THE HENCHMAN

"Pilot"

by

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT. COLOSSAL CITY MUSEUM OF ART - ESTABLISHING

The Beaux-Arts museum glows under the light of a full moon.

INT. COLOSSAL CITY MUSEUM OF ART - NIGHT

A black tie affair is in full swing. Colossal City's wealthy elite enjoy cocktails amid priceless works of art.

The LIGHTS GO OUT. A moment later, a SYMPHONIC CHOIR's version of the BEATLES' "SUN KING" booms through the hall.

CHOIR (O.S.)
Here comes the Sun King...

A SPOTLIGHT hits the glass-domed roof. An absurdly sun-tanned man wearing a gold lamé royal robe and gold crown dramatically rappels into the room. This is the SUN KING.

SUN KING
Citizens of Colossal City, I have good news and bad news. The good news is none of you will be harmed, I've merely come to steal the Colossal Diamond. The bad news is, since you're here, I'm going to rob you too. *
(calling off)
Gentlemen!

The HOUSE LIGHTS FLIP BACK ON. Six HENCHMEN dressed in old-timey one piece bathing suits and boater hats rappel into the room. They collect the guests' valuables in velvet sacks.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
Now, to just snatch the diamond and be on my way.

Sun King reaches for a large diamond sitting atop a pedestal display. But, as soon as his hands touch the jewel...

OWL MAN (O.S.)
Not so fast, Sun King!

FOLLOW Sun King's stunned gaze to reveal: OWL MAN, a superhero dressed in brown tights, brown eye-mask, feathered cape and feathered "O" emblazoned on his chest.

SUN KING
Owl Man. But how?

OWL MAN
The question isn't how. It's--
(owl-like)
-- whoooo.

A perplexed MALE GUEST turns to his WIFE.

MALE GUEST
How is the question who? He just wanted an excuse to hoot. *

OWL MAN
You've lost, Sun King. Now, if you'll just give these good people back their valuables.

SUN KING
And if I don't?

OWL MAN
I'll beat you faster than you can count to two-hooooooo.

SUN KING
Oh yeah? Well, lucky for me I was never good at math.
(to henchmen)
Get him!

The camera SNAP-ZOOMS in on one of the henchmen. A slightly paunchy man in his late 30's, the onesie is not doing him any favors. This is our title character: JERRY.

JERRY
Shit.

Jerry sighs and charges Owl Man. As Owl Man's feathered fist makes contact with Jerry's face, we: *

FREEZE FRAME

TITLE GRAPHIC: "THE HENCHMAN"

RESUME ACTION

Owl Man continues to pummel Jerry. The merciless thrashing lasts an uncomfortable length of time.

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jerry's face is bloodied and bruised. His 8-year-old daughter ELLA lightly presses an ice pack to his cheek. *

JERRY
You should've seen the other guy.

ELLA
Did he look worse?

JERRY
Oh God no. It's just that he was dressed up like an owl and I know you like owls.
(then)
You know, it wasn't that long ago that I was taking care of you.

ELLA
You still take care of me, Daddy.

JERRY
No, you don't need me anymore. You're old.

ELLA
I'm only eight.

JERRY
But you used to be three. And back then, you were completely helpless. You couldn't even wipe yourself. It was friggin' awesome.

ELLA
Yuck. You actually miss wiping my butt?

JERRY
Not the actual wiping, just what it represents.

ELLA
You're weird.

JERRY
(smiles)
I know.

As Ella moves the ice pack to another of Jerry's bruises, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE *

FADE IN:

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

5:30 am. Jerry's alarm clock goes off. He fumbles for the snooze button.

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - SHOWER - MORNING

Jerry's showering. He vainly tries to shake the last bit of shampoo out of the near-empty bottle. He collects some water * in the bottle, shakes it up, and dumps it on his head. *

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

While Ella eats her breakfast at the kitchen table, Jerry irons a Hawaiian shirt.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Jerry, wearing the Hawaiian shirt, walks Ella to the front of her school.

JERRY
So, your mom will pick you up after school, and I'll get you again Thursday.

ELLA
Okay. Bye, Dad.

Ella gives Jerry a hug. He holds on to her as long as he can, knowing full well this will be the highlight of his day.

INT. SUBWAY - MORNING

Jerry stands on the crowded subway, hanging on to a strap. He looks over to a guy reading a newspaper. The headline reads: "HOO DA MAN -- OWL MAN FOILS SUN KING AGAIN." *

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUN KING INDUSTRIES, INC. - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

A pair of scissors cuts the article out of the paper.

WIDEN to reveal the scissors belong to the Sun King. He carefully places the clipping in a thick scrapbook.

SUN KING
Solid caper last night, fellas. Real solid.

