

DUPER

Pilot: One hour comedy-drama

Written by

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FADE IN:

IMAGINARY MIST-FILLED VISION

Two ARMORED GREEK WARRIORS enter. One is huge and well-muscled. We'll soon learn that the other, despite her ferocity here, is a modern college student, ATHENA.

ATHENA (V.O.)
They didn't have electricity.

They circle each other.

ATHENA
They didn't have computers or phones.

Their gleaming swords move with the HUM of "Star Wars" lightsabers.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
They didn't have printing or even paper. But they had paint. They had pottery.

They make a few feints.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
They had dreams and adventures and stories.

They tip swords back-

ATHENA (CONT'D)
And they most definitely had . . .

The swords CLANG together, sizzling, sparking.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
-heroes.

The warriors instantly become 2-D figures adorning-

AN ANCIENT GRECIAN POT

CAMERA RISES, revealing-

INT. GALLERY - A LOS ANGELES ART MUSEUM - DAY

Athena, a docent, is struggling to interest a bored SCHOOL TOUR.

ATHENA

So, you see? These images on the ceramics were their superheroes. Like, with monsters and fighting? Sort of a pottery comic book, 2,500 years old. So isn't that, like -- isn't that cool? . . . Right?

Except for those distracted by their phones, the kids just sit there.

A STUDENT

Boring!

Athena wilts as the group moves on. PENNY SCHLIESTEIN, a well-dressed older woman, approaches as Athena's PHONE RINGS. She checks the number, sighs and answers.

ATHENA

Yes . . . uh huh . . . No, I don't have my rent yet, but-

She notices Penny watching and turns from her.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

I understand . . . Yes.

She hangs up, dejected, but returns to Penny and fake-smiles.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Do you have any questions?

PENNY

No, I wasn't with the group. I'm here on business.

ATHENA

Business?

Penny looks around, gauging their surroundings.

PENNY

I'm recruiting.

ATHENA

. . . Okay? For-

PENNY

How would you like to do something that affects many more people? In a far more elemental way?

ATHENA

Uh-

PENNY
How would you like to do something
really worthwhile?

ATHENA
I -- I *am* doing something worth-

PENNY
We need your help.

Athena looks around for the "we."

ATHENA
We?

PENNY
I want you to join my team of . . .
superheroes.

Athena is gobsmacked.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

CUT TO:

INT. GALLERY -- A LOS ANGELES ART MUSEUM -- CONTINUOUS

ATHENA
I'm just a college student. You
want me to be a . . . There's no
such thing as a superhero.

PENNY
No, I think you might already be a
superhero. In your own way. You
just don't know it yet.

Athena walks away but Penny pursues her.

PENNY (CONT'D)
You're Athena Atreides.

ATHENA
Thena.

PENNY
What?

ATHENA
My name. I go by Thena.

PENNY

I'm sorry. Thena. You can call me Penny. I own twenty three percent of Miracle Studios.

That makes Athena stop.

ATHENA

They make -- you make -- superhero movies. Lots of them.

PENNY

That's right. Lots and lots. And TV and comic books and gaming. Do you like superhero movies?

Athena considers.

ATHENA

No.

PENNY

Good.

They weave through exhibits.

ATHENA

Thank you.

PENNY

I don't like them, either. Or at least what they've grown into. If I did, I wouldn't be here.

ATHENA

Look, what do you want?

PENNY

I'm old, rich and looking for an intern. Someone to help at the studio. We've drifted from the basics. I need an advisor who's knowledgeable about the original heroes, the ones who set the pattern: Zeus, Hercules and I don't know who all.

ATHENA

That -- well, I suppose that could be me. This job is part time so I can spend the semester writing my Master's thesis. I'm in folklore and mythology.

PENNY

I know. I checked. Your professors adore you. You come highly recommended.

ATHENA

Thank you. That's very . . . creepy. And you should know there's a lot more to heroic folklore than ancient Greeks with muscles. There's India, Asia, the Romani, the San peoples-

PENNY

The who?

ATHENA

The San peoples. In Australia. People used to call them Bushmen. And then there's North, Central and South America, all of Africa-

PENNY

Yes! Good! All of it. I need it. We need it. Something fresh. Industry buzz is that superhero movies are over. They're done.

ATHENA

Yeah, I read that. "Superhero fatigue"?

PENNY

Too many movies, too many TV shows, and especially too many characters - in too short a time. But I think the real reason is that no one knows what a hero is anymore. What the word even means.

Athena is practically dismissive.

ATHENA

Hero is a Greek word. In the ancient world it was also a proper name. It's the feminine form. A woman's name. A man would instead have been named Heron.

Penny is impressed.

PENNY

Just try working with us for a week, Thena.

ATHENA

No.

She tries to walk away.

PENNY

I'll cover rent for you.

ATHENA

No! You people must be desperate to take such a risk.

PENNY

We are. But it's not a risk. If it doesn't work out, it's a write-off. Just a week. After that, maybe we can look at another week. Or even a couple months.

ATHENA

Penny, whoever you are, this is all very flattering. And I think it's great that Hollywood is interested in folklife-

PENNY

Burbank, actually.

ATHENA

Even if I knew anything about filmmaking, which I don't, I still wouldn't watch superhero movies. I don't *like* what people are labeling superhero movies. Or comic books or -- games or anything!

PENNY

What people are "labeling" superhero movies?

ATHENA

Ugh! There are truly good superhero movies all the time and people don't recognize it. They just don't label them that.

Penny is looking askance at her.

PENNY

Like what?

ATHENA

Well, there was "Barbie."

Penny smirks.

PENNY

"Barbie" isn't a superhero movie.

ATHENA

My god, Barbie is *such* a superhero movie.

PENNY

How can you-

ATHENA

She goes to a far away land? Meets challenges, overcomes obstacles, and in the end is transformed?

PENNY

And all of it pink. So?

ATHENA

It's the classic hero's journey. Odysseus, Hercules. Alice in Wonderland and Dorothy in Wizard of Oz? They are all superheroes.

PENNY

I see. I get it . . . But no.

ATHENA

No?

PENNY

Barbie isn't a superhero because it isn't just one Barbie. In the movie it's lots of Barbies. There's president Barbie and astronaut Barbie. African American Barbie, Weird Barbie. Too many Barbies.

ATHENA

Too many? Come with me.

ART MUSEUM GIFT SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Athena pulls a book from a shelf and presents it to Penny. It's Joseph Campbell's, "THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES."

PENNY

Oh my god.

ATHENA

The author had really bad selection bias. But it's still one of George Lucas' favorite books, by the way.

Penny realizes.

PENNY

"Barbie" is a superhero movie.

ATHENA

I think Billie Eilish summarized it best when she said, "Duh."

Penny hands Athena HER BUSINESS CARD.

PENNY

We need you more than I thought.
Think about my offer.

ATHENA

Look, thanks, really. But if I leave the museum for a week they won't take me back!

Penny walks away.

PENNY

Look at the card, dear! Look at the card!

The card reads "SENIOR ADVISOR, MIRACLE STUDIOS, PENELOPE SCHLIESTEIN." Athena looks up to see Penny standing in front of a GALLERY WALL. It's labeled "PENELOPE SCHLIESTEIN WING."

PENNY (CONT'D)

I think they'll let me have you, Thena. I have some influence. Give me a week, and at the end I'll give you one month's rent.

Athena is grim.

