

**AND THERE CAME A DAY, A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER. WHEN THREE FRIENDS UNITED TO SAVE THE EARTH, BEFORE GOING THEIR SEPARATE WAYS. ON THAT DAY, E.G.G. ENDED. OR DID IT?**



**-EPISODE 101-**

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

“Aw shell.” Acacia Blanco swore, digging through the refrigerator in her house in Oregon. “How did we run out of milk? Again? Celeste!”

“What do you want?” Celeste Aoki yelled back from upstairs.

“Did you drink the last of the milk?”

“No!”

“Really? Cause, I’m lookin’ in here, and there’s kind of, like, no milk.”

“Get off my case Acacia!” Celeste yelled.

“Young lady, you come down here this instant!” Acacia yelled back.

“Screw you!” Celeste screamed.

“Ughhhhh.” Acacia groaned, rubbing her face. She marched upstairs and jiggled the door handle. It was locked, of course. Acacia then proceeded to kick it open.

“Hey!” Celeste screamed. She was a year older, and a far cry from the little girl she’d been before. Everything she wore was black leather and her face was covered in eye shadow, with a nose piercing and short hair with streaks of purple. She was blasting screamo from her laptop, and lying on her bed, which, like the rest of her room, was an utter mess.

“Turn that off! Now!” Acacia ordered, pointing at the laptop. Celeste defiantly pressed the ‘volume up’ button and cranked the tunes. “Oh really?” Acacia created a forcefield around the laptop and crunched it into a ball.

“Do I have your attention now?” She asked. Celeste began to move her fingers around, which started to glow with a blue aura. The same aura came around the laptop and it reassembled itself, then began to blast the music again.

“I mean, did you forget I was a technopath now, or are you just stupid?” Celeste asked. Acacia clenched her fists.

“Come here you ungrateful little-” Acacia lunged and tackled Celeste.

“Get off!” Celeste cried.

“You need to learn respect!”

“Bite me!”

“Fine!” Acacia took Celeste’s arm and bit her wrist.

“Ah! What are you doing!”

“You said bite you!”

“You’re so weird! Get off!” Celeste held out her hand and pulled some wires from the wall, using them to electrocute Acacia.

“Gyyaaazz!” Acacia cried, falling to the ground. Celeste rolled her eyes, stood up, grabbed her laptop, and walked out of the room.

“Hey!” Acacia yelled after her, slowly getting up and moving to the top of the stairs. Celeste was halfway out the door. “Where are you going?”

“Out!” Celeste yelled, slamming the door. Acacia ran into her bedroom, flopped onto the bed, buried her face in a pillow, and screamed to the top of her lungs.

“I do not understand that girl!” She groaned in frustration. She looked up at her wall, with a picture of her, Josh and Eileen holding the Thwip Blaster. “Man, whatever happened to the good old days?” She sighed with longing, taking it off the wall and rubbing it.

“Just me, Eileen, and Josh, in the Humpty Dumpty Hall, making things that go boom.” She felt tears coming on. “I miss that.” She looked down at the picture. “Well, there’s no reason it can’t be like that again...”

She stood up and went to her closet. She pulled it open and dug all the way to the back. There it was, her old E.G.G. uniform. She touched it.

“No, no they’d never go for it.” She convinced herself. Suddenly, Acacia started coughing. It was horse, and violent, and went on for about a minute. She looked down at her shaking hands, and saw blood she had hacked from her throat.

*I’m not getting any better. She thought. And the doctors still have no idea what’s wrong with me. She looked back at the uniform, and bit her bottom lip. If I don’t do it now... I may never get the chance.*

“Well... it couldn’t hurt to try.”

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Eileen opened her eyes. She sat up and found herself in a hotel room. Then she heard someone snore. She slowly turned to see a man she’d never seen before sprawled out on the bed next to her. She leapt out with a shriek.

“What happened?” The man cried, suddenly awake.

“Get out!” Eileen yelled.

“Wait, but this is my hotel room-” He began, but Eileen fired a bolt of lightning at him. “Whoa! What the-”

“OUT!” Eileen yelled, and without a second word, he was gone. “Deborah! What did you do!” Eileen’s eyes flashed red.

“Calm down, nothing happened.” Eileen’s darker half, now apparently named ‘Deborah’, replied. Her eyes flashed back to blue and green, as Eileen was in control again.

“Where are we?” Eileen asked in a panic.

“Mexico.” Deborah stated.

“Mexico!? How? Why!” Eileen cried.

“That’s where the party was!”

“Who was that man?”

“I don’t know, but he said I could crash in his room, so...”

“Did you have to sleep in the bed with him! You know I’m...” Eileen froze. She looked down at her finger. “Deborah! Where is my ring!”

“It’s in your pants pocket, calm down.” Eileen noticed she was wearing a red dress.

“Well where are my pants!”

“That’s... actually a good question.”

“Deborah! I said my ring was off limits! I specifically told you *do not* touch my ring! I swear, you’re like a child, you cannot follow simple instructions!”

"The ring's a turn off! I can't have the guys think I'm spoken for."

"I am married Deborah!"

"*You*, yes, Eileen, *you* are married. I, however, am not!"

"And how exactly does that work, Deborah? Hm? Because in my book, that's called infidelity!"

"So what? I'm not allowed to date?"

"No! And who would want to date a monster like you anyway?" Eileen waited for a response, but her eyes remained, and none came. "Okay, yeah, whatever, crybaby." Eileen groaned when suddenly she heard a familiar beep. She began shifting through junk and pulled out her S.H.I.E.L.D. watch. She tapped it, and the face of stunningly beautiful woman with shoulder-length curly blonde hair, stunning blue eyes, and a S.H.I.E.L.D. lab coat, and appeared on the screen.

"Whitney!" Eileen exclaimed.

"Oh, hello Eileen." She greeted. "Ooh, foxy dress. I've got one just like it."

"Yeah, uh, thanks. What's up Frost?"

"Oh, well I was just wondering if you were going to be arriving soon to help with the..."

"The Gravitonium transport!" Eileen sighed and buried her face in her palm. "I'm so sorry. I'm on my way."

"Of course. Though, I think you might want to have me take a look at your transponder, it's saying that you're in Mexico."

"I... am in Mexico."

“Oh...”

“Yeah...”

“And you didn’t invite me?”

“It was... spur of the moment. I swear, next time I leave the country, I’ll call you first.”

“Flattered to the core Nestman. I’ll see you when you get here.” Whitney cut the transmission.

“Perfect.” Eileen sighed. She looked down at her legs. “And no leggings, of course, so I guess all of Mexico gets to see up my skirt. Freaking Deborah, I swear sometimes. How she causes so much trouble in only 24 hours is beyond me!” Eileen opened the window, leapt out, and took off.

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“NESTMAN!” J. Jonah Jameson yelled. “GET IN HERE!” Joshua Nestman practically fell through Jameson’s door, soaking wet, covered in green feathers, and holding a pair a women’s pants.

“Yes Mr. Jameson!” He exclaimed, standing at attention.

“WHERE IN THE NAME OF SAM HILL HAVE YOU BEEN! DEADLINE IS IN 10 MINUTES, AND IF I DON’T HAVE PICTURES OF SPIDER-MAN BY THEN, YOU’RE FIRED! FIRED! FIRED!!!!!!”

“That’s Peter’s job Mr. Jameson...” Nestman reminded.

“OH RIGHT... THEN WHERE THE BLAZES IS MY STORY ON THE TABLET OF LIFE AND TIME!!!”

“Right here.” Nestman said, sliding a flash drive onto Jameson’s desk. “Fun fact, the Vulture tried to steal it. If you’re wondering why I’m wet...”

“I’M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WOMEN’S PANTS, SON.”

“Oh, well, these belong to my wife actually.” Jameson stared, and Nestman awkwardly stared back. “It’s a long story.”

“GET OUT OF MY OFFICE!” Nestman scrambled out quickly and closed the door behind him.

“Excuse me!” Peter Parker called, pushing past him. Nestman noticed pictures of Spider-Man fighting the Vulture in his hand.

“Wait a minute, I didn’t see you at the museum Peter!” Nestman exclaimed. “How’d you get those shots?”

“I...” Peter seemed at a loss for words.

“PARKER!!!!!!” Jameson yelled.

“I gotta go!” Peter cried, almost relieved he didn’t have to answer Nestman. Nestman shrugged and got out his phone, dialing Eileen.

“Hey sweetie.” Eileen answered.

“Hey babe, want me to pick up dinner?” Nestman asked.

“Yes please, I’m gonna be super busy.”

“Awesome. Also I, uh... found your pants.”

“Oh my gosh, is my ring in there?”

“Um...” Nestman dug through Eileen’s pockets and found a diamond wedding ring. “It is! Wait, Deborah took off your ring?”

“I don’t want to talk about it. I’m just glad it’s there.”

“Me too. Cost me several paychecks! Guess that’s why Deborah threatened to tear out my liver if I didn’t find your pants.”

“Wait, Deborah sent you find them?”

“Yeah. And she threatened to tear out my liver...”

“Well when does she not? I’m just, a bit shocked, that’s all. She’s usually less responsible than that.”

“Well maybe you’re rubbing off on her!”

“Doubtful. Anyways, I’ll see you at home.”

“Alright, see ya!” Nestman hung up and happily strolled off.

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“Kyle, where are you right now?” Kyle Rice looked up. Sitting a few feet from him in a chair was Dr. Ashley Kafka, legs crossed, holding a clipboard. Kyle sighed.

“They had sonic weapons.” He replied. “That... agitates us.”

“Us?” Dr. Kafka noted, writing on her clipboard. “Been a while since you’ve said that.” Kyle froze, as if he’d made a terrible mistake.

“I mean... I don’t like loud noises either.” He said. “So, Venom doesn’t like it, I don’t like it, hence us.”

“Mhmm.” Dr. Kafka said, writing on her clipboard. Kyle sighed.

“Come on Dr. Kafka.”

"I'm just taking notes Kyle."

"I haven't lost control in months. You said I was making progress!"

"Did you see what you left in that room? There wasn't a hint of Kyle Rice. That was all Venom."

"Please don't take me back to the lab."

"I just have to make sure that..."

"NO LAB!" Kyle growled, his face becoming Venomous. Dr. Kafka stood up and looked sternly at him.

"Something red." She demanded.

"Blood!" Kyle hissed.

"Something red Kyle!"

"Roses, sorry."

"Something soft."

"Brains!"

"I'm waiting."

"Clouds. Clouds are soft."

"Something beautiful."

"... Reyha." Kyle said, tears in his eyes.

“Good job.” Dr. Kafka said. She knelt down next to him and put her hand on his shoulder. “I know you want to see your family, but if you don’t go to the lab, Venom could hurt them. You remember what happened in June, don’t you?”

“I try not to.” Kyle said, distraught. “It’s just... I told Sabrina we’d go somewhere special tonight.”

“I’ll take them out tonight.” Dr. Kafka reassured. “But you have to come in. Fury is worried about the threat you pose when you lose control.”

“I know.” Kyle sighed. “I’ll go to the lab.”

“Thank you, Kyle.” Dr. Kafka thanked. “You know I care about you. And your family.”

“Yeah. Thanks, Doc, for everything.” Kyle got up, and two S.H.I.E.L.D. agents came in and restrained him.

“Just get better.” Dr. Kafka said. As soon as Kyle was escorted out of the room, Dr. Kafka took out a tape recorder.

“The subject is at risk of gaining complete control, sonic weapons still agitate the creature, but resistance has been built over time.” Dr. Kafka groaned and rubbed her forehead. “If this continues I will not be able to complete my research for Project Carnage. Sending the subject back to the lab for... reconditioning. Subject is still unaware that I am causing the outbursts in the Venom Symbiote.” Dr. Kafka sighed and cut the recorder. She looked up at the ceiling. “Let’s just hope it stays that way.”

\* \* \*

Outside of a S.H.I.E.L.D. facility in the forest, a convoy of APC’s were lined up. A group of agents moved a container of a continuously shifting silver liquid-like substance onto the back of one. Agent Whitney Frost was typing into a tablet, when suddenly a loud noise was heard above. Eileen then flipped

out of the air and landed on the ground. Her hair was a disheveled mess and her dress was covered in burn marks.

“Does anyone have a spare S.H.I.E.L.D. uniform?” She asked. “Or shoes?”

“Where are your shoes!” Whitney asked in slight amusement.

“I lost one somewhere over Wisconsin, and the second somewhere over Jersey.”

“Well as much of a fashion emergency as you are right now, and possibly in need of a shower...”

“Hey!”

“We simply haven’t the time. No offense but you’re late enough as it is and if we don’t get this Gravitonium moving...”

“Yeah, yeah, alright. I’ll take point.” Eileen made her way to the front of the caravan, drawing attention from all of the agents, who were whispering and snickering.

“This is so embarrassing.” She growled under her breath. “I’m going to kill Deborah.”

“Convoy is a go!” An agent shouted.

“Move! Move! Move!” Someone ordered, as the trucks began to drive. Eileen began levitating, keeping just next to the trucks and observing their surroundings for danger. Whitney’s face popped up on her watch.

“This element is astounding!” She exclaimed. “Dr. Hall was really onto something. It’s a shame he went mad.”

“What are you planning to do with it?” Eileen asked.

“Oh, well the possibilities are limitless! Anti-grav tech will be at a whole new level! I’m thinking a new S.H.I.E.L.D. space station!”

“What, like the Peak?” Eileen asked.

“Only a million times better!”

“You know, I am constantly amazed at how you manage to be an Oscar-winning actress and a head S.H.I.E.L.D. scientist at the same time.” Eileen admiringly replied.

“Making science sexy, one day at a time.” Whitney replied with a smile. “Can you imagine, if we applied this to our space exploration division, why, it’d be as if the gravitational field of Earth were still in...”

“Hold that thought Whitney...” Eileen said. She landed in front of the convoy and held out her hand, signaling them to stop.

“Super spotted something! Eyes up!” An agent ordered. They began to file out and fall in behind Eileen. “What’s going on Commander Nestman?”

“I thought I saw...” Eileen squinted into the trees. Then her eyes widened. “Get down!” She pulled two agents down just a tree soared past them and slammed into one of the APC’s.

“Contact! Open fire!” The agents began firing into the trees. Eileen flew upward and lit up her fists. Out of the tree line came none other than Gravity Master, levitating on a rock, all of the bullets stopping just in front of his face in a gravitational field.

“I think you’ve got something that belongs to me.” He called.

“Cylus Raise.” Eileen said. “Where are the rest of the Losers of Doom?”

“I haven’t seen those guys in months.” Gravity Master replied. He pulled two trees out of the ground and sent them at Eileen. She dodged one, blasted the other, then sped into him at top speed and crashed them both into the ground.

“What do you want the Gravitonium for!” She shouted.

“Um, isn’t that obvious?” Gravity Master gripped the ground and sent out a pulse, knocking Eileen off of him. He levitated himself back up. “A power up!” He sent out another pulse, which knocked Eileen back and flipped some of the APC’s.

“Ugh!” Eileen groaned. She stood up and blasted him with lightning.

“Ahhhhh!” He cried in pain. He reached out his hand and ripped the door off of an APC, then pulled it toward him, slamming it right into Eileen’s back.

“Gah!” She groaned, falling to the ground. Gravity Master laughed and approached her.

“You know, this is a real step down from your costume, ‘Lightstream’. You look like you just went clubbing! And where are your shoes?”

“Shut up.” Eileen groaned, punching him into a tree.

“Ah!” He growled. He levitated once more, and began to lift some S.H.I.E.L.D. agents off of the ground.

“Whoa!” They cried.

“Put them down Raise!” Eileen shouted.

“Catch!” Gravity Master pitched five agents across the forest.

“AAAAHHHHHH!” They screamed.

“No!” Eileen took off. She flew at top speed and caught one. “I got you.” She caught another. “I got you!” She spun in the air and the third grabbed onto her.

“That’s three.” She sped up and zoomed past the fourth, who caught onto her leg. “Ugh, seriously Deborah, leggings wouldn’t have killed you!” She flew as fast as she could with the added weight toward the fifth agent, as he hurtled to the ground. “Come on! Come on!” She said to herself. She wasn’t going to make it. She knew she wasn’t, but she had to try. She went, faster and faster, but suddenly, the agent was caught in what appeared to be a cloud of glitter. Eileen sighed with relief.

She floated down and dropped all of the agents off. Above her, Carrie Jordan, in a S.H.I.E.L.D. uniform, lowered herself in an aura of glitter, and put the agent down gently.

“Bet you’re glad to see me.” She announced.

“Am I.” Eileen replied, hugging her.

“Um... why do you look like you just got back from Vegas?”

“Talk later, Gravity Master!”

“Oh, I’m totes on it!” Carrie and Eileen took off, and landed back at the scene. Whitney was on the ground, outside of an overturned APC, coughing, with the empty Gravitonium containment unit next to her.

“Aw.” Eileen groaned.

“He got away.” Whitney sadly informed. “I’d have slugged him myself, but I didn’t want to break a nail.”

“I’ll tail him while the trail is hot.” Carrie said.

“No, Carrie,” Eileen protested “we’ve got injured, let’s get them back to base.”

“Okay, you can do that, I’ll go after Gravity clown.”

“No Carrie!”

“Eileen!”

“That’s an order!” Carrie opened her mouth to defy, but then clenched her fists and stormed off.

“Fine.” She reluctantly agreed. Eileen sighed and rubbed her face.

“This hasn’t been a fun day.”

“Nestman.” Fury’s voice called from her watch. Her shoulders slumped.

“And it’s about to get worse.” She held up her watch. “Director Fury, I...”

“Helicarrier. Now.”

“Yes sir.” She replied. “Alright, two-time it people! I’m needed back at base!”

\* \* \*

Acacia got off of a plane and walked into JFK Airport. She pulled Terry’s aviator jacket tight around her E.G.G. uniform, and took her phone out of airplane mode. Suddenly she got a text from someone named ‘Sam’.

*You make it okay?* The text read. Acacia smiled.

*I did.* She texted back.

*Awesome! Glad you're back in town. Was thinking we could see each other again.* Acacia blushed.

*I could go to dinner... If you're down??*

*So down. Where should we meet?*

*I'll get you an address.*

*Can't wait! Love and kisses!* That text had the kissy face emoji. Acacia laughed.

*Love and kisses.* She sent back, also with a kissy face emoji. She then went to text Celeste.

*Made it to NY.* She said. It was soon followed by the middle finger emoji.

"Ugh, brat." Acacia groaned, putting her phone away. She walked over to the baggage claim and froze. She noticed that everyone's bags were covered in a sticky mess of webs.

"What is this crap?" Someone asked. Acacia knew that the Thwip Blaster she'd packed had probably exploded. But she really didn't want to explain, so she whistled and walked off. She called an Uber and made her way through the city. She rode to Chelsea, where she got out in front of a lovely brownstone. She walked inside, got into an elevator, and made her way to the fifth floor, where she strolled down to room 507 and kicked the door open.

"Surprise!" She exclaimed.

"Gyah!" Nestman shouted, falling over the couch.

"Oh, sorry bud!" Acacia laughed, helping him up.

"It's fine... Acacia..." He panted. He looked up. "Oh goody, you broke the door... again..."

"Where's Eileen?" Acacia asked, plopping on the couch and digging through a bag of Chinese takeout.

"Oh, um, that's for me and..." Acacia was already well into the chow mein. Nestman sighed.  
"S.H.I.E.L.D. mission, I think."

"So, Helicarrier?" Acacia asked.

"Most likely."

"Awesome! Well, I don't have clearance to go up there. So..."

"Why do I feel like you only talk to me when you need something?" Nestman groaned. Acacia dropped the empty Chinese carton into the trash.

"Because I do!" Acacia exclaimed, wrapping her arm around him. "I'm getting the gang back together, and I need your help!"

"The gang? Like... E.G.G?" Nestman asked.

"What else?"

"It's been, geez, like a year, I think. Do you think, well... will everyone want to?"

"Of course they will!" Acacia exclaimed. Nestman arched his eyebrows. "Look man, can you get me to the Helicarrier or not?"

"Sure. But, um, what about Josh? Westbrook." Acacia looked off.

"I dunno." She said. "I'm sure he'll be down."

"Do you even know where he is?"

“The Helicarrier has access to satellites, I’m sure we can find him. Speaking of which...”

“Okay, okay...” Nestman took out a small device. “Hang on.” Acacia hugged him, he tapped it, and in a flash of blue light, they were gone.

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Eileen sat in a locker room on the Helicarrier, tightening her bootstrap.

“There.” She said, back in full S.H.I.E.L.D. uniform. “Much better.” Carrie came out of the showers wrapped in a towel. She walked right past Eileen to her locker and proceed to get dressed. Eileen sighed.

“Come on Carrie, don’t be like that.”

“I could have caught Gravity Master!” She snapped.

“He was long gone, it would have been a waste of time.”

“We don’t know that! I’ve been your sidekick for over a year now, Eileen! When are you going to trust me!”

“Carrie, I trust you, I do. But our job is to protect the people first, and catch the bad guy next.”

“I protected the people! The people were protected! Or did you forget about the guy that would have gone splat if I hadn’t have got there in time!”

“Which I am grateful for...”

“So let me do more!” Carrie pleaded. “I’m not a kid anymore! Get me off the bench!”

“Carrie, you may not be a kid, but you’ve still got a lot to learn about being a hero.”

“If you’d just let me show you what I can do! I’m ready Eileen!”

“What exactly do you want from me Carrie?”

“Let me run point on a mission.”

“Carrie...”

“One mission! Put me in charge!”

“You’re not ready to lead a squad yet, there are actual people’s lives at stake.”

“So what, you think I can’t handle it?”

“Frankly Carrie... no. I’m sorry.” Carrie pursed her lips, pulled her shirt on, and slammed her locker.

“Okay, fine.”

“Carrie, I think you’re capable of so much...”

“No, I know exactly what you think of me! You still think I’m still that stupid teenage girl blowing stuff up for fun and posting it online!”

“That’s not what I...”

“Just save it Eileen!” Carrie walked off, then paused at the door. “You know, just once, I’d like you to see me the way I see you. As a hero.” She left. Eileen groaned and fell onto the bench.

“Why can’t I get through to her?” She sighed, and made her way to Fury’s office, where he was reviewing files.

“Director.” She greeted.

“Well, well, party girl.” Fury laughed. Eileen sighed.

"That was Deborah." She corrected.

"I figured." Fury replied.

"Where are we on Gravity Master?"

"In the wind. But on the plus side it looks like he was telling the truth about the Master of Doom, he appears to be working alone."

"Good, the less of those idiots we see the better."

"I agree." Fury said. "Listen, I've got another op for you, but it's gonna be a few weeks."

"Aw man, not another one of those." Eileen complained. "I hate being away from Josh that long."

"You don't have to take it, I can always send Romanov."

"Nat does so much already, I couldn't do that to her."

"Well it's up to you." Fury said. "I'm putting Jordan on the Gravitonium." Eileen looked up.

"Sir, she's... not ready."

"I think she is."

"I watch her in the field, and while she's improved a lot, she's just not..."

"She's your baby bird." Fury interrupted. "You can't keep her in the nest forever. It's driving you two apart." Eileen grunted in frustration, because she knew Fury was right.

"Alright, I guess Gravity Master isn't *that* much of a threat."

"Good. Now, get back out there, and think about that op."

“Thinking as we speak.” Eileen called, walking out. She turned the corner and saw Nestman standing in front of a door.

“Josh!” She exclaimed, hugging him.

“Hey...” He nervously replied, hugging her back. Eileen suspiciously squinted.

“What’s going on?”

“I’m making sure no one goes into this room.”

“... Why?”

“Because...” Suddenly Acacia came out.

“I got him! He’s actually in New York...” She spotted Eileen. “EILEEN!”

“Acacia!” Eileen exclaimed, hugging her. “Wow, it’s been too long!”

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure it was your wedding! Which is why... I’m getting the gang back together!”

“The gang?”

“E.G.G. Eileen! I’m getting E.G.G. back together!”

“Whoa, uh, wow... okay. That’s great, but... Josh.”

“Yeah?” Nestman replied.

“No, I mean, Westbrook. I haven’t seen or heard from him since we beat Galactus...”

“Neither have I.” Acacia said. “But S.H.I.E.L.D. satellite tracking puts him in New York! In the Manhattan Mall!”

“Acacia, did you just hack S.H.I.E.L.D.’s satellites!?”

“You’re not focusing on the important part Eileen! I found Josh!”

“Right, well, overlooking your felony, I suppose that is good news. But what’s he doing in a mall?”

“Shall we teleport down and find out?”

“I guess so.” Eileen agreed.

“Sorry Nestman, OG E.G.G. members only.”

“Hey, no fair!” Nestman complained.

“Just, go make sure dinner stays warm.” Eileen said, kissing him. “I’ll be home soon.”

“Yeah, dinner.” Nestman recalled, knowing he’d have to get more. “Well, be careful. It’s been a long time, who knows how he’ll react.”

“He’s our friend.” Acacia said.

“She’s right.” Eileen agreed. “It’ll be fine.” They both huddled together, and teleported away.

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“Get your Roxxon Roxberry right here folks!” Josh shouted from behind a kiosk at the mall, wearing khakis and a blue polo shirt with the Roxxon logo on the pocket. “1 gig of data, 2G network, 5-year contract! Doesn’t get better than this folks!”

“Westbrook.” A pencil pusher in a suit with a nametag that read ‘Gary’ called, approaching him. “I just got your numbers for this quarter, and, well, tsk, tsk. You’re not selling any Roxberry’s.”

“Gee, I wonder why!” Josh shouted. “Is it maybe because we’re, I don’t know, about two decades behind the curve!”

“Hey now...”

“I mean, this thing takes pictures in SD! The web browser is joke, it has no app support, there’s no network coverage... why is Roxxon making phones anyways? Isn’t it an oil company? And why did we set up our kiosk right outside of the Stark-Phone store!”

“Are you done?”

“Yes.”

“Good. You’re fired.”

“No! Please! I’m sorry! I need this job!” Josh begged, dropping to his knees. Gary smiled.

“Graveling to me on your knees, that’s what I thought! Now, if you don’t sell at least one Roxberry and lock a contract by the end of this day, don’t bother coming back tomorrow!”

“Yes sir, so sorry sir!” Josh cried. Gary got onto a Segway and rode off. Josh sighed. “Get your Roxberry here! The 5.0 model is the biggest and best Roxxon has to offer!”

“Josh!” He paused, then turned to see Eileen and Acacia.

“Hey!” Eileen happily greeted.

“It’s been a long time!” Acacia added.

“You guys here to buy a Roxberry?” Josh asked.

“Um... no...” Acacia said.

“Then get lost! I gotta sell a phone by the end of the day or I’m toast!” He turned back around.

“Roxxon Roxberry 5.0 here folks! 1 gig of storage, boy oh boy, what a steal!”

“..... I wasn’t expecting this....” Eileen said.

“You think he’d be a little glad to see us?” Acacia said. Eileen approached the kiosk.

“Hey friend, you doing okay?” She asked.

“I’ll be doing a lot better if you buy a Roxberry.” Josh said. “We got ‘em in purple.” Eileen scrunched her face, then took a breath.

“You know what? Alright.” She took out her wallet. “How much?”

“Well that depends on what plan you want.” Josh said, opening up a binder.

“Oh wow, um, here, just let me get the most basic one.”

“Oh but Eileen, if you upgrade to the Roxxon Premium Plus plan, not only do you get to save data to the Roxxon Cloud, but you get sort-of free Unlimited...”

“Josh.” Eileen said.

“Alright, fine, basic package. \$299.99 up front, \$79.99 a month, and you’ve got to sign this 5-year contract.”

“Okay, fine.” Eileen said, swiping her card.

“Look at that folks!” Josh shouted. “Lightstream just bought a Roxberry!”

“Are you serious!” Eileen exclaimed.

“That’s right everyone! If it’s good enough for Lightstream, it’s good enough for you too!”

“Lightstream’s a sellout!” Someone shouted.

“Hey!” Eileen called.

“I think I’ve made a huge mistake.” Acacia groaned, burying her face in her palms.

“Thank you Eileen, you’re the reason capitalism is still a thing!” Josh happily exclaimed. “Now, if you guys wanna talk shop, I’m off at 4:00. Otherwise, I have to get back to work! That’s right folks! Roxberry 5.0! The official phone of Lightstream!”

“Un. Be. Lievable.” Eileen said.

“I guess we can go shopping till 4:00?” Acacia suggested. Eileen shrugged.

“Why not.” She agreed. The girls walked off, leaving Josh to his job.

\* \* \*

“Fury thinks she’s ready, but... I don’t know.” Eileen said, continuing a conversation she and Acacia had started earlier. They both were sitting on a bench outside of the mall, surrounded by shopping bags. “I want Carrie to do well, but I feel... responsible for her.”

“Tell me about it.” Acacia groaned. “At least she still respects you. I’ve completely lost connection with Celeste. That girl hates me!”

“Well I’m sure she doesn’t hate you.”

“She flushed a fresh chimichanga down the toilet in front of my face. She hates me.”

“Hello ladies!” Josh greeted, approaching them from behind. Acacia looked at her watch.

“4:00 already. Hm.”

“Yes indeed. And sorry about the whole Lightstream thing earlier.” Josh apologized. “But it did help me sell a few more phones! How you liking the Roxberry by the way?”

“I can’t seem to turn it on.” Eileen noted.

“Oh, well that’s because you bought the basic package. You need at least the Advanced Package if you want the battery included, otherwise it’s sold separately.” Eileen stared blankly.

“You sold me a phone without a battery?”

“I did.” They stood for a few moments. Eileen then made her way to the trash can and dropped the Roxberry into it. “Fair enough. So what’d you guys come out here for?”

“Oh, well we’re getting the gang back together!” Acacia happily announced.

“The gang?” Josh asked.

“E.G.G.” Eileen said. “If you want.”

“If I want?” Josh snorted. “What took you guys so long! Follow me, I’ve got something to show you.”

“Where are we going?” Acacia asked. “Cause I’ve got a date and I said I’d text the address we can meet at.”

“Ooh, what’s his name?” Eileen asked, playfully nudging Acacia.

“Uh... it’s Sam...” Acacia replied.

“Well tell Sam he can meet us at the Maya Hansen Foundation building in Brooklyn.” Josh said, flagging down an Uber. “You guys are gonna love this!”

\* \* \*

A short car ride later, the three friends stood outside of a small yellow brick building underneath some train tracks with 'Maya Hansen Foundation' painted on the front.

"Still not crazy about you naming an entire foundation after her." Eileen admitted. "After what she did to me."

"I told you, she made the right choice in the end," Josh defended. "And those are the actions I choose to judge her by. Now then, if you could step inside."

"This is a little underwhelming." Acacia said. "What exactly is in here?"

"You'll see!" Josh squealed. They walked into a small waiting room, with two chairs, a small TV on the wall, a table with outdated magazines, a water cooler, and a front desk with Jake sitting behind it.

"Jake!" Eileen and Acacia exclaimed.

"Hey guys." He greeted.

"That's right, from librarian to logger to receptionist." Josh shook his head. "Didn't think you could sink any lower Jake."

"For the god-zillionth time, loggers cut down trees!" Jake exclaimed.

"I don't believe you!" Josh retorted. "Can you let us back please?"

"Fine." Jake picked up the phone on the desk and pressed the buttons 344. After that, a metal door just behind him and to the left beeped and opened. Josh led Eileen and Acacia inside.

"Whoa..." They both gaped in amazement. Inside was a warehouse full of computers, gadgets, machines, technicians, and a giant E.G.G. logo plastered on the back wall.

“Where did you get all this?” Eileen asked.

“Walk and talk.” Josh said, leading them in. “So when I first started the Maya Hansen Foundation, I grabbed this building because it was cheap. I think it’s an old Amazon warehouse or something, but poor location and numerous city code violations forced them to close their doors quick and sell for basically dirt! Now, Mr. Chen, the husband of the woman I saved from the Mandarin in China, Lee Mei, was my initial and biggest... and only... investor! He afforded me to start packing this place with the stuff I needed as a backup lab in case something happened to Egg Base. I even started storing some things here over the years.

“Then Galactus happened and E.G.G. got shut down. But a few months ago, I remembered this place, and I got things up and running again! A lot of old agents were happy to come back, we’ve got plenty of new inventions, and best of all, we do commission work now! E.G.G. is freelancing baby!”

“You did all this?” Acacia asked.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Eileen followed. Josh shrugged.

“I thought you guys moved on.” He simply replied. “I wasn’t trying to hold you back.”

“I’ve literally done nothing with my life.” Acacia said. Josh laughed.

“Of course not. Anyways, the whole place is basically the Humpty Dumpty Hall, but there’s dedicated labs now. There’s the Genetics Lab, the Engineering Lab, the Time-Space Lab...”

“Mr. Westbrook!” They all turned to see a young African American boy, about 14 years old, wearing basketball shorts, a green jacket over a red hoodie and black T-shirt, and a pair of red and white Nike’s that were notably untied.

“Guys, this is Miles Morales!” Josh introduced. “He’s my intern.”

“You have an intern?” Acacia asked.

“Oh yeah.” Miles replied. “I’m getting college credit doing the coolest job in the world!”

“That’s nice.” Eileen replied. “I’m Eileen, this is Acacia.”

“Mr. Westbrook told me all about you two! He makes up these fun stories where you’re all superheroes and...”

“Makes up!?” Josh exclaimed. “Miles, all of those stories are real!”

“No way man, quit playin’!” Miles dismissed. “You trying to tell me that you guys threw down with dudes like Dr. Doom and made it out alive!”

“We did.” Eileen confirmed. Miles’s eyes widened in amazement.

“Awesome!” He exclaimed.

“Yeah, awesome. What was it you were gonna tell me?” Josh asked.

“Oh, uh, I still have that box of junk you put on my station...”

“It’s trash Miles! Throw it out!”

“Well yeah, but, well, some of that stuff is hazardous... and illegal to throw into public dumpsters.”

“Street art is illegal too. You want me to tell your dad you’re doing it?”

“Um, no sir! I’ll take care of that trash Mr. Westbrook!” Miles hurried off.

“Wow Josh.” Acacia stated.

“Is he really even getting college credit?” Eileen asked.

“Not even a little.” Josh confessed.

“Josh!” She exclaimed. “You’re lying to that poor boy!”

“Hey now, it’s not my fault! I’ve been trying for months to get it cleared with the Board of Education, but apparently ‘inventing superhero toys’ isn’t worth collegiate credit hours! Just the system trying to keep the black man down!”

“You’re so embarrassing.” Acacia groaned.

“Anyways, if you guys will direct your attention to my pride and joy!” Josh scanned his hand on a pad and it opened a door to a room filled wall to wall with monitors, and one spinning chair in the middle. “Say hello to my Friendly Neighborhood Watch App.”

“What is this?” Eileen asked, observing that each monitor had a superhero battle on it.

“The Maya Hansen Foundation launched a satellite last month!” Josh exclaimed.

“Wait, really?” Acacia exclaimed.

“Yeah, it was all over the news. And by all over I mean one channel... at 11:00 pm... but yes, we’ve got a satellite! And I use it to monitor any and all superhero, and super villain, activity across the globe! By the way Eileen,” Josh tapped a screen showing the Vulture flying in a circle with Nestman on his back, then tossing him into a fountain just as Spider-Man swung in and kicked him. “Your husband was in a fight with the Vulture earlier today. I mean, it wasn’t much of a fight, but...”

“Wait, you said husband...” Eileen noted.

“You’re wearing a wedding ring, Eileen.” Josh pointed out. “And I did... eventually get the invitation to your wedding, it’s just...” He shook his head. “I’m sorry I couldn’t make it.”

"I understand." Eileen said. "You were doing something important."

"Did you... get any leads?" Acacia asked.

"No." Josh shook his head. "Came close a few times, but... Shadow just kept staying one step ahead of me... If I only knew who she was..." Acacia looked away in shame. How could she tell him that it was her dearest friend, Fumiko Aoki, that killed the woman he loved?

"We can help you find her..." Eileen offered.

"No." Josh stated. He cleared his throat. "No, I wasted a year of my life looking for that woman. Turns out quests for vengeance are toxic, and Chika would want me to move on... So here I am. Moving on."

"Good for you." Eileen said, patting his shoulder.

"Anyways," Josh exited the Friendly Neighborhood Watch room and the door closed behind him. "We've got bunks here, if you guys want to stay. I mean, I practically live here, so..."

"Josh is getting dinner at home." Eileen said. "Maybe not tonight."

"And I'm probably gonna end up sleeping over at Sam's." Acacia said.

"I understand." Josh said. "Well, explore a little. Stay as long as you'd like."

"Hey," Acacia said. "If you've got all of this, why are you peddling broken phones for Roxxon?"

"That's... personal." Josh replied. "And a long story. Something for Chika... I'll tell you guys later."

"Director Westbrook." Agent Becket said, approaching with a chart. "I need you sign off on the beta test for the magnet-glove thingy."

"Of course." Josh said, signing it.

"Thanks. Hey Commander Wuthrich, Commander Blanco, welcome back!"

"Thanks..." Eileen said. "Also it's Nestman now, but you can just call me Eileen."

"Alright then, Eileen." Agent Becket smiled and walked off. Eileen and Acacia both quickly turned to Josh.

"Agent Becket is here!!!" They simultaneously exclaimed.

"Yeah." Josh replied. "Did you know that his first name's not Becket? It's actually..."

"Yeah, don't care, what about Allyson!" Acacia exclaimed.

"Shhh!" Josh hushed, checking to make sure Agent Becket didn't hear. "As far as he's concerned, Allyson is on a deep cover mission in HYDRA and won't be back anytime soon."

"Wait, what!" Acacia exclaimed.

"You didn't tell him!" Eileen cried.

"No! I didn't tell him that his best friend in the world was Doctor Doom's daughter and is lying somewhere dead at the bottom of the ocean! The last thing Alyssa von Doom-face did before she killed herself was brainwash him, so he doesn't remember any of it! You guys should hear the way he talks about her... I can't take that away from him."

"So what are you going to tell him?" Eileen asked. "Because eventually you'll have to tell him something."

"I'm just gonna say she died on the mission." Josh said.

“Really?” Acacia asked.

“Unless you have a better idea, then yes, really!” Josh stormed off. “Have fun! I’ve got lots of stuff to take care of!”

“Wait, one question!” Eileen called.

“Yes, Eileen?” Josh asked.

“Does Fury know about this?”

“No!” Josh exclaimed. “And he never will! Fury’s a bum, he had Earth’s greatest gadgeteers at his fingertips, and he laid us off! Now, we’re doing it all-new, and all-different! Without the government breathing down our necks!”

“Is that what E.G.G. stands for now?” Acacia asked.

“Is what what E.G.G. stands for?” Josh asked in confusion.

“What you just said.”

“... All-new, all-different?”

“What, no!”

“E.G.G. stands for Experimental Government Gadgets, Acacia, tell me you haven’t been here this whole time without knowing that?”

“You literally just said we’re doing it without the government!”

“Oh yeah... I should change the acronym, huh?”

“To what you just said!” Acacia cried in disbelief.

"... What did I just say?" Josh asked, utterly lost. Acacia face palmed.

"You said Earth's Greatest Gadgeteers." Eileen reminded. "I actually like that."

"Me too." Acacia agreed. Josh thought for a bit.

"You know what, it does kind of roll off the tongue..." He raised his fist into the air. "It's set then! E.G.G. is now Earth's Greatest Gadgeteers!" A few surrounding people clapped, then went back to work. "I gotta go tell Jake to change the answering machine!" Josh hurried off.

\* \* \*

Eileen sat in the Eco Lab, fiddling with some plants.

"Deborah." She said. "I know you're listening, and I understand if you don't want to respond, but... Josh told me you sent him to find my ring. I just... Thank you. I didn't think you cared." Eileen's eyes flashed red.

"You really shouldn't be so quick to judge me." Deborah replied. "I'm not... I'm not a monster."

"I know." Eileen said. "I'm sorry. That was rude of me."

"Your words hurt sometimes. Most of the time I don't care, but sometimes... You know what, enough of his emotional feely crap, I'm sorry, you're sorry, let's move on, okay?"

"Okay. Can you just, you know, try not to have me wake in Mexico next to some stranger in a bed?"

"I'll try. No promises."

"Thanks. And Deborah, leggings, please!"

“Don’t push it.”

“Ugh, you’re the worst.”

“Well you’re no picnic.” Eileen, and Deborah, both smiled.

Josh was walking into the Engineering Lab when Agent Becket approached him.

“Hey, there’s some chick named Sam out front that’s here to see Acacia.” He said. Josh paused.

He looked at Agent Becket.

“I’m sorry, did you say some chick?” He asked.

“Yeah.”

“... As in female?”

“Yes...”

“... You’re sure it was a woman?”

“I know what a girl looks like bro!”

“Okay, yeah, sorry...” Josh looked back. He walked to the exit and peeked into the waiting room.

Standing there was a woman with long blonde hair with a headband in it, and blue eyes, wearing a short white dress and high heels. She noticed Josh.

“Um, hi.” She greeted.

“Hi...” Josh replied.

“I’m, um, looking for Acacia Blanco? We’re supposed to be going on a date.”

“You’re Sam?”

“Yep, that’s me.” She said with a nervous laugh.

“Okay...” Josh slowly slid back behind the door and closed it.

“Uh...” Sam began. “Okay...” She looked at Jake.

“They’re really weird here.” He simply stated.

Eileen was walking by when suddenly she was Thwipped and pulled into the Friendly Neighborhood room.

“Whoa!” She cried, as Josh closed the door.

“Sam is a girl!” Josh blurted.

“Wait, what?” Eileen asked.

“Acacia’s date! Sam! It’s a girl!”

“No way!”

“Go see for yourself!” Josh opened the door. Eileen walked to the exit and peeked into the lobby. Sam looked at her.

“Hi there.” She greeted.

“Hi...” Eileen said.

“I’m looking for...” Eileen slowly eased back into Egg Base. “Aaaaand you’re gone.” Sam exhaled and picked up a magazine.

“Sam’s a girl!” Eileen squealed.

“I know!” Josh cried.

“Hey fellas.” Acacia said, approaching. “What’s going on?”

“Sam’s here.” Josh answered.

“Oh, great!”

“Yeah, *she’s* really nice!” He finished. Acacia froze.

“Yeah...” She said. “I was gonna tell you guys...”

“Well why didn’t you?” Eileen asked.

“Well, because Josh is, well, Josh.”

“Hey!”

“And you’ve got that whole religious thing Eileen, I don’t know, I just...”

“Hey.” Eileen interrupted. “You’re my friend. And if this girl is who makes you happy, then I’m happy for you.” Acacia wiped a tear away and hugged Eileen.

“Thank you.” She said.

“What does ‘Josh is Josh’ mean?” Josh asked, offended.

“Anyways, have fun.” Eileen said, giving Acacia a thumbs up. Acacia smiled and walked out.

“Oh, there you are!” Sam happily exclaimed. “Hi Acacia.” Acacia nervously giggled.

“Hi Sam.” She replied. Sam smiled, and moved some hair out of her face.

“Hi Acacia.” Acacia tried to say something, but only came out with...

“Hi Sam.”

“She’s flopping like a fish!” Josh exclaimed.

“Well what kind of friends would we be if we didn’t needlessly intervene?” Eileen asked.

“Um, terrible ones!” Josh replied. They both strolled into the lobby.

“And so then I said, that’s no moon! That’s your mom!” Josh loudly stated.

“Haha! So funny!” Eileen replied. She stuck out her foot and Josh tripped.

“Whoopsie daisy!” Josh fell in an exaggerated manner and knocked Acacia into Sam.

“Oh!” They cried as they fell to the ground on top of each other. Sam laughed.

“Well geez Acacia, take a girl to dinner first.” She said. Acacia laughed.

“Right, sorry, there’s this great Shawarma joint I know!”

“Not the one we went to!” Josh warned.

“Right, that one sucked! Um Sam, these are my friends, Josh and Eileen.”

“We... met.” Sam said, with a half-smile.

“Sorry, we’re weird!” Eileen exclaimed.

‘Told you.’ Jake mouthed.

“Well you two go have fun!” Josh said.

“We will.” Acacia said. She took Sam’s hand.

“Shall we?”

“We shall.” Sam replied. Just then Miles came from the back barely lifting a giant box with broken down inventions in it.

“Coming through...” He groaned. He accidentally bumped into Eileen.

“Ohhh!” He shouted, as he fell and dropped the box. Everything spilled everywhere, and suddenly a blue blaster of some sort powered up and fired a laser, which blasted Sam square in the back.

“Ah!” She shrieked. She began to glow blue, then in a blink, she was gone. Acacia stared in disbelief.

“Aw man...” Miles gasped.

“What just...” Eileen was horrified.

“That’s... not good...” Josh said.

“Not good!?” Acacia shouted. “You just vaporized my girlfriend!”

To Be Continued...