

GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

written by

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BLACK SCREEN

A woman's voice, bubbly.

ANNE (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?

She knows very well why.

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

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

Vanessa reluctantly spins to face her.

ANNE
So it went well, then?

VANESSA
Yeah. It went well.

ANNE
...And?

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

ANNE
What did you do? Where did you go?

VANESSA
Dinner, and then, we just, walked
around.

Vanessa spins back to her desk.

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

ANNE
You met Carol?

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

Brief moment of horror. Vanessa looks at Anne.

VANESSA
Oh god, was it planned?

Anne shakes her head.

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

Vanessa turns back to her work.

ANNE
Where's he taking you tonight?

VANESSA
We didn't make any plans. Just,
meeting after work.

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

Vanessa looks sickeningly happy.

ANNE
You're too cute, I'm gonna vomit.

Anne spins back around to get some work done.

ANNE
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.

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

Vanessa rolls her eyes.

Vanessa's phone DINGS with a text message.

ANNE
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 (ANNE'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.

ANNE
(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
Ooh, that's a good line.

CHRIS
What? ...Oh, that is a good line. I should remember that one.

Vanessa laughs.

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

ANNE'S VOICE
Answer your phone. Answer your phone. Answer your phone. Answer your phone.

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

She fumbles with it, makes it stop.

Chris laughs.

CHRIS
Is Anne your ringtone?

VANESSA

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

CHRIS

I'm okay with you calling her back now.

VANESSA

It's not after the date yet.

Vanessa takes Chris'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 please no. Anything but this.

VANESSA

This and Guitar Hero are the only arcade games I play.

Chris gets excited.

CHRIS

I can play some Guitar Hero.

EXT. TRENDY ICE CREAM PLACE

Chris and Vanessa exit past a line that wraps halfway down the block. They each have a massive ice cream cone.

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.

They sit at a bench.

VANESSA

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

Chris takes a bite of his ice cream. Enjoys it immensely.

VANESSA

(off his enjoyment)
I told you.

CHRIS

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

He takes a bigger 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.

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. VANESSA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The sky is juuust barely starting to brighten. It's almost morning.

The building is the nicest one on a crummy block.

Chris and Vanessa walk up. They're exhausted, but somehow not tired at all.

VANESSA

This is me.

CHRIS
Are you sure? Should we walk around
the block another time?

Vanessa hesitates.

VANESSA
It doesn't have to be over.

Chris doesn't get it.

VANESSA
You could come in? If you want.

Chris gets it, is immediately awkward.

CHRIS
Oh, no, I don't...

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

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 thought you were a
double, I would've come sooner if I
thought you'd-

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

MOB RULE
I am a double!

All but one of him POP out of existence.

SONORA
I thought only the real you could
make doubles.

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, Jupiter.
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."

ANNE'S VOICE

Pick up your phone. Pick up your
(MORE)

ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
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?

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.

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 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
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
Obviously 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

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; he's hard to read for the
moment.

Vanessa picks the toppings off her burger, puts the bun
back on. She's very easy to read: she's very upset.

Vanessa 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 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 Anne eat their lunches - Vanessa has a sandwich from Starbucks, Anne 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.

ANNE
Oh, please. Look at yourself.

Vanessa sighs.

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

ANNE
How old are you now?

Vanessa laughs.

VANESSA
Wo-ho! She's going there.

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

VANESSA
Not even thinking about that right
now.

Anne bites her tongue.

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

ANNE
Oh, grow up.

VANESSA
They're pretty extreme!

ANNE

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.

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
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...

She stops herself. She needs to find a lie.

SONORA
I guess not, no.

MOB RULE

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

SONORA

Maybe. Maybe.

MOB RULE

Look, I know murder's not your style, but it's not like you've never killed anyone.

SONORA

It's a short list, though, and all people who deserved it. I don't think a mayoral aide who happens to be remarkably efficient deserves it.

MOB RULE

I get it, I don't like it either. But still, this is 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 Anne 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
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 went a little long, so...

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
I asked you a question.

JULIUS
Volur.

VANESSA
Why the hell 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 Anne arrives, sits down.

ANNE
Everything okay?

Vanessa jumps.

VANESSA
Y-yeah.

Anne doesn't buy it. Waits.

Vanessa spins to face Anne.

VANESSA
...We bumped into Julius at lunch.

ANNE
Oof. How was that?

VANESSA
(It was terrible.)
It was fine.

ANNE
Do you think it was a coincidence?

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

ANNE
He's not going to tell you if he's
stalking you again. 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.

Anne laughs.

ANNE
What does that mean?

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

ANNE
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.

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 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 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

Thank you.

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 looks out at the skyline. Mob Rule stands behind her.

MOB RULE

I'm not saying I don't understand, I'm saying the optics weren't great. Saving any hero would look bad, but Jupiter-

SONORA

"The optics?"

Mob Rule sighs, paces.

MOB RULE

Volur, and Jotun especially... they're not super forgiving.

SONORA

Which is why I don't like working with them. You do one thing wrong-

MOB RULE

(getting angry)

Yeah, but we are working with them. Shit, man, this is why the heroes keep beating us: they fight us instead of each other. And now you-

He throws his hands in the air.

MOB RULE

Now you're even fighting us.

(before Sonora can object)

I know! I already said I understand, and yes! You made the right choice. Just-

He freezes.

Sonora notices.

SONORA

What's wrong?

MOB RULE

Volur's jumping a double. I can't-SHIT.

He's in pain, like something's drilling into his head.

SONORA

Where are they?

MOB RULE

They've got me trapped, I can't drop the double! Alleyway, half a mile north-

Jotun leaps onto the rooftop from below.

Mob Rule POPS out of existence.

Sonora 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 black clasp covered in glowing runes, 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

If you know who he is, 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 chained to the wall with manacles matching Sonora's choker.

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? Did you get away?

He sees her new neckwear.

MOB RULE

Shit.

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 necklace 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 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, and I'll need time to set things up. 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. I don't
think he'll 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

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,

(MORE)

SONORA (CONT'D)

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 Anne. 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. Sit.

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.

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 grimaces.

Beat.

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

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 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. Chris matches the gesture.

Vanessa takes her hand down, hesitates.

VANESSA

...Any word from Anne?

Chris shakes his head, sad.

CHRIS

She's not... I'm working on her. But she feels betrayed.

VANESSA

I never wanted to lie to her. She-

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.

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 staticy 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 stops, 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.
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 was just
in here. 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 watching out for 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 days to the end of the year, I promise.

Vanessa nods.

VANESSA

There's something else.

JULIUS

The hell else can there be?

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.

JULIUS
And what about you? You're the one
locked up in here. Are you gonna be
okay?

They're both worried.

INT. PRISON REC YARD - DAY

Vanessa lifts weights again.

The room darkens, fades away; Vanessa remains, standing in
a sea of black.

VANESSA
About time, you son of a bitch.

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
I've been waiting for you to-

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.

She gathers sonic energy in her hands.

Sword Saint tightens his grip on his swords. Half-crouches, ready to pounce.

Beat.

Everything happens at once: Vanessa shoots a sonic blast at Sword Saint; Sword Saint dodges to one side and bounces off the wall at Vanessa, closing the distance between them in a single stride.

Sword Saint swings both swords simultaneously, one low, one high; Vanessa ducks beneath the high one, and shatters the other with a sonic slap.

She then has to duck flying shards of metal, as the pieces of the sword magnetically vibrate and zip back into place on the hilt.

VANESSA

Neat trick!

But Sword Saint doesn't do banter; he was already swinging the empty hilt, knowing the sword would be there before reaching Vanessa.

Vanessa falls flat on her back, catching herself on a sonic wave, and shoves herself back twenty feet.

Sword Saint runs, keeps pace with her; his boots glow brighter as he runs superhumanly fast.

Vanessa's back on her feet as Sword Saint unleashes a flurry of attacks; Vanessa blocks each one by shattering the blades, which just reform before each new attack.

Vanessa finally shoves a huge wall of sound at Sword Saint, pushing him all the way back 50 feet to the far wall.

Vanessa looks around herself; there's nothing, just cells, no exits. If she wants out, she's going to have to go past Sword Saint.

He knows it, too; he stands there, waits for her to make the approach.

SWORD SAINT

I know this prison complex like the back of my hand. You can't outmaneuver me.

VANESSA

You've miscalculated. I've already won. Let me leave now, before I do something you're going to regret.

SWORD SAINT

You're bluffing.

VANESSA

Kinda wish I was.

She SCREAMS at the door next to her.

EXT. SUPERVILLAIN PRISON COMPLEX - NIGHT

A thick concrete wall, miles outside the city.

The wall EXPLODES, and Sonora soars out into the city.

Sword Saint charges out over the rubble, watches her fly off.

He 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 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.

JOTUN (O.S.)

(faint)

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.

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

And yet there you are squaring up at me, 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

If she speaks again-

CHRIS

(angry)

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.

CAROL (O.S.)

Oh! Chris! Over here!

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

CAROL (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.

CAROL

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

VANESSA

You're not that old.

CAROL

Oh, hush.

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

CAROL

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

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.

Carol stands in the doorway and TUTS.

CAROL

I think you should-

Vanessa jumps.

VANESSA

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

CAROL

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.

Carol 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