

JUPITER'S LEGACY

Episode 101

"By Dawn's Early Light"

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Based on the Graphic Novel by
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FADE IN:

1 INT. ND SPACE

1

GEARS rotate. Interlocking TEETH grind, giving life to the complex innards of an unknown MACHINE. PULL OUT to reveal

A WALL CLOCK

The minute hand KA-CHUNKS. Five 'til six. CONTINUE PULLING OUT to reveal the clock is --

2 INT. BANK LOBBY - DAY

2

-- on the wall of a bank lobby. An elderly SECURITY GUARD checks his watch. Yawns. Frowns at the knot of CUSTOMERS still in the lobby.

 SECURITY GUARD
Closing up! Five minutes --

The front door crashes open. Three GOONS with ski masks and automatic weapons storm in.

 GOON #1
Get on the floor!

 GOON #2
Everybody down!

The Security Guard goes for his gun. Goon #3 (female) cracks him with the butt of her rifle.

 GOON #3
The fuck you doing, grandpa?! I
will shoot you in the face!

 GOON #1
Down! Down! Get down!

Customers scream as they hit the deck. All but one. A tall WOMAN with short, spiky blond hair. Wearing a long coat. Her back towards us.

 GOON #1 (CONT'D)
*Yo! Blondie! Hit the floor! We're
robbin' this bitch!*

 WOMAN
No.

(CONTINUED)

GOON #1

No?

His hand tightens on his automatic as he approaches her.

GOON #1 (CONT'D)

You looking to be a hero? Why you
sayin' no to the motherfucker with
the gun?

The Woman starts to turn. HIGH TECH ARMOR dominoes across her face and exposed flesh. She's not a hero. She's the supervillain IRON ORCHID. Her voice booms, menacing and powerful through an ELECTRONIC FILTER.

IRON ORCHID

Because I'm robbing this bitch.

GOON #1

Oh shit --

An ENERGY BLASTER pops out of the back of Iron Orchid's armored hand. BOOM! Goon #1's head comes apart, splattering the BANK MANAGER (female, late 40s) on the ground. She SCREAMS.

Goon #2 and #3 open fire. Bullets PING off Iron Orchid's armor. She casually blasts the Goons from across the lobby, showering the terrified Customers with blood and gore.

Iron Orchid whips her blaster to the Bank Manager.

IRON ORCHID

Shhh...

The Manager suddenly stops screaming, eyes wide with fear.

IRON ORCHID (CONT'D)

Let's get that safe open.

SMASH TO:

EXT. BANK - DAY

Alarms WAIL. Iron Orchid strides out with two duffel bags filled with cash.

A SONIC BOOM pulls her attention to the sky. What looks like ROCKET CONTRAILS are speeding towards her.

THOOM! PARAGON (BRANDON SAMPSON, mid-20s) lands in the street, blocking her escape. Powerful. Commanding. Super.

(CONTINUED)

PARAGON

Drop the bags and get on the
ground. Not asking twice.

Iron Orchid tenses -- then *breaks up laughing*.

IRON ORCHID

*Oh shit. For a second there I thought
you were the Utopian. Oh -- oh god, I
think I peed a little.*

*

Paragon's confidence falters.

PARAGON

Hey --

IRON ORCHID

(laughing)
*You guys really need to announce
yourselves or something. Like, "Hi,
I'm Paragon, no need to piss yourself
because I'm a fucking idiot -- "*

Paragon snarls and launches himself at Iron Orchid. TIME
SLOWS as his feet tear up the asphalt, the air CONTRAILING
behind him.

Paragon rears back to punch Iron Orchid into orbit. TIME
crashes back to normal just as Iron Orchid whips her hands
up. Massive CANNONS ka-chunk out of her armored forearms.

Twin ENERGY BLASTS slam into Paragon. He flies back, crashing
into parked cars.

Iron Orchid advances, arm-cocking her cannons.

IRON ORCHID (CONT'D)

*Stay down. I don't got your pansy-
ass code about not killin'.*

*

*

Paragon glares through the pain. Starts to try to get up.

*

IRON ORCHID (CONT'D)

Okay. Nice knowing you, kid...

*

*

Iron Orchid powers up her cannons to blast Paragon into the
great beyond.

*

*

KRAK-THOOM! The UTOPIAN drops down behind her. Early 60s.
Long white hair. Matching beard. God in a super suit,
inspiring awe. And in this case, *fear*.

(CONTINUED)

IRON ORCHID (CONT'D)

Utopian!

Iron Orchid opens fire with her cannons. Utopian grits his teeth against the onslaught. Everything around him comes apart, but he stands his ground.

Utopian's eyes begin to GLOW. ENERGY BEAMS suddenly leap from them, raking Iron Orchid's armored suit. She falls back, her suit arcing as it seizes up.

IRON ORCHID (CONT'D)

*Ahh! Fucker! You know how long it
took to build this?*

Utopian ignores her as he sweeps past and helps Paragon up.

UTOPIAN

You okay?

Paragon dusts himself off, deeply embarrassed.

PARAGON

(nods)

Just didn't see that coming.

UTOPIAN

Iron Orchid's always upgrading.

PARAGON

Yeah, Dad, I know.

Paragon stumbles, still reeling from the hit he took. Utopian (his father, SHELDON SAMPSON) steadies him, adding to Paragon's embarrassment.

UTOPIAN

Easy. Wait for the authorities to transport Orchid to the Max. Then go see Fitz and get checked out.

PARAGON

I said I'm all right.

There's an edge to that. Maybe more than intended. Maybe not. Sheldon cocks his head, listening to something we can't hear.

UTOPIAN

A train just derailed in Wyoming.
Go see Fitz.

PARAGON

Dad --

(CONTINUED)

UTOPIAN

Not a discussion. Do as you're told.

Utopian launches into the air like a ballistic missile. A grinding, metallic LAUGH splits the air, pulling Brandon's attention to Iron Orchid. Lying immobile in the street.

IRON ORCHID

*Yeah, do as you're told, kid. Lucky
your daddy showed up, you little
pussy --*

WHAM! Paragon kicks her into a lamppost, snapping it in two.

PARAGON

Shut the fuck up.

Paragon seethes, his eyes sweeping up to the sky where his father just flew off. OFF his roiling emotions...

SMASH TO:

MAIN TITLES

4

EXT. BEACH - DAY

4

Blue skies, bluer water. WALTER SAMPSON (40s) lounges with a book. *Seven Days in May* by Knebel and Bailey. He sighs as he turns the page. SUNNY, his wife (mid-30s) chuckles.

SUNNY

You always do that.

WALTER

Hmm?

SUNNY

You sigh, after each page. Like
you've just had a really good piece
of chocolate.

He smiles at her. It rivals the warmth of the sun.

WALTER

I like chocolate.

Sunny laughs, rising.

SUNNY

I'm going in the water. Want to
come?

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

After I finish this chapter.

SUNNY

Make it quick. I don't want to
prune.

She heads for the water. Walter hesitates. Rises.

WALTER

Sunny?

She turns. Walter struggles to find the right words.

WALTER (CONT'D)

I love you.

Sunny blinks, a quizzical, almost confused look passing
across her eyes. Then she brightens into a smile.

SUNNY

I love you, too.

She turns and heads into the water. Walter watches her go. A
deep sadness welling in his own eyes.

LADY LIBERTY (O.S.)

Walter?

