

GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

written by

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BLACK SCREEN

A woman's voice, bubbly.

ANNETTE (V.O.)
Wait, tonight? You're going out
again tonight?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Sea of desks, flourescent lights, skateboard rack on the wall so they can pretend they're a fun place to work.

VANESSA WHITTAKER (28, short hair, dressed cheap but well) sits at a desk; she's embarrassed, but a happy embarrassed.

VANESSA
Yeah. Why?

But she knows very well why.

ANNETTE (38, business casual, heavy on the casual) sits at the desk behind her, spins around to face her.

ANNETTE
Eight months. Eight months I have
been trying to set this up with you
two.

Vanessa reluctantly spins to face her.

ANNETTE
So it went well, then?

VANESSA
Yeah. It went well.

ANNETTE
...And?

VANESSA
I don't know! He asked to see me
again tonight, and I said yes.

ANNETTE
What did you do? Where did you go?

VANESSA
I don't know! Dinner, and then, we
just, walked around.

Vanessa spins back to her desk.

VANESSA
I have work to do. His mom says hi.

ANNETTE
You met Carol?

VANESSA
It wasn't, like. She just happened
to be there. I don't think it was
planned.

Brief moment of horror. Vanessa looks at Annette.

VANESSA
Oh god, was it planned?

Annette shakes her head.

ANNETTE
No, if you knew them, you'd believe
it.

Vanessa turns back to her work.

ANNETTE
Where's he taking you tonight?

VANESSA
I don't know! We didn't make any
plans. Just, meeting after work.

ANNETTE
You're gonna call me afterwards and
tell me all about it.

Vanessa looks sickeningly happy.

ANNETTE
I love you so much I'm gonna vomit.

Annette spins back around to get some work done.

ANNETTE
I hope you have a great time and I
want to be one of your bridesmaids.

Vanessa gives her a look.

VANESSA
It's not like that, don't take it
too far.

Annette puts her hands into a heart shape, holds them over
her shoulder.

Vanessa rolls her eyes.

Vanessa's phone DINGS with a text message.

ANNETTE

If that's him, tell him I say hi.

VANESSA

It's not him!

But it is him. His name in the phone is "CHRIS (ANNETTE'S FRIEND)."

"Do you want something classy or casual?"

Vanessa considers.

Responds: "Casual."

Chris: "Casual like dinner or casual like bowling?"

Vanessa: "I hate bowling."

Chris: "Batting cages? Roller skating? Gym?"

Vanessa: "You want to take me on a date to the gym??"

Chris responds with a gif of a guy in 80s spandex giving a thumbs up.

Vanessa laughs.

ANNETTE

(knowing)

Hmmmmmm!

VANESSA

Shut up!

EXT. GYM - EVENING

Vanessa stands out front of a gym, wearing a tank top and yoga pants. Big smile on her face even as she shakes her head.

VANESSA

This is dumb. Why am I doing this?
This is so dumb.

CHRIS (30, clean-cut) jogs around the corner in a loose tee and exercise shorts.

CHRIS

Hey!

She sees him, waves. He jogs over.

VANESSA

(playful)

This is already the dumbest date
I've ever been on.

CHRIS
What, you don't want to work out
with me?

VANESSA
As a date?

CHRIS
Yeah! It'll be fun!

Vanessa rolls her eyes and laughs.

CHRIS
Alright, it's cool, no worries.
There's a movie theater like three
blocks that way, you want to see
what's playing?

Vanessa laughs, grabs his hand and drags him inside the
gym.

INT. BOBA PLACE - NIGHT

Vanessa and Chris drink boba tea across from each other
after a long workout.

CHRIS
I thought it was alright.

VANESSA
I'll say this: I don't think I'd
ever suggest it, but I would accept
a gym date if it was suggested to
me.

CHRIS
Fair enough. So what do you want to
do next?

VANESSA
Next?

Chris is disappointed, but gets it.

CHRIS
Oh, sorry. No, duh, we can be done.
I just didn't want it to end yet.

VANESSA
No, I... do you not have anything
else to do?

CHRIS
Yeah. But I'd rather keep doing
this.

Vanessa smiles, doesn't know how to respond.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

They walk down the street together; Vanessa wears a light sweater now.

VANESSA
Favorite... type of pet?

CHRIS
Dogs.

VANESSA
You're such a dog person. I don't know why I asked.

CHRIS
You can just tell from looking at me?

VANESSA
You act like a golden retriever. You're so excited about everything.

CHRIS
(honest)
Nah, not really. That's just how I've been acting around you.

VANESSA
You are really breaking out all the good lines, aren't you?

CHRIS
What do you mean?

VANESSA
I mean that was very smooth.

CHRIS
Oh. Is that a good thing?

VANESSA
It is for you.

CHRIS
Then, good. I guess.

Vanessa's phone... RINGS? Her ringtone is just Annette talking.

ANNETTE'S VOICE
Answer your phone. Answer your phone. Answer your phone. Answer your phone.

VANESSA

Oh god, sorry, I should've silenced it-

Chris laughs.

CHRIS

Is Annette your ringtone?

VANESSA

I told her I'd call her after the date.

CHRIS

Well, it's not after the date yet, so she can shut up and wait.

He takes Vanessa's hand, and it's like they've been holding hands all their lives.

INT. ARCADE - NIGHT

They play Dance Dance Revolution. Chris is failing miserably on the easiest difficulty, while Vanessa blows through a screen full of arrows.

CHRIS

How long have you been playing this?!

VANESSA

It's not as hard as it looks.

CHRIS

I don't believe you!

The song ends. CONTINUE? flashes on the screen.

CHRIS

Oh dear god no. Can we play Time Crisis now?

VANESSA

What's Time Crisis? I don't like the shooting ones. How about Guitar Hero?

CHRIS

Oh, I can play some Guitar Hero.

EXT. TRENDY ICE CREAM PLACE

Chris and Vanessa sit on a bench next to a line that wraps halfway down the block. They each have a massive ice cream cone.

VANESSA

I told you.

CHRIS

You were so right. I would never have paid eight dollars for an ice cream cone, but this is...

He takes a big bite, talks with his mouth full.

CHRIS

This is amazing.

VANESSA

How do you bite your ice cream like that?

CHRIS

What, like this?

He takes another bite.

VANESSA

I can't do that. I can't open my mouth wide enough.

She tries to take a bite, gets ice cream on her face.

Chris laughs at her.

The ice cream place cuts off the line; closing time.

VANESSA

Are they closing? Is it really midnight?

Chris checks his phone.

CHRIS

A little after.

VANESSA

Oh god, I completely lost track of time.

CHRIS

Do you need to go?

Vanessa debates with herself.

VANESSA

I mean, it's Friday, I don't need to get up in the morning. But...

CHRIS

I don't want the date to be over yet. Let's do something else.

Vanessa laughs.

VANESSA
Like what?

INT. KARAOKE PARLOR - NIGHT

A private room. Vanessa sings *Bye Bye Bye* by NSYNC. She's doing the dance and everything, it's awesome.

Chris laughs and laughs.

CUT TO:

Chris absolutely nails *I Wanna Dance with Somebody* by Whitney Houston. Vanessa is blown away.

The song ends and Vanessa cheers and claps.

VANESSA
That was amazing! I wish I could
sing like that!

CHRIS
Yeah, but you did all the moves for
your song! I couldn't dance if my
life depended on it. I'm all-

He starts dancing like an middle-aged aunt at a wedding.

Vanessa HOWLS with laughter.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

They're holding hands, walking slow. It's super late, barely anybody else out now.

CHRIS
It's probably my favorite book of
all time.

VANESSA
It's so boring!

Chris shakes his head.

CHRIS
Mm-mm. Nope. We can't be friends.

VANESSA
Drat! I thought he was done with me,
but Charles Dickens is back to ruin
my life yet again!

CHRIS
It's SO GOOD. Fine, what's your
favorite book, then?

VANESSA
No, sorry, I didn't-

CHRIS
It's fine, I just-

VANESSA
No no, I shouldn't have...

They compose themselves.

CHRIS
I don't need... that.

VANESSA
Do you... want it?

CHRIS
Yes. Kind of. Not... yes.

VANESSA
Not yes?

CHRIS
I haven't... I haven't.

Oh.

VANESSA
Oh. That's okay, I don't... Are you,
um... on purpose?

CHRIS
Kind of. I don't know. Would that be
a problem?

VANESSA
No! But, I... have. Is that a
problem?

CHRIS
No! I know I'm weird.

VANESSA
It's not weird.

CHRIS
It's kind of weird.

VANESSA
It's kind of weird.

They laugh at themselves.

VANESSA
Can we... kiss?

CHRIS

I would really like that.

And suddenly they're kissing, long and hard.

And then it's over, and they're both smiling like idiots.

CHRIS

I had a really great time.

VANESSA

Me too.

CHRIS

Are you busy tomorrow night?

Vanessa looks at the sun just starting to peek up.

VANESSA

You mean, tonight?

Chris laughs.

VANESSA

I... am, actually. And tomorrow. But I'm free Monday?

CHRIS

Okay. Monday. It's a date.

VANESSA

It's a date.

She squeezes his hands, walks inside.

INT. VANESSA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It's nice enough. A little barren, and it doesn't look like she ever dusts. Her only furniture is a sofa and a coffee table.

Vanessa walks in, closes the door behind her.

Beat.

She laughs uncontrollably. She's deliriously happy. And deliriously sleep-deprived.

INT. VANESSA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Even more barren than the living room. Vanessa is asleep on a mattress on the floor; there's no other furniture or decorations.

Vanessa shifts awake. Cocks her head like she can hear something.

VANESSA

Oh, shit.

She fumbles for her phone. Looks at it.

VANESSA

Oh, shi-

EXT. VANESSA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Vanessa rushes out the door wearing a trenchcoat and sweatpants and carrying two energy drinks.

She fumbles with the lock.

Runs off down the street.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - EVENING

Vanessa strolls casually down the alley, finishes her second energy drink and crumples the can.

She throws her can away in a dumpster, takes the opportunity to look behind her; nobody's around. Nobody can see her.

She drops her trenchcoat and sweatpants, revealing a SUPERHERO OUTFIT - a white jumpsuit with leather boots and symbol of a bell on her shoulder. She pulls on a mask and becomes SONORA.

She shoves the coat and pants behind the dumpster, then steps back and kneels.

Her whole body vibrates with energy, which builds to a BRIGHT HUM as she leaps into the air.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - EVENING

MOB RULE (30s, superhero - rugged punk look, blank mask) sits on the rooftop, watches the sun set over the city. He's super bored.

Sonora lands on the roof behind Mob Rule. He GROANS.

MOB RULE

Finally!

He stands up.

MOB RULE

I've been waiting here for like an hour.

SONORA

I'm here now.

MOB RULE

Everything good? You have any trouble?

SONORA

Everything's fine. I take it there's a meeting?

MOB RULE

Two weeks. But the warehouse is out; Shock Mantis's identity got turned out, he ran off to Europe somewhere. Turns out his real name is Neil.

They both chuckle.

MOB RULE

Neil.

SONORA

So who is hosting? And who's gonna be there?

MOB RULE

The Professor is hosting. After Mantis, he wants in, has some big plan.

SONORA

Wait, really? It's about time he joined the club. It's too risky to be doing anything solo these days. Who else will be there?

Mob Rule laughs, splits into two, four, eight identical people.

MOB RULE

(all of them)

I never do anything solo.

Sonora fakes a laugh, then stops.