ATHENA

I owe two months back rent, too. I have to empty my apartment tonight.

Penny knows she has won.

PENNY

That sounds like a yes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A LOS ANGELES STREET -- NIGHT

Athena's CAR is packed tight with everything she owns. She's slowly driving by a HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT, looking at it, worried. She finds an open space on a quiet street, parks and looks at Penny's card again. She closes her eyes and tries to get comfortable.

EXT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - PARKING LOT - DAY

Athena is looking for a spot. She's bewildered by SIGNS marking sections with increasingly bizarre STUDIO SUPERHEROES.

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - WORK AREA - DAY

A riot of Miracle Studios IMAGERY fills the shared work space: merch, art, promotional materials. Athena is agog. She approaches CLARK, the receptionist, who resembles a certain reporter at The Daily Planet.

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The room is filled with FRAMED ART from studio productions. Off the room is a long HALLWAY. At front, the glowering head of elderly BRADDOCK MURLEY looks out from a huge MONITOR.

ROY (O.C.)
Australia's finest: Braddock
Murley, real life supervillain!

Chief Creative Officer ROY ALAN and Chief Financial Officer SALLY BARGO are introducing the head on the screen. A dozen STUDIO EXECUTIVES are listening, including LOIS and DENNIS O'BRIEN.

ROY (CONT'D)
A gazillionaire threat to our way
of life and to everything we know.

SALLY
And that's apart from his network.

Sally clicks a REMOTE to turn on the LION NEWS NETWORK. A scrolling HEADLINE GRAPHIC reads "DENIES EATING POOP." She clicks it off.

ROY

Mr. Murley is the one behind that hostile takeover attempt on our studio last year. Underscore hostile.

SALLY

He may be trying once more. He continues to buy up our stock. Murley believes our characters are worth more separately than as a team. He's been very vocal about selling the character franchises off, one by one. Okay, we knew all that.

She holds up a PRESS RELEASE.

SALLY (CONT'D)

But in an announcement this morning, 8 a.m. Eastern, he nominated himself to the board of directors.

ROY

Which, as you know, has its annual meeting here in Los Angeles on Monday. We have seven days, people. New York tells me they're worried.

LOIS

If the board selects Braddock Murley as its chair?

ROY

Then we could expect radical change, including the loss of our most valuable characters.

Hubbub. Penny and Athena enter.

PENNY

Sorry, everyone. This is Thena, our new intern.

Sally passes the press release to Penny. Dennis reaches to shake hands with Athena.

DENNIS

Hey, Thena! My first day, too. Dennis O'Brien, vice president for visual effects. For now, anyway.

Everyone laughs.

LOIS

You're, what, our fourth in three months?

Roy mock-scolds him, teasing.

ROY

Now, Dennis, you just get to work on that backlog of effects shots, and I'm sure New York will ease up on us.

A few more chuckles.

ROY (CONT'D)

Thena, welcome to Miracle Studios. I'm Roy Alan, chief creative officer or, as they like to call me around here, "boss." But I started, really, as a kid. Reading Miracle Comics, just like you, I bet. Huh?

Athena looks perplexed. Sally introduces herself.

SALLY

Sally Bargo, chief financial officer. We'll give you the formal tour later.

ROY

To get back to business and Braddock Murley:

He clicks the remote and the monitor changes to a NEWS CLIP. After the close-up of a ticking WRISTWATCH, we see Braddock Murley being interviewed by a NEWS ANCHOR.

INSERT - interview

NEWS ANCHOR

Mr. Murley, you came here from down under to found a wildly successful television network that has redefined news. You're not a U.S. citizen. Yet you've made billions from this country, you've rewritten the national agenda, and some say you've made and unmade presidents.

Murley beams happily, enthused.

BRADDOCK

I should've agreed to this interview years ago! Put her there!

He shakes hands with the anchor.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
I was all wrong about you blokes.
You're fair dinkum!

BACK TO SCENE - Roy clicks the monitor off.

ROY
His Lion News Network may be evil
incarnate, but we may be able to
come to terms. We're all basically
in the same business.

ATHENA
What?!

Everyone stares at the new kid in the room.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
Sorry, but -- well, he lies. His
whole network lies.

ROY
You think we tell the truth?
Welcome to Miracle Studios. Sally?

SALLY
Thena, the average person doesn't
want to engage in stories with lots
of graphic violence, especially on
the scale we deal with. I mean,
that's monstrous. Who would?

ROY
But it's a simple matter to drag
them along, whether its us or
Marvel or DC.

PENNY
Oh, god. Sally, do we really have
to go through this again?

Sally ticks off the process.

SALLY
One: Invent a danger. Two: Attach
it to a stranger, an outsider.
Personify the threat. Three:
Mitigate the audience's natural
resistance to conflict by calling
on its loyalty to the superhero.

ROY

Only the superhero can protect
against the danger!

Athena is kind of getting into this.

ATHENA

And then come some battles, the
climax, and an ultimate resolution?

Everyone laughs at her naivete.

SALLY

There's never an ultimate
resolution.

ROY

No one would buy the next comic
book or see the next movie. Or keep
tuning in to Lion News. No, no.
They all keep coming back: Mr.
Freeze, the Penguin, Lex Luthor,
COVID, immigrants at the border-

ATHENA

Or -- or the Joker!

SALLY

No. The Joker has been destroyed.

ROY

Utterly. Mind you, I do not
entirely place the blame on Lady
Gaga.

ATHENA

But this formula of yours -- it
sounds, I don't know, vaguely
fascist?

PENNY

It is. They're paraphrasing Hermann
Göring at Nuremburg.

SALLY

Actually, it works much better with
TV news.

DELIVERY PERSON enters with two floral arrangements, one
large, one modest.

DELIVERY PERSON

They said it was all right to come
in?

All are delighted to see the flowers.

DELIVERY PERSON (CONT'D)
Dennis O'Brien?

Dennis rises to accept the large arrangement.

DENNIS
Ohhhh!

He checks the card.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
It's from New York!

DELIVERY PERSON
And Athena Atre- . . . Atri- I
can't pronounce the last name.

Laughter.

ATHENA
It's Atreides. Thena Atreides.

Athena is honestly thrilled. She takes the flowers.

ROY
From me, Thena. Well, from all of
us.

PENNY
Roy, you're so sweet.

ATHENA
No one's ever done this for me
before!

ROY
I'm sure we'll learn as much from
you as you do from us. You're going
to be telling us all about these
fairytale you've been studying?

Athena glowers at him.

ATHENA
Global mythology. Parables. This is
literally knowledge of the
ancients. Tested, refined, told and
retold hundreds of times before
being committed to paper, papyrus
or clay tablets. They're lessons on
human nature that apply today.

Roy reacts as if he's faced with an unusually talented kindergartener.

ROY
Good for you!

Penny sets down the release she's been reading.

PENNY
Roy, just how serious is this thing with Braddock Murley?

LOIS
Does he want to mess with all the characters, or just the big ones, like Henge Stone, Cryptogram and Bomb Shell?

ROY
All the characters in our phase one releases. That means Toots, Bang Bang, Sergeant at Arms, Hangdog and even Captain Africa.

LOIS
What about Sea Wolf, Revenant and Ann Boleyn?

SALLY
No, just the *Miracle Legend* superheroes. All the *Miracle Odyssey* superheroes scheduled for phase two release are safe. For now.

