

The Somewhat Less than Super Adventures of
The Gargoyle and The Sparrow,
Including the Pseudo-comical Incident of the Fan Fiction
and What Transpired After

By

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ABSTRACT

ARCURI, THOMAS The Somewhat Less than Super Adventures of The Gargoyle and The Sparrow, Including the Pseudo-comical Incident of the Fan Fiction and What Transpired After. Department of English, June 2015.

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What do superheroes do when they retire? Are they expected to go out and reinvent themselves, maybe write a heartwarming memoir--or worse, sit in silence for the rest of their days as if it never happened? Two out of three of those wouldn't make for very interesting theatre, so I went with Option 1. Frank and Eddie (formerly known as masked avengers The Gargoyle and The Sparrow) haven't seen much of each other since leaving the trade, so when Eddie visits his old comrade out of the blue after fifteen years, it's odd enough. When he pulls out a scheme to get back into the spotlight that involves them emulating superfan Katharine's G/S fan fiction and posing as a married couple, the duo can only be bound for stranger tides. My play is a farce exploring camaraderie, the reasons we mask ourselves, the motivations behind fan fiction, and a what-if scenario different enough from Birdman that I felt comfortable writing it to completion.

*For Dad—whose sense of humor made it into the
play, even if his title ideas didn't*

*For Will and Will—the best distractions (and friends)
a guy could ask for*

*And for everyone who's read bits of this and laughed,
or given me advice, or looked at me weird...*

Thanks

Cast List (In order of appearance):

Frank Beckett.....Male, 60-70 years

Eddie Campbell.....Male, 50-60 years

Katharine.....Female, 30-35 years

Jocelyn Slimski.....Female, 25-30 years

Phil the Taxi Driver.....Male, 55-65 years

Ensemble (passersby, news anchors, studio audience, paparazzi, super fans, misc.)

ACT I

ACT I PRELUDE

(Lights up on a large comic book panel. Within it is a brick wall background. Perhaps the tops of buildings and small smokestacks are visible on the horizon. Spotlights dance around the back wall as police sirens sound. Eventually settling on the wall dead center is the signal for The Gargoyle, and as this appears heroic/suspenseful/noire theme music begins to play. Several men run onstage from the left wings, quite obviously—and even comically—dressed as burglars, followed by two men in full superhero drag. One is tall, grand, heavily muscled, and all in grey: THE GARGOYLE himself. The other is younger and shorter, spry, athletic, and wearing a colorful bird mask and a cape as the trademarks of his costume: THE SPARROW. The two supers have caught the burglars at a dead end, they're not leaving until they get what they came for, the priceless diamonds these ruffians pilfered. The fight ensues, the heroes are victorious, and the musical theme reflects this. The Sparrow bows but Gargoyle is already fleeing the scene. The young sidekick hurries after him. Scene Shift)

ACT I SCENE I

(The front room of a ridiculously well-kept, and likely very expensive house. Against the painted white wall and to the right of the front door is a polished wood sculpture of a well-muscled man in a tight-fitting rubber costume, smiling and posing in a triumphant manner, fists to hips. The sculpture has a raincoat thrown over its shoulders and an umbrella through one arm. On the other side of the room there is a pretty and pretty expensive vase. An older man walks around with a duster, cleaning his front room, eventually moving to the vase. This is Frank Beckett. He is in his late sixties, dressed in a plaid robe, with matching lounge pants and fuzzy slippers. Frank is well built from years of routine exercise and his active lifestyle as a crime fighter, and walks upright and proudly most of the time. Age has unavoidably softened him, if only slightly. He is of the opinion that he's fit enough to get by, and that he is ever alert to his surroundings. Here Frank is slightly drowsy despite the fact that it's nearly noon, as he has overslept. A knock is heard at the door. The knock causes Frank to start and push the vase over and shatter it. A reasonably long stream of curses and muttering falls out of him, which continues as he leaves the room to get a broom.)

FRANK:

(He wanders back onstage with a push broom and a dustbin. There is another knock) I'm coming I'm coming. Who on Earth— *(He shuffles to the door and looks into the peephole, and his face starts surprised and drops)* Oh. *(Sighs)* Oh boy. *(Pacing off left slightly, looking at the shattered vase, mumbling)* Couldn't call first...after all these years...think he would learn some manners the tyke... *(Another knock)* All right!

(Frank walks back to open it, and there stands Edward Campbell. That's not quite right of course; please, call him Eddie. Eddie is 50 going on 30. He is more tan than his old friend, and also noticeably thinner and shorter. He hasn't dyed his hair in far too long, but it is still more black than grey. Eddie is wearing a fleece jacket over a striped tee shirt, and boot cut blue jeans. He has one arm through a string backpack, which should not draw too much attention. His bearing is more upright and his energy level generally higher than Frank. Eddie doesn't notice the broken vase.)

EDDIE:

You old stoneface! It's so good to see you. *(They hug, or rather Eddie hugs Frank)* How have you been?

FRANK:

Much the same.

EDDIE:

(Gesturing at the broom) All this lovely property to keep up with and you won't hire a maid service?

FRANK:

I've never minded cleaning up myself. Just need a few hands to tend the garden and the rest I handle.

EDDIE:

You've still got a bit of a spark then, good to hear!

FRANK:

To what do I owe this visit?

EDDIE:

There doesn't have to be a reason for two old friends to get together does there? And on this lovely May morning, no less. I was thinking just last week, 'you know it's been long enough that I've been away from Frank, why not do something crazy, surprise him with some good company out of the blue?'

FRANK:

Color me surprised.

EDDIE:

I mean, I figured you wouldn't be too busy to receive a guest.

FRANK:

Depends.

EDDIE:

On?

FRANK:

What you mean by busy.

EDDIE:

Standing around in a robe is a full time job.

FRANK:

(Looking for an excuse to clean, gestures to vase) You broke my vase, you know.

EDDIE:

(Frank goes to sweep up) Oh? Well look at that.

FRANK:

It wasn't expensive.

EDDIE:

So why do you sound upset?

FRANK:

(Short pause) Because you broke it.

EDDIE:

Don't you have any *super* glue left in that utility belt of yours?

FRANK:

I see your sense of humor hasn't improved.

EDDIE:

Are you kicking me out for that, too?

FRANK:

I never said I was kicking you out. I'm just disappointed you didn't call ahead, and anyway I have sweeping to do, not to mention the rest of the cleaning. By all means, make yourself comfortable. Pull up a chair, rest your bones; it's all the same to me. *(Without losing his temper, Frank shuffles off stage left with the remains, stops rather than exiting)* You still haven't told me what the surprise visit is about.

EDDIE:

Frank, we were partners for ten years, is it so wrong that I get the urge to see you once in a while?

FRANK:

You're welcome of course, but not without your reasons, I'm sure... I suppose you'd better come in. *(They move into the house, to a room with a nice couch and a modern-looking black rectangular coffee table in front of it)*

EDDIE:

Oh for heaven's sake... So. What have you been doing for all this time?

FRANK:

The same thing I was doing five years ago. The same thing I was doing five minutes ago in fact: relaxing. I fill the days with whatever keeps me calm. I suppose that's all there is to it now—life, I mean—and it suits me. You ought to pick up a paintbrush you know; it keeps one occupied.

EDDIE:

Well that's...dull. I mean that's wonderful! Wonderfully Dull Frank! Good to know you haven't changed at all.

FRANK:

Why fix what isn't broken?

EDDIE:

If I had known you had a nice vase I would have stopped to get some flowers on the way.

FRANK:

(Dumping the remains) I've got some hyacinths from the garden. I'll have to cut some more. Think I left the portable shears in the old utility belt.

EDDIE:

(Lights up on that) Speaking of the utility belt, you do still have the rest of the old gear, don't you?

FRANK:

Of course I do. Do you know how many people I'd have poking around my house if I left any of that old junk out with the bins? I won't have it see the light of day again.

EDDIE:

But you did keep it.

FRANK:

(Coming back to Eddie, the scolding father) Edward if this is some kind of half-baked attempt at getting me to run around with you in tights at my age—

EDDIE:

Just making conversation, old man. Though I do wonder how silly you'd look in it now, with your gut and all.

FRANK:

(Draws himself up to full height on cue, but lets it go a moment later) I'm just glad my illusions went long before my form did. It doesn't do to have vitality and waste it on a cause that doesn't need you.

EDDIE:

It's been this long and still you believe that?

FRANK:

I'd rather you didn't make it out to be a tragedy. Our little parting of the ways needn't have been a bad thing. You could have visited more, but that's neither here nor there.

EDDIE:

Can you blame me? I spent all that time trying to do good by the world, and because you ran the show we never got to do anything in daylight.

FRANK:

Look Eddie, let's not have this argument—

EDDIE:

No let's. Let's pick up where we left off. Not five years ago, a full seventeen, because here you are still belittling yourself after this fantastic career you've had. You did exactly the right thing every day of your life for three decades, and then you refused to let

yourself enjoy even a minute of it. (*Gesturing to the sculpture*) Christ, you wanna tell me how you look at that statue every day and it doesn't remind you of what could have been? You were the Gargoyle, Frank! You jumped out of the stonework of the city because you saw the inconceivable crime rates, you saw the world falling apart and you knew what we had wasn't enough. You weren't some vigilante mowing down the slime of the underworld for sport. Hero. There's no other word for it. And you want to tell me that doesn't matter. You want to tell me there's nothing you'd rather do than dodder around Lake George and ignore one of the most profound slices of your life, like you're some Alzheimer's patient?! People loved you—love you—and it just isn't good enough to say that doesn't matter. I know you don't want to be alone anymore, because there was a time when you freely chose not to be.