SONORA

Wait, are you really here? Oh god, I'm so sorry, I would've come sooner if I thought you'd-

You can hear Mob Rule's pride beneath his mask(s).

MOB RULE

No!

All but one of him POP out of existence.

MOB RULE

It's rough, I can't keep it up too long. But yeah, my doubles can make doubles now, too. Triples? I don't know what I'm calling them yet.

Sonora's impressed.

SONORA

That's gonna come in handy.

MOB RULE

Yeah, don't let it out, though, right? It's more useful before it's public knowledge. I'm just so excited, I had to tell you at least.

Sonora chuckles, but a thought occurs to her.

SONORA

You still haven't said who else will be there.

Mob Rule grunts.

MOB RULE

Remember, you just told me it's too risky to be doing anything solo.

Sonora braces herself, knows she's not gonna like it.

MOB RULE

Volur and Jotun.

SONORA

I don't like it. But-

MOB RULE

And the Devourer.

SONORA

UGH.

MOB RULE

They're who's left. Everyone else is either too small to be worth it or refuses to join the club.

SONORA

Should we be willing to join the club, if they're members?

MOB RULE

Yes! We don't have to *work* with them, but we should at least communicate with-

Sonora's phone DINGS.

SONORA
Oh, forgot to silence my phone.
Sorry.

She pulls it out, checks it. Smiles.

SONORA
What a loser.

MOB RULE
What? What's so funny?

Sonora snaps back to the moment.

SONORA
Nothing's funny.

MOB RULE
Then why were you-

SONORA
It's nothing, don't worry about it.
Fine, I'll be at the meeting, but no
promises on cooperating. Anything
interesting happening tonight?

Mob Rule cocks his head, but decides to drop it.

MOB RULE
Depends what you mean by
"interesting." Jupiter seems like
he's really on recently, so most of
the crooks in the know are staying
indoors. Even the cops are taking it
easy; gonna be a slow night for
everyone.

SONORA
No kidding?

MOB RULE
I think it's a good night to rest.
You've been out a lot lately.

But she's already leapt from the rooftop.

A HIGH-PITCHED WHINE grows and fades as she circles around
to buzz the rooftop, and then she's gone.

Mob Rule sighs. POPS out of existence.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

A pair of COPS walk out with coffee and hot dogs, walk to
their cruiser. The driver, HOWARD (40, not as tough as he

wishes he was) has already finished his coffee; he tosses the cup on the ground.

SONORA (O.S.)
You gonna pick that up?

The cops look around... see nothing.

That's weird.

Howard's hand drifts casually to his pistol. The other cop looks up, GASPS.

Sonora lands HARD on their cruiser, crushes the roof, shatters the windows.

Superhero pose.

SONORA
How you doing, Howard?

Howard draws his gun, but Sonora throws a vibrating wave of energy at his hand and the gun hurtles away.

The other cop gets his gun drawn and takes a shot, but a wall of sonic energy flashes and deflects his bullet; Sonora throws a heavier blast at him, and he flies back into another car.

She turns to face Howard, who has his baton drawn, but he's scared.

Sonora drops to the ground, and Howard stumbles backward.

She strolls forward, takes her time; Howard shifts backwards to match.

HOWARD
Stop... stop! I'm warning you!

Howard stumbles on the curb, has to look behind himself.

HOWARD
I'll-

He looks up only to see she's already on top of him.

HOWARD
Oh no.

She grabs his head, and a HIGH-PITCHED WHINE fills everything; it sounds like your ears are ringing.

SONORA
It's harder when they fight back,
isn't it?

HOWARD
Please... no...

Sonora freezes, listens to something. She drops Howard's head; he collapses to the ground, coughing.

SONORA
(to herself)
Shit.

A set of bolas whip out at Sonora, but she deflects them with a sonic shield and turns to face:

JUPITER, champion of justice. He wears a thick armor-plated suit; lightning bolts arc down both arms, leading to oversized gauntlets with spinning electrical turbines.

He clenches his fists, and electricity arcs around them.

Howard runs away, abandoning his damaged cruiser.

Sonora adopts a relaxed pose, brushes some nonexistent dirt from her shoulder.

SONORA
Hey, Jupiter. Heard you were out tonight.

Jupiter keeps his guard up.

JUPITER
I don't want to hurt you. If you'll just come with me, I'm sure-

Sonora GROANS.

SONORA
Every single time with you. What will it take to get you to just fight me without the spiel?

Jupiter shakes his head.

JUPITER
I know there's good in you, Sonora. You have a strong sense of justice, even if it is skewed. I don't doubt that if I were to look into that officer, I'd find-

SONORA
Beats his wife. Harassed a kid for filming him. You know: the usual crimes heroes ignore.

Jupiter grimaces.

JUPITER

Just because I focus my efforts
elsewhere, doesn't mean-

SONORA

Ohmigod I'm so BORED!!

She SCREAMS the word BORED in a massive sonic blast; Jupiter dives out of the way, tucks into a roll, and comes out of it throwing another set of bolas at her.

The bolas catch Sonora's wrist, give her a light shock before she can rip them off.

By the time she does, Jupiter is in her face. He throws punches with the speed and precision of a trained boxer, and even with her sonic shields it's all Sonora can do to keep from getting hit.

Jupiter throws a heavy haymaker at her, and she blocks with a wave of sonic energy pressing against his fist. The two of them press against each other; Jupiter throws a punch with his other hand, which Sonora catches in another sonic field.

Sonora strains; this is taking a lot out of her.

Jupiter presses forward; he manages to take a step, forces Sonora to take a step backwards.

SONORA

This is a lot of power, man. You'd
take my head clean off if I let you.

JUPITER

What can I say? I have faith in you.

His gauntlets SURGE WITH ENERGY, and Sonora is forced to throw herself backwards; she hurtles back, slams into the building across the street, barely manages to slow herself with another sonic shield.

Jupiter doesn't take a break; he's already charging at her, full speed.

Sonora, now legitimately scared, takes off into the air.

Jupiter leaps into the air himself with a lightning-powered jump, easily reaching Sonora as she's 30 feet high.

Sonora SCREAMS a sonic wave at him; he manages to block with his electric gauntlets, but the force still sends him crashing down to the ground.

He lies on the ground, unmoving.

Sonora hovers in the air, stares at him, holds her breath.
Jupiter shifts, GROANS in pain.

Sonora relaxes, just a little bit. Lands next to him.

SONORA
Isn't this a change of pace?

Jupiter flexes an electro-gauntlet; Sonora pins his wrist with her foot.

SONORA
I have so many options now, it's hard to pick what to do.

JUPITER
Don't count me out just yet.

His gauntlet charges with energy...

Sonora's phone "RINGS."

ANNETTE'S VOICE
Pick up your phone. Pick up your phone. Pick up your phone. Pick up...

SONORA
Oh god.

She fumbles to silence her phone.

JUPITER
Wait, is that...

He looks at Sonora in a new light.

JUPITER
Vanessa?!

Sonora freezes.

SONORA
How... no, who are Van-? ...Who are you talking about? I don't, who's Vanessa?

Jupiter shrugs her off, and she doesn't resist. He gets to his feet, pulls his mask up just enough to peek under.

It's Chris!

He's excited and confused and freaked out.

JUPITER
 (half-quiet)
 It's me, Chris!

SONORA
Chris?!

JUPITER
 Shhh! Not so loud!

SONORA
 How are you... you're Jupiter?!

JUPITER
 You're Sonora!?

Beat.

Sonora starts to speak, then stops. What does she even say here?

Beat.

JUPITER
 Do you want to go get some coffee?

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - NIGHT

Vanessa and Chris sit across from each other in their civvies. A SERVER takes their order.

VANESSA
 I'll just have a coffee. Black is fine.

SERVER
 (to Chris)
 And you?

CHRIS
 Can I get... hashbrowns, all the way?

VANESSA
 Wait, you're getting food?

CHRIS
 Yeah, I'm starving.

VANESSA
 I just, you said we were getting coffee.

CHRIS
 You can eat if you want?

Vanessa scoffs.

VANESSA

You talk stuff out over coffee. Now this is... well, it's not just coffee.

The server looks between them; "Do I leave, or...?"

CHRIS

Do you want to order food?

The server looks at Vanessa.

Vanessa chews on her tongue.

VANESSA

I'll have a cheeseburger. Very well done, no toppings.

Chris gives her a look; he disapproves of her choices.

The server quickly shuffles off.

CHRIS

That's not why you go to Waffle House.

VANESSA

You didn't get waffles either.

CHRIS

Who gets waffles? Who gets anything other than hashbrowns?

He laughs. Vanessa doesn't.

CHRIS

So if it's not just coffee, what is it?

VANESSA

Not a date, if that's what you're asking.

CHRIS

Okay. Is this an outing?

VANESSA

Not enough people. I think of outings as group things. Maybe it's hanging out.

CHRIS

Too intentional to be hanging out. Hanging out is, like, chilling.

VANESSA
No, chilling is chilling. Hanging
out is...

She stops.

CHRIS
Is what?

Vanessa sighs.

VANESSA
Chris, what are we doing?

CHRIS
That's what we're talking-

VANESSA
Not... no. This can't work.

Chris's smile fades.

CHRIS
Yeah. I know.

Beat.

VANESSA
You're not gonna... My family
doesn't know about... me.

CHRIS
You've met my mother. You know where
she lives. My defenseless,
stiff-breeze-could-knock-her-over
mother.

Vanessa is offended at the implication.

VANESSA
You know I would never-

CHRIS
Exactly! I know you wouldn't. Just
like I wouldn't. When I'm Chris,
you're just Vanessa. When I'm
Jupiter, you're just Sonora. No
crossover.

Vanessa relaxes, leans back.

VANESSA
Agreed. Good.

CHRIS
Good.

VANESSA
But so if there's no crossover...

CHRIS
Yeah?

VANESSA
Nevermind.

Beat.

The server drops off Vanessa's coffee.

VANESSA
Thanks.

Vanessa takes a sip, glad for the excuse not to talk.

CHRIS
Can I ask you a question?

VANESSA
Shoot.

CHRIS
Why do you do it? You're not...
like, you're not evil.

VANESSA
I could ask you the same thing.

CHRIS
No, come on. You can disagree with
me, but I'm working with the law.
I'm on the side of justice. You
can't ask why.

Vanessa rolls her eyes.

VANESSA
You think just because you're
working with the mayor, you're
always on the side of justice?

CHRIS
At least I'm not breaking the law.

VANESSA
What if the law needs to be broken?

CHRIS
Then you do it the right way! You
vote, you protest! You don't-

He stops himself, calms down.

CHRIS
You've hurt people.

VANESSA
You're so naive.

CHRIS
Oh, bite me.

VANESSA
Don't think I won't.

They share wry smiles.

VANESSA
But you're really happy like that?
If I hadn't been there, what would
you have done about that cop?

CHRIS
If you hadn't been there, I wouldn't
have even known about it.

VANESSA
Um, exactly, but also that's not
what I meant.

CHRIS
I know.

He considers.

CHRIS
I probably would've, you know.
Reported him to his superiors.

VANESSA
And when they did nothing?

CHRIS
Then I'd assume they did their due
diligence and he's actually
innocent.

Vanessa scoffs.

CHRIS
Society doesn't work if we can't
trust it.

VANESSA
I don't understand how you can say
something so true and use it as an
argument for something so false.

CHRIS

You think I should what? Decide that I know better than people whose literal jobs are to research the entire issue and figure out where justice lies?

VANESSA

And when those people are the ones breaking the law?

Chris GROANS.

