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Noble Man

by

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North America. The United States of America. Light City. Ashley Seal and Ramsey Coating, now 24 and 33, are eating food at a restaurant together. In front of Ashley's sister, and her husband and two kids, neither Ashley nor Ramsey can talk about what it is they do for work. Both respond that they just don't have jobs right now. They discuss the superheroes that exist in the U.S., and wonder what else is going on all around the world, in Japan, in China, in Egypt.

When Ashley and Ramsey leave, they talk to each other. They couldn't say out loud what they really do: they're vigilantes, Paranormal Girl and the Jumping Flea. Ramsey is just a human, trained to push his body to the limits as a three-time Olympic athlete, and the vigilante called the Jumping Flea. Ashley is Paranormal Girl, a superhero with all the paranormal powers and abilities that the C.I.A. investigated during World War II. Her powers are levitation, kinetic energy, psychic senses, mind-reading, and fire. Together, they patrol the streets of Light City. Now the month is March.

Asia. Japan. Tokyo. Lee Minn, red-headed and 20 years old, spends all day as a cook. Leaving work for the day, she flies up into the air, toward the clouds, to make her way home. It's easy to find her way, when seeing Tokyo from above. Soon enough, she gets home. Inside, she watches footage on TV of Paranormal Girl. The big question is who's really wearing that outfit, what her real name is, her real age. She says she's 27. Based on that, a person should look at 27-year-old women to find Paranormal Girl's secret identity. Lee Minn suspects that 27 is not her true age. Lee Minn shakes her head. It's a shame that Paranormal Girl feels the need to stay hidden and masked.

Lee Minn is not a superhero, but she has all of Paranormal Girl's powers. Lee's powers are out in the open. She climbs out her window, and gracefully floats through the air with the butterflies to get to her garden, which she waters for a while. She never has to worry about being cast out as a freak. Nobody minds her having powers and abilities like Paranormal Girl. Her friends think it's the coolest thing in the world. With her powers, all she seeks to do is to make it through school and work.

Paranormal Girl seems to have limits. On the news, she tests her levitation, and can't get far past 7 feet. Lee Minn chuckles. Leaping off her balcony, she flies high up into the air, like a bird. She soars up, then lets go, and continues to fly because of momentum alone. After a while, as she falls down with gravity, she uses her levitation again, flying fast in between the buildings of Tokyo. She floats all the way to the waters of the north Pacific Ocean, then starts to panic. Soon enough, she will run out of energy for a while. She doesn't have any bottled water on her. It's never a great idea to fly above the ocean. She runs out of energy, and begins to fall. Before hitting the water, she twists her body around and is soon soaring upward again, to land on the bridge, where she rests for a while and recharges her strength. As she re-cooperates, two men are watching her. She is a valuable girl, indeed. The Japanese government would probably pay a fortune to get her back out of ransom. So, in the minute where she can barely move, they grab her and drag her away. Now she's being kidnapped.

Africa. Egypt. In the endless deserts, a costumed man soars through the air and comes to a stop in the desert sand. He is an Egyptian man with powers and abilities, like those possessed by Paranormal Girl and Lee Minn. He spends some time in the desert, away from it all. It's almost time to stop and pray. Quickly, he removes his costume. Not everything is about him. He gets down on the

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ground and begins to pray, in unison with the entire Muslim population in Egypt. He can hear their chantings, even from here. For a few minutes, he stays dedicated to the chanting and prayer.

In the evening, he flies up into the air again. He is Noble Man. He is Cairo's top superhero. Flying all the way to Cairo, he smiles and waves to everybody. Many people smile and wave back at him. He is the man keeping Cairo safe and clean, the police explain to the people in Cairo. He has changed things. He helps to fight wickedness and evil, and to keep the world safe. They should all support Noble Man, and all the incredible things he is doing for the world.

Back in his home, his friend Ashish reminds him that he hasn't done anything as a superhero for a long time now. For a long time, the strategy was to fight a major criminal at least once a month. He should want neither too much, nor too little, of a public image. Now it's been six months since he actually fought or stopped any criminals. It's time to do something more to make himself look good, something more than just flying around and waving. Noble Man explains that, in another 6 months, in December, he will hit his 10-year anniversary of the day he became the champion superhero of Egypt.

The next day, Noble Man flies around, with all the same paranormal powers and abilities as Lee Minn, and he finds a friendly thief pick-pocketing people near one of the Great Pyramids. Noble Man uses his mind powers to hone in on the thief, who is working fast to steal five wallets from Egyptians and overseas tourists alike. Noble Man flies in front of him, blocking his path. He makes a public sight of him stopping the thief, whom he brings to the police to explain to them that he has many wallets in his pockets. The man claims to have no wallets on him at all, but a search finds five. He claims that all of them are gifts for different friends and relatives. But he indeed is found to be stealing, and he is arrested. Noble Man personally hands every wallet back to the people. There is much clapping and cheering in the small crowd near the Pyramid, as Noble Man has stopped a thief. He flies on, toward the clouds.

Soon enough, he comes back home. Ashish has the news turned on. Noble Man has done it again. He stopped a thief, operating near the Great Pyramids, who had stolen five wallets from locals, and from American and Canadian tourists. This sight is another reminder that Noble Man is the wonderful man who makes Cairo a safer place for us all to live in. If only more people could be like him. Ashish is happy. That ought to be good for his image for another month or so.

Noble Man has been a hero for 9 and a half years now. His plan was to be a superhero for exactly 10 years, before turning his allegiance to crime. A man with a record of 10 years of superheroism would be unquestionable, untouchable, and unstoppable. Then, he will rise up to power as the most powerful man in Egypt, the man whom everyone else follows and obeys. Nobody will ever stop Noble Man and Ashish from ruling with an iron fist. Ashish gets to work. He asks his friends if they saw the story, on the news, about Noble Man – how he *saved* the men from theft! How he *stopped* the thieves! How he keeps Cairo safe! Noble Man is an ideal role model indeed. 6 more months, and they will see. Now it's March. April, May, June, July, August, September . . . in September, he can claim a 10-year record as a superhero.

Two Egyptians, a man and a woman, walk around and talk about Noble Man. The man swears that, really, he's an evil liar whose goal is to make himself look good. Still, he did stop the thieves, the woman points out. Whether it was for vanity or not, the end result was an actual hero in action. So, let him do it for his own vanity; let him want press coverage, and people's clapping and cheering; if it continues, people will continue to be saved.

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Meanwhile, in Tokyo, Lee Minn is unconscious in the car, with her shins cuffed together, her hands shackled together behind her back, and duct tape over her mouth. While unconscious, she manages to reach into the minds of both kidnappers, asking them where she is. She does not know that she's dreaming. All three people enter a dream-world where the car drives at night time with enormous lizards crawling everywhere. The moon itself has a smiling face. Back to reality, all three people wake up at once, to find that the car has gotten out of control, and now it crashes into a wall of the bridge.

Europe. Ireland. Dublin. A little girl is missing, according to the news, as she was kidnapped in Dublin and held for ransom. The TV turns off. A young man named Shade O'Waters sits in a gym. He's not a criminal, he insists. But he comes from a crime family. The O'Waters family has been involved in the Ireland Mafia for over 40 years. Now he's 21 years old. He admits that he always used to deny what his family was doing. He always used to deny that they were a powerful crime family. He used to just be the small, whiny kid. But when rumors of his family connections came to the surface, his life was ruined, and everywhere he went, people were afraid of him. He never got to have much of a normal life. His family is still extremely mad at him for being the only one not involved in the business. He insists that he doesn't want to do it. They swear he'll never be a real man if he's not willing to do what it takes to make good money. He walks out of the gym, having walked away, yet again, from an offer for a lot of money.

