very impressive. Proceed director.

DIRECTOR

Lights, camera, action!

The director takes her place behind the podium in the center of the room and takes charge.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Sanderson, what have you got for me?

SANDERSON looks up from his monitor.

SANDERSON

We have the Somnambulist terrorizing a mall in South Dakota. King Kaleidoscope and Caustic are both zoned to take care of it. Who's going?

DIRECTOR

Send the King. Caustic is too edgy for the Midwest. Besides, he'd eat that zombie for lunch. Next!

AGENT 2 manipulates a touch screen, pulling up a live news feed.

AGENT 2

There's been a factory explosion in China. Who do we send for the relief effort?

DIRECTOR

Turbine is Chinese, right? They'll feel better if one of their own saves them. Coordinate with the CMC and get it done. Who else?

AGENT 3

You have an appointment with Tragedy.

DIRECTOR

What are you, a fortune cookie?

The door the director came in opens, TRAGEDY walks in, his eponymous mask askew. The director remembers.

TRAGEDY

(Harried)

I can't do this anymore. Comedy gets all the press. She just did an interview for "Star," and what do I get? Nothing!

DIRECTOR

(Soothingly)

Calm down, Tragedy. That's a puff piece. We've got you on Maher next month, just be patient. The cerebral stuff takes some vetting.

Tragedy falters.

TRAGEDY

Well, I, I, didn't think you...

DIRECTOR

No, you didn't, now get out.

Tragedy exits. Bendis looks on with bemused fascination. The director notices.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Well Mister Bendis, what do you think of the place?

BENDIS

It all seems very glamorous, Miss Peters, but let's attend to the matter at hand.

The director deflates a bit. She notices one of the agents watching internet videos on his computer.

DIRECTOR

Harris, get back to work!

CUT TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

TITLE: BOSTON

Inside the internet video, OPHELIA BANKS, militant, barely hiding it (mid 20s) conducts an interview with two INTERNET PERSONALITIES, one on each side.

OPHELIA

Welcome back to "Who Would Win," your favorite show that pits your favorite fictional characters against one another in a cage match.

Five INTERNS in the production area cheer.

JAMES MOORE stands a few feet behind the camera. He stares at his computer. Ophelia watches him with interest before returning to the show.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

Today, we have Carter Bailey, host of the Geekweb Online Network defending Batman.

CARTER (early 30s) smiles smugly into the camera.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

And he's facing off against John Donner, writer of 1999's "Powerboy" movie, who's defending Spiderman.

DONNER (late 40s) gives a shy wave. '

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

Let's get our closing statements here. WHO WOULD WIN!

Carter jumps in.

CARTER

There's basically one word that is going to decide this argument, and that word is prep. With the right amount of prep time, Batman's going to be able to take down anyone.

Ophelia watches James click something. He reads the screen, and his face grows hard.

DONNER

I'm going to have to disagree with you there, Carter. Spiderman can lift a car in-character. The Dark Knight is getting his back broken again. At least seven out of ten.

CARTER

He's beaten literal gods, I think he'll be able to handle a high school kid who can't control his webbing!

DONNER

You're insane. There's no prep against spider-sense! And if he's symbiote boosted, it's over!

OPHELIA

OK, boys, that's enough for part one. We're going to throw it to the technical specialists for some gear analysis, but check us out next week to find out WHO WOULD WIN!

The interns cheer again.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

But before we go, we'd like to thank our sponsor, the Office of Superhuman Affairs. While we fight about fake heroes, they're off organizing the real ones. Thanks guys.

Ophelia grows serious.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

Today it is especially important to recognize the OSA, and to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Siberian Nuclear Disaster.

Ophelia, Carter, and Donner turn their lapels to camera.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)
Thanks to all of the brave heroes,
living and dead, and their service
to this great nation.

The CAMERAMAN stops recording, and Ophelia's persona breaks. She gets up quickly, moves past Carter and Donner, and walks over to James.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)
So they didn't like it?

JAMES
They haven't changed their offer.
Black Voices or Female Feedback,
your choice.

OPHELIA
Well, I haven't changed my decision
either. I'm not just some token
they can shuffle around when they
need diversity points!

JAMES
(Wryly)
But you're such a wonderfully
flexible token.

Ophelia glares at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Okay, I'll send it to some other
networks, but I'm telling you,
buying you out of your contract
makes you a pretty terrible
prospect.

OPHELIA
If I'm so terrible, why are you
hitching your wagon to mine?

Ophelia puts her arm around James.

JAMES
Because I think you're the only
person at this network with any
talent.

James blushes slightly. Ophelia notices. She removes her arm.

JAMES (CONT'D)
But that doesn't mean they're going
to.

OPHELIA

If you see it, I'm sure someone else out there will.

They walk down the hall toward the

BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

JAMES

Tell me, does it rain on whatever planet you're living on?

OPHELIA

No, but it hails three months out of the year.

James walks away.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

Thanks, James.

Ophelia walks over to her desk.

She opens a program on her computer called "Logbook" and logs onto a custom search she designed. It shows the day's log of superhero activity, including the bank robbery.

She is disinterested in today's haul, but logs them regardless. Carter approaches her.