ROY
But word is that Murley is itching in particular to get his hands on Undertow and Henry.

DENNIS
Not Undertow and Henry!

LOIS
Well, at least their sequels aren't slated until 2029.

PENNY
No, they've been switched to phase two, Lois.

SALLY
Remember the sequel to "Toots and Bang Bang Requiem Overdue Max"?

LOIS

No. Roy, I thought that "Overdue Max" wasn't in our own universe. I thought that was parallel universe three, galaxy seven, Earth two-B.

Roy is puzzled.

ROY

That *is* our universe!
Sally, make a note! Call Egypt and cancel the Sphynx.

Sally writes it down. Lois is delighted.

LOIS

I just saved us two hundred and twenty million dollars!

ROY

Buy you lunch.

PENNY

What's the universe where our movies don't tank all the time?

Sally brings them back to business.

SALLY

People. We should expect that Braddock Murley will be attending the board meeting in person. He may even want to drop by beforehand.

PENNY

Do we know when he arrives in L.A.?

ROY

Not yet.

DENNIS

Tsk! Murley! Doesn't he have enough to do, running Lion News?

PENNY

Oh, the Lion News Network is just one of Braddock Murley's many, many ventures.

Sally checks her notes.

SALLY

Penny's right. Besides his car company, he's invested heavily in AI. And it turns out that he even makes a lot of our Miracle Studios licensed merchandise. He owns a toy company. In China.

LOIS

Perfect. Do they make his toy politicians over here, too?

ROY

If he does show up at the studio, two words: suck and up.

A DIFFERENT DELIVERY PERSON enters, carrying more flowers.

DIFFERENT DELIVERY PERSON

Looking for a Mister Dennis O'Brien?

DENNIS

Hey, my big day!

Everyone is tickled. Dennis checks the card.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

From New York!

SALLY

More?

LOIS

So jealous!

PENNY

Oh, my!

Dennis reads the rest of the card.

DENNIS

. . . I've been fired.

Roy pretends nothing has happened, and cheerily moves on.

ROY

Thena! Time to give you that tour!

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- EVENING

Athena is speaking with SUSAN, a uniformed guard, trying to act casual.

ATHENA

Hello.

SUSAN

Good evening.

ATHENA

Hey, I'm looking for a new neighborhood to live in, and I want to start by finding a good grocery store.

SUSAN

Oh. Well, that's smart, I guess. Gotta have food.

ATHENA

Yeah. Yeah . . . So, is this a good grocery store?

SUSAN

Sure. I like it well enough. The hours kind of suck, but what are you going to do?

Athena laughs nervously.

ATHENA

Right. Right. Uh -- does it have good produce?

SUSAN

I'd say so.

ATHENA

Public restroom?

SUSAN

Well, not public. For customers, though, yeah.

ATHENA

Sure . . . And, like, here in the parking lot. Do people get in trouble for sleeping in their cars overnight?

Susan just stares at her.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- ATHENA'S CAR -- NIGHT

Athena is inside her car, uncomfortable, sleeping but restless.

DISSOLVE TO:

ATHENA'S DREAM -- ANIMATIC

Athena narrates an ANIMATIC of a comic book story. Thumbnail superhero-style graphics match her narrative throughout. She is portrayed as HERACLES, in Ancient Greece.

Athena-Heracles strikes a heroic pose, radiating sunbeams.

ATHENA (V.O.)

Once upon a time, long, long ago,
there was a person named Heracles.
This was when Heracles was young
and not a hero yet, not in any way.
But, you know, everyone has hopes.

Heracles wears an apron and works in a kitchen.

ATHENA

You might guess that Heracles
worked a hero internship for
awhile, did a great job, and then
was hired. And you know what?
That's exactly what happened.

We see Heracles bounding across the countryside.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

This was in Ancient Greece. They
changed Heracles' name to Hercules
a little later, in Rome. That was
still in ancient times, although
Heracles didn't know it was
ancient. To him it was just today.
Well, actually let's start over at
the moon.

Heracles is scribbled over and the moon enters, swimming in space. The happy head of the Nemean Lion peeks around one side and smiles.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

On the moon, long ago, lived the
Nemean Lion. He wasn't a real lion,
so don't call PETA. No, instead he
was a golden spirit lion.

(MORE)

ATHENA (CONT'D)

He was raised on the moon by Hera, queen of the Greek gods. Now, why you might want to raise a lion on the moon, I don't know. But you have to admit that for a golden spirit lion it would be a pretty great litter box.

A few symbolic poops fall out of the lion.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

But you know how kids can be, especially teenagers, and one day Hera was so upset with the Nemean Lion that she threw him from the moon. Just flung him right out! Aimed toward the earth.

The lion flies through space.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Boy, was Heracles in for a big surprise!

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- ATHENA'S CAR -- DAWN

Athena awakes with a start. She looks out to see a mostly-empty parking lot, with lots of abandoned SHOPPING CARTS.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - PARKING LOT - DAY

There's WALL WITH A CAPE painted onto it, for people to stand against and have their photo taken. Athena poses, hands on hips, for Penny. We then see-

THE RESULTING PHOTO

She looks like the most uneasy superhero ever.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS -- GREEN SCREEN STUDIO

DIRECTOR, CAMERA CREW, Penny and Athena are watching SERGEANT AT ARMS, a woman superhero dressed like an Army soldier. She's dangling in front of the GREEN SCREEN, flailing wildly at an invisible something. Penny carries a SCRIPT.

DIRECTOR
No, no, no! Cut!

The director goes up to speak to the superhero actress,
leaving Athena and Penny by the camera crew.

ATHENA:
Is she supposed to be fighting some
sort of horrible monster or what?

PENNY
In this scene, I'm not sure.

With the director standing close to her, the actress
rehearses the action again, flailing even more wildly.

PENNY (CONT'D)
I think she may be flying.

ATHENA
. . . Or falling?

PENNY
That *would* make more sense wouldn't
it?

ATHENA
Let me see?

Penny passes her the script. She pages through it and quickly
finds the spot.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
Ohhhh!

The director has returned to his chair.

DIRECTOR
Action!

The actress flails some more.

Penny and Athena whisper.

PENNY
Find it?

ATHENA
Yeah . . . It's the sex scene.

The actress continues, looking ludicrous.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - EDITING SUITE - DAY

Athena, Lois and Penny are watching, flanked by a few EXECUTIVES. We can't see the sequence that EDITOR 1 and EDITOR 2 are running, but it sounds awful: VIOLENT MUSIC and continual EXPLOSIONS.

LOIS

Thena, tell me. Does this look any different to you than it did Tuesday?

ATHENA

It was yesterday, and no. It looks the same.

PENNY

Lois, I can't tell any difference.

LOIS

Boy, I just don't know about this. I think we still have some dialogue problems. I don't believe Hangdog is really in the moment. And Cryptogram and Bang Bang are just *watching* Ursus Major. No. No. This isn't like the storyboards at all.

EDITOR 1

I said the same thing.

PENNY

Can we see it again without the music and sound effects? Just the dialogue track?

EDITOR 1

Sure.

EDITOR 2

Here we go.

They punch it up and this time we hear dialogue only: pure melodrama.

VILLAIN (O.S.)

Hangdog!

HANGDOG (O.S.)

. . . Yes!

VILLAIN (O.S.)

. . . You found me! But -- how?

HANGDOG
They don't call me Hangdog for
nothing!