The Sun King and his SIX HENCHMEN sit around a conference table. The scene would look like any other corporate office were it not for the henchmen's bruised faces and matching Hawaiian shirts -- and the two sun lamps aimed directly at the Sun King's leathery face.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
Let's face it, Owl Man's one tough customer. But we gave him all he could handle. Give yourselves a round of applause.

Five of the henchmen dutifully clap, but Jerry just rolls his eyes. D.J. -- Jerry's physically imposing, African-American best friend and fellow henchman -- elbows him. Reluctantly, Jerry joins in on the applause.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
But, when one door closes, another one--

DARRYL, a kiss-ass henchman, eagerly interjects.

DARRYL
Opens.

SUN KING
Yes, opens. Thank you, Darryl.

Darryl looks smugly at the other henchmen, not picking up on the fact that they all clearly hate him.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
Now, in order to build on our momentum, we need to come up with a new caper. Something bold, something daring...
(closes eyes)
I'm picturing a hot air balloon.

Jerry looks at D.J., mystified. He wants to say something, but D.J. wordlessly admonishes him.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
(eyes still closed)
What does this vision mean?
(snaps, opens eyes)
Of course! We'll float down to the Colossal City Mint and steal the city's gold reserve!

Jerry can't take it anymore. He raises his hand.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
Yes, Jerry? You want to be the first to endorse Operation Hot Air Balloon?

JERRY
Sir, don't you think a hot air balloon will be a little conspicuous?

SUN KING
I know! People will see it and say, "Wowza, that Sun King sure is up to something."

JERRY
That's pretty much exactly my point.

SUN KING
(curt)
What is your point, Jerry?

JERRY
Well, I'm just saying. We haven't been too successful with our elaborate capers recently, so maybe we could try flying a little more under the radar.

SUN KING
Under the radar? Like that fountain caper you pitched last month? Yawn. *

JERRY
I know it's not the most glamorous plan of all time, but there's a lot of money in that fountain. My daughter and I have been dropping coins in there for years whenever we make a wish. So has every other family in Colossal City.

DARRYL
We <u>wish</u> you would get to a point.

Darryl looks to Sun King for recognition. Sun King shrugs as if to say, "Not bad."

JERRY
My buddy in Sanitation says they haven't emptied it in like twenty years. A couple hundred wishes a day over twenty years. I figure there's gotta be $15,000 in coins in there.

SUN KING
Fifteen grand? Why would I bother with that kind of chump change when I own all the gold in Colossal City?

JERRY
Well, you don't actually own--

SUN KING
All in favor of stealing the city's gold, say "aye".

HENCHMEN
Aye.

SUN KING
Jerry?

Jerry looks at D.J., then at Darryl, then at the Sun King. He knows defiance is pointless.

JERRY
Aye.

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jerry and D.J. sit at a table drinking a couple of bourbons.

D.J.
Collecting wish-pennies from a fountain? Seriously? You're lucky Sun King didn't fire you on the spot.

JERRY
What? It's a good idea.

D.J.
Irrelevant. You're a henchman. Having ideas is not part of the job description.

A WAITRESS arrives with a tray of food.

WAITRESS
Okay, I've got your steaks. Who ordered their's medium well?

D.J.
Wrong table, hon. We're just having drinks.

WAITRESS
Shit. I'm so sorry, it's my first day.

JERRY
No problem.

D.J.
We are gonna be needing another round, though.

WAITRESS
Honestly, I think it'll be faster to just order it from the bar. I'm kind of a trainwreck.

D.J. watches the waitress walk away.

D.J.
Well, at least there's one person who's worse at their job than you.

JERRY
How am I bad at my job? Sun King's the one who's incompetent. What does this make it, 26 straight failed capers since he started running things?

D.J.
It is hard to believe he comes from the same blood line. Original Sun King was one bad-ass super-villain.

JERRY
Who'd be rolling over in his grave if he could see what his son's doing to his company.

D.J.
He doesn't have a grave, remember? SK-II's first caper?

JERRY
There, case in point. If you're gonna hijack a rocket to launch your dad's ashes into space, wouldn't you first make sure you know how to fly it?

D.J.
I can still hear him: "Where's the goddamn brake on this thing?!" *

They laugh at the memory. The waitress re-enters with another tray of food.

WAITRESS
Did either of you order the fish and chips?

JERRY
Sorry.

WAITRESS
Sonofabitch!

She exits with her tray.

JERRY
So, what's your advice?

D.J.
Do what I do. Go to work, do your job, get your ass kicked. And, if you're lucky, at the end of the day there'll be a Progressive commercial on so you can pound one out before beddy-bye.

JERRY
You masturbate to the Progressive Lady? *

D.J.
I got a thing for nurses.

JERRY
She's not a nurse.

D.J.
Eh, she's close enough.