CARTER

What are you doing?

Ophelia closes Logbook.

OPHELIA

Nothing. What do you want?

CARTER

I saw you talking with your boss. You looked upset.

OPHELIA

(Curtly)

He's not my boss. He produces a few shows I'm on, but he's not in charge.

CARTER

Either way, I couldn't help but overhear. I just came to tell you that if you're ever interested in leaving this place, my network is always looking for talent.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

I'm sure that something could be arranged for you.

Carter gives Ophelia a lascivious look.

OPHELIA

I know you mean this as a compliment-slash-solicitation, but I'm not interested.

CARTER

And why is that? You're obviously not living up to your potential here, and my network is looking for some cosplay coverage. You'd look great as a Catwoman or a Spider-Gwen.

OPHELIA

Carter, you're a step down. Your network doesn't even have traditional media arms. I want primetime, and you don't even have air time. Thanks for the creepy vibes, but I'm going to have to pass.

Carter slinks away, muttering to himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK, AUSTIN- DAY

Ernesto parks his old pick-up truck around the corner from the bank. A tarp covers a huge lump in the bed of the truck.

After confirming no one is around, he opens the bed and pulls the tarp away.

Underneath lies a make-shift suit of armor, jagged from a poor smelting job, and made of an alloy of cheap metals.

Ernesto pulls it on and touches a blue decal on the chest. It hums and surrounds him in a blue aura.

The wrist has a holster suited for the multi-tool. When Ernesto mounts it, a shockwave moves toward the suit, but is stopped by the rubber holster.

ERNESTO

Thank you Claudia.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. DORM PARKING LOT, AUSTIN- DAY

Ernesto wears the suit and holds a more primitive version of the multi-tool. Claudia stands at the other end of the lot next to a pile of dishes.

CLAUDIA

I can only do this for another half hour?

ERNESTO

(teasing)

Which one of your clubs is meeting?
The parliamentary procedure society
or is it the club administration
club?

Claudia smiles sadly.

CLAUDIA

Neither, I have to get up early
tomorrow. I have a job interview.

ERNESTO

Oh...

Ernesto looks at his feet.

CLAUDIA

What about you?

Ernesto is silent.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

What have you been doing?

Cut to full body of Ernesto's suit. We see the places where the armor doesn't quite connect, and the uneven metalwork.

ERNESTO

PULL!

Claudia throws a dish high into the air. Ernesto pushes a button on the multi-tool, and the selfie-stick extends.

Ernesto misses the plate by a mile. It clatters to the ground.

The multi-tool sends a shockwave into Ernesto's hand. The suit conducts the shockwave, and Ernesto is electrocuted. He screams.

CLAUDIA
Are you okay?

ERNESTO
(Panting)
This damn thing shocked me!

CLAUDIA
But isn't that what the Forcefield
is for?

ERNESTO
The Forcefield won't protect me
from things already inside it.

Claudia stops to consider this.

CLAUDIA
Well, then you need an insulator.

Ernesto leans forward, his hands on his knees.

ERNESTO
How did I not think of an
insulator?

Claudia thinks for a moment. She reaches into her bag.

She runs over to Ernesto with a mouse pad. She takes his hand
and wraps the stick in the pad. Claudia smiles at Ernesto.

CLAUDIA
Try now.

She walks back to the plates and throws another one.

Ernesto misses again, but he's much closer this time. The
shockwave travels to the end of the stick, but is stopped by
the mouse pad.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)
You know this tech is amazing,
right? You should go patent it not
hit people with it. You're digging
a well with a diamond shovel.

ERNESTO
It's not about the money.

CLAUDIA
It's gotta be a *little* about the
money... Well, you should at least
mount that thing.

Ernesto looks at the multi-tool.

ERNESTO

How come?

CLAUDIA

You'll have better aim from a set position, and it'd be harder for someone to knock it out of your hands.

ERNESTO

No one's going to knock this out of my hands.

CLAUDIA

Suit yourself.

Ernesto adjusts the mouse pad to a more comfortable grip.

Claudia picks a rock up off the ground and throws it at Ernesto. He dodges it, but drops the multi-tool.

He looks at Claudia, who smiles.

ERNESTO

Point taken.

Claudia walks over to Ernesto.

CLAUDIA

Plus, it's good to have both hands free.

She puts her arms around Ernesto and kisses him.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BANK, AUSTIN- DAY

Ernesto swallows, hard.

He pushes the decal on his chest, and the Forcefield activates.

He looks at down at his multi-tool, determined.

He looks toward the bank, trepidacious.

He feels the ground shaking, at least he thinks it's the ground.

ERNESTO
Armor, check. Multi-tool, check.
Underwear firmly on the inside. I
guess this is it.

Ernesto charges towards the bank.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. BANK - DAY

Jeff wheels his earthquake generator next to the safe. The customers cower on the east wall.

JEFF

Okay tellers, empty your drawers and put the money on the floor in the middle of the room. Then go over there with everyone else.

Jeff glances at one TELLER whose arm is spasming.

JEFF (CONT'D)

And I already intercepted the silent alarm, so you can stop pushing it.