VILLAIN (O.S.)
. . . Look there!

HANGDOG (O.S.)
. . . No!

VILLAIN (O.S.)
. . . Yes! Yes!

HANGDOG (O.S.)
. . . Must . . . hold on!

VILLAIN (O.S.)
Too late!

HANGDOG (O.S.)
. . . And again! . . . And again!

VILLAIN (O.S.)
No! . . . No! . . . Noooooo!

The sequence ends.

PENNY
Just comes alive, doesn't it?

Lois thinks for a second. She has a solution.

LOIS
Okay, roll it again. But *this* time
really punch up the explosions.

The editors look back at her, then turn to their board again.

EDITOR 1
Give us a sec to set it up.

Athena has a quiet question for Penny.

ATHENA
I know that not all superheroes
wear capes, but shouldn't they at
least be wearing some kind of
special costume?

Lois overhears.

LOIS
We're still designing the League of
Honesty uniforms. They'll be added
in post.

ATHENA
Post -- production?

LOIS
Mmm hmm.

ATHENA
Wait, you're going to use CGI to go
back and put superhero uniforms on
them after the fact?

Lois looks up at her.

LOIS
Well, how would you do it?

Editor 2 snorts a laugh and stifles it. The action sequence
restarts, very loud. Everyone flinches hard. Lois has to
shout.

LOIS (CONT'D)
Much better!

CUT TO:

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- EVENING

Holding her CAR KEYS, a weary Athena trudges past Susan, the
guard.

SUSAN
Hey, Thena.

ATHENA
Hey, Susan.

SUSAN
Long day?

ATHENA
Oh . . . y'know.

SUSAN
Sleep tight!

DISSOLVE TO:

ATHENA'S DREAM -- ANIMATIC

The Nemean Lion is flying through the Earth's atmosphere.

ATHENA (V.O.)

I don't know how long it took the Nemean Lion to fall from the moon. Since he was thrown by a god, I think we can assume he made pretty good time. Now, you might think being thrown from a minor planet into the atmosphere of another world might hurt. Especially because you'd heat up on reentry like a NASA space capsule covered in Taco Bell fire sauce.

A NASA capsule, red hot and smoking, passes the lion on the way down. The capsule lands in the sea, and the lion on land.

ATHENA

But this particular golden spirit moon lion was so tough and so strong that it didn't hurt one bit! Though I don't imagine it helped his mood any. And also, he was still on moon-time and had terrible, terrible jet lag. Ow! It was like the worst hangover ever. Maybe that's why on Earth he was so mean.

The lion makes an angry face. Then looks wistfully to the moon.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

But wouldn't you be angry, too, if every night you could look up and see your only home, so close you could touch it, although actually it was 239,000 miles away?

The lion sheds a tear.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - PARKING LOT - DAY

Roy is laughing and chatting with CALEB, a younger, much more handsome man. They're dressed identically.

ROY
No, really, it was great. Great
job!

CALEB
Thanks!

ROY
So, see you at Miracle-con?

CALEB
Yeah!

Athena wanders by.

ROY
Oh, Thena! Come here. I want you to
meet the other Roy Alan.

CALEB
Hi.

ATHENA
You're both named Roy Alan?

The two men laugh.

ROY
He's me. At conventions.

ATHENA
What?

CALEB
Comic book conventions.

ROY
He takes my place. So far as the
fans know, Caleb is me. And let me
tell you, he does a hell of a job!

Roy slaps Caleb's back and they laugh some more.

ATHENA
So you're an actor?

They laugh even harder.

ROY
No. No. Never an actor. Ew! Never.
Caleb is *better* than an actor!

CALEB

I do programming over in the Valley. Just freelance. But that gives me time to be Roy!

ROY

Hell of a job!

ATHENA

But -- but why?

ROY

Oh, Thena!

ATHENA

Roy, don't you want to meet the fans?

Roy is suddenly, awkwardly silent and fidgety.

CALEB

He . . . He has a little trouble with . . . you know.

ATHENA

With who? With the fans?

Roy is angry and defensive.

ROY

No, of *course* not the fans!

He stalks off.

Caleb hesitates but then follows. Alone, Athena calls out, then ponders.

ATHENA

I'm sorry! . . . Who else shows up to comic book conventions?

CUT TO:

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

We see a PIZZA DELIVERY PERSON holding a PIZZA BOX. They look puzzled. After a moment, a window in a car behind them slides down. It is Athena's, and she peers out.

ATHENA

Pepperoni with green olives and double pineapple?

PIZZA DELIVERY PERSON
That you?

ATHENA
Oh yeah!

She pays through her window and takes the pizza.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
I'm kind of embarrassed. I suppose
this looks strange to you.

PIZZA DELIVERY PERSON
No. No, you'd be surprised. A lot
of people get the pineapple.

DISSOLVE TO:

ATHENA'S DREAM -- ANIMATIC

The Nemean Lion is chasing peasants back and forth.

ATHENA (V.O.)
The Nemean Lion made lots of
trouble for everyone in the land of
King Eurystheus. So much trouble,
in fact, that the king decided he
better get some help. So called in
his cousin, Heracles.

Heracles and the king enter.

ATHENA
The king said, Heracles, you go get
that golden spirit moon lion! If
you do a good job, I'll give you
eleven more tasks. And Heracles
said you bet.

Heracles meets a peasant.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
He went out and looked around and
ran into a peasant or shepherd or
something, and they told him,
"Heracles, forgot to mention: You
have thirty days." Now, I don't
know why it was thirty days. Maybe
it had to do with phases of the
moon?

Moon and lion diagram comparison.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
Maybe a full moon golden spirit
lion is twice as strong as a half-
moon golden spirit lion. Although I
bet even a crescent moon spirit
lion would be a handful.

Heracles' face reflects determination.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
So Heracles said, thirty days! Boy,
I better get to work, then!

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - SCREENING ROOM -- DAY

With a few other EMPLOYEES, Athena and Lois are waiting in
their seats, bored.

ATHENA
Okay, your turn. If you were a
superhero, what would your
superpowers be?

LOIS
You know, I've actually given this
some thought.

ATHENA
Mm?

LOIS
I would have incredible,
unbelievable, powerful huge . . .
tits.

Gauging Athena's shock, Lois pivots to reassure her.

LOIS (CONT'D)
But I would use them only for good!

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - WORK AREA - EVENING

Except for Athena, the space is empty. She's at a desk,
apparently working very hard on something, but we can't tell
what. Roy walks through the back, notices Athena and goes
closer. Her DRAWINGS are childlike, but she's creating action
poses of a superhero she's made up. (These have nothing to do
with the Animatic. That's something else entirely.) Roy is
charmed. Penny begins to wander by.

He shushes her and motions her over. They watch together, silently. Athena is engrossed.

CUT TO:

INT. ATHENA'S CAR -- NIGHT

She is asleep.

CUT TO:

ATHENA'S DREAM -- ANIMATIC

ATHENA (V.O.)

Heracles thought and thought how to attack the Nemean Lion. There's no app for that. And there aren't a lot of weapons you automatically think of when hunting a golden spirit moon lion. Especially since Heracles wanted to stay away from the lion's razor sharp claws! They could tear through the strongest metal. Even stone! Heracles made some arrows and a mighty, mighty bow.

He does, and goes hunting.

