

GREATEST (WANNABE) SUPERHEROES

Excerpt (p1-12)

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FADE IN:

EXT. DOWNTOWN PERFORMANCE HALL, AFTERNOON

A black, shiny limousine is parked in a no-parking zone in front of the elaborate theatre. An old man, JASPER, teeters on a ladder changing the sign on the marquis to read: GENEVIEVE BOULET WEST COAST DEBUT. He fumbles a letter and drops it, MUTTERS, descends to pick it up. We travel up the ornamented theatre facade to the roof, three storeys above.

Up on the roof top, a pair of binoculars scans the street below. NEA SORENSONSON (AKA SUNSHINE), a waify 11-year-old girl in braids and overalls, watches through them. Beside her lie a backpack and a book-marked university aerospace engineering textbook. She picks up a juice box and slurps it without moving her eyes from the binoculars.

BANGING and CLANKING emanate from a refrigeration unit. We go into the vent and down through the metal air shaft. The sounds become louder and echo-y.

At the bottom, a bulky silhouette blocks the light shining into end of the shaft. The BANGING stops followed by an impact, a GRUNT of pain.

INT. THEATRE BASEMENT KITCHEN, CONTINUOUS

SIMON (AKA SCORCHION), a chubby maintenance man in his late twenties, backs out from behind the commercial-grade refrigerator rubbing his head. He flips a switch and the fridge HUMS on; he seems satisfied. Picks up his scattered tools, replacing them in the tool belt strapped to his canvas coveralls. Tries to wrestle the wheeled refrigeration unit back into place but cannot budge it. He gives up, leans against it.

Simon pulls out a snack pack of cheesy-poufs from a belt pouch and opens them. The first bite relaxes him like a good cigarette.

MUSIC rises in the distance--an orchestra. Simon becomes enthralled.

A lovely operatic mezzo-soprano voice joins in and he beams, walks down the hall toward the music, taking orange-powdery bites as he goes.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE THEATRE, A FEW MINUTES LATER

The MUSIC is clear and rich here, the hall empty as the visiting singer from Montreal, GENEVIEVE BOULET, rehearses. From behind a closed door marked "STAIRS" comes a rough baritone VOICE. The door opens and Simon enters, singing along with Genevieve. He licks his fingers and throws away the cheesy-pouf bag. Jasper comes down the hall bearing the ladder in from outside.

JASPER
Any bites this week?

SIMON
Three so far.

JASPER
Atta boy!

SIMON
(disheartened)
Nothing ever pans out--

They cut off as the manager exits the theatre carrying an glass half-full of a thick green drink. The MUSIC swells briefly through the opened doorway. Jasper winks at Simon, walks off down the hall. The manager approaches Simon somewhat exasperated.

SIMON
(re: the refrigerator)
Running smoothly again, sir.

MANAGER
Good. We need it...

He hands him the dirty glass, nods toward the theatre door.

MANAGER
She's very particular.

SIMON
Oh, she deserves to be...

The manager exits down the stairs. Simon looks at the glass, glances around. No one else is around. He dares to approach the theatre door, considers the glass. Smells it; the substance seems foul. He steels himself, drinks it down. Puts the empty glass up to the door, his ear to the glass.

He listens in rapture as Genevieve launches into a complex passage, her voice soaring above the instruments. As she sustains a powerful note, Simon's look of bliss changes to concern and then to alarm. Dropping the glass, he clutches his abdomen and rushes for the nearest bathroom-- the women's.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM, SHORTLY AFTER

A toilet FLUSHES as a WOMAN stares in disgust at the mirror where she was fixing her make-up. In the reflection, we see Simon in a stall, hauling up his polyester long johns, coveralls still around his ankles. Embarrassed at being observed, he closes and locks the door.

SIMON

I'll never touch another health
drink.

As he pulls on his coveralls, the cel phone rings. He struggles to fish it out of a pocket.

SIMON

Simon here.

We hear incredibly fast, high-pitched speech on the other end of the line. Simon sits down on the toilet, waiting for a chance to get a word in.

