

THE TICK
(A Parody)

by
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A Parody

FADE IN:

EXT. EARTH - DAY

The screen is filled with a perfect TICK BLUE. The whistling growl of A LOW TUVAN SINGER HUM intones.

WIDEN SLOWLY TO REVEAL it's the blue of an ocean from orbit.

TICK (V.O.)
Hey! HUMANITY!

WIDENER - EARTH hangs in space. Just visible past it, the SUN scatters glancing rays in a dazzle of beauty. MORE VOICES join the deep HUM, build to a 'Zarathustra' chorus.

TICK (V.O.)
Long has been your adventure! Blood
and broad-swords and dynasty and
ziggurats and SO MUCH shipping!
Man, you cats love movin' stuff
around...
(deep seriousness)
And always, underneath it all, the
Eternal Struggle.

A BLACK SHAPE tumbles over us: A MASSIVE ASTEROID falling towards our world.

TICK (V.O.)
The story of Light against
Darkness. Of Good against Evil. The
Battle for the fate of the world...
The Hero's Journey!

Earth's bottom arc fills upper frame. The tiny ASTEROID rises up vertically to it, trailing a WHITE HOT TAIL OF MOLTEN STRATOSPHERE [echo of sperm and ovum? YES!].

TICK (V.O.)
This then, is that story. The most
important story ever told...

The blazing asteroid falls at us, FILLING FRAME with FIRE. A title SUPERS over the ROILING INCANDESCENCE: **"THE TICK"**

TICK (V.O.)
My story.

EXT. TUNGUSKA RIVER BASIN - DAY

Gorgeous vista. Trackless arctic forest. Dawn. The ASTEROID descends from the dome of sky. The end is near.

ON REINDEER HERD - which chuffs and steams, clearing frame to reveal a TWO EVENKI TRIBESMEN; fur-clad, indigenous Siberians. They track the descending OS asteroid.

ON ASTEROID - CAMERA SHUDDERS with the roaring pile-drive of this cosmic firebrand. BUT THEN with a continental CRACK OF RED-HOT STONE the asteroid begins... TO SLOW DOWN.

The TRIBESMEN watch in awe, lit in its radiance. A title SUPERS: "**SIBERIA, 1908**"

This unnatural deceleration ADDS MORE HEAT to the massive object, which rumbles and groans, until with A SHIVERING DISTORT, the ASTEROID EXPLODES LIKE A HYDROGEN BOMB. A blinding WAVE OF FORCE billows out--

The tribesmen pitch back behind a low ridge. The wave rolls over to WHITE OUT SCREEN.

Winds push the haze off; the two tribesmen stagger to their feet, and look down over:

The entire forest, flattened radially out from the blast's epicenter, a horizon of singed matchsticks. [NOTE: This really happened. Google 'Tunguska Explosion'.]

Off OS ANIMAL CRIES, the one guy says to the other, flatly:

SHAMAN
(Evenki, with subtitles)
Your reindeer are on fire.

HERDER
(Evenki, with subtitles)
Shit!

The Herder jogs off. The Shaman stares up at the sky...

SMASH CUT TO:

THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW

ON OPRAH'S ADORING FACE - as she listens to an OS SPEAKER:

SUPERIAN (O.S.)
I mean by the 90s, I'd already been fighting the Terror for decades.

She sits talking with SUPERIAN. Suave but boyish, incredibly charismatic, Adonis in a burnished pewter bodysuit, framed in the drape of his royal blue cape. A hint of distinguished gray at the temple, otherwise, he's a perfect 30 years old.

Under his image, a CHIRON BANNER - "**SUPERIAN - World's First Superhero**".

SUPERIAN (CONT'D)

Really, I had been up against him ever since I first got here.

OPRAH WINFREY

And that was way back in 1938!

SUPERIAN

Yes.

OPRAH WINFREY

You look great.

Oprah pats Superian's arm, flirty, to the crowd's vicarious delight: they all grew up in awe of this Dalai-llama/Air-Force-One-Action-Sex-President-with-a-Cape.

SUPERIAN

Thank you--

OPRAH WINFREY

You've battled The Terror more times than any of your other foes.

SUPERIAN

Exactly. And if he were alive today, well, I think I'd know that.

INT. FISHLADDER AND SONS - OFFICE FLOOR - NIGHT

PULL AWAY FROM TV IMAGE - REVEAL it's playing in a YOUTUBE WINDOW, on an office desktop computer screen.

OPRAH WINFREY

You believe you killed him at Nebraska Station in 1998.

SUPERIAN

I know I did.

WIDER - ARTHUR EVEREST, 30s, a tense, wired, likability, sits in his cubicle, watching this clip. We clock his cubicle placard: "Arthur Everest - Accountant".

OPRAH WINFREY

We all do. Except maybe a fringe minority, 'Conspiracy theorists' who believe The Terror somehow survived that last battle--

It's after hours. The office empty except for a VACUUMING JANITOR in the BG.

SUPERIAN

Survived? Oprah. The authorities found his teeth.

(seriously, people:)

All of his teeth. Stuck in the walls of a crater I made. Out of him.

(case closed)

I mean these fringe people, they're just not rational...

Seemingly annoyed by this run, Arthur frowns, as he SIGNS some documents and shuffles them into a stack.

OPRAH WINFREY

(waxing colloquial)

Mmm-hmm, don't people be crazy?

(CROWD GUSHES AGREEMENT)

People be crazy, Superian.

ON YOUTUBE - The crowd laughs at Oprah's gambit. She shakes her head in awe, staring at his perfect, iconic coif.