ATHENA

One day he spied the Nemean Lion at a distance. He drew his stout bow and let loose the arrow. It flew straight and struck the Nemean Lion. And bounced right off! Its golden hide was proof against attack. Heracles shot another arrow and yet another.

He gives up and flees.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

But it was useless. So he fled, because the Nemean Lion was starting to look pretty damn pissed.

And he does!

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - WORK AREA - MORNING

Athena comes in with her coffee. Agitated STAFF, including Penny, Lois and Clark, are clustered around Roy.

ROY
Well, then. That's it, isn't it?
It's all over.

Penny calls Athena over.

PENNY
Thena, this affects you, too.

ATHENA
What?

Roy shows her his phone. On the screen, the headline of a news story reads, "LION NEWS NETWORK TO ACQUIRE MIRACLE STUDIOS."

ROY
As we suspected, his stock buy-up
wasn't just to become chairman of
the board.

PENNY
Apparently Lion News has created a
division that combines AI with CGI
in real time.

LOIS
That's impossible. He'd have to
have a rendering farm the size of-

PENNY
-of his ego. But he says they're
already doing it.

LOIS
For a news network?

ATHENA
I hate to think how.

PENNY
Or for what.

Roy continues to read from his phone.

ROY
He thinks we'd make a great fit in
his portfolio. He says we have
great "syzygy."

CLARK
What the hell is syzygy?

PENNY
It sounds Latin.

Everyone stares at Athena.

ATHENA
What, now I'm Word Girl?

She sighs.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
It's Latin. Two words, syn and
zygon. Together and yoke. It means
a yoke of animals. A pair. Union of
two.

CLARK
Y'know, they should put Word Girl
back on PBS.

PENNY
She *is* on. Try KCET.

LOIS
Word Girl rocks.

SALLY
What's Latin for kick his effing
ass?

ATHENA
Uh . . . asinum suum stimulum
calcitrare.

ROY
Oh, I'll stimulum his asinum, all
right.

CLARK
Isn't there anything we can do?

ROY
It's up to the shareholders.
They'll count the proxy votes and
decide on Monday.

ATHENA
So maybe I won't . . . I'll have to
go back? I won't be able to work
here anymore?

PENNY

Athena, as of Tuesday, none of us
may be able to work here.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Athena is ranting to Susan.

ATHENA

There has to be something I can do!

SUSAN

Oh, come on. You're not involved
with them. The stakes are so low.

Athena's anger is ferocious.

ATHENA

The stakes couldn't be higher! I
need them to succeed. I need this
job!

Susan doesn't get it.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

I have nothing! No one! I'm living
in a freaking parking lot, for
God's sake!

Susan takes offense.

SUSAN

. . . You have *me*.

Athena wilts but doesn't quite roll her eyes.

ATHENA'S DREAM -- ANIMATIC

The Nemean Tiger's face goes from neutral to angry. It
HISSES.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - PENNY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Penny is pensive, alone at her desk. On it is a FRAMED BLACK
AND WHITE PHOTO of her late husband. Athena is brought to the
open office door by Clark.

ATHENA

Thank you, Clark. I've really appreciated your help this week.

CLARK

Gee. Gosh. You're easy to be nice to, Thena.

PENNY

Thank you, Clark.

He departs, closing the door halfway, quietly.

ATHENA

He's very mild-mannered, isn't he?

Penny smiles. Her contemplative mood continues. Athena senses it.

PENNY

Well, that's why we hired him. It makes him a good receptionist. But I also think he just likes you.

Athena half-smiles, sits.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Roy had planned to speak with you when we're done. See how your time with us has been. And, I think, to see if you would stay longer. So now that's all shot to hell.

ATHENA

I was just starting to like it. And I really, really need the money.

PENNY

They're processing your check. I didn't know I was bringing you on board a sinking ship, Thena. I'm sorry.

ATHENA

I feel bad. You brought me in for my -- supposed expertise? And I haven't really done anything for you.

PENNY

Oh, I didn't expect anything in a week. I just wanted you to stir the pot. Get us thinking! Have you try us out.

ATHENA

Yeah. Guess I'll just be a tax write-off for you, after all.

PENNY

You wanted to see the soundstage before -- well, before you left. How was it?

ATHENA

It was just empty and . . . big.

PENNY

I used to enjoy going down there. I need to. I like to remember that something here is.

ATHENA

Hmm?

PENNY

Big, I mean.

ATHENA

Ah.

PENNY

Nothing about Miracle Comics was big until the movies, you know. In the beginning it was just a bunch of guys -- kids, really -- making silly drawings for comic books. Adventures. For each other, more than anyone else. For years and years, back in Manhattan.

ATHENA

That's where you're from?

PENNY

Yes. My husband's name was Hy Rich. Heard of him?

ATHENA

Hy Rich. Didn't he start the company?

PENNY

No, but Hy changed it. Made it his own. Started as an office boy in the 1970s. By the end he was publisher.

Penny turns the desk photo so Athena can see it.

ATHENA

That's Hy Rich?

PENNY

His real name was Heinrich Schliestein. Hy N. Rich. Heinrich. Get it? I buried him twelve years ago. It will be like burying him again if the studio goes.

ATHENA

I'm sorry.

PENNY

Tell me, just between us. When we met, why did you tell me you didn't like superhero movies.

ATHENA

Well it's not . . . It's not that I *dislike* them. It's only . . . a lack of like.

PENNY

Hmm.

ATHENA

They're just -- all the movies, they're -- it's good guy, bad guy, big evil thing in the sky.

PENNY

I see.

ATHENA

Usually it's glowing.

PENNY

I agree. Now, here's a history lesson. In the first -- the very first -- live-action Superman movie in 1948, do you know the first thing he did? His initial super act, as it were?

Athena shakes her head.

PENNY (CONT'D)

His father's automobile was in the way of a tornado. So he held onto it. That's all. Held it tight. Saved his dad.

ATHENA

I like that better than some alien trying to steal our oxygen or turning everyone to stone.

PENNY

Me too. Then there came a Superman radio program -- like a podcast. The first thing he did there was to save a father and son from a streetcar that lost its brakes. And in the very, very beginning, in the comic book that started it all in 1938, his first act was to stop the execution of an innocent woman. Then you turned the page, and he went out and stopped a man from beating his wife.

ATHENA

Those are all such small things.

PENNY

Are they? Are they really? Two women, a child and two fathers, one of them Superman's own.

Athena completes the thought.

ATHENA

They're actually big things. Much bigger. They all happen in real life.

PENNY

Very real. You know, here at the studio I've helped make up movie supervillains with super weapons to destroy entire worlds, and felt -- absolutely nothing. But if, instead, we were to-

Roy knocks on the half-open door and enters, wearing a FALSE MUSTACHE.

ROY

Hey!

PENNY

Oh, you must have been down at rehearsal.

Roy remembers he's wearing the mustache and peels it off.

ROY
Just in and out. Work must go on.

ATHENA
You wear a fake mustache to rehearsal?

PENNY
No, just when he's around the actors. He's afraid of them.

Roy tries to bluff.

ROY
What? That's ridiculous! Why would I-

PENNY
Because they're famous.

To Athena:

PENNY (CONT'D)
When he met Chris Evans and Scarlett Johansson at Comicon two years ago, he had to wear a false nose. And the next year, when he met Margot Robbie-

ATHENA
Ohhhh, now I get it! Actually, I can understand that. I can. I'd hate to be just me around such beautiful people, too.

