

WITHOUT GREAT POWER

By

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Second Draft
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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An average teenage boy's room: messy, also decorated in different themes on each wall. One wall displays comic-book related items.

Strewn on the floor are several single issues of comics, and a few trade paperbacks.

BRIAN, the fresh teenage occupant of the room, sits at his desk. He's leaning back in his chair while reading the last pages of a trade titled "Day Tripper."

Brian closes the book, putting it under the desk. He leans forward, typing on the laptop.

The screen shows he's typing a blog post: **"Just finished reading Vol. 2 of 'Day Tripper' by Elia Cordasco. It was awesome! Longer review to follow on Saturday."**

He clicks "Post."

Brian leans back and looks around the room.

He spots his posters, his movie collection, his video game consoles (some dating back to the 1990s) and role-playing game boards. They all have collected dust.

He sighs heavily and leans back further, but then gets an idea.

Brian leans back up to the desk. He gets on the laptop, and clicks on a bookmark in his web browser labeled "Superpower Wiki."

He clicks the Random Page tab, waiting as the page loads. The page opens to a page for a super power called **"Life Addition."**

The description reads **"The ability to gain an additional "life" every time the user takes the life of another being."**

Brian scribbles the power down on a piece of scrap paper. He clicks Random Page again, and it leads to **"Venomous Claws,"** described as **"the power to have claws with natural venom on/in them."**

Brian grows curious. He checks his fingernails.

He stands up and makes his way to a cup with markers in it on his nightstand. Pulling out a green marker, Brian scribbles the ink onto his fingernails turning them to a sickly green.

He poses into a mirror, bearing his nails, à la Wolverine.

Brian opens and shuffles through his dresser drawer. He pulls out a green bandana and ties it over his mouth and nose.

He goes through the closet and flips through several clothes, stopping at a light-green Adidas jacket. He pulls it off the hanger, and tugs it on, zipping it all the way up.

He reaches for some sweatpants while taking off his shorts and pulls the sweats on.

After a while, his heavy breathing behind the bandana coaxes him to pull it down and hyperventilate. He unties the bandana and replaces it to his head.

Brian poses again in his mirror, this time in full regalia. He starts narrating to himself.

BRIAN

(to himself; in a serial
announcer voice)

This mysterious figure hails from
an unknown region. It appears his
sole purpose is to personally
punish the most menial of crimes,
and expect no rewards. Some say
it's for shits and giggles, some
say it's for attention. One thing's
for sure, everyone will remember...

(beat)

...yeah, I have nothing.

Brian shrugs before starting to leave the room. He hesitates.

BRIAN

Crap. A weapon.

Brian looks back in his room and in a rush, grabs a curtain rod left in the corner of his room and leaves.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A MAN relaxes on a bench, eating a bag of candy. He tosses the empty bag on the ground before standing up and walking along the path.

Brian in his hero outfit, combat rolls behind the man. He gives him a hard whack in the backs of each of the man's knees with the curtain rod. The man groans out.

MAN

Ah! What the fuck was that for?

BRIAN

You litter around me again, and it's across the face, punk!

Brian picks up the candy bag and tosses it into any nearby trash bin before sprinting away. The man looks on puzzled and grips their leg in pain.

BRIAN (V.O.)

First criminal punished. My timing was a bit off though. He committed the crime before I could stop him. Note to self: make sure the next one won't be so lucky.

EXT. SUBURB - LATER

A WOMAN is writhing and groaning in her driveway, rubbing her back. Brian stands over her with his weapon, striking a noble pose. Neighbors watch with confusion and disgust.

BRIAN (V.O.)

And she wasn't.

Brian squats down over the woman.

BRIAN

Really wish I hadn't done that, ma'am. Especially in front of the true civilians here, but texting while driving is a silent killer!

WOMAN

I wasn't even driving, you dumbass!

BRIAN

You were on your phone and getting into your car. It was a crime begging to happen.

WOMAN

Why? Why are you just walking around, beating people with a stick for doing small shit? Who does that? Are you on drugs?

BRIAN

(offended)

Am *I* on drugs? You're the one who conspired to take up to twenty percent of all lives lost in car accidents.

BYSTANDER

Back off of her, dick! There's kids watching.

Brian turns and stomps after the bystander, whacking him once over the head with the weapon.

BRIAN

Then be thankful that I stopped them from picking up an evil habit.