OPRAH WINFREY (CONT'D)

Never change your hair.

SUPERIAN

(Gary Cooper humble)

It does what it wants.

OPRAH WINFREY

Can I--?

Still watching, Arthur picks up the phone, dials.

ON SCREEN - off Superian's playful nod, she reaches out to touch his hair -- The ECSTATIC CROWD CRESCENDOES. A CURSOR SLIPS IN and PAUSES CLIP.

Arthur startles as the other end of the line picks up.

DOT (O.S.)

Arthur?

ARTHUR

Oh, Dot, you picked up. I thought
you were on your shift.

INT. CITY HOSPITAL - ER - NIGHT - INTERCUT

DOT [Arthur's younger sister, late 20s, cute] stands against
the wall in her Nurse scrubs, on her cell. The ER is FULL and
DOCTORS, NURSES, and GURNEYED PATIENTS criss-cross the FG,
screaming in pain, seizing, or BABBLING MED-SPEAK.

Ignoring a bloody handprint on her top, she talks casually.

DOT

I am. What's going on.

ARTHUR

I-- was going to leave a message.
What I say'll sound weird now.

DOT

You calling me is weird.

Another FG CROSS of a GRISLY COMPOUND FRACTURE, SCREAMS.

ARTHUR

No, I-- just wanted to say uh,
'thanks'. Thank you? You've really
helped me. More than a lot. I mean,
these past few years, after my
last, you know, 'thing'... You're a
good sister.

DOT

Now you're scaring me.

ARTHUR

See, I told you it'd sound weird--

DOT

Not having thoughts, right? I mean
nothing obsessive?

ARTHUR

What? Um. No--

As he talks Arthur slides his document into an envelope. We
catch that it's a LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

No, that's why I'm calling. Cause
I'm good and I owe you for that.

DOT

OK...

ARTHUR

And just, thank you.

She looks up at a new OS SCREAM'S tenor.

DOT

OK. I better go. Somebody's new is bleeding. Arthur--

ARTHUR

Yeah.

DOT

Keep it real, OK?

A DOCTOR rears back into FG, rubbing DEFIBRILLATOR PADS, then dives back at an OS patient:

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Clear!

Arthur hears the OS WHUMP! of defibrillation then hangs up.

He opens up his desk drawer, puts the envelope in.

ON DRAWER - written on outside of envelope: "OPEN IN CASE OF MISADVENTURE" The drawer shuts and we CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Stormy night. Rain lashes the mid-size metropolis. A CAB heads to the City's industrial outskirts...

TALK RADIO HOST (O.S.)

Look, this city has been literally taken over by crime. Two gangs, fighting in the street for supremacy, and where are the cops?

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

Arthur sits in the back, as the radio plays.

CALLER (O.S.)

That's why I'm saying we need The Freedom Five back.

POV ANGLE ON INDUSTRIAL PARK - prefab warehouses, empty parking lots, chainlink fences, sparse streetlights, all under a veil of POUNDING RAIN as we DRIVE ON...

CALLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Other cities got heroes... What about us? I mean we got screwed. You know? Lost our team. Like Brooklyn losing the Dodgers.

TALK RADIO HOST (O.S.)
Well the Dodgers, they moved to LA. The Freedom Five were blinded and shot to death, so technically--

ARTHUR
Can we shut this off?

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT

SLAM! The door clumps shut, the taxi drives off, leaving Arthur in the rain. He lets the red tail lights go for a beat, then swiftly pulls a PLASTIC PONCHO from his duffel --

ON GREENED EMBANKMENT - Arthur darts up, PONCHO ON and FLAPPING in the wind and rain!

ON CHAIN-LINK - he drops to the wet earth at the foot of the fence, pulls BOLT-CUTTERS, starts to work at the chain-link.

Arthur POPS UP INTO FRAME on the inside of the fenced perimeter, snaps a coast-clearing look, then SPRINTS OFF.

WIDE ON ARTHUR - as he sprints to a rise near one warehouse. Beyond we see that this warehouse is LIT UP, numerous CARS and few SEMI TRAILER TRUCKS in its lot.

ON STREET LIGHT SECURITY CAMERA - mute witness in the night.

Arthur hits an area of STACKED FREIGHT CONTAINERS, uses them as cover. He pulls out EAR-BUDS, a consumer LISTENING DEVICE, BINOCULARS [dime-store surveillance set]. He lifts the specs:

BINOCULAR POV - finds the warehouse's open loading dock door; POV focuses in on the HUSTLING FIGURES inside.

MEN IN OVERALLS remove VARIOUS SILVER CASES and STRANGE HI-TECH EQUIPMENT from an open freight container, organizing the storage of the large incoming shipment.

BINOCULAR POV - FINDS A MAN IN A GREY SUIT - 'MR. LINT' [30s, thin, dull whitish skin, bright gray eyes] who stands before a small group of powerfully built, bad-ass criminal THUGS.

Lint holds up a suit of WHITE TACTICAL BODY ARMOR for the THUGS' inspection. A pair of feathery hi-tech 'ears' extend from the cowl. They start LAUGHING.

ON ARTHUR - fiddling with his LISTENING DEVICE, pointing its plastic scoop at the warehouse. He JOLTS at a burst of STATIC and LAUGHTER, then tunes in the distant VOICES:

THUG #1

Looks like a goddamn bunny-suit.

RESUME POV - Mr. Lint points at the suit, talking.

MR. LINT

It's the future. Layered graphene weave with an ultra-thin STF core. 100 percent bullet-proof.

THUG #2

Yeah? And who's going to test that bullshit out?

MR. LINT

You all are.

RESUME ARTHUR - He watches, rapt. The rain has let up.

CAMERA ARMS TO PROFILE Arthur as he peers through his specs. In the OUT-OF-FOCUS BG a blurry BLUE FIGURE steps into view.

TICK

How we doin'?

Arthur startles, slams against the container with a BONG!

ARTHUR

AAAGH!!

He recoils and staggers out of frame.

WITH ARTHUR as he runs into the maze of FREIGHT CONTAINERS. Behind him, we track the EASY 20-FOOT LEAPS of the figure, who follows him above, across the tops of the containers.

Breathless, Arthur darts into an intersection. He looks up. LIGHTNING FLASHES, framing the muscled frame of THE TICK. He's big, sheathed in blue, with animate, segmented antennae.

Arthur gasps, back-pedals, and falls on his ass. His LISTENING SCOOP skitters from his grasp.

The Tick jumps off the container, lands almost on top of Arthur, who SQUEAKS with fright.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

EEEE!

Genially, Tick reaches down and picks up Arthur, resting him back on his feet, as if he was lifting a wiffle-ball bat.

TICK

Keep it down, chum. Evil is afoot.

Beyond Arthur, he sees the hive of gang activity and strides off to look closer. A beat, then Arthur trails after him.

Arthur finds Tick staring at the bustling warehouse, grim:

TICK (CONT'D)

Look at the blackguards! Beetling
away in their aluminum-sided
dunghill!

ARTHUR

You're a superhero.

TICK

That's what it says on my mailbox.
I imagine.

Arthur looks at him, at the gang. Growing excited:

ARTHUR

You're staking them out. So I-- I'm
right! I'm right?
(is it possible?)
Am I right?

TICK

Right as rain. Nowhere near as wet!

Arthur stands by Tick, lifts up his binoculars.

ARTHUR

Which gang is it, you think?

TICK

How-many?

ARTHUR

You think they're the Pyramids? Or
from the Syndicate?

TICK

Does it matter? They all work for
the same wretched tyrant.

Arthur lowers the binoculars, stricken this. A beat, then:

ARTHUR
Wait-- You believe that too?

TICK
Evil wears every possible mitten!

He slams fist into mittened hand with relish, beaming:

TICK (CONT'D)
Ready?

Tick starts to walk toward the warehouse. Stunned, Arthur watches for a beat, then in alarm rushes to him.

ARTHUR
No! Stop!

Arthur bars Tick's way. Baffled, Tick cocks an antennae.

TICK
You've done the legwork! You've found Villainy's leering mug! Now we punch it till it makes nice!

ARTHUR
There's a dozen men down there!

TICK
Aces!

ARTHUR
You can't tip them off! I mean this is the only lead I have to get to him. To the mastermind!

TICK
A mastermind? Aha.
(antennae twitch)
And he's not on the premises?

ARTHUR
I can't even prove he's alive.
Yet.

TICK
So you counsel finesse.

ARTHUR
Yeah. I do. Finesse...

He looks away from his quarry, back at Arthur.

TICK
What do they call you, chum.

ARTHUR
Me? They call... Arthur.

Tick leans in, face an inch from Arthur's, stares deep into his eyes:

TICK
Look at that three-pound universe
chugging away in there. You've got
the soup, don't you, Arthur!
(stoked)
We can use that.

In the BG behind Arthur a PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS are moving up.

ARTHUR
Who... are you?

TICK
I am... The Tick.

Arthur goes pale with horror.

ARTHUR
No...

TICK
A name to strike fear in the hearts
of men, indeed, but you and I,
we're on the same team--

The Tick nods to the oncoming OS headlights. Arthur is
SILHOUETTED IN A SPOTLIGHT from behind --

TICK (CONT'D)
Oop-- Establishment, six o'clock.

A POLICE CRUISER rolls up on the access road Arthur came by,
pinning him with its spotlight.

PROFILE ON ARTHUR - he spins to see the cruiser. Tick leans
in from behind, whispering in his ear:

TICK (CONT'D)
We'll meet again.

Arthur whipsaws back. TICK IS GONE. Like he was never there.

ARTHUR BOLTS. The cruiser's lights FLASH RED AND BLUE! It
lurches to follow Arthur who runs along the fence --

He gets to a pile of lumber, and using it as a springboard,
flips over the fence.

He falls in his FLUTTERING poncho and hits the ground hard, ROLLING THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH of a landscaped embankment.

ARTHUR

OOOFH!

The RAIN STARTS UP AGAIN as he bursts out on to the access road, caught in the LIGHTS of another CAR [PARK RENT-A-COP].

ON WAREHOUSE - the men have gathered to watch the distant commotion. Mr. Lint steps in among them, pale gray eyes studying Arthur's distant apprehension. He says a few words to THUG #2, who strides forward, drops off the loading dock, heading out to monitor the altercation.

LONG SHOT - trapped between the RENT-A-COP and the cruiser, Arthur gives up, puts his hands up over his head --

THUG #2 walks among the freight containers, watching Arthur get caught. CRACK! He steps on something, looks down.

THUG #2 POV - Arthur's cracked LISTENING SCOOP.

OTS THUG #2 - he watches as Arthur is manhandled into cuffs.

ON CRUISER HOOD - Arthur is pushed on to it, hands behind his back. The MIDDLE-AGED COP cuffs him as he yells desperately:

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I'm the good guy! I'M THE GOOD GUY!

INT. CRUISER - NIGHT

ON ARTHUR - SILENCE. He's cuffed in the back of the cruiser, rain-shadows streaking over his face.

COP (O.S.)

'The hell you doing all the way out there on a shit night like this?

CLOSER ON ARTHUR - rain drums OS. The question sinks in as he throws a hapless look INTO CAMERA...

TITLE CARD - white block letters on black: **TWENTY YEARS AGO**

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

CLOSE ON - a SUPERHERO ACTION FIGURE ["ATLAS", muscled, with a white '5' on his armor; a member of THE FREEDOM FIVE]. Atlas sails through tight-focus space, lands next to a juice glass on a cafe table. It's sunny, idyllic--

AN OS KID hums a stirring 'dum-dah-dah-dum' theme:

ARTHUR (O.S.)
The Train! Only seconds... to...
clear the tracks...

Atlas strains plastic fists against the juice glass.

WIDER - SEVEN-YEAR OLD ARTHUR sits with his DAD [in a TICK BLUE pilot's uniform] at an outdoor cafe table.

ARTHUR'S DAD
Arthur. Don't let it melt.

Arthur nods, grabs up a neglected cup of ice cream, eats dutifully. His Dad takes up the 'Atlas' figure, sails it around a bit, as if flying. His son corrects firmly:

ARTHUR
Dad. Atlas doesn't fly. He has
super-strength and limited
regeneration. But he can only jump.

ARTHUR'S DAD
Right.

Dad stands Atlas, watches his son, happy. We like this guy.

ARTHUR'S DAD (CONT'D)
It's good?

ARTHUR
Uh huh.

ARTHUR'S DAD
Mom and Dot should be back soon...
(checks watch)
'Meter is almost up. Hang on.

He sweeps coins off the table. Arthur watches his Dad cross the street, put change in the meter. A simple, sweet moment.

THEN THE SKY DARKENS. We hear an OS MASSIVE WRENCH OF METAL. Dad looks up as a SHADOW pools over him, something immense, something horrible descending from above... Under its darkening shadow he throws a quick look at his boy--

A STEELY AIRSHIP [GLOWING WHITE '5' across its hull] drops from the sky to crush him and their car instantly. DEAD.

ON YOUNG ARTHUR - Car alarms trill down the block. A billow of dust rolls over the boy, who stares, frozen in shock.

ON AIRSHIP - fire and smoke within -- the windshield shatters outward, and a FLAMING, CAPED FIGURE ["The Fireman"] drops out onto the asphalt. A hatch in the ship's side OPENS:

ATLAS, armored like his action figure, battered, singed, staggers out, leaning on a TEENAGE SIDEKICK [18]. An injured FEMALE HERO ['Velvet Fist'] stumbles out behind them--

THE SHADOW of another OS VEHICLE passes over Arthur, over the street. A DOZEN MEN descend on drop lines from the unseen ship, uniformed head-to-toe in dark red. They form a semi-circle moving in cautiously on the heroes.

The heroes swivel their heads wildly, eyes unfocused, hands outstretched -- BLIND. ANOTHER DROP LINE DESCENDS in the FG - a wicked, segmented steel boot steps to the ground.

This is The TERROR [russet-clad scarecrow of a supervillain, hooded, ANCIENT]. Hale, deadly, he barks at fearful minions:

THE TERROR

What are you waiting for? The virus
ate their eyes!
(gleeful malice)
They're all blind!

His men move in on the blinded heroes, drawing RED LUGERS. Atlas steps forward, trying to shield his friends--

ON 'THE FIREMAN' still struggling to get off all fours [he's also on fire, but that's his power] as a MINION comes up behind, takes executioner aim...

ON ARTHUR - who blinks at the MULTIPLE GUNSHOTS.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Terror and tiny Arthur, from down the street.

IN THE FG - a MAN [stylishly dressed, ponytail, with CAMERA] shelters behind a parked car. Crouching, he SNAPS PHOTOS.

The Terror sees Arthur, an innocent. An evil glint fires. He starts for the boy, passing SEVERAL MINIONS gathered around the SIDEKICK. As he passes, Terror nods at the teen--

THE TERROR (CONT'D)

That one don't kill. Just crush his
hands!

The Terror saunters up to Arthur, looming, a thin smile:

THE TERROR (CONT'D)

Hello there.

We hear OS SCREAMS of the sidekick as Terror stoops to the boy, ancient leathers creaking, breath a crow's rattle.

He reaches past Arthur's face, the old 'quarter comes out your ear' trick:

THE TERROR (CONT'D)

What's this you've got, eh? Behind your ear...

He draws back his closed fist, holds it before Arthur's dazed face. Then the fist spiders open to reveal itself EMPTY.

THE TERROR (CONT'D)

It's nothing!
(cackling ROAR)
YA GOT NOTHING!

He holds Arthur's stare for a triumphant beat. He's about to turn away when he notices the boy's CUP OF MELTED ICE CREAM.

He snatches it out of Arthur's hand, turns to his men.

THE TERROR (CONT'D)

Let's go!

He guzzles the melted cream greedily as he walks to grab his drop line. The other minions grab their lines and they all lift silently, up towards a DARK RED HOVERCRAFT with a dagger-like 'T' of lit amber across its belly.

Arthur sits frozen. Then his ice cream cup drops from above to the street, empty.

CLOSE ON YOUNG ARTHUR - in shock. A beat, then his face twitches in a PRONOUNCED FACIAL TIC. Another beat, then the TIC FIRES OFF AGAIN...

PSYCHIATRIST (V.O. PRE-LAP)

Arthur?

INT. MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC - NIGHT - NOW

ON GROWN ARTHUR - now seated in a chair against a grimy mint-colored wall, in an office. He's disheveled, but drier.

PSYCHIATRIST (O.S.)

Arthur--

ARTHUR

Yes.

A PSYCHIATRIST [40s, heavysset, female] sits behind a desk, reading Arthur's records from her computer screen.

PSYCHIATRIST

Everest?

ARTHUR

Arthur Everest. Yes. Arthur.

A few MOUSE CLICKS, reflected pages SCROLL over her glasses.

PSYCHIATRIST

Doing some trespassing on private property, Arthur? Some kind of unlawful uh, 'surveillance'?

WIDER - The COP who brought him in stands nearby, looking on.

ARTHUR

No, that was-- a misunderstanding. It's like I said to the officer here--

PSYCHIATRIST

That you were... 'bird watching'.
(to the cop)
There any kind of birds over to the Industrial Park? At night I mean?

COP

(shrugs)
Owls maybe?

PSYCHIATRIST

Arthur. Do you understand why you were brought here?

ARTHUR

(anxious intensity)
Actually no. No, I don't, because none of this is necessary!

PSYCHIATRIST

Well, I'm the judge of 'necessary' at this point, all right? We're going assess you and see if I have to recommend an involuntary psychiatric hold--

Arthur squirms; we start to realize, he's heard talk like this before. He's no stranger to this experience:

ARTHUR

Come on--

PSYCHIATRIST

In which case we would send you down to Evanston Hospital for a court-approved maximum of seventy-two hours.

ARTHUR

Jesus!

She trades looks with the cop, both keeping an eye on Arthur's level of agitation. They're treating him like a nut.

PSYCHIATRIST

Now. Have you been taking your medication?

ARTHUR

Yes.

(off her skeptical look)

Yes.

More MOUSE CLICKS, more probing into Arthur's backstory.

PSYCHIATRIST

And this would be the--
(checks to be sure)
Amilsulpiride, along with the Celecoxib, am I correct?

ARTHUR

Yes. I'm on my medication. I've got a job, I just got an apartment, back in the City. Please, this is-- I'm a together person!

She fixes him in the vise of her no-nonsense stare.

PSYCHIATRIST

Arthur, I'm looking over your record here and you have a history of incidents like this one tonight, going back to community college--
(pages further)
No, back in to high school, to--

Arthur shifts in his seat, hapless as she unravels his story. Then a LAST MOUSE CLICK. She FREEZES, staring at the screen.

PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Her alarm draws the cop. What is this? Did they catch Ted Bundy? The cop moves to join her at the screen.

COP

What.

PSYCHIATRIST

He's the--
(back to Arthur, in awe)
Oh my God.

She can't help but gush her compassion:

PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)

You're the little boy from the
photograph...

Arthur sags, this wave of sympathy familiar and dismaying.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN - over various other WINDOWS of Arthur's RECORDS: a WINDOW showing the ICONIC PHOTOGRAPH framed in the red border of a dated TIME MAGAZINE COVER:

The Terror, standing over young Arthur. He's just pulled 'NOTHING' from the boy's ear -- Iconic, like a Time Square Sailor's kiss, monster and tiny martyr pose-perfect.

The cop and the psychiatrist look at Arthur with unabashed fascination. He is a celebrity of loss. The victim's victim.

COP

(before he can stop)
The Terror dropped The Freedom Five
on your Dad...

PSYCHIATRIST

Good lord, what does that do to a
person--

ON ARTHUR - small in the lens of their pity.

INT. EVEREST HOME - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

The WAKE for Arthur's Dad. JOAN EVEREST, Arthur's mother, with some WELL-WISHERS, near a portrait of her and her late husband. Past them, we see YOUNG ARTHUR.

He and YOUNG DOT sit at a table. She's eating some ICE CREAM.

Arthur pushes away an untouched bowl of his own ice cream --

Suddenly his mother, JOAN, is over him, a little frantic.

JOAN

It's OK. Arthur? You can have some
ice cream, OK?

ARTHUR

No.

JOAN

You can-- It's OK to have something
for you. It's got to be OK--

She pushes the ice cream back at him, so desperate to see him
comforted by something, anything, to have a kid's treat.

ARTHUR

I don't want it, Mom. I--

JOAN

(breaking into sobs)
Arthur, please, let's have
something nice. Please, let me...
Let something still be... nice...

She withdraws, weeping, into a relative's arms. Another
relative, ARTHUR'S UNCLE, comes up, shoves the bowl into
Arthur's hands. [REMEMBER all are senseless with grief.]

UNCLE

Christ, kid, eat it.

Arthur looks down into the bowl. OS his mother SOBS. Finally
takes a spoonful, swallows it down. Hold on him.

Then his face TWITCHES in that distinct FACIAL TIC.

INT. EVEREST HOME - ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Young Arthur lays in his bed -- a BLUE NIGHT LIGHT sheds a
calm moonlight glow.

ON NIGHT LIGHT - it wavers in brightness, AS IT 'SPEAKS' with
The Tick's DISEMBODIED VOICE:

NIGHTLIGHT

What are you going to do about it,
Arthur...

Frightened, Arthur screws his eyes shut. His face TICS.

ARTHUR

Please. Leave me alone...

He pulls his pillow over his head. The light wavers on:

NIGHTLIGHT

You've seen it. The toothy maw
opened wide and ready to guzzle up
a whole world...

ARTHUR

Shut up--

NIGHTLIGHT

Arthur!

CLOSE ON NIGHT LIGHT - strange BLUE GLOW wavering.

NIGHTLIGHT (CONT'D)

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?!

INT. EVEREST HOME - KITCHEN - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

Arthur and his younger sister Dot sit at the table eating
cereal as their mother pours them juice. After a beat's
deliberation, Arthur pipes up.

YOUNG ARTHUR

Mom, my night-light is doin'
something weird.

Young Dot turns to him, looking perplexed.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

Arthur and Dot sit in the waiting room. His FACIAL TIC fires
off again.

The PATIENTS on either side quietly read the TIME MAGAZINE
with him on its front [but don't see it's him].

DOCTOR (O.S.)

We'll start him on a low-milligram
anti-psychotic regimen.

A PSYCHIATRIST [50s, male] finishes up with Joan over by the
RECEPTIONIST AREA, just within unfortunate earshot.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

He may experience some weight gain,
but on the bright side, the facial
spasms should stop--

JOAN

You can make his tic go away?
(taking what she can get)
Well that would be a plus.

INT. MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC - NIGHT - **PRESENT DAY**

The psychiatrist and the cop share a look; she turns back to Arthur, heart bleeding:

PSYCHIATRIST

I think under the circumstances,
what we can do is-- What we can do
is just--

(Cop nods)

We can just call your legal
guardian, and if she'll take
responsibility--

She picks up her phone, referring to her computer.

PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)

That's your sister Dorothy?

ARTHUR

Please don't call my sister--

Behind her the looming cop booms:

COP

Hey! Asshole! Where do you want to
spend your weekend?!

Off Arthur's startled chagrin--

EXT. MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC - NIGHT

Through the clinic's lit FRONT WINDOW we see the Psychiatrist
and the Cop watch a HATCHBACK drive out of the parking lot
and pull out onto the street--

INT. DOT'S HATCHBACK - NIGHT

Dot is at the wheel, eyes fixed on the road ahead, deeply
worried about her schizophrenic brother, who sits, silent.

ON ARTHUR - his eyes drift to the side mirror.

CLOSE ON SIDE MIRROR - dark buildings recede in the mirror. A
muscled FIGURE leaps from roof to roof, keeping up with them.

Arthur's eyes widen in alarm -- The Tick is following him.

DOT

You're not going to say anything?

ARTHUR
(startles, turns to her)
What..?

DOT
Holy shit, Arthur. What am I
supposed to do now.

ARTHUR
Drive faster.

Beside herself, she doesn't register his response.

DOT
We just moved you back into an
apartment! We took pictures. Mom
saw it on Facebook--

ARTHUR
She hated it.

DOT
Of course she hated it. It's a
shithole. But it was your shithole.
And now what?

ARTHUR
Nothing.

DOT
You're not taking your meds.

ARTHUR
You think I'm lying?

DOT
Yes! I do!
(scoffing mutter)
'Birdwatching'. I know what you're
doing. You think you're tracking
him again, don't you. Don't you!

Arthur doesn't answer; she doesn't need him to:

DOT (CONT'D)
Again? We're going through all this
again? The Terror is dead! Superian
killed him the year after Dad died!

ARTHUR
He was tricked.

DOT
He wasn't tricked! You can't
'trick' Superian!

ARTHUR
This is The Terror we're talking
about--

DOT
They found his teeth!

ARTHUR
His teeth?! He owns this City,
Dot, and nobody knows it! I saw his
men unpacking weapons and armor!
He's getting ready for something--

DOT
We shouldn't have moved you in to
town. There's too many triggers for
you here--

ARTHUR
I saw his men, Dot!

DOT
But Arthur! You see things!
Remember? Sometimes? Things that
aren't there?

Arthur checks the side mirror again. No leaping heroes.

ARTHUR
This wasn't that.

EXT. ARTHUR'S BLOCK - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Dot's car rounds the corner, slows to stop in the lightening
drizzle. Arthur gets out. Dot gives one last go:

DOT
Please. Take your meds and be not
crazy and do your job and I don't
know, find somebody, and have
something, have some-- Something.

ARTHUR
I'm OK. OK?

DOT
(hopeful, desperate)
Are you?

An upset Dot drives off...

Arthur walks up to his stoop, looking up, listening, hoping he's made a clear get away from the strange blue man. He keys his way into a building.

POV ON ARTHUR - through a windshield, as he goes in.

ON A BLACK SUV - tinted windows, idling, sinister...

EXT. THE CITY - DAWN

ESTABLISHING SHOTS glide over The City as PEGGY LEE's "*It's A Good Day*" starts bouncing. INTERESTING DETAILS hint that ours is a UNIQUE WORLD, but one just next door.

IN A PARK - A BRONZE MEMORIAL TO FIVE SUPERHEROES, with a plaque: "IN MEMORY OF THE FREEDOM FIVE, R.I.P. 1996"

ON ARTHUR'S BUILDING. An ALARM SOUNDS.

INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT - DAWN

ON ARTHUR - in bed. He snaps awake, slaps the ALARM OFF. He stares up for a beat, wincing as last night's mess rushes in on him. He SIGHS deeply, talking himself down.

ARTHUR

I'm not going crazy. I'm not going crazy.

ARTHUR POV ON CEILING - Tick leans into frame, big smile:

TICK

You're not going crazy, Arthur.
You're going sane in a crazy world!

Arthur skitters out of bed, backs against a wall.

ARTHUR

How did you get in--?

TICK

Don't get stuck on trivia, man,
we've got a tiger by the tail!

Tick is looking around Arthur's apartment, at his stuff.

TICK (CONT'D)

This is your HQ, eh?

Arthur follows Tick into his kitchen.

ARTHUR
This is my apartment!

TICK
Also good.

ARTHUR
What are you doing here?!

TICK
How could I stay away? You're the other piece of my puzzle chum! I can't tell how long I was wandering the wilderness, without a compass. I mean, I really can't. Tell you.
(points to temple)
I mean the past is like a brick wall up in here. Flat and featureless.

ARTHUR
You lost your memory--

TICK
But I found you! You're the crosshairs, chum! Let me be the bullet.
(presses)
Come on, man! You've got ideas. Theories. I like that in a sidekick.

ARTHUR
Sidekick?

He gestures at a wall COVERED WITH DOCUMENTS, AREA MAPS, PRINTED OUT PHOTOS - this is ARTHUR'S HUNTER WALL, all of it dedicated to THE TERROR, his men.

TICK
You study the enemy, take careful notes. You JOT IT DOWN and that pays dividends!
(imploring)
I just want in!

Arthur opens his front door, guides Tick out into the hall as they talk.

ARTHUR
Look, I'm sorry, but I'm not a superhero, OK? Or any kind of-- I'm just trying to prove the Terror is alive.

TICK

Terror? Alive and kicking, friend.
But have you heard of Destiny?

ARTHUR

Um, I don't think--

THE TICK

YES YOU DO! Come on! You got the
brains, I got the everything else!
We have a Destiny and you have to
face it!

(slaps his own chest)

Look at me. I'm right here, facing
our Destiny... Come on over.

(soothingly)

It's good. It's warm. Like the
inside of bread.

ARTHUR

I'm not going to get inside bread
with you. OK? Can you understand
that?

Tick stands in the hall, not yet realizing he's out.

TICK

Not really.

ARTHUR

I don't even know you.

TICK

Oh, you know me... I'm the you
you've always wanted to be. You
want to come over and be me, but
you can't, 'cause you're standin'
there, right in your own way.

ARTHUR

No.

TICK

But you make a better door than you
do a window, chum. So swing wide
open, let you walk through you,
right on over to me. Right here.

ARTHUR

Nope.

TICK

We can beat that mastermind. We--
Oh, hey.

(MORE)

TICK (CONT'D)
(notices he's in the hall)
I'm out here now.

ARTHUR
Uh huh. So I need to...

Arthur closes the door on him.

INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Arthur finishes up after a shower, toweling off. Cautiously he exits his bathroom, peering out into his living room.

ANGLE DOWN HALL TO ARTHUR - seems empty.

He steps out in to his living room. He looks at his wall of photos, documents, a shrine to obsession. The work of a crazy person. He shakes his head sadly, backs away...

Arthur enters the kitchen, grabs a trash can, DUMPS IT OUT.

TRASH spreads across the tile. Arthur pulls out the bag, dumps out the dregs. He drops down, digging through rubbish, pulls up a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE, holds it up.

ON BOTTLE - 'Celecoxib - 30 milligrams'

He digs some more, finds a second bottle of pills.

AT THE COUNTER - he fills a glass of water, hastily downs his pills.

INT. ARTHUR'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - SOON AFTER

Now dressed, Arthur opens his door, peers out. The coast is clear.

EXT. ARTHUR'S BUILDING - DAY

Arthur walks down his stoop to the sidewalk. No giant blue men in sight. He breathes a sigh of relief, starts to head down the block.

A beat, then he hears:

THUG 2
Hey.

He turns, just as a BLACK HOOD is thrown over his head.

ARTHUR

AAGCK!

CUT TO BLACK!

INT. PYRAMID SAFEHOUSE - DAY

ARTHUR POV FADES UP ON - a GOLD PYRAMID spray-painted over a moldering brick wall.

CLOSE ON ARTHUR - He's being manhandled, and stirs awake just as a WHITE COWL is pulled up over his head.

He's been stuffed into the WHITE BODY ARMOR from the warehouse. Regaining his senses, he jolts with panic:

He's in a grimy factory space, surrounded by the THUGS. The BLACK SUV we saw last night is parked inside, in front of a garage door.

Thug #2 leers at him, shaking him.

THUG #2

Why are you casing us? Who the fuck are you, little man?

Thug #2 shoves the broken LISTENING SCOOP at Arthur.

ARTHUR

Nobody. Nobody, I'm not anyone--

THUG #2

You're gonna be.

(re: BODY ARMOR)

Mr. Lint says this shit is the shit. Let's see if he's right.

Thug #2 PUNCHES ARTHUR IN THE GUT -- he doubles over.

A few THUGS move in on Arthur with LEAD PIPES, WRENCHES, ETC. He looks around nervously. He dodges the first couple swings but a THUG behind him shoves him forward--

A pipe connects with his temple, another cracks the back of his head and he GOES DOWN HARD--

More blows rain down --

ON THUGS #1 and #2 watching as we hear an OS HEAVY BEATING and Arthur's CRIES.

THUG #2 (CONT'D)
Blunt force trauma. Check.
(to the men)
See if you can gut him.

ON ARTHUR - hauled to his feet. He's grabbed behind by ANOTHER THUG who flips out a butterfly knife.

He shoves Arthur's jaw up, starts to SAW INTO ARTHUR'S THROAT with his knife. We CUT AWAY QUICKLY--

ARTHUR (O.S.)
[muffled SCREAM]

As Thug 1 saws, he registers increasing frustration. REVEAL the UNMARRED fabric of Arthur's supersuit over his throat.

OTHER THUG
Hey. This stuff won't cut.
(saws at Arthur's throat)
Fucking cool!

He kicks Arthur forward. Arthur staggers into the center of the room, gains enough composure to confront Thug #2.

ARTHUR
You don't even know who you're working for.

THUG #2
How's that?

ARTHUR
You work for The Terror. Your gang, the Syndicate, all of us. Because this City belongs to him... He stole it, don't you understand?

THUG #2
You're crazy.

ARTHUR
Yeah, well-- yeah, but that doesn't change the truth.

THUG #2
Terror's dead, asshole.
(pulls out GUN)
They found his teeth.

THUG #2 FIRES his gun at Arthur's chest. Arthur BLASTS BACK:

Arthur lands on the floor, his wind knocked clean out. BUT NO BULLET HOLE!

ARTHUR POV - swimmy, blurred, on a window above. THE TICK drops down into view, a silhouette peering in.

ARTHUR

You...

(barely conscious)

Are you there--?

Thug #2 lurches in to FILL his POV.

THUG #2

Yeah, I'm here. Crazy bastard.

Suddenly, behind and above THUG #2, A SKYLIGHT SMASHES IN!

Behind the thugs' backs, a BLUE BOMB drops into frame, slamming into the ground like thunder. CAMERA SHUDDERS!

They turn to see the Tick crouched in a spiderweb of CRACKED CEMENT. He rises.

TICK

Wicked men, you face-- The Tick.

THUG 1

Now where the hell did that one come from?

Arthur beaten, bloodied, woozily catches sight of Tick.

ARTHUR

You see him too?

TICK

I am The Tick and I say unto you:
(Pointer finger skyward)
Un-HAND that precious balloon of hope!

Thug #2 aims his gun at Tick. Others draw weapons.

TICK (CONT'D)

Listen 'friend', guns won't solve your--

BLAM! Thug 2 FIRES, marching towards Tick, then FIRES AGAIN. Tick unscathed, PISSED, keeps coming.

TICK (CONT'D)

New policy!

Thug #3 also FIRES. His bullet ricochets off Tick's chest.

ON GAS CANNISTERS at the back of the shop. The bullet TEARS THE TOP off a cannister. FLAMMABLE GAS hisses out.

He PUNCHES Thug 2 in the chest. The man sails back a dozen feet, a fast line drive, to CRUMPLE THE SUV HATCHBACK [a brutal, fast, non-comedic blast of force and impact].

TICK (CONT'D)
(unhappily)
That was your own fault, sir--

Thug 1 swings a 2x4 down over Tick's neck, SPLINTERING IT. [FX NOTE: this will be a composite, so Tick won't budge a millimeter from the force of it]

TICK (CONT'D)
Sneaky, quit it!

He snatches the rest of the 2x4 away from Thug 1, lifts him by the suit front and hurls him back. Thug 1 sails, skipping over the roof of the SUV, rolling off its hood. Thug 3 gets Thug 1 in the SUV.

The Tick reaches the SUV and grabs its REAR BUMPER -- which TEARS OFF IN HIS GRIP as the vehicle GUNS OFF.

It SMASHES out a GARAGE DOOR, Thug 2's legs dangling from the crumpled hatch.

The Tick stands with the twisted bumper in his hands.

TICK (CONT'D)
All right! Run! Run back to your
spidery mastermind! Tell him we're
not foolin'!

Arthur staggers to his feet.

ARTHUR
Tick...

TICK
Arthur! Is this OK?
(gestures to ruckus)
I didn't know if you were doing the
'finesse' thing or not.

Arthur sways there very unsteadily, on the brink of passing out-- He helps Arthur dust off.

ARTHUR
We should-- go--

EXT. PYRAMID SAFEHOUSE - DAY

Arthur and the Tick walk out of the abandoned place side-by-side -- Arthur in his soon to be iconic suit, next to Tick.

TICK

Destiny, chum. She's got her hand
at the small of your back, and
she's pushing.

ARTHUR

(dazed)
Uh huh...

The Tick tosses the bumper back in to the building.

INT. PYRAMID SAFEHOUSE - DAY

The bumper clatters in to the safehouse, end over end, to the back, where the air now SHIMMERS, fat with FLAMMABLE GAS!

One end of the bumper STRIKES A SPARK off the flooring.

EXT. PYRAMID SAFEHOUSE - DAY

Tick and Arthur walk away from the building, JUST AS ITS FRONT BLOWS OUT IN A BILLOWING EXPLOSION.

TICK

Go tell it on the mountain!

WIDE AND HIGH as a plume of SMOKE AND FIRE rises up from between the rooftops in the FG. Beyond we see the CITY SKYLINE, the pitched battleground of our season.

CAMERA DROPS DOWN to see Tick and Arthur walking.

CAMERA KEEPS DROPPING - reaching street level as Tick and Arthur pass by us on either side. CAMERA KEEPS DROPPING...

DOWN THROUGH THE CONCRETE - down through a CROSS-SECTION of layered pipes, conduits, soil...

Past earth-locked garbage, a RUSHING WARREN OF RATS, a HUMAN SKELETON in an unmarked grave, and STILL FURTHER DOWN...

CAMERA DROPS INTO A SUBTERRANEAN OUT-OF-FOCUS SPACE.

STILL DROPPING DOWN -- until it falls again, strangely, on THE CITY SKYLINE. Something is a little odd, however, about this second spread of buildings.

Suddenly, vile, ancient, but no less vital, A GIGANTIC TERROR LOOMS in the sky, overlooking the city with a rapacious grin.

It's the Terror all right. He's alive, in his deep-buried redoubt, standing over a perfectly detailed miniature of The City he's stolen.

His rasping CROW'S LAUGH CRACKLES.

THE TERROR

Mine.

END OF CHAPTER ONE

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