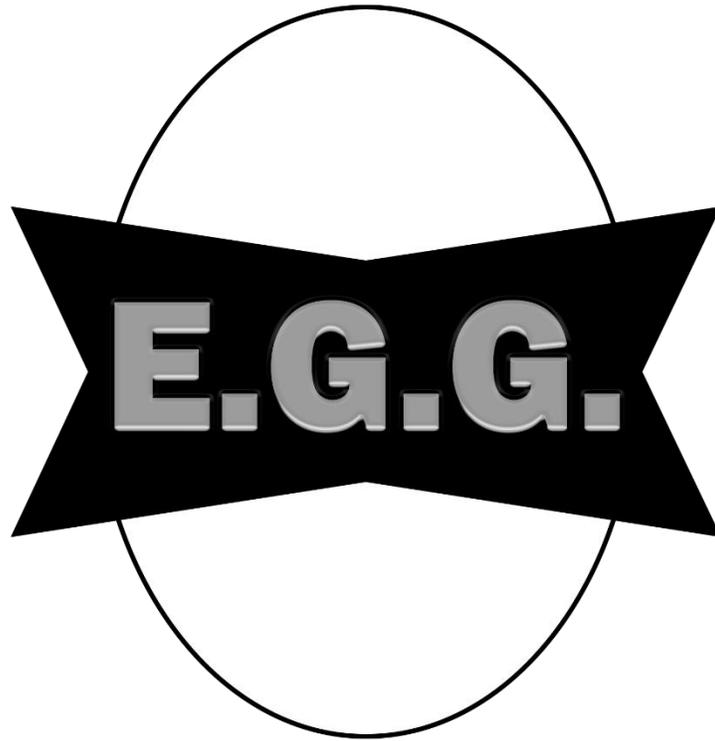


AND THERE CAME A DAY, A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER. WHEN THREE FRIENDS UNITED TO SAVE THE EARTH, BEFORE GOING THEIR SEPARATE WAYS. ON THAT DAY, E.G.G. ENDED. OR DID IT?



-EPISODE 104-

THE PRIVATE WAR OF ALYSSA VON DOOM

Location: Latveria

“Lord Doom, I beg of you...” A commoner pleaded. He stood in the center of Castle Doom’s throne room. Looking down on him was Alyssa von Doom, formerly Allyson Whitcomb, wearing Doom’s armor (with the exception of the mask) and cloak. Next to her, standing as if she were a sentry, was Shadow, Fumiko Aoki.

“My family is hungry...” The commoner continued. “Work in Doomstadt has been scarce lately, what with Doombots being re-tasked to run the city. I was laid off after 45 years at the mill.”

“I’m waiting for the part where you thought it was okay to steal from Doom.” Alyssa coldly stated. The commoner cleared his throat.

“It’s just that... Castle Doom has more food than the entire country at this point... I didn’t think a lowly loaf of bread would be missed.”

“No, you just flat out didn’t think.” Alyssa’s gauntlet lit up.

“My Lord, please!” The commoner begged, cowering in fear.

“Alyssa...” Shadow began but in vain, as she blasted the commoner in the chest and killed him. Shadow groaned in frustration. “That was uncalled for.”

“He stole from Castle Doom!” Alyssa shouted, snapping her fingers and signaling two Doombots to remove the body. “That is punishable by death!”

“Must you follow your father’s archaic rules to the letter?” Shadow asked.

“People do not take me seriously, Fumiko.” She replied. “The thought of stealing from my father wouldn’t have even crossed the minds of these citizens!”

"It's been a year Alyssa!" Shadow shouted.

"And?"

"And, stop trying to play catch up to your father by maintaining status quo. You come off as a pretender and it shows."

"Hold your tongue assassin." Alyssa growled. "Lest you forget whom you serve. Can I even call you assassin anymore? Don't think I haven't noticed."

"Noticed what?"

"That you haven't taken a life since Doomsday."

"Killing is not always a necessity."

"I remember days where you killed for fun."

"I was young. Foolish."

"What happened after you took the life of Chika Tanaka? What changed?" Shadow cleared her throat.

"This is not about me." She simply stated. Alyssa eyed her suspiciously, then shrugged it off.

"It is of no consequence. Have a bath drawn for me. And send Sersi, she's fun."

"As you wish, Lord Doom." Shadow dismissed herself, removed her mask, and made her way to a room where several handmaidens were talking amongst themselves.