Brian quickly retreats as others rush to help both the woman and the bystander.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Brian is in civilian clothes again, walking down the street, eyes fixed down on the pavement as pedestrians pass him by.

BRIAN (V.O.)

As I walk through the city, I ponder whether or not the last act of justice was really the smart thing to do. The crime was stopped before it happened, but making an example out of the morally gray bystander might've been superfluous. What would I have done differently? I could've sat him down and calmly explained my crusade. No, he'd just think me a fool. I suppose the easy ways are the bluntest.

He stops at the window of a store. The television on display inside reports on what happened in the suburb, complete with a police sketch, only halfway accurate.

REPORTER

Witnesses described the perpetrator as this sketch displays. A young male, white, age 15 to 17, armed and potentially dangerous.

Brian grimaces and keeps walking, hiding his face with his hand.

BRIAN (V.O.)

Shit. Really? "Dangerous?" After I serve to charge the guilty for the crimes the law refuses to uphold for being "menial," they label me a danger? The media is a cesspool. A snake with stalk eyes slithering under doors to creep, only to slither back into piles of their own defecation. Hey, that was pretty poetic.

Brian knocks into a streetlamp. Taken aback, he gives it a kick and keeps walking.

BRIAN (V.O.)

It's a shame when no one can recognize the true good that's being done. People fear what they don't interpret correctly. Now I know how Joss Whedon felt. Looks like I have two choices in front of me: hang up the bandana and retire, or turn myself in. Or there's the more sensible plan of ignoring the hatred, and continue to do good's work.

Brian smiles, walking faster and facing forward.

BRIAN (V.O.)

Yeah, that's the spirit, Brian. Don't give in. Don't hold back. Yeah, don't stop doing you. Don't hold back. Don't give in. Don't... stop. Or give in. Or submit.

(beat)

Don't give in. Time to increase the vigilance. Next plan: leave no crooked stone unturned. Everyone pays, no matter the crime.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A CHILD CYCLIST is riding down the street, without his helmet. Brian, in his hero outfit, runs up behind him and hits the kid's calf with the rod, causing him to tumble.

B) EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A TRIO OF TEENS are spraying graffiti on a wall. Brian attacks them all, knocking all of them down before sprinting away.

C) INT. SUBWAY/BUS

Brian sits next to a MAN eating on the public transportation. He nonchalantly knocks the food out of their hand with his weapon.

D) EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

A WOMAN, likely a teacher exits the building to take a smoke break. Brian leaps down, and knocks the cigarette out of her hand and her on the head, incapacitating her as he flees.

E) EXT. SCHOOL - EVENING

The woman, holding an icepack to her head and a bandage on her arm, is speaking to police and reporters. Brian is looking on from afar. He smiles and nods, rushing away.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A LARGE MAN with a shaved head, resembling the Kingpin is sitting at a table with a friend, a skinny man with a scraggy but still professional look. This is ALEX They each have a cup of coffee at the table.

LARGE MAN

The world's going to Hell. It's insane, man. The kid puts on his little get-up and automatically wants to change the world.

ALEX

Almost as if he wants to be all vigilante, like a damn comic book hero.

LARGE MAN
 (defensive)
 Hey, what did I tell you? Don't
 compare him to that.

ALEX
 Yeah, sorry. I know. I just don't
 see any other situation that could
 be in but that. Unreal, dude.

The large man checks his phone. He takes his coffee and
 prepares to leave.

LARGE MAN
 Dammit, I gotta run. I'll call you
 sometime today, alright?

ALEX
 You got it, big guy.

The large man shakes his friend's hand before leaving.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUED

The large man is walking to his car. He unlocks it. Before
 he steps in--

WHAM! He falls to his knees. Brian stands over him, and
 whacks the man twice in the back until he's splayed out.

LARGE MAN
 You! It's you, the damn hellraiser!

BRIAN
 Hellraiser? "Hellraiser," says the
 man who's double-parked!

He hits the man again.

LARGE MAN
 You damn idiot! You're not
 seriously gonna go around knocking
 everybody over the head!

BRIAN
 Not if everybody's a criminal scum
 like you. The hard part though, is
 that anybody could be without
 knowing it. You fit the criteria,
 derelict!

LARGE MAN
Oh, fuck off, kid!

Brian starts wailing down hits on the man with his weapon, not holding back as he yells in pain for help.

The man manages to get his door open, attempting to crawl into the driver's seat. Brian looks up and notices a duffel bag in the passenger seat. He smirks and reaches over the large man to grab it.

BRIAN
I'll be taking that.

The large man rolls up to look at Brian, chuckling.

LARGE MAN
You're not gonna like what you find
in there. Too out of your league.

BRIAN
(shuffling the bag around)
Drugs, huh? Well, that's a shame.
Luckily for us, I can still report
this and let the rent-a-heroes do
their job on your little--

Brian unzips the bag. Inside is a machine gun, a few pistols and ammunition. Brian gets wide-eyed immediately, mouth following suit by going agape.

The man looks up and smirks. He touches the back of his head, his fingers covered in blood. He looks up at the shocked kid and smirks menacingly, shrugging.

LARGE MAN
Really should've listened.

Brian drops the bag and makes the quick attempt to run. The man trips him with his leg before he could make it.

Brian reaches for his weapon, but the man grabs it before he can. The man punches Brian in the back of the head once, his face colliding with the asphalt. He's out cold.

The man opens the back door of his car, looking around as he drags Brian into the back seat. He makes a call on his cell.

LARGE MAN
Alex? Yeah, it's me. Change of
plans. Gonna have to come to my
place in an hour... alone. And
bring our tools. We got ourselves a
crimefighter that needs fixing.

He slams the back door shut.

INT. BASEMENT

The concrete-walled basement is illuminated by a single light bulb. Brian is semi-conscious, tied to a chair, bloodied and with a shiner.

The large man and the skinny man from the coffee shop, ALEX, descend the stairs down into the basement.

They pass a table on which laid a sledgehammer, a pipe wrench, a bag of charcoal and a belt sander. Alex picks up the wrench.

The large man lightly slaps Brian awake, tearing off his bandana to wave it over the boy's face.

LARGE MAN

C'mon, wake up, kid. Rise and shine. Wakey wakey, eggs and steaky.

Brian groans, but comes to.

LARGE MAN

There ya go. Now, you thought your justice crusade was gonna go on for some time, huh? Can't say I hate to say it but this marks the end. When you're out of this room, you'll never play hero again and whether you're leaving with a friend or the undertaker, you won't speak about this. Now I gotta know... what's your name?

Brian groans again.

The large man slaps him across the face.

LARGE MAN

I asked a question. What's your name? Just curious.

BRIAN

(groggy)
Brian. Brian Knox.

LARGE MAN

Well, Brian Knox, We're gonna have to get to know each other more, so

LARGE MAN
better zip it until I tell you to
open it. Then again, you never
listened last time with the bag.

BRIAN
I had... no idea what could've been
in there.

Alex brings the wrench down on Brian's right hand. He yelps
in pain.

LARGE MAN
Alex, hold up. I believe him. He
wouldn't just look at what's in the
bag, drop it and run if someone
like the Katsumotos sent him. No,
no. This kid, Brian, thought he was
doing good. Yeah, that's right. The
past week he's been raising hell
across town, beating people with a
curtain rod of all things.

(chuckling)
Can you believe that shit? Beating
people with a curtain rod to stop
them from committing crimes. Now, I
don't know about you, but we've
been crime free for the past two
years, excluding the crimes that
haven't been documented. So I'm a
teeny bit confused as to why you'd
bring it upon yourself to try and
be the arresting citizen.

BRIAN
I didn't mean anything by it,
really. Just thought it was fun.

LARGE MAN
Fun? Oh, so this was fun to you?
(showing the scar on the back
of his head)
You put a little hole in the back
of my head--I had to close this
with super glue first--and it's
your definition of fun?

BRIAN
I read a lot of comics and thought
it'd be cool to pretend to be some
crazy vigilante guy. I got really
into it.

LARGE MAN

(outraged)

You're a comic geek?! You did this because of comics? He's a comic geek, Al! You were right. Jesus Christ, this gets better.

BRIAN

I got really into it! It became bigger than a joke. No, I mean... a bigger joke.

LARGE MAN

Oh, good God. Now I have to kill you.

The large man walks to the table, he picks up the sledgehammer. Brian is spouting panicky stutters.

LARGE MAN

Sorry, Al. Gonna have to cut using the other toys short.

ALEX

I think the belt sander can be good for what's left of the head.

BRIAN

(on the verge of tears)

"What's left of the head?!" No, no, no. I don't want this. I didn't want this!

Alex collects the belt sander, turning it on. He and the large man walk up to Brian, standing on either side of him.

LARGE MAN

Then you shouldn't have played "the kid without fear." Now you're gonna feel what a real weapon is. Say goodnight.

He raises the hammer as Brian screams for help. Just when he's about to bring it down, the door to the basement opens, bringing more light to the drab room.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

What's going on down there?

LARGE MAN

Nothing. Cut it, Mama.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
 Someone's yelling like they have
 their balls in a letterpress and
 nothing's going on?

LARGE MAN
 Ma, I'm telling you. Nothing's
 happening. Now can you go back to
 doing whatever you're doing?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
 What I'm doing is finding where to
 put the sketches Sheldon sent you.

LARGE MAN
 Just put 'em on the coffee table.
 Damn.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
 You mean the one with all your
 letters and other files and stuff?
 To make it messier than it already
 is?

LARGE MAN
 Good God, Ma!

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
 Hey, don't mind me. That "Day
 Runner" or "Road Tripper" thing you
 write is making you money.

LARGE MAN
 Ma! It's "Day Tripper" and would
 you not talk about that?

Brian looks up at the large man, eyes widening in surprise.

BRIAN
 You write "Day Tripper?"

LARGE MAN
 Yeah, yeah.

BRIAN
 You're *the* Elia Cordasco?

LARGE MAN/ELIA
 Yeah. Yeah, that's me. Don't tell
 everyone. Alex, take five and help
 Ma with the stuff on the table.

Alex nods and turns off the belt sander, placing it back on
 the table as he goes upstairs.

BRIAN

Holy shit. You're Elia Cordasco. I can't believe this! Why did you try and kill me? You're a lover of comics!

ELIA

(pulling up a chair for himself)

Kid, I *do* love comics. What I don't love is little pricks thinking they're cute for bringing out the comic mentality into the real world. Which you're guilty of. Whenever I hear about idiots going out and trying to stop crime on their own, it hurts. It hurts to see the news come up and blame movies or violent video games and all that. It started with comics, now it floods out to other escapist fiction. It makes the fans and the creators look like goddamn morons. They made a horrible episode of SVU about us, for Crissake. It sucks, kid. And... you do seem like a bright kid, someone who can find better shit to do in their free time, so I have no clue why you wanted it to be this. Making yourself and people like you--people that include me--regret loving it. It doesn't help you as it does harm you.

BRIAN

All this coming from the guy who tortured and was gonna kill me.

ELIA

Hey, that was only because I didn't want that fact getting out. It's a law in the family.

BRIAN

And you're a crime boss too.

ELIA

Not quite a boss. Just an affiliate in the area.

BRIAN

(sighs)

How many others? How many others
were like me and you... you know?

ELIA

Seven. You would've been eight. But
now that Ma stopped me and you
found me out, I can't just bash in
the brains of a fan.

BRIAN

(deadpan)

Gee, thanks. So now what?

Elia stands up and unties Brian from the chair. He smirks.

ELIA

Now you get outta here. And use
your brain next time you're bored.

Brian stands up, his knees shaking and arms dangling weakly.
He smiles and nods to Elia, going up the stairs. Elia goes
to the table and starts putting the items away.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Brian is back in his bedroom typing on his laptop. He's in a
shirt and pajama pants. A bandage is on his nose and an
icepack on his right hand.

BRIAN (V.O.)

Comics are addicting. Dangerously,
sometimes. It sucks that I had to
get kidnapped and the snot beaten
out of me to realize how stupid I
was being, going over the
definition overboard, but it does
help me appreciate how good indoors
are. Since that incident, I got
more work done, got fresher looking
and I'm even starting up on my own
comic work. I still haven't gotten
busted for hitting all those
people, but that'll come later when
I choose to go outdoors again.
Which will be quite some time from
now, since I'm finding it harder to
walk after that experience. For
now, just where I am is smooth
sailing.

On the laptop, Brian is typing his full review of "Day Tripper" to his blog. He gives it the rating at the bottom of the review in big bold text: "**A fresh new story with witty dialogue, flashy art,**"

He hesitates and breathes hard. He adds to the incomplete sentence: "**and an utterly insane author who I owe a lot to. 8/10.**"

He clicks "Post."

CUT TO BLACK

THE END