He thinks about it, across the evening. He still can't seem to have a normal life. He never developed good social skills. He just wants to do good in the world. He doesn't want to hurt people to make money, even if the money is enormous. He thinks again about what his Dad had said, about how you do what you have to do when matters of money get difficult, and small entry-level jobs will never be enough to make a living. On the news, he sees another report of the little girl missing, who was held at ransom for \$20,000. It brings a tear to his eye to know what kind of people the world is filled with: criminals and thieves. They were doing it for the money, too. He will never be one of them, he swears.

The next day, he comes up with a new idea. In the gym, he decides that he wants one room of space to be the headquarters of his new unit. Four men will go out into the city together to raise money, but only when fighting crime. They will look for, and track down, dangerous criminals, starting with kidnappers. A little girl was kidnapped in Dublin. The four men will go find that scumbag who captured her – and they'll rescue her. His friends are extremely confused. Does he want to join the crime family at last, or does he want to fight crime altogether? His words are very confusing. He does want to enter the family, he explains – but directing its resources in such a way that the four men will only go after kidnappers, and other sorts of criminals. Those people shall be the targets for money theft and violence. Every person in his new group questions his sanity. Nobody can just walk in and try to write their own set of rules. On the contrary, he notes, only the geniuses can.

Within days, the four men indeed track down the kidnapper, sitting at a bar, with the girl next to him. The man is overpowered by four men, and dragged into a separate room. They hold him down, beat the shit out of him, throw him to the floor, and demand that he let all his hostages go. He swears that it's his daughter, and he's not doing anything wrong. Meanwhile, the little girl admits that the man is not her real Daddy, but he gave her three cookies if she promised not to tell anyone. So she makes the bartender promise not to tell anyone. The bartender, angry, decides to phone the police. Soon enough, he sees the kidnapper, roughed up, bleeding, courtesy of Shade and his three cohorts. The kidnapper promises to let the girl go.

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Shade has won. But he makes the kidnapper agree to stop such crimes forever, because he'll be checking back one day a week to see how his behavior has been. It's funny, he remarks, how the New Testament describes angels as beings of harmony, but the Old Testament seems to write them as fighters, warriors of strength. Indeed, he can be considered like one of the warrior angels, sent to cleanse the Earth and fight evil. He talks on the phone to the little girl's parents. They are more glad than anything in the world to have her back, and they have Shade O'Waters to thank.

Shade has done it. He's managed not to hurt or kill any innocent people, only going after the truly guilty. Shade and his three helpers drive around Dublin, screaming for joy and awe. They spent four days tracking the man down, but they did it! They rescued a kidnapped girl! That man will never do that again. The next day, his Dad is furious with him. Now he's going out headfirst on a mission against crime like some sort of police officer. He acts like he's a perfect saint, like he's the opposite as the rest of the O'Waters. But Shade insists he's only helping the world. He rescued a kidnapped girl, and he wants to rescue more. His Dad tells him it's no wonder he's the outcast of the entire family.

Shade goes back to the gym. Now, wearing all black with some green, he feels unstoppable. He will never go after innocents. He will only demand money from guilty criminals. That money will be enough to sustain his crew. Day after day, they will look for criminals, kind of like bounty hunters, except they demand the money from the criminals themselves, then force their operations to stop. At the same time, Shade wants to open a pub with Chinese-style fortune cookies on the menu. He wants to make this happen. So he uses violence and force to demand that fortune cookies be added to the menu of a local pub. The next time he walks in, he orders some beer, some cheese fries, and some fortune cookies. The fortune tells him that he should slow down before trying to take on 100 obstacles. Now, he feels, he has become one of the most powerful men in Dublin.

Tokyo, Japan. A car has just crashed into a bridge, and now has some damage sustained. Two men are trying to hit Lee Minn. But she manages to wrap her hands, tied behind her back, to sliding below her butt, to such a point where her hands have enough freedom of movement to knock one man's head into the other's. After doing this a few times, she's able to move her feet underneath her hands and arms, leaving her almost completely free. She opens the door with telekinesis, and steps outside. She floats up into the air, many feet above the ground, to stay safe from the two men. So they aim their guns at her, and she flies around, trying to miss their bullets, strategically waiting for them to run out of ammo. Then, with duct tape still over her mouth, and both hands and shins still stuck together, she executes many flying diving kicks, hurting both men.

Soon, she gathers an orbit of kinetic energy to move around her hands. She makes it orbit her hand so many times that, as it picks up strength, she redirects all the energy to hit her metal shackles at once, smashing them to pieces. With both hands free, she curls up into a cannonball position, and destroys her shins' shackles. Now she makes one thief rise up into the air, to be thrown into the other. All three people rise up into the air, and she fights them both above the bridge, and they all land on the bridge in the middle of traffic. She flies up into the air, and leaves the men to get hit by cars and trucks. Then she flies away, keeping the rest of her flight underneath the bridge, to stay unseen. The two mens' plan to kidnap her failed miserably. Now she just wants to get herself home safe.

April. She has managed to go almost a month without any more kidnappings or dangerous encounters, but she's still stricken with anxiety. At least she knows self-defense. Usually, self-defense means the fighting styles of martial arts. But evolution gives humans extra abilities for self-defense. Lee Minn has made a perfect display of those abilities in action. Fire is the most incredible self-

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defense method of all – it's even too much. Still, now she seeks to get on with her life.

Cairo, Egypt. Now that it's April, it's 5 more months until he can claim a 10-year anniversary as Noble Man. He explains to Ashish that, although he can read people's minds, he can't control many at once. There was a machine built in 2009 called the Hadron Accelerator, which attempted to accelerate the speed of the flow of subatomic particles. Egyptian scientists wondered if a machine could also accelerate the flow of the electronic exchanges within the two human brains. Perhaps a regular human could get an increase of brain energy – enough to lift a chair a few inches into the air, without touching it! Or perhaps someone like Noble Man could use this machine, and amplify his power to a point nobody was meant for: a point where he could take control of the whole city. That is just the theory; it has yet to be proven. But this is the machine he must use.

Noble Man tracks down the scientists who are building the Neuro-Synapse Accelerator, or NSA. He speaks to them, and says that he must use the machine on himself at once. They explain that it's not completed yet. They have not yet gotten to a point of seeing it in action. He brainwashes them into working for him. They will work on the machine, and as soon as they have seen that it's safe, and it works, they will let him use it. They estimate 8 months. He tells them to work faster. He demands that it be done by 5 months. So he leaves, and nobody realizes that he is making them work for him.

It's been a month since his last good deed, and now he's got to do his one for April. But he can't find much crime going on anywhere. Not much of anything seems to be happening. So he lands on the ground, and screams at a random man that he was about to steal a lady's purse. Both the man and the lady say that's not true. Noble Man creates a public scene of attention, swearing that he's stopping the man from stealing her purse. The woman insists that he's her friend, but Noble Man tells her to step aside, and to not say another word until he gives her permission. He tells the man that he's in big trouble now. Who should people believe – some small, scrawny weakling? Or a superhero of more than 10 years? Noble Man swears that the man is a purse thief. The man tells Noble Man to leave him the Hell alone. Noble Man's final words are that he is glad he saved the girl from the purse snatching she would have just otherwise had, and he flies away telling Ashish, in thought, that his good deed for April is done and over with.

Back to Shade O'Waters, in Ireland. He is interested in the American superheroes, he remarks. Paranormal Girl has powers ranging from mind-reading to telekinesis to fire, and the Jumping Flea is an Olympic athlete turned vigilante. It's also interesting how Egypt seems to have produced at least 10 superheroes of its own. He wonders if people in Ireland might have powers, too. That would certainly be interesting, to tap into the field of powers and float around like a superhero.

Tokyo. May. Lee Minn has no wish to be a superhero. She was considering getting away from Tokyo for a while, maybe even as far as the farmlands and countryside, but now she doesn't feel such a need. Though she's not a superhero, she spends much free time flying through Tokyo, alone, just to get away from it all, occasionally landing on the rooftops of the tallest buildings. After visiting the greatest buildings in Tokyo, she flies along with a large flock of birds, and they continue to fly away from her, but she continues to chase them, determined to become friendly with them. They still fly away from her, but she tries to fly as one of them.