FRANK:

Lovely speech. But aren't you the one who had the choice, in the end? You stayed on board with me, for what ended up being the wrong reasons. You can't have all that fame and think you'll still do right by the world. How many times have I tried to tell you—

EDDIE:

You're not wrong.

FRANK:

I know.

EDDIE:

Not the way you're thinking about it. But we can do right by the world another way if we really want to.

FRANK:

And what exactly does that mean?

EDDIE:

(*A devious smile crosses his lips, he removes the string bag from his shoulders and takes out a ridiculously large stack of papers and gestures at Frank with it*) So this is where the fun part begins. Frank, this is a book.

FRANK:

Not bound too well, but I can see that.

EDDIE:

It's not just any book. This is a story about us.

FRANK:

(*Intake of breath*) Oh Eddie, you didn't—

EDDIE:

No, I didn't tell anyone who we are—were, but I think we should. (*Before Frank can protest*) And the book has something to do with it; let me explain. It's called fan fiction. You know as well as I do that despite your best efforts stories of us started to circulate, snooping journalists and secondhand stories and all that. Well it turns out the stories kept on going. We're what you might call cult icons.

FRANK:

That sounds suspect.

EDDIE:

(*Light laugh*) Not for the reason you're thinking.

FRANK:

Explain.

EDDIE:

So this story starts out with this bizarre dramatic scene, with us in a losing battle against some crazy femme fatale. And we lose hard. But somehow it's ridiculously funny. (*Frank barely raises an eyebrow, then in a rushed and hushed tone*) And in the next scene we fall in love and have graphic sex.

(*Frank drops the broom, blackout*)

ACT I SCENE II

(A message above the scene reads "One week earlier..." Eddie is at a café sipping coffee and eating a wrap. He is on a break after several hours of signing books and smiling too hard. There are several tables around the area, with people sitting, talking, coming and going over the course of the scene. Eddie's table should be isolated from the rest, and most preferably pushed forward. A sign set on the right side of the stage reads "Today Only, Book Signing w/ Stuntman & Fitness Guru Eddie Campbell in the Barnes and Noble Outlet." A very attractive woman walks up to Eddie and starts talking with him)

WOMAN:
Hello there. Hi?

EDDIE:
(He looks up a bit dully, but lights up when he notices the attention) Hello. I'm sorry, would you like a seat?

WOMAN:
Oh, no thank you. I was just wondering, you're him right? Eddie Campbell the author?

EDDIE:
Guilty.

WOMAN:
Wow, this is like, so cool! I didn't mean to interrupt you or anything, I just wanted to say how inspired I was by your book. It totally changed my life.

EDDIE:
Well I can't say I'm surprised, but I'm always glad to hear it. Do you want it signed?

WOMAN:
Um, are you sure? I was going to wait once people lined up again, I just really wanted to meet—

EDDIE:
Nonsense, always glad to help a fan out *(He takes it and signs)*.

WOMAN:
Do you think you'll keep writing?

EDDIE:
With the right inspiration, I suppose anything's possible.

WOMAN:
Hey, thanks!

(She walks off without a second thought, and Eddie goes back to eating, dejected. A woman in her mid 30s walks up to Eddie's table, holding the manuscript shown in the previous scene. This is Katharine. She is wearing beige pants, comfortable shoes, and a t-shirt that reads: "I crossed over dimensions to seek my destiny and all I got was this stupid t-shirt" or something similar. Her dark hair is naturally curly and looks unkempt, as if she's given up trying, and there's a pencil tucked behind her ear. She finds getting close to him difficult, for no other reason that with every step toward Eddie, she's nearly dying of excitement. Eddie does not notice her, even after she clears her throat.)

KATHARINE:

(After several audible breaths of steeling and anticipation) Ahem. (Pause) Ahem. (Pause, then in one breath, and as if one word) Mister Campbell I need to talk to would you mind?

EDDIE:

*(He looks up mid bite, a quick scan of her and her book) Sorry to disappoint you lady, but I'm on break. The line'll reform in *(He checks his watch, defeated)* twenty minutes.*

KATHARINE:

Oh it's—it's not that. *This* isn't your book—well in a way it is but—could I sit down with you for just a moment? Please?

EDDIE:

Are you kidding me? *(Katharine tries to compose herself to prove she isn't)*

KATHARINE:

It's very important.

EDDIE:

(He stares at the wrap in his hands, puts it down in a huff) I live to serve. (She sits across from him gingerly as he watches bemused) Look, I'm not supposed to get crazy fans in this line of work; for my own sanity's sake please tell me you don't want a lock of my hair for your collection or something.

KATHARINE:

Oh, no. Nothing like that. I'm just a little star struck, is all. And can I just say, you are still incredibly fit looking for someone your age. *(Nearly bites her tongue off)*

EDDIE:

(Icy expression) And what do you want exactly Miss...

KATHARINE:

Katharine. My name's Katharine. *(Mumble to self) Omigosh. Omigosh.*

EDDIE:

Eddie. (*Moves to shake, she responds with an 'eep,' so he pulls back and decides once and for all to drop formality*) But you knew that.

KATHARINE:

I don't mean to be rude, it's just, I think I might actually be right this time, it just seems so possible. You, here, the way you are, and I managed to get here without totally freaking out, I'm...I'm just afraid you'll think that I—I—

EDDIE:

You can relax now. Really, I mean it. If I tell you to calm down, will that do it?

KATHARINE:

Wuh...well I—

EDDIE:

Listen Katharine, I'm on a tight schedule, and I really don't want to disappoint all the nice, healthy people who came to see me today, so if you wouldn't mind getting to the point—

KATHARINE:

(*Whispering into her lap*) I know you're the Sparrow.

EDDIE:

Beg pardon?

KATHARINE:

(*A bit louder*) I know you're the Sparrow.

EDDIE:

If you have something you need to say—

KATHARINE:

(*Excited whisper-shout*) I know you're the Sparrow!

EDDIE:

(*Pause, choosing his words carefully*) What exactly do you mean?

KATHARINE

The Sparrow. You used to be a superhero, but now you're here and— (*She stops when he pushes himself up from the table and glares at her, they both launch in*)

EDDIE
Who do you think you are,
coming here like some—

KATHARINE
You're him! I can't believe I'm
actually getting to meet—

(They stop for a moment, then jump in again)

KATHARINE:
I didn't mean to surprise
you, I just had a hunch—

EDDIE:
If you think this is some kind
of game, sweetheart—

(Both pause again, Eddie looking about as frazzled as Katharine was, Katharine is bright eyed)

KATHARINE:
I'm sorry.

EDDIE:
Please. Speak. Now.

KATHARINE:
It's just such a pleasure to finally, actually meet one of my idols after all this time—

EDDIE:
(Softens a bit at this) Tell me what you need to tell me as quickly and quietly as you can,
or this will have to wait. But I am all ears.

KATHARINE:
All right, all right. Well I bought your book because I was planning on getting into shape,
or at least trying out something new, and I read your bio on the dust jacket and saw your
face, and it looked familiar to say the least. I couldn't place it. I knew you, somehow.
Anyway, I was going through some old collectibles I have boxed in my storage room—I
like to look at the stuff you know, it brings back such wonderful memories—and one of
the things I picked up was a framed photo I had taken almost two decades ago now. Back
then I was really into—okay fine I was obsessed—as a kid I was part of a kind of fan
club and we were devoted—

EDDIE:
Please get to the point.

KATHARINE:
We absolutely adored you. And the Gargoyle. We were, are, your biggest fans.

EDDIE:
I'm flattered.

KATHARINE:

You are? Oh how wonderful! I can't even (*She sees his shaken, agitated look*) but back to the point. We adored the two of you, we looked up to you because you were just so perfect and generous and strong. So the club that myself and my friends formed became devoted entirely to you two. We held meetings, read articles about you in the paper, invited people who had actually seen you or been saved by you to tell their stories, and eventually we told each other stories. We made them up mostly, but they were all about the two of you and how wonderful you were as a team. It was just so much fun, because as...altruistic as the two of you were, you were surrounded by so much mystery. We used that and gave you an even bigger life in our imaginations. It's funny, actually talking to you now, I wonder for the first time if this really is something I should be doing.

EDDIE:

And the picture?

KATHARINE:

The picture...

EDDIE:

You say you saw a picture of something!

KATHARINE:

Oh yes. I'm sorry, this is all... Sometimes we would all sneak out and wander the streets at night trying to find you. It never worked, except for a single, wonderful night. I'll never forget, it was January, and so, so cold. But I was out walking, and I heard a— a commotion above my head, and when I looked up I saw two figures leaping across the roofs. Without even thinking, I grabbed the camera around my neck and snapped. I caught you just in the lamplight; it was too good to be true. And even with the picture quality for those days, it was crystal clear.

EDDIE:

And you kept it all this time?

KATHARINE:

I studied that thing for ages, almost thought to bring it to the papers, but I was too selfish. I never even showed it to my friends.

EDDIE:

Hm. Shame.

KATHARINE:

So I saw your picture, I found my old one, and it just clicked. I nearly fainted right there on my floor.

EDDIE:

Well, it's an amazing story. I'm not quite sure what to say, but...what was the point of this then? You must know I've retired from that business. You're not asking for some daring...act, are you?

KATHARINE:

So, you're not mad?

EDDIE:

Not at the moment, no.

KATHARINE:

Well I—wow, I've gotten this far. This may literally be the most insane thing that's ever happened. But yes, I had this mad, spur-of-the-moment idea that I should find you, and give you, well, this! (*She lifts the manuscript in her trembling hands*)

EDDIE:

What on Earth is that?

KATHARINE:

Something I wrote. About you. Well it's about what I thought you might—I mean what I thought I wanted you to possibly—it's fanfiction.

EDDIE:

It's massive.

KATHARINE:

It's my best work. I took a lot of the stories I made up over the years and re-worked them into one solid narrative. It's been well received in most of the forums I've posted it to. I'm not sure why, but I want to give it to you. You'll probably hate it, but it's just...something I've always wanted to do, you know?

EDDIE:

(*His hands take it, but his face is still processing*) I'm sorry, what was it about forums?

KATHARINE:

Oh, well it turns out my group wasn't the only one. There were lots. Mainly in the Boroughs, but as content started moving to the Internet the stories spread and connected. Now there are people across the country who know all about you, or rather about the Sparrow. I mean, there are more fan stories than a hundred times the number of newspaper columns ever written about you guys. You didn't know about that?

EDDIE:

(*Wheels are turning, slowly*) No...

KATHARINE:

I know we don't have much time now, but there's still so much I want to ask you, about yourself, about him. If that's okay of course! I mean—

EDDIE:

Listen, Katharine, don't have a stroke, but I'd like your number, if you wouldn't mind.

KATHARINE:

House or ce...ce-ce-c- (*She begins to fall out of her chair, but Eddie reacts and catches her*)

EDDIE:

Cell works.

ACT I SCENE III

(A message reading, "That same night..." appears in the frame of the stage. This is the lounge/living room of his apartment. We see a couch at center, with a large number of pictures and newspaper cuttings adorning a section of the wall behind it. These are mainly articles congratulating, maligning, and speculating about the Gargoyle and the Sparrow. Some may even be old enough to have been used for clues in an old case or two. There is a small table off to the left with two chairs, one left askew from the table and one pushed neatly in. Eddie enters from a door offstage left, and drops his coat on the askew chair. Taking off his messenger bag, he impatiently removes its contents, the same manuscript we saw at the end of SCENE I. He stares at it)

EDDIE:

Stories of admiration from—hundreds, she said? Thousands? Thousands of people write thousands of these? It's a freakin' dictionary. This had better be good.

(He plops down on the couch comfortably and cracks it open. As Eddie begins to read, Katharine walks into the light with a pile of pages and narrates the story. Eddie continues to react to the story throughout the scene)

KATHARINE:

Lightning flashed over the skylight of the old shipyard warehouse, illuminating the sinister countenance of Lady Lethe. *(Katharine takes the pencil out of her ear and scratches the name out)* Nightshade. *(Scratches out)* Matrona Catatona. *(Pause, she nods)* She stood there grinning, staring over the handrails of the catwalk down at her victims, the so-called heroes who so foolishly thought they could stop her plans to blanket the City in a fog of sleep.

There on the ground floor, lay the limp unconscious body of the Sparrow, his heart rate already sinking to dangerous levels from exposure to Matrona's deadly poison. And there was the great Gargoyle, rushing to his comrade and lifting him in his rippling mighty grey arms. As he did so, his eyes darted up to catch sight of the villainess, but she was already long gone, dissipated like mist in the storm.

The Gargoyle would have grinned had circumstances not been so dire. As he ran from the building with poor Sparrow over his shoulder, he thought,

"A villain who doesn't stick around to gloat? That's respectable. *(She scratches it out)* That's a relief. *(Scratches it out)* That's new. *(Pause, she nods)* But I won't rest until she answers for what she's done to you. I swear it. This won't be an easy fight, friend..."

(Fade to black and back up, same scene but half an hour later, Eddie's sitting position has slightly shifted, he is completely engrossed. Katharine's voice is still heard reading)

KATHARINE:

"Oh, you're awake." The Great Defender couldn't hide the warmth in his voice any more than he could hide a massive sigh of relief.

As he fully came to, the Sparrow realized several things: One, that slippery devil Matrona Catatona had gotten away, and it was all his fault. Two, the poison was

definitely gone, because he was awake and not dead. Three, he was in his own bed back at the Cathedral—

EDDIE:

(He is seized by a genuine bout of laughter, after recovering) Oh that's hilarious! Why in the hell did we never think to call it that?

KATHARINE:

Three, he was in his own bed back at the Cathedral, feeling refreshed and clean and—he looked down—not in his costume. The Sparrow was wearing a pair of silk pajamas with the Gargoyle's symbol sewn into the lapel. He looked over at his longtime comrade, who was beaming to see the young man healthy and alive. Without knowing quite what he was saying, the Sparrow sat bolt upright and spilled everything that was on his mind.

“She got away we have to catch her, I mean how did you save me, I mean I thought I was done for are you I mean we're back how did we—”

“Whoa, slow down, boy. Everything's going to be just fine.” The older man smiled earnestly as he rested a firm hand on Sparrow's shoulder.

He took a moment to calm down. Blinking in the light of the room, he thought aloud, “Wait, so how did you get the poison out...”

(Fade to black and back up, same scene but more than an hour later. Eddie's gotten through a significant chunk of the book, and he's now lying on the couch holding it in front of his face and laughing uncontrollably while Katharine's voice continues in the background)

KATHARINE:

The sparrow looked into his eyes and softly cooed, “I suppose deep down I always knew we were meant for each other, my friend. I just can't believe it's been all this time.”

Gargoyle didn't need to say anything, his expression was enough comfort. Then Sparrow, drawing his face even closer as they embraced, said, “There's something I'd like to try...”

(Ed continues to laugh as lights fade, and come back up on him sitting forward, bent over and staring at the manuscript, now silent, pondering)

EDDIE:

(Speaks with increasing excitement, as if it weren't to himself) And people still obsess over us like this? No, screw it, this is more than I had bargained for. It's almost insane. And yet...she did say they were all over the internet. We're still famous. We can still be... I may not sleep tonight, but... *(Deep sigh as he goes to take out his laptop from his bag, and turns it on as the lights fade.)* For the fans, then.

ACT I SCENE IV

(We are back at Frank's home, which takes place a while after the first scene. Both Frank and Eddie are now sitting at the table; they've been talking animatedly about the book, which lies open on the table between them)

FRANK:
And people waste their time writing this nonsense?

EDDIE:
And reading it, apparently.

FRANK:
I'm still not sure I can wrap my head around all of it.

EDDIE:
You don't seem too angry.

FRANK:
Really Ed, are you expecting everything you do today to get a rise out of me? *(Amused)*
I'll say this much, even for my younger days, it's given me quite flattering proportions.

EDDIE:
Ha! I was taken by that myself.

FRANK:
Now, where the bulk of the action is concerned...

EDDIE:
Degrading?

FRANK:
Uncanny.

EDDIE:
That's the best criticism you have to offer. Uncanny. Is it possible you've gotten more phlegmatic in your old age?

FRANK:
(Ignoring him) And this thing was just given to you?

EDDIE:
Out of the blue, by some woman. By some—I don't know what you want to call it—by some divine inconvenience she managed to trace her evidence back to me. So at the very least, she knows I'm the Sparrow.

FRANK:

And how do you plan to deal with that? In all my piles of gadgetry I haven't got a thing to induce amnesia.

EDDIE:

I have her contact information.

FRANK:

Plan to ask her for more of these? They're funny.

EDDIE:

In case I need to keep tabs on her.

FRANK:

You want to keep tabs on her? We're neither of us as young as we used to be, you know; as far as I'm concerned, reconnaissance missions are out of the question.

EDDIE:

Oh please, Frank! How could you even imagine I'd suggest it?

FRANK:

I happen to know you better than you know yourself, junior. However you've spun this out, you want something from me.

EDDIE:

(Starts to speak, pauses, sighs) I'd like for us to think about this in the grander scheme of things for a second. What did I tell you before?

FRANK:

I ought to get off my ass and out the door for the sake of—well for some reason or another.

EDDIE:

Because people adore you. And if this doesn't prove it—

FRANK:

The only thing this would have proven back in my day was defamation of character.

EDDIE:

—If this doesn't prove it then there's an ocean of stories just like it floating around the Internet, along with forums upon forums admirably recounting all of the things we actually did do. And besides, the whole homosexual thing is in now.

FRANK:

And?

EDDIE:

Jesus, Frank, don't you read the news? People have gone gaga over the idea of free love. Anybody can love anybody now.

FRANK:

Yes, I know, I've always believed that. I was around for the 70s, weren't you?

EDDIE:

What I'm saying is, the fact that we've—that the idea of us has been folded into this belief in unrestricted love is proof of something fantastic! (*Frank doesn't react strongly, Eddie picks up the book*) The Gargoyle and the Sparrow are still relevant! They're keeping us in their hearts!

FRANK:

I can't picture something like that coming from the heart, myself.

EDDIE:

But that doesn't matter, see? *Fan fiction*. It's all about consumers themselves creating something they enjoy about us. From all the work that we did, out comes this endless stream of mythology. It's weird sure, but it sells.

FRANK:

All right, so we've done the good work, we've left them with...this.

EDDIE:

We made people safe—and happy. Why stop?

FRANK:

Because I'm old! It's not my place to save the day anymore.

EDDIE:

You're missing the point! We don't have to save the day. We just have to give them something they love. You haven't been out and about much, Frank, you're not seeing what I'm seeing. People nowadays, they obsess over the smallest things so easily, content themselves with silly, even senseless icons.

FRANK:

You want us to be silly icons?

EDDIE:

No! We're not silly! We're real heroes. We should have outlived being modest and quiet and boring by now. Just think, if we let ourselves out of the box, what a stir it'll cause. We'll be helping people by giving them new personalities to enjoy. That's all they want.

FRANK:

They want two old men standing on a podium.

EDDIE:

Giving them advice, showing them we're human, (*gesturing with the book*) fulfilling their expectations even.

FRANK:

Edward, that is vulgar!

EDDIE:

Not really! We pretend to be together, it'll drive 'em wild.

FRANK:

Married?!

EDDIE:

Like salt and pepper.

FRANK:

(*Frank sighs, covers his face with his hands, massages his forehead*) You're really quite taken with the idea of popularity, aren't you?

EDDIE:

No more than you're taken with the idea of making people happy.

FRANK:

Exactly how much will we have to lie for this hair-brained scheme of yours to work?

EDDIE:

We're only lying to as many people as there are know we're lying.

FRANK:

And how long's it been since you've spent a decent amount of time with decent human beings?

EDDIE:

C'mon Frank, don't patronize me. Won't it be fun at least?

FRANK:

Play your games then. I'll tag along.

EDDIE:

And you thought you were gonna get to be boring for the rest of your life.

ACT II

ACT II PRELUDE

(The scene opens on another comic book panel set piece with 'hero theme' playing in the background, as a woman in office wear and a beige double-breasted coat is hanging precariously from an outcropping on a building. As she gradually loses her grip and becomes more frantic, we see the younger Sparrow jump onto the scene in full superhero drag. She falls, and in one swift motion he leaps to the rescue, catching her flawlessly. The two recover, and when Sparrow is about to drop a sly cliché on her, he hears maniacal laughter from offstage and the Gargoyle enters. He pulls Sparrow away and the two run after their bounty. The woman is still dumbstruck. Blackout)

ACT II SCENE I

(A series of news reports are heard in quick succession, spotlighted one after the other. Reporters—chosen from the ensemble—show varying levels of professionalism)

...An unexpected duo has taken the media world by storm with their new announcement...

...out of the woodwork, or should I say out of the closet, after decades in obscurity...

...In an announcement via Twitter today...

...Superheroes Turn Super-Queeros...

...all I'm saying is, you don't get guys running around in spandex all day without some homoerotic subtext...

...I certainly didn't see that coming Tammy.
I know Jim, you think you've seen everything when...

...Oh. My. God. I knew they'd be back some day...

...But it's every fanfic writer's dream!
Close enough a nightmare if you ask me...

...This is just another example of washed-up old has-beens co-opting the Gay Rights movement...

...They're adorable!

...They're heroes!

...They're...old. That's weird...

...and there were no survivors. *(Pause)* On a somewhat lighter note, it seems that two men have recently come forward with some shocking information. After breaking the news on social media, Frank Beckett and Edward Campbell held a closed press conference, in which they brought forth evidence that they are in fact The Gargoyle and The Sparrow. The older among you will remember these two as the caped enigmas whose concerted efforts smashed the crime rates of the city through the floor way back when. It seems that they've retired from their career as supplementary law enforcement, and are enjoying their autumn years in each other's company. Among the revelations heavily pursued by the associated press was their recent marriage, following the legalization of marriage equality four years ago. You heard it here, folks: Love is beautiful in all its forms. Sometimes, its even super. *(Transition to next scene)*

ACT II SCENE II

(The scene is a studio set for 'Real Talk with Jocelyn,' a daytime talk show on TV. There are bright colors and strangely inviting geometric patterns in the backdrop, and a small coffee table with one chair to the left and two chairs to the right of it, all facing the table. The studio audience, which occasionally reacts with gusto, is off to the side sitting in bleachers. Jocelyn Slimski is the young host, and she knew next to nothing about Frank and Eddie prior to looking them up on the Internet five days ago. She's TV pretty. She uses notecards liberally throughout the interview.)

JOCELYN:

Hello everybody, welcome back to Real Talk with Jocelyn! Our first two guests today have taken the news by storm with the recent announcement of not only their once-secret identities, but also their wholly unknown relationship and marriage! And I'm honored to say that in joining us on the show, this marks their first ever TV interview! Those of you old enough to remember their bravery and mystique will, I hope, be thrilled to welcome Frank and Edward Beckett-Campbell, none other than the Gargoyle and the Sparrow! *(Wild cheers erupt from the studio audience as they walk onstage and sit in the guest chairs)* Hello and welcome to the show!

EDDIE:

Thank you, it's great to be here.

JOCELYN:

Happy to have you; are you both well?

EDDIE:

I'd say, never better.

FRANK:

Well, a touch of sciatica, but that never hurt anybody. *(Laughter from the audience, Frank is caught off guard by it)*

JOCELYN:

We've got plenty to talk about, but I'd like to start off by congratulating the two of you on the recent announcement of your marriage! *(More cheers from the audience, Frank is stoic and pleasant, Eddie is trying to keep his smile humble)*

JOCELYN:

I'm sure this is a proud moment for the both of you. As former superheroes you must have dealt with some pretty exciting circumstances on a daily basis.

EDDIE:

I tell ya, some days, getting into the spandex was enough of an adventure.

JOCELYN:

I can imagine. If you don't mind me asking, what's the thought process behind those costumes of yours? Why all the gear and gadgets?

FRANK:

Is that one for me? Oh, well...secrecy, I suppose.

EDDIE:

There's a factor of intimidation as well. You figure once you get your name out there in criminal circles they'll learn to fear the mask on your face, or the big guy in gray. And that's pretty much how it worked out. Symbol's a powerful thing.

JOCELYN:

Was there any particular success in your heyday that could match the experience of the past few days?

EDDIE:

Oh I dunno. I was always of the opinion that it was our body of work as a whole that meant something, rather than one moment in particular, though being awarded the key to the city back in '91 was something I'll never forget.

JOCELYN:

And you, Frank?

FRANK:

Mm? Yes, I remember when we heard about that on the radio; we popped a bottle of Mercier to celebrate. Lovely day, though junior here was a bit incensed about not attending.

JOCELYN:

Is that so?

EDDIE:

Well...

JOCELYN:

Ah! That means yes! I never really pictured you as a big fan of the spotlight.

EDDIE:

Eh...

JOCELYN:

Speaking of, the two of you have remained in relative obscurity all your lives, even when we knew you as a celebrated super-heroing duo; what was it like to suddenly have all this attention?

EDDIE:

You know, I admit it was a risky move, but the response from fans has been overwhelmingly positive, and I personally have no regrets about it.

JOCELYN:

So you're not afraid of some criminal kingpin with an old grudge coming for you?

EDDIE:

No, not really. I guess you could say we were lucky in that we never went too extreme with our brand of, eh, vigilante justice would you call it? Never killed anyone of course, or lost them massive amounts of money. And as far as I can tell, most of the old nemeses are either reformed, retired, or locked up on the funny farm. I think the both of us would agree, life's good.

FRANK:

You know, speaking of criminals, as it happens I do remember seeing Phil Archer on TV a while back. You remember Gargantula?

EDDIE:

(Huffs) The guy with the spider fetish? *(Laughter)*

FRANK:

The very man. This was well after his parole mind you, but he was on the nature channel believe it or not, getting interviewed for one of those programs, how this or that industry works, you know the ones? He keeps bees now.

EDDIE:

Huh. Go figure.

JOCELYN:

Wow. Do you keep in touch with any of these former convicts then, Frank?

FRANK:

No.

JOCELYN:

Ever worked with other heroes in your time?

FRANK:

No.

JOCELYN:

Have you known any?

FRANK:

Not many worth knowing, to be honest.

JOCELYN:

I see...

(Awkward pause)

JOCELYN:

I mentioned it already, but let's bring it back around to the marriage. It seems to be resonating with the public in a big way. *(Cheers and applause from the audience)* I had heard of you before, but when a friend—who I'll be honest is a bit obsessed with your 'super' personas—when he told me what you guys had done I just thought, 'wow, what a fascinating pair they must be.'

EDDIE:

Well...

JOCELYN:

Oh don't be modest now! How long have you guys been together? Or is that together together? You see what I mean?

EDDIE:

I've got you. It's...wow it's been a while hasn't it? How time flies. We really settled down when we retired in '98. Of course I haven't 'really settled' myself. As I'm sure you know, I went back to being a stuntman full-time, and had my self-help book published fairly recently, but honestly for the most part it's just been us, taking it easy.

JOCELYN

The book sold well, I hear?

EDDIE:

Apparently it's still selling, which is wonderful.

JOCELYN

And how did you two meet?

EDDIE:

Ah, the uh...the old story.

FRANK:

I've got this one; remember it clear as day. Busy day. By chance, I happened to be in costume after taking care of an armed robbery, when I noticed the smell of smoke coming from somewhere not three blocks away. It happened to be an apartment building. I found out later on it was an electrical fire caused by some careless old bat forgetting to check her toaster. She survived. So I ran toward it as fast as I could, saw that the fire had started

and that the trucks hadn't arrived. Went around to the fire escape and climbed up to the source of the smoke, and found the apartment was empty. My guess is the lady didn't think to stop it or she just ran away because she couldn't. Left her poor dog to burn too. Had to sling the pooch over my shoulder.

JOCELYN:
And Eddie?

FRANK:
Right, right. In the hallway, passed out from the smoke. Slung him over the other shoulder, and heard the sirens coming down the street. Figured they'd take care of the rest, and I didn't have any more arms, so I got out.

JOCELYN:
Oh my. And Eddie, you seem like you've got such strong lungs.

FRANK:
(Slyly) He was a bit tired, I'd say. *(Eddie snaps to attention, gives Frank a look to cut the story)*

JOCELYN:
Oh...?

FRANK:
Ah, yes, he was working that day.

JOCELYN:
And it was love at first sight?

FRANK:
No. *(Pause)* Well he was passed out at the time. And of course that took a while. Those things always do.

JOCELYN:
Yes. Your announcement of course comes in the wake of a lot of high-profile comings out in the media, as marriage equality fervor is sweeping the nation.

EDDIE:
I thought this might come up.

JOCELYN:
Though I gotta say, this blows most of the others out of the water. I mean, talk about a blast from the past! *(Another round of applause)* Anyway I feel like I have to ask, would you say this was a case of you two jumping on the bandwagon, in a way?

FRANK:

If I'm honest, I don't really watch the news much. (*Laughter, Frank is still unsure what's funny*)

JOCELYN:

Oh Frank, you are just a riot! Isn't he, folks?

EDDIE:

Ah, he's just being a bore. Jocelyn, if I may—I understand why it could be construed in that way, after all it's been years since we've been relevant enough to make headlines. The fact is, we did talk it over a great deal beforehand, and in the end we thought that this was for the best. Not just for us, but I think, for the country. After all, the more stable, functioning, same-sex relationships there are visible to the people, the easier it'll be for those out there who are still struggling to understand that they're not alone. Certainly, it's a sentiment that many before us have expressed, but that doesn't make it any less valid. I don't think it's a matter of how many people come out to the world, but how effective it is in moving us forward as a society.

FRANK:

And of course, we did do it for the fans.

JOCELYN:

Oh?

EDDIE:

What Frank means is the fans' *enjoyment*. We've been cooped up for so long, and with all these people who loved us kind of not being able to express it.

JOCELYN:

So you've also come out to meet them, in a way?

EDDIE:

Absolutely.

FRANK:

I myself'd wonder about anyone who stayed enamored with us for all this time. Surely they've got better things to do.

JOCELYN:

You really haven't seen the Internet, huh Frank?

FRANK:

Can't be bothered with it myself.

JOCELYN:

Fascinating. Well listen folks, we've gotta take a break. When we come back we're gonna play a little dress-up with our guests, it'll be just super! *(She motions to a crew person who brings in costumes from offstage. They are "super suits" that are essentially onesies with 'Real Talk' emblazoned across the chest)*

ACT II SCENE III

(Frank and Eddie walk out onto the stage and toward a street corner, some people might pass them by—one of whom has a camera around his neck—congregating at a slight distance and looking them over)

FRANK:

I think that went as well as could be expected.

EDDIE:

Oh do you? Because I felt like a complete fool. I mean, dressing us up in super suits is one thing, but an ill-fitted onesie with “Real Talk” plastered across the front? Ridiculous.

FRANK:

Gifts are always nice. And to her credit, she was trying to make us look good.

EDDIE:

Did you even see yourself in that thing? *(Frank chuckles, Eddie tries hailing a taxi)* At least it’s over and done with.

FRANK:

I did like how you said we’d have our people come and pick up the suits. I wasn’t aware we had people.

EDDIE:

I have a publicist, I’ve told you. He’s not returning my calls, but that’s not important. And another thing—

(The crowd disperses, and from behind them we see a construction of chairs and a platform on wheels that form a kind of taxi, with the driver in a front chair)

PHIL

Where to?

EDDIE:

West 49th and Flatbush. Quick as you can manage.

PHIL:

Step right in, gentlemen. Your carriage awaits.

EDDIE:

(Stepping in) Right. I don’t know why you had to go into detail about the whole rescue thing.

FRANK:

(After him) I like that story, and besides, I had sense enough to stop before I mentioned whatshername. *(Pulling away from the curb)*

EDDIE:

'He was a bit tired, I'd say.' You're lucky you caught yourself, if people find out I've slept with women it could throw the whole thing into chaos. *(Frank chuckles)* What's so funny?

FRANK:

I don't know; it's just something I never thought I'd hear you say. This day is full of that. *(Pause)* How did you get us the interview without your publicist?

EDDIE:

Made a few calls. Star power is a wonderful thing while it lasts.

FRANK:

But you couldn't use your star power and get us a limo?

EDDIE:

Don't I have enough on my plate without calling up a limo company? I'm working my ass off to get our name in lights Frank; the least you could do is cut me some slack.

FRANK:

You're right, I'm sorry.

PHIL:

Not for nothing gents, but this here's the fanciest taxi ride this side of the square.

FRANK:

No kidding?

PHIL:

Ain't she a beaut? Customized leather seating, extra large cup holders, and a bigger library of this century's greatest hits you won't find anywhere else. And who needs limos at these prices, am I right?

FRANK:

It is very impressive, ah...

PHIL:

Phil.

FRANK:

Frank. Pleasure to meet you. You fixed it up yourself?

PHIL:

Not quite within company policy, but yeah. She was getting' old and beggin' for a tune-up, and I wasn't gonna trust just anyone with the job, you know how it is.

FRANK:

All too well, yes.

EDDIE:

Couldn't you have just gotten a new one?

PHIL:

Well, no offense meant pal, but I'm guessing you've never owned a quality vehicle for very long.

EDDIE:

No, I guess not.

PHIL:

Really gets to be a part of ya after a while. You guys from around here?

FRANK/EDDIE:

Yes/No. (*Pause*)

Sort of/Not really.

PHIL:

Ha! I get ya. Couple-a hard workin' guys taking a break from the studio, don't wanna get bombarded with questions about all the celeb gossip. Can't say I'm immune to the urge, but I'll respect ya.

EDDIE:

(*Sighs*) Well actually we don't work at the studio, we were the interviewees.

PHIL:

No kiddin'? That's gotta be a real treat. You guys actors?

EDDIE:

Not exactly, no.

PHIL:

Get famous saving the whales or something?

FRANK:

Nope.

PHIL:

You two those crazy superheroes what been in the news?

FRANK:

That's us.

EDDIE:

I'm sorry, did you say crazy?

PHIL:

Well whadda ya know. And hey, congrats on the comeback! Read about you in the papers and everything, you seem like a couple of stand up guys. You know you two saved my Uncle Sal way back?

FRANK:

I had no idea. Was he getting mugged?

PHIL:

Nah, he was the mugger. Story goes you guys caught him and threw him in jail, he started browsing the library there, readin' up on some Paine and Rousseau, right? Really turned him around. He came out a new man. Still runs a nice flower shop down on 15th, if you ever get the chance to stop by.

FRANK:

That sounds...wonderful!

PHIL:

Makes you wonder how many people around here got stories like that, doesn't it?

FRANK:

That's for sure.

PHIL:

But somebody like you, hangin' around here, must get the odd anecdote every other day.

FRANK:

Not exactly. Though to tell you the truth I wouldn't mind finding out.

EDDIE:

We're trying to keep public meetings to a minimum until we can find an organized venue.

PHIL:

Sounds like a smart idea to me. You must feel pretty lucky, having the run of the city, and having each other.

FRANK:

Well, it's never a dull day, that's what I keep saying.

(At this point, they should be stopped at a light. Several members of the 'paparazzi' come rushing over, crackling with camera flashes and inaudible babble. They should not necessarily be people, but might be portrayed through a mob of puppeteered cameras, videorecorders, and microphones bouncing around and in the taxi, a la Hitchcock's birds or Fleming's flying monkeys)

EDDIE:

(Shouting over the rabble) Well shit.

PHIL:

This is new.

EDDIE:

Any chance you can make the light change faster?

PHIL:

No, 'fraid we're stuck for a bit.

EDDIE:

No comment! No comment, dammit!

FRANK:

(As he whacks away a microphone) Sorry about this.

PHIL:

Eh no worries, my line of work, you meet all kinds.

(The struggle continues, until finally the rabble follows the car as it drives off)

ACT II SCENE IV

(Soon after SCENE III, Eddie and Frank make it to Eddie's apartment, Eddie looks utterly traumatized, Frank winded. As before, the location is signified by chairs, a table, and a simple cupboard)

EDDIE:

(Winded, slumping into a chair) That was awful.

FRANK:

Would've been better if we made more lights.

EDDIE:

But they were coming at us from every corner! I'm surprised they didn't crush the taxi the way they were all clambering on top of it.

FRANK:

All that flashing, surprised we can see at all.

EDDIE:

What a day. *(Motioning to the other chair)* Sit, please.

FRANK:

(He pulls up the chair, turns it to face Eddie and sits) Well, at least we lost 'em that time.

EDDIE:

(Ignoring, rubbing his head) I feel like I have this massive welt back here.

FRANK:

Need me to get some ice?

EDDIE:

Ah, just leave it.

FRANK:

I wonder what they could have wanted from us.

EDDIE:

Everything. And nothing at all, if that makes any sense.

FRANK:

None.

EDDIE:

Put it this way, if the regular press are like gazelles at our watering hole, they're kind of termites to our log cabin.

FRANK:

(Pondering) We're going to have to deal with that mob quite a bit from now on, aren't we?

EDDIE:

I'd rather not think about it.

FRANK:

You might do, Edward. *(Pause)* I'll bet we just went about it wrong, panicking like that—like those finger traps you can't get out of if you struggle? We ought to try standing and talking to them next time.

EDDIE:

Yeah, put that on my obit: "A former great tragically suffocated under a dog pile of sleazy reporters, and he was only trying to talk." I need some ice. *(Gets up to get some ice)*

FRANK:

(To himself) If it's not the bravado with that one, it's the dramatics. *(There is a banging on the door)*

EDDIE:

(Rubbing his head) Oh, what now?!

FRANK:

Were you expecting someone?

EDDIE:

Do I look like I'm—

KATHARINE:

Let me in, let me in right now!

EDDIE:

Oh crap. Her.

FRANK:

(Tentatively) Who is it?

KATHARINE:

You are dealing with a very perturbed, and *very* impatient woman. Either you open the door, or I'm calling the cops.

EDDIE:

Oh good, I'll bet they have a quiet room.

FRANK:

(Gesturing toward the door) Do you think we should...?

EDDIE:

Just...let her in; but I'm not doing this without an aspirin. *(He opens a cabinet and gets a pill for himself)*

FRANK

(Says the following to Eddie, opening the door to Katharine who walks right in) It's your house.

KATHARINE:

You arrogant bas—*(catching herself)* Oh. You're—*(Shakes off surprise)* Oh I'll deal with you in a minute! Where is he?

EDDIE:

(Trying his best not to meet her gaze as he rubs his temples) To whom are you referring?

KATHARINE:

I've been watching the news in shock for the past week, trying to find out exactly what's been going on, and I still have no idea!

EDDIE:

I pity you, I really do.

KATHARINE:

Don't you start with me! I want to know why you've done this!

EDDIE:

You might explain—

KATHARINE:

Married!?! The two of you are married, in public no less! It just doesn't add up.

FRANK:

Excuse me, but I didn't catch your name.

KATHARINE:

(Turning sharply) Katharine. *(More upset than angry here)* And I can't believe you would do something like this. I mean, it just isn't like you at all.

FRANK:

I wasn't under the impression that you knew either of us terribly well.

KATHARINE:

That's not—I didn't mean to imply—(*turning on Eddie*) you stole my story!

FRANK:

Oh, you're *that* Katharine!

EDDIE:

You *gave* me your story. And we...thought it was apropos. If a bit too overdramatic.

KATHARINE:

Apropos?

EDDIE:

Well Frank and I are married, aren't we?

KATHARINE:

Oh please, you flirted with me! A month later, and you're suddenly married to the Gargoyle?

EDDIE:

I have been the whole time!

FRANK:

You flirted with her?

KATHARINE:

He flirted with me!

EDDIE:

That didn't mean anything!

KATHARINE:

And the other woman?

FRANK:

There was another woman? (*Eddie groans*)

KATHARINE:

They were flirting before I met him.

EDDIE:

For the love of god; Frank!

FRANK:

Hang on! (*Pause*) You don't believe we're married?

KATHARINE:

I mean it's just such a strange...I mean it would be fantastic but I can't...no.

FRANK:

Well, you're obviously a bit unbalanced right now, so I'll put you at ease: you're right.

EDDIE:

But-but—

FRANK:

Forgive me if I'm presuming too much Edward, but your attitude back at the start made it seem like this plan of yours was airtight. You're not going to stand there and tell me you forgot to think ahead again?

EDDIE:

But she's just a civilian; she doesn't m—(*catches himself when he catches her eye*)

FRANK:

Mean anything? Mind? Matter? I have to say it's disappointing to hear that kind of talk from you. (*Toward Katharine*) We've wronged you. That much I can see. If you would—kindly—explain why you're upset, and what you want from us, we'd be more than happy to help.

KATHARINE:

(*Sighs*) Well I may have overreacted a bit. Eddie didn't steal my book, I gave it to him because I was, well, enamored with him I guess. Was. Obsessed with who I thought he was, maybe.

FRANK:

Mm-hm. By the way, I thought the story was wonderful.

KATHARINE:

(*Pause*) Oh, you did?

FRANK:

Yes, very funny.

KATHARINE:

Oh my. (*She collapses into the nearest chair*)

FRANK:

Are you all right?

KATHARINE:

I think I just need a second to process that. (*She takes a second to process, which may involve giddy laughter or squealing of some kind*) So. When I discovered his secret

identity, I went and met with him and handed him my book, without really knowing what would come of it. I just...I thought it would be something unreal. And then I got his phone number and—well he never called—but I still got it, that's still something almost unreal. Later that day I went home, and all I could think about was how I should have looked it over, just one more time, you know, just to make sure it was perfect. I mean I was handing it to a personal idol, how could I let it be crap? And I remembered that there was still this awful dangling participle halfway down page 63, but I could never decide how to fix it, and the fact that it was still there put me in a total cold sweat that is until I thought of something even worse which was what if that didn't even matter what if he hated it no matter how I fixed it up what if he was reading it right then with a look of utter disgust on his face and he thought who is this random crazy woman who walks up to strangers and hands them novels about their own crazy sexy gay romance and what if he thinks I really am a psycho and gets me locked up for harassment and like can they even do that because of a stupid book and I was just really, really messy for a bit. *(Pause)*

EDDIE:

Jesus—

FRANK:

Ed! I don't think she's finished.

KATHARINE:

Thanks. Anyway, I calmed down after a few days, and then all of a sudden I'm flipping through the channels when I hear that 'the Gargoyle and the Sparrow have come out of hiding to come out,' and I just couldn't believe it. And I knew, the coincidence was way too good for it to really be coincidence. I wanted to think...what if I inspired them, you know? Wouldn't that be unreal—but no. The more I thought about how Eddie was acting, how he was so nervous about being found and so secretive yeah but still so...utterly straight, I was shocked that he would be married to you, and the both of you in the news as your super selves.

FRANK:

Former supers. We're retired. Famous...more famous...again, but retired all the same.

EDDIE:

All right, now what the hell do you want with us?

KATHARINE:

I want the truth!

EDDIE:

You can't handle the—I mean, you have the truth already, isn't that enough?

KATHARINE:

God, no! Do you think I can sit idly by while my heroes are lying to the city they swore

to protect like, years and years ago? Even for something this stupid? That just seems so...wrong.

EDDIE:

Hey! Don't forget, that's *your* book you're insulting!

KATHARINE:

My book is fiction, mister, and yes it's *my* fiction. If I want to insult it I'll do just that, because deep down I know it's still a beautiful idea. But this, this thing you're doing? *(She points at the two of them, 'cleaning the oven' with her finger)* This is mockery, it's a ridiculous ploy for attention, and you should be ashamed of yourselves for ever dreaming it up. *(Both men are speechless, Eddie taken aback, Frank pensive)* And how about this, if you don't come forward and admit that you were lying, and why, I'll do it for you, and you'll look like bigger idiots.

EDDIE:

And what proof do you have to show anyone?

KATHARINE:

I have a copy of the book, obviously.

EDDIE:

Ah. *(Turns to Frank)* Are you planning on doing anything about this, or are you just going to stand there and take it?

FRANK:

I must say, it's been fun, Sparrow m'boy. But I think it's time we closed out the charade.

EDDIE:

(Pause) This can't be happening.

KATHARINE:

Oh, and while I'm blackmailing you—wow that's what this is, isn't it?—I may as well ask, do you still have the costumes on hand?

EDDIE:

This can't be happening.

FRANK:

Yes as a matter of fact, we keep them 'in case the public demands it,' according to him anyway. Would you like to see them?

KATHARINE:

(She 'takes a second to process' again, then catches herself suddenly, carefully) I'd be very grateful if you tried them on for me.

EDDIE:
This can't be happening.

FRANK:
It's been ages since I've done a quick-change. Hope you don't mind rust-bucket speed.

(They go to change, Katharine enthusiastically following, stage goes black and lights up on them in costume, bleeding directly into the next scene)

ACT III

ACT III SCENE I

(Final comic book panel set, the Gargoyle and the Sparrow are in full costume from the end of the last scene, but it is now some time in the 90s. They are coming away from another job well done, returning to their hideout, which is pictured in a flat backdrop)

FRANK:

That's another job well done, eh Sparrow, m'boy?

EDDIE:

Yeah.

FRANK:

You've got to wonder what keeps these low-brow burglars fumbling for their guns in close quarters, they'd almost be better off trying to take us head on.

EDDIE:

If I were them, I wouldn't be too keen on tackling someone with the build of a truck.

FRANK:

Ha ha! True, true.

EDDIE:

Hey, you wanna tell me something, Frank?

FRANK:

What's that?

EDDIE:

We're leaving the latest batch of freshly caught perps right in front of the police station. Why?

FRANK:

I thought you enjoyed the idea that it was a...what did you call it? *(With distaste)* 'One big "fuck you" to the incompetent little shits in blue?' Still find that a little rude, by the way.

EDDIE:

Yeah, yeah, but still—and I've been thinking about this a lot—don't you think leaving them with the cops, doesn't it take away from some of *our* credit?

FRANK:

Not really.

EDDIE:

Of course you don't.

FRANK:

People must know it's us doing it. After all, what officer would leave three carjackers tied up in a rope on his doorstep?

EDDIE:

But we should at least make it so that someone sees us, otherwise what's the point?

FRANK:

Oh yes, good one Ed. Why don't you go ahead and strike a pose by the next unconscious criminal, that way someone can snap a polaroid of you? Maybe a pretty young woman will come along, compliment your biceps and ask to peek under the hood. The point, Edward, is that we're not wearing these masks for no reason. Just like the Kevlar padding in the suits, we use the masks to protect us. No identity, no discernable weakness, no problems outside the cases we've yet to solve.

(Eddie is unimpressed. Flash forward, a text box above them reads, "Some Time Later." They have returned to their hideout after another day's work, Eddie is placing his mask on a mannequin, Frank is re-stocking his utility belt. The backdrop of the scene has shifted slightly, perhaps a chair more to the left, a coat missing)

FRANK

You feeling nervous at all?

EDDIE:

No, not yet anyway. I'm seeing her again tomorrow night—er...make that tonight I guess, for drinks. I think this one might work out.

FRANK:

Well, as long as you think so.

EDDIE:

You don't?

FRANK:

It's a tough tray to balance, but I've got nothing but faith in you, you know that.

EDDIE:

Oh please, don't do the dad thing, anything but the dad thing.

FRANK:

What? We've both been working ourselves to the bone lately; can't I be a little relieved to hear your love life's picked itself up from the ashes?

EDDIE:

Well, when you put it that way—hey, whadda you mean ashes? (*Frank laughs heartily*)

(Flash forward. Once again at the hideout. A text box reads “A Month Passes.” The background of the scene has shifted slightly once more. The air is tense, Eddie is not wearing his mask, but clutching it in his hand. He is looking straight at Frank, who is wearing his mask and trying to avert his gaze.)

EDDIE:

What do you mean, she can't know?

FRANK:

Exactly what I said.

EDDIE:

Frank, I want to be with her. The least I could do is tell her the truth, that way I can better protect her.

FRANK:

Haven't you been listening? You'll do nothing to protect yourself, let alone her, if you go around revealing your identity.

EDDIE:

Go a—GO AROUND?! It's one civilian, Frank! And we are talking about the woman I love here.

FRANK

I hardly think—

EDDIE:

No! No way am I letting your paranoia get in the way of this. I spend every night devoting myself to a cause that I get nothing for, because I see that I'm supposed to respect the cause. Because I *do* respect you! For the past month, I've spent every day devoting myself to—(*blurred name*) because we respect each other. You hear any difference there? Respect, partnership, it's a goddam two-way street Frank!

FRANK:

Eddie you have no reason to doubt my trust in you; I'm looking out for the both of us when I say we can't just invite this woman into the loop who you barely even know.

EDDIE:

That would be you, who doesn't know her. Have you even bothered to meet her once? No.

FRANK:

I know enough from what you tell me.

EDDIE:

Bull. Shit. Honestly, I'd even be okay with you spying on her at this point, just to prove you take an interest in my life.

FRANK:

Oh please, I'd never stoop so low.

EDDIE:

No, no you wouldn't. *(Looks at the mask in his clenched fist, throws it down)* Enjoy your fortress of solitude, Mr. Gargoyle. I'm gonna go out and live. *(Eddie exits without giving Frank a chance to respond)*

FRANK:

(Frank looks after him for a beat, looks down at the mask, picks it up, continues to look at the mask) All right then.

ACT III SCENE II

(A table and chairs are being set up onstage, as well as posters/signs advertising 'The Gargoyle and The Sparrow' near the table. A banner is raised and hung above the scene that says "SuperFanCon." Frank and Eddie walk onstage, to the table that's been marked for them. Throughout the beginning of the scene, several others walk by, fellow superheroes and event technicians alike, setting up other tables)

FRANK:

And other heroes from all around gather in places like this?

EDDIE:

Sure, it's good publicity. Nearly national event. And it gets you up close with all the little people, which is just great.

FRANK:

Odd. For all the space it feels almost homey.

EDDIE:

I wouldn't get too comfortable, the whole congregation'll be turning sour on us soon enough.

FRANK:

Then I suppose we'll just have to enjoy it for what it's worth. *(Pause, Frank sees an older woman passing by, very comfortably dressed)* Is that...Enid Barry?

EDDIE:

Who?

FRANK:

The former Mrs. Dash? She was a real looker back in the day, though we never ran in the same circles.

EDDIE:

(Eddie gives him a look, bemused, surprised) Did I really just hear you say that?

FRANK:

What, I can't have opinions?

EDDIE:

(He's started people watching now) I think that one over there is Jackrabbit. He's new to the job, seems like an oddball. And there goes Fire Chief, another one of the eh...youngsters. Bit of a tool, if you ask me.

FRANK:

His power is putting out fires?

EDDIE:

No, he breathes fire.

FRANK:

Why didn't he call himself the Dragon then? Where's the imagination gone with these kids?

EDDIE:

(Shrugs) The future of crime-fighting.

FRANK:

Never did like the ones with all the flashy powers. This looks like our spot.

EDDIE:

Looks like it.

FRANK:

(Both go to sit) Oh, and they've even got posters of us, how...flashy.

EDDIE:

It's quaint, I suppose.

FRANK:

And we just sit here for a while and sign pieces of paper?

EDDIE:

Lunch break's three hours after we start, and then...we get to go and give our speech.

FRANK:

I thought it was a panel discussion.

EDDIE:

I'll be honest with you; I'm not much interested in what the panel has to say.

FRANK:

(Staring at a program in his hand) We're at the tail end of the whole thing. '*Finding the L-G-B-T-Q-I-A in Heroics.*' That's a mouthful. What does that all mean? Is it an acronym?

EDDIE:

It's not all that important.

FRANK:

...'*Featuring Sistaire, The Merman, and The Gargoyle and The Sparrow.*' The Merman's gay? I had no idea.

EDDIE:

(Forced humor) Thought he was sleeping with the fishes?

FRANK:

I'll bet you think you're clever.

EDDIE:

I have my moments. *(Pause)*

FRANK:

You're a bit tense, you know? Do you think you'll be all right?

EDDIE:

Sure, fine. Let's just get this over with.

(There is a light change, and super fans start to throng the stage—some carousing, others lining up for autographs, all occasionally “wowing” at the people they see. Some may be plainclothes, others in homemade costumes. Ages range from mid-teens to thirties. A security guard is standing around; he is not entirely sure of why he needs to be there)

VARIOUS FANS 1:

(The following are suggested conversations; improvise as necessary)

I heard Fire Chief was gonna do a fire breathing exhibition later.

Oh my God that's gonna be so awesome!

Do you think he ever burnt a villain to a crisp?

Totally, I mean he looks so badass...

VARIOUS FANS 2:

No man, I'm telling you, The Marvelous Myriad's defeat of Under-Thunder was the greatest most challenging, like, *challenge* of their career!

No way dude...

VARIOUS FANS 3:

I so-o-o-o can't wait to see what Captain Janus is like in person!

I know! He's so mysterious.

I just can't get over his chin! So manly...

(At the table, Frank and Eddie are signing autographs)

FRANK:

Thanks for stopping by Brenda, pleasure to meet you.

EDDIE:

Who am I making this out to?

(After a while, a young man in a costume gets to the front of the line and starts talking to Frank and Eddie)

YOUNG MAN:

Wow, hi! I'm Kiernan. It's so great to finally meet you two. Can I...? *(Offers his hand to shake)*

FRANK:

(Reciprocating) Of course, of course! Pleasure's all mine.

EDDIE:

(As he moves to Eddie, offers hand halfheartedly) Likewise.

YOUNG MAN:

I uh, just wanted to say I thought what you guys did was really brave. I actually have a cousin who—But anyway I mean, you guys have always been pretty brave I guess.

FRANK:

You do what you have to to get by I suppose. Did you make that outfit yourself, by the way? Very impressive.

YOUNG MAN:

You like it? Yeah. A couple of my friends thought it was weird, but I think I'm proud of it anyway.

FRANK:

Well, you should be! Sewing is a lost but valuable art among most men, I find. Me, I made and mended my own suits for all the time I used them. Came in quite handy.

YOUNG MAN:

Wow. But actually?

EDDIE:

Mm. Bit of sewing, proper diet and exercise, and you too can be a hero.

YOUNG MAN:

Ha ha, I don't know about that. It was uh, nice meeting you...and uh, thanks! *(He goes off, the line moves)*

EDDIE:

(To the next person) To Maggie? Sure. *(Pause, then to Frank)* Sad that we're gonna lose that kind of enthusiasm after today, huh?

FRANK:

(Signing for someone else) Hm? Yes, I suppose it is.

EDDIE:

Do you think maybe there's a chance that we can keep it somehow?

FRANK:

Honesty is always a good place to start.

EDDIE:

(Pause) Oh yeah, good, good; *that'll* work.

FRANK:

Do you not agree?

EDDIE:

Maybe I'd agree if you were a bit more committed.

FRANK:

What was that?

EDDIE:

You were skeptical of my plan, and then you agreed. You turn on me because of her, and now you're making nice with the people you're about to—never mind.

FRANK:

(They go on signing in relative indifference to each other for a short time, then the lunch bell sounds) Ah, break time.

SECURITY GUARD:

All right folks in line, clear out. There'll be time for more signing later.

(The line disperses. As Frank and Eddie move away from the throng of people, they move in the opposite direction, and lights focus on the two)

FRANK:

So you're worried.

EDDIE:

What was your first clue?

FRANK:

It's not that I don't understand, but I don't think we have much of a choice in the matter. May as well resign yourself to it.

EDDIE:

Katharine's just one person, Frank, how much effort will it take to stop her from doing something stupid?

FRANK:

About as much as it'd take to stop you, I'm guessing. *(Pause)* You said you don't find me 'committed?' What do you mean?

EDDIE:

Don't you realize how much you've changed?

FRANK:

Neither of us is fond of self-reflection.

EDDIE:

You're not sticking to your guns on anything! That's not like you; it's never been like you! You've always had a one-track mind, and now you're...

FRANK:

Fairly certain we've reached the end of the tracks.

EDDIE:

It's not that! For a simple guy, you can be so evasive.

FRANK:

(Agreeable) Guilty as I am.

EDDIE:

(Pause) What have you been thinking, this whole time? Have you even been on my side?

FRANK:

I think you'll find that's all I ever was. I never 'turned on you' Ed. Why was I skeptical of your plan? Because I was afraid you were going to do something you'd regret. Why did I agree to it? Because I figured I'd rather be there to help you when this silly thing capsized. Now why am I sitting here making nice? Frankly, because being old and bitter is boring, and because I happen to be enjoying the company. Yours and theirs. Will that do?

EDDIE:

...Well what happened to enjoying your solitary retirement?

FRANK:

Have you enjoyed yours? I'm not opposed to the peaceful living, I never was, but what's life without a friendly face or two? Faded. Bitter. Boring. That's what. I'm here because you are. And I expect I'll abandon this mess whenever you do.

EDDIE:

You're...you're doing this for me?

FRANK:

How did Katharine put it? 'If you were to give a color to their passion for one another, it would have been scarlet—deep, solid, strong.' Perhaps it's not so strong as that, but the idea is the same. We're partners Ed. Selfish motives or otherwise, I suppose we had to be drawn together again somehow.

EDDIE:

But...you didn't try to stop me leaving.

FRANK:

And cause more grief? 'An active hero is passive in words,' that's what I used to tell myself. (*Senile quaver*) Or perhaps it was 'punch first, quarrel never.'

EDDIE:

I left because I was angry—but you know that. I left because I thought I could find myself, somewhere else along the way. And at the risk of sounding disgustingly sentimental, I—

FRANK:

Sorry, when did you ever have a problem with sentiment?

EDDIE:

Only when I'm being honest about it.

FRANK:

Sounds about right.

EDDIE:

(*Laughs*) Shoot, now I've lost my thread.

FRANK:

You were about to descend into some real emotion.

EDDIE:

Right. I just thought I should say that now that I think of it, maybe our motives weren't all that different. There. Plain and simple, just for you.

FRANK:

Then we're square?

EDDIE:

We're square. Square, damaged old has-beens. And we still have a public to take care of.

FRANK:

Technically we don't have to do anything.

EDDIE:

But we—we should, shouldn't we?

FRANK:

You're nervous.

EDDIE:

You're not?

FRANK:

What have a couple of old has-beens got to lose? They can't take away what we have been.

LOUDSPEAKER:

(Cuts in) Will the guest speakers all report to the green room in five minutes. That's five minutes for the guest speakers. *(Cuts out)*

EDDIE:

Oh boy... *(Runs off)*

FRANK:

Ed? Ed, where are you going?!

ACT III SCENE III

(The stage is split between two locations: one is the broom closet Eddie has gone to hide in; he is crouching there, not terribly much space, containing a mop and bucket, or other miscellaneous cleaning supplies. The other is the podium on which both Frank and Eddie are scheduled to stand. Only Frank is now stepping forward)

FRANK:

Er-hrm. Hello everyone. My name is Frank Beckett; most of you knew me before as The Gargoyle. I am speaking to you now not so much as a public figure, but as a lowly practitioner of heroism. Former practitioner. Over the course of the day, I've had the pleasure of meeting most of you, and quite a pleasure it was. To see a crowd full of young appreciative faces beaming right at you, and to know that barely scratches the surface when it comes to the people you've moved, it's a feeling...I never knew I wanted. Perhaps never wanted to acknowledge. That, in a way, was foolish of me, because love of any kind is at least worthy of note—at most worthy of reciprocation. So if my coming out of the shadows after all these years teaches you anything, let it be this: that we are all moving the world in many ways, and the only force that can truly drive us forward is to appreciate that. Now, why am I coming to the moral so quickly with a good fifteen minutes left? Well I worry, perhaps a bit selfishly, that what comes next might knock me off the pedestal I've been given. *(Lights change to focus on Eddie's half)*

EDDIE:

What was I thinking? Pull yourself together. *(Katharine walks up to the door of the closet and knocks, Eddie starts but doesn't respond)*

KATHARINE:

You know Sparrow, for someone who always wants to make a big scene, you picked a pretty shitty place for one today.

EDDIE:

Oh, it's you.

KATHARINE:

I'm coming in now Eddie.

EDDIE:

Wha—no, just leave. Please, I need some time to think.

KATHARINE:

(As she enters) Yeah, not a question there, pal. *(Looking down at him)*

EDDIE:

Are you here to gloat then? To get all high and mighty about how I couldn't go through with it?

KATHARINE:

Gloating over you? (*Laughs lightly*)

EDDIE:

What's so funny?

KATHARINE:

That'd be a bit too weird to be honest, even considering the month I've been having. Besides, I'm not evil or dramatic enough to pull that off.

EDDIE:

Are we saved from your televised wrath, then?

KATHARINE:

(*Sits down next to him*) Again, not the villain here. And you're no victim, no matter how well you play the part. Thinking of it now, I'm not sure if I would have gone to the news either way. The crazy cat lady vibe's not good for much besides fluff stories.

EDDIE:

I messed up.

KATHARINE:

Yep. Frank's up there though, doing a good job patching things up for the both of you.

EDDIE:

I don't really deserve him.

KATHARINE:

(*Laughs, then half-sarcastically*) Still plagiarizing, huh?

EDDIE:

What now?

KATHARINE:

I could have sworn that was somewhere in the book. (*Lights back over to Frank's half*)

FRANK:

You will have heard of course that Eddie Campbell and I are married, and that seems to have been what—(*cut off by cheers, tries to continue*)—celebritized us. I'll never get used to that. (*Continuing*) There's a thought that says it's the only reason we're relevant, which may very well be the case. But if we're to be remembered for anything positive, and I hope we are, then it won't be for that. Not the least of reasons for this is that it's a lie. The fact is we were never married, we made it up, it's a sensational story that came out of fan fiction and worked, against all reason. Isn't that strange? Tricking you wasn't what we wanted, mind you; it was merely a side effect of personal gain. I like the sound of that less and less. (*Lights back over to Eddie's half*)

EDDIE:

So what's it feel like then, to see your hero stuck like this, down and out?

KATHARINE:

Pretty natural.

EDDIE:

Excuse me?

KATHARINE:

Eh, I'm just waiting for the big epiphany when your faith in yourself will be restored, and you can go fight your way to a happy ending.

EDDIE:

That doesn't strike you as a tad cliché?

KATHARINE:

Well yes, but cliché can be entertaining.

EDDIE:

I-I can't go out there. I'm done embarrassing myself trying to make myself happy. I don't need it—fame, infamy—I'd sooner sit in a dark room and know that I used to be somewhere else.

KATHARINE:

I guess that's fine for later, but now you should probably get your angsty ass out there and help your one friend you can hide away with.

EDDIE:

He's doing fine on his own.

KATHARINE:

Isn't that what he thought when he didn't chase after you?

EDDIE:

(Pause) How did you—

KATHARINE:

We talked history. I asked him for some material to write a new book. Still fictional, of course. Guy's had a heck of an awesome life.

EDDIE:

So that's it then, I get to go and make a fool of myself and you go back to writing weird shit about us?

KATHARINE:

Too cliché?

EDDIE:

Too real. (*He gets up*) Go write whatever you damn well please; I'm getting this over with. But I'll do it my way. (*Lights back over to Frank's half*)

FRANK:

Which brings me roundly to the awkward situation of not having Eddie with me right now. Unfortunately he— (*Eddie walks over from his side*)

EDDIE:

—decided the whole dramatic entrance thing wouldn't be fitting given the circumstances.

FRANK:

(*Eddie puts an arm around Frank*) I don't suppose you—

EDDIE:

I know you were all set on getting a great talk out of us about love and camaraderie and all that new age bullshit, but I think Frank's gone far enough to let you know that isn't happening. And we are sorry about that.

FRANK:

(*Certain*) Yes...yes, we are.

EDDIE:

It's terrible of us, I know. The whole mess was a grab for fame in the first place, you see.

FRANK:

I already mentioned that.

EDDIE:

Oh good, that saves us even more time! (*Turning back to the audience*) We also regret to inform you that we'll have no time for questions, as it's about time for us to crawl back to our secret hideout for good. Thank you for your time!

FRANK:

(*As Eddie's hurrying him away*) We wish you all the best. (*Lights change to show they've moved offstage and out of the room, Katharine comes into view*) I can walk just fine unaided you know.

EDDIE:

I figured I ought to hurry you along before you got too lost in sentiment. We should slip out the back sooner rather than later, dodge the crowds.

KATHARINE:
Not forgetting anyone, I hope?

EDDIE:
No, I was just about to go and find you.

KATHARINE:
Oh.

FRANK:
Will you be joining us, then?

EDDIE:
(Shooing them along) Walk and talk! Walk and talk!

KATHARINE:
Eddie agreed to let me come along. And besides, I have so many more questions to ask you two.

EDDIE:
Still interviewing for that book of yours?

KATHARINE:
Naturally. The next one's going to be the most action-packed story yet. Full of intrigue, drama—

EDDIE:
And romance.

KATHARINE:
Yeah, there may be a little of that. I'll never be too good for a good cliché.

FRANK:
If it's really going to be about us, it ought to stink of anti-climax.

KATHARINE:
So Eddie, *(she stops, so do they)* you faced the crowds, stuck with your friend, and your next chapter's ahead of you—how do you feel?

EDDIE:
(Shrugs) Eh...less than super. *(They exit)*

CURTAIN