CHRIS

I don't know. Okay? I don't know. I'm only human. But that's the point. I don't want to take action in a situation where I can't know for sure I'm doing the right thing.

Vanessa sighs, relaxes.

VANESSA

I know. That's not... you are wrong. You're very wrong. But you're not unreasonable.

CHRIS

What about you? You never have pangs of conscience? You're always convinced you're doing the right thing?

VANESSA

You know I'm not. I wish I could see the world like you do. Trust the world like you do. I just... I can't.

CHRIS

I get it.

Beat.

VANESSA

This would be a lot easier if you were, like...

She struggles to think of the word.

VANESSA

I like you.

CHRIS

I like you, too.

VANESSA
No, not like...

She takes a risk.

VANESSA
I really like you.

CHRIS
I think I love you.

Oh damn.

The server arrives with their food.

SERVER
Here you go. Hashbrowns all the way...

She puts them in front of Vanessa.

SERVER
And a cheeseburger.

It's got a bunch of toppings. She puts it in front of Chris, then walks away.

VANESSA
Um-

CHRIS
Yeah, here.

He swaps the plates.

CHRIS
Wait, didn't you ask for no toppings?

He raises his hand to get the server's attention, but Vanessa pulls his hand down.

VANESSA
You love me?

CHRIS
...I don't know. Yeah.

VANESSA
We've been on two dates.

CHRIS
Three if you count this.

VANESSA
Even if we did! You can't say you love me after three dates!

CHRIS

I can say whatever I want.

VANESSA

Saying you love someone after three dates is insane.

CHRIS

I disagree. Falling in love with someone after three dates, that's insane. Saying it when it's true is just-

Vanessa looks away; she's getting upset.

VANESSA

Stop. Seriously. It's not funny.

Chris eats his hashbrowns.

Vanessa picks the toppings off her burger, puts the bun back on.

Picks the burger up.

Puts it back down.

VANESSA

We are enemies. Sworn rivals.

CHRIS

We're not. Jupiter and Sonora are. We talked about how there's no-

VANESSA

There's crossover, Chris.

CHRIS

Well, then, fine. I love Sonora, too.

VANESSA

Stop it.

Chris looks sorry, backs down.

Eats more hashbrowns.

VANESSA

How are you eating?

CHRIS

(full mouth)

Why are you so upset? I'm the one putting myself out there. You don't have to-

He swallows.

CHRIS

You don't have to say anything back,
or feel anything. I'm the one who
should be... I don't know.

He gestures fruitlessly.

CHRIS

You know.

Vanessa takes a bite of her burger.

She swallows.

VANESSA

I think I love you too.

Chris smiles. Vanessa doesn't, but her attitude lightens.

VANESSA

This is dumb. We're dumb.

Chris takes another bite of hashbrowns.

CHRIS

Yeah.

Vanessa smiles.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

Chris and Vanessa walk through the park, holding hands.

VANESSA

If this is going to work, we're
gonna need some ground rules.

CHRIS

Agreed.

VANESSA

No revealing each other's
identities.

CHRIS

That's a given. And no acting on the
knowledge ourselves. I won't turn
you in to the police, you won't
kidnap my girlfriend.

Vanessa snorts a laugh.

VANESSA

I'll try not to. No milking each
(MORE)

VANESSA (CONT'D)
other for information. If the city's
putting together a task force to
hunt me down, don't tell me.

CHRIS
I mean, I would tell you.

VANESSA
You can't. We don't want them to
suspect you were working with me.

CHRIS
I kind of am, though? I'm definitely
enabling you.

Vanessa laughs.

VANESSA
Yeah, but we don't want them to know
that.

CHRIS
I'm not gonna... I won't volunteer
the information, obviously, but even
that feels weird. If they figure it
out I'm not going to deny it.

VANESSA
You would go to prison. And unlike
me, you wouldn't be willing to
escape.

CHRIS
I know.

Vanessa rolls her eyes. She thinks he's an idiot, but at
least he's a lovable one.

CHRIS
The big question: what if we bump
into each other in super-form? We
don't fight, do we?

VANESSA
We kind of have to. Besides, it's
not like either of us has changed
our mind about what's right and
wrong. We still have opposing goals.

This is wiggling Chris out a bit.

CHRIS
Are we sure about... is there some
way we can... I don't know.

They stop. Look at each other.

CHRIS
I know it has to be a secret. I just
don't like that.

VANESSA
Yeah.

The sky gets a little brighter. Morning is coming.

CHRIS
Oh gosh, is it morning already? Did
we do this again?

Vanessa laughs.

VANESSA
"Oh gosh?"

CHRIS
I really, I've been, uh, "working" a
lot lately. I need to get some
sleep.

VANESSA
Me too.

CHRIS
Yeah, hey, about that:

Vanessa raises her eyebrows.

CHRIS
I have some contacts in the police.
I'll talk to them about that cop. I
can't make them do anything-

VANESSA
So they won't.

CHRIS
...But we've worked together pretty
closely, so I think it's worth a
shot.

Vanessa sighs. Nods.

VANESSA
It's worth a shot.

They walk back to the street together.

EXT. OFFICE BREAK ROOM - DAY

Vanessa and Annette eat their lunches - Vanessa has a
sandwich from Starbucks, Annette packed herself a salad.

VANESSA

No, it's... it's not like it sounds.
We get along very well, but it's
not, like, a sure thing. I don't
know.

ANNETTE

Oh, please. Look at yourself.

Vanessa sighs.

VANESSA

I know. I'm worried we're moving too
fast, though.

ANNETTE

How old are you now?

Vanessa laughs.

VANESSA

Wo-ho! She's going there.

ANNETTE

I'm just saying! I don't know if you
want kids, but-

VANESSA

Not even thinking about that right
now.

Annette bites her tongue.

VANESSA

It's just, we just have some...
political incompatibilities.

ANNETTE

Oh, grow up.

VANESSA

They're pretty extreme!

ANNETTE

Get over yourself and let yourself
be happy.

Vanessa considers. Nods.

VANESSA

I'll try.

She turns back to her work.

VANESSA

But there are obstacles.

INT. THE PROFESSOR'S LAB - NIGHT

Like something out of a 50s horror movie, but significantly cleaner. Exposed tesla coils, vials of mysterious bubbling goo - but all perfectly sterile, lit well, in a pleasantly bright palette.

Several supervillains stand around a high counter:

THE PROFESSOR (40, sweater and khakis and an opaque face shield) is at the "head" of the counter.

To his left is Sonora, in her full getup.

To the left of her are JOTUN (50s, bear-themed medieval armor) and VOLUR (50s, furs and leathers, very witchy). Volur is the one paying attention; Jotun keeps his gaze elsewhere, anticipating treachery and ambush.

To their left is Mob Rule - three of him, actually, all three of whom alternate talking throughout the scene.

Finally, between Mob Rule and The Professor is THE DEVOURER, a mostly-human-shaped living shadow - it constantly gurgles and murmurs, and its voice sounds like a hundred people whispering at the same time.

THE DEVOURER

i don't understand. have you not
been attempting this already?

The Professor glares at The Devourer. This shadow-thing is too creepy for him.

THE PROFESSOR

Of course I have. We all have, to
varying degrees.

Volur glances at Sonora:

VOLUR

Not all of us.

Sonora scowls at her.

SONORA

I'm not above killing, but I'm not a
murderer. Don't get the wrong idea,
witch: I'm here out of necessity,
not idealism.

Volur snarls.

VOLUR

Careful how you speak to me.

THE PROFESSOR

Regardless, we have not been coordinating our efforts. I believe that if we work together in this, we can make the city safer for all of us.

MOB RULE

Bullshit. If we start a coordinated hero-killing campaign, other heroes from out of town will notice.

VOLUR

Regretfully, I agree. This is too dangerous.

The Professor gets frustrated, raises his voice.

THE PROFESSOR

If you'd let me finish!

He clears his throat.

THE PROFESSOR

Thank you. Sorry.

He reaches into a drawer, passes out files to everyone. (He only has one file for Mob Rule.)

THE PROFESSOR

I'm not suggesting we simply go on a rampage. That would obviously be foolish...

(at Sonora)

...And cause unnecessary loss of life besides.

(at Volur)

Which is always undesirable due to the increased attention from the authorities and other super-powered beings.

Sonora and Volur both nod. They're in agreement here, even if their reasoning is different.

THE PROFESSOR

I'm suggesting something a little more subtle. If you'll look at the plan I've outlined, my research suggests a method to kill the minimum number of people in the least suspicious ways in order to achieve the maximum reduction in obstacles to our goals - mutual and otherwise.

Sonora tenses, just a little, then forces herself to play it cool.

THE PROFESSOR

If we only kill Jupiter, The Marshal, and a handful of specific unpowered civilians working in various civil agencies, I project the efficacy of law enforcement will drop significantly.

Sonora wants to object, but is afraid of outing herself.

The Professor picks up on her body language, turns to her.

THE PROFESSOR

Sonora? Do you have something to say?

SONORA

I... this seems, too good to be true. What does "significantly" mean here?

THE PROFESSOR

I project the city's overall crime rate would rise on the order of two hundred percent.

Surprise around the room; Mob Rule WHISTLES.

MOB RULE

Yeah RIGHT.

THE DEVOURER

i agree with that one. this is not possible.

The Professor is visibly frustrated.

THE PROFESSOR

You haven't even... would you at least look at the handouts?

Sonora's the only one who does.

VOLUR

Even if it's true; Jupiter and The Marshal are too high-profile. Killing one of them, maybe, but-

THE PROFESSOR

That's why we don't kill them.

He flips open The Devourer's file to a specific page.

THE PROFESSOR

I've been working on this for months. I'm not there yet, but I'm narrowing down facts about both of their secret identities.

Sonora's breath catches.

THE PROFESSOR

If we can kill them without their secret identities getting revealed-

SONORA

How does that happen? You don't think they'll fight back?

THE PROFESSOR

We don't give them anything to fight back against. Make it look like an accident.

Sonora tries to put on an air of disbelief, but the plan is growing on the rest of the room.

MOB RULE

If it's an accident, there's no reason for other heroes to seek vengeance.

THE PROFESSOR

Even if they do reinforce the city, it won't be anywhere near the same level. Nobody out for blood. Any increased patrols won't last, won't have the same drive.

THE DEVOURER

this plan is interesting. if undeveloped.

THE PROFESSOR

Undeveloped? I've been-

VOLUR

There are gaps.

THE PROFESSOR

There are no gaps! All I need are Jupiter and the Marshal's identities and-

Sonora gestures at the handout.

SONORA

And what? Your leads on both basically boil down to some guy at
(MORE)

SONORA (CONT'D)

McDonalds claims he saw someone who looked like them. This is like saying "I have a foolproof method of getting to the moon, all we need to do is build a rocket capable of getting to the moon."

THE PROFESSOR

That's... It's not... I know there's more work to be done! If I could do this alone, would I have brought you all here? You know I prefer to work alone!

He stammers, collects his thoughts. Cracks a little.

THE PROFESSOR

Forgive me for thinking all of us together might be able to freaking accomplish something!

An awkward beat; nobody's quite sure what to think.

MOB RULE

Alright. Chill. We'll try to help figure out their identities. Even if we decide the plan sucks, figuring that out helps all of us.

Nods from everyone but Sonora, who mostly succeeds at looking annoyed and disdainful instead of terrified.

THE DEVOURER

this is reasonable.

SONORA

Fine. Don't let anybody say I'm not a team player. I'll look for Jupiter.

The Professor is genuinely relieved.

THE PROFESSOR

Thank you. This is going to work, I promise.