An anime is playing on TV about a red-haired girl with powers. Lee Minn watches as a cartoon girl that looks similar to herself leaps and flips around in animated form, fighting green and purple robots. She watches the fighting go on, until the commercial break starts. Indeed, her life should be

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turned into an anime, she remarks to her cat, and she should be getting paid for it. Instead, she works and goes to school and gets nothing for it. Sighing, she takes her cat and flies back to her garden, which she waters as the cat roams around. When she's done, she takes the cat and flies back up home.

Cairo. Now that it's May, it's 4 months until Noble Man's 10-year anniversary, and 4 months until the Neuro-Synapse Accelerator may be finished. Apparently, Paranormal Girl was put through complete MRI testing, so that her brain could be examined, and compared to a normal human brain, so that any and all differences could be located as being the source of her powers. This exact area of the brain is what the scientists wish to accelerate with their machine. Noble Man checks up on his crew, and asks them how it's going. They've been working feverishly, and fast, to the point of overwork. But they've done everything he's asked of them. They still believe they're on-course to have this machine working in another 4 months. In the meantime, he remembers, he must perform at least one good public deed for the month of May. So he flies on to do his work.

He flies to a famous tourist attraction, one of the Great Pyramids of Giza. He finds many people walking around. He uses his mind-powers to convince everyone that he's dressed the same as the people around him. He walks about, and sees the locals, the tourists, the police. He uses his kinetic energy to grip a man's wallet from a far distance, and make it fall out of his pocket. Once it hits the ground, he sucks the wallet into his hand, then runs to a secretive place, removes the money, and stashes it away.

The illusion wears off, so he is again dressed as Noble Man. He flies around, asking, loudly, if anybody is missing their wallet. He reads the man's name out loud from his driver's license. Then, as he flies around, he throws the wallet to the man, who catches it. The entire surrounding crowd of people claps and cheers for the moment. It takes a short while for the man to realize that the wallet is empty. Noble Man flies away, back in the direction of Cairo. Back home, he shows Ashish that he just made himself 120 pounds and 43 piestres richer. 4 more months until the machine will be ready. Then the world will see.

Dublin. It's been 2 months since Shade O'Waters assembled a crime-fighting crew in March, and now, in May, they still drive around and look for crime. When one criminal is down, that means it's time to look for another. Soon, he finds a girl firing fireball after fireball at their car, as it drives. Soon, it crashes into a light pole, and comes to a stop. The girl is laughing as she flies through the air. She's clearly not human, they remark. Shade remarks that she's damn well human. She's like the Ireland equivalent of Paranormal Girl, except crazy and evil.

Now Shade and his three men are facing worse danger than ever from red-haired Ellie Nightsky, whom they all swear is a witch. She fires balls of fire toward the sky, so that they eventually fall back down to the Earth and rain fire upon the streets. Shade wonders what in the world he could have done to make this paranormal red-headed girl so angry. It's who she knows: one of the men he had roughed up was her cousin. Somehow, she was the only one in the family to ever seem to have the paranormal genes. Allegedly, her powers are the ones that would exist in the future path of human evolution, but it's possible that some people can tap into it all today. Now she knocks all of Shade's helpers down to the ground, and fights him herself. He has no powers. She leaves him stranded on a rooftop. Someone could stop her, he swears. She takes a broomstick, and flies up into the air, as though she were a witch. Then she grabs Shade, and throws him right off the roof, to fall to his death.

Tokyo. June. Lee Minn is flying around Tokyo, by herself. She manages to find one other

person flying around – a teenage boy. He flies away. So she flies after him, and the two continue a chase across Tokyo. She insists she doesn't want to hurt him. He demands that he leave her alone. So they both fly together all around Tokyo, and finally land near the Pacific Ocean. She asks him if now he wants to talk about who he is. Soon enough, he's telling her the story of how he managed to develop mind-reading powers as a little boy. He's like her: a person with powers. They exchange contact information. Now he knows that he is indeed not alone.

Cairo. Ashish tells Noble Man that, now that it's June, he has 3 months left, until the machine is built, until he can claim a 10-year record as a superhero. “Noble Man is Not All He Seems” is the name of the newspaper article that Joheim Essen writes. According to his article, Noble Man really just harasses random innocents, harasses them with the label of a loser, and won't leave them alone. At the newspaper, his editor is mad with him. There's no way that anybody's going to publish an article blasting Noble Man. He's the hero everyone needs. Nobody's going to believe his stupid, crazy, paranoid theories. He is warned that, outside the newspaper building, the rest of the world will find him to be paranoid, delusional, claiming that everyone is out to get him. But Joheim knows that what he's saying is the truth, and he's determined to get the story run.

“Noble Man is More Than He Seems” is the final article, written in Joheim's name. The article only serves to praise Noble Man's amazing powers, and how they tie in with Egypt's tourism industry. His editor explains to him that he's playing with fire. Attacking a wonderful superhero like that will not get him far. He is reminded that Noble Man may have saved his life before, so he owes a lot to the man. Joheim insists he doesn't owe anything – not an explanation, an apology, anything. He's determined to get the word out there, the word of the truth. He's laughed at, again, and labeled the most paranoid person ever born.

After Joheim leaves the room, his editor explains that, yes, Noble Man may be cruel at times, vicious, even sociopathic, but Cairo needs to believe that there's a person out there cleaning up the world, and keeping everything safe and clean. Even if it is a lie, at least it's a lie designed to convince the people that everything is good in the world – that there is peace. Joheim's words are just rage and anger. Soon, all the men in the room remind one another, he will be able to say that he's been an Egyptian superhero for 10 years.

Joheim comes back the next day, starting an article about a different subject, a look at the first few years since the fall of Hosni Mubarak. Anybody could write this piece, he figures. After that story, he writes another called “What Noble Man Is Like”. He starts to blast Noble Man, but he thinks twice, realizing that his angry words will get nowhere, and nobody will believe him. So he erases the article and starts over. “Paranormal Powers All Across the World” is the new story, which compares superheroes having paranormal powers all around the world. Paranormal Girl lives in the U.S.A., Lee Minn lives in Tokyo, Japan, Ellie Nightsky lives in Dublin, Ireland, and, of course, the world is already familiar with Cairo's own Noble Man. Now Joheim has a case: by looking at everything the other paranormal superheroes can do, that may be a clue that Noble Man can not only levitate, and move kinetic energy, and read minds at extremely close range, but he can probably also project illusions into people's minds, like Paranormal Girl, set regular air aflame with pyrokinesis, and possibly even erase information as he sees fit. These are powers he has never been known to possess before, yet a look at all the other superheroes with those powers shows that he might very well have the complete package. Then, indeed, he would be more than he seems.

Joheim makes a few copies of the article. He keeps them in a safe place. He brings a few to his

home, before he tries to present one to his editor. His editor finds that the political retrospective piece is garbage. Joheim presents the story called “Paranormal Powers All Across the World”, which he says looks at many superheroes around the globe of Earth. His editor is not sure about it. He asks the question of whether or not his story is about Noble Man. He admits that, at the end, it does describe Noble Man, but he is said last. The story will not be run, period. Joheim pleads him to at least read the article himself, to see how people around the world can connect together. But he will not read the article, period. He is simply not interested.

He has only a minute to give one reason he should not be fired. Finally, Joheim says he could write a piece about Shackle, an Egyptian superhero who does not get much press coverage. Perfect. Shackle is a violent vigilante. He is clearly an outlaw. An outstanding warrant is still out for his arrest – is this decision right, or wrong? Joheim has got it: the next story he'll write, and the reason his editor will give him one last chance before being fired. Afterward, he thinks again about Noble Man. He talks to the other journalists, but they warn him not to write about that particular superhero – at least, not while this particular editor is in power. His last article about Noble Man ended up only praising him. Back home, he looks over his article again, and thinks about how true his own words are. It will be a long and difficult road, indeed, to break the lies and get the truth out there, but he's willing to try.

Dublin, Ireland. May. Shade falls toward the ground, but all in one second, he realizes something. He has to tap into the powers himself and become a paranormal man. Ellie throws the broom at him. He grabs it, and starts to take control of kinetic energy, thinking of the broomstick as more of a surfboard. He floats to the ground, landing gently. Though he still can't fly, at least he softened a fall that nobody should have normally survived. He wonders if he really did just make kinetic energy work, or if a guardian angel just saved his life.

Either way, the witch-girl continues to cast balls of fire at him, so he finds a way to restrain her hands, so that she can't cast the supernatural energy. He wonders if the Americans in World War II had simply investigated extra-human powers, or if what they had investigated was actually magic. Either way, this witch-girl shall be restrained, now. Eventually, the police show up. Her hands stay restrained, so the police are able to take over from here. They urge Shade not to get himself too involved, even when up against such a dangerous lady. The police leave him in peace. Now he asks his men the question of how he got the kinetic energy to work, that one time.

June. Shade, back in the gym, never lets his guns leave his hands. He wonders how many people in the world have paranormal powers. It clearly can't be a lot. Now he's determined to make it happen again, yet, after a month of trying, it still hasn't worked.

Tokyo. July. Lee Minn is flying around with the boy, whom she trains to fly through other parts of Japan. He's 14 years old. She's 20. They can both read minds, fly, and other things. She's more aware of how to use her powers than he is. He doesn't know how to project fire yet. That may be a good thing, she decides. But, one day, it may come out uncontrollably. So she helps him learn to use his powers through chasing and training sessions across Tokyo.

Cairo. 2 months until Noble Man's machine is ready. Ashish is growing nervous. Noble Man claims, already, to having been Noble Man for over 10 years, since he's close enough already. His word has become unquestionable. He is highly educated. He has the experience of 10 years of a superhero, an Egyptian record. Whoever questions him can be labeled crazy and paranoid. Nobody can stop him now. The machine may not be working as of yet, but he still believes that he owns Cairo.

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So he walks inside a building, gets free food and drink, and erases the minds of all the people in the room, to make them believe he didn't steal anything. The only problem is the security camera footage. A crew of asset protection people, not under the spell at all, watch from their cameras, and report the information that someone is stealing to the managers. But inside the building, all the people swear they were there and saw nothing. Asset protection watches the video footage again, of the man who got away. For now, it could be said that it was a thief who was dressed like Noble Man.

Noble Man flies around, and all at once, it hits him: “a thief who was dressed like Noble Man”. So he alters his mask a little, and runs around pulling off robberies. When he does the robberies, he displays no powers whatsoever. When two witnesses get close, he fights weakly. After fighting for a few minutes, he takes the money, talks in a different voice, and starts to make a getaway. Both witnesses tell each other that this man, who pulled off the robbery, was no super-powered superhero. He would be flying off, if he were. That man slowly ran away on foot. Secretly, Noble Man turns a corner, gets himself lost from their sight, and flies up to the roof, where he remains hidden. Then he alters his mask, back to the way he normally has it dressed. He stashes all the money away, then tosses everything else off the roof. He flies away, once more appearing like the superhero Noble Man.

He gets home, and counts the thousands of dollars that he stole. Ashish questions where this money came from. So he mentally silences Ashish, who forgets the last 10 seconds. But after Ashish walks away, he comes back, thinking he's talking to Noble Man for the first time, and again he comes to question the money. Again, Noble Man silences him. But Ashish turns on the TV and sees the report that Noble Man apparently just robbed a store. There has been a string of robberies recently from Noble Man himself, who is holding people up at gunpoint. On TV, someone points out that the robber used a gun, and was never seen to be flying. Ashish comes back to Noble Man, and now he questions, for the third time, where this money came from. Noble Man starts to silence him, but Ashish tells him not to, and now his anger is building up, so his willpower is strong enough to overcome Noble Man's illusions. Noble Man tries again to tap into Ashish's mind and silence him. But it won't work now, Ashish explains, now that he's up and running and talking. Now he wants an answer.

Noble Man tells him to shush. He tells him to calm down. He tells him that he really, seriously needs to slow down. He tries again to tap into his mind. Ashish explains that he's not leaving until he gets an answer as to where all that money came from. Noble Man explains that there is some impostor going around framing Noble Man for armed robbery. But Noble Man is really doing it himself. Now he needs some help: Ashish has to take over the role of the impostor, so that Noble Man and the impostor can both be seen side-by-side. Ashish refuses to do it, and he walks away.

Noble Man flies out, and decides to pull off one last, final robbery before giving it up. So he flies around, but the Cairo police show up, with three helicopters dispatched to open fire at him. Although he can fly, he is not bulletproof. The bullets are firing away at him, and he flies away, and swears that he was framed for armed robbery. The helicopters continue to give chase. He rises up higher than the helicopters, to confuse them, and make it difficult to follow him. Then he drops down and falls to the ground, flying to run away. Finally, he is grounded, and the choppers fly on, to eventually lose him.

He gets started walking. He's afraid to be seen flying right now. A shirtless man in a black mask shows up, with small pieces of chains attached to his wrists. He is Shackle: a violent vigilante who goes after criminals. He used to idolize Noble Man. He never thought it would come down to fighting him. So a fight breaks out in the middle of the streets, and Noble Man pleads for Shackle to

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not make it necessary to hurt him. Shackle is a crazy, out-of-control, loose cannon vigilante. Noble Man throws him across the street.

Shackle says not one word during the fight. Finally, he seems to win, except Noble Man then makes him rise up 20 feet into the air. Shackle is a villain, Noble Man says – a villain that must be stopped. A witness comes close, and says that Noble Man is making Shackle rise. Noble Man says that Shackle is doing an amazing job flying on his own. The witness screams that Noble Man, after pulling off those robberies, is killing Shackle! Now Noble Man's plans have all turned against him. He lets Shackle go, and makes him land gently. The witness screams that Noble Man is running away.

A cab driver finds that his door is opening, and a beautiful young lady is climbing inside. She hands him \$100 in American bills to drive her home. American bills are worth far more than the local pounds, the driver remarks. He thanks her. It's no problem at all, she claims. Really, she is Noble Man, projecting the illusions into the cab driver's head that he is a girl, and that he's getting paid. Now he gets a free ride home. At the end of the ride, the driver asks him for his phone number, and he laughs and says he can't. Stepping out, he is back home, still dressed in the Noble Man outfit.

Dublin. Reading the local newspapers, Shade finds, in the World section, that the Egyptian superhero Noble Man seems to have turned his allegiance toward crime, as he has been pulling off a string of robberies, armed with a pistol. A few people theorize that it's an impostor dressed as the superhero. Others say he really did the deed himself. Shade decides that he wants to step up his game some more, to get into world travel. Maybe he'll visit America. Or maybe he'll visit Egypt, where this costumed criminal is running rampant.

Tokyo. August. Lee Minn's problems are again school and work. They are a picnic compared to kidnapping. So she puts up with all that school and work throw her way. There's no way she would ever permanently become a superhero. On the way home, she sees one of Tokyo's local heroes flying around. She again meets up with the boy, at a certain day and time every week, and she teaches him how to use his powers. Indeed, it's important to learn how to defend yourself from the bad people out there. With her teachings, he will learn how to fight back.

Cairo. Noble Man flies, with Ashish, to a museum that will be both robbed and saved. Ashish dresses up as Noble Man. He alters the mask, and his own voice, and enters the museum with guns in both hands. He spends a while robbing the museum. But Noble Man steps in to stop him. A tourist is filming everything with his cell phone. Later, on the news, it is confirmed that there were two men dressed as Noble Man, fighting each other. Now his name is cleared.

Dublin, Ireland. Shade O'Waters continues to patrol the city. He checks back up on criminals that he's caught committing major crimes. Now it's becoming more clear that his crew of four owns more and more of Dublin, and they want all kidnapers and other attackers to leave or be fought. His house is shot to pieces by members of the Shan family, who fire away and then drive on. His family is now a target for this gunfire. He takes them into his car and insists that they be driven far away, immediately. He won't tell anyone where he's going until they're there. This was exactly why he wanted to stay uninvolved in the crime scene. He thought he could redirect it toward the truly evil. Now he's moving his family to safety until further notice.

Tokyo. September. Now it's been half a year since Lee Minn's kidnapping. She's almost 21 now. She still does not want to be a superhero. Yet she trains the boy, now 15, to defend himself from

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anyone that might attack him. Indeed, he has learned to fight back against vicious predators. But now he's taking it way too far, brutalizing a dozen people at a time. Lee Minn tells him to stop. But he won't stop. He was tormented and picked on for enough years. Now he's fighting back. All the kids that were the meanest to him are thrown into one another, as he laughs. Lee Minn steps in, and begins to fight the boy. She didn't want to have to do this. Now she feels the need.

Now, in his rage, he suddenly learns how to project fire. He can't quite figure out how to set regular air aflame, but for now he's able to make it work while he's holding something in his hands. Holding a chair with both hands, he sets it ablaze, and throws it at Lee Minn, who avoids the chair, which falls off a roof and down to the streets below. She flies to catch the chair, which she catches in a grip of kinetic energy, to make it orbit around and back up into the air, so that it won't hit anyone on the ground. Now she throws the boy through a building, and they continue to fight. She is well-trained in martial arts, yet he moves his hands to where she will strike, before she gets there. Soon enough, she manages to keep him restrained, so that he can no longer project fire. But he flies up into the air again, getting himself lost into the night.

Cairo. September. The time is now. The scientists should be done with their machine. At last, the Neuro-Synapse Accelerator is finished, 3 months ahead of the scientists' original projected schedule. The NSA powers on for the first time. A human volunteer stands in the middle of a metal ring, which surrounds his head on all sides. He has no paranormal powers, so the areas of his brains that process the extra activity are missing, yet those same general areas can still be accelerated in normal human brains, goes the theory. As the machine powers on, the human feels himself escalating. He holds his hands toward a chair, and makes it rise up into the air. But then the machine overheats, and the power shuts off. Something very similar happened to the Hadron Accelerator, when it was first powered up. Noble Man gives the crew of scientists one month to fix this. The human volunteer tries again to lift a chair. It no longer works. Nonetheless, the machine had, indeed, worked for a minute.

It's time to commit a public good deed for the month of September. But Dark Wolf shows up, following Noble Man. Just like Shackle, Dark Wolf is an Egyptian superhero who is now onto Noble Man. Laughing, Noble Man tells Dark Wolf that he will now forget everything. But his mind powers won't work while he's wearing the Anubis mask. Now the two fight, and Dark Wolf won't fall for anything Noble Man tries on him. Noble Man insists they are on the same side. There is no reason for them to fight. Finally, Noble Man uses his kinetic energy powers to pull the mask off, revealing the man's true self. Noble Man says that he is a superhero, fighting crime, bringing justice. Noble Man and Dark Wolf are the same. Now the two will work together to fight evil. So the two stand side-by-side, now a permanent duo.

One month later. The scientists say that the work is done. The modified NSA is powered on, now set to be cooled down right when the overheat builds up. A regular human becomes temporarily capable of lifting a chair with telekinesis. He sees flashes and visions all around the world, visions of the future, visions of events yet to come, natural disasters. He hears the thoughts of everybody in the room. Then he removes himself from the ring. Indeed, his brain functions were accelerated, the volunteer remarks. The machine is now safe to use.

Noble Man stands in the center of the ring. Soon enough, his brain power is strong enough to grasp everyone within a 0.2-mile radius, stopping everybody immediately. Nobody moves or speaks for a moment. Then he lets go of his grip. The people have all lost their sense of where they are. Noble Man tells them that they will obey him now. Ashish, who was promised a position as Noble

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Man's right-hand man when the time came to rule, is now enslaved like everyone else.

The machine is powered up higher. His range of control quickly becomes over 5 miles. He's able to grasp everybody, telling them to listen to him. Outside, he announces that Cairo is his to command. Like the Pharaohs themselves, he is an intermediary, above regular humans, surpassed by nothing except a God. He flies around, and feels his brain power expand to the point where all the people within a close range are his to control. From now on, only positive things about him will be said over the news. Arguments made over the radio, even those meant to slander the Superhero in general, will be stopped. From now on, Noble Man, the oldest and longest-running superhero in Egypt, will be the one to lead all the others, who are younger than him. He will raise new superheroes to power. He will raise new costumed figures to regulate Egypt, and rid it of all its crime, in all its forms. Now Egypt will see that he will raise them into the newer and better age. But the costumed figures will be the enforcers of Noble Man's rules.

More superheroes show up, ready to fight Noble Man, to stop his plan. He soon finds himself fighting Disappear, a well-trained athlete and vigilante. He makes the man think he's in the middle of the ocean, about to drown. Quickly, Noble Man has brought Disappear to his knees. But he finds another Egyptian superhero, Lawman, a former police officer turned outlaw vigilante. Noble Man fights Lawman as well, and the two fight each other as though inside a ship out at sea. The fight goes back and forth between the real world and the projected illusion of the ship. Now Noble Man has fought Dark Wolf, Shackle, Disappear, and Lawman, on his own. He has fought four Egyptian superheroes, and won. Indeed, they must now see that he is at the top of the top.

Noble Man publicly announces the greatest news of all. He is assembling Dark Wolf, Shackle, Disappear, and Lawman into a new team of superheroes, led by himself. The Mighty Protectors, a group of five heroes, will lead Egypt into the newer and better days.

The news story spreads around the world. All of Egypt seems to be hopelessly entranced in favor of Noble Man. The Mighty Protectors are a new team keeping Egypt safe. Some argue that it is just a union of five individuals who have already long since existed. All the journalists and news in Egypt are praising and loving the Mighty Protectors. The superheroes are seen together on the news, with crowds of Egyptians clapping and cheering for them. All the superheroes who had been fighting Noble Man have apparently become his closest allies.

The world seems to be at peace, but in Tokyo, Japan, Lee Minn is not so convinced. Now the truth hits her all at once. Herself. Paranormal Girl. Noble Man. The NSA, which she learned about in class. Now she understands what trouble Egypt is in, with Noble Man abusing all his mental powers. So it's time to steal an airplane flight to Cairo. Using mind-manipulation, she enters the plane as the pilot, then walks through the plane as a stewardess, who walks to the back of the plane. Soon enough, the real Lee Minn finds a seat, which she did not pay for. So she takes a two-part airline flight to Egypt, where she lands in the morning time. Now she is alone in the country of Egypt, in search of Noble Man. Only now does it hit her to be afraid.

Dublin, Ireland. Indeed, Noble Man is running rampant in Egypt, and nobody is stopping him, Shade has learned through the newspapers. Perhaps it's time to go to Cairo to meet this man. So he arranges a flight for Cairo.

Lee Minn is new to Cairo. She's scared of the Egyptian men, who are ready to take advantage

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of a pretty young lady. She hears their thoughts, but they're thinking in Arabic. Outside the airport, she takes a shuttle vehicle to a hotel, where she pays in Japanese currency for a hotel room. She's brought along several picture and video-taking devices, to make herself appear like a tourist, so that they don't think she's a superhero. Of course, this also puts her at risk of theft, but she can handle that. Only two men attempt to get close to her as she walks around. She makes them fly into the walls, and she manages to pull it off with nobody seeing.

Walking around Cairo, Egypt, Lee finds that all the men stop for prayer. After they're done, she finds that people stand back up, and return to their normal lives. Right then, she feels it kick in: the brainwashing spell. She is under Noble Man's spell, doing whatever he says to do. She remains brainwashed for many hours, but reawakens just in time for the next round of prayers. Now she sees what happened. Noble Man stops, three times a day. That is when his hypnosis stops. Now she flies away, to make it difficult for him to grip her again.

She thinks about the Greek story of Odysseus, sailing in a ship past the cyrins. He ordered himself to be tied up to get through the brainwashing pull of the cyrins' song. Now, like Odysseus up against the women, she is trying to get through Noble Man's brainwashing lure. The only way to do it is to hear other people's thoughts, made of their own free will. This is a reminder of who she really is, a superhero and mind-reader.

Noble Man shows up to face Lee Minn. She reveals to him her knowledge of martial arts. She's good at using her powers, because of a lifetime spent practicing and training herself, like a sports player who does nothing but practice playing ball. She fights Noble Man in the styles of tae kwan do and hapkido. But a good punch to the face is all a man needs to know, Noble Man insists as he punches her hard enough to make her bleed. He's done with all the games. He's done with people saying no to him. Now, he will destroy Lee Minn, and make the world think she's crazy. Somebody shows up with a video-recording device. Noble Man quickly turns the tables against Lee, claiming that she is brutally assaulting him. The video continues to be filmed, and Lee Minn realizes that she must fly away, or else find herself stuck deeper in Noble Man's trap.

Shade O'Waters lands in Egypt. He is assumed to be American, until he talks out loud with his Irish accent. He is coming here without his cast and crew, who will be carrying on the business without him. Back in Dublin, they lay around lazily and wonder if Shade will ever be coming back. In Cairo, Egypt, Shade finds that this is the worst place for him to go to, Egypt, where the Sunlight is the harshest. July is the hottest time, but even September is no picnic. He's only been in town a few hours, and his skin is starting to peel. He finds something suspicious about the people here in Egypt – everybody seems to love Noble Man to a point of absolute servitude, and they all say the same phrase, “The greatest man in Cairo”. So he asks where he can meet the superhero, to personally deliver a thank-you letter for all his wonderful work. That much is arranged quickly by happy Egyptian men.

Shade O'Waters meets Noble Man, and the two get started fighting. In seconds, they find themselves back in the green fields of Ireland. Shade asks what in the world is going on. He can hear the birds chirping. He is simply back home, Noble Man tells him. He enjoys the illusion, for a moment. A beautiful girl arrives, and claims she wants to have Shade's kids. But Shade screams that all of this is an illusion. The girl's face becomes old and decayed, and she runs at Shade, but the illusion breaks apart, and Shade again sees Cairo, Egypt, where Noble Man stands. So they fight, but next Shade is convinced the two men are standing at the Great Wall of China. The fight continues, apparently right next to the Great Wall. Shade and Noble Man fight physically, but the illusion wears

off, revealing Cairo again.

Lee Minn flies in, tracking down Noble Man. Now, two separate individuals have come to stop him at once. Perfect: when turned against each other, each will bring the other down. Noble Man tells Shade that, really, she orchestrated all of this. Lee Minn is the one he must stop. Shade fights Lee Minn, for a short time. Shade fights as Noble Man would, with strong, hard punches, but Lee Minn is all about precision, and not just punching hard with one's knuckles, but striking exactly the right spot with the side of one's hand. She traps him in a hapkido grip, which he struggles to escape. Noble Man is smiling and clapping, loving this. Shade continues to resist, and Lee warns him that resistance only makes the hapkido grip worse. Finally, she explains that she's not the enemy here. Noble Man is. Finally, she finds that the only way to win, for now, is to brainwash Shade into turning against Noble Man. She will probably only have one minute of control, if even that. So Lee and Shade stand back-to-back, ready to fight.

Lee Minn uses both powers and martial arts to fight Noble Man. Shade backs her up, using the fast fists of an Irish fighter. Soon enough, two superheroes stop Noble Man, knocking him unconscious. Now they have won. His grip on the people should now subside. However, Shade realizes that it may not yet be over. When you step out of the hot Sun, and into the shade, it seems like the Sunburn should stop, yet it really keeps going for a while, and it takes some time to slow down. Shade knows that, being Irish. This is especially true in Egypt. By the same logic, Noble Man is now unconscious, but it may take quite some time for the effects of his brainwashing to slow down to a stop. Now the two fighters, standing back-to-back, find four more Egyptian superheroes, here to stop them, under Noble Man's hypnosis, which will hopefully wear off soon. They are Shackle, Dark Wolf, Disappear, and Lawman.

Shackle runs at Lee and Shade. So they fight him together. He is the outlaw vigilante with parts of metal shackles still attached to his wrists. After they take him down, Dark Wolf runs at them, wearing the Anubis mask. Lee Minn starts to project illusions of supernatural attacks, like throwing green triangles of energy, to get Dark Wolf to stumble backward and fall. Disappear, the Olympic athlete vigilante, and Lawman, the former police officer, fight Lee and Shade next. Lee finds ways to stop them both with illusions that don't really hurt.

Noble Man regains consciousness. Now he is bleeding. He will stop Lee and Shade O'Waters, and their evil plans for world domination, he swears. He is the superhero around these parts. He's been a superhero for 10 years. He has the longest-running record of any superhero currently active in Egypt, and he refuses to let go of his role of power. They all just wish to be him. So he fights them himself. He is brutal, in his fighting. But with Lee's powers, and Shade's fists, they make it happen: they physically beat him. But how could they possibly stop someone with his level of power, now?

There's only one way to break Noble Man's brainwashing: by attempting to control those same people herself. Hopefully, two controlling minds will cancel each other out of a person's head. One by one, she restores the four superheroes to normal, by forcing them to walk straight ahead at the command of her voice. Hearing a girl's voice, forcing them to walk, makes them forget the control by Noble Man. She can't do this on a massive scale, but she can at least make it work for right now to break their spells.

Lee Minn looks inside Noble Man's head. She understands the machine now. The Hadron Accelerator. The Neuro-Synapse Accelerator. The crew of scientists made to work for him. The

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location of the machine. So she grabs Shade and flies away, to the location of the machine. She enters the ring herself, and uses it to take over Noble Man's entire grip of control, canceling it out. Then she destroys the machine.

Lee Minn and Shade O'Waters worked good together. Now they start kissing, and then she ends up coming back with him to Dublin, Ireland. He decides that he will stop all his involvement with organized crime and crime-fighting, leaving it to his men to carry on the crew without him. Now he will date Lee Minn, and maybe even visit Tokyo some day.

Cairo is waking up from its trance. Now, looking back, the people can feel the major difference between the sober alertness of reality, and the brainwashing world of lies Noble Man fed everyone. It's surprising to see that such a friendly person, a superhero, would turn out to be a criminal. Now, in a shattered world, it's hard to tell who is a friend and who is a foe. Noble Man insists that he is the most powerful man in Egypt. But a crowd of Egyptians, millions of them, provide too much willpower for him to control. Soon, he's in prison, attempting to mind-control his way out, yet there are too many big, strong people here, talking and thinking at once, for him to keep up a strong grip on anyone.

Shackle, Dark Wolf, Disappear, and Lawman go off in their different directions across Egypt. They have no wish to stay as a team. They only worked together to stop Noble Man. Now the world has no reason to trust them – no reason to think they're any less evil than Noble Man himself. But they will let their actions speak for themselves, they say, to slowly earn Cairo's trust back.

Lee Minn now lives in Ireland. Nobody here was ever affected by Noble Man. It's funny: she still does not consider herself to be a superhero, but she saved the world from Noble Man. She will deliberately fight crime no longer. Shade is quitting too, and Noble Man is in prison. All three people look up to see the moon, the stars, and the night time sky above the great big planet Earth.

1

BLACK.

INT. OUTER SPACE

Dark matter fills the near-infinity that is outer space.

Luna, the moon made of gray rock, orbits planet Earth, the luscious green and blue globe of life. Many layers of white clouds are visible in the Earth, from the moon.

INT. EARTH – THE SKY

Looking down upon the Earth from up in the sky, we see the white clouds closely.

Down below: nothing but oceans and masses of land.

INT. EARTH – LOOKING DOWN OVER ASIA

First, we see the continent of Asia, connected to its western neighbor, Europe. A white caption reads: “Asia”.

Next, we FLY TO the continent identified by a second white caption as “Europe”.

Next, we FLY TO to continent identified by its white caption as “Africa”.

Finally, we FLY TO the connected continents of North and South America, and settle on “North America”.

Soon, we FOCUS IN on one country in particular: “The United States of America”.

We FOCUS IN to the land about 200 miles away from the capitol city of D.C.: “Light City, U.S.A.”.

INT. LIGHT CITY – GROUND-LEVEL – FEDERAL HIGHWAY – DUSK

A traffic sign changes from its red “STOP” lettering to a green “GO” stick figure.

Traffic moves down the street, in both directions, down Federal Highway, which, despite its name, is just a regular city road.

At dusk time, when the sky is dark blue, the orange glow of the street lights is visible.

2

INT. LIGHT CITY – EXT. COFFEE SHOP – OUTDOOR SECTION – STILL DUSK

Ramsey Coating, 24 years old, sits in a chair at a table,
with Ashley Seal, 33 years old, her sister, and her husband,
and their two toddlers and baby.

RAMSEY

Now it's March. Look how time flies by.

VICKY

I'll say. So how old are you now, Ramsey?

RAMSEY

24.

VICKY

You're a baby.

RAMSEY

Great. Thank you.

VICKY

And what do you do for a *living*?

RAMSEY

Well. After that whole Olympics thing?

VICKY

Yes, after that whole Olympics thing.

RAMSEY

. . . Just . . . uhhh . . . nothing right now. No job.

VICKY

Nothing. No job.

RAMSEY

It's difficult. You know? You apply to jobs,
every day, you can't land them.

ASHLEY

Yeah, it's really difficult right now. I haven't had a
job for a long time now, either. Hey, look, it's dusk out.

RAMSEY

Dust.

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ASHLEY

Hmm?

RAMSEY

Superhero Dust – apparently he lives around here, in Light City. Some sort of *new* superhero – people have been saying.

VICKY

Dust? That's his name?

RAMSEY

Yeah, apparently. You haven't seen it? . . . At all?

I mean, it's like . . . like . . . the guy is just *filled* with technology! And it kind of makes you think.

You know? Technology. It *must* be able to enhance someone's . . . leaping ability. There must be something!

ASHLEY

Dust? I've never heard anything about a Dust.

RAMSEY

Never? No? I don't know, he's, like, my favorite superhero lately. The more I'm finding out about him.

TOM

Why *Dust*, Ramsey? Why your . . . sudden interest, in this *Dust*?

RAMSEY

What? I don't know. I just think he's cool.

ASHLEY

Oh, what about the Gray Shark? Don't forget, he's a vigilante too, now – on the side of good.

RAMSEY

Oh, please. No way. I am *not* counting that, as a superhero. The Gray Shark? No way.

No. He's not a hero.

ASHLEY

Or, hey, what about that *Lee Minn*?

RAMSEY

Oh, yeaah! Yeah! *Lee Minn*.

ASHLEY

Yeah, Lee Minn.

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RAMSEY

Yeah, we looked up this thing . . . like, in Tokyo . . . well . . . you know about Paranormal Girl? . . . You guys know about her? . . . Well, in Tokyo, there's this, like, Paranormal Girl of Japan. Except – she's just out in the *open!* Like, *open* about her identity. Her powers. Because she's not a superhero.

ASHLEY

Yeah. She's not a superhero. She just . . . has the exact same powers, as Paranormal Girl. And the exact same everything else!

RAMSEY

Except she lives in Tokyo.

ASHLEY

Except she lives in Tokyo. We saw it on the news.

VICKY

I've heard about her. I mean – read about her, in the City Post. Y'know, World Section.

TOM

Yeah. Girl in Tokyo with red hair.

RAMSEY

Yeah.

VICKY

I never really cared much about these superheroes anyway. But, the Lee Minn thing, I thought was kind of interesting, actually.

(*ahem*)

Realistically speaking, if you two don't get serious about getting jobs soon, I don't see *how* you two are going to make it.

RAMSEY

Okay, could we please not discuss this, at the dinner table? Please?

VICKY

I am serious! What's your *strategy*? You think you can run and jump your way through everything in life?

RAMSEY

5

What?? . . . Oh, yeah. Olympic athlete, yeah.
I don't know! Lots of athletes, like, sponsor a
product, a – a – box of cereal – and make money!

VICKY

So why not *you*? Get started with something!

RAMSEY

I don't know! Just . . . who knows?

VICKY

Maybe they think you don't look
like you'd be a good role model.
You look like a *stoner*. Like a *pothead*.

RAMSEY

Oh, okay. And what about these . . .
pictures of you from the 60's.

VICKY

I'm just saying, they want someone who seems like
they would be mature, and responsible, and reliable.

RAMSEY

And when am I not all of those things?

VICKY

Well . . . when you . . . show up in the driveway at 9:30 at night!

ASHLEY'S SISTER

Yeah, Ramsey – you do NOT show up in a person's
driveway at 9:30 p.m. when someone has kids!!

RAMSEY

Oh my God! What? Am I hearing about this again?

ASHLEY

Well, Ramsey, it's true: you *did* show up at, like,
9:30, when she has kids.

RAMSEY

What? I drove *you*! To *help* you! Now I'm -?

ASHLEY

No, Ramsey, that *is* pretty late. You know bedtime is 7:30.

RAMSEY

What? But 9:30 is so . . . *early* to me!

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VICKY

Well you two are gonna need to come up with something new. And fast.

RAMSEY

Yeah, don't I know it. (*sigh*)

FADE TO:

INT. LIGHT CITY – SIDEWALKS ON FEDERAL HIGHWAY– SOON

We FOLLOW RAMSEY and Ashley as they walk down the sidewalks of the west side of the street called Federal Highway.

RAMSEY

We can't even talk about what we really do, at dinner.

ASHLEY

I know.

RAMSEY

That's so messed up. Why should everything be a secret? . . . Because the world is horrible – because the world is all thieves, all . . . *bad people*, and so we have to resort to living like this – “secret” identities.

ASHLEY

I know.

RAMSEY

And so we just have to sit here, and *take this heat*.
That: *we have no jobs. We have no jobs.*

ASHLEY

I know. Believe me. I can't even tell her kids that I'm Paranormal Girl. I just can't risk it spreading around.
But I would love to!

RAMSEY

Yeah. And so, here we are. Paranormal Girl, Jumping Flea. Two . . . great warriors. And this is our life: broke.
Broke, broke, broke.

ASHLEY

I know. You would think we'd be *banking*,
because of . . . like . . .

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RAMSEY

Our outfits, and stuff? Yeah, no. It's not even like that. It's more like we're poor. Very poor. Just . . . two poor humans, in the Earth. You know? Just two mortal flesh-and-blood . . . people. That's all there is.

ASHLEY

I know. I wish I had kids as cute as hers.

RAMSEY

And, see! That's the thing! Her little kids, her 3-year-old, ought to be . . . like . . . playing with action figures that are based on Paranormal Girl, and the Jumping Flea! With us being rich, and comfortable, and both able to support ourselves! And look at this. What kind of unfair fate is this?

ASHLEY

And people somehow just think we're rich.

RAMSEY

This is all just bullshit. I don't know how much longer I can take all this nonsense.

ASHLEY

Hey, it could be worse. Think about other countries.

RAMSEY

Yeah, what? Where everyone has a goat in their house, or something? That might be kinda nice. You know?

ASHLEY

I'm just saying. Life could be a lot worse.

RAMSEY

I . . . *guess* so.

They walk on.

ASHLEY

It's a nice night.

RAMSEY

Yeah, it's turning into night now. Every time it's dusk, I start thinking about Dust, for some reason.

ASHLEY

Yeah?

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RAMSEY

Yeah! It's so cool! Those remote-controlled Rollerblade things.

ASHLEY

Sure, just save up a bundle, and buy some.

RAMSEY

And that would take me, like . . . two years. It's just . . . unfair. Hmm. Well, we'll think of something.

ASHLEY

Yeah, we'll think of something.

EXT. RAMSEY'S HOME – SOON

Ramsey tugs on the doorknob.

RAMSEY

Ohhhh, shoot, it's locked.

ASHLEY

Where's the key?

RAMSEY

I . . . don't have it.

ASHLEY

What??

She grumbles.

ASHLEY

All right. Well. Just wait here.

She floats up into the air, levitating against gravity. Rising up above the ground, she flies up until she reaches a window, which she easily opens, to climb inside.

RAMSEY'S THOUGHTS

<You can't be doing this! You're gonna be seen!>

ASHLEY

<Shhh. Just this once. I have to.>

RAMSEY'S THOUGHTS

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<Someone's gonna see you!!>

EXT. RAMSEY'S HOME – FRONT – SOON

Ashley opens the front door from inside.

ASHLEY
See? Can't knock it now.

RAMSEY
See, a Door-Locker on the car keys would come in handy here.

He steps inside. The door closes.

INT. RAMSEY AND ASHLEY'S HOME – LIVING ROOM

RAMSEY
Do you think anyone saw you flying?

ASHLEY
No, no. Definitely not.

A white caption reads: "Wednesday".
A second white caption reads: "8:05 p.m.".

INT. LIGHT CITY – OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

At the ground level, Light City is filled with white lights. Up in the sky, the darkness of the night is filled with white stars.

INT. EARTH – NORTH AMERICA

Looking down at the ground, from up above, we PULL AWAY from the continent of North America. Then we FLY AWAY from Light City, U.S.A., to move west of the entire continent, to fly over the Pacific Ocean, to finally get to the edges of Russia, China, and the island-country of Japan. All the countries have a white circle over them, and a white arrow pointing from the circle to a caption reading the country's name.

We FOCUS ON Japan in particular.
The island is shaped somewhat like a dolphin. We FOCUS IN on its capitol city, Tokyo.

INT. TOKYO, JAPAN – METROPOLITAN EXPRESSWAY – 9:05 A.M.

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In the morning time, cars drive on down the highway,
the Metropolitan Expressway. We FLY THROUGH
THE ROADWAY, following its curves and turns,
as many cars drive about.

A white caption reads: "Tokyo, Japan".
A second caption reads: "Thursday".
A third reads: "9:05 a.m.".

White Japanese lettering marks the ground,
along with arrows that point the way. Many
cars speed on down the road, eventually
turning a curve to continue down the C1
Inner Circular Route, going clockwise.

Lee Minn in Tokyo.

Noble Man, in Cairo, Egypt.

Then . . . Shade O'Waters in Ireland.

INT. IRELAND – RESTAURANT – KITCHEN – LATE EVENING

Water shoots out of a dishwasher nozzle, hitting dirty dishes.

Within seconds, the water washes the dishes dry.

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We LOOK AROUND to see the head and face of
blond-haired Shade.

EXT. RESTAURANT – BACK END – 11:00 P.M.

It's bedtime. Shade is still inside the restaurant,
closing the place up for the night.

JOSHUA
Shade? Shade O'Waters.

SHADE
Yes, that would be me.

JOSHUA
How old are you now, Shade?

SHADE
I'm 17. Why?

JOSHUA
Just asking.

SHADE
Hey, come on, man. Are there any parties
going on, after work, or anything?

JOSHUA
What? What are you talking about,
“parties”? You don't know nothing
about going to parties.

SHADE
Come on, man. I'm sitting here, closing up the shop
here, by myself, all night, all alone. You know?

JOSHUA
So? That ain't my problem.

SHADE
Yeah, I know, I know that, but . . .
I'm just saying. You know?

JOSHUA
Good night, Shade.

Joshua leaves for the day.

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FADE TO a series of progressively farther-away shots of Shade, standing alone in the darkness, in the back end of the restaurant, alone in the city.

CUT TO a close shot of Shade, as we ROTATE AROUND his body to see his surroundings. The few human beings who remain in the area are walking away, to their cars, to leave for the day. Shade will remain here alone. So he turns back inside, to re-enter the building. Thus begins the rest of his night.

INT. RESTAURANT – KITCHEN

A crushing weight of depression hits him all at once: how alone he is here, in this building, with no music, no sounds but the ones he makes.

Time for him to clean up this entire dirty, filthy place, alone.

SOON – Shade is mopping the floors. Back, forth, back, forth.

SOON – with two gloved hands, he lifts up a black garbage bag full of garbage. He twists it and ties it, so that the bag is closed.

EXT. RESTAURANT – SOON

Soon enough, he is lifting the extremely heavy garbage bag up and over his head, to be tossed into the dumpster.

He manages to make it. The heavy bag falls into the big dumpster bin with a THUD.

EXT. RESTAURANT – BACK END – SOON

A white caption reads: “11:37 p.m.”

Shade starts to walk home, still alone. The night is still pitch dark, and completely silent.

He walks away from the work building, alone.

INT. DUBLIN, IRELAND – CITY STREETS AND SIDEWALKS – QUARTER TILL MIDNIGHT

We FOLLOW SHADE as he rides his bicycle home. He pedals, and pedals, and pedals, then lets go to coast on ahead effortlessly.

We FOLLOW HIS BIKE from behind as he soars down

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the Dublin sidewalks. He knows exactly what he's doing on this thing. He looks around, and notices a red traffic light, meaning that he should stop, but since there's no cars around right now, he continues to fly ahead.

He rides the bike up the cement ramp, back onto the sidewalk, and farther on ahead through his journey back home.

EXT. SHADE'S HOME – SOON ENOUGH

17-year-old Shade walks on until he reaches his home.
Now it's about midnight.

INT. SHADE'S HOME – LIVING ROOM

Shade opens the door, and steps inside.

His mother is passed out asleep, sitting on the couch.

He walks inside. The TV is on. So
he uses the remote and turns it off.

MOTHER

What? What? Hey!! I was watching that!

SHADE

You were asleep, Mom.

MOTHER

Oh. All right, then.

She goes back to sleep.

Smiling, Shade goes to the lamp, to turn it off.

Now, as the living room falls into darkness,
he walks away, to go sleep in his bedroom.

SHADE

Good night, Mom.

INT. SHADE'S HOUSE – HALLWAY – SOON

Shade walks slowly through his dark
hallway, and makes his way to his bedroom.

EXT. SHADE'S HOUSE

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From a distance, we see Shade's house,
underneath the dark night time sky.

TIME ACCELERATES, and hours pass
by in seconds. The clouds bloom and pass
by. The moon seems to shrink and move
away, out of sight. The Sun rises, and the
night time becomes the morning.

INT. SHADE'S HOUSE – HIS BEDROOM – MORNING

Shade O'Waters wakes up again for the day.

So, you see, Shade feels very *alone* where he is. In terms of his social life, he is still just a nobody. But when people start talking about the O'Waters family, he goes from being the supposed nobody to a man that people are actually afraid of. People are too afraid to say more than a few words to him before they leave. So Shade will always remain one person alone in the world. Later, at age 21, his family can't *stand* his “nobody life” of restaurant work, which is still a giant issue with them. Then he assembles his own crime-fighting crew.

So Shade and Lee Minn must *team up* to stop Noble Man.

