

***WARNING: This episode of E.G.G. contains sensitive subject matter on the topics of race, religion, disabilities, politics, and sexual orientation. Reader discretion is advised. ***

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 105-~~

PURIFIED

“Eileen Nestman is a sinner!” Shouted an aging white man on a stage to his constituents. He was in a nice suit, wearing glasses, had a head of grey hair, and was holding a Bible. Behind him was a giant campaign poster, branded *Senator Kelly for Reelection* with the tagline *No More Mutants*.

People in the audience hollered and cheered in agreement.

“She has the gall, no... the audacity! To walk into a house of the Lord and quote scripture!” Senator Kelly shouted, followed by a roar of applause. “My fellow brothers and sisters. Eileen Nestman is a mutant, an abomination created by the devil! Not only this, but through unholy sciences, she has cheated death and grown her dangerous mutant powers exponentially!”

“Death to the Muties!” A man cried, along with cheers from the crowd. Senator Kelly held up his hands, silencing them.

“No, my brother, no.” He said. “It is not for us to pass judgment on the mutant filth in our great nation of America. Only the good Lord above can cast his wrath upon these wretches. And I promise you, brothers and sisters, my Purifiers in arms, that a reckoning is coming! Eileen Nestman, or... Lightstream, as she so audaciously calls herself. There is no light around you, and your days are numbered!” Everyone cheered as Josh turned off the TV.

“What a waste of a human.” Josh groaned. “How on Earth did he get elected in the first place? Let alone reelection?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Acacia asked. “He rode a wave of hate and fear into his position.”

“His support base is staggering.” Kyle observed.

“Yeah, a bunch of redneck second-amendment-toting, trigger happy bums that hunt down mutants in the streets.” Josh snorted.

“Don’t bash the second amendment.” Eileen said. “We make weapons for a living.”

“True, but we give those weapons to good guys!” Josh defended. “The Purifiers... they’re another story. I thought you’d be mad about this, why aren’t you mad about this?”

“Senator Kelly’s claims are baseless and vain.” She said. “I knew my Talk would garner backlash. I didn’t think it’d be to this extent, but...”

“He called you a sinner!” Josh cried.

“I’ve agreed to have an open communication with him.” Eileen informed. “Maybe if we can talk, I can educate him.”

“Guys like that often aren’t open to... receiving information.” Kyle noted.

“It’s worth a try.” Eileen said.

“Well, you go to Senator Butt-Face.” Josh said, grabbing a bag. “I gotta see a girl about a thing.”

“I also have a girl to see, about a thing.” Acacia giddily exclaimed. “Date night for me and Sam!”

“I’m glad you all have plans.” Kyle said, sadly kicking up some dirt. “I guess I’ll just stay in Egg Base... alone.”

“Your attempts at sympathy aren’t working.” Josh noted.

“You can come with me Kyle.” Eileen said. “Kelly might get rough, you could serve as a protection detail.”

“If you need protection from an at least 80-year-old man, I feel sorry for you.” Josh said.

“Senator Kelly is 63, Josh.” Eileen corrected. “And if he steps out of line, I’m not the one that’s going to need protecting. Come on Kyle.” Eileen and Kyle walked off. Josh shrugged, hoisted his bag, and left as well, while Acacia hurried to her room to get ready.

* * *

Josh approached small house on the Upper East Side. He knocked on the door, and in a few moments, Cassandra answered.

“Hello? Who’s there?” She asked.

“It’s Josh.” Josh answered. Cassandra smiled.

“My hero.” She recalled. “Come on in.” Josh walked in. The house was pitch black, and sort of a mess. Books and papers lay strewn about, the furniture had no real order or color coordination. Josh tripped on a basket.

“Ow.” He said.

“Watch your step.” Cassandra warned, proceeding with ease. “I’ve kind of learned to navigate my little mess.”

“It’s just kind of dark...” He looked around for a lamp, but couldn’t find one. “And I guess you don’t need any light...”

“There’s some curtains over there you can open.” She noted, pointing to a window. Josh pulled open the curtains, flooding sunlight into the room.

“Better.” He said. Cassandra moved into her kitchen and opened the refrigerator.

“I’ve got soda, if you want.”

“Fanta Orange if you have it.” Josh called. She leaned on the refrigerator door and looked in his direction. “Oh, right.” He walked over and began browsing the soda selection. “Yep, here we are!” He said, grabbing one. “Don’t you have, like, a system?”

“I like the surprise.” She said, searching around and grabbing a Dr. Pepper. “So what brings you by? Better question, how did you find out where I live?”

“You didn’t know I was coming?” Josh asked, sitting on a couch.

“What do you mean?” She asked.

“You, Cassandra, are psychic, aren’t you?” She paused, then sighed.

“I am.” She replied. “How’d you know?”

“That picture you drew, it was of me.” Josh replied.

“That’s what you look like?” She asked.

“Well, imagine a small afro, a less pretentious wardrobe, and, you know, no objects of infinite power floating around. That was a different version of me, a really, really bad version of me that my friends and I trapped in another dimension. You having a vision about him... well, let’s just say that the word troubling is an understatement.”

“I see.” Cassandra said, sitting down.

“I know this might be a bit overwhelming.” Josh said. “Alternate dimensions, evil doppelgängers...”

“Not really.” Cassandra admitted. “The way my powers work... it’s hard to explain, but I’m connected to something called the Web of Life and Destiny. It’s like... a network, connected to all facets of reality, showing me the secrets of all dimensions across the multiverse.”

“Sounds like a cosmic version of my Friendly Neighborhood Watch app.” Josh noted. “Which is how I found you, by the way.”

“Oh, so you’re spying on me?”

“No! I’m not... back to you! What else did you see? Anything helps, this guy is serious bad news.”

“I’m sorry, but what I drew is what I saw. The Web calls upon me to... maintain balance. I am shown the future, and I must ensure that it remains unaltered.”

“That... sounds like a big responsibility.”

“Well, with power that great, shouldn’t an equally as great responsibility come along with it?”

“I suppose.” Josh admitted. “So Infinite Josh, he’s coming?”

“My visions are never wrong.” Cassandra sadly replied. “If I saw him, then yes, he’s coming.”

“Shell it all.” Josh swore. He exhaled deeply. “Then I guess we better get ready. Wanna help? E.G.G. could use a psychic!”

“E.G.G?”

“Earth’s Greatest Gadgeteers, we’re kind of a big deal.”

“Is that why I’ve never heard of you?”

“Okay, haha. What do you say? You can be a superhero! We’ll call you... oh!” He held his hands out dramatically. “Madame Webb!” Cassandra snorted.

“Madame Webb?”

“Yeah! Because you’re a psychic, so they usually call themselves Madame blank. And, you know, your last name is Webb... and you get your powers... from a web... so... Madame Webb...” Cassandra smiled and shook her head.

“Yeah, I don’t think there’s a market for blind superheroes.” She replied.

“You’d be surprised.” Josh said. “Come on, your place of employment recently burned down, you gotta pay the bills somehow.”

“So this is a job offer?”

“Um, yes!”

“You guys have medical?”

“Um... we got dental...ish.”

“Dental-ish?” Cassandra laughed. “You’re funny.”

“I try. What do you say?” Cassandra thought for a bit.

“Come here.” She said, standing up and walking to her kitchen. Josh followed, and sat across from her at the small, circular table. “Sometimes, with my powers, I can see... people’s futures.”

“Ooh, please tell me you have a crystal ball!”

“Ha, no. It works through contact.” She held out her hands.

“Oh, palm reading!”

“Shut up.” She laughed. “I’ll peek into your future, and if I’m in it, then I’ll take your offer.”

“Sounds fair.” Josh placed his hands into hers. Suddenly her eyes began to glow white.

“Whoa...” Josh gasped in amazement. She stared into the air, face blank, eyes glowing, for about ten seconds before finally returning to normal.

“Oh my...” She looked up at Josh.

“What? What’d you see?” He eagerly asked.

“It’s... not important. But I think I’d better take your job offer.”

“You were in my future?” Josh inquired.

“I was. So, *that’s* what you look like.” She blushed. “You’re cute.”

“Oh.” Josh was taken aback. “Well, you’re not so bad looking yourself Miss Webb.”

“Well, I wouldn’t know...” She bashfully replied, running her hand through her hair.

“Hey.” Josh said, placing his hand onto hers. “Don’t second guess yourself.” She looked toward him. They sat there for a few seconds before both clearing their throats.

“Well, I’ll be in touch?” Josh said.

“Um, yeah, totally.” Cassandra replied, standing up. “You want my number? Or did you find that out while you were spying on me?”

“I wasn’t spying! But yes, I uh, I did get your phone number...”

“Haha, okay. Well, I look forward to your call.”

“Good. I’ll see myself out.”

“Thank you. And could you close my curtains please? Don’t need the whole neighborhood to see me changing.”

“Right.” Josh rushed over and closed the curtains, then made his way to the door. “Goodbye, Cassandra.”

“See you later.” She called. Josh nodded and left. Cassandra smiled, then made her way back towards her bedroom.

* * *

Eileen and Kyle walked into a TV studio, where Senator Kelly was sitting in an armchair, sipping a cup of coffee, Bible tucked safely under his arm. Upon seeing them enter, he stood to greet them.

“Well, as I live and breathe, Eileen Nestman.” He said, shaking her hand.

“Senator.” Eileen greeted. “I’m eager to have an open and honest conversation.”

“As am I. Now I hope you know my followers expect me to do my duty as man of the people. I don’t throw softballs sweetheart.”

“I tend to hit home runs.” Eileen retorted with a smirk. Senator Kelly pointed at her.

“You got some moxy, I’ll say that. Um, coffee?”

“No, water is fine.” She said, sitting across from Senator Kelly. Kyle stood just off camera, an assistant delivered Eileen her water, and after a short countdown, they were live.

“Ladies and gentlemen, today we have a special guest with us today.” Senator Kelly announced.

“Eileen Nestman! How are you?”

“Happy to be here.” Eileen replied with a smile.

“Well that’s good to hear. Now then, Mrs. Nestman, you have got quite a story. Born Eileen Wuthrich, in the proud American state of Utah, grew up in Arizona, and joined S.H.I.E.L.D. at the ripe age of 18. Shortly after which you were assigned to your own division, E.G.G., was it?”

“You’ve done your homework.” Eileen noted.

“I have. I also find it rather interesting that, and this is all public knowledge, that you were killed in action, serving your country, by a monster known as Venom.” Kyle shifted uneasily. Eileen cleared her throat.

“I was.”

“So tell me, Eileen, can I call you Eileen? How is it that you’re sitting before us this very day?”

“I was injected with an experimental serum called Extremis.” Eileen honestly answered.

“Unholy science.”

“What can I say? My friends missed me.”

“It’s also through this... reawakening, that your mutant abilities were realized?”

“Yes, this is true.”

“The abilities to, create electricity from your hands, thus compromising any city’s power grid, hack electronics, taking away our God-given right to privacy. Fly, giving you free reign to, well, wherever the hell you want to go, and breathe fire, which, if that doesn’t scream hail Satan then I don’t know what does...”

“What’s your point, Senator?” Eileen impatiently asked. “I don’t, nor have I ever, done any of those things.”

“But you could.” Senator Kelly stated. “As demonstrated by your other half, Darkstream.”

“Darkstream is a-”

“Yes, yes, a clone created by A.I.M., we all read your husband’s, ahem, ‘official story’. But Darkstream is simply what you’re capable of if left unchecked. She was spotted near a school just the other day! A threat that dangerous so near to our children!”

“I’m not her!”

“But you have the potential to be and that is what I think most folks are missing here! You, Eileen, are a danger to society! You should be registered! Marked, so that anyone who doesn’t want to be at risk to your awesome power can have the option to steer clear!”

“Let me ask you a question, Robert. Can I call you Robert? Why do you hate me so much?”

“Hate you? Eileen, come on, be better than that. I respect all the work you’ve done for this country! With S.H.I.E.L.D., and E.G.G., even your time on the Avengers! It’s just a sin and a shame that you were born with a dominate X-Gene.”

“Then let me rephrase the question.” Eileen growled. “Why do you hate mutants?”

“There’s that word again, hate!” Senator Kelly waved his arms. “I don’t hate, Eileen, I love! I love mankind, humans. And I am simply afraid of the threat mutants present. They are born with unholy abilities, and they have the power to eradicate us all!”

“Eradicate? You’re being a bit dramatic.”

“Oh am I? I’m sure you’re familiar with the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants? Raven Darkhölme, a woman who can impersonate anyone, from government officials to the President of the United States! Victor Creed, a savage beast who tears people limb from limb! And his counterpart, what’s his name, Wolverine? He’s no better!”

“Senator...”

“Erik Lehnsherr, aka Magneto. The man who can control any metal on the periodic table, thus rendering any and all defenses against him useless. The leader of this terrorist cell, preaching ‘mutant superiority’ to the top of his lungs! Well let me tell you, young lady, I won’t have it! The American people won’t have it!”

“Senator!” Eileen exclaimed. “You said it yourself, the Brotherhood is a terrorist organization. News flash! Humans have those too! Ever heard of HYDRA, or the Syndicate? There’s bad humans, just like there’s bad mutants! But we’re just trying to live our lives like the rest of you!”

“But you aren’t like the rest of us!” Senator Kelly shouted. “You, for example, marching into a holy temple and speaking as if you’ve earned the Lord’s good graces!”

“It’s called freedom of religion Senator!” Eileen shouted back. “I have every right to go to church and practice my beliefs!”

“Wrong! Those rights are for humans! The house of God is no place for Satan-spawn abomination like you!”

“You pathetic worm!” Eileen yelled, leaping up and seizing him by the tie, her hands lighting up. Kyle quickly pushed forward and grabbed her arms.

“Eileen! Cool it!” He firmly ordered.

“Do you see this America!” Senator Kelly exclaimed. “I’m defenseless against her mutant abilities! Help! Someone help! She’s trying to kill me!”

“Let’s go.” Kyle demanded, pulling her away. He stood protectively in front of Eileen as reporters followed her, taking pictures and shouting questions.

“This is why I need to be reelected!” Senator Kelly could be heard shouting in the distant. “Make America safe again! No more mutants!” Eileen and Kyle got out of the studio, into the Egg Jeep, and drove off.

“He did that on purpose.” Kyle said. “He was trying to rile you up.”

“Yeah, no \$#&% Kyle.” Eileen hissed.

“Hey, that’s not you. Calm down.” Eileen sighed. She took a deep breath.

“Sorry.” She apologized. “I just... I can’t believe I let him get to me.”

“He knew what he was doing. He never intended to have an open conversation.”

“I know.” Eileen sighed. “I have to make this right. I have to apologize.”

“To that jerk? No way.”

“If I don’t, then I’m the monster he claims me to be.”

“Don’t play his game Eileen!”

“What choice do I have Kyle? The people need to see that I’m not dangerous. That mutants aren’t dangerous. If that means I have to swallow my pride and smile in his face, and shake his hand, then that’s what I’ll do. Mutation manifests around puberty. There are kids out there who are confused

enough as it is with their new abilities. Add in a blowhard Senator yelling that they're devil-spawns on TV... He can't get reelected, Kyle. We have to fight fire with love."

Kyle sighed.

"I hope you know what you're doing." He said.

"He has a campaign meeting at his place tonight, what's it called?"

"The Church of Purification?"

"Ugh, yeah, that. I can go there."

"I'll call Josh, see if he can meet us." Kyle said.

"Josh? Us? No, Kyle, I've got to do this by myself."

"No, you don't." Kyle replied with a smile. Eileen smiled back and placed her hand on his arm.

"Thank you." She said. Kyle nodded, and they drove off.

* * *

Acacia and Sam walked hand in hand, both dressed for a night out on the town, to a taco truck just outside of a park.

"Hey Juan." Acacia greeted.

"Ah, Acacia!" The man named Juan enthusiastically replied. "And what can I get you ladies tonight?"

“Oh, I’ll have three chimichangas, two of the Tacos con Queso, an order of carnitas, oh, that crunchy avocado fajita looks good, I’ll get two of those, a side of rice and beans, red sauce, and a Dr. Pepper. And Sam, you wanted the shrimp taco?”

“Yep.” Sam confirmed.

“And one shrimp taco, with a Coke.”

“That’s a pretty hefty order!” Juan laughed.

“Well, it is date night.” Acacia justified.

“Is that so? Well how about I knock 5 bucks off?”

“Aw, Juan, you’re too sweet.” Acacia said, handing him her card. After a few minutes, Acacia lugged an armful of food to a nearby table and laid out her banquet.

“Here you are.” She said, handing Sam her shrimp taco.

“Where do you put it all?” Sam asked in astonishment.

“Sadly, I think it’s all going to my thighs!” Acacia cried with a dramatic flail.

“Um, false.” Sam said. “Or are we forgetting that I’ve seen your thighs... along with everything else...” Acacia choked on her fajita.

“Sam!” She exclaimed, flushing red.

“I’m just saying.” Sam remarked, biting her taco. “Do you remember when we met?”

“I do.” Acacia recalled. “I had just left a funeral, so I was, like, super depressed. I was sitting under a tree, crying to myself, and that’s when I heard you.”

“Also crying.” Sam remembered.

“You were visiting the grave of a dearly departed I believe. And I said: If you want, we can cry together. Then you smiled your big, beautiful smile at me, came and sat down next to me, and we cried together.”

“Wow... our story is a bit more depressing than I remember...”

“Right? I thought it’d be sweeter...”

“Oh well. It landed us together, so here’s to that!” Sam said, raising her soda.

“Amen!” Acacia agreed. Sam took Acacia’s hand.

“I’m glad you were in the graveyard that day.” She said.

“Yeah, me too.” Acacia agreed. They gazed into each other’s eyes.

“Whooo! Alright!” They looked to see three frat boys watching from a distance. “Come on ladies! Give us a show!”

“Make out with her!” Another shouted.

“Morons.” Sam groaned. “Ignore them babe.”

“Aw come on!” One shouted. “If you’re gonna be lesbians the least you can do is show us something sexy!” They all began making crude gestures. Acacia sighed and stood up.

“Acacia...” Sam began, but Acacia held up her hand. She turned to the boys.

“You guys wanna see something hot?” She asked.

“Whooooo!!!” All three of them cheered.

“Alright, here it comes.” Acacia’s hands lit up and she shot fire at them.

“Oh crap!” One cried.

“Let’s get out of here bro!” Another shouted.

“Freak!” The third yelled, as they scrambled away. Acacia powered down and sat back at the table.

“Douchebags.” She said, biting a chimichanga.

“You showed them.” Sam replied with a smile. “But I do kind of wanna make out with you...”

“Let’s wait until they’re completely gone so we don’t give them the satisfaction.”

“For you? I’ll wait for as long as I have to.” Sam smiled, as did Acacia, and they both continued to eat their Mexican feast.

* * *

The Egg Jeep pulled up outside of a church that had been recommissioned, a sign out front that read *Church of Purification* followed by one that read *No Muties Allowed!*

“Charming.” Eileen said.

“I’ll say.” Kyle agreed. He paused. “You hear that?” He asked. They got out and rounded the corner to find a mob of kids, between high school and college age, waving signs around and protesting.

“Purify the Purifiers! Purify the Purifiers!” They chanted. The signs had Senator Kelly’s name inside of a circle and a cross, along with other with various messages such as *mutants are people too* and *Lightstream was right*.

“Well, it’s good to know there’s still some people willing to stand up for what’s right.” Josh called, approaching them from behind.

“It truly is.” Eileen replied. Josh squinted.

“Wait a sec... Miles?” He cupped his hands around his mouth. “Miles!” Miles, who was indeed in the crowd, turned, then excitedly hurried out.

“Hey Mr. Westbrook!” He greeted. “You’re here too?”

“Yeah, man, what is all this?” Josh asked.

“Peaceful protest.” Miles said. “Me and my buds Ganke and Joey actually organized it!”

“Really?” Josh asked. “Wow Miles, I’m impressed.”

“My dad always says to stand up for what I believe.” Miles said. “He also doesn’t think I know he’s in the squad car around the corner.”

“He’s just looking out for you.” Josh defended.

“You like my sign Mrs. Nestman?” Miles asked, holding up a sign with the Lightstream symbol on it.

“Very cool Miles.” Eileen admired.

“Yeah, I saw the way Senator Kelly treated you on TV, and it just didn’t sit right with me.”

“Miles!” Someone called.

“I gotta go!” He said, rushing off. “Purify the Purifiers!”

“Good kid.” Kyle remarked.

“Still gonna apologize to this dude?” Josh asked. Eileen sighed.

“Better to play his game than to feed into his narrative.” Eileen said.

“But look around you Eileen!” Josh argued, pointing to the crowd. “The people know Kelly’s full of it! I say you go in there, and you give him a piece of your mind!”

“Show him who you really are.” Kyle added. Eileen looked between them and nodded.

“Okay.” She said. “I’ll do it.”

“I’ll stay out here.” Kyle said. “Protect the kids if the Purifiers get rowdy. Also the Symbiote doesn’t like church bells...”

“Got it.” Josh said. He and Eileen walked into the fence and began making their way toward the entrance. Two men in red robes and hoods stood outside. As Josh and Eileen approached, one of them drew a gun.

“Turn back Mutie!” He yelled.

“Hey now...” Eileen began when suddenly the second Purifier hit him in the back of the head and knocked him out, then took off his hood.

“Nestman!” Josh cried. “Your husband’s a Purifier! I knew it all along!”

“I’m not a Purifier!” Nestman exclaimed. “I’m undercover for the Bugle! After the way this clown embarrassed you on TV hon, I asked Mr. Jameson to put me on this assignment personally!”

“Thanks babe.” Eileen said, kissing him.

“Um, yeah, shouldn’t you be, you know, inside?” Josh asked. “Can’t cover the story from out here.”

“I was in there!” Nestman said. “It’s just... he’s so full of hate. He was just... spewing vitriol... I couldn’t stand it, I needed some air.”

“Stay here hon.” Eileen said. “We’ll handle this.” Eileen and Josh walked into the church, where Senator Kelly stood at the head of the chapel, Bible in hand, addressing a room full of red-hooded figures.

“I have seen the light my Purifiers!” He shouted. “The Lord above will give us the strength to cleanse the world of mutant filth!” He was met with thunderous applause.

“Tough talk Senator.” Eileen called, all eyes shifting to her. “From someone who just today was cowering from my ‘awesome mutant power’.”

“So you’ve come to finish me off, have you?” He asked.

“I came here to show you that you’re wrong.” She pointed to everyone in the room. “You’re just filling these people’s minds with hate and lies!”

“I’m only preaching the word of the good book.” Senator Kelly replied, patting the Bible. Josh squinted suspiciously at the Bible. Something seemed off about it.

“You’re perverting it to suit your agenda.” Eileen corrected. “It won’t work, and it won’t get you reelected.”

“It got me in the Senate.” He reminded. “Who knows? Maybe next it’ll get me in the White House!”

“Listen, Senator.” Josh spoke up. “I’m, somewhat religious myself, and uh...”

“Oh, yes, please.” Senator Kelly said, opening his arms. “By all means, let’s hear what the dark-skinned heathen has to say.” Josh pursed his lips.

“Okay, never mind.” He patted Eileen’s shoulder. “He’s all yours.”

“Kelly, I’m going to say this once.” Eileen demanded. “Mutants are just as human as you are. Your behavior is vile and wrong, and you need to stop this. All you’re doing is inciting violence and hatred. No more!”

“You know what?” Senator Kelly said. “You’ve been a pain in my side for too long little lady. You wanna see inciting violence?” He pointed to her. “Purifiers! Let’s take care of this mutant problem once and for all!”

“Death to the Muties!” Someone shouted. The Purifiers began to draw weapons, guns, knives, batons.

“Run!” Josh cried.

“Kill them!” Senator Kelly ordered. The Purifiers all charged and attacked. Josh took out a Thwip Blaster and webbed two of them to a wall, pushing out of the doors, while Eileen flew backwards and blasted at them. At the sounds of gunfire, the crowd outside began to scream and disperse. Kyle, now alerted, pulled an Outie 5000 and began sniping Purifiers from a distance.

“Well, was this the plan?” Josh asked, firing his Thwip Blaster.

“Not exactly.” Eileen said, back to back with him, blasting Purifiers. Suddenly a pickup truck with a gunner turret in the truck bed backed through some bushes.

“What the shell is that?!” Josh exclaimed. A Purifier with an RPG stood next to it as another one began warming up the gun.

“Just exercising our second amendment rights.” He called.

“I don’t think that covers rocket launchers!” Josh cried. “You see Eileen! I told you about this!”

“Well they’re abusing it!” Eileen defended. The Purifier aimed and fired a rocket. Thinking fast, Nestman took out a Repulsor Blaster and fired off a shot, blowing up the rocket midair!

“Nice aim Nestman!” Josh complimented.

“Mr. Westbrook!” Miles called, rushing up to him.

“Miles? Get out of here!” Josh cried.

“No way! I want to help!” He defied.

“No! You... I... ugh, fine! Senator Kelly was holding that Bible a little too close! Why don’t you go take a closer look?”

“On it!” Miles hurried across the battlefield, practically unnoticed what with Lightstream drawing all of the attention, and made it into the church. He hid behind a pew and peeked out.

“Yes, I know what you said!” Senator Kelly said. The Bible was open, and he seemed to be talking to it. “Yes, I... Yes I know! Listen, the Purifiers are on it! Eileen Nestman will die tonight!”

Miles began creeping down the aisles.

“Please, I... I know! I’m trying! I just have to get reelected! Then I can kill all the mutants like you asked! I just need more...”

“Yoink!” Miles exclaimed, swiping the Bible from Senator Kelly.

“What the- give me that back boy!” He fumed. He charged forward, but Miles leapt back and pulled his own hood over his eyes. Blinded, Senator Kelly stumbled over the altar and hit his head on a step, knocking himself out cold.

“Now let’s have look at you.” Miles opened the Bible. To his surprise, there were no pages. There was only a screen, with a glowing yellow circle in the center, pulsing in almost a hypnotizing fashion.

“Return this device to entity: Robert Kelly at once!” The book demanded in robotic female voice.

“What the... what are you!” Miles exclaimed in horror.

“I am Master Mold.” It replied. “And through entity: Robert Kelly, I will bring death to all mutants.”

“I don’t think so!” Miles shouted. He turned and slammed the screen against the wall, shattering it. He dropped the steaming ‘Bible’. “That felt wrong... I think that was blasphemy or something...” He looked up at a crucifix on the wall. “Sorry Jesus!”

Outside, the gunner was tearing up grass, trying to get a shot at Eileen.

“Can someone please deal with that truck!” Eileen shouted, flying higher to avoid bullets. Kyle closed his fists and became engulfed by the Symbiote. Agent Venom charged, knocking two Purifiers out of his way, and slammed into the truck, tipping it over and knocking the Purifiers out.

“Awesome move man!” Nestman called. He activated a Wall Crawler and stood there, arms folded, as the four mechanical spider legs on his back fought off Purifiers. Josh thwipped a few more, and Eileen flipped in the air, then came down with an electrified fist slam, taking out any other Purifier that dared to challenge her.

“I think we did it!” Josh exclaimed, as police cars pulled in and cops began swarming the area. Josh hurried into the church to find Miles finish bonding Senator Kelly’s arms behind his back.

“Good job Miles!” Josh exclaimed.

“It called itself Master Mold.” Miles said, handing Josh the fake Bible. “It told Kelly to kill Eileen, and all the other mutants!” Josh took hold of it.

“I’ll look into it.” He said. “And you, Senator, can kiss reelection goodbye after this stunt!”

“You haven’t heard the last of me!” Senator Kelly barked.

“Actually, I think we have.” Josh said. “Don’t worry, maybe you can try for the White House after you get out of prison. I hear it’s super easy for ex-cons to become President!” He laughed. “Let’s go Miles.” He turned to leave with Miles.

“Hope you’ve had a good laugh at my expense.” Senator Kelly growled. “Nigger.” Miles stopped, and turned.

“Man, what’d you just say?” He asked.

“Miles.” Josh said, placing his hand on his shoulder.

“Nah, man, say it to my face!” Miles shouted, getting in Senator Kelly’s face.

“Miles, knock it off!” Josh ordered, pulling him back.

“You hear what this dude just said?” Miles asked.

“I did.” Josh said. “I heard it now, I’ve heard it before, and I’ll hear it again. It’s a word. And you can punch him in the face all you want, but you can’t beat that kind of hate out of somebody.” He looked down at Senator Kelly. “He just has to live with it. In the end, it’ll consume him. Be greater Miles.

He can try and provoke you all he wants, but you have a choice. Engage, and fuel his fire. Or just ignore bigotry, and walk away.”

Miles took a few deep breaths, staring angrily at Senator Kelly.

“I’m gonna walk away.” He decided.

“Attaboy.” Josh said, putting his arm around him. “Now let’s go get your dad. I’m sure he’d enjoy slapping the cuffs on this guy.” Josh and Miles both left the church, walking in solidarity.

* * *

Sam walked Acacia up to the door of the Maya Hansen Foundation.

“Well, I had fun tonight.” She said.

“Me too.” Acacia concurred. “You sure you don’t want to come in? Feeding Pen is stocked on Pop Tarts!”

“I’ve got an early day tomorrow babe. But I’ll be thinking of you if that makes you feel better.”

“It does.” Acacia said. She drew Sam in and the two shared a loving kiss. “Goodnight Sam.”

“Goodnight Acacia.” Sam replied, as she turned and practically glided away. Acacia watched her, smiling, then entered the building.

“You have fun?” Jake asked, entering 344 into the keypad and opening Egg Base.

“I did.” Acacia replied. “Go home Jake.”

“I’m going.” He said, grabbing his stuff and leaving. Acacia walked in, then stumbled.

“Whoa.” She said. She held out her arms. She started to feel woozy. “Maybe I went a little hard on the carnitas...” Suddenly she doubled over and began to cough violently. She fell to her knees, hacking and coughing. She looked at her hands and saw blood.

“No... not now... not again...” She gasped.

“Acacia?” She turned to see Celeste approaching. She noticed the blood. “Acacia! Are you okay!”

“I’m... I’m fine...” Acacia’s vision went blurry. “Don’t worry baby... I’m fine...” She vomited blood, her eyes rolled to back of her head, and she collapsed onto the floor.

“Auntie Acacia!” Celeste screamed, rushing over and taking her into her arms. “Somebody HELP!”

To Be Continued...