VOLUR

We will hunt The Marshal.

THE PROFESSOR

I'll stay here, coordinate leads.

MOB RULE

I guess I'll help Sonora look for Jupiter.

Sonora forces herself to nod.

SONORA
That works.

THE DEVOURER
i take orders from no one.

MOB RULE
We're all working together on this-

SONORA
It's fine. If he wants to futz off
on his own, let him struggle.

The Devourer snarls at her, and she snarls back.

THE PROFESSOR
Ladies and gentlemen, I think we
have a plan, here.

Sonora takes a deep breath.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

Sonora and Mob Rule confer in the shadows.

MOB RULE
What was that? You were freaking out
in there.

SONORA
I wasn't freaking out. I just...

MOB RULE
You don't trust them.

SONORA
No, it's... yeah. I guess.

MOB RULE
They're scum, sure, but I think
we're all on the same side, here.

SONORA
Maybe. Maybe.

She struggles to figure out the right lie.

MOB RULE
Look, I know murder's not your
style, but it's not like you've
never-

Sonora gives him a look.

MOB RULE

Oh, shit, really?

SONORA

Once. On accident. That's not why I do it.

MOB RULE

I get it, I don't like it either. But still, this on them. We're dropping like flies.

Sonora GRUNTS. She needs a different angle.

SONORA

That's not the problem. I get it, this is for survival. If it was Shock Mantis's plan, and we were working with the old gang...

Mob Rule nods.

MOB RULE

But we're not. Volur's a psychopath, The Devourer is... worse than that.

SONORA

And The Professor's an idiot.

She faces Mob Rule, confident.

SONORA

Leave Jupiter to me. You keep an eye on them.

MOB RULE

Can do.

He POPS out of existence.

Sonora lets out a heavy sigh.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT - DAY

It's crowded for the lunch rush. Vanessa and Chris eat lunch together near one corner.

VANESSA

So I know we said no feeding each other information...

CHRIS

You gonna start milking me, now?

VANESSA

No. I actually have something you might want to know.

Chris shakes his head.

CHRIS
It's fine. I'm alright.

Vanessa is surprised.

VANESSA
You don't even know what it is.

CHRIS
I know you really wanted to keep a wall between our identities. It's fine. I've survived this far.

VANESSA
...Okay. Thanks.

Beat.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MALL - DAY

Vanessa and Chris leave the mall, prepare to separate.

CHRIS
This was nice. Can this be a regular thing?

VANESSA
If you're cool with Annette whining about you stealing me.

Chris gets excited.

CHRIS
She can come too! Oh, that'll be fun.

Vanessa laughs.

VANESSA
I don't want to eat out every day, either.

CHRIS
That's fair. Maybe like once or twice a week?

Vanessa nods.

VANESSA
That'll work.

Beat.

CHRIS
Okay, well-

VANESSA
The Professor's planning to figure out your identity and kill you.

Chris cocks his head, leans in closer, talks quiet.

CHRIS

What?

VANESSA

I'm actually... I volunteered to find your identity for him.

Chris smiles.

CHRIS

That works out well.

Then he realizes:

CHRIS

Oh, shit, but what are you gonna do? Are you gonna be okay? What are you gonna tell them?

VANESSA

Nothing, obviously.

CHRIS

They aren't gonna get suspicious? If you need to give them something, I can-

VANESSA

I'll burn that bridge when I come to it. I'll be fine.

JULIUS (O.S.)

Hey, Vanessa!

JULIUS (33, battered hoodie and jeans... familiar voice?) walks out of the mall, heads over to Vanessa and Chris.

Vanessa is rattled, but recovers fast.

VANESSA

Hey, Julius. Chris, this is my friend Julius. Julius, this is my boyfriend Chris.

Julius shakes Chris's hand.

JULIUS

(to Vanessa)

I knew you were seeing somebody.

(to Chris)

Nice to meet you, man.

CHRIS

Likewise.

Julius nods to Vanessa.

JULIUS
Fancy seeing you here.

VANESSA
We just ate.

Chris can tell Vanessa's not happy about this.

CHRIS
Yeah, we actually just finished and
went a little long...

JULIUS
Sure, I won't keep you. Nice to meet
you, Chris. See you around.

CHRIS
You too.

VANESSA
See you.

Julius walks away. Vanessa watches him for a beat, like
she's making sure he's leaving.

CHRIS
That was-

VANESSA
I gotta go. I'll text you later.

She hustles across the street, then turns the same
direction as Julius.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Vanessa walks into an alleyway. Julius leans against a
wall, waiting for her.

Vanessa hisses at him, keeps the volume down.

VANESSA
What the hell are you doing here?

JULIUS
Relax. I'm not following you.

VANESSA
(spooked)
Then who are you following?

JULIUS
You really didn't want me to know
about this guy, did you?

VANESSA

What? No, it's not about that,
it's...

She stops. Takes a breath. Calms down.

VANESSA

Sorry. It's been a weird few days.

JULIUS

Seems like it. You sure you're good?

VANESSA

I'm fine. Are you okay here, do you
need to-

JULIUS

I had another double nearby, he's
tailing Volur now. I trade off a lot
anyway, it's fine.

VANESSA

Why was Volur here?

Julius frowns, shakes his head.

JULIUS

I don't know. Probably just a
coincidence, but you should be
careful.

Vanessa nods. She's worried, but carries it well.

VANESSA

I do have to get back to work.

She turns to leave.

JULIUS

Chris seems like a cool guy.

Vanessa looks at Julius.

VANESSA

Don't.

She leaves.

Julius chuckles.

POPS out of existence.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Vanessa works, but she's anxious.

She grabs her phone, gets ready to text Chris.

Decides against it. Puts her phone back down.
She picks her phone back up, does text Chris:
"Julius is kind of a"... delete delete delete.
Beat.

She swears under her breath just as Annette arrives, sits down.

ANNETTE
Everything okay?

Vanessa jumps.

VANESSA
Y-yeah.

Annette doesn't buy it. Waits.

Vanessa spins to face Annette.

VANESSA
...We bumped into Julius at lunch.

ANNETTE
Oof. How was that?

VANESSA
(It was terrible.)
It was fine.

ANNETTE
Do you think it was a coincidence?

VANESSA
I don't know. I talked to him after
and he said yes.

ANNETTE
I mean, he's not going to tell you
if he's stalking you again.

VANESSA
I know.

ANNETTE
I think you should think about a
restraining order.

VANESSA
It wouldn't... that's not necessary.
He's an asshat, but he comes by it
honestly.

Annette laughs.

ANNETTE

What does that mean?

VANESSA

I don't know. I'll talk to him.

ANNETTE

You said you did.

Vanessa spins around, gets back to work.

VANESSA

I need to make sure he got the message.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Sonora pins Mob Rule to the wall, hand on his neck.

SONORA

Disappear again, and I'll just track down the real you. You can't hide from me.

MOB RULE

Shit, fine! What the hell is your problem?

SONORA

How many of you are tailing Chris right now? And you know I can tell if you lie.

MOB RULE

None! I swear!

Beat.

Sonora releases him.

SONORA

I thought we were past this.

MOB RULE

We are. I'm telling you, it was an honest coincidence. I was following Volur. You know I'm telling you the truth, so why are you freaking out?

Sonora sighs.

SONORA

Alright. Okay.

She leans against the wall.

Beat.

MOB RULE

You really like this guy that much?

SONORA

What's that supposed to mean?

MOB RULE

I mean, you're... look at yourself.

SONORA

Don't put this on me. This is about you and your shit. If you hadn't been a bitch after we broke up-

MOB RULE

Oh please, bring on the lecture.

SONORA

Screw you.

MOB RULE

Never again.

Beat.

Sonora looks at Mob Rule.

Sighs.

SONORA

I do like him that much.

MOB RULE

That's good. I'm happy for you.

SONORA

Now you are lying.

MOB RULE

Only half lying. I can be happy and jealous at the same time. I contain multitudes.

Sonora snickers at the pun.

SONORA

Yeah, well, thanks.

MOB RULE

You're not just spending all your time with him and blowing off the hunt for Jupiter, are you?

Sonora stiffens. Mob Rule notices.

MOB RULE

Yeah, I thought so. Look, we're cool, you and me, and I'm okay laying low for a bit. But the others... We gotta give them something.

Sonora grimaces.

SONORA

I know.

A long beat.

Mob Rule stands up straight.

MOB RULE

Oh, shit. Speak of the devil.

Sonora stands up, ready for action.

SONORA

What's up?

MOB RULE

The Devourer's fighting Jupiter.

SONORA

Shit.

(thinking fast)

He's trying to kill him. He'll ruin everything.

MOB RULE

Jupiter's a big boy, he can handle himself.

SONORA

Where are they?

MOB RULE

Commercial-Broadway. Don't do anything stupid.

SONORA

I'm just gonna watch.

And with a BRIGHT HUM, she takes off into the air.

EXT. COMMERCIAL-BROADWAY TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Jupiter stands on elevated train tracks, gauntlets surging with electricity. He looks around himself, trying to predict the next attack.

The Devourer is a horrifying shadowy thing; it slithers like a serpent before it bursts out as a demonic beast and charges from behind Jupiter.

Jupiter spins around, punches the Devourer across the jaw; it SCREAMS like an angry animal, swipes at him, and he's forced to jump down to the ground below.

EXT. NEARBY ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Sonora lands on a rooftop nearby, but she's too far to get a good view of things - especially once the Devourer chases Jupiter underneath a bridge.

SONORA

Shit.

She looks around for a better vantage point, but she's at the highest spot for a mile. There's nowhere where she can see what's going on and hide at the same time.

SONORA

Shit.

There's another SHRIEK, and Jupiter soars into the air.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Jupiter tucks into a neat backflip and lands on the bridge in a crouch - then immediately dives out of the way of an oncoming car.

He holds a finger to his ear.

JUPITER

Where's that roadblock?! I've still got civilians here!

Before he can get a response, a car is THROWN AT HIM from the other side of the bridge.

Jupiter narrowly dodges out of the way of the car. As it passes by him, he sees the terrified DRIVER, trapped in her seat.

As the car hurtles over the side of the bridge, Jupiter grabs the corner of the car with both hands.

The car's weight drags him to the edge of the bridge, but he throws one foot on the barricade, and SPINS THE CAR BACK ONTO THE BRIDGE.

The car lands on the bridge with a heavy CRUNCH. It's totaled, but the driver is alive.

As soon as Jupiter can see the driver is safe, the Devourer TACKLES HIM OFF THE BRIDGE.

EXT. BELOW THE BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Jupiter hits the ground hard, the Devourer on top of him. Shadowy limbs sprout and pin Jupiter completely.

JUPITER
(in pain)
You don't have to do this, Nicholas.

THE DEVOURER
do not speak.

The Devourer solidifies into DOCTOR NICHOLAS THOMAS (75): a leathery-skinned, wiry old man; shadows still hold Jupiter to the ground.

His voice is more natural now, but still raspy.

DOCTOR THOMAS
You're finally going to pay for what you did to me.

A shadow coalesces into a dagger in his hand.

SONORA (O.S.)
NOOO!!

A sonic wave hits Doctor Thomas like a truck, knocks him back into his shadowy form as he flies back underneath the bridge.

Jupiter gets to his feet - he's hurt, but he's still gonna fight.

Sonora walks over to him, hands up and ready for when The Devourer comes back.

JUPITER
What are you doing?

SONORA
Saving your ass.

JUPITER
But what about-

SONORA
Now's not the time.

Jupiter punches his fists together, and they ignite with electric flames.