SIMON

(interrupting)
Sunshine, slow down.

EXT. PERFORMANCE HALL ROOFTOP, SIMULTANEOUS

Nea, who Simon refers to as Sunshine, talks very rapidly on the phone while holding the binoculars with her other hand.

SUNSHINE

(just slow enough to be
understandable)
I said a perpetrator is attempting
an illegal velocipedal
appropriation--

SIMON

(v.o.)
Again?

We see her point of view through the binoculars: a swarthy fellow works away at the lock of a pink princess bicycle a couple of blocks away.

SUNSHINE

If we depart in all precipitateness--

SIMON

(v.o.)

What?

SUNSHINE

(without missing a beat)

If we go now we could conceivably
apprehend--

SIMON

(v.o.)

Huh?

SUNSHINE

--maybe catch him before he can
successfully abscond-- get away--
with it. He's on 3rd in close
proximity to the previously owned
literary material establishment.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM, SIMULTANEOUS

Simon gets up, starts struggling into his coveralls, still
holding the phone.

SIMON

Where? (pause) Oh, the used book
store. Got it. Let's meet at the
usual.

He hangs up the phone, slips it into a pocket as he zips up
his coveralls.

SIMON

"Velocipedal appropriation"... she
should come with her own personal
decoder.

He reaches for the door, tries to unlock it but can't. The
bolt is jammed. He pulls at it, jiggles it, to no avail. In
a hurry, he gives up, goes down on his belly to slide under
the door. He can't fit. Finally, he awkwardly climbs up on
the toilet tank, looks over the partition into the adjacent
stall. A woman SHRIEKS. Simon ducks down, then throws his
bulk up and over the other side. It is hardly a graceful
exit, but he is on his way.

EXT. PERFORMANCE HALL ROOFTOP, SIMULTANEOUS

Sunshine finishes stuffing her textbook, binoculars, etc. into her backpack. Straps it on her back and dashes across the roof toward the far side, long braids streaming behind her. Her speed is unnaturally fast and she seems unusually agile. Some of that speed comes from skates imbedded the bottom of her shoes, but still, this is no normal kid.

Sunshine reaches the far side of the roof and nearly overshoots off the edge. Grabs the fire escape just in time and pulls herself onto it. Taking the stairs in a run, she leaps over the last 3-4 steps of each flight.

EXT. NEARBY PARKING GARAGE, SIMULTANEOUS

Simon emerges from the performance hall parking garage. All business, he pulls on black pleather gloves that match his black pleather scorpion-emblazoned jacket. His dirty coveralls poke out from underneath.

He walks across the street and approaches the corner of the theatre just as Sunshine drops down from the end of the fire escape. She points and they run off, Simon heaving his bulk to and fro in a vain attempt to keep up.

EXT. 3RD ST. NEAR A USED BOOK STORE, SIMULTANEOUS

A tall, skinny THIEF finishes cutting the last of the many locks on the princess bike Sunshine spied from the rooftop. He mounts the bike, which forces him to sit up tall and hold the curved handlebars far out to each side. His legs are far too long for the pedals. He looks over his shoulder as he teeters off, sees Sunshine and Simon spot him from about a block away. Riding unsteadily, the thief ducks into a nearby alley.

EXT. ALLEY, CONTINUOUS

The bicycle thief hides himself behind a dumpster a short distance from the street. Whips out his cell phone to call his boss.

BICYCLE THIEF

Hey, I got the bike, but I think someone's on to me. (pause) Yeah, two of them. How did you know?

(MORE)

BICYCLE THIEF (cont'd)
 (pause) Well, tell 'em to hurry.
 I'm outta here.

With that, he pushes himself away from the dumpster and pedals off down the alley.

Seconds later, Sunshine arrives. The alley is empty. She scans the ground. There are tire tracks in the soft mud of the alley; they lead behind the dumpster. Sunshine sneaks forward, anticipating the thief to still be hiding there. She slips along the side of the dumpster, peers around the side ready for a fight. No one is there.

Simon shows up, puffing and blowing, sweating profusely. He pulls out a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his face.