JERRY
This is the weirdest pep talk ever. *

The waitress re-appears with another food tray. *

WAITRESS
(not hopeful)
Caesar salad?

Jerry shakes his head empathetically.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
You know what, just keep it.

She drops the salad in front of Jerry and exits.

D.J.
Free salad. See, it's all coming together for you, man.

INT. CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - MORNING

TIGHT ON Jerry's contorted face. He winces, we hear a CRACK.

WIDEN. Jerry lies topless on an exam table, getting adjusted by his chiropractor brother, LLOYD. Lloyd is handsome, bordering on too handsome.

LLOYD
Jesus, your T12's practically bent in two. How the hell did that happen?

JERRY
If I had to guess, I'd say it was most likely from Owl Man breaking a chair over my back.

LLOYD
When you get home, alternate ice and heat every twenty minutes. Plus, I'll write you a scrip for some painkillers.

JERRY
Don't bother, I'll just double up on the Aleve. Sun King changed providers on us and now our prescription benefits suck.

LLOYD
I'll send you home with some samples.

JERRY
Wow, that's really cool of you. Thanks.

LLOYD
Hey, what are little brothers are for?

JERRY
Why do you always call yourself that? You're only 11 months younger than me.

LLOYD
You're right, it's weird. I mean, I am a good six inches bigger than you. Plus, I'm also taller. Up top!

Lloyd raises his hand for a high five. Jerry rolls his eyes and gives his brother a half-hearted bump.

As Jerry puts his shirt back on, he looks around the office. Photos of Lloyd's perfect family -- wife, son, daughter, golden retriever -- cover the walls along with various diplomas.

JERRY
Hey, Lloyd, you busy next Tuesday morning?

LLOYD
Just working, why?

JERRY
Ella's got Career Day at school, so I was wondering if you could maybe stop by and talk about your job.

LLOYD
Sure, I did that in Trevor's class. You should've seen it when I cracked his teacher's back. The kids went nuts.

JERRY
Great. So just pick her up at my place at 8:00, then you can take her to school.

LLOYD
Wait, you're not going, too?

JERRY
Nah, I mean, she'll have you there. It may be confusing for her to show up with two dudes.

LLOYD
Jerry, am I going to be pretending to be her dad?

JERRY
No, no. I'd just keep it non-committal. I don't think any of the kids are gonna dig too hard.

LLOYD
Come on, bro. Don't you think Ella's gonna want her <u>actual</u> father to talk to her class on Career Day?

JERRY
And say what? "Hi, kids. Do you like getting the shit kicked out of you? If so, then do I have the career for you! As a professional henchman, you'll never get ahead and will be destined for a life of mediocrity!"

LLOYD
(a beat, then)
I'll pick her up at 8.

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jerry sits with a heating pad on his back as he watches TV. *

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Hey there, party people! Welcome to Progressive.

Jerry perks up, a tiny bit intrigued.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You here to name your own quote, or are you just happy to see me?

Jerry sighs; he's better than that. He takes the remote and turns off the TV.

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jerry looks at himself in the mirror. Noticing a stray nostril hair, he takes a pair of tweezers and pulls. After a short struggle, he manages to yank it out. And it hurts. * * *

JERRY *
Motherfuuuu-- *

Jerry shuts his eyes as he recoils in pain. When he re-opens them, he's looking into the garbage can. On the top of the pile is the shampoo bottle. Jerry frowns, pissed that he forgot to buy more today. * * * *

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jerry walks down the late-night street. He arrives at the entrance to a 24-hour drug store.

As he steps into the revolving door, he spots the terrible waitress exiting in the other door compartment. As she passes, they make eye contact through the glass.

The moment hits Jerry like a thunderbolt.

INT. DRUG STORE - CONTINUOUS

Jerry steps into the drug store. He pauses for a beat, thinking. A look of resolution crosses his face; he gets back into the revolving door.

INT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jerry steps back onto the street.

JERRY
Hello?

The waitress, ALEX, turns around.

ALEX
Hey, I thought that was you. So, how was your free steak?

JERRY
Caesar salad.

ALEX
Shit, really? Seriously, I'm not a drug addict or anything. I'm just terrible at my job.

JERRY
Apparently, so am I. But don't be so hard on yourself, it was just your first day.

ALEX
Yeah.
(then)
It kinda wasn't.

JERRY
I'm sorry, what?

ALEX
I've been working there for three months. I say it's my first day so customers won't get mad when I screw up.

JERRY
That's actually pretty smart.

ALEX
Thanks. We haven't been formally introduced. I'm Alex, shitty waitress.

JERRY
(shaking her hand)
Jerry. Shitty henchman.

ALEX
Henchman? Like for a super-villain?

JERRY
You sound impressed. You shouldn't be.

ALEX
I have a friend who works for the Germinator? Donnie Boyd, you know him?

JERRY
Yeah, he temped for us a couple years back. Solid guy. Bit of a bleeder if I remember correctly.

ALEX
So, Shitty Henchman Jerry, are you walking the same direction as me?

Jerry considers this for a beat.

JERRY
I am now.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They walk. (NOTE: In the background, we see a wall covered with posters featuring Owl Man wearing a milk moustache in the “Got Milk?” ad campaign.)

ALEX
So, have you ever had to kill anyone?

JERRY
Nah. We’re more about ill-conceived robberies than murder. How about you? Ever kill anyone in the line of duty?

ALEX
No, but I once burned a guy’s leg pretty bad when I spilled some soup on him. And the worst part was--

JERRY
He didn’t order soup.

ALEX
Bingo.

JERRY
Alex, I gotta ask. Why do you keep waiting tables? I mean, no offense, but isn’t there anything you’re better at?

ALEX
Oh, yeah. Pretty much everything.

JERRY
Then why don’t you just quit and do something else?

ALEX
Because that's the thing, I always quit. Ever since college -- which I dropped out of junior year by the way -- I've had like a million careers. Pastry chef, yoga instructor, tattoo artist. But, the thing I tried to stress to the people I life coached was--

JERRY
Wait, you were a life coach?

ALEX
Yeah, that was a dark period. Anyway, I always told my clients to stick with things, to not give up. So, when I took this waitressing job, I promised myself I wouldn't quit until I was absolutely, positively sure it was time to move on.

JERRY
Well, as an objective observer, I can say it may be time to move on.

ALEX
Yeah, it's feeling that way. Okay, so now it's my turn to ask the questions.

JERRY
What do you want to know?

ALEX
How does your wife feel about your midnight walks with strange women?

Jerry stops.

JERRY
Wife?

Alex gestures to the wedding ring on Jerry's finger.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Oh, this? No, I'm divorced. *
(off her look) *
But, believe me, I'm not one of those * guys who still wears his wedding ring 'cause he can't move on or he's still in love with his wife.

ALEX
Then which kind of divorced-guy-still-wearing-his-wedding-ring are you?

A beat. This is painful for Jerry. Finally, he decides to come clean.

JERRY
The kind whose finger's gotten too fat to get his ring off.

ALEX
(laughs)
Oh my God, that's awesome. Have you tried greasing it up with soap or baby oil or something?

JERRY
And peanut butter and toothpaste, I've tried pretty much everything. Except, of course, diet and exercise.

ALEX
What if I were to tell you I could get that ring off your finger tonight?

Jerry looks intrigued.

INT. WOOD SHOP - A LITTLE LATER

Alex raises a metal grate to reveal a wood shop -- table saws, drill press, etc.

ALEX
I worked for a while as a woodworker's apprentice.

JERRY
Those machines look pretty sharp.

ALEX
(menacingly)
Oh, believe me, they are.

She flips on a large circular saw. As the blade whirs, Jerry realizes he doesn't actually know this woman. And, there's a very good chance she may be a serial killer.

JERRY
You know what, I think I'm just gonna join a gym. Nice meeting you and all--

Jerry quickly starts to exit. Alex turns off the saw.

ALEX
Jerry, wait. I was just messing with you. Come, sit over here.

Jerry hesitantly takes a seat. Alex removes some tools from a drawer and pulls up a seat next to Jerry.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(gently taking his hand)
Believe me, I'm much better at this than waiting tables.

JERRY
That's not as reassuring as you probably think it is.

Alex slips a metal splint between Jerry's ring and skin. She carefully positions the jaws of a pair of diagonal cutters on either side of the ring and gently squeezes.

ALEX
So, what made you decide to get divorced?

JERRY
It was probably my wife leaving me.

ALEX
Whoops. Sorry.

JERRY
No, I'm actually glad she did. The marriage pretty much sucked for years, but I'm the type of guy who would've just ridden it out. You know, path of least resistance.

ALEX
(semi-sexy)
So you need a kick in the ass every once in a while to get you going. Good to know.

JERRY
Don't tell me, you used to work as a dominatrix.

ALEX
Nope, that one's just a hobby.

She raises her eyebrows jokingly, then turns her attention back to Jerry's ring.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Okay, we're just about there. You wanna do the honors?

JERRY
Cut it off myself?

ALEX
Might be symbolically empowering.

Alex takes Jerry's free hand and puts it on the handles of the cutters. She keeps her hand on his for a beat. It's a surprisingly intimate moment.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I'm going to let go, then you're gonna give the handles a squeeze. The metal may not want to give at first, but just power through, okay?

JERRY
Okay.

Alex takes her hand off of his. Jerry takes a breath then squeezes. After a short struggle, we hear a metallic SNIP. Alex expertly inserts a tool under the ring and spreads the band wide enough for Jerry to remove his finger.

ALEX
How does it feel?

JERRY
Weird. Good weird. Thank you, Alex. For real.

ALEX
My pleasure. This may be hard to believe, but the life of a waitress isn't all non-stop adventure. Performing late-night ring surgery on a complete stranger is about as exciting as it gets.

Jerry rubs his newly freed finger. A look of resolve crosses his face. He turns to Alex, dead serious.

JERRY
You wanna rob a fountain?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SUN KING INDUSTRIES, INC. - BULLPEN - MORNING

The bullpen contains a couple rows of cubicles. All are empty except one.

A focused Jerry sits in his cubicle, typing on his computer. D.J. approaches, a travel mug of coffee in one hand and a briefcase in the other.

D.J.
Look at you, early bird.

JERRY
I didn't even know my badge opened the front door. The security guard who let me in told me. I gotta say, there was a little condescension in his voice.

D.J.
Why the sudden work ethic?

JERRY
I could ask you the same thing.

D.J.
This is the time I always come in.

JERRY
Since when?

D.J.
Since Sun King announced he was promoting one of us to VP.

JERRY
When did he do that?

D.J.
Like three weeks ago. He sent out an e-mail blast to the whole department.

JERRY
Yeah, I don't read those e-mails.

D.J. *
Which explains why you never signed up * to bring a pot luck dish to the office * Christmas party. *

JERRY *
Come on, man. You really think he's gonna promote you and not Darryl?

D.J.
That kiss ass? He may know how to polish Sun King's balls, but he doesn't have what I have.

JERRY
Delusions of grandeur?

D.J.
A facility with words. To wit.
(hands Jerry paper)
It's the clue for the balloon caper.

JERRY
(reading)
Roses are red/ Violets are blue/ Gold is what we'll steal from you.

D.J.
I already booked the skywriter. Think he'll like it?

JERRY
Probably. But, wouldn't the smarter move be to <u>not</u> announce our plan.

D.J.
That's not how Sun King likes to roll.

JERRY
Yeah, I know. Which is why we're literally 0-for-26 under his command.

D.J.
So, are you gonna tell me what you're doing in the office so early, or what?

JERRY
Not here. I'll tell you later tonight when the whole crew's together.

D.J.
Crew?

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The crew -- Jerry, D.J. and Alex -- sit at the same table as the previous night. They have dossiers in their hands.

JERRY
As you can see, there's a 40% chance of rain Sunday night. I'll keep monitoring it, but I say we go for it rain or shine.

ALEX
Why does it have to be Sunday night?

JERRY
See that graph on page six? The weekend's when most people make wishes. So, hitting the fountain on Sunday night will maximize our take.

ALEX
(looking at dossier)
Who's William Ross? It says he gets 10%.

JERRY
He's in our accounting department at work. He knows a guy who can launder the coins for us. It'd look pretty suspicious to exchange fifteen grand worth of pennies at the bank, don't you think?

ALEX
Wow, you're pretty good at this.

JERRY
I am, aren't I?

D.J. raises his hand.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Yes, D.J.?

D.J.
I've a got a two-part question. Number one: How fucking dumb are you? And number two... actually, I guess it's just a one-parter.

JERRY
What, you see a hole in the plan?

D.J.
No, seems pretty straightforward.

JERRY
Then what's the problem?

D.J.
Idiot, what's Sun King gonna say when he finds out you're freelancing?

JERRY
Hey, I gave him first crack.

D.J.
He doesn't get first crack, he gets <u>every</u> crack. You signed a non-compete.

JERRY
How is it competition? I offered him the caper, he turned it down.

D.J.
Look, do whatever you want, but I'm not getting involved. Not when I'm this close to a promotion.

JERRY
(to Alex)
He's really not.

D.J.
(to Alex)
I've got a skywriter on hold.

JERRY
(to Alex)
Everyone knows Darryl's getting it.

D.J. *
Says the expert who doesn't even read his e-mail blasts. Tell you what. I * feel bad about not joining your crew, so next round's on me. *

JERRY
Wow, that is a first. Offer accepted. But, you should probably go up to the bar. I haven't seen a waitress in like ten minutes.

Alex's eyes widen.

ALEX
Shit balls.

Alex gets up to reveal she is wearing a waitress apron. She crosses to a table of angry diners.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Sorry about the wait, it's my first day. *

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jerry sits at the kitchen table, FaceTiming with Ella.

ELLA
(on monitor)
I told everyone you're coming to Career Day.

JERRY
Oh, great. Yeah, I'll be there. Or maybe Uncle Lloyd. It's gonna be fun.

ELLA
(on monitor)
Uncle Lloyd?