JUPITER
You're right.

The Devourer has regrouped, turned into a massive tide of darkness.

Sonora does some stretches, loosens up.

SONORA

I've been wanting to do this for a
long time.

The Devourer charges.

Sonora throws up a sonic barrier, which The Devourer crashes into.

Jupiter charges in; Sonora drops the wall at the last second, and Jupiter lands a tremendous uppercut that knocks The Devourer into the air.

Sonora takes off and soars over of The Devourer, then screams a sonic blast from above him that knocks him straight back down.

The Devourer lashes out; a shadowy tendril wraps around Sonora's ankle, whips her down.

Jupiter jumps back and catches Sonora, then snaps the tendril with an electric karate chop.

SONORA

Give me a boost!

Jupiter chucks Sonora like a shotput, hurling her at The Devourer.

The Devourer grows and spreads, readying a massive tide of shadows.

Sonora hurtles into the darkness, disappears...

...Then reappears on the other side, dragging Doctor Thomas out of his shadows with her!

She slams him on the ground. His shadows surge towards her, trying to return to him, but Sonora's entire body vibrates with sonic energy; all the shadows are shredded as soon as they get close.

Soon they're all gone, leaving only her and Doctor Thomas. Jupiter jogs towards them, but he's pretty far away for the moment.

SONORA

I knew I could take you, but I
didn't think it'd be that easy.

DOCTOR THOMAS

Wh... why?

SONORA
 Because you're an asshole and I've
 never liked you.

She leans in close, whispers to him.

SONORA
 I'm not going to let you ruin
 everything because you needed to
 land the killing blow yourself.

DOCTOR THOMAS
 I deserve this! He-

Sonora stands.

SONORA
 Oh, boo-hoo. We all have tragic
 origin stories, asshole. Jupiter
 probably does too. You don't see him
 whining about it.

Jupiter arrives, stands next to Sonora.

JUPITER
 Good work.

SONORA
 Don't get the wrong idea, Sparky.
 This was me settling a score, not
 helping you.

Jupiter's not used to lying; it takes him a second to
 realize why she's talking like that.

JUPITER
 Oh... well. Whether it was your
 intention or not, you helped the
 cause of Justice today. I couldn't
 have defeated Doctor Thomas without
 you. I'm going to make sure he gets
 the help he needs to-

SONORA
 Yeah, yeah.

She takes off and flies away, leaving Jupiter and Doctor
 Thomas behind.

INT. VANESSA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Vanessa sits on the sofa, holding a beer. Chris paces the
 room, gesticulating wildly.

CHRIS
 And when I knocked him into the air
 (MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

and you just shot up there and blasted him back down?! It was like I knew you'd be there to follow up, I just felt it! And you asked for a boost, and I didn't even have to think about it, I just chucked you as hard as I could, and... and... oh, man.

He crashes on the sofa next to her, pulls her in for a kiss.

CHRIS

It was awesome.

VANESSA

We fought pretty well together.

CHRIS

Is this, like... can we do this more? Are there other bad guys you have beef with?

VANESSA

I have beef with all of them. They're conspiring to kill you, remember?

Chris leans back.

CHRIS

Wait, this didn't, like, blow your cover, did it? You just saved my life.

She shakes her head, puts her beer down.

VANESSA

No. It didn't help, but part of the plan is to kill, like, you. Chris. Not Jupiter. To avoid drawing heat from other heroes.

CHRIS

That's still gonna draw heat, though. Most of the other heroes in the area know who I am.

VANESSA

That doesn't matter, what matters is... wait, hang on, really?

CHRIS

Yeah. It's a secret from... well, from you. Not the good guys. I'm not
(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)
worried about Quasar or Sword Saint
coming after my friends and family.

VANESSA
I hadn't really thought about that.
The only secret identity I know
is...

She realizes maybe she shouldn't say.

CHRIS
Who?

VANESSA
Uh... I don't... you're not gonna,
like... go after him?

Chris shakes his head, then reconsiders.

CHRIS
Actually... I might. If he's hurting
people, I'm going to do what it
takes to stop him.

They both shift - just a little bit away from each other.

CHRIS
It's fine. You don't have to tell
me.

VANESSA
I know.

Chris clears his throat.

CHRIS
So, but... can we, like, do that
again sometime? Really? Sonora was
always, like... you have a code,
everybody knows that. You worked
with The Centurion a few years ago,
didn't you? What happened there?

Vanessa laughs, leans back on the sofa, props her legs up
on Chris's lap.

VANESSA
Okay, so that wound up working out,
but it almost went really bad. What
happened was...

Chris settles in, excited to hear the story.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Sonora lurks on a rooftop, surveying some white-collar BROS drinking raucously at a bar across the street.

She concentrates, and can hear them clearly:

BRO

You have to keep them on a leash,
man, or they'll do the same thing to
you.

Another voice intrudes.

VOICE

(quiet)

Sonora.

Sonora doesn't notice.

BRO

I would never hit a woman, right,
but I'm not gonna let her know that,
right? Because once she knows I
wouldn't do it-

MOB RULE (O.S.)

Sonora!

Sonora cocks her head. Concentrates on Mob Rule's voice.

The camera follows the sound to...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

An alleyway a few blocks away.

Volur has Mob Rule pinned to a wall with black manacles covered in glowing runes.

MOB RULE

Run!

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Sonora's concentration snaps back to herself.

She spins around to see Jotun land right behind her.

She leans back to jump off the rooftop, but Jotun grabs her ankle and throws her back onto the roof.

She tucks into a roll and back to her feet, but Jotun tackles her and pins her to the ground, choking her.

JOTUN

Heard what you did to The Devourer.

Sonora struggles to breathe.

JOTUN

How you helped Jupiter. Funny thing, weren't you supposed to be hunting him?

Sonora gathers a ball of sonic energy in her hand, then Jotun slams her head against the ground and rattles her - she loses the energy.

JOTUN

Not so fast.

He pulls out a clasp like the manacles holding Mob Rule, and locks it around her neck.

Then he releases her, stands up.

She rolls back onto her feet in a combat stance, but Jotun looks relaxed.

Sonora tries to speak, just coughs. Tries again:

SONROA

I'm gaining his trust, asshole.

Jotun nods.

JOTUN

Good. Then you will be fine.

Sonora feels at the clasp.

SONORA

What the hell is this?

VOLUR (O.S.)

Insurance.

Volur appears from behind Jotun.

VOLUR

It will get tighter with each day that passes. I'll remove it once you've found Jupiter's secret identity.

SONORA

Are you crazy? I just said I was working on it!

VOLUR

Tell me who he is, and I can remove it right now.

Sonora shifts.

SONORA
I don't know yet, obviously. Or I
would've told you.

VOLUR
Surely you're close.

SONORA
I... yeah, I guess, but-

VOLUR
Then there is no problem. We have
discovered the Marshal's identity.
Once you have Jupiter's, we're ready
to initiate the Professor's plan.
Bring the name to us in a few
nights, I will remove the clasp, and
all will be well.

SONORA
Like hell. Why would I work with you
when you're-

Volur SNAPS her fingers, and Sonora starts choking.

Sonora drops to all fours, struggles.

Another SNAP, and she can breathe again - she gasps in
air.

Jotun smirks.

Sonora gets to her feet.

SONORA
(defeated)
What did you do to Mob Rule?

VOLUR
I don't like being followed.

She flies away, and Jotun leaps from rooftop to rooftop,
following her.

Sonora picks at the clasp on her neck, watches them leave.

She takes off in the direction of Mob rule.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Mob Rule is still chained to the wall.

He tries to vanish; his entire form wavers, goes
transparent, then the bindings flash and he comes right
back.

Sonora drops from above into the alley.

MOB RULE

What happened? Are you-

He sees her new neckwear.

MOB RULE

Shit. They got you, too?

SONORA

You can't, "poof?" Disappear?

He tries to disappear again, demonstrates it failing.

SONORA

Okay, hang on, I'll get you out of these.

She holds her hand out flat, starts a dull vibration around it - making a sonic blade.

She tries to cut Mob Rule free, but the cuffs are strong.

She looks at him.

SONORA

I don't think I can.

MOB RULE

Cut off my hands. This is just a double.

SONORA

It'll still hurt, won't it?

Mob Rule nods. Tenses.

Sonora slices his hands off just below the cuffs. Mob Rule GROANS in pain, but drops down, free.

Sonora helps him to his feet.

MOB RULE

Gonna be harder to get your neckwear off.

SONORA

Get out of here, I'll catch up with you when it's safe.

Don't have to tell him twice; he POPS away.

Sonora WHISPERS, but her voice ECHOES and STRETCHES, reaching further than it ever could naturally.

SONORA

Chris...

EXT. CHRIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chris lives in a tiny house in an okay-ish part of town. Big iron fence, bars on the windows, but everything is clean and the yards are taken care of.

SONORA (O.S.)

Chris... Chris, I need you. I need Jupiter.

Chris all but leaps out of the front door, already shrugging on his Jupiter uniform.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER SPIRE - NIGHT

Sonora waits on the highest skyscraper for miles around.

With a small flash of light, Jupiter jumps from a lower ledge to land next to her.

JUPITER

Couldn't have waited somewhere easier to get to?

SONORA

I'm probably being followed. At least from here, I'd be able to see them coming.

Jupiter's immediately alert, scans the area.

JUPITER

Who is it?

SONORA

Volur and Jotun collared me.

JUPITER

Collared?

He looks at her, and she gestures to her neck.

He moves in to examine it.

SONORA

I was only able to get matching cuffs off Mob Rule by cutting his double's hands off. That won't work for a choker.

JUPITER

Why is she coming after you? I thought you were all working together?

Sonora hesitates.

SONORA
This is... well...

Jupiter gets it.

JUPITER
Oh, no. They're on to you.

Sonora nods.

SONORA
They're suspicious.

Jupiter thinks.

JUPITER
I know someone who might be able to help. But...

SONORA
It's a hero.

JUPITER
Do we take you as Sonora? Or as...

He looks around, cautious.

SONORA
Relax. I control sound. Nothing we say is even reaching my collar, just in case it's bugged.

JUPITER
That's handy. If you show up as Sonora, he'll... it's probably better you come as Vanessa.

Sonora shakes her head.

SONORA
I can stop sound, but not sight. And if they are following me...

JUPITER
Right. Masks on. Sword Saint mostly operates on the other side of town. Bit of a hike for me, but...

Sonora smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SKY - NIGHT

Sonora carries Jupiter as she flies through the sky.

Jupiter is loving it.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

SWORD SAINT, a hero wearing a cyberpunk take on traditional samurai armor, complete with a pair of glowing swords on his belt, sits chatting with a couple cops as they put two handcuffed men into a police cruiser.

JUPITER (O.S.)

Sword Saint!

Jupiter steps out of some nearby shadows. Sword Saint stands up.

SWORD SAINT

(to cops)

Excuse me.

(to Jupiter)

Don't normally see you on this side of town. Everything okay?

JUPITER

Don't freak out, she's with me.

Sword Saint cocks his head.

Sonora steps out from behind Jupiter, with her hands raised.

Sword Saint draws his swords faster than you can blink.

JUPITER

I said don't freak out!

SWORD SAINT

I haven't attacked yet.

SONORA

I-

SWORD SAINT

That changes if you speak a single word. I know the power of your voice.

Sonora grimaces, but doesn't speak.

JUPITER

She needs our help.

SWORD SAINT

I will gladly help her find her way to prison.

JUPITER

She's gonna die if we don't help her. Volur and Jotun have a collar
(MORE)

JUPITER (CONT'D)
on her. They're forcing her to
figure out my secret identity.

Sword Saint considers.

SWORD SAINT
Why her?

Jupiter looks at Sonora. She shrugs at him.

JUPITER
We're... kind of an item.

Sword Saint is shocked. He takes a step back, and his grip
on his swords tightens.

SWORD SAINT
It's a trick. She's-

JUPITER
Saint... I love her.

Jupiter puts his arm around Sonora's shoulders. She puts
an arm around his waist.

Sword Saint processes that.

He sheathes his swords.

JUPITER
You're... cool with this?

SWORD SAINT
Of course not. But you're foolish
enough to have given her ample
opportunity to ambush you before
now, and I have no reason to believe
she'd use you to reach me, of all
people. Whatever her ulterior motive
is, I doubt it involves attacking me
here.

Sonora nods.

SONORA
Mob Rule always said you were too
clever to be worth tussling with. He
wasn't exaggerating.

SWORD SAINT
You would do well not to remind me
of the reprehensible nature of the
company you keep. I still haven't
agreed to anything.

Sonora slides out from under Jupiter's arm.

SONORA

If I get close enough to let you examine my new neckwear, are you gonna flip out?

Sword Saint rests his hands on his swords, says nothing.

Sonora walks over, tilts her head up to show off the collar. Sword Saint examines it.

SWORD SAINT

They want Jupiter's identity?

SONORA

There's more than that. I can tell you the whole plan if you help me.

SWORD SAINT

(to Jupiter)

You really trust her?

JUPITER

I do.

SWORD SAINT

Even though she hasn't told you the whole plan?

Jupiter hesitates.

SONORA

It hasn't come up.

Sword Saint snorts.

SWORD SAINT

I can help you. But not here. The collar is too tight to cut it off with my swords, and regardless of how much Jupiter vouches for you, I will not take you to my lab.

SONORA

(genuinely relieved)

Thank you. I know you don't have to do this.

SWORD SAINT

(disgusted)

Of course I do. I value all life, even the lives of my enemies.

JUPITER

All the same, thank you.

SWORD SAINT

I haven't done it yet. Leave me for now, I have much work to do.

He walks away. Sonora and Jupiter look at each other.

JUPITER

That went well.

SONORA

He's gonna betray us.

JUPITER

I know villains all like to stab each other in the back-

SONORA

Chris, I'm telling you. He's not gonna kill me, but...

Jupiter puts his hands on her shoulders.

JUPITER

Do you trust me?

SONORA

Of course I trust you, but-

JUPITER

I trust him with my life. If you can't trust him, trust my faith in him.

Sonora growls.

Nods.

SONORA

Fine. But if I have time to kill anyway, I'm setting up some failsafes.

JUPITER

Failsafes? Like-

Sonora kisses Jupiter.

SONORA

Like to keep you safe if I'm not around to protect you.

She steps back.

SONORA

I'll see you soon.

And she takes off into the air.

Jupiter looks around.

JUPITER
I should've taken my bike.

INT. SWANKY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Decorated more to show it off than to live in it; furniture that looks good but is uncomfortable to sit in, paintings on the wall instead of pictures of friends and family.

Julius walks in, flips the lights on. Sonora is standing in the corner behind him.

SONORA
Mob.

Julius doesn't react; he either knew she was there, or he's used to this.

JULIUS
Vanessa. I'm not single right now either, if this is a-

SONORA
This isn't a social call.

Wait.

SONORA
Who are you dating?

Julius smirks.

JULIUS
No one you know. What is this, then?

SONORA
I'm about to do something stupid.

Julius raises an eyebrow.

JULIUS
That's not like you.

SONORA
I'm calling in all my favors. I've already destroyed any evidence I had left about your identity. You and me, we're square now.

That gets his attention, but he tries to play it cool.

JULIUS
I haven't agreed to anything yet.

SONORA

You will. You might regret it later, but if things go well for me you don't actually have to do anything, and the idea of getting something for nothing is too attractive for you to resist.

JULIUS

You really think you know me.

SONORA

If something happens to me in the next 24 hours, you're Chris's bodyguard for a year. Nobody comes after him.

JULIUS

Only for a year? What happens to him after that?

SONORA

He can take care of himself. I just need to make sure he doesn't get blindsided.

Julius considers. This is too good a deal.

JULIUS

What don't I know?

SONORA

A lot.

JULIUS

He's somebody important, isn't he? The president's nephew or something? Foreign prince?

Sonora smirks.

SONORA

He doesn't have money, if that's what you're thinking.

JULIUS

If something happens to you twenty-four hours and five minutes from now, it's not my problem?

SONORA

And you're free and clear for life, either way.

Julius GROWLS. He knows there's something he's missing, but he wants this.

JULIUS
I hate this. You're fighting so
dirty.

SONORA
Deal's off the table in ten seconds.

JULIUS
You said you already destroyed-

SONORA
I'll just go tell the police your
identity. No skin off my back.

JULIUS
So that's how it is, huh?

He swears under his breath.

JULIUS
Fine. Fine, deal. But if this is
some sort of trick, you and I aren't
going to be friends anymore.

Sonora turns to leave, but hesitates.

SONORA
This isn't... the deal's already
been made. But-

JULIUS
Of course I'll keep an eye out for
Annette. Come on.

Sonora relaxes. Nods.

Leaves.

INT. SWORD SAINT'S TEMPORARY WORKSHOP - MORNING

A high-tech workshop has been pieced together inside an
abandoned warehouse.

Sword Saint leans over a workbench, preparing something.

Sonora walks in. Looks around.

SONORA
Where's Jupiter?

SWORD SAINT
I gave him the wrong address.

Sonora stops, gets into a defensive posture, but doesn't
strike yet.

SWORD SAINT

I wanted to have a chat with you first. Without him here.

SONORA

He told me I could trust you.

SWORD SAINT

I'll keep my word, villain. Come sit and I can get started.

Sonora's gut tells her to run, but she goes and sits anyway.

The chair reclines and the headrest drops, exposing Sonora's neck and the choker.

SWORD SAINT

I imagine you know his secret identity.

SONORA

He told me you all know each others'.

SWORD SAINT

Because we can trust each other, yes.

Sword Saint grabs a laser scalpel, starts working on the collar.

SONORA

He knows mine, too. We actually met in real life, first.

SWORD SAINT

This is real life.

SONORA

That isn't-

SWORD SAINT

You think you can put on a mask and consequences don't apply to you.

SONORA

Yeah, okay, but-

SWORD SAINT

But I know what you meant. Yes.

Beat.

Sonora sighs.

SONORA
I really do love him.

Sword Saint looks up at a monitor.

SWORD SAINT
Huh.

Sonora rolls her eyes.

SONORA
You have me hooked up to a lie
detector?

Sword Saint goes back to work on her collar.

SWORD SAINT
Only seemed fair. You can hear
micro-quivers in the voice to detect
lies as well, no?

SONORA
I can.

SWORD SAINT
Then you trust me when I say this is
a trap, and you have already fallen
into it with no hope of escape.

Sonora tenses... then relaxes.

SONORA
You wouldn't tell me about it if I
had a chance.

SWORD SAINT
Indeed not. I still expect you to
resist, but it will accomplish
nothing.

And like that, three more superheroes emerge from the
shadows around them.

SONORA
And that's the real reason Chris
isn't here.

SWORD SAINT
It is also a reason he isn't here. I
find the secret to lying
successfully is to do so entirely
within the truth.

Sonora sighs.

SONORA
You're still removing the collar?

SWORD SAINT

I have no wish to harm you,
especially knowing your feelings for
each other are sincere. But all the
same, you must face justice for your
many crimes.

Sonora opens her mouth to respond, but doesn't.

Sword Saint finishes. The collar falls off.

SWORD SAINT

All done. Can I trust you to come
peaceably?

Sonora takes a deep breath, and immediately Sword Saint
slams some strange technological gag around her mouth. The
other heroes leap into action, grabbing her arms and legs
and holding tight.

Sonora struggles, but there's nothing she can do.

CUT TO:

INT. VANESSA'S CELL - DAY

The room is covered in thick soundproof padding, including
the floor and ceiling.

The room is bisected by a thick barrier made out of a
translucent foam. A small glass porthole in the center
allows the only clear sight of the other side.

Vanessa stands on one side of the room. She wears a white
prison jumpsuit, with glowing electronic bands around her
wrists and her neck. Chris, in his full Jupiter getup but
with his mask off, is on the other, visible only through
the porthole.

Chris's voice comes in staticy and distorted as if through
a hidden speaker.

CHRIS

The Marshal has come around to our
side of things - you did save her
life, after all. She's supporting
your case to the other heroes,
but...

Vanessa shakes her head.

VANESSA

They can't do anything now.

CHRIS

Sure they can. If all the big heroes
(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 in the city speak up as character
 witnesses on your behalf-

VANESSA
 Then I can get out, what, ten years
 earlier? On parole, which is
 honestly worse than prison?

CHRIS
 We can be together if you're on
 parole.

Vanessa puts her hand on the porthole. Jupiter matches the
 gesture.

Vanessa takes her hand down, hesitates.

VANESSA
 ...Any word from Annette?

Chris shakes his head, sad.

CHRIS
 She's not... I'm working on her. But
 she feels betrayed. And I mean, I
 get it.

VANESSA
 I get it too. It just sucks.

A BUZZER sounds. Chris puts his mask back on, becomes
 Jupiter again.

JUPITER
 I'll be back in a few days. I'm
 helping the Defensive Alliance of
 New York deal with some stuff, I'll
 be out of town.

VANESSA
 They wouldn't be happy with you
 telling me that.

Jupiter is hurt by her implication.

JUPITER
 You know I trust you with my life.

VANESSA
 You trusted Sword Saint, too.

JUPITER
 I know. I'm so sorry, I-

The BUZZER again.

VANESSA

Go. I'll see you soon.

Jupiter lingers for a beat more, then leaves the room.

Vanessa watches him go.

INT. PRISON REC YARD - DAY

The rec yard is completely enclosed, with armed guards patrolling and guarding each of the doors.

Vanessa, dressed the same except with the addition of a technological gag, lifts weights. A few other supervillains are in the yard, all wearing various technological restraints to match their powers:

- HUNDRED ARMS, a villain who can grow additional limbs, wears a straightjacket with glowing bands reinforcing the restraints;

- UNICLOPS, a one-eyed villain with laser vision, has a thick metal eyepatch and is led around by a guard acting as his seeing-eye dog;

- RED DRAGON, a massive woman with scaly skin, a thick reptilian tail, and a large finned ridge on her head, has thin glowing bracelets that seem to somehow be impossibly heavy, dragging her arms down. She wears a gag similar to Vanessa's, but this one is made out of a thick fireproof canvas.

And finally, Doctor Thomas (AKA The Devourer) sits in the corner, glaring at Vanessa. He wears no extra restraints, but his jumpsuit glows faintly, and he doesn't cast a shadow at all.

Vanessa stops lifting weights, sits up. Looks at Doctor Thomas.

He snarls at her. She gets up, walks over to him.

Vanessa can speak through the gag, but it's distorted and staccato like Chris's voice was through the speaker.

VANESSA

You have a problem you need me to fix?

DOCTOR THOMAS

Jupiter visits you a lot, doesn't he?

Vanessa turns to walk away.

VANESSA

I don't know what you're talking about.

DOCTOR THOMAS
I have a theory.

Vanessa freezes, but doesn't turn around.

DOCTOR THOMAS
I don't think you failed at all. I think you discovered his identity.

VANESSA
That's absurd. I would've told Volur right away and not needed to turn myself in to the heroes to get her collar off.

DOCTOR THOMAS
I don't think you wanted to tell her. I think there was a reason you wanted to keep the secret.

Vanessa scoffs and walks away, but she's rattled.

INT. VANESSA'S CELL - NIGHT

Vanessa lies on the padded floor, no need for a bed. She hears a small, quiet HISS, and sits up straight.

VANESSA
Hey. Hey!

She looks around, panicked.

VANESSA
HEY! GUARDS! HEY!

She yells loud enough, long enough, a prison GUARD comes in her cell. The lights automatically turn on as he enters; he walks up and looks in the porthole.

GUARD
What do you want?

VANESSA
The Devourer is out of his cell. He's got his shadow back.

The guard glares at her for a beat, then pulls out a radio, whispers into it.

Beat.

He holds the radio to his ear. Nods. Puts it away.

GUARD
We've got eyes on him right now.
(MORE)

GUARD (CONT'D)

He's locked away and fast asleep.
Now shut up.

VANESSA

I'm telling you, he's got his powers
back, I don't know how. He's in
here, right now. Can you at least
leave the light on?

The guard considers... hits a button on his radio. He
leaves the room, and the lights stay on.

Vanessa lies back down, but she can't relax.

INT. DOCTOR THOMAS'S CELL - NIGHT

Doctor Thomas's cell is filled with vibrant light from all
angles, preventing anything from casting a shadow.

Thomas lies with his back to the door, facing the wall.

He's awake.

And smiling.

INT. VANESSA'S CELL - DAY

Julius visits Vanessa. He looks nervous as hell.

JULIUS

I told you, I'm keeping an eye on
him.

VANESSA

And you haven't noticed anything...
strange?

JULIUS

Yeah, Vanessa, I figured that out
pretty damn quick.

He swears under his breath.

JULIUS

I've agreed to a lot of stupid
things, but-

VANESSA

But nothing. Even in here, I can
hold you to your word.

Julius grimaces.

JULIUS

You think I don't know? Counting the
(MORE)

JULIUS (CONT'D)
days to the end of the year, I
promise.

Vanessa nods.

VANESSA
There's something else.

JULIUS
Oh god.

VANESSA
The Devourer. I don't know how, but
he's... he's got some of his mojo
back, even in here. And he...

She looks around her. It's not safe.

VANESSA
He's pissed at the people who put
him in here.

JULIUS
Are you okay?

VANESSA
I'm fine.

Julius chews on his tongue.

JULIUS
I'll keep my eyes peeled, but...

VANESSA
But?

JULIUS
But, he's... I'm just a normal guy,
Vanessa. I've got a lot *friends*,
but nobody with super strength.

Vanessa sighs.

VANESSA
Yeah. I know.

INT. PRISON REC YARD - DAY

Vanessa lifts weights again.

The room darkens. Fades away, with only Vanessa remaining
in a sea of black.

VANESSA
No. No!

She gets to her feet, but she's lost in a black void now.

BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa looks around her, arms raised in a defensive posture.

VANESSA

Bring it on, you shady son of a-

She turns around and is face to face with Volur.

VANESSA

You?!

VOLUR

Our mutual friend sends his regards,
and says you may have held up your
end of the bargain after all.

VANESSA

You and I have no bargain.

VOLUR

I beg to differ.

She grabs Vanessa's head forcefully, and the air around Volur's head ripples with psychic energy.

Vanessa drops to her knees in pain.

VANESSA

Get... out... of... my... HEAD!

She leaps to her feet, shoves Volur back.

But Volur just hovers in the air and laughs.

VOLUR

Oh, my. Devourer said he thought you
knew him, but, this...

Vanessa is terrified.

VANESSA

No! NO!

And suddenly the darkness disappears, taking Volur with it.

INT. PRISON REC YARD - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa stands in the middle of the yard, yelling.

VANESSA

NO! Get back here! Stop!

The guards rush her, aim their rifles at her.

GUARD

Down on your knees! Now!

They tackle Vanessa and pin her arms behind her back. She doesn't resist.

Doctor Thomas watches from nearby, grinning.

INT. VANESSA'S CELL - NIGHT

Vanessa sits in her cell, eyes closed, concentrating.

She HUMS, and the band around her neck GLOWS, lets out an ELECTRONIC WHINE.

The process is difficult, maybe painful; Vanessa grimaces, stops.

She takes a deep breath.

Tries again.

She HUMS, the band on her neck WHINES, and Vanessa modulates her hum to match the whine.

Once it matches exactly, she hums louder, LOUDER, until the band sparks and fizzles and falls off!

An ALARM goes off somewhere outside the room.

Vanessa stands, steels herself.

She looks at the porthole. Backs up to put as much distance as possible between it and her.

A guard charges in the room, rifle ready.

GUARD

Hey, you-

Vanessa charges towards the porthole, YELLS as she does; the porthole BURSTS in shards of plastic, startling the guard; Vanessa leaps into a perfect dive, sliding right through the now-empty hole and into a roll on the other side.

The guard tries to raise his rifle, but she's too close; she disarms him and slams the butt of the rifle into his face, knocking him out.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - NIGHT

An ALARM blares as Vanessa walks down the hallway, removing her bracers with a key. Once they're all removed, she drops them and the key to the floor.

A group of guards run around the corner. They don't wait to shout a warning, just open fire on her.

Vanessa throws her hands forward, and the air in front of her vibrates with a sonic shield that stops all the bullets before they can reach her.

She SCREAMS, and the sound reinforces the shield until it's a raging wave of sound that bowls the guards over.

VANESSA

I always wondered if it was as easy to break out as The Fiddler made it sound.

SWORD SAINT

It's not that easy.

Vanessa wheels around to see Sword Saint behind her, swords drawn.

VANESSA

You won't be able to gag me this time.

SWORD SAINT

I don't need to. The other heroes are only minutes away. You can't escape.

VANESSA

Volur knows Jupiter's identity. And she's pissed. They're going for him right now.

SWORD SAINT

How could you possibly know that?

VANESSA

She came to visit. Ripped it out of my head.

Sword Saint shakes his head.

SWORD SAINT

Nice try, but my sensors would have-

VANESSA

Not with The Devourer blocking them. Don't ask me how, but he got his-

SWORD SAINT

Enough!

Vanessa stops.

Nods.

VANESSA
You're right.

EXT. SUPERVILLAIN PRISON COMPLEX - NIGHT

A thick concrete wall, miles outside the city.

A long beat.

The wall EXPLODES, and Sword Saint tumbles out with the rubble.

He gets to his feet quick, but not quick enough to stop Vanessa as she soars out past him.

Sword Saint speaks into a radio on his gauntlet.

SWORD SAINT
Sonora is out and airborne. I've got to look after the hole she blew in the wall.

A woman's voice comes in over the radio.

CRIMSON (O.S.)
I see her, Saint.

Sword Saint prepares his swords as Red Dragon and Hundred Arms advance on him, freed in the explosion.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Vanessa flies through the sky. She WHISPERS into the air, her whispers vibrating with a curious strength.

VANESSA
Chris.... Chris, they're coming for you. Chris-

A red streak slams into Vanessa from below, sending her tumbling before she's able to catch herself.

She looks around. Doesn't see anything.

The streak slams into her from behind, and stays this time - it's CRIMSON, a flying heroine with superspeed. She wears a deep red jumpsuit with a prism as her logo.

Crimson has Vanessa in a half nelson hold.

VANESSA
Crimson, now is not the time.

CRIMSON
I've been waiting for you to stumble back on my turf again, Sonora. I've
(MORE)

CRIMSON (CONT'D)
 picked up a few tricks since the
 last time we-

Vanessa SCREECHES, the sound deafening. Crimson drops her
 and covers her ears.

Vanessa slams her feet into Crimson with an extra sonic
 OOMPH, and sends her hurtling towards the ground.

VANESSA
 So have I!

Vanessa hurtles away.

VANESSA
 (vibrating whisper)
 Chris... Chris!

She LISTENS, filtering through all the sounds of the city.
 She hears children LAUGHING, car horns HONKING, music
 BLARING, people TALKING...

And she hears Chris's voice, quiet, but clear. She focuses
 in on it.

CHRIS (O.S.)
 ...nessa? Where are you?

VANESSA
 Volur knows. She's coming for you.

CHRIS (O.S.)
 I just got off the plane, are you
 still in-

Crimson slams into Vanessa again, tackling her down
 towards the ground.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

They smack into the ground with a sonic shockwave, leaving
 a large crater and a cloud of dust.

Beat.

A SHRIEK, and Crimson is sent flying out of the dust
 cloud. The shockwave leaves a tunnel through the dust,
 revealing Vanessa, somewhat battered, but using the pain
 to fuel herself.

Crimson skips across the ground, manages to land on her
 feet. She squares up at Vanessa; they stare each other
 down.

Vanessa's voice is almost unrecognizable; it booms and
 vibrates with barely-contained energy.

VANESSA

This won't end well for Jupiter.

CRIMSON

Tough talk, but... what? What does he have to do with-

VANESSA

He's in danger. You and I are the only ones fast enough to get to him in time to help.

Crimson has doubts, but Vanessa's words are landing.

CRIMSON

How do you know?

VANESSA

You know how I always know you're coming? I can pick sounds out from across the city.

Crimson smirks.

CRIMSON

You didn't hear me coming this time.

Vanessa GROWLS; it echoes across the walls, vibrates the windows.

VANESSA

I was occupied trying to save Jupiter's life.

Vanessa cocks her head.

VOLUR

(faint)

There. He doesn't have his gauntlets, this will be easy.

Vanessa's eyes widen. She SHOUTS at the top of her lungs, the shout bowling Crimson over and echoing across the entire city.

VANESSA

CHRIS!

EXT. AIRPORT PICKUP ZONE - NIGHT

Chris waits with a large backpack; he looks around, alert for signs of danger.

Vanessa's shout echoes all around.

VANESSA (O.S.)

CHRIS!

Everyone around him looks up, trying to find the source of the shout.

CHRIS
Vanessa?! Are you-

Sparkling dust drops all around; everyone but Chris freezes in time.

Jotun drops in from above Chris, grabs his backpack, and rips it off his back.

With one hand, Jotun shoves Chris to the ground; with the other, he throws the backpack far enough away that you can't see it land.

Jotun laughs, looks down at Chris.

JOTUN
Hello, Jupiter.

CHRIS
Oh, that's bad.

Jotun picks him up by the neck. Holds him at eye level.

Volur flies in from above them, hovers just over Jotun's shoulder.

VOLUR
Sonora was kind enough to point us
in your direction.

Chris chokes out his words.

CHRIS
I thought you were going to make it
look like an accident.

VOLUR
Look around you. They'll see what we
want them to see. Jotun always has
hit like a truck.

Chris does look around; everyone is spellbound, staring wide-eyed at nothing. Colors dance in their eyes.

CHRIS
You won't get away with-

Jotun tightens his grip, cutting off Chris's air supply.

VOLUR
Do it.

Vanessa comes out of nowhere and slams into Volur, tackling her into a wall; she holds a vibrating sphere of sonic energy to Volur's head.

VANESSA

Not so fast.

Volur laughs merrily.

VOLUR

You don't have time to kill me and save your lover.

VANESSA

Try me.

VOLUR

Okay. Jotun?

Time slows to a crawl.

Jotun lifts Chris up to better slam him into the ground.

Vanessa's eyes widen. She turns around, releases Volur; Volur teleports away.