Roy hands Athena his mustache.

ROY
Here you go, then.

She accepts it as she would a dead fish.

ROY (CONT'D)
Penny? See you tomorrow. Thena, may I have a moment?

As Athena starts to leave with Roy, Penny calls after her.

PENNY
Thena, don't feel bad. I didn't expect your global folklore would apply to our predicament.

Thena stops abruptly, as something occurs to her.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - HALLWAY

Roy fumbles in his pocket for some car keys and brings them out. He holds them up to Athena.

ROY

Thena, I know you've only been here a week, but that's what makes you a perfect choice. I need a favor.

She rolls her eyes, pissed.

ATHENA

Roy, I've been an intern before. Let me guess. For my last official act you want me to take your sportscar to the car wash.

ROY

What? No! First, it's an SUV. Second, it's a company SUV. And third, that would be completely unnecessary.

ATHENA

Sorry.

She gets out the fake mustache and starts playing with it.

ROY

It's clean *enough*. Feel free to trash it, though. Empty a bag of Doritos in the back seat. Spit gum on the floor. Pee if you want.

Now she's wearing the mustache.

ATHENA

Be careful what you wish for.

ROY

I won't care because I need you to go to meet Braddock Murley and his -
- I don't know, bodyguards or whatever. Pick them up at the airport and take them to their hotel.

ATHENA

What? No! That jerkwad and his goons? Why should I?

She takes off the mustache.

ROY

Because he asked New York and New York asked me, and now I'm asking you.

ATHENA

No! Let them get ride share or a taxi like the rest of us poor mortals.

ROY

Look. Yes, it's some power thing with him. He wants to see us jump when he says jump. But in the big picture it doesn't matter. Just because you suck up doesn't make you a suckup.

ATHENA

Gee whiz, dad, I really am learning a lot in this internship.

ROY

Please?

ATHENA

Why me?

ROY

He knows everyone else here! And you're -- you're--

ATHENA

Expendable, right? If I screw up, no one will care.

ROY

No! Not at all. It's just that, as an intern, you're -- you're -- Well, all right, yes, you're expendable. But that's not why I want you to do it.

ATHENA

Then why?

ROY

Because you're not *us*.

She doesn't get it.

ROY (CONT'D)
You're not Miracle Studios. Not yet, anyway. He won't see you as -- tainted or anything.

ATHENA
What?!

ROY
He will have no reason to hate you.

Athena isn't sure she can believe that.

ATHENA
The way he already hates you, you mean. All of you.

ROY
. . . And also, if he wins, if he takes over and the staff is forced to leave . . .

He's embarrassed to be so sentimental.

ROY (CONT'D)
Maybe he'll keep on a friendly intern. Especially such a good one. So that you might still have a chance to work here, Thena. If you want.

She can accept his explanation. She trades him the mustache for the keys.

ATHENA
I don't know why I'd want to stay, if that happened.

ROY
You have to. If you're still here, when other studios call, you can give us good job recommendations.

She smiles at his joke. Nods.

ATHENA
Okay. Deal. What's the hotel?

ROY
The Beverly-Burbank. They have a suite.

(MORE)

ROY (CONT'D)
Same location as for the board
meeting. The hotel's going to
stream it from a banquet room.

He gives her a note.

ROY (CONT'D)
Here's the gate information. Better
leave right now.

She's not pleased but, with a big sigh, she starts to head
out.

ROY (CONT'D)
And Thena?

She turns back.

ROY
Drive safe.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BEVERLY-BURBANK HOTEL - DRIVE-UP - EARLY EVENING

The MIRACLE STUDIOS SUV swerves, squeals and jerks to a stop.

ATHENA
I'm just an intern!

Two beefy BODYGUARDS get out, both pretty shaky. Braddock
calls to them from inside. His Australian accent is
pronounced.

BRADDOCK
Lads, don't chunder, now! Get the
luggage.

Athena opens Braddock's passenger door. He looks ill.

ATHENA
Did I shake you up?

BRADDOCK
No worries, mate . . . I've been to
Los Angeles lots of times.

He swallows.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
It always feels like this.

INT. BEVERLY-BURBANK HOTEL - SUITE - NIGHT

The quarters are palatial. They all enter, bodyguards with luggage.

BRADDOCK
Good. Get it all set up, fellas.
Then get onto room service.

He looks around.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Thena, is it? You'll stay for some
champers?

ATHENA
Um, sure . . . Champers?

BRADDOCK
Champagne.

One of the bodyguards picks up a television REMOTE and turns on LION NEWS NETWORK. Braddock waves Athena to a seat.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Take a load off.

Athena sits.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Intern, eh? What are you learning
from those yobbos at the studio?

ATHENA
Oh, it's more like filling in for a
week. I'm taking some time off from
school.

BRADDOCK
Studying what?

ATHENA
It's interdepartmental. Folklore
and mythology.

BRADDOCK
Get out! Me too!

ATHENA
What?

BRADDOCK
Undergraduate in classics and
ancient history.
(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
 Master's in anthro. "Myth, ritual
 and the sacred." University of
 South Adelaide. Did my field work
 with the San peoples.

Athena can hardly believe it.

ATHENA
 I just -- I would never have
 guessed that. Ever!

He motions toward the television.

BRADDOCK
 Tch! My young blokes -- Lion News
 Network -- it's all just modern
 mythology, you see. The stories we
 like tell ourselves. About who we
 are.

ATHENA
 I never thought of it that way.

BRADDOCK
 Same as always. Nothing ever
 changes. Except old Homer and
 Sophocles couldn't charge as much
 as I do for advertising, eh?

They laugh.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
 Mind you, they look better than I
 do in a toga.

Athena seems to actually start liking this man.

ATHENA
 You're not at all what I expected.

BRADDOCK
 Tell me about school.

ATHENA
 Oh, you don't want to-

BRADDOCK
 Sure I do.

He checks his wristwatch.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

It's three hours earlier here.
Nothing but time, and you're at the
bottom of the pecking order at the
studio. So there's nothing you can
tell me I don't already know. Tell
me about school. Odysseus and
Achilles up to anything new these
days?

She decides it's okay to share.

ATHENA

All right.

BRADDOCK

Good! Now first, what is it with
calling yourself Thena. Short for
Athena? Yours and my old friend,
the Greek goddess?

ATHENA

Yes. But no.

BRADDOCK

"Yes but no." Now, I need to write
that down, young lady. You just
explained America to me!

She laughs.

ATHENA

Pallas Athena, the ancient goddess
of warfare. Cold, logical. A
killer. You know that. Leading
troops into battle? In every single
statue, wearing a helmet and
holding a spear. That's not me.

BRADDOCK

You don't even know the best part.
I reckon your superhero studio
chappies didn't want you to know.

ATHENA

Know what?

BRADDOCK

Why, Athena's father is Zeus!

She knew this.

ATHENA

Yeah?

BRADDOCK

Young lady, do you know who else he fathered?

ATHENA

Oh, so many. Ares, Apollo, Minos, Dionysus-

BRADDOCK

Athena, your half sister is Wonder Woman!

ATHENA

What? Get out! Really?

BRADDOCK

I can see you need to read a better class of literature. Pallas Athena is on the state seal of California, too. Did you know that?

ATHENA

Really?

BRADDOCK

Sitting right next to a grizzly bear!

ATHENA

I did not know that!

BRADDOCK

Oh, Thena. Well, that's just being young. I reckon there's a lot you don't know.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. BEVERLY-BURBANK HOTEL - DRIVE-UP - NIGHT

Athena comes outside and gets into the SUV. She sits there for a moment, troubled.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Athena pulls in with the SUV and gets out. She halts for a second but then gets an idea. The more it builds in her mind, the wilder and more exciting it gets. She hurriedly dials her phone.

ATHENA

Clark? Thena. I'm at the studio.
Tell me -- what do you people call
it here? Costuming? Or wardrobe?
Where you store the . . . Okay. Now
-- can you get me in there? I need
to borrow something . . . Yes,
tonight!

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY-BURBANK HOTEL - SUITE -- NIGHT

Bodyguards answer the door. It's Athena, looking in-charge
and a little ominous. She's walks right in and hands one of
them a GARMENT BAG.

ATHENA

Is he still up? He needs to know. I
have some ideas about the studio.

She crosses her arms and waits.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Susan the guard is looking around, anxious to find Athena.
She spots her exiting the store, eating a BIG SANDWICH. She
runs over.

ATHENA

Mmm! I didn't eat all day. Want
some?

SUSAN

Thena. Now don't get upset! Just-

ATHENA

What?

SUSAN

I have good news and bad news.

ATHENA

. . . Give me the bad news first.

SUSAN

It's easier to show you.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- A PARKING STALL --
CONTINUOUS

Athena's car is gone. But all the STUFF that was in it is piled up in the space. Athena is livid.

ATHENA
They stole my car? They stole my car?

SUSAN
I'm sorry!

ATHENA
And left my stuff?

SUSAN
That's the good news!

ATHENA
What -- what -- what the hell kind of a security guard are you?!

Susan is indignant.

SUSAN
Well, they wanted to take *everything*!

CUT TO:

ATHENA'S DREAM -- ANIMATIC

Athena-Heracles follows the lion's footprints.

ATHENA (V.O.)
Heracles tracked the Nemean Lion to a cave. But he wasn't home.

A moon crater is diagramed to compare to a cave.

ATHENA
Now why, you might wonder, would a spirit moon lion choose a cave to live in? I have a theory. I think a cave is the closest it could get to living in a moon crater. So he must have felt right at home! But unlike a crater, which only has one opening, this cave had two.

Heracles sets an enormously fat centaur on its butt in front of one cave entrance. It just sits there.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
 Heracles blocked up one entrance.
 He went inside to hide, and wait
 for the lion to come back. He was
 afraid. It was a big risk. Would it
 work out? He waited . . . And
 waited . . . And in the morning-

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT -- A PARKING STALL -- MORNING

Susan and Athena have arranged her stuff to make a living
 room out of the parking space. Friends again, they're eating
 doughnuts and drinking coffee.

SUSAN:
 Mmm! Good beans make all the
 difference.

ATHENA
 I know, right?

SUSAN:
 So you're going to go through with
 it?

ATHENA
 Too late to stop it.

SUSAN:
 If it works, you know what?

ATHENA
 What?

SUSAN:
 I'll miss you.

ATHENA
 Well, I'll still *shop* here.

SUSAN:
 Tch! Not the same.

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY-BURBANK HOTEL - BOARD MEETING - DAY

At a PODIUM in the front, Roy, dressed formally, is coming to
 the end of his speech.

ROY

And so, with the changes we've
already made this fiscal year, we
can promise you super efficiency
and super share price.

THIN, POLITE APPLAUSE as he walks briskly to the back of the
room, where he joins Penny.

PENNY

Good job.

Braddock advances to the podium.

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

All the OTHER STAFF but Athena watch the board meeting being
streamed. It's a party, with SNACKS and MIXED DRINKS.
Braddock takes his place onscreen.

LOIS

Nosferatu walks among us!

CLARK

Hey, where's Thena? I thought she'd
be here.

INTERCUT BOARD MEETING/MIRACLE STUDIOS

Braddock shuffles the pages of his SPEECH. He looks to the
side. He spies Athena standing just outside an entrance,
unseen by others. She gives him a thumb's up. He gives her a
quick nod. He is ready. He begins to read, a little stiffly.

BRADDOCK

I'm pleased to be here, to speak
with the long-suffering board of
directors, to whom I humbly
volunteer my assistance. I have
made no secret of my
dissatisfaction with Miracle
Studios. It has been my hope to
extend to it the same bold
leadership, political influence and
management of public perception
that I have demonstrated at the
Lion News Network.

MIRACLE STUDIOS

LOIS

He said it!

CLARK
Lion News!

In near-unison, everyone takes a drink.

BOARD MEETING

BRADDOCK
However, recently I have found that
my views are evolving.

There are anxious murmurs. Braddock shoots Athena a sly wink.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
I know more than most about how to
create heroes. We have done so,
many times, at the Lion News
Network.

MIRACLE STUDIOS

They all take another drink.

BOARD MEETING

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
And yet there is more we can all
learn. For example, can anyone here
tell me the very first deed
performed by Superman in a live
action film, in 1948?

Penny is truly alarmed. This is straight from her meeting
with Athena.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
I will tell you! Superman's adopted
father was in a car. There was a
tornado. Superman saved him!

He starts clapping. Everyone starts to vigorously applaud
with him. Penny is anxious.

MIRACLE STUDIOS

Lois is amazed. Sally is rapidly paging through documents.

LOIS
What. The. Fuck.

SALLY
This isn't anywhere in the briefing
papers.

BOARD MEETING

BRADDOCK

Miracle Studios' superheroes must be just that real. As real as what you see every day on the Lion News Network. Indeed, they can and must be on the Lion News Network. To that end, I propose a merger!

The room is really stirring.

MIRACLE STUDIOS

Clark comes back into the room and sees that everyone is drinking harder than ever, but at random.

CLARK

What? Did he say it again? Did I miss it?

BOARD MEETING

A SCREEN has lowered behind Braddock, and he begins clicking through a presentation featuring Lion News.

BRADDOCK

TV is a reality factory. And what if TV news one day tells us that a real war was ended -- not by soldiers or politicians . . . but by Hangdog and Bang Bang!

The screen shows Miracle superheroes on Lion News. They're shaking hands with enemies, making peace. We hear the imitated VOICE OF A PRESIDENT.

PRESIDENT (O.C.)

Hangdog was just great, everybody tells me he's great, and I always knew that. He thinks I'm great, too, by the way. And Bang Bang, well, he's just the greatest superhero, I think, of all time. Everyone says that. You know, they say we have the best superheroes in the world, and we really do. Today they brought us peace in the Middle East and I play golf with them.

Penny and Roy are in shock.

BRADDOCK

Lion News, with AI and real-time
CGI rendering, will make it
possible for millions to see
Miracle Studios superheroes respond
to each day's worst threat, live on
television. And there will always
be another threat. And another!

Various Miracle superheroes interacting with footage of
natural disasters. A suitably patriotic COUNTRY song plays
beneath.

Superheroes at the border.

The screen shows a mocked-up front page that reads "MEXICO
DEPLOYS KRYPTONITE!"

Superheroes in front of rioting at the U.S. Capitol.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

And if the U.S. Congress someday is
invaded by rioting protesters, the
capitol will be protected with the
help of Lion News, Captain Africa,
Undertow and, of course, Henry!

He reaches under the podium to pull something out. It's a
cloth that he unfurls and sweeps around his neck. It's a
Miracle Studios SUPERHERO CAPE.