SIMON
 You're supposed to wait for me!

SUNSHINE
 We've permitted the perpetrator to extricate himself from the situation. I've observed that he ensconced himself for a brief temporal period adjacent to this trash receptacle. There is further evidence of his velocipedal passage in these imprints-- are you unwell?

Simon looks a bit gray as the blush from his exertion fails. He presses the hankie to his mouth.

SIMON
 Had a little stomach trouble earlier. I'll be fine. So he went off that way? (seeing her nod)
 Then let's go.

THUG #1 (O.S.)
 Not so fast, fat guy.

They turn and find three large men hulking in the alley entrance-way. They brandish various heavy bicycle tools (i.e. socket wrenches, etc.) and advance, threatening.

THUG #2
 Boss didn't say anything about a little girl and a sissy. Are these the right ones?

THUG #3
 He said two superheroes were on the trail and these two are on the trail...

THUG #1

Charge!

Sunshine smiles sweetly, placing her backpack carefully to one side as the three men run toward them. As the first approaches her, she grabs her braids like nunchuks and wields them in a spinning flurry. Weights fastened at the end of each braid crack against the thug's jawbone and he flies back. She follows up with a series of well-placed kicks; he's out cold. The shortest of the attackers turns his attention from Simon to Sunshine and finds himself quickly dispatched by her lightning fast hand work.

SUNSHINE

This is the predictable consequence
of attempting to intimidate the--

She air-chops swiftly with her hands.

SUNSHINE

Sunshine Slash Slasher!

Her victim remains unconscious. She checks him over; the bared upper arm sports a bicycle wheel tattoo.

The third thug freezes as he sees his partners down. Looks back at Simon, who steps forward.

SIMON

And I am--

He brandishes his fingers and aims them at the oil-slicked puddle the man is standing in.

SIMON

The Scorchion!

Flames shoot out of his fingertips and ignite the oil. The thug's clothing catches fire and he SHRIEKS, rushing off to find another puddle to drop and roll in. Simon and Sunshine high-five each other. Grabbing her backpack, they take off down the alley following the bicycle thief's tracks.

EXT. CITY STREETS & ALLEYS, CONTINUOUS

Simon and Sunshine run as Sunshine tracks the thief through the city.

SUNSHINE

(re: the thugs)

Scorchion, did your cerebro-superhuman-capability detectors indicate a positive response?

SIMON

Did I Supersense them? (shakes his head) Did you?

Sunshine shakes her own head then hesitates, looking for a clue. Seeing the faint mark of a tire track, she carries on running, confident.

SUNSHINE

Ergo, substantiated upon the available circumstantial evidence, one could reasonably conclude the perpetrators are of the sub-super-homosapien species...

SIMON

(a little out of breath)
So... normal thugs-for hire then.
Not supervillains.

SUNSHINE

Correct, in the vernacular nomenclature. (beat) I observed that the upper typically-dominant-side appendage of the proportionally vertically challenged suspect bears a subepidermally-injected permanent-pigment graphical representation of a velocipedal rotary unit.

SIMON

(panting hard)
One of them had a... bicycle wheel tattoo? (catching his breath) Maybe it's a gang...

SUNSHINE

It would logically imply substantially enhanced sophistication and multi-personage coordination... I am no longer inclined to deem probable a matter of simple pilferage.

(MORE)

SUNSHINE (cont'd)

(beat) Have you absorbed the content of the present 24-hour-period mass-produced journalistic multipaginated publication?

SIMON

(badly winded)

Yes... the newspaper says... rash of bike... thefts... Police suspect... a ring... This could... be our break!

They run off around a corner.

EXT. WHARF AREA, FIVE MINUTES LATER

Our heroes enter around the side of a building. A narrow dirt road leads between a string of shabby warehouses. Piles of crates and machine parts rest up against corrugated metal walls. Some of the warehouses are open with workers coming and going. Simon pulls Sunshine back before they can be seen.

SIMON

We'll never find him without going in there.

SUNSHINE

I concur. (looking around) We register occularly as abundantly conspicuous... Hmmm... are we perchance adequately equipped for infiltration?