The teller's arm stops. All three TELLERS load their drawers into bags.

Jeff walks over to the safe and manipulates buttons and dials on his earthquake generator.

In Jeff's ear, we hear static, and BERNARD screaming.

BERNARD (O.S.)

Behind you!

Jeff whips around and points his arm at a teller who pulled a gun. Waves emanate from the wristband and the gun is wrenched from the teller's hand.

The teller clutches his hand. His fingers are bent at unnatural angles.

JEFF (TO BANK)

I thought it went without saying. No hero stuff! No one pulls a gun on...

Jeff pauses.

JEFF (CONT'D)

The Maleveler!

Jeff turns back to his work.

JEFF (TO BERNARD) (CONT'D)
(Whispers)
Thanks Bernard. God, this persona
has a stupid name.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNARD'S CUBICLE - DAY

Bernard (mid-30s) sits at a desk much like a call center. He has Jeff's heads-up display from his mask on his monitor, along with a series of numbers cascading along the side of the screen.

BERNARD (O.S.)
No problem Jeff. The announcement
could use some work, though.
Gravitas is the name of the game
here.

Jeff finishes his calibrations.

INTERCUT BETWEEN JEFF AND BERNARD

JEFF
You're probably right, but I just
really hate this one.

BERNARD
Sure, but it's not nearly as bad as
when you were Leapfrog.

Jeff shudders.

JEFF
Ugh, that costume was so heavy, and
the only way I could win a fight
was by bouncing into people.

BERNARD
You moving so fast on screen gave
me motion sickness.

JEFF
You? Imagine being in the suit.
Just thinking about the gallons of
vomit from the inside of that suit
give me nightmares.

Beat. Jeff shudders.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I feel sorry for the guys in maintenance who had to clean it every time. Is anyone using a frog identity these days?

BERNARD

Sure, just let me see...

We see Jeff from the hostages' perspective. He seems to be mumbling to himself. Two men look at each other. One stands up.

Jeff sees in the reflection of the earthquake generator that one of the bank customers is making a break for the door.

JEFF

No!

Jeff fires his gauntlet ten feet in front of the man, blasting a trash can against the wall.

The man stops in his tracks.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Go back with the rest of them. Just because I'm not looking at you doesn't mean I can't see you.

The man runs back to his hiding spot.

JEFF (CONT'D)

That's better. Continue Bernard. How's your brother by the way?

BERNARD

He's much better, thanks for asking. The card you sent to the hospital was really above and beyond.

JEFF

Of course. Tell him we all want him back as soon as possible.

Bernard finds the Leapfrog file.

BERNARD

Can do. So, there was one more Leapfrog after you, but he had Meniere's disease, so he threw up even more than you did.

JEFF

Gross. So how long with the safe?

BERNARD

About fifteen seconds. I should be able to identify where the ink cartridges are in your heads-up display when we're in there. Law enforcement should arrive in about forty seconds, and wait, what's this?

Jeff stands up.

JEFF

What's up?

BERNARD

Some kid. He's dressed like Bender from Futurama, and he's rushing the doors.

JEFF

I thought heroes were done with kid sidekicks. Isn't that the first rule: no animals, no children?

BERNARD

I've never seen him before. I think we have a code 42.

JEFF

A freelancer? What do I do here?

BERNARD

Standard practice would be subdue, don't kill.

Bernard types on his keyboard. His monitor displays the bank's security cameras.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Turn the gauntlets all the way down. This kid's wearing aluminum foil on his chest.

JEFF

Down to one? In a bank full of people? If more than two of them rush me, I'm dead.

BERNARD

Well, you can't kill the kid. This is a bank robbery, not a targeted assassination.

Ernesto kicks open the door to the bank and rushes in. He draws his multi-tool.

ERNESTO

Beware foul villain. I'm here to thwart you!

JEFF

That's nice, kid. Now go home before you get hurt.

Jeff turns his gauntlets down to the lowest setting.

ERNESTO

You can't scare El Caballero.

BERNARD (V.O.)

Nice banter. He's pretty good with the jargon.

JEFF

Shut up, both of you.

Ernesto looks at Jeff, confused.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Okay, kid. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Jeff fires both of his gauntlets at Ernesto. Ernesto's blue aura counters the blast, and the waves bounce off, having no effect.

JEFF (CONT'D)

What?

BERNARD (V.O.)

The kid has some kind of tech on him. Forcefield by the look of it. New plan, give it half strength. I'm really curious to see what he's got.

JEFF

Well, I'm glad you're enjoying yourself. He's inspiring some of the customers.

Two larger men have moved away from the wall and crept towards Jeff. He turns his gauntlets up to half power and fires at both of them.

The two men are sent flying. Each hits the back wall with a distinct **CRACK** sound, and falls behind the bank counter. They are heard moaning off-screen.

While Jeff is busy with them, Ernesto fires his multi-tool.

It hits Jeff square in the chest, electrocuting him. He screams and falls to his knees.

JEFF (CONT'D)

That really hurt. I'm going to kill you, you little bastard.

Jeff stands up and points both of his gauntlets at Ernesto.

Ernesto prepares to fire his multi-tool again, but sees that his mount has melted.

ERNESTO

Shit.

Suddenly, CAPTAIN KOA, a man in a wooden mech suit kicks in the bank door.

CAPTAIN KOA

Maleveler, your reign of terror has come to an end.

He looks to Ernesto

CAPTAIN KOA (CONT'D)

Thank you for your assistance, citizen, but I'll take it from here.

Ernesto nods and runs behind the captain to help the bank customers out the door.

Jeff and Captain Koa stare each other down.

JEFF

(Uncomfortably)

Never, Captain Koa, my earthquake generator is primed to break open this safe, and neither you nor any kid sidekick will stop me.

Jeff takes a deep breath. He sighs.

JEFF (CONT'D)

In fact, besides destabilizing the foundation of this safe, it should throw the *balance* of this fight in my favor.

BERNARD (V.O.)

See, that's how you banter.

JEFF (TO BERNARD)

I hate myself.

Jeff turns on his earthquake generator. It glows the same yellow as his gauntlets, and the ground shakes.

Everyone falls off balance, except for Jeff, whose wristbands glow brighter than ever.

JEFF (CONT'D)

What's the matter Captain? You look a little dizzy.

Jeff walks over to Captain Koa and punches him in the face.

Jeff shakes his hand in pain, but Koa goes flying across the bank.

Jeff turns to Ernesto, smiling.

He blasts him with his gauntlets. Ernesto's Forcefield shatters, and he's knocked to the ground.

Captain Koa rebounds and tackles Jeff.

CAPTAIN KOA

Get to safety, citizens.

The tellers and customers run out of the bank. Men drag the injured men out with them. Ernesto remains unconscious.

CAPTAIN KOA (CONT'D)

Looks like it's just you and me, you fiend.

JEFF

Okay, they're gone. Turn it off, you *ham*.

Jeff uppercuts Captain Koa so hard he hits the ceiling. He shakes his hand in pain again.

Captain Koa falls onto Jeff's earthquake generator, cracking his faceplate.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO BULLPEN - DAY

Ophelia watches more of the bank robbery coverage on the news.

NEWSCASTER

Captain Koa has defeated the Maleveler before, so Austin should be able to breathe a sigh of relief tonight, but there is no word on the young man who has entered the fray during the robbery and joined Captain Koa's fight.

The broadcast displays footage of Ernesto taking the blast from the earthquake generators and shrugging it off.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

That is the last footage we have, before the security feed cut out, presumably by the Maleveler. No information is currently known about the mystery man, but stay tuned, as it is undoubtedly forthcoming. Thus far, the Office of Superhuman Affairs has declined to comment.

Ophelia grabs a passing REPORTER.

OPHELIA

Do we have anyone on this? What do we know so far?

REPORTER

We didn't have anyone at the bank. Maleveler bank robbery was just going to be something for the police blotter, but since the kid showed up, the news desk upstairs is going crazy.

OPHELIA

But do we know anything? I can't sit here and learn about it on TV like I don't work for one of the largest news organizations in the world.

REPORTER

Well, no one's telling the
entertainment desk anything.
Everyone is playing this one close
to the vest.

Ophelia stands.

OPHELIA

Tell James I'm leaving. I'll be
back in about a week. I'm taking
all of my personal days.

REPORTER

What for?

OPHELIA

Family reasons.

The reporter walks away, and Ophelia logs back onto her
computer.

She books a plane ticket for Austin, Texas.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

Ernesto lies on the floor, unconscious.

Captain Koa knocks Jeff across the bank. He flies over
Ernesto.

His lapel pin falls out of his spandex suit and skitters
across the floor. Captain Koa walks over to his prone form
and looms over him.

He turns Jeff over, but Jeff fires his gauntlets into Captain
Koa's face, throwing him off-balance again. Two voices
converse over the fight.

DR. MITCHELL (V.O.)

Ernesto, you sustained some serious
head trauma. I'm going to try to
keep you talking. Tell me what you
know about early superheroes.

Jeff cranks his gauntlets to full power. He fires them at
Captain Koa, pinning him to the safe.

Captain Koa's wooden armor *peels* off of his face in layers
until a patch of tan skin is exposed.

ERNESTO (V.O.)

(Slowly)

I know that the OSA says that
superheroism is about 50 years old.
All the early guys, like Iron Lung,
just started fighting crime in
their home towns.

With the last of his strength, Captain Koa fires one of the splintering shards of his fingers into Jeff's left gauntlet.

It **EXPLODES!**

DR. MITCHELL (V.O.)

And what changed?

Ernesto coughs.

ERNESTO (V.O.)

There were some early alliances,
mostly to stop villain team-ups.
Then last year, you guys changed
the game.

Jeff turns to address his wounded hand, but forgets to turn off his right gauntlet, and blows out the bank's front windows.

He turns off his working gauntlet, and looks at the broken one. It's a rat's nest of wires and metal shards.

His hand starts to bleed.

DR. MITCHELL (V.O.)

How did we do that?

Captain Koa, now free, tackles Jeff. He beats Jeff about the head and shoulders, punching him several times.

Captain Koa hoists Jeff over his head and throws him at the back wall of the bank.

ERNESTO

It's a conspiracy! After that Dr.
Ziggurat guy took over the nuclear
plant, you guys told everyone
you've been coordinating the
heroes.

Captain Koa walks over to Jeff's earthquake generator and smashes it.

He walks back over to Jeff and punches him in the face one more time.

Jeff passes out.

Captain Koa picks him up by the scruff of his neck and walks toward the blown out facade of the bank.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS WEAPONS LAB - DAY

TITLE: Somewhere outside Austin

Ernesto, with a black eye and scratches all over his face, and DR. BRETT MITCHELL, professorial, slightly perturbed (late 30s), in a wheelchair, sit on opposite sides of a table. Dr. Mitchell is flanked by two GOVERNMENT SUITS.

DR. MITCHELL

You've almost got the whole story.
You just missed one detail. The
villains work for us too.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

The broken earthquake generator sparks.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS WEAPONS LAB - DAY

An identical machine, this one in perfect working order sits on a lab table.

We zoom out to see that the lab table lies behind a window in a

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Mitchell wheels by the window. Ernesto follows, led by both of the suits.

DR. MITCHELL

I want to show you something.

The four walk into an

AIRPLANE HANGER - CONTINUOUS

SCIENTISTS mill about testing various projects.

One tests a freeze ray. He turns a tank of water into ice. Another scientist smashes it with an oversized metal glove with spikes on the knuckles.

A third scientist fires a grappling-hook into the ceiling. A fourth hacks at it with a samurai sword, but it does not yield.

ERNESTO

This place is amazing. Where are we?

DR. MITCHELL

This, Ernesto, is the Weapons Lab for the Office of Superhuman Affairs.

The two continue walking through the hanger.

DR. MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Ernesto, let me tell you a story. When I was sixteen, I created a black hole.

Ernesto and Dr. Mitchell pass by a scientist trapped in a phone booth while another fills it with water.

DR. MITCHELL (CONT'D)

I got early admission to MIT, and created it in their physics lab. I blew up the entire science wing.

Ernesto rushes to let him out, but Dr. Mitchell places a hand on his shoulder. Ernesto stops.

When the water fills the phone booth, we see that the scientist has a pair of mechanical gills strapped to his neck.

DR. MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Not long after, the OSA recruited me. They had started to prevent every Tom, Dick, and Harry with a particle accelerator from taking over the Eastern Seaboard.

The scientist who filled the phone booth opens the door, spilling the water and the gilled scientist out onto the floor.

ERNESTO

And they expanded to staging superhero fights? Why?

DR. MITCHELL

It's for the public's own good. It was the 60's. We hadn't been to the moon yet, and Americans needed to know that we were better than the Russians. What better way than having our very own super-powered peacekeepers?

Dr. Mitchell leads Ernesto out of the hanger.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS WEAPONS LAB - DAY

Ernesto and Dr. Mitchell stand around the generator. The two suits stand by the door.

ERNESTO

So this is where you built the Maleveler's machine?

DR. MITCHELL

The earthquake generator, yes. But what I'm more interested in is your tech. What's that tool?

ERNESTO

It's a taser I souped up. It also fires tranquilizer darts, and has a small EMP.

DR. MITCHELL

Most impressive. And the Forcefield too. Stronger than we expected.

ERNESTO

Not strong enough though. Where is my tech, by the way?

DR. MITCHELL

It's in another lab being analyzed by our technicians. Before we return it, we need to make sure we're on the same page. Why did you build this equipment, and why were you at the bank this morning?

Ernesto looks over at the two suits. Their eyes are inscrutable behind their glasses, but they both stare at Ernesto, frowning.

ERNESTO

I made some killer tech. I wanted to see how it stood up in a real fight. I wanted to be a hero, but I guess that's not happening now.

DR. MITCHELL

The heroes might not be real, but the tech is.

ERNESTO

Sure, but the Cold War is over, why are you guys even still around?

Dr. Mitchell leans back in his chair.

DR. MITCHELL

Just because we are no longer fighting the Russians doesn't mean that the United States doesn't have enemies. Uncle Sam can always use a few superhuman deterrents walking around.

ERNESTO

(Suspiciously)
What about the ones who don't want to be deterrents?

DR. MITCHELL

(Frankly)
They're in prison. Unregulated super-science is maybe the biggest threat of the 21st century.

ERNESTO

Why are you telling me all of this?

Dr. Mitchell smiles.

DR. MITCHELL

Ernesto, you're smarter than that.

Ernesto looks around. He thinks for a moment.

ERNESTO

You're recruiting me? Why?

DR. MITCHELL

You have the talent. Your tech is almost as good as some of our stuff. Think of it like an internship.

(MORE)

DR. MITCHELL (CONT'D)

One where you get to design all of the tools your favorite heroes use.

ERNESTO

Wouldn't I be designing weapons for the villains too?

DR. MITCHELL

Sure, but isn't it really the same thing? None of it is real.

ERNESTO

I don't know if I can get behind all this secrecy.

DR. MITCHELL

Think of it this way. Sometimes National Security interests trump the freedom of information. Like the Manhattan Project, and you get to be one of the scientists.

ERNESTO

The Manhattan project wasn't nationwide for 40 years. They didn't conduct nuclear tests in public places.

DR. MITCHELL

The American people love superheroes. The American military gets to test some new gear, it's a win-win.

ERNESTO

The military uses this stuff? Hell no. I'm out. How many people are you responsible for killing, just this year?

DR. MITCHELL

Ernesto, it's perfectly safe. We have laws in place keeping average people away from superhumans, and we've given our operatives strict rules of engagement with civilians to minimize damage and injury. It's all theater, Ernesto. No one has died in over twenty years.

Ernesto turns towards the door. He walks out, but is stopped on the way to the door by one of the government suits.

SUIT

I don't think I need to remind you about the nature of the agreement you signed.

ERNESTO

I won't tell anyone anything.

SUIT

You're free to do what you want, but if I bring you back here, you're not getting another tour.

Shaken, Ernesto leaves the room.

CUT TO:

DR. MITCHELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Mitchell rolls into his office. He shuts the door behind him.

Dr. Mitchell sits at his desk watching surveillance footage from the bank.

On screen, Ernesto shrugs off the blast from Jeff's gauntlets.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK - DAY

Captain Koa exits the bank with Jeff slung over his shoulders.

A flurry of news cameras snap pictures as he walks away from the bank. The police have blocked entrance to the building.

REPORTER 1

Who was the young man in the tin costume?

REPORTER 2

Do you have a kid sidekick? Has the OSA reinstated the Young Ward program?

REPORTER 3

Is your partner okay?

Captain Koa steadies Jeff on his shoulders. In the background, a black SUV pulls up, and GOVERNMENT SUITS dressed like the ones in the OSA Weapons Lab rush into the bank.

CAPTAIN KOA

I have no comment at this time.
Please refer all questions to the
Media Relations Department of the
Office of Superhuman Affairs. Good
day, citizens.

Captain Koa jumps thirty feet into the air and across the street onto a

ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Captain Koa walks behind a water tower on the roof. He places Jeff on the ground, and he regains consciousness.

JEFF

You want to tell me what that was?
Where'd you get the kid?

CAPTAIN KOA

I've never seen that kid before. We
have rules of engagement.

JEFF

We have rules about drugs too,
Brian, but I've never see them stop
you.

Captain Koa glares at Brian.

CAPTAIN KOA

Can we talk about you for a second?
Full power on your gauntlets? You
could have killed me.

Jeff stands up.

JEFF

Kill you? Never, I'll wait around
and let speedballs do that for me.

Captain Koa retracts his mask to reveal Hawaiian native Brian Bolden, hard-faced, soft-eyed (early 30s).

~~CAPTAIN KOA~~ BRIAN

I wasn't high. And it's hard being
the good guy. I don't get to switch
to another identity if I fuck mine
up.

JEFF

Just take me to the car, Brian.

Captain Koa picks Jeff up. He jumps down into the alley behind the building. A white van idles. The two get inside.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

CAPTAIN KOA

So how's Nancy?

Jeff looks around the back of the van. He spies a pipe.

JEFF

I thought you weren't high.

CAPTAIN KOA

I'm not... currently.

JEFF

Goddamnit, you're unprofessional.

CAPTAIN KOA

Well I've got a lot to deal with. I have to go do PSAs for childhood obesity later. What are you up to?

Jeff pulls off his mask. His face a mess. He has a black eye, scratches on one cheek, and the beginnings of a bruise near his forehead.

JEFF

In case you forgot, I don't have a fancy suit of armor. I have to menace civilians, and I can never lose control. It's hard to do that when you're high.

CAPTAIN KOA

It was one hit.

JEFF

Stop talking. Let's go back to the house.

Jeff hits the front wall of the van twice. The engine starts and the van lurches forward.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS - DAY

The Director and John Bendis are in the same position as when we saw them last. The office continues to buzz with agents.

BENDIS

I need you to give me a straight answer.

DIRECTOR

I don't know why they're missing. It wasn't on the job, but it's not my problem.

BENDIS

We know it wasn't on the job. That's why this is an investigation and not a court martial.

As she finishes speaking, Jeff and Brian, without their costumes, arrive.

DIRECTOR

This department brings in more revenue and intelligence than the IRS and the CIA combined. I won't have you talk down to me.

BENDIS

Well one thing you *will* have to answer for is that kid. Who was that? What was he doing there?

DIRECTOR

We had a team take care of him. If you want information, you'll have to talk to...

She manipulates her screen.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Weapons.

BENDIS

Weapons? What is he doing in weapons?

DIRECTOR

Listen, inspector. I'm not sure I have anymore time for you.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

If you want to write up a report with some specific inquiries for the operations department, I'd be happy to review them.

Jeff cuts in, disregarding Bendis.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

But in the meantime...

JEFF

Audrey, I quit!

The director gives Jeff a withering stare.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Can you not see that I'm busy, Ratavan. I don't have time for you right now.

JEFF

I heard you talking about the kid. You know something. As a card-carrying member of the Office of Superhuman Affairs, I have a right to know what happened in any Code 42 incident I was directly involved in.

DIRECTOR

You just quit, Ratavan. You don't have the rights to shit.

JEFF

Audrey, come on.

Bendis steps forward. He walks past Brian. He turns. Their height disparity only brings Bendis up to his chest. Bendis turns back towards the Director and continues undeterred.

BENDIS

Director, if you don't cooperate with us, you may find yourself operating with a much shorter leash.

JEFF

Are you from IA? I've got some villain's rights stuff I want to go over with you.

Bendis' face glazes over.

BENDIS

Send it to the department in a memo.

JEFF

I've sent it to you a dozen times by now.

BENDIS

I'm sure next time, someone'll read it.

He turns back to the Director.

BENDIS (CONT'D)

Director, we need to talk about these disappearances.

Brian perks up.

BRIAN

You're finally dealing with that? Vainglory is one of the missing guys. I love that guy, we go bowling together.

JEFF

(to himself)

If this were heroes, it would have been done two disappearances ago.

The central computer whirs to life, spitting out a red alert.

The screen shows a newscast. The headline at the bottom of the screen reads "Arizona supervillain, The Buffalo, brutally dismembered."

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT GORGE - EVENING

TITLE: Arizona

NEWSCASTER 2 stands on the edge of a gorge.

NEWSCASTER 2

Once again, the supervillain known as the Buffalo was found dismembered and thrown into the gorge behind me.

The camera zooms past her and a buffalo mask is visible at the bottom of the gorge.

NEWSCASTER 2 (CONT'D)

The Buffalo was one of the more notorious costumed threats of the Southwest region. He had stolen over five million dollars in cash and stolen valuables, and cost the state of Arizona over ten million dollars in property damage.

The headline changes. It now reads "Vigilante among us?"

NEWSCASTER 2 (CONT'D)

In addition to dismembering the body, the murderer left a flash drive with the personal information of the Buffalo on it. Police have confirmed that his name is Milton Daniels, a thirty-five year old electrician who lives in Phoenix. The murderer also left a note, stating that he used every part of Mr. Daniel's body.

CUT TO:

OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS - DAY

Jeff, Bendis, Brian, and the Director all watch the broadcast horrified.

JEFF

We have to find who did this. Tell me you have leads.

BRIAN

Is that why he's here?

DIRECTOR

We're doing everything we can to get to the bottom of this. We have engaged a special task force just for the purpose of finding whoever is terrorizing our operatives.

The director gets a report on-screen.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

According to this, the Maleveler identity is destroyed.

JEFF

Yeah. Brian smashed all the generators.

DIRECTOR

Report to Costuming for reassignment. All three of you, out. I still have two more hours on call tonight, and unless you want to help me field calls from every two bit villain in the Southwest Region, I suggest you leave now.

Jeff, Bendis and Brian leave. The Director returns to coordinating her agent's efforts.

CUT TO:

INT. ERNESTO'S DORM ROOM- DAY

Ernesto sits on his bed, sans gear. He looks at the Second Hand poster on his wall. He glances around his room.

He turns on his television. He flips past Ophelia's broadcast, and settles on the news.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

...and there is still no word on the identity of the mystery youth at the bank this morning. The OSA has declined to comment on his involvement with the Office.

Ernesto turns the television off.

CLAUDIA (O.S.)

Where have you been?

Ernesto says nothing.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)

What happened? Are you okay?

ERNESTO

I don't want to talk about it.

CLAUDIA

Are you kidding? I help you prep in that suit for months. You get knocked out on the news and now you're back here, beaten, without the suit. We're going to talk about it.

ERNESTO

Claudia. Please, Go home. I have a lot on my mind.

CLAUDIA

There is no way in hell that I'm going home.

Ernesto's phone buzzes. He checks it.

Shocked, he turns the television back on. It is the same broadcast that was playing in the OSA office.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)

You see, Ernesto? That's why I don't want you out there.

Ernesto doesn't turn to look at her.

ERNESTO

I'm never going out again.

Claudia is taken aback. Now, Ernesto turns.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

Okay, now will you leave? We'll talk tomorrow.

CLAUDIA

Okay, Ernesto, but don't worry about talking tomorrow.

Claudia leaves.

Ernesto moves to his computer. He Googles the public number for the Office of Superhuman Affairs.

He dials the number.

ERNESTO

Hello? I'd like to request a transfer to the Weapons Lab. Doctor...

DR. MITCHELL (V.O.)

Well that was a quick change of heart.

ERNESTO

What's going on? Is this real?

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

I thought it was fake!

DR. MITCHELL

Calm down.

DR. MITCHELL (CONT'D)
I can't say any more to anyone who
doesn't work for the Office of
Superhuman Affairs.

ERNESTO
Okay, then tell me.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

TITLE: San Marcos, Texas (5 miles outside of Austin)

The wallpaper is peeling in the cheap room. Ophelia sits on one of two double beds watching television. She eats a candy bar.

The same broadcast about the Buffalo is on. She shuts the TV.

She pulls her laptop out of her bag and opens Logbook.

She logs the Buffalo's death, including the SEO tag "vigilante"

She clicks on the SEO tag, and a web opens up on her screen. It looks like the twenty-first century version of a corkboard conspiracy wall.

In the web, we also see the names of various corporations suspected to be working with the OSA, a timeline of emergency Congressional sessions, and major supervillain attacks.

At the center of all of it is the date June 2, 1992.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. COLLAPSING BUILDING - DAY

The date from the web becomes a TITLE.

A YOUNG OPHELIA (about 9) limps through a collapsing office building.

OPHELIA
Daddy!

She walks another few feet and calls for him again.

She stops in an office with a wall of windows facing the street.

Outside the window TWO FIGURES fly by. The second figure throws projectiles at the first. The first figure deflects one of the projectiles TOWARDS THE WINDOW!

One of the windows breaks as the projectile shaped like a boomerang with a clock in the center enters the office.

The projectile ticks, but does not go off.

Ophelia hears groaning and feels the building lean towards the street.

She looks around. The support beams of the building are on hinges.

Outside, the hinges are breaking the building in half, tilting the upper portion of the building towards the street.

Inside, Ophelia tries to run towards the higher part of the floor, but the incline has already become too steep.

She falls onto her back and slides out the window about thirty stories up.

For a moment, she hangs in midair, about to plummet to the street below, when suddenly...

The first figure catches her. She looks over his shoulder as he flings her away from the building. It collapses.

She closes her eyes and sobs.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Ophelia rouses from her memory and finishes her log.

She runs a search in her database looking for supervillain deaths. Finding nothing she runs another for disappearances.

She sees nothing of immediate interest, so she closes the program. She opens another window, this time to book a plane ticket to Arizona.

END ACT THREE

TAG

INT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIR - NIGHT

The director stands behind her podium.

The door behind her opens and Jeff and Brian enter.

JEFF

What are we still doing here?

DIRECTOR

You're being reassigned.

Jeff brightens. He looks over at Brian and frowns.

JEFF

Both of us?

DIRECTOR

Yes. You think we need to do something about this vigilante, well I'm doing something about it. You and Bolden are going to be our task force to track him down.

JEFF

I'm not sure I want to do a crime spree. Fighting with Brian city to city. I've been doing this too long to do road work again.

DIRECTOR

You wouldn't be fighting this time. You'd both be heroes.

Jeff's face lights up.

JEFF

I could do that.

DIRECTOR

You would both be investigating these murders. Use of your personas would be at your discretion, in order to serve the case effectively.

BRIAN

Sounds good to me.

DIRECTOR

I don't want any screwing around.
The department expects results, and
you saw internal affairs in here.

JEFF

We're part of this now.

DIRECTOR

Right, and it won't just be my ass
on the line if you don't catch him.

BRIAN

And what do we do when we find him?

DIRECTOR

Officially, the Office would like
him arrested. But whatever happens,
happens.

Jeff looks away.

JEFF

So what's my new persona?

DIRECTOR

We have an identity we use for
cases like these.

The director looks toward a microphone on the podium.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Display PROTEUS footage.

On screen, a man stands in a parking lot. He appears to be
covered in ink.

We go into the screen.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A rural parking lot surrounded by fields.

The ink-covered man shimmers. His features morph into that of
an overweight white man.

He shimmers again, and becomes a young Asian woman.

He scrolls between a few more forms of human. An old black
man, a hijabi teenage girl, and settles on a large tough-
looking Latino man.

EXT. OFFICE OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS - NIGHT

Outside the office, Jeff and Brian climb into the back of an SUV. Jeff's legs are obscured and he wears a puffy jacket.

The settle in and the radio crackles.

DIRECTOR (ON RADIO)
We're sending you to the airport.
You're going to Arizona to
investigate the crime scene.

Brian turns over and stares out the window.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
We'll have you meet with one of our
area operatives who will provide
support for this phase of the
mission.

The radio shuts off.

Jeff and Brian both try to sleep in the car, but neither one can.

Jeff's pocket buzzes. We see his pants are made of the same ink as the man from the video. He reaches inside and pulls out another lapel pin.

He twists the pin to the side and pulls it out, pulling out the pin as well as the fastener. He places the buzzing pin in his ear.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
I need you to keep Bolden sober.

JEFF
Why did you put him on the case if
I'm going to be baby-sitting the
whole time?

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
The whole country just saw his face
get peeled off. He's the last
person anyone is going to expect to
see right now.

JEFF
Makes sense.

DIRECTOR
Come on, Ratavan. This is what you
always wanted, isn't it? You're a
good guy now.

JEFF

I just want to get through the day,
Audrey. I can't worry about which
side of our fake fights I'm on.

DIRECTOR

I don't believe you. I've seen the
way you look at Bolden. You've
spent your whole career fighting
for villains be treated like
heroes. You want the adoration. I
can smell it on you.

JEFF

I don't need a pat on the back.

DIRECTOR

Of course you do, you wouldn't put
on a leotard unless you did. You
know false modesty doesn't make you
a martyr, Jeff. It makes you an
asshole.

Jeff's eyes shimmer the same color as the suit on the video.

JEFF

Audrey, sometimes it's better that
they don't know. Sometimes, they
like who you are in their head more
than they actually like you.

There is no answer from the other side of the line.

Jeff closes his eyes to go to sleep.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE