

Mercury Messaging

By

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INT. MILITARY CARGO AIRCRAFT - NIGHT

AGENT THOMAS SHRINE (30s), wears all black in the dark cargo bay of a military aircraft. On his back is strapped a parachute. Night vision goggles are at the ready above his eyes.

A combat fatigue military JUMP OFFICER comes from the cockpit.

JUMP OFFICER
Coming up on target.

Shrine nods and gets up and pushes a button to open the rear hatch of the cargo bay. A TORRENT of AIR rushes past. Nothing but blackness is beyond.

Thomas lowers and adjusts the goggles over his eyes. He watches over the edge of the hatch door and waits for the right moment.

Through the goggles, Shrine SEES a night vision view of an industrial building standing out from a landscape. Various electronic readouts are SUPERIMPOSED over the view.

The Jump officer watches a red indicator light. It changes to green.

JUMP OFFICER (CONT'D)
(he points to Shrine)
Go, go, go.

Shrine launches himself out the doorway. He falls in darkness, watching the view below as he approaches his target.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Shrine pulls his ripcord. The parachute deploys with a WOOSH-THUP.

EXT. DR. PLANK'S LAIR. ROOF - NIGHT

Shrine lands on the darkened roof, running. Quickly he comes to a stop, takes control of his parachute. Gathering it up he hides it behind a nearby air conditioning unit.

Stooping for a moment to look around, he lifts his goggles revealing his face, assesses the situation, then sprints off toward an entrance.

INT. DR. PLANK'S LAIR. ELEVATED WALKWAY - NIGHT

The evil Dr. PLANK (40s) towers over MINION #1 as they walk along the elevated walkway.

Dr. Plank's stride is confident. He wears all black with a heavy cape. His outfit is pristine. Over his eyes are heavy welder's goggles. His eyes are hidden behind the near black of the glass.

His shorter Minion #1 shuffles nervously to keep up.

DR. PLANK

In two more days, history will
begin a new page, where my name
will appear in the table of
contents.

Minion #1 nods nervously beside him.

INT. DR. PLANK'S LAIR. CONTROL PANEL - NIGHT

JUMP-SUITED WORKER #1 walks past an important looking control panel. Shrine, silently emerges from the shadows and subdues the Worker.

From his belt, Shrine removes a plastic explosive with attached timer. Flicking a switch he places the bomb in a strategic place on the control panel.

Shrine takes out a grappling-hook gun and fires it upwards. He then rides the mechanism up out of frame.

EXT. DR. PLANK'S LAIR. ROOF - NIGHT

Another jump-suited minion SEES over his shoulder, the partially hidden parachute. He turns forward, bringing his radio up to speak.

INT. DR. PLANK'S LAIR. ELEVATED WALKWAY - NIGHT

As Dr. Plank talks to Minion #1, the minion touches his hand to his earpiece.

MINION #1

A parachute's been found on the
roof, Dr. Plank. We may have--

There is a FLASH as the scene SHAKES, from an EXPLOSION.

(CONTINUED)

DR. PLANK
(finishing the sentence)
--An intruder.

Over the PA-system a female voice begins announcing.

RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)
Explosion in sector five. Intruder
alert. Repeat, intruder alert.

Dr. Plank turns toward the direction of the explosion.

DR. PLANK
Find him. Kill him.

RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)
Intruder detected in sector one.

DR. PLANK (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Then bring him to me.

Minion #1 begins a nod, then turns it into a head shake as he is obviously confused.

Dr. Plank glare at both minions. They run off to carry out his orders.

Dr. Plank steps to the railing overlooking the installation. He spreads his hands, gripping the railing and gritting his teeth.

RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)
Poly-protonic laser,
overloading. Containment failure
immanent.

There is a BRIGHTER FLASH and STRONGER EXPLOSION as Dr. Plank is thrown backwards.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Shrine emerges from the shadows In a tuxedo as a car pulls up. The door opens and he casually climbs in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

DRIVER
You threw away the jumpsuit again,
didn't you?

(CONTINUED)

SHRINE

This tux costs several times as much. Anyway...

Shrine pulls an enveloped invitation from his tux pocket.

SHRINE (CONT'D)

We have a party at the embassy to crash.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The car pulls away. In the distance Dr. Plank's lair is ablaze.

EXT. MERCURY MESSAGING. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

It's a nice sunny day, people walk past the entrance of an office. Above the entrance a sign reads "Mercury Messaging - Specialty Announcement Services."

INT. MERCURY MESSAGING. SOUND STUDIO BOOTH - DAY

Inside a sound booth, sits JULIE (29-ish), an attractive woman. She has on headphones, and in front of her is a microphone. The desk before her has several manila envelopes.

Over the sound booth intercom comes the male voice from the studio control room.

CONTROL ROOM (O.S.)

(from intercom)

Ready for the next one?

Julie opens the top envelope and takes out a single sheet of paper.

JULIE

(into microphone)

Yes.

Julie's voice is the same one that came over the PA system in Dr. Plank's installation.

CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR (O.S.)

(from intercom)

This is Professor's Klatu's Lair. Announcement one, take one.

(CONTINUED)

Julie takes a drink of water from a bottle, and CLEARS her throat.

JULIE
(reading, into the mic)
Bio-hazard protection failure in
sixty-seconds.

CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR (O.S.)
(from intercom)
Perfect. Next one.

JULIE
(into mic)
Particle-beam security system
armed.

CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR (O.S.)
(from intercom)
You're the best. Last one for this
set.

JULIE
(into mic)
Self-destruct cancellation,
canceled.

CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR (O.S.)
(from intercom)
That's three for three. Next set.

Julie tosses the sheet of paper, and its envelope into a disposal device beside the desk. Flames WHOOSH up as it destroys the paper.

She takes the next envelope and begins to open it.

INT. MERCURY MESSAGING. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Plank leafs impatiently through a magazine. Tossing the magazine aside onto a growing stack, he takes another from the other side's dwindling stack. He wears the same black outfit we saw him in before, except that it is now tattered, and the edges scorched in places. The one lens of his goggles is cracked.

MR. HERMAEA (40s), a short stocky man, walks into the waiting area wearing a car salesman smile.

Dr. Plank throws down the magazine onto a growing stack on the end-table.

(CONTINUED)

DR. PLANK
(standing up, angry)
Mr. Hermaea, I've been waiting--

HERMAEA
Yes, yes.

Hermaea leads the taller Dr. Plank into the dark studio control room.

Julie is in the recording booth through the window. The recording booth OPERATOR is working the recording system.

HERMAEA
(hushed voice)
We've been very busy. You clever guys keep coming up with newer and newer ways to destroy the world.

JULIE
(from speaker)
Gluonic detonation in thirty seconds.

CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR
(into mic)
Fantastic, and one last set for the day.

Hermaea takes Dr. Plank through another door into his brighter lit office.

INT. MERCURY MESSAGING. HERMAEA'S OFFICE - DAY

Once the door is closed the control room can no longer be HEARD. Through another window Julie can be SEEN reading, but hear voice cannot be HEARD.

Hermaea sees Dr. Plank watching Julie through the window.

HERMAEA
She IS our most demanded voice.

Dr. Plank takes an envelope out of his pocket and hands it toward Hermaea.

DR. PLANK
That's why, as last time, I want her to do my new set of announcements.

(CONTINUED)

Hermaea CRINGES visibly, as he shakes his head slightly. He walks over to Dr. Plank and looks straight up at him and puts on a patronizing business smile.

HERMAEA

You see... you no longer rank in the top ten villains, especially after last week.

DR. PLANK

(angrily)

And just what... is... my ranking?

HERMAEA

Well, like the ashes of your last lair, the numbers haven't quite settled yet. But... maybe, err... 22nd.

DR. PLANK

(in a high-pitched shout)

22nd?!

Hermaea smiles and pats his hands down in a gesture for Dr. Plank to calm himself. Then he slides the envelope from Dr. Plank's loosened grip. Taking the envelope to his desk he opens it and counts the items requested.

Dr. Plank watches Julie getting up from the desk. No more envelopes remain. Through the glass she can be SEEN waving to the control room and mouthing her farewell to the control room Operator as she heads for the door.

HERMAEA

How about two weeks?

Dr. Plank turns toward Hermaea's desk, seeming to protest. Then he sighs and nods his head.

DR. PLANK

(confirming weakly)

Two weeks.

HERMAEA

Very nice. Now, about the matter of payment. Your primary Swiss bank account seems closed.

Dr. Plank sighs. He pulls out an envelope of cash, and begins counting out bills on Hermaea's desk.

(CONTINUED)

HERMAEA (CONT'D)

And when you leave, please use the
side exit this time.

Dr. Plank glares for a moment; Grits his teeth; then regains his composure. Looking at the money, he sweeps it up, and begins counting it out again.

EXT. MERCURY MESSAGING. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Julie exits the door to the outside. A man waits for her on the sidewalk. The man is Thomas Shrine.

Together they begin to walk down the avenue.

SHRINE

Any interesting work today?

JULIE

Same ole, same ole. But you know I
can't tell you, anymore than you
can tell me of your exploits.

SHRINE

Fair enough. So, Germain, or
Russian for lunch?

JULIE

Chinese.

SHRINE

As long as I can get a martini.

Their conversation FADES as they continue down the street.

INT. MERCURY MESSAGING. SOUND STUDIO BOOTH - DAY

A MAN in the booth chair, loosens his tie and unbuttons his collar. He takes a drink of water and clears his throat.

CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR (O.S.)

Okay, first set of the day. League
of Villainy. Take one.

The man takes the first envelope off a fresh stack. He opens it, takes out its sheet of paper and takes a breath.

MAN

(into the mic)

There will be no smoking in the
break room.

(CONTINUED)

He cocks his head back in confusion and turns the paper over and back.

MAN (CONT'D)

What the hell kind of ridiculous
announcement is that?

END