JERRY
Or me. Probably Uncle Lloyd. Speaking of school, how'd it go today?

ELLA
(on monitor)
We got our math tests back. I got a 98.

JERRY
That's great.

ELLA
(on monitor)
I would've gotten a hundred if I'd carried that stupid three.

JERRY
Well, I may have some math you could do for extra credit.

ELLA
(on monitor)
What do you mean?

JERRY
I'm gonna need your help counting coins. Though, I gotta warn you, some of them may be a little wet.

ELLA
(on monitor)
The fountain caper?! You're gonna do it?!

JERRY
Yup. Putting together a crew and everything.

ELLA
(on monitor)
Can I be in it?

JERRY
Of course. Wouldn't be a crew without my partner in crime.

ELLA
(on monitor)
Awesome!
(then)
Uh-oh.

JERRY
What "uh-oh"?

On Jerry's laptop, Ella's face has been replaced by that of his ex-wife, KAREN.

KAREN
(on monitor)
Partner in crime?

JERRY
It's an expression.

KAREN
(on monitor)
Which in this case you mean literally, you dumb piece of shit.

JERRY
Hey, not in front of Ella.

KAREN
(on monitor)
She's in the other room.

ELLA
(poking head into frame)
No, I'm not. Hi, Daddy.

JERRY
Nice. And I'm the bad influence.

KAREN
(on monitor)
Jerry, you can not involve our daughter in criminal activity.

JERRY
Fine, I won't.

KAREN
(on monitor)
I need to hear you promise.

JERRY
Really? Okay, I, Jerry Duffy, do solemnly swear that I will not involve our daughter Ella in my awesome fountain caper. *

EXT. COLOSSAL CITY FOUNTAIN - DAY

Jerry and Ella stand in front of a grand fountain (think Central Park's Bethesda Fountain.)

ELLA
You broke your promise.

JERRY
Hey, we're just a couple of citizens enjoying a Colossal City landmark.

ELLA
Then why are we measuring the water?

Jerry surreptitiously removes a tape measure from the fountain.

JERRY
Just working on your math facts. Okay, 39 inches deep. And what did we say the diameter was?

ELLA
(reads from notepad)
92 feet.

JERRY
(types figures into phone)
So we divide the diameter by two, square it, multiply by pi, then by the depth. Convert it to gallons and what do we get?

ELLA
A headache? *

JERRY
162,297. That's how many gallons of water we'll need to drain and replace on the day. * *
(then)
Okay, I think we've earned a little ice cream, don't you?

ELLA
Yeah. Just give me one sec.

JERRY
One sec? I thought when I said the words “ice cream” you’d be off in a trail of dust like a cartoon animal.

Ella reaches into her pocket and pulls out a coin.

JERRY (CONT’D)
What are you doing?

ELLA
Making a wish.

JERRY
But, that’s the Silver Eagle Grandpa gave you.

ELLA
I know. But, I’ll get it back soon, right?

Jerry gets it. As often happens when his daughter proves she’s smarter than him, he smiles.

JERRY
Make it a good wish.

ELLA
I will.

Ella closes her eyes, concentrates deeply, then flips the coin into the fountain. Hearing the plop, she opens her eyes.

ELLA (CONT’D)
Ice cream!

Ella runs off. Jerry happily gives chase.

INT. SUN KING INDUSTRIES, INC. - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Sun King is in the middle of a presentation.

ON MONITOR: In the style of an animated Asian news dramatization, a CGI Sun King and CGI henchmen load gold onto a hot air balloon. Moments later, it ascends into the sky.

SUN KING
As you can see, the weight of the city’s gold will have absolutely no affect on our ability to take off.

Jerry watches the presentation without expression.

DARRYL
Jerry, care to make a snarky comment?

JERRY
Nope. That cartoon couldn't be clearer. It's a foolproof plan.

SUN KING
Glad you're on board. Now, the last item of business is the pre-caper clue. Does anyone have anything?

D.J. winks at Jerry, then rises confidently to his feet.

D.J.
I do.

SUN KING
D.J.? Well, someone's showing a little initiative. Whaddya got?

D.J. takes over the room, dramatically presenting his idea.

D.J.
Picture if you will a crystal clear sky. Then, suddenly, words appear. All of Colossal City stops what they're doing and looks skyward. There, in puffy white letters, they see the message--

DARRYL
A skywriter? How quaint.

D.J.
Quaint? You got something better?

DARRYL
For once, you're correct.

SUN KING *
Ooh, me-ow.

DARRYL
That plan would be fine for lesser super-villains. But this is Sun King we're talking about. And, I don't think I'm overstating it when I say that Sun King is the greatest super-villain in the history of the * universe. And, as such, we need to * think bigger than just a skywriter.

SUN KING
Are you suggesting--

DARRYL
Yes. Two skywriters.

SUN KING
Ooooh, I like the sound of that.
(then, smile fading)
Take a seat, D.J. Darryl has the floor.

Darryl shoots D.J. a victorious look. D.J. scowls and re-takes his seat. He turns to Jerry.

D.J.
Fuck this shit, I'm in.

EXT. FOUNTAIN - NIGHT

A PATROL COP walks past the floodlit fountain. He passes a THREE-MAN SANITATION CREW scrubbing the ground near a Department of Sanitation van.

COP
Night shift, huh? Guess you guys pulled the short straw.

SANITATION WORKER #1
Tell me about it.

COP
Have a good one.

SANITATION WORKER #1
You too.

SANITATION WORKER #2
Stay safe.

The Cop continues into the park. When he's gone, the sanitation crew stops scrubbing and looks up. For the first time, we see it's actually Jerry, Alex and D.J.

JERRY
"Stay safe?"

D.J.
Don't start. You know cops make me nervous.

JERRY
There's nothing to be nervous about. He patrols every hour, on the hour.
(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)
So, we just need to be done with the job in 58 minutes. And our time starts... now.

Jerry starts the clock on his phone. Then he just stands there. D.J. looks at him, confused.

D.J.
Okay, what's next? We're on the clock, right?

JERRY
We are.

D.J.
Then why aren't we doing anything?

JERRY
I've been picturing this moment for a long time and now it's actually happening. I'm just taking it in.

D.J.
Are you insane?! We've gotta start--

ALEX
(insistent)
Shh.

D.J. shuts up. They all stand quietly for a long beat, just taking it in. The silence is meditative, even D.J. feels it's power. Finally--

JERRY
Alright, let's steal some coins.

SMASH CUT TO:

TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE

From a STATIC OVERHEAD SHOT, we see:

-- Our trio drains the fountain using a professional water pump. They are a highly organized, well-oiled unit.

-- The water level decreases until eventually all the liquid is gone.

-- Using an industrial vacuum unit, they suck up and collect the fountain's coins.

-- They use the water pump to start refilling the fountain.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The fountain and its water level are back to normal.

D.J. re-spools the hose. Alex finishes transferring the coins from the vacuum unit into a large metal cylinder and screws on the top. She looks over to Jerry and smiles. Jerry smiles back, then checks the timer on his phone.

JERRY
5, 4, 3, 2 and...
(phone beeps)
Bam. We did it.

D.J.
Yes! Now, that's what I call a crew!

He and Jerry high-five. Alex approaches Jerry.

ALEX
Well, a crew's only as good as its boss. And we have a pretty goddamn good one.

She gives him a hug. Even in their bulky sanitation outfits, there is a heat between them. They start to move in for a kiss, when--

COP (O.S.)
Jesus, what the hell goes on in Sanitation these days?

Jerry and Alex turn to see the Cop approaching.

JERRY
Evening, officer.

COP
Don't let me stop you. This is the most exciting thing that's happened all shift.

JERRY
Maybe another time.

ALEX
(lasciviously)
Promise?

JERRY
We really need to get going.
(to Cop)
See you around.

Jerry starts to lug some equipment toward the van.

COP
Wait, what's that on the ground?

Jerry stops in his tracks. He nervously watches the Cop cross to a coin on the ground next to the metal cylinder by Alex's feet. The Cop picks up the dripping coin and examines it closely. Jerry exchanges worried looks with Alex and D.J.

It's a very tense moment. Until finally--

COP (CONT'D)
(brightly)
"Find a penny pick it up."

D.J. lets out a sigh like he's been holding his breath for a year.

JERRY
Well, hope it brings you good luck.

COP
Yeah, maybe there'll be a Progressive commercial on when I get home.

The Cop starts to walk away. The trio watches him go.

ALEX
What do you think he meant by that?

JERRY *
(sheepish)
Probably just cop lingo.

D.J. *
(calling after Cop) *
Stay safe!
(off Jerry's look)
I have a problem, okay?

Jerry opens the back doors to the van. Rows of metal cylinders line the walls.

JERRY
Nice job stacking the cylinders, Alex. How many did we fill?

ALEX
I'm sorry, what?

JERRY
The coin holders. You finished transferring the money into them, right?

ALEX
Them? I'm not following.

JERRY
(worried)
Alex, how many cylinders did you fill?

ALEX
Just this one.

JERRY
Oh shit. Shit shit shit shit shit.

Jerry quickly removes an industrial-sized change counter from the van and places it on the ground. Frantic, he unscrews the top of the coin cylinder.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Tell me this isn't happening.

D.J. helps Jerry lift the cylinder. Together, they pour the coins into the counter. The counter BEEPS, the LED screen displaying the dollar amount rises steadily. Once all the coins have been transferred, Jerry looks at the LED screen.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Eighty-three twelve.

D.J.
See, you were worried over nothing. Eight grand's not a bad haul.

JERRY
Eighty-three dollars and twelve cents.

D.J.
Oh. That's actually a pretty fucking terrible haul.

Jerry is devastated. As the CAMERA MOVES IN on him slowly shaking his head...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOT AIR BALLOON - THE NEXT DAY

Jerry, face now painted gold, still slowly shakes his head.

WIDEN. Jerry stands next to D.J. in the balloon basket. D.J.'s face is also painted gold and they both wear gold track suits.

JERRY
How could I have been so wrong?

D.J.
Your real mistake was trying to be happy.

Dressed in his golden robe and crown, the Sun King approaches.

SUN KING
Jerry, can I have a word?

D.J. shoots Jerry a worried look, then hurries off. As he talks to Jerry, the Sun King absentmindedly rolls a coin through his fingers.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
So, just wanted to let you know. I pulled that fountain caper of yours.

JERRY
You what?

SUN KING
Sorry I didn't include you. It was a small op, just me and Darryl.

JERRY
I don't understand. When was this?

SUN KING
Two nights ago. And you were right, there was some decent money in there. Not compared to what we're gonna take this morning, but decent.

JERRY
How decent?

SUN KING
Twenty-three grand.

JERRY
Twenty-three grand?!

SUN KING
Hey, I know it's not a lot, but it's nothing to sneeze at. You may not have noticed, but we've been on a bit of a cold streak. This little cash infusion could be just the thing we need to turn it around. Who knew there could be that much money in wish coins?

Jerry says nothing even though every ounce of his being wants to scream "I DID!!!" For the first time, he gets a good look at the coin in Sun King's hand. It's Ella's Silver Eagle.

JERRY
Is that where you got that coin?

SUN KING
Yup, isn't she a beaut? Don't know why someone would toss this baby in a fountain, but it's their loss, eh?

The Sun King starts to walk away. Jerry looks like he's been punched in the gut. The Sun King glances back at Jerry and notices his sadness. In Colossal City, they say the Sun King's small heart grew three sizes that day.

SUN KING (CONT'D)
Jerry, here. You've earned it.

He flips Ella's coin to Jerry. Jerry looks at the coin, then at Sun King. He is moved.

JERRY
Thank you, sir.

SUN KING
Don't mention it.
(then)
Seriously, do not mention it. I didn't give Darryl a nickel. Plus, he's been pretty pissed ever since I announced no one's getting promoted to VP.

JERRY
When did you do that?

SUN KING
Last night in the e-mail blast. Didn't you read it?

JERRY
Yeah, yeah. Of course. I love those blasts, keep 'em coming.

SUN KING
Alright, everyone! Ready positions! Darryl, music!

Darryl, looking pissed off, presses play on an iPod. We hear the symphonic choir.

CHOIR (O.S.)
Here comes the Sun King...

Jerry joins the rest of the henchmen getting into position. * The balloon lands on the roof of the Colossal City Mint with a thud. Darryl opens the door to the basket. As soon as the Sun King steps onto the roof...

OWL MAN
Not so fast.

SUN KING
Owl Man?

OWL MAN
Sorry, Sun King. But everyone knows stealing the city's gold is against the ra-whoooooooles.

SUN KING
Well, you know the old saying. Some rules are meant to be broken.
(to henchmen)
Get him!

The camera SNAP-ZOOMS in on Jerry. He tucks Ella's coin safely away in his pocket, sighs, then charges Owl Man.

As Owl Man's feathered fist connects with Jerry's jaw, we:

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

A TEACHER stands in front of a blackboard with “CAREER DAY” written on it.

TEACHER
Our next parent has a very interesting job. Does anyone know what a chiropractor does?

None of the third graders do. Ella, seated in the front row, looks confused.

TEACHER (CONT’D)
Okay, well we’re about to find out. Please give a warm welcome to Dr. Duffy.

The teacher leads the kids in some polite applause, then moves away. The CAMERA pans to find, not Lloyd, but Jerry. He steps to the front of the class.

JERRY
Hi. I’m Ella’s dad.

Jerry smiles at Ella. She smiles back.

JERRY (CONT’D)
Look, I’m gonna be honest with you kids. Being a chiropractor’s super boring. But, you know what job is really fun?
(conspiratorially)
Robbing a fountain.

The kids GASP and perk up in their seats. Jerry winks at Ella, who beams. Jerry’s never been happier.

JERRY (CONT’D)
We decided to hit it on a a Sunday night, because the weekend’s when most people make wishes...

As Jerry spins his yarn to the rapt audience of 8-year-olds, the CAMERA PULLS BACK as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW *