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CAPTAIN COMPREHENSION

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HALL OF SOULS

Boy and girl unborn souls play in a heaven-like white area bordered by darkness.

Columns line the illuminated space, and a majestic "Hall of Souls" sign sits atop an entranceway arch.

The child-souls, who wear simple white robes, recreate like kindergartners on a recess period. Several Guardians in angelic robes oversee the rambunctious children.

As the playground games go on, a male, OLDER GUARDIAN enters through the archway and beckons the other Guardians to a conference. He carries a large, ornate book under his arm.

After a few words, the older Guardian proceeds to what looks like a judge's bench at a far end of the Hall.

OLDER GUARDIAN

All souls! May I have your attention, please? All you young souls, stop what you're doing and gather around.

He motions for them to come.

OLDER GUARDIAN

This way, please! I have an important announcement to make.

The other Guardians herd the kid-souls to the bench.

OLDER GUARDIAN

The authorities that be have reached a decision.

The souls quiet down.

OLDER GUARDIAN

In a former age of the world, thousands of years ago, certain individuals were, from time to time, bestowed with extraordinary powers that went beyond the capabilities of other men and women.

The little boy SOUL OF DAVID HAMMISTON spies his own personal Guardian, a woman, coming to him through the crowd.

He rushes to her and tugs on her robe.

DAVID'S SOUL  
What is it? What's going on?

DAVID'S GUARDIAN  
Shhhh, be quiet, David. Just listen.

OLDER GUARDIAN  
After millennia of debate, we have decided once again to grant such powers to a select subset of individuals. In essence, this will serve to test whether we should discontinue to practice altogether, as some feel we should.

David looks up at his Guardian with eager eyes.

OLDER GUARDIAN  
I'm here to tell you that you lucky souls are the group from whom we will choose several recipients of these supernatural abilities, to be conferred upon you at your birth.

The child souls buzz with excitement.

OLDER GUARDIAN  
There will only be a few powers given out -- to those we feel will put forth the greatest effort in their exercise. If you want to be considered, you will have to prove your commitment to superior achievement through a number of tests.

The entire Hall breaks into chatter.

INT. HALL OF SOULS - LATER

Whooshh! A child soul flies through the air and over a bar, landing on a celestial high-jumping pit.

Other children stand in line to take their turn, and, all around the pit, additional Elysian sports and training activities take place in an enlarged illuminated area.

Guardians supervise practice contests in weight lifting, wrestling, archery, fencing, gymnastics, calisthenics, javelin-throwing, and foot-racing.

## AT THE JUMPING PIT

David's soul stands in line, and he peers around a young GIRL SOUL in front of him.

GIRL SOUL  
(to David's soul)  
Hey, stop trying to cut!

DAVID'S SOUL  
I'm not cutting. I just want to  
see how high that bar is.

He points to his chest.

DAVID'S SOUL  
I'm going to get one of those  
superpowers. You wait and see.

GIRL SOUL  
Ha! You're so sure?

DAVID'S SOUL  
I just have to.

As he waits for his turn, David watches a combat contest taking place near the high-jumping line.

Two boy souls with padded jousting sticks measure each other's likely first move as they maneuver on a thick mat.

One of the boys strikes. But he swings too high, and the other BOY SOUL ducks, rolls, and cuts the first soul down with a swing to the back of his legs.

The victor raises his stick in triumph.

BOY SOUL  
I'll be the greatest human ever!

David reaches the front of the line.

He runs, dives, and sails across the bar with room to spare!

HIGH JUMP COACH/GUARDIAN  
Good job, David! Way to put your  
heart into it.

David beams and runs to the back of line.

The games continue all over the extended area.

## INT. DAVID'S SOUL'S QUARTERS

In a small space illuminated out of encircling darkness, David's Guardian sits on a turned-down bed. A table by the bed holds a lit, but cordless, lamp.

David's soul bounces around the bed, re-living his sporting triumphs of the day.

DAVID'S SOUL

I was unstoppable! You should have seen me.

He bounds over his Guardian.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

You're certainly wound up about this. What's gotten into you?

DAVID'S SOUL

Don't you see? This is my chance. I don't want to live any old life. I want to change the world!

He jumps over her again.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

I'm sure David Hammiston will do many important things, with or without a supernatural power.

David sits down on the bed.

DAVID'S SOUL

But I want to do something really big. That's what would make all the things you have to go through in life worth it.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

That's an awfully overreaching statement for such a young soul at the beginning of his existence.

DAVID'S SOUL

I'm right, though, aren't I?

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

I don't know where you get these ideas. You'll have plenty of chances, I promise.

She tucks him in and turns off the lamp. As she leaves, the rest of the "room" goes almost dark.

## INT. HALL OF SOULS - ATHLETIC PROVING GROUND

The competition heats up, and David's soul navigates the middle of the pack in a race through an obstacle course.

The children souls leap from one stepping stone to another across a water hazard.

They rush to a wall and scale it via ropes hanging down. David still trails others.

They come to a set of long tubes and scurry through them like frightened animals. Guardians monitor their progress.

David emerges from his tube closer to the lead than before!

Everyone dashes to a set of ladders that stick up into midair with no noticeable support. The young souls climb up to ropes stretched tight to another set of ladders not far away.

David grabs a rope and press forward, hand-over-hand while dangling from his rope. He grits his teeth in determination.

Down the ladders on the other side, and now the competitor souls break into a foot race to a finish line.

David passes the lead soul and wins the race!

As the other competitors trickle in, a group of Guardians at the finish line huddle and confer.

David sees them looking at him and pumps his fist.

The older Guardian from before blows a whistle.

OLDER GUARDIAN

Everyone, please! Please assemble for a moment. All of you!

David's Guardian finds him, and they wait together.

OLDER GUARDIAN

I am pleased to inform you that our evaluation for the award of special abilities has concluded. An announcement will be made at the next assembly.

The crowd murmurs. David bites his lip.

Other child souls press closer to the older Guardian like eager ticketholders prior to the opening of an attraction.

OLDER GUARDIAN

After that, you will be born into  
the world!

The Hall erupts with excitement, with many of the child souls  
bouncing up and down.

INT. DAVID'S SOUL'S QUARTERS

David's soul sleeps in dim light.

His Guardian rushes into the "room" and shakes him.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

David! David! Why are you still  
here!?

David's soul rouses and rubs his eyes.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

Didn't another Guardian come for  
you?

DAVID'S SOUL

What's wrong?

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

I was detained by other duties.  
You were supposed to have been  
taken from here hours ago.

She grabs his arm.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

Come on!

They rush out of the sleeping quarters.

INT. HALL OF SOULS

David sprints under the archway ahead of his Guardian.

Emptiness fills the hall, except for the older Guardian, who  
is on the bench structure writing in his gilded book.

DAVID'S SOUL

Where is everyone?

OLDER GUARDIAN

Who's there? Who are you?

David's Guardian catches up and puts hands on his shoulders.

DAVID'S SOUL

The soul of David Hammiston, sir.  
Where are the others?

OLDER GUARDIAN

Everyone has been sent to be born.  
Where have you been?

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

I was called away and wasn't  
replaced as his escort to the  
assembly. It's not his fault he's  
late.

The older Guardian shuffles through the pages of his book.

OLDER GUARDIAN

Soul of David Hammiston, huh?

He shakes his head.

OLDER GUARDIAN

Guardian, you were not with this  
soul earlier?

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

I had other urgent  
responsibilities.

OLDER GUARDIAN

This is most unusual; most  
unfortunate.

DAVID'S SOUL

What about the superpowers?

OLDER GUARDIAN

That's just it. The soul of David  
Hammiston was chosen to receive one  
of five supernatural powers given  
out at the assembly. But, when you  
were not here, we assumed you could  
not accept and gave the award to  
another soul.

DAVID'S SOUL

No!

He looks up at his Guardian in despair.

DAVID'S SOUL

This can't be happening.



DAVID'S GUARDIAN

This isn't fair, sir.

OLDER GUARDIAN

I'm afraid there's nothing I can do about it now. I've got to send you on your way.

DAVID'S GUARDIAN

But this soul earned one of the extraordinary abilities. He deserves the opportunities in life that would come with it.

David's soul looks like he's about to cry.

DAVID'S SOUL

(to the older Guardian)

You have to do something. You have to.

The older Guardian turns a large handful of pages and searches in a distant section of the book.

OLDER GUARDIAN

There may be something I do have the discretion to do. Hold on.

David's soul perks up.

OLDER GUARDIAN

Ah, there it is. Yes, there is a power left over from the last time we did this, over three thousand years ago. It was never taken by anyone.

DAVID'S SOUL

Can I have that one?

OLDER GUARDIAN

Yes, I believe you are entitled to it.

David jumps for joy.

DAVID'S SOUL

Yippee!

He dances around, playacting his role as superhuman.

DAVID'S SOUL

What is it, the ability to create thunder and lightning?

(MORE)

DAVID'S SOUL (CONT'D)

The power to move mountains? Fire and explosions anywhere I look?

OLDER GUARDIAN

Nothing like that. It's not a physical power at all. It's a mental ability.

DAVID'S SOUL

You mean I'll be all-knowing?

OLDER GUARDIAN

It's not quite that. A bit more subtle. It's a heightened acumen into the thought and behavior of other human beings.

DAVID'S SOUL

You mean I'll be able to read people's minds?

OLDER GUARDIAN

It isn't the ability to actually read minds; it's a superior skill at understanding the reasons behind the actions and opinions of others. Words for it are "insight" and "empathy."

David's soul deflates.

DAVID'S SOUL

That's it? What good is that?

OLDER GUARDIAN

It may be of more value than you realize.

DAVID'S SOUL

How can I ever get anything great done with "insight?" No wonder it was never taken.

OLDER GUARDIAN

Do you want the power or not?

David's Guardian puts her arms around his neck and shoulders and smiles at him. David's soul pouts.

DAVID'S SOUL

I guess I'll take it.

The older Guardian makes a mark in his great book.

OLDER GUARDIAN

You'd better get going; your time for departure is at hand. You will not remember any of this after your birth.

He nods at David's Guardian, who leads David's soul out of the Hall. David's soul drags his feet.

They disappear into the surrounding darkness.

The older Guardian closes his book with a thud.

EXT. SMALL TOWN HOSPITAL - 3 AND 1/2 DECADES AGO - NIGHT

A sign out front reads "Middletown Hospital."

SUPERIMPOSE: "A FEW DECADES AGO"

EMERGENCY ENTRANCE

A DOCTOR, nurse, and two orderlies unload an accident victim from an ambulance.

DOCTOR

(to the nurse)

Let's get some stitches in that left arm right away. And check his rib cage.

The nurse and one of the orderlies hustle the victim inside. The doctor talks to the ambulance staff.

A local SCIENCE TEACHER crosses the entrance drive toward the scene. He carries a metal box.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Doc! Hey, doc!

He presents the box.

SCIENCE TEACHER

You've got lots of x-ray equipment here, right?

DOCTOR

Yes?

SCIENCE TEACHER

I'm a science teacher over at the high school, and I've got a real oddity I wish you'd check out.

DOCTOR  
What is it?

The teacher removes a chunk of black ore from the box.

SCIENCE TEACHER  
I dug this out of a volcanic lava  
bed in Italy, but it's not lava or  
anything else I can identify.

The doctor takes it from him.

DOCTOR  
You want me to x-ray it?

SCIENCE TEACHER  
I want you to see if it's giving  
off x-rays. It sours fruit if you  
put it next to it.

A car pulls up in haste. A FRANTIC MAN jumps out.

FRANTIC MAN  
My wife's having a baby! Help me!

DOCTOR  
(to science teacher)  
All right.

He hands the black ore chunk to the second orderly.

DOCTOR  
Put this inside. Away from anyone.

He rushes to the aid of the woman in labor.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

The second orderly takes the ore to a storage room.

STORAGE ROOM

He puts the ore on a table nearly full of medical equipment  
and leaves the room.

HALLWAY

As the orderly disappears around a corner, another nurse,  
coming from the opposite direction, goes into the storage  
room with a stack of six infant-size blankets.

The blankets are bright yellow with blue "MIDDLETOWN HOSPITAL" embroidering on their ends.

#### STORAGE ROOM

The nurse puts the blankets down next to the black ore. But the table is so crowded they slip off its edge.

The nurse picks the blankets back up and puts the black ore on top of the stack to hold it in place.

She goes to some overcrowded shelves, pulls a few hospital gowns, and leaves the room with them.

#### EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Birds chirp.

#### INT. HOSPITAL - DELIVERY ROOM

An OBSTETRICIAN and a DELIVERY NURSE wash their hands.

#### OBSTETRICIAN

I walk in still half asleep from last night, and I've got six deliveries at the same time. Geeesshh!

#### DELIVERY NURSE

It's a banner morning.

#### MATERNITY WARD

Six newborn babies lie in hospital cribs. A bright yellow blanket with "MIDDLETOWN HOSPITAL" embroidered in blue wraps each bundle of joy.

#### RADIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

The emergency doctor from the night before moves the lava-bed ore chunk off a sheet of x-ray film.

He holds the film up to the light. A massive exposure shows.

#### DOCTOR

Holy Mother of God.

He backs away from the ore with newfound awe and fear.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - 17 YEARS LATER (18 YEARS AGO) - DAY

BART WARNER, a national TV news reporter, stands beside a sign that reads, "MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL."

SUPERIMPOSE: "17 YEARS LATER"

Warner looks at his camera and cameraman, CHARLIE.

WARNER  
Ready, Charlie?

Charlie jumps behind the view lens.

CHARLIE  
In three, two, one...

He cues Warner with a finger point.

WARNER  
This is Bart Warner in the heartland with an in-depth report on the amazing story that's swept the globe in recent years. I'm standing here in Middletown, at Middletown High School, where the phenomenon of five miraculously gifted students continues to fascinate scientists around the world. Born on the same night in the same hospital, and exposed to some kind of mysterious, long-misplaced substance from the center of the earth, these four boys and one young lady are blessed with extraordinary powers that go far beyond the realm of normal human abilities.

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

An inter-school game plays out. Middletown High moves down the field on the offensive.

WARNER (V.O.)  
First, you may remember, there's Skip Skinner, the super speedster.

SKIP SKINNER, a skinny, nervous lad playing left wing of the Middletown attack formation positions himself carefully at normal seventeen-year-old boy speed. The soccer ball scoots around the other side of the field.

WARNER (V.O.)

This human rocket has been clocked  
by his coaches at speeds of over  
one hundred miles per hour.

The right wing of the Middletown team kicks the ball to the center of the field, which is void of players.

But not for long. Skip accelerates to almost a blur, gains control of the ball, zigs around a defender at super-speed, and zips the ball into the net before the befuddled goalie can figure out what's happening.

The Middletown players celebrate. They seem awfully cocky with this guy on the team.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - CROSS COUNTRY COURSE START LINE - DAY

Runners from different high schools await a starter's gun.

WARNER (V.O.)

Skinner has broken every track and  
cross country record in the book.

Bang! The gun goes off and so does Skip. He bolts ahead of everyone, moving out of sight way ahead of the others.

Opposing coaches shake their heads in frustration.

WARNER (V.O.)

And he shows no signs of slowing  
down.

EXT. RACING POOL - DAY

Students compete in a high school swim meet. A small crowd cheers freestyle swimmers.

The swimmer in lane three, EDDIE DEMENT, is way, way, way out in front and moving at an incredible speed.

WARNER (V.O.)

Then there's Eddie Dement, who's  
reported to be the loner of the  
group.

(MORE)

WARNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

With the ability to swim underwater for prolonged periods of time and a swimming speed matched only by the great mammals of the sea, Eddie is as big a hit in the pool as Skip Skinner is on land.

In a two-length race, Eddie turns with amazing speed and agility and goes on to crush his competition. Middletown High fans cheer.

Eddie acknowledges the adoration with some reluctance.

INT. GYNASIUM - DAY

A high school wrestling match commences at an opponent's (to Middletown High) venue.

WARNER (V.O.)

Jim Bonner continues to be the brawn of these Middletown superstars.

JIM BONNOR, a heavy-set Middletown wrestler, starts a match from the bottom position against a seemingly equal opponent.

The start whistle blows and in two seconds Jim is up and arm-locked with the other wrestler. He hoists the poor kid above his head as if we weighed nothing!

In two more seconds, Jim rolls him onto the mat and pins him.

EXT. RUNNING TRACK - INFIELD - DAY

Jim winds up a mighty shot put throw.

WARNER (V.O.)

Bonner's super-strength has yielded five varsity athletic association records, and made him unmistakably the most feared personality in the schoolyard.

Jim's put blasts well beyond the normal landing area, soaring above the heads of marveling meet officials.

WARNER (V.O.)

Everyone agrees, you do not want to get into a fight with this guy!



EXT. ARCHERY RANGE - DAY

MARTA CARROL, a strong-looking young woman, loads a bow.

WARNER (V.O.)

The lady of the group, of course,  
is Marta Carrol. Her eagle-eye  
vision gives her pinpoint aiming  
accuracy at distances of up to a  
mile.

Marta's arrow rips a dead-center bull's eye.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY

Marta stands with a rifle ready to shoot a round of skeet,  
but with an interesting twist: the clay pigeon launcher is  
literally a half mile from her.

A pigeon launches high in the sky.

Marta fires quick shots and shatters the target. A second  
pigeon flies, and this time she gets it in one shot.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Marta and a group of girlfriends huddle outside the boys'  
locker room, giggling.

WARNER (V.O.)

And since Marta can also see  
through solid objects, like walls  
or doors, she's become one of the  
most popular girls in school.

Marta whispers to her friends.

A boy in a towel sticks his head out the door and sees Marta  
and her friends.

LOCKER ROOM

The boy shouts warning to his friends about the spying, and  
boys inside wrap towels around themselves.

INT. GYNASIUM - NIGHT

A Middletown varsity boys basketball game moves down the  
court in front of cheerleaders and a crowd.

HOLDEN DENNIS, an athletic, handsome, super-stud-type brings the ball over the half court line.

WARNER (V.O.)

But the leader of these celebrated youngsters has always been Holden Dennis, the boy who can fly.

Holden passes the ball and makes for the basket on foot.

His teammate leads him there with a pass that's way too high for any normal human to catch.

But Holden can fly, and fly he does. He soars to the ball, darts through the air to the basket, and slam dunks the ball.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Another Middletown High crowd cheers the opening kickoff as Middletown receives the ball. Holden is deep to field it.

WARNER (V.O.)

We still don't know how Holden is able to defy gravity, but his amazing feats are, without a doubt, the biggest thing to ever hit this sleepy little town.

Holden catches the ball and takes off down the field at normal, eye-to-eye level with the kick coverage squad, but with one exception to the way the game is usually played: Holden's feet don't touch the ground.

He flies with great agility at shoulder level all the way down he field. Would-be tacklers barely lay a finger on him.

In the end zone, Holden's teammates converge on him as the Middletown High crowd goes wild.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

After game, Holden's teammates carry him off the field.

The scoreboard reads, "HOME 103 / VISITORS 14."

At the back of the cheering Middletown fans stands DAVID HAMMISTON, now a seventeen-year-old living person.

Beside David stands his junior class sidekick, PEPPER.

WARNER (V.O.)

Also, a sixth Middletown student born the same night and in the same location as his extraordinary classmates, David Hammiston, may have developed some sort of heightened intuition at reading people, so his friends and teachers report.

David watches the Holden lovefest at the edge of the football field with a glum expression.

WARNER (V.O.)

He picks up on things very well, they say.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

EXT. MIDDLETOWN HIGH - DAY

Warner finishes the introduction to the news report.

WARNER

We're going to spend a few days with these exceptional young people -- to get to know them and to find out what life is like when you're a super kid.

INT. MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Bam! Textbooks and spiral writing notebooks smash against a locker with near super-human force. A couple of startled kids move away.

DAVID

Aaugghh! Pepper, I'm so stupid!

He clenches his fists.

DAVID

Augggg!

Pepper looks on with concern.

PEPPER

It's not that bad.

DAVID

How is it not that bad? I just asked the girl I've been in love with my entire life to the junior prom, and she said "no."

He kicks the mess he's made on the floor. Other students walk by, ignoring them.

PEPPER

She said "maybe."

DAVID

"Maybe" means "no." And now Susan knows I have feelings for her.

PEPPER

Did you know Joey Swisher and Holden had already asked her?

DAVID

Of course I didn't! What is Holden doing asking Susan to the prom? I didn't know he even liked her.

PEPPER

He's captain of the football team; she's head cheerleader for next year...

DAVID

Don't remind me. I still don't understand why Susan even wanted that.

David gathers up his books, and the two head down the hall.

PEPPER

She's not going to choose Joey Swisher, so, maybe she picks you over Holden.

David stops and looks Pepper in the eye.

DAVID

He can fly. The kid can fly. Who wouldn't pick him?

He starts walking again.

DAVID

I can't even jump.

PEPPER

Hey, you've got a lot to offer.  
What about that thing you do?

David mocks comments from others about himself.

DAVID

Oohhh, I'm sooo perceptive! Who  
gives a flip? That adds up to jack  
squat.

PEPPER

You're president of the junior  
class. You're going to be  
president of the senior class.

DAVID

Again, who cares?

PEPPER

You and Susan have been close a  
long time. Don't let Holden get in  
the way now.

David stops again.

DAVID

The real problem is Susan doesn't  
have romantic feelings for me. She  
just likes me because we've been  
friends so long.

He sighs.

STUEY, a nerdy classmate, appears. Stuey's dress is bad, in every sense.

STUEY

David, there you are. I've been  
doing some work on the career week  
idea for next year. Trying to get  
a head start, you know.

David snaps out of his funk and deals with this kid with impressive maturity.

DAVID

Stuey, great. This will be a great  
thing for the senior class and the  
school. I'm glad you're working on  
it.

STUEY  
I've got eleven parents interested  
already -- all from different  
professions.

DAVID  
That's fantastic.

Stuey beams.

DAVID  
After the senior class elections,  
we'll start working on a schedule.  
You can build this thing into the  
best career fair ever.

STUEY  
Will do, Mister President.

He bumbles away with enthusiasm.

PEPPER  
See?

DAVID  
What?

PEPPER  
This is what I'm talking about.

David moves on.

PEPPER  
You're the best thing that's ever  
happened to this school. What  
other class president would share  
his office the way you do?

David looks straight ahead. He keeps walking.

PEPPER  
I'm no sports star either. But  
you've proven you don't have to be.  
Even if the other superpower kids  
don't recognize you, I do.

DAVID  
Oh, they recognize me.

He finally looks at his friend.

DAVID  
They hate me.

EXT. MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL

David and Pepper step out onto the school grounds.

Nearby, a small crowd gathers around a long table with balloons and posters on it.

David and Pepper investigate.

They discover a launching pad for a political race -- a campaign for senior class president by Skip Skinner.

Strongman Jim Bonner hands out "Skip for President" buttons. Marta, Eddie, and Holden hand out flyers.

PEPPER

(to Jim)

What the heck is this?

JIM

Back off, pipsqueak. Nobody's running for your job. Who wants to be secretary anyway?

Pepper looks at Skip, who looks a little rattled.

PEPPER

What are you doing? Everybody wants David to be president again.

JIM

(to Pepper)

It's an open election; get used to it. Skip's gonna win, too.

Marta comes over.

MARTA

(to Jim)

I thought you said you had talked to David about this already?

She looks disapproving. David just stands there.

JIM

Oops, I guess I forgot. Who cares about Hammiston anyway? He's a wimp.

Holden now sits on the campaign table, ignoring Skip and his mission. He soaks up attention from female admirers.

JIM

Hold on!

Jim lifts up the table, Holden and all, and moves it to a slightly superior location.

The crowd cheers, and Skip interprets it as for him.

SKIP

Thank you very much. I want to put my best foot forward for Middletown High.

David still looks frozen.

JIM

Hey, Hammiston. You can forget about getting a segment in the Bart Warner story too. You're not invited, Mister Know-It-All.

Other kids laugh at Jim's joke.

PEPPER

He's got as much right to be in the story as you do.

JIM

Stow it, jerk face. Before you get hurt.

Jim wings a Skip button at Pepper with frightening force. It misses him by only a few inches.

EDDIE

Take it easy, Jim. You're going to kill somebody.

Marta glares at Jim again.

VOICE (O.S.)

Is that the way you win votes these days?

HOLDEN

Susan!

He beelines up to a very good looking SUSAN DELLUP.

SUSAN

What are you guys fighting over now?

DAVID

Just a friendly political race, that's all.



SUSAN  
 (to Skip)  
 If you can spare the manpower, I'm  
 supposed to tell Eddie...  
 (to Eddie)  
 That principal Akers and the  
 reporter guy are looking for you  
 over at the pool.

Eddie heads off without a farewell. Susan finds David.

SUSAN  
 Are you doing anything tonight?

DAVID  
 Not really.

SUSAN  
 Come over. We'll talk about this.

DAVID  
 Okay.

PEPPER  
 (to David)  
 Come on, let's go.

They start to leave. David looks back at Susan.

DAVID  
 See you tonight.

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

David approaches on foot.

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

David waits by himself. He wanders over to a picture of Susan when she was a few years younger.

He sees another one of her and picks it up.

Approaching FOOTSTEPS sound, and he replaces the picture.

Susan bounds into the room.

SUSAN  
 Come on!

She gabs his hand.

SUSAN

I want you to help me decide what dress to wear to my cousin's wedding in Port Lawrence.

She leads him up stairs.

INT. SUSAN'S BEDROOM

David sits on the bed. A nearby bathroom door is almost closed, but clothing moves around in the crack.

DAVID

I want to let you off the hook from my invitation to the junior prom. I can tell you want to go with Holden.

SUSAN (O.S.)

I can never hide anything from you.

DAVID

Some of your friends have been after me to ask Eleanor Abernathy anyway, so I guess I will.

SUSAN (O.S.)

She likes you.

DAVID

I know.

Susan comes out of the bathroom wearing a white linen dress. She looks good enough to marry right there.

DAVID

Wow. That looks great. Are you a bridesmaid or something?

Susan spins around so David can see the back.

SUSAN

No, my cousin's a boy. But this is my first social event ever in Port Lawrence, so it's kind of a big deal.

DAVID

Looks good to me.

Susan darts back into the bathroom.

SUSAN

Wait, look at the next one.

She shuffles around inside the bathroom. David looks at the closed door.

SUSAN (O.S.)

So, do you think I'm ridiculous for wanting to go to the prom with Holden?

DAVID

Seventeen-year-old girl head over heels for super-stud football and basketball player? I'd say that's pretty normal.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Ha!

DAVID

And it's even more understandable when you add in the fact that... he can fly!

Susan laughs as she comes out in a bulky yellow dress.

David shakes his head.

SUSAN

Yeah, I agree.

She goes to her closet and rustles around in it.

SUSAN

I am interested in Holden.

DAVID

He has enormous potential. His ability will open doors that aren't possible for others.

Susan extracts a sleek, light blue dress from the closet.

SUSAN

I think you're right.

She holds up the new dress.

SUSAN

Okay, number three.

She goes back into the bathroom.

David stretches back on the bed.

DAVID

I'm worried about what will happen if Skip becomes class president.

SUSAN (O.S.)

They shouldn't be doing this. It's obvious Jim pushed Skip into it.

DAVID

Skip's a pretty famous guy. I can't compete with that.

SUSAN (O.S.)

He'd make a terrible president! A lot of people are counting on you for next year.

Susan comes out, and the dress looks elegant on her. But David looks worried.

DAVID

You're right, and I shouldn't have assumed no one else would run.

SUSAN

Yes, you should have. I don't know why Jim and Skip are doing this, but you need to find out.

She turns in the dress to give David a full view.

DAVID

What do you mean?

SUSAN

Use that gift of yours to figure out what they really want and then figure out a way to give it to them with you still doing the job you need to do.

DAVID

That's a pretty darn good idea.

Susan shoots him a look of pride. She sits down on the bed next to him.

SUSAN

I know it's tough being compared to them all the time. Especially with news stories going on.

DAVID

It's like having four brothers and  
a sister all better than you.

SUSAN

You were friends. When we were  
kids.

DAVID

Somehow, that ended.

SUSAN

You know who was my very first kiss  
back then? In the second grade?

DAVID

Holden?

SUSAN

No, you. You kissed me on the  
playground one day.

DAVID

I didn't think you remembered that.

He squirms. He stands and looks Susan up and down.

DAVID

It must have been because I knew  
how stunning you'd look one day in  
this dress. I think we have a  
winner.

Susan stands and models it again for him.

Then she grabs his hand.

SUSAN

Come on, let's go get some ice  
cream.

EXT. MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Bart Warner and Charlie unload gear from their news van.

WARNER

Last day. I'm going to call Ellis  
and let him know we'll be back at  
the studio tomorrow.

He heads off towards a school building.

INT. MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL - OUTSIDE THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Skip, Jim, and Pepper wait.

Jim wears a Middletown High football jersey over a regular shirt. He and Skip sit apart from Pepper.

David arrives with a folder of materials. Pepper jumps up to meet him. He keeps his voice down.

PEPPER

You don't have to do this.

DAVID

I think we do. Skip could win.

PEPPER

It still ticks me off.

DAVID

This isn't just about us.

The door to the office opens, and PRINCIPAL AKERS steps out.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

David, Skip, come in.

He looks at Jim and Pepper.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

I guess you're the campaign managers?

He hesitates.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

All right, you can come too.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The rival pairs sit opposite each other. Jim scowls at Pepper. Skip looks nervous; he rubs the top of his thighs.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

Skip, you've recently collected enough signatures to get yourself on the ballot for senior class president. It's a little late, but there isn't actually any deadline, so I guess it's okay.

He paces. The four boys track him.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

I understand you're running on a platform of maximizing our image to news media outlets that will undoubtedly cover your senior year and graduation, and also to the annual regional high school convention next fall.

He looks at Skip, who doesn't respond.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

Do I have it about right?

SKIP

Yeah, that's basically it.

JIM

We want someone who will make us look good. Skip's done more to put Middletown on the map than anyone, except maybe Holden.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

Did I ask you, or did I ask Skip?

He paces.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

As president of the junior class, David's creation of unique positions for others gave a dozen students the chance to lead where it didn't exist before. I must say I really liked that.

He glances at David. Then he looks back to Skip.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

Just out of curiosity, do you have any policy or administrative proposals for the senior year?

Skip gives him a blank look. Jim too. Akers stands still.

Akers resumes his movement.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

Since you two are the only two candidates, David has a compromise proposal to offer.

(to David)

Why don't you explain it?

David hands out copies of a printed document.

DAVID

My idea is to split the office of senior class president, which is a much bigger job than junior class president, into two positions. The first would carry the title "Senior Class President," and this would be the person the school puts forward to the outside world. That person would go to the regional convention and would represent the school anytime we need a titled student body president. The second position is called "Senior Class Executive."

Jim stirs. He looks skeptical.

DAVID

This second person would be in charge of the senior class budget and the nuts-and-bolts of school activities. The executive authority would also be assignable to other students for projects and events.

He looks at Skip.

DAVID

Under this set-up, I'd withdraw from the race for president and simply run for executive.

JIM

We don't have to do this! Skip, you don't have to agree to this.

Akers pulls a black notebook out of one of his desk drawers and flips to a certain page.

PRINCIPAL AKERS

Mister Bonnor, how many times this year have you or Mister Skinner here either completely missed or been late to P-E, do you know?

JIM

We shouldn't even have to go to P-E! We both play three sports.



PRINCIPAL AKERS  
Is that school policy, or is that  
your personal opinion?

Jim folds his arms and stews.

SKIP  
I'll agree to what David said.

Akers extends a handshake to him.

PRINCIPAL AKERS  
Good.

He then shakes David's hand.

PRINCIPAL AKERS  
Well done.  
(to everyone)  
Let's go join the spirit rally, why  
don't we?

EXT. MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL - SIDE GROUNDS

A staged school spirit rally supplies Bart Warner a final  
backdrop for his report.

The CHEERLEADING SQUAD, which includes Susan, bounces into  
formation. Varsity football players wear their jerseys.  
Letter jackets also abound in the crowd.

CHEERLEADERS  
(chanting)  
Who's the best team in the land!?

STUDENT BODY  
Middletown, Middletown, Middletown!

Warner stands aside as Charlie films the cheer.

CHEERLEADERS  
Who's gonna give it all they can!?

STUDENT BODY  
Middletown, Middletown, Middletown!

From behind the crowd (and above), Holden flies in, wearing  
his football jersey. Charlie captures the dramatic arrival.

Holden sets down next to Marta and Eddie.

Principal Akers, David, Pepper, Skip, and Jim arrive, and Jim and Skip celebrate Skip's now-certain ascension to class president with well-wishers.

Stuey sees this and rushes to David.

STUEY

What's going on?

DAVID

Nothing to worry about; it's all been taken care of. Everything's still on.

Bart Warner helps a print NEWSPAPER REPORTER and PHOTOGRAPHER set up a special photograph.

WARNER

We need all the superpower athletes up here. The Port Lawrence Sentinel wants a picture.

He rounds up Jim, Skip, Eddie, Marta, and Holden, who has to be torn away from Susan.

WARNER

Right up here. Together, now.

The print reporter positions them in an upper row of three behind two kids on a knee.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER #1

I understand the police chief in Port Lawrence has asked you to come help with their crime problem after you graduate?

HOLDEN

Yes, sir. We're going to meet with him next month.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER #1

So Port Lawrence residents may be seeing you in their city as soon as next summer?

HOLDEN

That's the plan.

David and other students look on as the pose is set.

MARTA

Hey, what about David?

Warner motions for David to join the group, but no one in the group other than Marta looks like they approve. Jim grumbles aloud about it.

David seems unsure.

WARNER

Come on, son.

David starts to go. No, he's not moving. Now moving forward. No wait, he's not after all.

MARTA

Come on, David.

At last, David jumps into the formation on an end at the bottom. But he doesn't get quite all the way into the close-knit group. There's an uneasy space between him and Eddie, who's also on the bottom row.

NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHER

One, two, three...

CLICK! The camera's shutter frames a photograph which turns into a story in the *Port Lawrence Sentinel* weekend magazine section.

The headline over the photo reads: "Middletown Super Kids Look to the Future."

Turning calendar pages are then SUPERIMPOSED over the newspaper. The pages have months spelled out, but no year.

With the calendar pages ticking by, a view of the actual city of Port Lawrence appears -- a large, Great Lakes city, not unlike Chicago.

The SUPERIMPOSED turning calendar pages stop and FADE OUT.

EXT. PORT LAWRENCE - ALLEY - DAY

A large, old truck bounces at high speed. Way too fast for a very tight space.

SUPERIMPOSE: "18 MONTHS LATER"

At the end of the alley, the truck starts to turn into busy downtown traffic, but it loses its forward momentum.

Its wheels spin in place, releasing clouds of rubber-dust.

The two guys driving the truck look at each other, baffled.

Jim Bonner, in a superhero's uniform of bright red, holds the back bumper of the truck. Jim sports a globe symbol on his chest; his waistline could use a little trimming.

The bad guys get out and investigate. Jim confronts them, and one of them pulls a handgun and fires at close range!

But Jim flexes his muscles, and the bullets drop off him and CLINK on the ground.

Police sirens wail, so the two men make a break for it.

The one without the gun makes it to another alley.

On the street, in a shiny gold outfit, Skip Skinner watches.

He zooms down a city street that runs parallel to the alley.

END OF THE SECOND ALLEY

The man without the gun emerges and turns up a sidewalk.

Whomp! A speeding projectile in gold tackles him!

The guy seems stunned from the collision, and Skip stands over him as a Port Lawrence police cruiser rolls up.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

The suspect with the gun runs frantically down a sidewalk.

Sirens sound behind him, and he uses his piece to hijack a green sedan, ousting the driver.

The car speeds away.

EXT. ABOVE THE CITY

Holden soars along with in a white and blue superhero's uniform, complete with a radio transmitter. A silver lightning bolt covers his chest.

HOLDEN  
(into radio)  
What do ya got for me?

POLICE PURSUER  
(through radio)  
Look for a green sedan. I repeat,  
green sedan.

Holden zips down a street (from above).

He flies lower and draws fire from a green sedan.

Holden zigs to make it hard to get a fix on his location.

He moves out in front of the car.

HOLDEN

(into radio)

Coming out on Church Street. Looks like he's headed for Shoreline Parkway. You should be able to get him before the midtown ramp.

Holden soars upward, getting a birds-eye view of things.

Below, squad cars respond to the instructions, and nab the perpetrator!

Holden descends for the arrest and is greeted by officers who obviously think the world of him.

The man with the gun is cuffed and ushered to a holding car.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Two motorboats, each driven by a young man, race each other through a shipping lane at Port Lawrence's commercial docks.

The boats tear across the bow of a ship, banging into one another. They both then almost hit a barge.

They head up the side of a pier and make a blind turn at the end of it -- right into a passenger ferry of people on a dinner cruise.

The ferry splinters, dumping everyone into the lake. The guests scream and splash around in the water.

The two motorboats survive the crash, and they speed off.

A HUNDRED YARDS DOWN THE LAKE

Eddie Dement's head surfaces.

He sizes up the situation and heads towards the disaster.

Underwater, he swims like a fish in a sleek, green wet suit, complete with fish-like fins on its sleeves.

## FERRY CRASH SITE

Eddie hauls passengers together alongside a larger piece of the former ferry. He moves with astonishing ease and speed.

The passengers circle the floating piece and hold onto it.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Help! Help me!

A young girl splashes around a ways away.

Eddie ducks his head under the water.

In almost no time at all, he pops up again at the struggling girl. He pulls her back to the others.

## EXT. HARBOR PATROL HEADQUARTERS

Just below the surface of the water, a green object rockets toward a dock with patrol boats moored to it.

Right before the object gets to the dock, it bursts out of the water, and Eddie lands on the dock running, without missing a stride in the transition.

EDDIE  
Zack! Zack!

Harbor policemen scramble in response to Eddie's voice.

EDDIE  
Bring three boats and come with me!

## EXT. LAKE'S EDGE - DAY

The harbor patrol arrests the two motorboat drivers.

Eddie looks on from a dock.

He reaches into one of the dented and scratched renegade boats and removes its key from the ignition. Eddie tosses it up and snatches it back into his hand.

## EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Marta helps a Port Lawrence police strike team raid a criminal's lair. Her signature crime-fighting uniform is a form-fitting jumpsuit that's the same dark blue color as a police uniform. A short cape completes the superhero look.

Marta crouches behind cover fifty yards from the warehouse. Police Captain DEVEREAUX stoops next to her.

MARTA'S P.O.V.

Marta can see through the warehouse wall. Inside, eight armed men move through rooms to one end of the structure.

MARTA

They're all moving to that end.

She indicates the direction.

MARTA

Heavily armed.

DEVEREAUX

(into radio)

Move in on the south end. Red squad, be ready for fire from the building on the north end.

MARTA'S P.O.V.

The strike force rushes into the building on the safe side.

At the other end, another police unit blocks any escape.

MARTA

They're trapped now. Have the officers inside fire warning shots.

DEVEREAUX

(into radio)

Lowry, fire a warning round.

Inside, they do.

An OUTSIDE OFFICER makes a peace offering through a bullhorn.

OUTSIDE OFFICER

You're completely surrounded, inside and out! Come out with your hands in the air, or we'll fire.

MARTA'S P.O.V.

The villains discuss their predicament. More warning shots sound inside.

Outside, guns come tossed out. The wanted men come out behind them with arms raised.

Captain Devereaux pats Marta on the back.

DEVEREAUX

Good work.

They walk toward the arrest.

INT. CITY HALL - FOYER - DAY

Clink! Wine glasses tap together at a reception/celebration.

A banner proclaims: "OPERATION SAFE STREETS / Middletown Superheroes & Port Lawrence P.D."

In costume, the Middletown group soaks up attention from police officers, their family members, and politicians.

The chief executive of Port Lawrence, MAYOR NEAL, forms a conversation circle with the superheroes. The mayor's WIFE tries to get their "stage" names straight.

MRS. NEAL

(to Holden)

Okay, you're Lightning Man, I know that.

She points to them in turn.

MRS. NEAL

And Jim is Atlas. Skip, you've decided to go by "Golden Boy?"

SKIP

Golden Streak.

MRS. NEAL

And Eddie's Hydro Man; that makes sense.

Eddie nods.

MRS. NEAL

But that wasn't the name you started out with?

The other superheroes laugh.

EDDIE

I didn't have a name at first. But they made me get one.

Jim slaps him on the back and grabs one of his arm fins.

JIM

You look good, man.



MRS. NEAL

And, Marta, you're Radar Woman.

MARTA

Call me Marta.

MRS. NEAL

It's so wonderful to have you here.  
Or reputation as a city has gotten  
so bad, I can't get my own mother  
to come visit.

MAYOR NEAL

We're going to change that, dear.

At a microphone, the CHIEF OF POLICE makes an announcement.

CHIEF OF POLICE

Today we celebrate a new era in  
crime-fighting in Port Lawrence.  
Over the last few months, we've  
worked on an informal basis with  
the Middletown superheroes out on  
our troubled streets. Today, we  
make it official: we're putting  
ourselves in your hands. From this  
point forward, you're no longer the  
Middletown superheroes; you're the  
Port Lawrence superheroes!

He raises a glass of white wine. The room toasts back.

CHIEF OF POLICE

With your watchful eyes on the job  
each day -- except for three weeks  
paid vacation a year, of course...

Everyone laughs.

CHIEF OF POLICE

... we're going to transform Port  
Lawrence from a crime capital to a  
model of law and order.

Everyone drinks; some applaud. The superheroes bask.

Captain Devereaux steals the microphone.

DEVEREAUX

Chief, you left one thing out.  
Bar's open for another half hour!

Everyone cheers or laughs.

In another part of the foyer, David, dressed in a coat and tie, talks to a CITY OFFICIAL.

DAVID

... I'm enrolled at the university here in Port Lawrence. I'd like to major in criminology.

CITY OFFICIAL

You want to go into crime-fighting too?

DAVID

I think there's enough of it to go around.

CITY OFFICIAL

There is now, but these guys...

He indicates the superheroes.

CITY OFFICIAL

... could make criminology obsolete, at least in Port Lawrence.

DAVID

Well, I wonder at least a little bit about that. When you look at the actually dollar value of theft reports from January through October...

Holden takes the microphone, and his booming voice interrupts David's and everyone else's conversation.

HOLDEN

Can I have everyone's attention, please! For just a minute.

The city official David was talking to watches Holden.

Susan stands next to Holden in a cocktail dress.

David stares at her. Susan is all smiles.

HOLDEN

I'd like to announce that Susan Dellup, my high school sweetheart, has just agreed to become Mrs. Lightning Man. We're gonna get married!

Chatter breaks out, and guests shower Susan and Holden with congratulations. Marta hugs Susan. Jim play-attacks Holden in male-bonding affection.

HOLDEN

And Jim Bonnor will be my best man!

David watches the scene from the side of the hall.

He walks over to the bar to get a drink.

While he's waiting, a hand touches his sleeve. It's Susan.

SUSAN

What do you think?

DAVID

I'm very happy for you.

He summons super facial muscle strength and smiles.

SUSAN

I can't believe I'm actually getting married.

DAVID

Mrs. Lightning Man?

Susan bursts out laughing.

SUSAN

I know, that's crazy, isn't it?

DAVID

I wonder if your kids will be able to fly?

SUSAN

Would you stop obsessing about the flying?

DAVID

It is remarkable.

SUSAN

I can't believe everything that's happened since we left Middletown.

DAVID

Yeah, I'm a little worried I won't be able to get a job interview after a graduate.

SUSAN

What better person to have on a criminal case than someone who can look into the criminal mind?

DAVID

A person who can fly?

SUSAN

Shut up!

She play-hits him.

The entire superhero group approaches, led by Holden, who clearly wants Susan back. The police chief, Captain Devereaux, and the mayor and his wife tag along.

JIM

(to David)

Hey "Captain Comprehension," where's your uniform?

DAVID

I'm not sure that stretchy nylon is the best look for a guy.

JIM

Screw you.

MARTA

Be nice, boys.

SUSAN

Mister Mayor, this David Hammiston. He went to high school with us too.

Mayor Neal shakes David's hand, but immediately starts listening to Devereaux and the Chief debate how big a raise everyone should get when crime is eliminated.

Holden pulls Susan away and the group sweeps through David, leaving him alone again.

As he watches them go, Skip sneaks back to him.

SKIP

Do you really think we look stupid in these uniforms?

DAVID

You look fine. I was just kidding.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

David drives up to a fortified entrance.

DAVID  
(to gate guard)  
David Hammiston. I'm from the  
University of Port Lawrence.

INT. PRISON CELL

A GUARD locks David in a cell with a PRISONER, a man in his forties. David has a notebook.

GUARD  
I'll be down here...

He points.

GUARD  
... if you need me, professor.

He grins.

David sits down on the bed and flips through his notebook.

DAVID  
Last time, you were telling me that  
your arrest, which was made by  
Holden Dennis and Skip Skinner, or  
Lightning Man and the Golden  
Streak, had taught you a lesson.

PRISONER  
Yeah.

He thinks about it.

PRISONER  
Yeah.

DAVID  
And it was a bulk theft arrest,  
wasn't it? Strangely, Port  
Lawrence's biggest crime problem.

PRISONER  
Yeah.

David shows him a newspaper clipping.

DAVID

This article makes it sound like you were a major player in big-scale theft and the marketing of stolen goods.

PRISONER

Yeah.

DAVID

But that's not the kind of sentence you got.

PRISONER

Yeah?

DAVID

You made a deal with the D-A to pretend you were a major player, didn't you?

The prisoner looks worried.

DAVID

Yeah?

The prisoner clams up.

DAVID

There's an organization behind the thefts, isn't there? And neither the police, nor the superheroes, nor you have any idea who it is, isn't that right?

PRISONER

What kind of class did you say this was for?

BEGIN PORT LAWRENCE MONTAGE:

-- David and Susan enter a university library. A student coming out wears a "University of Port Lawrence" sweatshirt.

-- David studies a propped-up "Criminal Psychology" textbook in the library. He and Susan sit across from each other. David steals a glance at Susan studying.

-- Holden arrives through the air to the front of a tired, old office building to confer with Jim, Skip, and several Port Lawrence police officers. Holden and Jim argue.

-- Jim breaks through a plate glass window and tackles a thug holding up a gun store. Jim and the crook knock over a rack of ammunition and gun accessories. The store owner looks at the mess.

-- David receives a diploma at a University of Port Lawrence graduation ceremony.

-- Susan, also in cap and gown, sits next to Holden at the same graduation ceremony. Holden checks out other women.

-- Marta gets applause at an elementary school class. Kids come up and touch/pull on her Radar Woman costume.

-- In a suit, David walks into a drab office building with a "Federal Bureau of Investigation / Port Lawrence Regional Office" sign on it.

-- An older man, also in a suit, shows David a tiny personal office. David goes around behind the desk. He wipes dust off the desk with his hand.

-- Holden and Skip, each teamed with a uniformed cop, play doubles ping-pong against each other in a Port Lawrence police station break room. Other officers watch. Holden and Skip are both super-quick to the ball.

END MONTAGE

EXT. PORT LAWRENCE HARBOR - DAY

A ship dumps liquid waste into the harbor through an opening in its hull.

SUPERIMPOSE: "2 YEARS LATER"

As the ship moves on, Eddie's head surfaces, choking on the waste in the water. He spits out traces of a bad taste.

He coughs.

He swims away keeping his head out of the water. His swimming pace looks not too impressive.

EXT. HARBOR PATROL HEADQUARTERS

Eddie pulls himself onto the dock with wavering arm strength.

He half-collapses on the dock.

He wiggles a finger in an ear. He pats and shakes his head as if he was trying to get water out of it.

He rises and lumbers towards the headquarters office.

His patrolman friend ZACK sits out front.

ZACK

Hey, Eddie. What's new?

EDDIE

I can't get my ears to stop ringing, that's what's new.

He tugs on the leg of his green wet-suit.

EDDIE

And this damn suit is giving me a rash.

Zack shakes his head.

ZACK

Anything going on out there?

EDDIE

Zip. As usual.

ZACK

You wanna ride with me in the boat this afternoon? I got some extra clothes inside you can borrow.

EDDIE

That'd be great.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - DAY

A golden blur streaks towards a "Lawrence HiPhonics" plant.

INT. PLANT

The Golden Streak skids to a halt in a storage area. A PLANT MANAGER and ACCOUNTANT stand beside rows of empty shelves. The plant manager holds an electronic circuit board.

SKIP

I got a message about a heist?

PLANT MANAGER

Yeah, that'd be me.

He walks over to Skip; the accountant follows.



PLANT MANAGER  
I'm the plant manager.

SKIP  
Where were the perpetrators last seen? Headed in what direction?

PLANT MANAGER  
Well, never seen, to my knowledge.

SKIP  
I don't get it...?

PLANT MANAGER  
The inventory was gone when we came in this morning.

ACCOUNTANT  
We believe it was an inside job.

SKIP  
So why call me?

PLANT MANAGER  
We really need this stuff back.

SKIP  
What do you want me to do?

PLANT MANAGER  
You can run really fast, and you can see through buildings, right? So we thought maybe you could find our circuits for us.

He shows Skip the example.

SKIP  
First off, you're confusing me with Marta Carrol. Only she can see through solid objects. Secondly, I don't do searches for stolen goods. There's way too much of that. You'll have to just report it to the Port Lawrence police.

PLANT MANAGER  
I thought you worked for the police?

SKIP  
I do, but only when something specific is happening.

The plant manager and accountant eye each other.

ACCOUNTANT

Do you have the forms we need to  
file a report?

Skip looks down at his form-fitting superhero costume.

SKIP

Do I look like I do?

INT. FBI REGIONAL OFFICE - COMMON/CUBICLE AREA - DAY

A small office ceremony is underway. David holds his right  
hand in the air to take an oath.

The national ATTORNEY GENERAL recites from a script.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Do you solemnly swear, before these  
witnesses, to obey and respect the  
law; to uphold the integrity of the  
Federal Bureau of Investigation;  
and to faithfully discharge your  
duties to the best of your ability?

DAVID

I do.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Congratulations, Mister Chairman.  
The federal crime commission on  
bulk theft in Port Lawrence is now  
a reality.

Other FBI staffers give David a light round of applause.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

(to onlookers)

David has chewed my ear off since I  
became Attorney General -- and the  
ear of the Regional Director...

Everyone laughs.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

... about a source. Finding the  
source of Port Lawrence's crime  
problem. Well, David, here's your  
chance. You've got one year to  
crack the case.

The small audience claps again and then breaks up.

David shakes a few hands. A woman print REPORTER inquires.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER #2  
Mister Hammiston, I'm from the  
Sentinel. This is a very unusual  
set of circumstances, isn't it?

DAVID  
How so?

NEWSPAPER REPORTER #2  
You're often associated with the  
group from Middletown with  
extraordinary powers, and now it's  
your job to re-direct crime-  
fighting efforts in Port Lawrence.

DAVID  
I don't think anyone's ever  
considered me a superhero.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER #2  
But you've known this group a long  
time, and now you have to figure  
out why the city's crime response  
strategy has failed.

DAVID  
I've known Holden, Jim, Skip,  
Eddie, and Marta since we were  
kids, yes, but the goal of this  
commission is to work with the Port  
Lawrence authorities, not counter  
to them in any way.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER #2  
Can you coexist with your former  
classmates without competitive  
tension?

DAVID  
I look forward to collaborating  
with them.

The reporter makes a note. Susan walks up to David.

SUSAN  
I'm proud of you.

DAVID  
Thanks. Is Holden coming?

Susan shakes her head.

SUSAN

He's got some convention thing with  
the police chief.

DAVID

Shouldn't you be there?

Susan opens her mouth a little to answer, but nothing comes  
out. She looks stressed.

VOICE (O.S.)

Are you the super brain man?

A LITTLE GIRL pulls on David's jacket. Susan delights at her  
cuteness.

DAVID

Brains can't really be super, can  
they? They just sit around and  
don't move.

LITTLE GIRL

What can you do with your brain?

DAVID

I sometimes use it to think about  
what's going on in your brain.

He touches her on the sides of her head.

DAVID

It it happy? Sad? Angry?  
Frightened? Smart? Or is it just  
full of empty space?

The girl laughs. Susan watches them interact.

LITTLE GIRL

Are you friends with the  
superheroes?

DAVID

Sort of.

LITTLE GIRL

I always wanted to meet them.

David looks at Susan.

DAVID

I know someone who might be able to  
get you a ride with Holden Dennis.  
With Lightning Man.

LITTLE GIRL

Wow!

DAVID

You'd like that?

She nods. Susan takes her hand.

SUSAN

Introduce me to your mommy or  
daddy, and I'll see what I can do.

David watches them go. The girl pulls Susan along.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PORT LAWRENCE - OFFICE HIGHRISE - DAY

A dark blue van sits near the building, back door open.

David flies through the air into the van, arms stretched out  
in front of him!

CRASH! Equipment, notebooks, and empty coffee cups tumble.

David recovers from his simple fall. He pants.

DAVID

Did you get them!? Did you get it?

Two young federal agents, LOFTON and HAL, attend to a camera  
pressed up to the passenger's window.

LOFTON

We got it.

David scrambles forward.

DAVID

Four industrial thieves at the same  
place at the same time. That's a  
meeting.

HAL

You were right.

DAVID

I'm going in. Radio the police.  
Get Marta, Holden, and Skip over  
here on the double.

LOFTON

A little super-surveillance?

DAVID

These guys are going to lead us  
right to the mastermind. Radio me  
when Marta gets here.

He scoots back out of the van.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - STAIRWELL - DAY

David cracks a door leading out of the stairwell to "FLOOR  
17." His police radio comes on.

LOFTON

(through radio)  
Where are you?

DAVID

(into radio)  
Seventeenth floor.

Lofton and Hal hurry up the stairs behind David. They look  
stressed out.

DAVID

Where's Marta?

Lofton shakes his head.

LOFTON

They won't come. No one's coming.

DAVID

No one?

LOFTON

There's a big community watch  
function on the west side. The  
superheroes are all there; they  
won't break off.

DAVID

That's ridiculous.

LOFTON

I'm just telling you what I was  
told.

DAVID

Damn it.

He starts back down the stairs.

DAVID

Let's do what we can from the van.

Lofton and Hal follow.

EXT. PORT LAWRENCE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Uniformed cops walk into the building. Black-and-white units sit outside.

INT. POLICE STATION

A small crowd of officers surround David, Lofton, and Hal. Captain Devereaux and all of the superheroes, in uniform, make up part of the circle.

DAVID

All I'm saying is that we need some help. That's it.

DEVEREAUX

And I'm saying sometimes we can accommodate you, and sometimes we can't.

DAVID

Then let's work out a plan together to try to get to the bottom of the commercial crime ring.

HOLDEN

We don't know that there is a "bottom." It's theft. It happens all the time.

DAVID

I'm sure there's something more to it than random acts.

DEVEREAUX

I've got manpower limitations. I've got a tight budget.

DAVID

And you spend almost all of it on patrolling.

UNIFORMED OFFICER

And?

David looks around the room.

DAVID

Is that allocation based on anything?

Holden and Devereaux look put off. Jim walks out.

DEVEREAUX

We've got the best patrol coverage in the country. And thanks to your friends here...

He puts a hand on Skip's shoulder.

DEVEREAUX

... I've got a crime deterrent like no other city in the world.

Rumblings of approval sound from the crowd.

DAVID

But according to what? Colored uniforms and flashy routines make it that much easier for smart criminals to avoid you.

Jim wanders back to see more of the standoff.

DAVID

People who profit from crime are never going to challenge you openly in some kind of grand showdown.

JIM

If we're not good enough for you, you can just leave us out of your little commission.

DAVID

This is your city! Don't you want to do everything you possibly can to help it?

JIM

What the hell have you ever done to help anyone?

MARTA

(to Jim)

Will you shut up?

HOLDEN

There was no crime today. There was nothing for us to do.



EDDIE  
 (to both sides)  
 Both of you are being ridiculous.

Captain Devereaux throws his arms in the air.

DEVEREAUX  
 That's it; end of meeting!  
 (to David)  
 As long as the mayor tells me to  
 work with you, I will. But no  
 ordering my people around.

He departs, and everybody goes there own way.

Lofton and Hal lead a dejected-looking David away.

HAL  
 Why don't we go do some police  
 work?

EXT. POLICE STATION

David walks away and stews.

DAVID  
 Damn it, I didn't mean to get into  
 it with them like that.

Lofton and Hal flank him.

LOFTON  
 We have faith in you, boss.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF DAVID'S COMMISSION WORKING ON THE CASE:

-- David and Lofton stride back into the same high-rise  
 office building they were watching earlier.

-- At a "Meddle Industries / Corporate Offices" reception  
 desk, David and Lofton present a search warrant.

-- David, Lofton, and Hal sift through boxes of documents.

-- Port Lawrence police officers handcuff a suspect at a junk  
 yard. In the middle of the yard, looking out of place, sit  
 newly manufactured electric engines, stacked in columns.  
 David speaks to a uniformed officer while pointing at the  
 suspect. The officer nods, and David approaches the suspect  
 and shows him his FBI I.D.

-- A police officer leads David to a cell in the Port Lawrence holding jail. Inside, two incarcerated men approach David.

-- David and Lofton receive multiple papers titled "WARRANT" from a judge in an empty courtroom. The judge signs them one by one.

-- David and Lofton handcuff a corporate executive-looking gentleman in the lobby of the Meddle Industries headquarters.

END MONTAGE

EXT. PORT LAWRENCE DOCKS - DAY

Outside a plant that has "MacArthur Tool & Die" painted on it, David and Lofton watch several Port Lawrence police officers lead two handcuffed suspects to a patrol car.

LOFTON

I feel like we're almost there.

David shakes his head.

DAVID

We still don't have a reason for all this.

LOFTON

Are you going to tell the mayor what we do know?

DAVID

I should. You don't have a tuxedo I could borrow, do you?

INT. FANCY HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

A couple in formal attire check in at a registration table. A sign on the table reads, "Port Lawrence Cares / Guests with reservations."

INT. BALLROOM

Upper crust types drink and socialize.

Susan, looking divine, dances in front of an orchestra with an old fossil of a gentleman.

David, who did find a tux, stares at her.

Across the room, Holden talks to the mayor and others.

Another elder man cuts in on Susan.

David makes his move. He cuts in on her next.

SUSAN

I didn't know you were coming to this.

DAVID

I've got some questions to ask the mayor.

SUSAN

I heard about what happened with Jim the other night.

David turns her.

SUSAN

If it's any consolation, the superheroes are at each other's throats too.

DAVID

That's not what I want.

He turns her again. He dances pretty well.

SUSAN

You're not bad.

David smiles at her.

SUSAN

May I ask you something?

DAVID

Shoot.

SUSAN

How come you've never gotten married?

DAVID

I guess I just haven't found the right girl yet.

SUSAN

But you've never even been close. Why not?

DAVID  
I don't always tell you everything.

David avoids her look.

SUSAN  
I know.

DAVID  
Who are those guys you were dancing with?

SUSAN  
They're the Port Lawrence dinosaurs. They're being honored tonight. Major sponsors.

DAVID  
Dinosaurs?

SUSAN  
Ancient C-E-Os of the rustiest companies in town. A walking group of mummies, if you ask me.

David looks at a group of five old men, including the two with whom Susan was dancing. David stops dancing.

SUSAN  
What's wrong?

David stares at the CEOs. They lead their wives to another part of the ballroom.

DAVID  
I think I just figured it out.

SUSAN  
What?

INT. FBI REGIONAL OFFICE - COMMON/CUBICLE AREA - DAY

Lofton and Hal talk to three other agents. A few administrative staffers type.

David enters with two law books.

DAVID  
Listen up, everyone.

Everyone looks, but doesn't move.

DAVID

I'm going to tell you a story about a set of lucrative, exclusive supply contracts, anti-trust violations, black market industrial goods, and some Port Lawrence social kingpins willing to screw the lower three-fourths of the economic food chain in order to stay on top past their due dates.

Everyone looks frozen. David notices the cold shoulder.

DAVID

Why isn't anyone taking notes?

HAL

They shut us down.

DAVID

Who shut us down?

LOFTON

The superheroes and the police chief went to the governor. The governor pulled some strings in Washington, and Bureau has pulled the plug on us. It's over.

David stares at him. He puts his books down on the nearest desk and walks out of the office.

LOFTON

(to Hal)

Where's he going?

EXT. URBAN PARK - DAY

An outdoor festival and civic celebration fills the park. Games, food vendors, and picnics abound.

A stage stands in the middle of the park. On it sit Mayor Neal, other city officials, and five uniformed superheroes.

A banner proclaims "Founders' Day -- A Port Lawrence Tradition." Holden and Marta hold awards plaques.

Two rival television crews and a decent-sized crowd stand in front of the stage.

David marches into the park. He looks determined.

On stage, Mayor Neal makes an introduction.

MAYOR NEAL

The winner of this year's Founders' Day essay contest is Oakbrook Middle School sixth grader, Jeffrey Bantle.

The crowd applauds as JEFFREY bounds up to a microphone with essay in hand. Holden stands beside the boy with a plaque for him.

David reaches the back of the stage crowd, still marching.

JEFFFEY

(to the audience)

"What Founders' Day means to me" by Jeffrey Bantle. Founders' Day is a time to remember. A time for Port Lawrence families to...

David ascends the stage, rushes Jim, and tackles him.

DAVID

You bastard!

Jim flings David off of him, knocking over chairs.

David gets up, rushes Jim again, and clocks him in the face.

DAVID

Aauugghhh!

David shakes his fist in pain. The hit leaves Jim unharmed.

Holden and Skip jump between them. Jeffrey runs for his mom.

JIM

You're an ass, Hammiston!

David rushes him a third time, but Holden and Skip stop him.

HOLDEN

(to David)

You're way out of line, man.

The news cameras position themselves to get a better view of the fight. The citizens of Port Lawrence stand aghast.

DAVID

(to Jim)

You've tried to ruin everything I ever wanted to do!

Jim pushes through Holden and Skip and knocks David to the ground. People scatter and knock over more chairs.

Someone crashes into a post that holds the "Founders' Day" banner, and it flutters down.

DAVID  
(to Jim)  
I hate you!

Holden grabs David and tries to pull him off the stage.

HOLDEN  
I thought you always wanted to be one of us. This isn't helping.

DAVID  
I wouldn't want to be one of you.  
If I had my choice of any power in the world, I wouldn't take it. Not if I had to be like you!

He looks around. A gawking gathering up front just heard that. Everyone stares.

David looks at crowd. The news cameras. The mayor. Susan.

DAVID  
Screw it.

He walks off the stage and knifes his way through the crowd.  
Susan glares at Holden. She follows David.

EXT. LAKE SHORE - DAY

David sits on a retaining wall.

Susan walks up. She sits down beside him.

David stares at the water.

DAVID  
Why?

His head droops.

DAVID  
Why was I not worthy? What did I do so wrong that meant that I couldn't get a superpower too?

SUSAN  
You do have a power.

David scoffs.

SUSAN

You were going to break the theft cases, weren't you? The sources?

DAVID

It doesn't matter.

SUSAN

They'll still be broken. It'll just take the F-B-I a little longer, that's all.

DAVID

I'll never work with those idiots again, that's for sure. Sorry for including your husband in the group.

SUSAN

I'm just as mad at them as you are.

David puts his head in his hands.

DAVID

I don't why I've always failed so badly with them.

SUSAN

Because you forgot to use your power on them.

DAVID

What?

SUSAN

A mental ability is very intimidating. And it doesn't take much to intimidate Jim and Skip.

DAVID

Hmph.

SUSAN

Think about it.

David does.

SUSAN

I'm right, aren't I?

David fights off a smile.



DAVID

I thought I was the one with the perception power.

SUSAN

You're not the only one who's got it.

She puts her arm around him and kisses him on the cheek. After the kiss, they stay dangerously close.

The look into each other's eyes. Their faces drift back together.

Their lips press together fully, although their bodies don't really participate in the kiss.

They pull back.

SUSAN

I shouldn't have done that to you.

DAVID

It wasn't that bad.

SUSAN

I'm not ready to give up on my marriage.

DAVID

I know.

SUSAN

Why are you here, anyway?

David looks at her like he doesn't understand.

SUSAN

Why are in the street crime-fighting business in Port Lawrence at all? I never heard you say anything about wanting to do this until Holden and the others did it.

DAVID

It just seemed like the right thing to do.

SUSAN

So you could chase after them and prove you're just as good?

David looks down.

DAVID

I have thought some about moving to Washington and trying to get into something else. Maybe foreign affairs.

SUSAN

That's exactly what you should do.

DAVID

I would hate to have to start all over again.

SUSAN

You're twenty-five years old.

DAVID

I know...

SUSAN

You should go. I mean it.

David seems torn.

SUSAN

You've got so much more to offer.

DAVID

It would be such a different life...

SUSAN

Go, damn it!

She collapses in David's lap. She wraps her arms around him, and starts to cry.

SUSAN

Go.

David strokes her hair.

As they sit together, SUPERIMPOSED yearless calender pages appear again, ticking by faster than before.

The scene behind the pages changes to Washington, D.C. The Capitol sits atop the National Mall. The ticking calendar pages stop and FADE OUT.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - DEPARTMENT OF STATE - DAY

An identifying sign marks the monumental building.

SUPERIMPOSE: "PRESENT DAY"

A medium-sized office that looks well-lived in stands empty.

On the wall is a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Port Lawrence conferred on David Wright Hammiston.

Near the diploma is a framed front page of the *Port Lawrence Sentinel*. The headlines read: "Port Lawrence Industrial Giants Indicted on Antitrust Charges / (subheadline) Illegal Supply Practices Linked to City's Commercial Theft Problem."

A map of central Asia also hangs on the wall. Pen marks and colored stickers dot the map. The words "Murakistan" and "Tengri" are written in southern Kazakhstan, near the Uzbekistan border.

On a bookshelf sits a picture of an older-looking David with his arms around an attractive woman with a Russian look.

Also on the bookshelf sits the photo, taken by the *Sentinel* photographer, of David and the superheroes when they were in high school.

On the office's desk rests a placard with David's name on it. Underneath, the marker reads "Deputy Assistant Secretary - Central Asia."

The door opens, and the older-looking David leads a small class of junior high school students into his office.

DAVID

And this is the final stop on the tour -- my office! This is the kind of luxury you get when you rise to the level of Deputy Assistant Secretary.

The KIDS laugh. They pack in with a couple of TEACHERS. One of the kids points to the map on the wall.

KID #1

Is that the territory you're in charge of?

DAVID

King of it, actually. I don't just make recommendations about soybean exports or textile politics or garbage treaties...

He waves his hand over the map.

DAVID  
I rule the whole region. Right  
from this office!

More laughter. David looks at one of teachers.

DAVID  
Just kidding, of course.

TEACHER #1  
(to the kids)  
All right, everyone, we've got a  
bus to catch in fifteen minutes.  
Let's let Mister Hammiston get back  
to work.

Some complaining sounds as the teachers herd the kids out.

DAVID  
(to the class)  
Tell everyone back in Port Lawrence  
I said "hello."

As they clear the room, an AIDE rushes in.

AIDE  
David, have you seen the news?

DAVID  
What?

AIDE  
The president's sending a car for  
you right now.

DAVID  
What is it?

AIDE  
You're not going to believe it.

INT. GOVERNMENT LIMO (MOVING) - DAY

On a tablet computer, David watches a national newscast about  
an erupting "CRISES IN CENTRAL ASIA."

A NEWSCASTER reports a story with a map showing the regions  
of Murakistan and Tengri over her shoulder.

## NEWSCASTER

Reports coming out of the region of Tengri are that rebels from the breakaway would-be state of Murakistan have invaded Tengri, with intentions of annexing the neighboring area and achieving independence. The Murak rebels have surrounded the easternmost outpost of NATO.

David rubs his face. He straightens his tie as the limo slows down to enter a White House gate.

## NEWSCASTER

We have no pictures or video from Tengri yet. This is all coming word-of-mouth.

## INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE

The PRESIDENT of the United States, Army General RHINEHART, an AIR FORCE GENERAL, and a NAVY ADMIRAL sit in conference.

A staffer shows David in.

## PRESIDENT

Ah, Mister Hammiston. We've never met, have we?

They shake.

## DAVID

No sir.

## PRESIDENT

We were just discussing our impending military response in your region of expertise.

## DAVID

Don't do it.

## GENERAL RHINEHART

What?

## DAVID

You don't have to do it.

## GENERAL RHINEHART

Mister President, we have to respond. This is essentially our base under siege.

PRESIDENT  
 (to David)  
 What do you mean?

DAVID  
 I know these people. My wife was  
 from Murakistan. You can get out  
 of this without an armed conflict.

PRESIDENT  
 What would you have me do?

DAVID  
 Send me over there. Send in the  
 U-N Secretary General.

AIR FORCE GENERAL  
 (to David)  
 To talk the Muraks down?

DAVID  
 Deal them down. They're  
 overextended, and they'll soon  
 realize it. I'm sure of it.

NAVY ADMIRAL  
 A delay in our response gives the  
 rebels a firmer foothold.

David shakes his head.

DAVID  
 In this case, I think it'll work to  
 our advantage.

He looks at the four of them. They look skeptical.

DAVID  
 Give me a week. Give me a chance.

The president paces. He looks out a window.

PRESIDENT  
 David Hammiston. You were part of  
 that group of super-heroic figures  
 who fought crime in Port Lawrence,  
 weren't you?

DAVID  
 Sort of.

PRESIDENT  
 Whatever happened to them?

DAVID

I think their chosen profession turned out to be more complicated than they expected. They disbanded a few years ago.

PRESIDENT

What was your power, exactly?

DAVID

Some people say I have a good understanding of other people's reasoning and behavior.

PRESIDENT

So people listen to you?

DAVID

Oddly, it seems like no one's ever listened to me.

PRESIDENT

Should I?

GENERAL RHINEHART

Mister President, please. We should move to respond now.

DAVID

(to the president)

The history books are full of warriors. If you want to make your mark, try peacemaker.

The president addresses the military commanders.

PRESIDENT

I'm going to try the superhero.

They look shocked.

PRESIDENT

Get him in. Establish a base of covert operations, and put Hammiston in charge.

(to David)

I want a report every day.

DAVID

(to the president)

I have some friends -- that you mentioned -- who might be able to help. May I bring them along?

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - DAVID'S OFFICE

David hurries in and punches a button on his desk phone.

DAVID  
(into phone)  
Get me a number for Marta Carrol.

He listens.

DAVID  
Port Lawrence or Middletown. I  
think Middletown, actually.

INT. PAPER MILL - DAY

David and Marta walk through the facility.

Marta's older age has softened her once athletic look. And she now wears glasses!

MARTA  
So it was technology that killed  
our luster, more than anything  
else. Better surveillance  
equipment, better body armor,  
better communications, a whole  
range of high-tech advancements.  
We weren't needed so much.

DAVID  
But Holden still wears the  
Lightning Man uniform?

MARTA  
He changed it when he moved to the  
West Coast. But now I think he's  
back to the original version.  
Skip's made an appearance or two  
with him out there, but he won't  
move.

DAVID  
Why did Holden leave Port Lawrence?  
Was it because of Susan?

MARTA  
I think so. When they divorced, we  
were basically done as a team. I  
think he needed a clean slate.



DAVID

When my wife died, I thought about  
inviting everyone to the funeral.  
But it was overseas, so I wasn't  
sure how to handle it.

They come to an area where huge rolls of paper sit stored in  
hard-to-get-to compartments that run floor to ceiling.

MARTA

What you're doing here is a  
godsend. The boys need it in the  
worst way. If you can get Jim,  
Holden and Skip will come.

DAVID

And you can get Eddie?

MARTA

Eddie and I would do anything to  
help you.

They round a corner where the rolls are being moved by two  
instruments: a forklift and an ex-superhero in work clothes.

Jim grunts as he carries a roll of paper out of one of the  
storage compartments.

He sets it down near the forklift with a BANG.

Jim wipes his face. His clothes are covered with dust.

A PLANT FOREMAN arrives at Jim ahead of David and Marta.

PLANT FOREMAN

Bonner! Where have you been?

Jim looks worn out.

PLANT FOREMAN

You were supposed to have cleared  
the side yard by today.

JIM

There's no where to put that stuff.

PLANT FOREMAN

I thought you and the warehouse  
crew were going to bring it back  
here?

JIM

We're not ready to yet.

PLANT FOREMAN

Well, I need it out of the yard.

JIM

I'll get it done; don't worry about it.

The foreman departs, shaking his head. Jim goes back to the storage compartments for another oversized roll of paper.

As he sets it down by the forklift, David and Marta walk up.

Jim stares at them. He wipes sweat off his brow.

DAVID

I need your help.

EXT. CENTRAL ASIA - MILITARY CAMP - DAY

Three helicopters hover above a temporary base of U.S. military operations. One chopper moves to depart; two come in for a landing.

Wearing civilian clothes and looking older too, Holden zigzags in between the helicopters. He almost hits one of them as he flies a little wobbly.

The LANDING SITE CHIEF, in uniform, sees the near calamity.

LANDNING SITE CHIEF

Out! Get out of there!

He waves his arms.

LANDNING SITE CHIEF

Down!

David, dressed in gray "diplomat's field wear," which looks a little like a safari outfit, steps into the landing area.

DAVID

(to the landing site chief)

Sorry about that.

LANDNING SITE CHIEF

You're waiting for the U-N Secretary General?

DAVID

Yes.

The chief points to one of the landing choppers.

LANDNING SITE CHIEF

That's him.

The helicopter's door opens, and David greets the U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL, a middle-aged man of African descent.

DAVID

Welcome to Tengri.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Nice to see you again, David.

He speaks with a French accent. David leads him away.

SECRETARY GENERAL

The way I see it, the entire problem here is Governor Barandy. He has always been the biggest headache in the region.

DAVID

Tell me about it.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Let's make him an offer that no one in Murakistan or Kazakhstan proper will allow him to refuse.

IN THE HEART OF THE CAMP

David and the Secretary General walk past rising tents and stashed weapons and ammunition.

SECRETARY GENERAL

The economy has been a major problem for decades, and the U-N is now prepared to offer a technical school to be built in Murakistan if this rogue invasion of Tengri can be quickly undone. The school was going to be done anyway; it just hadn't been announced.

He follows as David makes a turn.

SECRETARY GENERAL

The construction work can involve the Murak military force.

DAVID

And Barandy?

SECRETARY GENERAL

If he will step down from his official post, he can direct the trade academy. With a deputy of my choosing.

DAVID

That might work.

SECRETARY GENERAL

But, David...

He wags a finger at him.

SECRETARY GENERAL

... the deal is off if any fighting breaks out. If there's even one skirmish, NATO will remove the Murak fighters by force.

DAVID

I understand.

David leads him into a large tent.

INT. COMMAND TENT

General Rhinehart and other military officers surround a map spread out on a portable table.

Off to the side, not participating in the action at the moment, stand Jim, Skip, Marta, and Eddie.

Skip looks nerdier than his younger self. Eddie's midsection is larger. All of them wear civilian field clothes.

GENERAL RHINEHART

Mister Secretary General, I don't mind telling you that I don't like this plan of yours one bit.

SECRETARY GENERAL

It's my understanding your president supports it.

GENERAL RHINEHART

He's humoring it for the time being, but I don't understand it, and I don't think it will work.

Holden enters the tent.

SECRETARY GENERAL

(to David)

Mister Under Secretary, why don't you explain what we have in mind?

The former superheroes circle around with the others.

DAVID

The theory here is that the Murakistan loyalists have picked several fights that they don't really want to fight. They've been led astray by a provincial governor who doesn't have an endgame. So we're going to give everybody an easy way out.

MARTA

Why are the rebel fighters sticking out the blunder?

DAVID

Barandy has his own special security force that outranks them. Everyone's afraid to challenge them.

SECRETARY GENERAL

But the rebel commanders probably understand they can't win a fight with NATO.

GENERAL RHINEHART

What if you're wrong?

SECRETARY GENERAL

Then we settle the crisis the old fashioned way: through bloodshed.

Rhinehart looks put-off.

DAVID

The key is to get the word out about the U-N's offer of a managed reset plus the school for technical disciplines.

GENERAL RHINEHART

And Barandy gets off scot-free?

DAVID

It's not a perfect solution, but I think it's the best one possible.

HOLDEN

So you want us to spread the word  
about the peace offering?

DAVID

That's it. That's the plan.

All the military officers in the tent look uneasy and unsure.  
David sees this.

David approaches Jim.

DAVID

You might have the most important  
role in this whole thing.

Jim's eyes open wider.

DAVID

You can still take a bullet, right?

JIM

I can take a bullet or two.

GENERAL RHINEHART

The Murak rebels have more than  
just bullets.

JIM

I can't take a missile or a bomb or  
anything, but I can still take a  
bullet.

DAVID

I need you to physically take the  
Secretary General to the Murak  
rebel leaders in Tengri and  
communicate our offer.

GENERAL RHINEHART

What good is a semi-bullet proof  
civilian in that situation? The  
Secretary General should have a  
military escort.

DAVID

We can't risk a battle breaking  
out.

JIM

I can do it.

He looks at the Secretary General

JIM

We can do it.

DAVID

Surrender if you have to.  
Surrender repeatedly. Your only  
job is to protect the Secretary  
General and deliver the message.

SECRETARY GENERAL

We ought to be fine. I don't think  
anyone will harm us.

DAVID

Holden and Skip, you'll use your  
mobility to spread the word in  
Murakistan about the offer  
involving Barandy's honorable  
retirement. I've got a list of  
local religious and political  
leaders. We're getting the plan  
spelled out in the local languages.

HOLDEN

Do you have maps?

DAVID

We do.

David looks at Eddie.

EDDIE

What do I do?

DAVID

You come with me. You and Marta  
will help me reach the Murak  
Council in the territorial capital.  
Somehow, Barandy's completely cut  
them off from the outside world; we  
need to bring them into what's  
going on.

GENERAL RHINEHART

What about Barandy's security force  
around the capital?

DAVID

That's the dangerous part.  
(to Eddie and Marta)  
You don't have to do this if you  
don't want to.

MARTA

We're in. All we have to do is reach the Council, right?

David nods.

DAVID

The goal is to sneak into their building. If we make it, they have enough autonomy to protect us, I think.

MARTA

Then Holden and Skip should help with that too.

DAVID

(to Holden and Skip)

I'll set a meeting place for you to join us after your missions.

Holden nods.

GENERAL RHINEHART

(to the Secretary General)

Are you listening to this? This is the most roundabout, complicated, wing-and-a-prayer plan I've ever heard. Why in the world should I trust these people?

MARTA

Because David knows what he's doing.

SECRETARY GENERAL

You're right, General. It is complicated. Communication and compromise are always harder than fighting. That is why they're rarely chosen.

Rhinehart starts to leave.

GENERAL RHINEHART

Captain Worley, get me the president on a secure channel.

He looks back at David.

GENERAL RHINEHART

I want to go on record opposing this whole scheme.



EXT. TEMPORARY MILITARY CAMP

David walks around with a young STAFF OFFICER.

DAVID

In addition to written versions of the proposal, can we get it on some sort of audio recording in Murak dialect, and then give that to Holden and Skip?

STAFF OFFICER

Maybe.

DAVID

See if you can get that done.

The officer heads off. David watches a truckload of journalists with "PRESS" I.D. badges around their necks unloading television equipment, still cameras, and personal belongings from a military transport truck.

Susan walks away from the truck with a press badge and camera around her neck and a duffel bag over her shoulder.

She lights up when she sees David. They meet and hug.

SUSAN

Thank you so much for getting me in here.

DAVID

The Port Lawrence Sentinel is the most important paper in America.

SUSAN

Stop!

DAVID

Well, it's my favorite.

SUSAN

I know there's no reason to bring it up, but I'm sorry about what happened to your wife.

DAVID

I was lucky to have her for the time that I did.

Susan hoists her duffel over a different shoulder.

DAVID

Let me show you where they've put you.

He takes the bag from her.

Susan takes a note pad and pen out of her pocket.

SUSAN

They told us what the basic plan is on the ride over, but what's your part?

David looks around to make sure no one is listening.

DAVID

I'm going with Marta and Eddie to the Murakistan capital, but you can't report that until we're already there and secure. After that, I want it published.

Susan scribbles this down.

SUSAN

You've given all the Middletown superheroes roles, haven't you?

DAVID

I need them.

SUSAN

I want to do a piece about the six of you coming together again.

DAVID

I just hope it has a happy ending.

As she makes more notes, they run into Holden.

DAVID

(to both)

I'll be in the Secretary General's tent.

(to Holden)

Come over soon. You, Skip, and Jim leave tonight.

He leaves.

Susan gives Holden a quick hug.

HOLDEN

I want you to meet my new wife.

SUSAN  
I'd like that.

EXT. TEMPORARY MILITARY CAMP - DAWN

Soldiers move around in a rush.

At the edge of the camp, David, Marta, and Eddie pile food, water, and gear into a dilapidated-looking European car. The three wear central-Asian garb.

They are about to go when General Rhinehart shows up.

GENERAL RHINEHART  
Mister Hammiston. I've spoken to the president this morning, and he's only willing to give you two days. The rebels show signs of moving. If I don't hear from Barandy or the leader of Murakistan Council in forty-eight hours, we attack.

David looks at his watch.

DAVID  
Forty-eight hours.  
(to Marta and Eddie)  
Let's go.

They get in, and David starts the clunker car.

Susan runs up. David sees her. He rolls down the window.

SUSAN  
Be careful.

She kisses him on the cheek.

David pulls out. Rhinehart escorts Susan away.

EXT. TEMPORARY MILITARY CAMP - NIGHT

Susan hangs out with other journalists. She sits on the ground and types on a laptop.

Nearby, a MILITARY COMMANDER gives an interview to three camera crews.

MILITARY COMMANDER  
If a diplomatic solution fails, we are prepared to use force, yes.  
(MORE)

## MILITARY COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Any offenses against the Murak  
forces would be a NATO operation.

Susan looks up as ANOTHER JOURNALIST, a man, walks to her.

SUSAN

Any news?

He shakes his head.

Susan types.

EXT. CENTRAL ASIA - COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Rain pours on a terrible dirt road.

The wheels of David, Marta, and Eddie's car spin in mud.

INT. CAR

David "drives."

DAVID

Damn!

Eddie looks out an open window at the wheels.

David checks his watch.

DAVID

We walk from here. We can still  
make it.

EXT. CAR

David, Marta, and Eddie slip and slide as they head out.

EXT. MURAKISTAN CAPITAL CITY - OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Clouds fill the sky, but no rain.

David, Marta, and Eddie look at a medium-sized, ancient city  
by a river.

DAVID

The Council chamber is right in the  
center.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

The governor's house is only a few blocks away, so Barandy's security forces could be anywhere. They have black uniforms usually. All black.

EDDIE

Does anyone on the Council know we're coming?

DAVID

They're cut off; they have no idea.

David checks his watch. He starts walking.

EXT. RIVERBANK BY THE MURAKISTAN CAPITAL - DAY

David, Marta, and Eddie hike.

They come to a bridge and climb up on its end.

They see a military unit with artillery on the other side of the river, a ways up the opposite bank. The soldiers wear tan uniforms.

David looks at Marta.

DAVID

How many?

Marta squints through her glasses.

MARTA

A lot. Did you need an exact count?

DAVID

No, it doesn't matter. But any black uniforms?

Marta squints.

MARTA

No. All tan. Every one.

DAVID

That's a regular army unit likely left here to scare people like us away.

EDDIE

Are they a threat to us?

DAVID  
Probably not, if they knew what we  
were doing.

Eddie puts down his gear.

EDDIE  
Then I'll go tell them.

DAVID  
Too dangerous.

EDDIE  
I'll just surrender to them.

DAVID  
I don't want you to get shot before  
you surrender.

EDDIE  
Let me do this. I haven't done  
anything like this in a long time.

He stares David down.

David takes a large, empty, plastic water bottle out of his gear, rolls up a document, sticks it in the bottle, and screws the top back on.

He hands the bottle and a pocket knife to Eddie.

DAVID  
Cut it out when you reach them.

Eddie goes to the water's edge. David and Marta follow.

DAVID  
Try to convey that you're a  
messenger. Stay with them until I  
come get you.

Eddie dives into the river. He disappears under the water.

David and Marta hurry back up onto the bridge.

They walk across and meet some pedestrians who stare at them. David and Marta try to hide their faces.

As they near the other side, David stops.

Unseen until now, a black-clad bridge guard with a large rifle stands watch just beyond the far end.

David looks at Marta. Marta looks at the guard and holds up one finger to David. They press up to one side of the bridge, standing stationary.

A jeep with another black-clad trooper pulls up to the bridge guard. He jumps in, and they both take off.

David and Marta resume walking.

EXT. MURAKISTAN CAPITAL CITY

As David and Marta move into the city, Holden and Skip come out of a hiding spot.

DAVID

I can't tell you how glad I am to see you two. How'd it go?

HOLDEN

Pretty well when people would take in what I was communicating. It helps when you can fly.

David looks at Skip.

SKIP

Same.

DAVID

I thought it might work. Hopefully, we're less than a mile away from the end of all this.

(to Marta)

You lead.

CENTRAL STREET

Marta, David, Holden, and Skip huddle at a street corner. Not far away stands a somewhat ornate government building.

DAVID

That's the Council building.

He steps toward it.

But just then thirty, black-outfitted, armed, security force guards stroll into view, blocking their path.

David and the others scramble down stairs to a basement door to avoid being seen. They go through the door.

INT. BASEMENT STORAGE ROOM

The room is dimly lit, and Marta, in the lead, trips over a board, causing everyone to topple on top of or over her.

MARTA

Ow!

Everyone gets up and brushes themselves off.

HOLDEN

(to David)

This changes things.

David peeks out the door. Everyone looks at him. He looks defeated.

DAVID

I didn't mean for you to have to directly risk your lives for my plan.

HOLDEN

Not with poor odds, we shouldn't.

MARTA

(to Holden)

Can you just fly into the Council building with David?

(to David)

That's all we need, right?

HOLDEN

I'm not any stronger in the air than I am on the ground. Carrying an extra two hundred pounds would slow me down to the point where we'd be an easy target.

SKIP

I have a similar problem. Especially these days.

HOLDEN

Then we go back.

David peeks out the door again.

DAVID

I don't know if you can understand this, but I can't go back.

HOLDEN

What are you talking about?



DAVID

The president and the Secretary  
General trusted me. I won't get  
another chance.

MARTA

(to Holden and Skip)  
I'm not leaving David.

David shakes his head at her.

DAVID

This is my gambit, not yours.

MARTA

I'm not leaving you here.

SKIP

I'm not leaving Marta.

HOLDEN

(to Skip)  
You saw those guns. These are  
soldiers used to killing. With  
automatic weapons.

SKIP

If we go back, what do we go back  
to?

HOLDEN

What are you talking about?

SKIP

How's your law enforcement job  
going? Any better than when I  
visited you last year?

HOLDEN

That has nothing to do with  
anything.

SKIP

For whatever reason, we were given  
phenomenal gifts. Unthinkable  
gifts. But we've got little to  
show for them if you ask me.

Holden looks unhappy. But he softens.

HOLDEN

(to David)  
So what do we do?

David looks at his watch.

DAVID  
We go another way. Come on.

He leads them out of the cellar.

EXT. MURAKISTAN CAPITAL CITY - ANOTHER STREET

David, Marta, Holden, and Skip watch an argument between two groups of Murak civilians. Two black troopers mediate.

SKIP  
I'll run around and find another way.

DAVID  
Not a super-speed. You'll draw attention to us. Marta, what's that way?

He points. Marta squints.

MARTA  
Another block. No guards.

DAVID  
And beyond?

Marta squints harder.

MARTA  
I can't see that far anymore.

HOLDEN  
I'll fly up to the roof and look around.

DAVID  
Don't let anyone see you.

Hiding their faces, they head away from the street fracas.

They duck down a narrow alley.

Holden flies up the side of a building -- right next to it.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

David, Marta, and Skip hurry along.

Two blocks ahead of them, a lone black guard crosses their path in a jeep. David puts on the brakes. He turns around.

But behind them, four other guards approach. They point at David's group and run towards them.

David, Marta, and Skip run for it. Skip stays close by.

EXT. ROOFTOP

Holden sees the chase. The pursuing guards raise rifles.

Holden flies above the guards.

HOLDEN

Hey! Up here! Hey you!

Pow! Pow! Shots explode Holden's way.

Smash! He plows through the upper window of a house.

INT. HOUSE

Psshowww! A bullet pierces the broken window behind Holden.

Holden rolls across a living room floor, startling a Murak woman and her little boy.

Holden gets up, looks at the boy, and flies through a window on the other side of the house.

The boy rushes to look after him, but his mother grabs him.

EXT. STREETS

Still running, David, Marta, and Skip close in on the back side of the Council chamber building.

Two blocks behind them, black-clad guards pursue.

An unguarded door to the Council building stands across a wide, open area.

Holden calls from a rooftop above.

HOLDEN

Go! Now! Run!

David and Marta dash into the plaza. Skip runs way ahead and hides near the door David and Marta are making for.

Civilian Muraks in the square point at David and Marta.

Two black-clad guards appear from a side entrance to the plaza and set up a large machine gun on a stationary base.

David and Marta sprint, but they're not going to make it! The big gun points, ready to cut them down.

Whapp! A blur that is Skip smashes the gun and flattens the two guards.

David and Marta make to the door and slip inside!

With a burst of super-speed, Skip follows just ahead of more guards arriving.

From above, Holden plows through a second story window of the Council building.

INT. COUNCIL BUILDING - LIBRARY

Holden lays on his back on top of broken glass in the middle of a large, combination library/office.

A dozen older men look at him.

David, Marta, and Skip rush into the room.

One of the men, a MURAKISTAN COUNCILMAN, stares at David.

MURAKISTAN COUNCILMAN  
David Hammiston?

Holden breathes a sigh of relief.

DAVID  
Can you protect us?

MURAKISTAN COUNCILMAN  
Yes, I think so.

He motions for a couple of others to go downstairs.

Holden gets up. He, Marta, and Skip stand beside David.

DAVID  
I have news from the rest of the world.

EXT. TEMPORARY MILITARY CAMP - DAY

A helicopter lands.

## NEWS RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is the Joint Services Global Radio Network. In news, the crisis in Tengri is officially over. As part of an agreement that includes the stepping down of Murakistan's Governor Barandy, the Murak rebel army began withdrawing from Tengri today. Our hats are off to the men and women who held their ground at the NATO base there.

The U.N. Secretary General, Jim, and other military officers meet the chopper. General Rhinehart maintains a stoic look.

But others cheer as David, Holden, Skip, Marta, and Eddie exit the helicopter. The Secretary and Jim congratulate them.

All smiles, Jim gives David some heartfelt pats on the back.

Rhinehart goes to David and extends a hand.

## GENERAL RHINEHART

The president would like to talk to you as soon as you have a chance.

Others pat David.

Susan watches with a joyful face.

## EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF THE TEMPORARY MILITARY CAMP - DUSK

David and Susan walk up a small hill. All is now quiet.

## DAVID

So it looks like we're going to be a team again. The Secretary General thinks he can use us in other crises.

Susan takes notes.

## SUSAN

Would you work for the U-N full time?

David nods.

## DAVID

After my term at State ends. The U-N wants to open a new satellite office in Washington.

SUSAN  
And the other superheroes?

DAVID  
Looks like they may move too. At  
least for part of the time.

SUSAN  
So they'll have a new purpose...

She scribbles.

DAVID  
One that requires thought  
leadership. Something you made me  
realize once they probably want.

SUSAN  
And I can say this is definitely  
going to happen?

They reach the top of the rise. The sun sets before them.

DAVID  
I think you can.

Susan makes one more note and stops writing.

DAVID  
Anything else you want to ask me?

Susan puts away her pad and pen.

SUSAN  
Just one thing.

She steps close and puts her hands on David.

SUSAN  
Is it too late for me to make up  
for a mistake I made a long time  
ago?

DAVID  
You know I can't fly?

Susan kisses him. She pulls back.

SUSAN  
Yes, you can.

As they kiss again, SUPERIMPOSED calendar pages tick off  
another time.

Behind them, the scene changes to a glass, pyramid-shaped building. A sign in front reads, "UNITED NATIONS - WASHINGTON / Middletown Superheroes Center for Diplomacy."

Two bullet-shaped futuristic cars travel by the Center.

INT. U.N. WASHINGTON CENTER - THE FUTURE - DAY

A cocktail reception fills a mini-museum about the Middletown superheroes and their accomplishments. A permanent sign above the space reads "Middletown Superheroes."

SUPERIMPOSE: "THREE DECADES LATER"

A series of mounted, photographic exhibits tells stories:

-- David and the other superheroes, all in civilian professional attire, receive recognition from the Murakistan crisis-era U.S. president at a press event on the steps of the State Department.

-- In a mountainous setting, Jim and Holden, in civilian field wear, stand beside two opposing military commanders, both of whom look Eastern European, in a field. The commanders shake hands.

-- David, Marta, and Skip, in business dress, listen to two Middle Eastern religious leaders explain something at a bombing site.

-- David, Eddie, Holden, and the same U.N. Secretary General, in civilian field wear, ride down a dirt road in a jeep.

-- David and all of the superheroes, in business-casual clothes, sit on stage in an college auditorium. A university seal decorates a set of oversized drapes behind them. David and the superheroes feature aging hair.

-- Looking even older, David and other the superheroes, in business dress, walk through an Asian, colorful, outdoor food market. U.N. pins stand out on their lapels.

Beside each photograph stands a written narrative of their peacemaking work. A crowd views the exhibits.

The guests wear sleek, relatively minimalist outfits, with many tops the same color as the pants. The material looks like thick silk. Some of the clothes feature a thin, metallic silver strip at an edge of the fabric. Other than that, the clothes look modern-day.

The superheroes, including David, mingle with guests. Some people hold cocktails in super-skinny glasses, and wait staffers in black minimalist suits pass colored dumplings.

The superheroes appear grayer, balder, heavier, and with a few wrinkles.

Marta wears super-thick glasses. Eddie uses two hearing aids. And Skip walks pretty well, but with a cane!

Susan fixes the hair of a twenty-year-old boy. A seventeen-year-old BOY stands next to him.

David talks to a YOUNG REPORTER, a woman. David's appearance has held up better than the other superheroes.

The reporter points a pen-shaped digital recorder at David.

YOUNG REPORTER

So you knew your wife in high school, but she was married to Holden Dennis before you.

DAVID

A little unusual, I know.

The two boys who were with Susan approach him.

YOUNGER BOY

Dad, we're going to walk around outside.

DAVID

Don't be gone too long.

They depart, and Susan comes over to him. David puts his arm around her.

DAVID

We've been married almost thirty years now.

YOUNG REPORTER

How much longer do you think you and the other superheroes can serve as a U-N strike team?

DAVID

Well, we don't do a lot of striking anymore. Hopefully, that won't be needed as much in the future. Have you seen our book?



The reporter shakes her head, and David leads her to table where like books are stacked and silver, flash drive e-books are laid out in packages that could be sold off a rack.

The book's title, "Points of Disagreement," sparkles on a shiny rubber-looking cover. The authors are David Hammiston, Holden Dennis, Marta Carrol Altschul, Jim Bonner, Eddie Dement, and Skip Skinner.

David picks up a book.

DAVID

We worked on it together. You're welcome to a copy.

The reporter opens the book.

DAVID

(to Susan)

Honey, why don't you send her that article you wrote about us after the Murakistan affair.

SUSAN

Oh, yes. Sure.

The reporter hands her a business card.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (O.S.)

I never thought I'd see you again.

David turns around and looks at a man his age. David scratches his head.

Susan lights up.

SUSAN

Oh, my goodness!

DAVID

Pepper?

PEPPER

The one and only.

David and Pepper hug.

PEPPER

I always knew you'd make your mark somehow.

David looks moved.

DAVID

Wow.

Susan hugs Pepper.

Coming from a back room, the five superheroes emerge with a surprise cake with three candles burning on it. The superheroes now wear, as best they can, their old Port Lawrence crime-fighting uniforms.

People clap, and they make straight for David.

SKIP

(to a guest)

That's a golden streak behind me,  
can't you see it?

Writing on the cake reads, "Happy Thirty Years, Captain Comprehension."

DAVID

What's this?

HOLDEN

This is our thirtieth year with the  
U-N.

MARTA

We could have never done it without  
you.

David smiles and blows out the candles.

The young reporter pulls out a camera the size of a credit card. She taps on it, and a three-inch mini-lens extends.

YOUNG REPORTER

I need a group picture for my  
article.

She motions.

YOUNG REPORTER

Get together!

The superheroes start arranging themselves. In the shuffle, Jim puts an arm on David's shoulder.

David looks at him.

JIM

Thank you.

David nods.

YOUNG REPORTER  
All right, everyone. Smile!

David and Jim are near one end, but Holden pulls David to the center. The other men superheroes press to his sides.

YOUNG REPORTER  
One, two...

Marta kneels in front and throws her arms open wide as if to say "Look at us, world!"

YOUNG REPORTER  
... three!

Click! The card-camera flashes and captures a great pose. The Middletown superheroes.

FADE OUT:

THE END