MIRACLE STUDIOS

Almost simultaneously, everyone drops their glasses and beer
bottles. Clark smiles knowingly.

CLARK

Ha!

BOARD MEETING

As the music peaks, Braddock joyfully flings his arms up in
the air like a victorious boxer, posing.

BRADDOCK

Let me lead you! It's time! It's
time to make . . . America . . .
super!

Long silence. No one stirs. Arms still raised, Braddock's
eyes shift back and forth. He frowns. It didn't work.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)
Oh, bugger.

Penny looks toward the entry and sees Athena ducking out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS SUV - MOVING

Athena is driving Braddock and the bodyguards. He's still wearing his cape. One of the bodyguards leans forward.

BODYGUARD
Can -- can we go any faster?

She floors it.

ATHENA
Well, *I* thought it went very well.

BRADDOCK
I'm used to it.

ATHENA
Will you be back? Do You think
you'll ever try again?

BRADDOCK
I doubt it. But you never know.
Keep in touch, eh? . . . My people
could always use a clever girl like
you.

ATHENA
Oh! . . . Well, thanks.

BRADDOCK
You know, you're wrong about
Athena. The Greek goddess.

Athena is concentrating on traffic -- or pretending to.

ATHENA
Oh? How so?

Braddock observes the sites along the road, distractedly relating his interpretation.

BRADDOCK
In "The Odyssey," Homer's epic
poem? Here you have Odysseus, the
great hero of the Trojan war. A
veteran. He's lost, forgotten.
(MORE)

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

It took ten bloody years for the gods to notice. And then who was it? Who was the only god who went to Zeus the father, and said "I am worried about Odysseus, alone in trouble and sorrow."

She knows, but she's not comfortable admitting it.

ATHENA

It was Athena.

BRADDOCK

Who asked Zeus if she could be the one who finally helped him home? To do it, who overturned the curse of mighty Poseidon? And kept Odysseus safe by covering him with mist and disguising him as an old man?

ATHENA

. . . Athena.

BRADDOCK

Who brought him ashore at Scheria? Kept his treasure safe in Ithaca? And finally, who stood by Odysseus' side to defeat the happyclappers who for ten years tried to have their way with his wife?

Athena clears her throat.

ATHENA

Athena. Athena did all of that.

BRADDOCK

So, then. Who is the hero of the story? The one who was saved, or the one who saved him?

Athena cannot find any words to respond. Braddock sees that he has convinced her. For once, he's satisfied.

BRADDOCK (CONT'D)

So. My trip wasn't a complete waste. It's a good name, Athena. A powerful name. You're wise to be careful with it. But don't waste it, either.

They drive a bit more in silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS -- PENNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Athena comes into Penny's office, carrying a GIFT BAG. But Penny isn't there. As she turns to leave, Penny enters.

PENNY
There you are!

ATHENA
Hey, is Roy around?

PENNY
How did you do it?

ATHENA
Do what?

Penny glares at her.

PENNY
You saved the studio . . . *Didn't*
you?

ATHENA
Oh. Well. I suppose you never read
about Heracles and the Nemean Lion.

Penny is testy and impatient.

PENNY
Thena!

ATHENA
The Nemean Lion was like Superman.
Claws so sharp they could cut
anything. Skin impossible to
pierce. But Heracles had to bring
its hide to the king! An impossible
task.

PENNY
Is this going somewhere?

ATHENA
Well! Heracles managed to strangle
this lion. Yuch. But how to get the
skin off? Again, nothing could cut
it!

PENNY
Your paycheck is still in my desk
drawer, you know.

ATHENA

So. Heracles thought and he
thought, and he finally had an
idea. He cut off the skin . . .
using the lion's own claws.

PENNY

. . . The lion's own claws.

ATHENA

The razor-sharp claws.

PENNY

. . . He turned the lion's own
strength back on itself.

ATHENA

The king was very pleased.

Penny agrees.

PENNY

I should think he was . . .

She gets Athena's check and hands it to her.

PENNY (CONT'D)

You know, I have an idea that this
Heracles was probably much more
clever than people thought. More
than the king ever gave him credit
for. Or her.

ATHENA

Maybe. This is for you.

She gives Penny the gift bag.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

To thank you for my time here.

PENNY

What is it?

From the bag, Penny pulls out a set of two nesting RUSSIAN
DOLLS -- a smaller doll inside a larger doll.

ATHENA

It's a Trojan horse.

But it's obviously not. Penny gives her a questioning look.

ATHENA (CONT'D)
Why? What do you think it looks like?

PENNY
Well, it's one of those Russian -- it's a little woman hidden by a larger woman.

Athena is beaming.

ATHENA
. . . Exactly. I have to look for Roy.

And she's gone. As Penny thinks on that, she draws the CARD out of the bag.

ATHENA'S CARD

We focus especially on the bold, proud signature. The card reads, "THANKS FOR MY RENT. NOW I NEED A SECURITY DEPOSIT. -- ATHENA."

Penny taps the card, smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

As Athena passes the doorway, Roy calls out to her, wryly.

ROY
Young lady, you have been a very naughty girl!

Athena comes into the doorway, fake innocence.

ATHENA
Who, me?

ROY
I'd give you a spanking, but I have a feeling you might get into that sort of thing. Braddock Murley just phoned from his airplane. He seems quite impressed with you, despite what I suspect you did to him today.

ATHENA
Oh?

ROY

He told me I better hang onto you
if I want to keep my job. Which I
don't know that I appreciate.

ATHENA

Roy, I'm glad I ran into you
because I really need to-

ROY

He also told me about all these
heroic legends you know about. And
your ideas about how they might be
applied.

ATHENA

. . . Hmm! Well. Huh! Let me see.

She circles the room like a schoolteacher, gesturing to
studio characters decorating the walls as she references
each.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Undertow and Henry in "Lightning
Chow 2" is just Homer's Odyssey
from 800 B.C., but with a much
bigger part for Poseidon. That's
why the third act struggles. He's
really just B plot.
Your Sergeant at Arms team-up with
Sea Wolf and Revenant for 2029
release is the legend of Alexander
the Great at the Temple of Amun, at
Karnak in Egypt, 332 B.C. I'm
sorry, but where's the emotional
payoff in declaring yourself
pharaoh? Only gamers could
identify. As for Toots and Bang
Bang in "Requiem Overdue Max II,"
what you've got here is the Inuit
folktale of Mahaha the Arctic
Demon, but as a buddy movie. And
finally, bringing together
Undertow, Sergeant at Arms,
Bombshell and Cryptogram in the
Phase 2 alternate universe? Really?
You don't need to license the
rights after all because that's the
ancient African myth of The
Midnight Goat Thief, from Zimbabwe.

Roy is goggle-eyed.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

In a black hole. With time travel,
of course.

ROY

Of course . . . So tell me. How
many of these stories do you know?
There's gotta be a limit. How long
do you think you could keep this
up?

ATHENA

Oh, wasn't it Socrates who said,
"From solstice to equinox and
thrice again, the many lessons of
an Athenian poet could fill . . .
four seasons"?

Roy is puzzled.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

With an option to renew.

Roy gets it. Grudgingly, he finally smiles and starts to nod.

She turns and continues down the hall-

INT. MIRACLE STUDIOS -- HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

-and starts to dance.

SMASH TO BLACK

END OF EPISODE