"Lord Doom wishes for a bath. Make sure you're in there Sersi." A group of them split off and hurried through Castle Doom. Fumiko exited and walked to her quarters. She took out a picture of Terry.

“And don’t think I haven’t noticed.” She said to herself. “That you have yet to fulfill your promise.”

In her bedroom, Alyssa was digging through her closet for a bathrobe, when suddenly she felt a sharp pain in the back of her skull.

“Argh!” She shrieked in pain, falling to her knees.

“Daughter...” A familiar voice echoed through her head. The voice of Doctor Victor von Doom.

“Father!” Alyssa cried, grasping her head in pain.

“Alyssa, you must find me. You must free me.” Doom said to her.

“Where father... gah... where are you!”

“A point of no return. The Zero Dimension.” And just like that, the pain was gone. Alyssa nearly fell over herself, rushing out of the room and down the halls. She pushed into Fumiko’s room.

“Fumiko!”

“Crap!” She exclaimed, jumping in surprise. “What is your deal?”

“My father is alive!” Alyssa shouted. Fumiko’s eyes widened.

“Impossible.”

“Very possible!” Alyssa corrected. “And more than that, I know exactly where to find him.”

* * *

Josh walked into Eileen’s bunk, holding a Lightstream comic book.

“Issue #57.” He said, reluctantly handing it to her. Eileen looked at the cover to see Lightstream flying in a spaceship.

“Okay, well, no excessive cleavage or disproportionate extremities. Seems fine to me.” She approvingly replied.

“Well, the controversial content is actually... inside.” Josh sighed and flipped to a certain page, handing the comic to Eileen. Eileen began to scan the page and read aloud.

“The ship’s coming in too fast.” She read a female astronaut on the page say. “I can only pray to God that we land safely.” She moved on to Lightstream’s lines. “Well... I don’t really believe in any of that nonsense, but I’ll take all the luck I can get...” She stood there, holding the comic.

“Are you okay?” Josh inquired.

“Why?” She asked. Josh cleared his throat.

“Religiously ambiguous heroes are more... marketable, I suppose.”

“This isn’t ambiguous! Even that would’ve been more palatable, it straight up says I don’t believe in God!”

“Look, I don’t know, it didn’t sit right with me, so I thought I’d let you know, but this issue has already made its rounds, Eileen. So really, I don’t think there’s any reason to...”

Eileen crumpled the comic in her hand and incinerated it to ash. Then she flew up and took off out the window.

“That was a near-mint original print, but okay.” Josh sighed. He walked into the lobby of E.G.G. “Miles get in yet?” He asked Jake.

“No, I think he said he’d be late today.” Jake replied. Just then the phone rang. Jake picked it up. “Earth’s Greatest Gadgeteers, how can we help you today?” Jake listened for a bit, then turned to Josh. “It’s the Fire Department Chief.”

“Oh, goody.” Josh said, taking the phone. “Chief Pratchett! How are you? How are the kids?”

“No time for small talk Westbrook!” The Chief replied. “Is that ice blaster thing we commissioned from you ready yet?”

“Um, basically, we just need to field test it.” Josh replied.

“Well bump that test up to today! We’ve got a fire in the Financial District! We can’t get it out!”

“If that spreads thousands could die!” Josh exclaimed. “Don’t worry Chief, we’re on our way!” He hung up and hurried inside. “Blanco where the shell are you!”

“Hm?” Acacia asked, peeking from her room.

“We’ve got a fire in the Financial District! New invention time!”

“Alright!” Acacia cheered. Josh hurried into the Cryogenics Lab and picked up two white gauntlets with glowing blue fists.

“Traffic’s gonna be rough getting up there.” Acacia warned.

“Good thing we’re not driving!” Josh led Acacia through Egg Base and opened a door to the back, which led to a garage, and hangar.

“No way!” Acacia exclaimed. In the center of everything was a Quinjet, tripped out and sporting the E.G.G. logo. “Where the shock did you get a Quinjet?”

“Well, remember the one you flew up into space a year ago?”

“Yeah... it froze up and drifted off into the void.”

“Well actually it drifted into the atmosphere and crash landed back on Earth.”

“Really?”

“Yep! My Friendly Neighborhood app picked it up and I poached it before S.H.I.E.L.D. even knew it was there!”

“Wow Westbrook.”

“Leave me alone, I had to rebuild E.G.G. from scratch! Now hop in, copilot!”

“Pilot!”

“No way!”

“I made this thing!”

“And I remade it! Copilot!”

“I’m not coming if I can’t fly her!”

“Ugh, fine! The city’s on fire, we don’t have time for this! Get in!”

“Yay!” They both filed into the new Egg Jet, and took off into the sky.

* * *

Location: Top Secret S.H.I.E.L.D. Facility

Ten S.H.I.E.L.D. Agents typed at computers, monitoring various activity. Several guards stood around, armed to the teeth. And in the blink of an eye and a puff of purple smoke, Shadow appeared in the middle of the room.

“What the-” One guard barely began before Shadow got his head between her legs and flipped him to the ground. The guards opened fire as the scientist ran for cover. Shadow kicked one in the throat, dodging and blocking bullets, sliced one on the leg, drop kicked a third guy into a fourth, then cut the last guy’s gun in half and roundhouse kicked him into unconsciousness.

“Up against the wall! All of you!” She demanded, grabbing a scientist by the hair and dragging him to the wall. The rest obeyed out of fright. The doors to the facility opened, letting in a rush of snowy air, and Alyssa von Doom entered. She looked at all of the downed guards.

“Why are these men still breathing?” She asked.

“There was no need to kill them, they were easily incapacitated.” Shadow replied.

“For the love of... Fumiko, dear, listen closely.” Alyssa’s glove lit up.

“No, wait!” Shadow cried.

“We.” Alyssa said, blasting a guard in the head and killing him. “Cannot.” She blasted the second. “Have.” Third. “Any.” Fourth. “Witnesses.” She blasted and killed the last one. “Am I clear?” The scientists began screaming and cowering, as Shadow sighed.

“Yes... Lord Doom.” She said.

“Good.” Alyssa waked over to the line of scientists. “So, whichever one of you doesn’t want to end up like your friends over there should probably swear allegiance to me.”

One boldly stood to her feet.

“We are Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.” She declared. “We will never swear allegiance to the likes of you!”

“Wow. Hope that was worth it.” She nodded at Shadow. “Snap her neck.” Shadow looked at Alyssa.

“She might have what we...”

“DO IT!” Alyssa screamed. “I will not repeat myself Aoki!” Shadow moved towards the woman, who began to back up.

“I’m not afraid of you...” She said. Shadow grabbed her and teleported away. She reappeared outside of a small town. “Wait, what?” The woman asked in confusion, as Shadow teleported back.

“She’s been left to freeze to death in the tundra.” She lied.

“Okay.” Alyssa sighed. “Clearly we’re have some subordination issues.” She powered up her gauntlets and began to electrocute Shadow with green blasts of lightning.

“Gyyyaaaahhhh!!!” Shadow screamed, falling to the ground in pain.

“You serve me! You do exactly as I say! There is no room for interpretation! There are no judgment calls! You do as I command! Am I clear!”

“Yes... Lord Doom...” Shadow shrieked. “Please!” Alyssa stopped, then marched over and grasped Fumiko by the throat, ripping her mask off.

“Maybe you’ve forgotten how to snap a neck.” Alyssa hissed. “Here, let me remind you.”

“No! No! No! Please!” Fumiko begged, but in vain, as Alyssa violently twisted her head, resulting in a loud

CRACK!

Fumiko's body fell to the ground, her eyes staring lifelessly. And in seconds, she disappeared in a puff of purple smoke.

"Now." Alyssa said, moving the hair from her face. "I am reassigning you all. You're going to help me find a way to get someone back from the Zero Dimension."

"This station only monitors the Zero Dimension." A scientist stated. He was Caucasian, male, had a goatee, glasses, and was a bit huskier. "We don't interact with it. It's far too dangerous."

"Okay, listen Mister..."

"Phillips. Jacob." He said.

"Mister Phillips. I don't care about danger, there's someone in there that I need to get out. You get me?"

"The point of the Zero Dimension is that it's inescapable." Jacob challenged. "That's why people toss their bad guys in there. Because there's no chance of them coming back."

"You must be brave or stupid." Alyssa said.

"I'm just giving you facts." He said. "Now, maybe I can help you. I only ask that you let everyone else go free. I'm the head scientist, you'll only need me." Alyssa thought for a moment.

"Fine. I'm not unreasonable." She opened the door. "Go. Any reinforcements show up, he's dead."

"Go on guys, hurry." Jacob coaxed, as everyone rushed out. He sat back down at his station and began to type.

"This will probably take time. Like, months."

“I’ll set you up somewhere with considerably more resources.” Alyssa said. “And trust me, I’ve got time. Patience is one of my... specialties.”

* * *

Eileen flipped in the air and landed in front of a building labeled ‘Marble Comics’. Standing outside on a phone was a white man well into his 40’s, balding, overweight, and wearing a suit that clearly needed to ironed... and washed.

“No, now you listen here!” He said to the person on the phone. “We get Whitney Frost or it’s no dice! I’m not putting any other dame’s face on that poster! Capiisce?” He noticed Eileen marching towards him. “I gotta call you back.” He hung up and turned to her, opening his arms. “Eileen! Doll, sweetie, baby! How’s my favorite cash cow!”

“Barnaby!” Eileen angrily replied. “What have you been doing with my name?”

“Um, making you the most profitable superhero since Iron Man. You’re welcome.” Barnaby flippantly replied. “You seem mad. Are you mad?”

“Yes! I’m mad!” Eileen cried.

“Well gee, what’d I ever do to ya?”

“Well, let’s start with Issue #33 of the Lightstream comic!”

“Yeesh, I don’t ever wanna hear the number 33 again!” Barnaby complained, rubbing his head. “PR nightmare, that one.”

“I wonder why!”

“I’ll tell ya why, it was those prudes at the Mormon church! What’s wrong with a little skin?”

“First of all, it’s LDS.” Eileen corrected. “And secondly, that brings up today’s problem, Issue #57! Barnaby, it says I don’t believe in God!”

“And?”

“And I very much do!”

“Yeah, I wish you’d stop sayin’ that. Look, I don’t give a crap about LSD’s, or LGBT’s, or whatever the heck, every time you mention that stuff, our numbers take a dive!”

“L-D-S! Latter Day Saints!” Eileen shouted. “And I don’t care about your numbers Barnaby! And I’m not going to abandon my beliefs so you can make a cheap buck!”

“I’m hearin’ a lot of accusatory statements here. These aren’t *my* numbers, they’re *our* numbers. You hired me to market Lightstream, so I’m gonna market Lightstream!”

“This isn’t the way to do it Barnaby!” Eileen protested. “How does turning me into something I’m not make me more of an asset? It’s not even *me* at that point!”

“Listen toots, our target audience is teenage boys and 40-year-old neck beards that still live with their mamas! They like boobs, so bada-bing, Lightstream gets a pair of knockers! They get twitchy when things get too political, so bada-boom, Lightstream has no religious preference!” Barnaby began running his fingers together as if to signal dollar bills. “It’s market research baby. We find out what sells, and we make it happen.”

“I agreed to this deal because I wanted to be a role model. Not to horny teenage boys and middle-aged men, I wanted to be someone little girls could look up to. I wanted to prove that if Eileen Wuthrich from nowheresville Arizona could become a superhero, then they could too.” Eileen opened

her arms. "I'm a normal girl. I've got a normal body, and I have firm religious beliefs. I fight for justice, for my friends, for the next right thing. That's the version of myself I want in the comic books."

"Nobody wants that!" Barnaby exclaimed. "People don't pay for 'normal' kid! They pay for exciting, for epic! And no offense, but you ain't a very exciting person."

"Then you leave me no choice." Eileen said. "You're fired."

"Bwaha!" Barnaby heartily laughed. "Take a look at your contract toots! You signed a deal for exclusive lifetime rights to your name and likeness! You can't fire me!"

"Then... I demand you change your-"

"Let me stop you there." Barnaby interrupted. "You ain't in a position to demand squat. Essentially, we can do whatever we want, whenever we want, however we want. You're locked in."

"You snake!" Eileen grabbed him by the collar and her fist lit up.

"Ah! Ah!" Barnaby warned. "See, us normal folks gotta protect ourselves against you superhero types! If you review your contract, you'll find that if you lay one finger on me, I am at liberty to sue you so hard that I'll own you, your dumb costume, your cushy government job, and that schlubby husband of yours! So uh, hands off sweet cheeks." Eileen glared at him angrily, then powered down, and let him go. Barnaby straightened his tie.

"That's what I thought." He took his phone out and began to walk off. "You should swing by the Lightstream movie set, we got a cameo for you all worked out, and hey! I'm gunnin' for Whitney Frost as the lead, so that's not for nothin'! Can you believe they're tryna snag her for a Pepper Potts biopic? Psh, who wants to see that!"

Eileen's eyes flashed red.

“I’ll skewer him alive and burn Marble Comics to the ground!” Deborah insisted. Eileen’s eyes returned to normal.

“No, no.” She said. “If we’re gonna teach these guys a lesson, we’ve got to do it the right way. Thank you, though. I think...” Eileen flew off.

* * *

The Egg Jet sped through the sky and descended upon the Financial District, where a building several stories tall was on fire, and surrounding buildings were beginning to catch on. A tall, African American man in a fireman’s uniform rushed up to Josh as he and Acacia exited.

“Westbrook, thank goodness you’re here!” He exclaimed.

“Don’t worry Chief Pratchett!” Josh replied. “You’re about to get a first-hand look at the BeLow ZeRo Degrees! Or, B-L-Z-R-D! Or... wait for it... the Blizzard Blaster!”

“You come up with that one all by yourself?” Acacia patronized. Josh scowled at her.

“Cut the attitude Blanco.” He ordered. “Use your Regulators to contain this flame.”

“Got it.” Acacia said, tapping her wrists together and activating her Regulators. She held out her hands and began manipulating the flames. “I’ve got it, but this is a lot of heat.”

“Then let me do my thing!” Josh ran for the front door and activated the Blizzard Blasters. He held his arms forward and fired two streams of cold air, suppressing the flames and leaving a thin layer of dry ice so it could not reignite. He kicked in and began firing left and right, putting out the flames.

“He’s doing it!” Chief Pratchett exclaimed. “Alright boys! We got a fighting chance! Let’s get those hoses back up!”

Inside, Josh got on his comms. "Jocasta? You there?"

"I am Director Westbrook." Jocasta replied.

"Good to have you back. Has Celeste patched you into the Friendly Neighborhood Watch's interface?"

"She did! I have eyes everywhere!"

"Excellent, I need you to scan the building I'm in for heat sig- you know what, scratch that, organic lifeforms."

"Commencing scan... Scan complete. There are several people on the third floor, and one on the 13th."

"I'm on my way!" Josh exclaimed.

Josh ran into the staircase, putting out the fires in front of him. He shouldered a door open to the third floor and found trapped civilians.

"Help us!" A man cried.

"Coming!" Josh sprayed the flames around them, quelling the fire.

"Thank you!" They all joyously cried, rushing past him.

"Head for the stairs, single file!" Josh ordered. He ran after them, freezing fires on the way up to the 13th floor, where he found the door open and flames raging. He blasted them and put them out.

"Hello!" He called. "Is anyone here!"

“Yes.” A female voice softly replied. Josh followed to a kitchenette where found a young woman sitting at a table, drawing onto a piece of paper. She was shorter, about 5’3”, with short red hair bunched in a messy ponytail and fair skin. She was wearing a red leather jacket over a white t-shirt, with black shorts, red sneakers, and sunglasses that had yellow lenses. Josh looked curiously at her.

“Hey there.” He said approaching.

“Hey.” She replied, continuing to draw. Josh pulled up a chair and sat next to her.

“So, um...” He looked around. “Are you... aware that the building is on fire?”

“I am.” She simply replied.

“... Okay so other than trying to recreate the ‘this is fine’ meme, what are you still doing here?”

“I’d probably end up hurting myself if I tried to get out on my own.”

“Why’s that?” Josh asked. She looked at him and lifted her sunglasses to reveal her eyes, glazed over.

“Because I can’t see where I’m going, silly.” She replied, lowering her glasses and continuing to draw.

“You mean... no one helped you?” Josh sadly asked.

“No. I suppose when people are trying to save their own lives, no one’s gonna stop to help the weird blind girl. So, I just sat here.”

“Well, that’s terrible. I’ll help you get out of here.”

“Thank you.” She replied.

“No thanks necessary. What’s your name?”

“Cassandra.”

“Okay, well, I’m Josh, and I’m here to save you!”

“My hero.” She said with a smile. She stood up and extended her arm. Josh took it into his.

“Oh, do you want your drawing?” He asked. He picked it up. “Dang, you’re pretty good for...”

“A blind girl?”

“Hey, you said it, not me.” Josh paused. “Wait a sec...” His eyes widened in disbelief, and in fear.

“Where did you... what exactly are you drawing?”

“I don’t know, I saw it in a dream.” Cassandra replied. “That’s where all of my inspiration comes from.” Josh stared at the picture, as if he’d seen a ghost. Cassandra tapped him on his shoulder.

“Huh?” Josh cried, snapping out of it.

“Are you aware that the building is on fire?” Cassandra retorted.

“Oh, haha. Very funny, come on!” He led Cassandra out and down the stairs, putting out any fires he saw along the way. They walked out of the building, where two EMT’s rushed up and took Cassandra.

“Can I... keep this?” Josh asked.

“Of course.” Cassandra replied. “Thank you for saving me.”

“I already said you don’t have to thank me.” Josh replied. He turned to leave, then looked back as the EMT’s escorted her to an ambulance.

“Cassandra! One more question!” He called. She looked back.

“Yes?”

“What’s your last name?”

“Webb.” She called. “Cassandra Webb.” She walked off. Josh looked down at the picture, troubled.

“Westbrook!” Chief Pratchett happily exclaimed.

“Chief.” Josh greeted. “I expect you’re pleased?”

“Quite.” He said. “My boys could save a lot more people with those ice gloves of yours.”

“Blizzard Blasters.” Josh corrected. “And not only do they come in gauntlet form, but also rifle form, and mount cannons you can put on top of your fire trucks!”

“Send me an invoice.” Chief Pratchett replied, patting his shoulder. “I’m about to place a sizable order.”

“Yes sir!” Josh said with a salute, as the Chief made his way back to his men. Acacia soon approached him.

“Phew.” She said. “Well, that was fun. Glad we were able to put those fires out.”

“Yeah.” Josh said, looking back at the picture. Acacia tilted her head curiously.

“What’s that?” She asked.

“Girl I saved inside... she was drawing this. She said she saw it in a dream.” He showed Acacia the picture. She gasped and covered her mouth.

“It can’t be.” She shuddered in fear. On the picture was Josh, with long, black hair, glowing yellow eyes, and a decorative blue and white robe. He also had all six Infinity Stones orbiting around him.

“Infinite Josh.” Josh said.

“You mean the one we trapped in the inescapable Zero Dimension!” Acacia cried.

“Yeah. Along with the Carrie Jordan version of Lightstream.” Josh sadly recalled.

“This... what does this mean?”

“I don’t know.” Josh honestly answered. “But I have a bad feeling we’re about to find out.”

* * *

In Manhattan, there stood a Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It was there where Eileen stood at the head of the chapel, with an eager full house, hundreds of people, including news cameras and reporters, waiting to hear what she had to say.

“My dear brothers and sisters, good morning.” She greeted into the microphone. “For those of you who don’t know me I’m Eileen. I’ve been in the ward for a while but, I don’t make it to a lot of activities outside of meetings on account of my busy schedule as the super hero Lightstream.” Little girls and even some boys bounced with excitement. Eileen smiled warmly.

“I asked Bishop if I could speak about a topic to you all today, one I feel I really need to talk about. Integrity. Clearly my own thoughts proved to me that it was something I myself needed to study and try harder in. I’ll be frank, recently I’ve come across certain renditions of myself in comic books that were... not true to my character. At first, I was upset and angry. But then, I began to worry, why did others see me this way? How could I change that?”

“When confronted with these questions, I remembered the same thought I had before on the phone with Bishop: Integrity. If we turn to the example of Job, a man whom had everything taken from him we see that he said: ‘*Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me,*’. After some contemplation, I decided that the best thing for me to do was to prove my enemies wrong through action, rather than protest or confrontation. To stay true to the goodness inside of me and find ways to be kinder, more prayerful, more Christ-like. Although my integrity to my character is a small choice, I testify that by doing so as well, any one of us can be an example to the world.”

* * *

The world may try to change us, and tell us who we should be or how to act, but when we understand our roles as children of God set on this earth to learn and grow, it becomes easier to know how we should act.

Josh placed the picture of Infinite Josh onto his dashboard in the Friendly Neighborhood Watch room. He sighed and rubbed his face.

“Jocasta.” He said.

“Yes Director?” She replied.

“Run a search on Cassandra Webb. I want to know everything.”

“Initiating search on Cassandra Webb.” Jocasta replied.

The savior was the ultimate example, a perfect and sinless sacrifice to redeem us from our imperfections. Brothers and sisters, be true to he who had sacrificed all so that we may find eternal joy!

* * *

Every once in a while we may find ourselves to show the appearance of evil. But we can return to our true selves through His power and through His love.

Alyssa watched as Doombots loaded equipment into a jet, Jacob overseeing it. She caught a glimpse of herself in the window. She stared at her reflection, seeing not Alyssa von Doom, but the innocent and carefree Allyson Whicomb. She began breathing rapidly, then punched the glass, shattering it.

“Let’s speed this up!” She demanded. “I want to get out of this place.”

This is regaining and retaining of integrity. And growing it to be stronger through good works. In closing, I want to share a scripture from the New Testament: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."

* * *

Our Heavenly Father knows us and when we strive to do good he will bless us. Even if others do not see, know, or understand we still must try to do our best to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Acacia was tinkering away in the Cryogenics Lab, assembling Blizzard Blasters.

“Hey Ms. Blanco!” Miles greeted, entering the room. “Sorry I’m late, school stuff.”

“It’s fine.” She dismissed. “Why don’t you make yourself useful and start putting these things together. Fire Chief ordered hundreds!”

“I’ll get to it.” Miles said, as he put his backpack down and got to work. Acacia sighed.

“Miles?”

“Yeah?”

“Random question. If you had a chance to save someone, but doing so could potentially release, like, a really, really bad guy, would you do it?”

“Of course.” Miles replied. “It’s probably not a good idea to release a bad guy, but if it’s to save someone else? Then that’s just a risk you gotta take.”

Acacia smiled.

“Thanks, Miles. You’re pretty smart, kid. Keep up the good work.”

Not everyone will love us, but not everyone loved Him either. However, He is the path that leads to salvation and exaltation. All we must do is have the integrity to stay with Him, and be true to our divine nature as children of God.

* * *

“This, I say in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.” Eileen concluded. Everyone clapped as she walked off the stage. Her eyes flashed red.

“Do you really think your words will change the mind of that fat, pompous fool?” Deborah asked.

“I don’t think my words can do anything.” Eileen replied. “It’s the faith behind them that holds power. You’ll see Deborah. In time.” She left the Temple, changed into Lightstream, and took off, all of the children waving as she flew heroically into the distant.

* * *

Fumiko opened her eyes in a panic.

“Gaaaaahhhh!!!” She tried to scream but only felt liquid fill her throat. She reached upward but her hand was stopped by a large, heavy object. She banged, banged, and banged, screaming. She used her foot and kicked the lid off. She pulled herself up and fell over the edge of the large pod she had been inside of.

“Ach... grah...” She choked, spewing up orange liquid. She shivered, unclothed on a cold, metal floor.

“Well, look who’s back.” Fumiko turned and saw Alyssa sitting in the corner of the room.

“Why did you do that!” She screamed, tears streaming down her face.

“Stings, doesn’t it?” Alyssa replied. “Maybe next time I give you an order, you’ll listen.” Fumiko curled into the fetal position and began to cry.

“I told you I hate this... this feeling...”

“I know.” Alyssa said. “I honestly didn’t want you to live through that again, but I can’t afford my right hand disobeying me. Do you understand, Fumiko?”

“I understand.” Fumiko whispered.

“Good.” She walked over, lifted Fumiko into her lap, and dried her off with a towel. Then she dressed her in a robe, and gave her a cup of tea. After that process, she guided Fumiko out of the room and into what looked to be a mansion mixed with a museum.

“Where... this isn’t Latveria.”

“No, it’s New York. The Latverian Embassy.”

“Alyssa!” Fumiko exclaimed. “We’ll be caught!”

“No we won’t, I’ve ensured we’re shielded from, well, S.H.I.E.L.D. With Latverian tech, we can hide in plain sight. Also, I have diplomatic immunity here, so even if they did detect us, there’s not a damn thing they can do about it.” She led Fumiko into a lab, where Jacob was working adamantly.

“How’s it coming my little worker bee?”

“With this technology at my disposal? Swimmingly.” He said. “I’ll figure out travel to, and from, the Zero Dimension in no time.”

“Good.” Alyssa said. “Very good. You’ve been such a doll, thank you very much Jacob.”

“You’re welcome, um... what do I call you?”

Alyssa opened her mouth to say ‘Lord Doom’, but she paused, thought for a bit, then smiled a sinister smile.

“Call me... Allyson.”