Walter looks up to find LADY LIBERTY (GRACE) floating down.
Late 50s. A warm, powerful goddess. A small bouquet of
flowers in her hand.

The beach disappears as she touches down, revealing Walter is
actually in --

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The beach was a psychic "painting" created by his mental
powers. And Walter (now mid-60s, dressed in an overcoat) is
considerably older than he was a moment ago.

WALTER

Sorry. I was just...

His eyes fall on an ornate headstone. The inscription reads
SUNNY SAMPSON. BELOVED WIFE. 1937 - 1983.

LADY LIBERTY

Can't believe it's been another
year already.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

Yeah.

*

The depth of his pain breaks her heart.

LADY LIBERTY

Why don't you come for dinner. Kids
would love to see you.

WALTER

Kids, huh?

Lady Liberty doesn't try to hide the truth.

LADY LIBERTY

You shouldn't be alone. Not today.

WALTER

You don't have to worry about me,
Grace.

LADY LIBERTY

Sheldon's making pot roast.

Walter smiles faintly. She knows him too well.

WALTER

With the baby carrots?

LADY LIBERTY

And the rolls with garlic butter.

Walter chuckles.

WALTER

Well that's just not fair.

LADY LIBERTY

So you'll come?

Walter nods. Thankful for the offer. Lady Liberty places the
flowers on Sunny's grave.

LADY LIBERTY (CONT'D)

She was a hell of a lady.

WALTER

That she was.

Walter pushes the emotion away, shifting the subject.

WALTER (CONT'D)

You need me to bring anything?

(CONTINUED)

LADY LIBERTY
Just your appetite.

She gives him a peck on the cheek.

LADY LIBERTY (CONT'D)
I'll tell him you're coming.

She takes off into the air. Walter's eyes drift back to his wife's grave. The emotions come rushing up. He bites back tears as *WEARY RIVER* fades up, transitioning us to --

6

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT (1929)

6

The Roaring Twenties are in full swing. RUDY VALLEE croons *WEARY RIVER*, backed up by his band THE CONNECTICUT YANKEES.

RUDY VALLEE
(singing)
*I have been just like a weary river
That keeps winding endlessly...*

Find Walter (early 30s) working his way through the RICH and PRIVILEGED crowding the dance floor. Carrying a sheaf of papers. Alone. Adrift. He brightens, spotting a familiar face.

WALTER
George! George!

GEORGE HUTCHENCE (late 20s) turns. Grins at the sight of his friend attempting to navigate the crowd. George is everything Walter isn't. Tall. Handsome. Effortlessly personable.

GEORGE
There he is! Like Moses from the desert!

WALTER
Where's Sheldon?

George hooks a thumb.

GEORGE
Over in the corner nibbling on Jane's ear. For starters, at least.

George heads in the opposite direction.

WALTER
You leaving?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

(laughs)

Is the sun up? I'm getting drinks,
Ethel. If you can call 'em that.

George heads for the bar. Linger on Walter, once again alone
and adrift. His eyes dart around, searching for a safe
harbor. He spots it at

*
*
*

A CORNER TABLE

Sheldon (late 20s) sits with a radiant JANE (early 20s). He
whispers something in her ear. She laughs, swats at him,
playfully scandalized.

*

JANE

He did not!

SHELDON

He did, I swear!

Jane spots Walter hustling up.

JANE

Walt, Sheldon's spinning stories.
Did George really fly to Los
Angeles to show Douglas Fairbanks
his, you know...?

Walter grimaces, nods.

WALTER

George had a thing with Mary
Pickford. They dated when they were
kids or something.

SHELDON

(to Jane)

Did I tell you?

JANE

So why was he showing it to
Fairbanks?

WALTER

I don't know. Ask him.

(to Sheldon, re: papers)

Shel, there's some things we need
to go over.

SHELDON

Come on, pal. Not tonight.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

We have to talk about the numbers.
Dad needs to --

SHELDON

We're celebrating here! Loosen your
corset, for Chrissake.

Walter glowers, gives in.

WALTER

All right. Let's see it.

Jane holds out her hand, revealing a dazzling ENGAGEMENT
RING. Walter lets out an appreciative whistle.

WALTER (CONT'D)

(to Sheldon)

How much that set you back?

George joins them, loaded with drinks.

GEORGE

(laughs)

Hey, put that thing away before you
blind somebody.

JANE

George, what's this I hear about
you and Douglas Fairbanks?

George grins, relishing the subject. Walter tightens, having
heard this story one too many times.

*
*

GEORGE

Mary was beating her gums nobody
ever gave it to her like Fairbanks.
That it was like riding a stallion
or some bushwa.

JANE

Oh! So you flew out to *compare*
yours to his!

GEORGE

No, I flew out to have lunch at the
Derby. Humiliating that prick
Fairbanks was just a bonus.

*

WALTER

Can we please stop talking about
what's in George's trousers?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

You can try, but it always comes
back around.

Walter frowns sourly. George ignores him, hoists his glass to
Sheldon and Jane.

*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

A toast! To impending nuptials, and
the best friends a guy as tasty as
me could ever have.

SHELDON

(laughs)

Hear! Hear!

They drink. Walter, Sheldon, and Jane sputter in surprise.

WALTER

What the hell's in this?

GEORGE

A little shine of the moon variety.

George opens his jacket, revealing a SILVER FLASK poking out
of his inside breast pocket.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Not gonna get ossified on that
noodle juice they're serving.

Sheldon glances around, nervous.

SHELDON

You off your nut? That stuff's
illegal.

GEORGE

Until this country comes to its
senses on Prohibition, consider me
a goddam outlaw.

George downs his drink in one gulp. Rudy Vallee and his band
start up *HONEY*.

JANE

Ouh! They're playing *Honey*.
(rising, to Sheldon)
Come on, let's dance.

SHELDON

(to Walter and George)
Duty calls.

(CONTINUED)

Jane pulls him onto the dance floor. George grins, watching them go.

GEORGE
They make a helluva couple. Think
they'll last?

WALTER
That's a shit thing to say.

GEORGE
Look, I hope they're a real
storybook together.

George pours moonshine into his empty glass from his flask.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Keep that twinkle in their eye 'til
they're old and gray. But not how
it usually shakes out, is it?

WALTER
Maybe not for a guy like you.

George forces a smile, feeling the truth in Walter's barb.

GEORGE
Maybe not.

He spots two GORGEOUS TWINS at the bar giving him the once
over. Brightens.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
And suddenly the clouds part.

Walter gawks.

WALTER
That's the Rinsdale twins.

GEORGE
Twins, huh? Good. Thought I was
seeing double.

He fires up a cigarette, rises.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
'Scuse me while I iron my
shoelaces.

WALTER
Hey, uh, can I --

(CONTINUED)

Walter starts to rise. Desperate to join the fun. To break free from his loneliness. George puts the brakes on.

*
*

GEORGE
Whoa, pal. Four's a crowd.

WALTER
Come on, George.

GEORGE
Someday you'll find a gal to look
past all your considerable faults,
Ethel. In the meantime, break some
laws.

He tosses Walter his flask of moonshine as he heads off to join the Rinsdale twins. Walter sags back into his chair.

His eyes fall on Sheldon and Jane on the dance floor. Laughing and in love. Walter takes a swig from the flask, a familiar sadness welling in his eyes.

ON SHELDON AND JANE

Sheldon spots his brother, abandoned at their table.

SHELDON
Walt's all by himself.

JANE
He's a big boy. He'll be fine.

Sheldon chuckles.

SHELDON
That's not very Christian.

JANE
Show me in the Bible where it says
a mopey brother gets to ruin my
engagement party.

SHELDON
Isn't that in Leviticus somewhere?

She swats him, laughing.

JANE
Blasphemer.

(CONTINUED)

6

SHELDON
Blasphemer? That's George. You got
the wrong fella.

JANE
I think I got the right one. And
I'm never letting him go.

Love shines in her eyes. Sheldon reflects it back.

SHELDON
I'm gonna hold you to that, lady.

JANE
You'd better, mister.

She kisses him. He takes her into his arms, the world around
them forgotten as the music from the band SWELLS...

7

INT. KITCHEN - SAMPSON FARMHOUSE - DAY

7

A SPEAKER belts out *Honey* by Rudy Vallee and his Connecticut
Yankees. PULL BACK to reveal it's a bluetooth device sitting on
a kitchen counter in a classic Americana home.

Sheldon passes by, searching through the battlefield of a meal
in progress.

SHELDON
(calling out)
Honey? Where's the garlic press?

Grace enters. In the present, Sheldon is married to her, not
Jane. Looks like George was right.

GRACE
It's in the drawer.

SHELDON
I checked the drawer.

Grace opens a drawer, rummages, pulls out a garlic press.

GRACE
You know for a guy that can spot a
dime on the surface of the moon...

SHELDON
Don't sass me when I'm cooking,
woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes the garlic press, kissing her with a grin. There's love here. Compounded by the years.

GRACE
(laughs)
You want a beer?

SHELDON
Wouldn't say no.

She retrieves two bottles of American beer from the fridge.

GRACE
What are you listening to?

SHELDON
Rudy Vallee and his Connecticut Yankees.

GRACE
Ugh. Where's your phone??

She pops the tops with her thumb instead of a bottle opener. Hands one to Sheldon.

SHELDON
Over by the potatoes.

She picks up his phone. Punches a code. The music cuts off.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
How'd you know my code?

GRACE
We've been married for sixty years.
You don't get to have secrets.

SHELDON
That's disturbing.

Elvis croons *Loving You* from the speaker.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
Ouhh, the King. Remember when we
bumped into him in the woods in
Germany back in '57?

ELVIS (OVER SPEAKER)
(singing)
I will spend my whole life through
Loving you, just loving you...

(CONTINUED)

GRACE
'58. Scared the crap out of him.
Thought we were a UFO.

SHELDON
(laughs)
Good kid. Before the drugs got him.

His mood visibly darkens. Grace knows where his thoughts have gone. And why.

GRACE
She's going to be all right.

SHELDON
Maybe I should just sit her down --

GRACE
Maybe you *shouldn't*.

SHELDON
She needs to hear it.

GRACE
But she won't. Your heart's in the
right place, but it's not *her*
place. At least not right now.

SHELDON
So when?

GRACE
That's up to her.

Sheldon presses garlic. The mightiest being on the planet.
Powerless.

GRACE (CONT'D)
How's the kid that still listens to
us?

SHELDON
Fitz gave him a clean bill.

GRACE
Not what I meant.

Sheldon exhales, concern creasing his brow.

SHELDON
Iron Orchid's a C-Lister. At *best*.
He let her get under his skin.

*

(CONTINUED)

GRACE

Like that's never happened to us?

SHELDON

Sure, with somebody like Hobbs or
Blackstar. Somebody who could back
it up. What if Brandon had some of
the other kids with him? He could
have gotten them killed.

*
*
*

GRACE

But he didn't, so...

*
*

SHELDON

He's just... he's not getting it,
Grace.

*
*
*

GRACE

He's still learning.

SHELDON

If he's going to take on the mantle
of Utopian, he needs to do more
than learn. He needs to *become*.

GRACE

Okay, Yoda. You're not going
anywhere. He's got time.

SHELDON

Time's not the problem. He gets so
distracted. Emotional. He's not
even close to being ready.

The next words pain Sheldon. But they need to be given voice.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

Maybe he never will be.

8

EXT. ROOFTOP - SAMPSON FARMHOUSE - DAY

8

The sun hangs low on the horizon. Reveal Brandon sitting on
the roof having a beer. Eavesdropping with his super hearing.

SHELDON (O.S.)

(fading)

*Maybe he never will be... Maybe he
never will be... Maybe he never
will be...*

Brandon is deeply stung by his father's doubts. Walter floats
down on the roof next to him, carrying a bottle of wine.

(CONTINUED)

BRANDON
Hey, Uncle Walt.

WALTER
Hey, Champ. Heard you took down
Iron Orchid.

BRANDON
That was all Dad. I just got
knocked on my ass.

The memory festers. Walter applies a little balm.

WALTER
Your dad's gotten knocked on his
ass plenty of times.

BRANDON
He has?

WALTER
And it's never not funny. What are
you doing up here?

BRANDON
You know.
(re: beer)
Thinkin' and drinkin'.

WALTER
Well let's do it on a full stomach.
Your uncle's starving.

Walter floats down to the ground. Brandon finishes his
beer... and tosses it a mile into the distance. He rises to
follow Walter, WIPING US TO --

INT. FURNACE CAST HOUSE - SAMPSON STEEL - DAY (1929)

The blast furnace towers four stories over the cast house
where molten steel is poured. STEEL WORKERS toil and sweat,
straining against the oppressive heat.

Sheldon appears, all smiles and handshakes. The Workers greet
him more like a brother than a boss.

CLYDE
Hey, Shel!

SHELDON
Clyde, how's it going?

(CONTINUED)

CLYDE
Hot as shit!

SHELDON
You're telling me. Roscoe, what's
the word?!

ROSCOE
Weddin' Bells! That's the rumor!

SHELDON
(laughs)
No rumor, pal! I'm heading up the
aisle!

WILLIE SMALL (48, gray beyond his years), calls out.

WILLE
So she finally pinned you down,
huh?

SHELDON
Couldn't be happier to kiss the
floor, Willie.

WILLE
(laughs)
You do right by her now. Keep it
zipped tight and you'll never have
a fight.

FITZ (22), Willie's son, tenses.

FITZ
Pop.
(to Sheldon)
Sorry, Mr. Sampson.

SHELDON
For what? That's good advice from
your old man. And what'd I tell you
about calling me Mr. Sampson, Fitz?
That's *my* old man -- and I ain't
that old yet.

WILLIE
(re: Fitz)
Ah, don't pay him no mind.
Congrats, Shel.

Willie sticks out his hand. Sheldon grasps it warmly.

(CONTINUED)

SHELDON

Thanks, Willie. Appreciate it.

WILLIE

Need to be appreciating the quiet
you have to yourselves right now.
Before you know it, house'll be
full of kids, running around like
damn fools.

Willie throws side eye to his son. Fitz laughs, clasping his
dad on the shoulder.

FITZ

Just keeping you on your toes, pop.

SHELDON

(to Willie)

Looking forward to the chaos.
Especially if I'm lucky enough to
have a son like yours.

WILLIE

You ever want to take him off my
hands, just say the word.

SHELDON

(laughs)

Kinda keen on making my own.

He glances up to an OFFICE overlooking the cast house.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

My dad up there?

WILLIE

With your brother, last I saw.

SHELDON

You take care.

WILLE

You too.

Sheldon heads up to the office. Fitz shoots Willie a look.

FITZ

"Take him off my hands." Why you
gotta embarrass me like that, pop?

WILLIE

Boy, shut up and get to work. Whup
you upside your damn head.

(CONTINUED)

Willie goes back to pouring molten steel. OFF the noise and intense heat...

10 INT. MAIN OFFICE - SAMPSON STEEL - DAY (1929) 10

Dark woods illuminated by shafts of light piercing the gloom from windows looking out over the cast house.

CHESTER SAMPSON (60s, a bear in glasses and a yellow tie) argues with an agitated Walter.

CHESTER
What are you talking about? The Dow's at 381. Fisher says it's a permanent plateau.

WALTER
Fisher? He's an atheist.

CHESTER
And you're not?

WALTER
I go to church.

CHESTER
I go to the bathroom. Doesn't make me a urologist.

Sheldon breezes in.

WALTER
Shel, will you get Dad to listen?

SHELDON
(to Chester)
Listen to Walt, Dad.
(to Walter)
What are we talking about?

CHESTER
Your brother wants to sink the deal.

SHELDON
What? I thought you were on board?
When did this happen?

WALTER
I tried to talk to you about it last night at the club.

(CONTINUED)

CHESTER
(to Sheldon)
How's Jane?

SHELDON
Already picking out china patterns.
(to Walter)
You should've tried harder. Where's
this coming from?

WALTER
You asked me to kick the tires. I
did, and the tread's wearing thin.

Walter grabs up the sheaf of papers he was carrying at the
club from off Chester's desk.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Every Joe Lunchbox with a spare
nickel is buying on margin with as
little as ten percent down.

CHESTER
Spreading the love to the little
guy. How's that bad?

WALTER
If you pile a bunch of "little
guys" up high enough, they'll
flatten you when they fall over.

SHELDON
Market's been gaining almost twenty
percent annually since '22. Fisher
says --

WALTER
I don't care what fucking Irving
Fisher says!

CHESTER
Language.

WALTER
Sorry.
(to Sheldon)
Fisher could be wrong.

SHELDON
(no way)
He's from Yale.

Walter waves the papers.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

Your little guys are overextended.
Agriculture is in a slump. And the
Federal Reserve in New York just
hiked interest rates a full point.

CHESTER

Hoover knows what he's doing.

WALTER

So everybody knows what they're
doing except me.

SHELDON

That's not what we're saying.

CHESTER

Look, we get it. You're the glass
half empty guy. Every company needs
one of those to keep feet nailed to
the ground. But sometimes you gotta
have faith and step off of that
ledge if you're ever gonna soar.

Walter wavers. His father casts a powerful shadow.

WALTER

Okay. Let's just hold off for a few
months --

SHELDON

Months?

WALTER

Just until we see what the market
does.

CHESTER

The Board's ready to back the play
now, Walt.

SHELDON

We're gearing up to start breaking
ground on three more mills. You
know how much a delay like that
could run us?

Walter rifles through his papers.

WALTER

I've got numbers on that --

(CONTINUED)

10

CHESTER

This isn't about money or numbers.
This is about what we do. We build.
Not just with steel, but with
people.

Sheldon takes up the baton as he looks out across the furnace
cast house floor. At the men toiling below.

SHELDON

Some of these guys like Willie have
been with us twenty, thirty years.
The more we expand, the more good
men we can give jobs to. The chance
to buy a house. Raise kids.

*
*

CHESTER

A pension to retire on when they
can't work anymore.

SHELDON

The chance to grab ahold of the
American Dream.

CHESTER

That's what this is about. Not the
Board or the Fed or Irving Fisher.
It's about *people*, Walt. It's about
family.

Walter wrestles with his father's words. Wanting to
desperately believe in them. OFF his struggle...

SMASH TO:

11

INT. DINING ROOM - SAMPSON FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

11

A Sunday dinner that would make Norman Rockwell jealous.
Walter takes a seat at the table with Sheldon, Grace, and
Brandon. *His* family. The only thing keeping him from being
pulled under by sorrow and loneliness.

WALTER

That smells amazing.

GRACE

Can my man cook or can my man cook?

She kisses Sheldon, sits. Brandon forces a smile, his
father's overheard doubts about him still echoing.

(CONTINUED)

11

BRANDON
Looks great, Dad.

SHELDON
(laughs)
It's Sunday dinner, not the Last
Supper. Let's lower expectations.

Sheldon's rebuke, despite its humorous intention, adds salt
to Brandon's wound. Walter catches the reaction.

WALTER
Strength of a hundred men, humility
of a thousand.
(to Brandon)
Tell your old man it's okay to take
a bow once and a while.

BRANDON
I don't think he'll listen.

GRACE
I know he won't listen.

WALTER
I'll drink to that.

Walter pours from the wine he brought.

SHELDON
(with a smile)
Well at least we're all on the same
page.

Walter starts to raise his wine glass to his lips.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
Walt, you forget something?

WALTER
Oh, I'm sorry. Would you like a
glass?

GRACE
I told you you didn't have to bring
anything.

WALTER
It's just a little Pinot I picked
up in Côte de Beaune on my way
over.

(CONTINUED)

11

SHELDON

Not the wine. We say grace before
we eat in this house.

WALTER

Technically I'm *drinking*.

SHELDON

Walt.

Walter sighs. Puts the glass down.

WALTER

Right. God before the good stuff.
(to Brandon)
Old family tradition.

SHELDON

Let's all join hands. And close our
mouths.

Walter complies. With his hands, at least.

WALTER

We waiting for Chloe?

SHELDON

We've eaten enough cold Sunday
dinners to learn not to.

Sheldon bows his head. Everyone follows suit.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

Thank you, Lord, for your
generosity. Thank you for the
blessings of the meal we eat today.
Thank you for our home, and for our
family. For those present, and for
those who are no longer with us...

*

Walter registers that. The old familiar grief flashes across
his eyes.

*

*

SHELDON (CONT'D)

... but are always in our thoughts
and prayers --

*

*

*

BOOM. The house trembles. The table shakes. Brandon glowers.

BRANDON

Look who showed up.

Walter forces the sadness aside with a half-hearted grin.

*

(CONTINUED)

11

WALTER

That mean I can drink now?

The front door crashes open. CHLOE SAMPSON (23) spills into the house, laughing as she dusts herself off from the hard landing. Drunk? High? Both? Hard to tell.

CHLOE

Sorry! Sorry, my agent called just when I was leaving -- Uncle Walter!

WALTER

Hey, kiddo.

She runs over and throws her arms around him. Knowing what day this is for him.

*
*

CHLOE

So good to see you! How're you doing? You okay?

*
*

WALTER

Not if you keep squeezing me.

*
*

She lets go with a laugh.

*

CHLOE

Sorry. I -- ouh! Is that Pinot?

*
*

Chloe grabs the bottle of wine.

GRACE

Your father was saying grace, honey.

CHLOE

Sorry! Sorry!

*

She fumbles into her seat, laughing.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

He's saying grace and your name is Grace. That is so weird. Isn't that weird?

Sheldon frowns. Joins hands again. Everyone lowers their head. Chloe's eyes dart around as she tries not to laugh.

SHELDON

Thank you for our health, and bless those who are in need. Open our hearts to your love.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SHELDON (CONT'D)

We ask your blessing through Christ
your son. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

Chloe dives in like she hasn't eaten in a year. Everyone else
follows at a more dignified pace. Walter eyes her, concerned
by what he sees but keeping it to himself. Not his place.

*

*

CHLOE

Oh, mom. This looks so good.

GRACE

Thank your father. He made all
this.

CHLOE

Wow. Go Dad. Did Jesus help?

SHELDON

Just with the bread.

Chloe practically snorts wine out of her nose. Brandon
grimaces.

BRANDON

Come on.

CHLOE

(to Sheldon)

That was a good one. You made fish,
you could've had a runner.

WALTER

Pass the carrots, please.

Chloe complies.

GRACE

I think I'll have some of that
wine.

Walter dishes carrots. Tries to steer the conversation in a
positive direction.

*

*

WALTER

I saw your magazine cover, Chloe.
You looked beautiful.

*

CHLOE

Aww, thanks, Uncle Walt.
Photographer was a real asshole.

(CONTINUED)

11

SHELDON
Language.

CHLOE
Sorry. He was a real anus.

Brandon laughs despite his annoyance.

BRANDON
What's wrong with you?

CHLOE
How much time you got?

She nudges him with a smile. They may have differences, but there's love there.

GRACE
Was that the one for InStyle?

SHELDON
(correcting)
Marie Claire.

Chloe freezes. Surprised.

CHLOE
You saw it?

SHELDON
It was a good picture.

*

Chloe blossoms under the unexpected praise.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
But you could wear a little more.

She wilts. Grace shoots Sheldon a look that could strip paint. Tries to defuse.

*

GRACE
Your uncle's right. You looked
beautiful --

*

*

CHLOE
(to Sheldon)
I could wear a lot less.

BRANDON
If you want to be naked.

(CONTINUED)

11

CHLOE

You want to cover your body up with
a rubber suit and shiny boots,
that's your kink.

SHELDON

Your brother's using his gifts to
make the world a better place. Not
to grab attention and endorsements.

WALTER

Okay, let's all just --

CHLOE

I don't need powers to get
attention. Or a fucking job.

GRACE

Chloe.

SHELDON

You don't talk that way in my
house.

CHLOE

"My house. My rules. My Code." I
didn't ask to be your daughter. And
I sure as shit didn't ask for your
"gifts."

SHELDON

They're not for you. They're to help
people who aren't as fortunate.

CHLOE

Everyone's more fortunate than me,
Dad. Because they don't have you as
a father.

That hits Sheldon like a slap to the face. Anger gives way to
a deep, stinging hurt. Any anger Grace had towards Sheldon
for his earlier comment is washed away.

GRACE

Apologize to your father.

CHLOE

What, he started it.

GRACE

Apologize. Now.

(CONTINUED)

It's the Mom Voice of God. Even Chloe trembles a little before it.

CHLOE
I'm sorry. Thanks for dinner. It's
the last one I'm ever coming to.

She storms out. A tense beat, broken by:

WALTER
(noticing)
She took the wine.

12 EXT. DRIVEWAY - SAMPSON FARMHOUSE - NIGHT 12

Chloe chugs the wine as she heads down the driveway. The door to the house bangs open behind her.

BRANDON
Hey.

CHLOE
Fuck off.

BRANDON
You don't talk to me like that.

CHLOE
Sorry, Dad.

BRANDON
Why are you being such a fucking
shit?

CHLOE
(laughs)
Language.

BRANDON
Fuck you.

CHLOE
Now we're talking. Come on. Let it
out.

BRANDON
Poor little Chloe Sampson. Got it
all and has to piss on it not to
shit her pants.

(CONTINUED)

CHLOE

You're the one that still lives at home, Diaper Boy. How old are you again?

BRANDON

I'm in training.

CHLOE

For what? How to be an asshole? I think you graduated.

BRANDON

Dad can't keep this up forever. Somebody has to be next Utopian.

CHLOE

Why?

BRANDON

Because the Utopian stands for something. He's a symbol --

CHLOE

Oh fuck me. You drank the fucking Kool-Aid. You really want to be him, don't you?

He locks eyes with her. Answers honestly. From the heart.

BRANDON

Would that be so bad?

Chloe answers in kind.

CHLOE

No one can live up to the great Utopian, Brandon. Sometimes I don't even think he can.

Chloe rockets into the air and flies off. Brandon watches her go, her words resonating.

CLOSE ON dishes being washed. WIDEN as Sheldon hands a plate to Grace to be dried.

WALTER (O.S.)

You know they invented this thing called a dishwasher.

(CONTINUED)

13

Sheldon half turns as Walter ambles in. Tension from the abortive family dinner hangs in the air.

SHELDON
I like washing the dishes. Occupies
the hands. Lets the mind wander.

Grace senses that maybe Walter can help the situation more than she can at the moment. And in the act, take his mind off the anniversary of his wife's passing.

*
*

GRACE
Drying's not as exciting. Want to
take over?

WALTER
Sure.

She tosses Walter the towel.

GRACE
I'll be in *not* the kitchen if you
need me. But don't need me.

Grace exits.

WALTER
(laughs)
She hasn't changed since the day I
met her.

*

SHELDON
Thank God some things stay the
same.

He hands Walter a dish. Walter dries.

*

WALTER
You know you could be done with
these in the blink of an eye.

SHELDON
Rush through life, you just get to
the end faster --

*

Sheldon catches himself. Instantly regrets his words.

*

SHELDON (CONT'D)
Sorry. That was a stupid thing to
say.

*
*
*

Walter shrugs it off with a sad smile.

*

(CONTINUED)

WALTER
Like you said. Some things stay the same.

Sheldon half chuckles at the gentle barb.

SHELDON
Yeah, I guess.

Walter shifts the subject, not wanting to linger.

WALTER
Where'd Brandon get to?

SHELDON
Out with Tectonic and Pitchshifter in New York. Hanging with the old man's not as fun as it used be.

WALTER
You kidding me? That boy idolizes you.

SHELDON
He's stubborn and thick-headed.

WALTER
Apple fell right next to you, didn't it?

SHELDON
(laughs)
Guess so.

WALTER
He's a good kid, Shel.

SHELDON
He is.

Sheldon forces a smile.

WALTER
But?

Sheldon hesitates, confesses.

SHELDON
You think he can take over? When I can't do this any more?

(CONTINUED)

13

CONTINUED: (3)

13

WALTER

Kid has a lot of potential. Anybody
can see that.

*

SHELDON

World's filled with kids that had
potential. And didn't make it.

*

WALTER

They didn't have you.

SHELDON

Tell that to Chloe.

Walter sees the burden his brother is carrying. Would do
anything to help him shoulder it -- and to occupy his own
thoughts. He tosses his towel down.

*

*

WALTER

Rest of these can soak. Let's you
and me go for a ride.

SHELDON

Where?

WALTER

You're out of beer.

SHELDON

There's half a case in the fridge.

WALTER

You're out of good beer. Come on.
Dry your hands.

*

OFF the command...

14

INT. CORRIDOR - CITY BUILDING - DAY (1929)

14*

A BUSINESSMAN gets his shoes shined. Sheldon and his dad
Chester walk past.

SHELDON

How much capital did we have to
move around?

CHESTER

It's taken care of. Relax. You're
starting to sound like your
brother.

(CONTINUED)

SHELDON
Did you look at his numbers?

CHESTER
Yeah, I glanced at 'em.

SHELDON
He wouldn't shut up about it, so I
had him walk me through it. He's
not wrong. Maybe we should slow
down a little.

CHESTER
Can't.

SHELDON
Can't or won't?

CHESTER
Shel, it's already done.

Sheldon stops.

SHELDON
What do you mean it's done?

CHESTER
The Board voted. We started
breaking ground --

SHELDON
Wait, there was a vote? Without
Walt and me?

CHESTER
Everybody wants this, Shel. You
stood in my office and said you
wanted this. I wasn't gonna have
Walt get in there and start
throwing the jitters around.

Sheldon wrestles with that. Knows he's right.

SHELDON
You tell him yet?

CHESTER
I love your brother, but he doesn't
get it. It's not an intellectual
exercise. It's an act of faith.
Everybody tells you "No" about
everything. Everybody's afraid.
(MORE)

*

(CONTINUED)

14

CHESTER (CONT'D)

But fear is quicksand, Shel. You
can't build nothin' on it.

Sheldon absorbs that. Nods. Starts walking again.

SHELDON

I'll talk to Walt. Make him see it
your way.

CHESTER

We'll talk to him together.

Sheldon shakes his head.

SHELDON

He'll think we're ganging up on
him. Let me handle it.

CHESTER

(nods)

It's going to be okay. Long as we
have each other's backs. You take
care of your brother, he'll take
care of you.

SMASH TO:

15

INT. CORRIDOR - THE UNION OF JUSTICE - NIGHT

15*

The same city building from the previous scene in 1929. Now
transformed into the headquarters for the UNION OF JUSTICE,
the elite team of superheroes lead by Utopian.

Walter and Sheldon sip beers, strolling past trophies and
memories from a lifetime of adventures. Walter points out a
BLUE CLOAK and pointed WIZARD'S HAT speckled with STARS.

WALTER

Oh, this guy! Remember him? Haddo
the Sorcerer?

Walter chuckles, trying his best to distract Sheldon from
his troubles.

SHELDON

Hard to forget in that getup.

WALTER

Thought he was just some nut in a
Halloween costume 'til he started
blasting the shit out of us with
his little wand.

(CONTINUED)

Sheldon grimaces, rubbing the right side of his chest.

SHELDON
I can still feel it.

WALTER
Wouldn't have gotten the drop on us
without that goofy beard. If we had
recognized him from the boat...

SHELDON
Probably why he grew it.

They step out into

THE CHAMBER OF WISDOM

A massive, imposing space filled with even larger trophies. A
TYRANNOSAURUS REX. GIANT ROBOT HEAD with a clear dome, showing
a huge BRAIN inside. Massive SUIT OF ARMOR with FOUR ARMS.

In the middle of it all sits an imposing six-sided table
worthy of King Arthur and his Knights. Sheldon takes it all
in with a sigh and a frown.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
We oughta get rid of this junk.

WALTER
Junk? These'll be in a museum one
day.

SHELDON
Feels like they're in a museum now.
When's the last time we all sat
around this table? The six of us,
from the beginning?

WALTER
I don't know. Seventy something?
Right before George --

Walter darkens, the past welling.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Before Skyfox turned on us.

Sheldon waves his hand, activating a HOLOGRAPHIC DISPLAY.
Utopian, Brain-wave, Lady Liberty, The Flare (Fitz), Blue-
bolt (Richard Conrad), and Skyfox (George) spring to life
from a moment captured in the early 1930s.

(CONTINUED)

15

Sheldon takes in the grinning, helmeted visage of George Hutchence, aka Skyfox. The past returning to haunt him.

SHELDON
He was a good man.

WALTER
Until he wasn't.

Walter deactivates the holographic display. Sheldon's eyes sweep across the room.

SHELDON
The Union of Justice. All these trophies. All the battles we fought.

WALTER
Hell of a thing. From thinking you had a screw loose back in '29 to *this*.

SHELDON
Hell of a thing. Ninety years of fighting wizards and dinosaurs and whatever the hell that thing was.

He waves absently at a giant dead LAVA LAMP-ESQUE CREATURE bristling with teeth and tentacles, floating in a tank.

SHELDON (CONT'D)
Ninety years. And what do we have to show for it?

Walter sees the weight his brother shoulders has returned.

WALTER
We've made a difference, Shel.

Walter takes in their achievements with a frown. His father's words haunting him from the past.

SHELDON
Quicksand.

WALTER
What?

SHELDON
This country's never been more divided. Congress is at a standstill. No one's willing to meet in the middle anymore.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

15

SHELDON (CONT'D)

Gap between the rich and the poor
just keeps getting wider. Kids being
taught active shooter drills almost
before they know their ABCs. Nazis
marching in the street. Nazis, Walt.

WALTER

Not what they call themselves these
days.

SHELDON

They're Nazis. I don't care what
the hell they call themselves. It's
all sinking into the ground. After
all these years. After everything
we've sacrificed.

WALTER

Country would have been swallowed
whole a long time ago without the
Utopian. And the Union.

SHELDON

Maybe it should have. Maybe we were
always just delaying the inevitable.

Walter gauges the moment. Sees an opportunity.

WALTER

Doesn't have to be that way. If we
played a more active role in
helping the administration shape
policy --

SHELDON

It's against the Code.

WALTER

The Code you made up.

SHELDON

We don't *kill*. And we don't *lead*.
We *inspire*. The people of this
country need to make their own
choices.

WALTER

And how's that been working out?

Sheldon tenses. It's an old argument. One they've had many
times before, with the same result.

(CONTINUED)

15

FITZ (O.S.)

Sheldon?

*

Sheldon turns to find Fitz entering (Willie Small's son from 1929). He's in a WHEELCHAIR now, his hair gray and receding.

By his side is his daughter, PETRA (female, late 30s), dressed in an updated FLARE costume. She's taken up the mantle from her father.

FITZ (CONT'D)

We've got a situation in Nebraska.

*

Sheldon instantly shifts into focused hero mode, all other concerns pushed aside.

*

*

SHELDON

Threat level?

*

*

FITZ

Off the chart.

*

*

THE FLARE (PETRA)

And climbing fast.

*

*

OFF the gravity of their words...

*

16

EXT. SAMPSON STEEL HEADQUARTERS - DAY (1929)

16

Sheldon and Jane stroll down the street, post-lunch. Madly in love. High on the life they're about to embark on together.

JANE

What's wrong with the name Sheldon?

SHELDON

Nothing. But throw a Junior at the end of it, kid'll always feel like he never grew up. There's a reason Dad didn't name Walt or me Chester Sampson, Junior.

JANE

Well I like Chester, too, if we have a boy.

SHELDON

Hey, how come a girl is never stuck with her mom's name and a Junior slapped on the end?

(CONTINUED)

JANE

Because women don't want to burden
their daughters with the
antediluvian concept of
perpetuating a patriarchal legacy.

SHELDON

You know that almost sounded like
English.

JANE

You want caveman talk, you
shouldn't have proposed to someone
with a degree from Smith.

SHELDON

Don't worry, professor. I'm a fast
learner.

He grins, pulling her into a kiss.

JANE

Speaking of names...

She glances the office building looming over them. SAMPSON
STEEL is emblazoned across it in huge, gleaming letters.
Sheldon grins playfully.

SHELDON

Shh. I'm in disguise.

JANE

(laughs)
You talk to Walt yet?

SHELDON

I talked. He yelled.

JANE

That bad?

SHELDON

He'll get over it. Once the other
mills are up and running and the
dough starts rolling in.

Jane grins, her eyes shining with love.

JANE

So I'm marrying a mogul.

(CONTINUED)

16

SHELDON

I prefer Captain of Industry, but
yeah. Our kids'll never have to
worry about anything.

She laughs, pulling him into a kiss.

JANE

We still on for dinner tonight?

SHELDON

And every night, till you get sick
of me.

JANE

Never happen.

SHELDON

Better not.

Sheldon whistles, hailing a cab.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

I'll ring you after the meeting.

Sheldon opens the cab door. Jane climbs in.

JANE

Tell Walt and your father I said
hello.

SHELDON

If they're lucky.

He taps on the side of the cab. He watches it pull away, his
eyes shining with love.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Hey, can you not whistle so loud?

Sheldon turns to find George walking up. Nursing a hangover.
Or worse.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Damn near split my skull half a
block down.

SHELDON

George! Where the hell've you been?

George grimaces at the boisterous greeting.

(CONTINUED)

16

GEORGE
Rinsdale twins. We flew back east
and took the *Don Quixote* up the
coast.

Sheldon eyes his condition.

SHELDON
How far?

GEORGE
Made it to Nova Scotia. Before she
caught fire and sank.

A MAN runs past. George and Sheldon don't notice.

SHELDON
Fire? What happened?

GEORGE
Mary thought I was paying too much
attention to Margaret. Or the other
way around, hard to tell. Anywho,
here I am. Want to grab a drink?

A MAN and a WOMAN run past, now pulling Sheldon and George's
attention. More and more PEOPLE are running up the street,
panic flashing in their eyes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
The hell's going on?

Sheldon calls out to a HARRIED WORKINGMAN hustling past.

SHELDON
Hey! What gives?

HARRIED WORKINGMAN
Stock market just went tits up! You
got money in the bank, better get
it out! Quick!

Sheldon tightens as the man hurries off. *Oh shit...*

17

INT. BOARDROOM - SAMPSON STEEL HEADQUARTERS - DAY (1929)

17

Chaos. BOARD MEMBERS yell into phones and at each other. An
OLDER GENT shouts the bad news streaming in from a stock
ticker tape machine.

OLDER GENT
Down another two and a quarter!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Walter -- his hair mussed, jacket discarded, sweat staining his shirt -- reacts.

WALTER

Shit!

He shouts to a man with a VAN DYKE working the phones.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Get Greenwald on the line at
National First!

VAN DYKE

He's not picking up!

WALTER

Well, get somebody on that fucking
blower!

Sheldon bursts in with George in tow. Spots Walter.

SHELDON

Walt!

WALTER

Where the hell you been?!

SHELDON

We just heard.

GEORGE

How bad is it?

WALTER

How bad does it look? Wall Street
just melted down and burned a hole
to the center of the Earth.

OLD GENT

Down another three quarters!

Walter pins Sheldon with a hard look.

WALTER

I told you it wasn't time to
expand. And here we are, Shel. On
the far side of fucked!

Sheldon's only half listening, his eyes frantically scanning the room. Someone's missing.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (2)

17

SHELDON

Where's Dad?

SMASH TO:

18 EXT. HILLTOP - DAY (SUNRISE)

18

TIGHT ON A FLOWER, dew dripping off its petals. Birds SING.
The flower TREMBLES as a GUST OF WIND disturbs its peace.

ADJUST to find RUBY RED (early 20s) floating down from the
sky, creating a small whirlwind as she touches down.

RUBY RED

What's going on?

ROTATE around her to reveal FLAMING FIST (male, mid-20s)
standing on the hilltop. Looking off into the distance.

FLAMING FIST

The Union's fighting Blackstar over
the ridge.

RUBY RED

Blackstar? Thought that asshole was
locked up in the Max?

FLAMING FIST

Guess he broke out. Again.

A BURST OF LIGHT flashes beyond the ridge. A BOOM splits the
air. Faint, like far away thunder. Flaming Fist lights a
cigarette with the tip of his finger. Exhales.

FLAMING FIST (CONT'D)

(re: cigarette)

You want one?

RUBY RED

I'm trying to quit.

FLAMING FIST

Me too.

He takes a long drag.

RUBY RED

What are you doing?

FLAMING FIST

Smoking. What's it look like?

(CONTINUED)

RUBY RED
(re: Blackstar)
Why aren't you out there helping?

FLAMING FIST
You kidding me? I got flaming fists.

He ignites his aforementioned fists for emphasis.

FLAMING FIST (CONT'D)
Blackstar's got an antimatter
heart. Fuck that.

His fists cool off.

FLAMING FIST (CONT'D)
I'm hanging back, letting the big
guns soften him up. I'll get in
there at the end for the photo op.

KRAK-BOOM. The ground shakes from the unseen battle in the
distance. Ruby nods.

RUBY RED
Okay, that's a pretty good plan.

FLAMING FIST
Fuck yeah it is.

She motions for his cigarette. He hands it over.

RUBY RED
So who's all over there?

FLAMING FIST
Utopian, Lady Liberty, Brain-wave --

RUBY RED
Ugh.

FLAMING FIST
I know, right?

RUBY RED
(exhaling smoke)
Who else?

FLAMING FIST
Flare, Phaseout, Ectoplex, Paragon --

Ruby tightens.

(CONTINUED)

RUBY RED
Brandon's out there?

FLAMING FIST
Yeah. Heard you two were a thing.

Ruby shakes her head, handing the cigarette back.

RUBY RED
We split up a couple weeks back.

FLAMING FIST
Oh.

He takes a drag. Exhales. Makes his move.

FLAMING FIST (CONT'D)
So, uh... What are you doin' later?

RUBY RED
Look out!

BOOM! Flaming Fist is crushed into a bloody smear as Blackstar crashes to earth in mid-battle with Utopian and Lady Liberty. Ruby barely dives out of the way.

Blackstar rises, eyes flashing with blind rage. Eight feet tall. Armor protecting grayish-green flesh. Face barely human from the experiments that turned him into a one-man army.

His ANTIMATTER heart PULSES as he roars. He's gone full-on berserker. A killing machine, unleashed and unhinged.

LADY LIBERTY
Get him off his feet!

She rushes in, slugging him in the face. Blackstar snarls, grabs her by the throat.

UTOPIAN
Grace!

Utopian launches an elbow at Blackstar's jaw. Blood flies, but if anything it just fuels the monstrous warrior's rage.

Blackstar tosses Grace aside and trades blows with Utopian, going toe to toe. Blackstar blasts him with an energy beam from his antimatter heart. Utopian tumbles back.

Blackstar lunges to finish Utopian off, but SOUNDWAVES suddenly slam into him like a freight train. He grunts in pain, his eyes sweeping up to find

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

18

Phaseout winks out, reappears -- but this time Blackstar's ready. He backhands her so hard her head comes apart like a melon dropped from a high-rise.

Paragon rushes in, his emotions carrying him away just like they did with Iron Orchid. Blackstar swats him, sending him tumbling past Lady Liberty as she lands blow after blow.

*
*
*

Utopian gets Blackstar in a chokehold, yells to Walter still floating in the air.

UTOPIAN

Walter! What are you waiting for?
Get in his head and shut him down!

BRAIN-WAVE

I'm trying! He's put up a thousand
walls between me and --

WHUMP! Lady Liberty crashes into Brain-wave, courtesy of Blackstar. They tumble to ground, landing hard.

Blackstar breaks free from Utopian. They trade blows, but Blackstar is an unstoppable force of nature.

Paragon regains his senses, looking on in horror as Blackstar's fist slams into Utopian's face --

*

SMASH TO:

19

EXT. ROOFTOP - SAMPSON STEEL HEADQUARTERS - DAY (1929)

19

The door to the roof crashes open. Sheldon hustles out, spots what he's looking for.

SHELDON

Dad?

REVEAL Chester standing at the edge of the roof, looking out across the city. He glances over. Smiles.

CHESTER

Oh, hey, Shel.

SHELDON

What are you doing up here?

CHESTER

Just taking a minute.

His eyes return to the city stretched out before him.

(CONTINUED)

SHELDON

They need you downstairs.

CHESTER

Yeah.

(a beat)

Just look at this city. Look how far it's come. And we helped it get here. Sampson Steel runs through it, the bones keeping it standing upright. We did something here, Shel. We made something.

SHELDON

Dad --

CHESTER

The Prendergast Building! Remember him? Butch Prendergast? Came to us. Had a dream. *I wanna make boxes*, he said. *Everything needs a box*. Like he's the first one who ever thought of making a box. But it was a better box. So we gave him the steel to put his first shop up, took a share of the company. There he is, decade later. He makes boxes right there. Everything needs a box. Everything --

The words choke in his throat. The cracks start to show.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

All your life you're trying to build something. Build something bigger, better, stronger, faster, more. Build a legacy. One day you make a wrong turn but you tell yourself you gotta do it if you wanna keep building. Building, building, and then it turns out you've been building your own box and now you're inside it.

(a beat, soft)

Everything ends up in a box, Shel. Sooner or later. Everything ends up in a box.

SHELDON

Come on, we gotta go. They're waiting for us.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: (2)

19

Chester draws himself up. Braces himself for what he knows has to be done.

CHESTER

Tell 'em I'll be right down.

Sheldon turns to go. Chester loosens his tie. Takes his glasses off. Tucks them into his jacket pocket -- and calmly steps off the edge of the roof.

SHELDON

Dad!

He rushes over, looks over the edge. PUSH IN as horror fills his eyes.

SHELDON (CONT'D)

Dad!

SMASH TO:

20 EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

20

A bruised and bleeding Paragon struggles to his feet, his shout OVERLAPPING Sheldon's voice from the previous scene.

PARAGON

Dad!

BOOM! Blackstar's ham-sized fist slams into Utopian's face. Utopian goes down hard, stunned.

Blackstar bellows, rearing back for the death blow. But he suddenly pauses, confused. He's no longer on the hilltop. Instead he's now --

21 EXT. BEACH - DAY

21

The same beach from scene 4. Blackstar blinks in confusion. What the fuck?

BRAIN-WAVE (O.S.)

There. That's better.

Blackstar whips his eyes up. Snarls as Brain-wave floats down from the sky.

(CONTINUED)

21

BRAIN-WAVE (CONT'D)
Sorry for the confusion. I've
penetrated your mental defenses and
just separated your mind from your
physical body, trapping you in a
psychic painting. One of my
favorites, actually.
 (calling out)
Say hi to Blackstar, darling.

Sunny waves at Blackstar as she heads into the water.

SUNNY
Hi, Blackstar!

Blackstar growls, struggling to fight off the psychic attack.

BRAIN-WAVE
Relax. This shouldn't take long.
 (re: the beach)
I thought it might be nice to go
somewhere quiet while my brother
and the rest of the team kick the
living shit out of you. Would you
like some cake while we're waiting?

Brain-wave offers Blackstar a slice of cake from a plate he's
suddenly holding. Blackstar lunges, but suddenly freezes,
unable to move.

BRAIN-WAVE (CONT'D)
Not in here, my friend. In here,
I'm God. And you're *fucked* --

Blackstar bellows, suddenly breaking free and grabbing Brain-
wave by the throat.

Brain-wave gasps in surprise. *That's impossible.* Blackstar
throws him like a rag doll.

SMASH TO:

22

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

22

Brain-wave tumbles from the psychic throw, his hold on
Blackstar's mind shattered.

Blackstar, bloody and nearly beaten, smashes everyone back.
He bellows, intentionally overloading his antimatter heart.
If he's going down, he's taking everyone with him.

(CONTINUED)

UTOPIAN

He's going nuclear!

Paragon, the closest to Blackstar, leaps into the air. Face twisted in rage. He punches Blackstar with everything he's got, crushing his skull in a gory shower of death.

Blackstar's antimatter heart winds down. He slumps to the ground, dead. Ruby Red, The Flare, and Ectoplex (her hand to her bloodied mouth) cheer. Paragon grins. He did it.

RUBY RED

Yeah!

ECTOPLEX

Fuck that guy!

Utopian surges to his feet.

UTOPIAN

What's wrong with you?! We don't kill. Ever.

Paragon's grin collapses. A punch to the gut would have been less painful.

PARAGON

He was gonna detonate! He would've taken us out and half the state!

UTOPIAN

You could have thrown him into space. You could have disabled his systems. There're a million things you could have done, but instead you took the easy way.

GRACE

Sheldon --

PARAGON

Did that look fucking easy to you?!

UTOPIAN

Go home.

PARAGON

Dad --

UTOPIAN

Go home. Now.

(CONTINUED)

Paragon launches into the air, cut to the bone by his father's disapproval. Ruby, The Flare, and Ectoplex trade uncomfortable glances.

RUBY RED
Mister Sampson, Brandon was just
trying to --

UTOPIAN
Walter.

He shouts to Brain-wave, who's peeling himself off the ground.

UTOPIAN (CONT'D)
Check with the Supermax. I want to
know how Blackstar broke out.

BRAIN-WAVE
On it.

Brain-wave puts two fingers to his bleeding head, psychically reaching out to the Supermax. Lady Liberty goes to Utopian.

LADY LIBERTY
You okay?

His eyes fall on Blackstar. The weight of his death -- even though he was a villain -- crushing down on him.

UTOPIAN
He took a life.

LADY LIBERTY
Blackstar was going to kill us.

UTOPIAN
Then we would have died on the
right side. Our son took a life,
Grace. After everything we've
taught him --

BRAIN-WAVE
Shel.

They look over to Brain-wave. His face grim.

BRAIN-WAVE (CONT'D)
We have a problem.

SMASH TO:

23

INT. SUPERMAX PRISON - DAY

23

A vast, high-tech incarceration facility. CLASSICAL MUSIC plays. Utopian, Lady Liberty, and Brain-wave pass cells housing SUPERVILLAINS, containment fields keeping them in check.

They pass HADD0 THE SORCERER, an ancient gent with flowing white hair and matching beard. Currently floating crosslegged in mid-air, meditating.

SHATTERSTONE, a tough looking woman doing one armed pull ups with an imposing MECHANICAL LIMB.

REVERSO, a hard looking motherfucker standing on the ceiling.

They reach their destination. Reveal BLACKSTAR in prison orange (no armor). Classical music playing. Reading a romance novel, bifocals perched on his nose. Very much alive.

Utopian stares in surprise. What the hell? Blackstar glances up. Glares at Utopian over his glasses.

BLACKSTAR
What the fuck you looking at?

SMASH TO BLACK:

END OF EPISODE 101