Vanessa tries to run to Jotun, but she's too far away; Chris is already halfway to the ground.

Time returns to normal speed as a red streak blasts past Jotun; Crimson stands a dozen yards away, holding Chris.

Vanessa is flooded with relief.

Jotun ROARS. Vanessa SCREAMS at him, blows him a few blocks away.

Chris looks towards where Jotun threw his bag.

CHRIS

Nice timing. My stuff is over-

Crimson bolts away; she returns a moment later holding Chris's gauntlets.

Vanessa runs to Chris; they embrace tightly. Crimson is surprised.

CRIMSON

You guys really are a thing? Like, really?

CHRIS

It's a long story.

CRIMSON

I didn't see your suit or mask. Are you-

Chris and Vanessa's hug finally ends.

CHRIS

Got damaged in New York. Looks like my identity's out now anyway; we'll deal with that tomorrow.

VANESSA

The others involved were The Professor, the Devourer, and-

MOB RULE (O.S.)

And me.

Mob Rule walks over from around the corner. Everyone takes defensive postures towards him.

Mob Rule shakes his head.

MOB RULE

Really, Vanessa? Is this really how things are shaking out?

VANESSA

You said you knew who he was.

MOB RULE

That doesn't mean... you're on their team, now?

VANESSA

It's not a team thing.

MOB RULE

But there you are squaring up at me with Jupiter on one side and Crimson on the other.

A small EARTHQUAKE rattles the ground.

CHRIS

Jotun and Volur are regrouping.

CRIMSON

On it.

She disappears in a blur.

CHRIS

She's gonna need help.

VANESSA

Go. I can handle him.

MOB RULE

"Handle me?" You can "handle me?"

Chris charges his gauntlets, wraps himself in lightning, and runs off at 50 MPH.

A dozen more Mob Rules walk out from various corners.

VANESSA

We don't have to fight.

MOB RULE

It says something about me that I thought we were friends up until this point. Says something about you, too.

VANESSA

Help us. Help us beat Volur, tell us who else is coming.

MOB RULE

You were the goddamn idealist of the two of us, do you remember that? I was the opportunist, you were the one who insisted we were right and they were wrong!

The Mob Rules each double.

Vanessa notices.

VANESSA

I'm not giving up the fight. But I'm not letting anyone hurt Chris.

The talking Mob Rule hangs his head.

MOB RULE

You know what the difference is, between you and me?

VANESSA

What?

Mob Rule looks at her again.

MOB RULE

I know I'm a bad guy.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Jotun stands in the middle of the highway, swinging wildly at Chris as Chris weaves in and out of range.

Crimson flies through the sky as Volur shoots bolts of dark energy at her.

CHRIS
Crimson, can you-

CRIMSON
Kinda busy!

Jotun jumps at Chris, and Chris barely dives into a roll to avoid the attack.

Chris yells at Jotun.

CHRIS
Bring it on, big guy!

Jotun ROARS, swings another meaty fist, and Chris can't get out of the way fast enough; Jotun knocks him a dozen yards across the pavement.

Jotun LAUGHS.

Chris tries to stand, but the shadows coalesce around him and pin him to the ground.

The Devourer's HISSES comes from everywhere at once.

THE DEVOURER
hello, jupiter.

Chris's gauntlets surge with lightning, but the darkness strangles them, shuts them off.

A WAVE OF BLUE ENERGY shoots out from the other side of a hill and blasts Crimson from the sky; The Professor emerges with a backpack-mounted energy cannon.

CHRIS
I thought things were going too well.

Jotun stomps over to Chris. Grabs him by the head and lifts him. Volur telekinetically lifts Crimson, pins her in midair.

CHRIS
Your plan has already failed! What do you think you can accomplish, here?

VOLUR
You're right. Might as well go all-in.

Volur twists her wrist, and Crimson's neck SNAPS.

CHRIS

JANE!

Volur tosses Crimson's body aside. The Professor walks up to Volur.

THE PROFESSOR

You shouldn't have killed her. We could have salvaged the plan.

VOLUR

They all know about it now anyway, thanks to Sonora.

The Professor nods grimly.

THE PROFESSOR

So do we just kill him now?

Mob Rule drives up on a motorcycle. Stops next to them.

MOB RULE

I have Sonora. I'm carrying her over now.

VOLUR

Jupiter's powerless without his gauntlets. We'll let her watch us kill him.

MOB RULE

I did everything you asked. You and me, we're square now.

VOLUR

We're not "square" until she's dead, fool. Demonstrate again.

Mob Rule growls, doubles himself and then disappears the double.

MOB RULE

I'm *still* the real one.

Three of his doubles appear from towards the airport, carrying Vanessa's body.

They toss her in front of The Professor and Volur.

THE PROFESSOR

Is she dead?

MOB RULE

She's unconscious. Sue me.

Volur sighs.

VOLUR

I'm not waiting for her to wake up.
Might as well kill Jupiter now,
then. Jotun?

The Mob Rules all disappear.

Volur's eyes widen as she realizes she's been tricked.

Vanessa's eyes snap open, and she SHRIEKS. It's deafening.

A shockwave blows Volur and The Professor back; Jotun drops Chris to cover his ears.

The Devourer's shadows quiver across his frame, revealing Doctor Thomas beneath them.

Vanessa flies forward, slams a sonically-charged fist into Jotun, sending him flying into a nearby hill; he hits so hard he leaves a crater.

The Devourer charges Vanessa; she leaps forward, a sonic sheathe protecting her from his shadows; she pushes through them to grab him by the neck, then grabs his shadows with her other hand; she vibrates the shadows into nothingness, then she tosses the now-defenseless Doctor Thomas aside.

Volur flies towards Vanessa's exposed back, a mystic dagger in her hand-

Then Sword Saint drops from the sky on top of her! He deftly disarms and cuffs her in the same motion.

The other heroes who helped him arrest Vanessa arrive and cuff The Professor and Jotun.

Vanessa runs to Chris and checks on him.

VANESSA

Chris! Are you okay?

Chris is dizzy, but conscious.

CHRIS

Holy heck that was loud!

Vanessa smiles and cries and hugs him tight.

Chris hugs back, still dazed.

Sword Saint walks up behind Vanessa.

Chris pushes Vanessa off of himself, tries to get to his feet; Vanessa has to help him.

As soon as he's up, Chris steps between Saint and Vanessa.

Vanessa squares up for another fight, but it's clear she's wiped.

SWORD SAINT
You need to step aside, Chris.

CHRIS
I will not.

SWORD SAINT
She's a criminal. Everything else aside, she just broke out of prison, let a few other villains out with her.

CHRIS
She broke out to save me.

SWORD SAINT
From villains that she enabled to harm you.

VANESSA
I would never have-

Sword Saint draws his sword and would have cut Vanessa if Chris didn't get in the way; Sword Saint stops his sword at Chris's throat.

SWORD SAINT
I know the power of her voice. If she speaks again-

CHRIS
Saint, I swear to you, if you hurt her, you and I are going to have a big problem.

Chris and Sword Saint stare each other down.

VANESSA
I am not a threat to you.

Sword Saint GROWLS at her, but doesn't attack.

SWORD SAINT
Crimson is **dead**.

CHRIS
And you have the murderers! Let Vanessa go!

SWORD SAINT
No. No! I will not let you ally yourself with this villain!

VANESSA

He would be dead right now if not
for this villain!

SWORD SAINT

His secret identity would still be
intact if not for you!

(to Chris)

Think about your mother, Chris!

Chris's eyes widen.

CHRIS

Is she-

VANESSA

Mob Rule said he had a double
watching her.

SWORD SAINT

Is that a threat, fiend?

The other heroes take up flanking positions around Chris
and Vanessa.

CHRIS

You know I'm not gonna let you take
her. You arrest her today, I spring
her out tomorrow.

Vanessa pushes past Chris.

VANESSA

Forget it, Chris. I can take them.

SWORD SAINT

Can you?

Vanessa's hand vibrates with sonic energy. She and Sword
Saint stare each other down.

Chris turns around to face the heroes behind them, covers
her back.

A long beat.

SWORD SAINT

Both of your secret identities have
been exposed.

He sheathes his swords.

SWORD SAINT

You should get out of town before
something like this happens again.

He walks away.

The other heroes are confused, surprised, but also relieved.

Chris and Vanessa relax.

VANESSA
Sword Saint.

Sword Saint stops.

VANESSA
Thank you.

Sword Saint keeps walking.

Vanessa grabs Chris and flies away.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS

As they roll:

EXT. BELIZE STREETS - DAY

Vanessa and Chris hold hands as they walk through a touristy area.

A sharp eye will notice them both wearing wedding rings.

VANESSA
I get it. I really do. But does she have to, like, live with us?

CHRIS
Not forever, just, while she's getting used to living in a new country.

CHRIS'S MOM (O.S.)
Oh! Chris! Over here!

Vanessa rolls her eyes, but she's got a smile on her face.

CHRIS'S MOM (55, Hawaiian shirt and fanny pack) runs through the crowd, gives Chris and Vanessa both big hugs.

CHRIS
Mom, you have to stop calling me that. I'm John, now.

CHRIS'S MOM
I'm an old woman, you have to give me time to get used to that.

VANESSA
You're not that old.

CHRIS'S MOM

Oh, hush.

But she liked hearing it; she holds Vanessa's hand as they all walk away.

CHRIS'S MOM

I was talking to one of the shop owners, he said there's a nice restaurant over on the beach that...

INT. CHRIS AND VANESSA'S NEW BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's cramped, not fully decorated. But it'll be nice once they're finished getting settled.

Vanessa sits on the bed, watches Chris show off a pieced-together super outfit made out of various scraps and cloths.

CHRIS

Right? I think it'll work.

VANESSA

I'm so bad at this. I'd need to see the finished product to judge.

CHRIS

At least tell me what you think of the color palette.

VANESSA

Did you really put this much effort into your old outfit? Because... it did not show.

CHRIS

Um, ouch? But you're totally right, and that's why I want to get this one right.

CUT TO:

Now Chris sits on the bed, shirtless and in pajama pants, while Vanessa models an all-black outfit with a towel for a cape.

Chris's mom stands in the doorway and TUTS.

CHRIS'S MOM

I think you should-

Vanessa jumps.

VANESSA

Shit! Oh, sorry, ma'am, I didn't see you there.

CHRIS'S MOM

You don't have to call me mom, but
you also don't have to call me
"ma'am."

Vanessa considers.

VANESSA

I don't... I could call you mom.

Chris's mom smiles.

EXT. DARK BELIZEAN ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

A MUGGER armed with a large knife advances on a YOUNG WOMAN. They speak in subtitled Spanish.

[The English translation of Spanish dialogue is in <angled brackets>]

YOUNG WOMAN

<Please, don't hurt me!>

MUGGER

<Give me your purse and->

RELÁMPAGO

(thick accent)

<Stop!>

RELÁMPAGO, Chris's new hero identity, drops down from the rooftop; he wears a uniform much like the one he was modeling.

MUGGER

<Who the hell are you?>

RELÁMPAGO

<I'm feeling Relampago!>

Vanessa, in her new identity as TRUENA, drops down on the other side of the mugger, between him and the woman.

TRUENA

(perfect accent)

<No, you are Relámpago.>

RELÁMPAGO

Right. <I are Relámpago!>

Truena laughs. The mugger is very confused.

RELÁMPAGO

Come on, I'm trying.

MUGGER

<What's going on?>

TRUENA

<You're going to prison, moron.>

She blasts him right into Relámpago's arms; Relámpago spins him into the wall, zip ties his hands behind his back.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END