SIMON

You bet... right up my alley.

He pulls off his jacket and gloves, folding them carefully. In his maintenance clothes, he blends in seamlessly. Strides down the street away from Sunshine.

EXT. NEAR WHEELER DEALER WAREHOUSE, SHORTLY AFTER

Simon tinkers at a piece of machinery with a found tool while keeping a sharp eye out on the activity around him. He can see Sunshine peeking around the corner and waves her off. Another worker notices his gesture, so Simon pretends to be waving away a fly. He gets back to "work".

Another worker drives by with a forklift full of crates. One of them has a visible logo: a bicycle wheel.

Simon watches as the driver turns into the next warehouse down. He finishes his tinkering and walks off around the back of the warehouse.

EXT. REAR WHEELER DEALER WAREHOUSE, CONTINUOUS

Sneaking now, Simon makes his way into the shadow of the warehouse.

SUNSHINE (O.S.)

Pssst!

Simon nearly jumps out of his shoes, looks up. Gets a face full of his jacket and gloves as they fall from above. Sunshine grins down at him from the roof. Simon glares at her, puts on the jacket. She joins him on the ground. They move along the back wall to a door. It's locked. Simon pulls out a set of picking tools, gets to work on the lock.

SUNSHINE

It is suggested precautionary procedure to perform reconnaissance prior to attempting to unlawfully penetrate this substandard architectural structure.

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS (O.S.)

Reconnaissance. Step #1 in the Superhero Sting Operations Guide.

An impressively tall and broad-shouldered superhero stands behind them, fists on hips.

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS

But you wouldn't know, would you. You're not in the union.

He's dressed in a skin-tight fancy hero outfit and matching boots. He pulls out his wallet, flashing ID; it is a guild membership card that reads: CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS. REGISTERED SUPERHERO GUILD MEMBER. CLASS A.

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS

This is a union gig, kids. Members only.

SUNSHINE

My crime-commitment-apprehension associate and I--

Captain Oblivious imperiously holds out a hand to stall her. He looks at Simon for an explanation.

SIMON

We've been hot on the heels of a bi-

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS

--cycle thief. I know.

He begins pacing, ticking off on his fingers.

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS

And you think you've tracked him masterfully. And you believe you've stumbled on to a ring. And you are certain there's a ring leader. Well, you're right. This is the home of the nefarious Wheeler Dealer and we're here to round up this tired little operation.

He strikes a dramatic pose.

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS

No more will children's bicycles be stolen out from under their snotty little noses. No more will frail elderly women be left without their trusty two-wheeled companions. No more--

SIMON

So just how did you know--

CAPTAIN OBLIVIOUS

Classified. Now run along... go back to... whatever it is you... people... do. There's Real Work to be done.

With that, he launches himself up the wall, managing his exit with true superhero flair. Until he nears the top, where, oblivious to a piece of wood jutting out, he rams himself badly and nearly falls. He loses his wallet, which tumbles to the ground. Before Simon can say anything, Captain Oblivious recovers and disappears over the top. He is gone. Simon picks up the wallet.

SIMON

Superhero Guild. (beat) It's so stupid. You can't get--

SIMON
 ...into the guild without any
 experience and you can't get
 any experience without being
 in the guild.

SUNSHINE
 ...into the guild without any
 experience and you can't get
 any experience without being
 in the guild.

SIMON
 C'mon, let's get out of here...

SUNSHINE
 (making an effort to speak
 slowly)
 Scorchion, we are perfectly capable
 of engaging in this operation. We
 must simply apply advanced
 strategic preconsideration and
 tactical cerebral exertion.

Sunshine pulls a spiral notebook out of her backpack and
 starts drawing up a plan. A pair of work boots approach, stop
 in front of her.

WORKER
 Here, now. What'chyou two doin'?

SUNSHINE
 Extracurricular scholastic
 undertaking.

He blinks at her. Turns to Simon.

SIMON
 I'm her school project chaperone.

WORKER
 Well, all right, then, but stay
 outta the way and watch yerselves.

(END SCENE)