

SuperHuman Times
"The Hot Property"

A Graphic Novel
Written by Lance Woods

7876 Cheverly Lane
Glen Burnie, MD 21060
PH: 410/766-0844
CELL: 443/520-7927
E-mail: hudsucker@cablespeed.com

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LETTERING KEY

Underlined.....	Boldface
Italic	Italics
CAPS.....	All Caps
HW	Handwritten
(off)	Off Panel
FX	Sound Effect
(CAP)	Character-specific caption
(TH).....	Thought Balloon
(WH).....	Whisper Balloon
(BL).....	Oversized Lettering
(SL).....	Undersized Lettering
BURST.....	Burst Balloon
CHATTER	"Floating" dialogue balloons
ELEC.....	Electronic (phone, TV, etc.)

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PAGE 1 / FIVE PANELS

[1.1] AN EXTENDED FOREARM AND UPPER ARM BELONGING TO A MALE WHOSE BODY & FACE ARE CURRENTLY NOT IN THE FRAME FROM THE SHOULDER UP. ALL WE SEE IS HIS ARM AND OPEN HAND, CLAD IN THE SHIRT (CUFF VISIBLE) AND JACKET OF A U.S. ARMY DRESS UNIFORM. BEHIND IT, SEVERAL DETAILS OF THE SETTING — A TYPICAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM (BLACKBOARD, BULLETIN BOARD WITH STUDENT PAPERS, ETC.) — CAN BE SEEN.

1 RHETT (off): Now, y'all watch very closely.

[1.2] SAME ANGLE, AT THE MIDPOINT OF A VERY RAPID, VERY COOL-LOOKING TRANSFORMATION IN WHICH THE FOREARM AND ITS CLOTHING SUDDENLY BECOME A SINGLE, LIQUID LIMB INSTEAD OF SOLIDS. IN THIS CASE, THE FOREARM IS 'MORPHING INTO A HIGH-TECH, PUMP ACTION SHOTGUN. BALLOONS OF CHATTER FROM THE ROOM'S AS-YET UNSEEN KIDS AND TEACHER SURROUND THE IMAGES.

2 FX: FWIPPZPPHMMM!

3 CHATTER (BL): WOW!

4 CHATTER (WH): My uncle has a fake arm.

5 CHATTER: Shoot it! Shoot your arm!

6 CHATTER: Gregory.

[1.3] SAME ANGLE — THE FOREARM TRANSFORMS AGAIN (SO QUICKLY THAT WE SEE ONLY THE TAIL END OF THE EFFECT), THIS TIME INTO THE BARREL OF A FUTURISTIC-LOOKING LASER GUN.

7 FX: PFFFFZZZWHIR!

8 CHATTER (BL): OOOOOOOOOOH!

9 CHATTER (WH): My uncle's arm, it just pops off ...

10 CHATTER: Bet that'll vap'rize a planet!

11 CHATTER: Vap'rize my lunch!

12 CHATTER: Gregory!

[1.4] SAME ANGLE — ANOTHER RAPID TRANSFORMATION, THIS TIME, MORE TOWARDS THE MIDPOINT AS THE FOREARM HAS NO DISCERNIBLE SHAPE ... YET.

13 FX: ZWIPFWZZZAATT!

14 CHATTER: Make it bigger!

15 CHATTER: Make a cannon!

16 RHETT (off): How about I make it into —

(CONTINUED)

PAGE 1 (cont'd)

[1.5] WIDER ANGLE FROM THE P.O.V. OF 10 OR 12 EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS SITTING IN A HALF-CIRCLE ON THE CLASSROOM FLOOR, LOOKING UP AT RHETT CORSAIR, WHO HAS JUST TURNED HIS PHENOMENAL ARM INTO ... A NORMAL ARM WITH A HAND PUPPET THAT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE HIM. RHETT — A TALL, HANDSOME MAN IN HIS LATE 30S WITH WAVY, BLACK HAIR — IS AN ARMY COLONEL, IN FULL DRESS UNIFORM. THE TEACHER, MS. HART, STANDING BESIDE RHETT, IS AMUSED AND APPLAUDING, AS ARE MOST OF THE KIDS (EXCEPT FOR ONE DISAPPOINTED BOY SITTING BY THE TEACHER; THIS IS OBVIOUSLY GREGORY).

17 RHETT — me?

18 CLASS (IN UNISON): YAYYYYYYYY!

19 GREGORY (SL): Wanted to see the cannon ...

PAGE 2 / SIX PANELS

[2.1] WIDER ANGLE OF THE CLASSROOM. AS RHETT SPEAKS, HIS HAND TRANSFORMS BACK TO ITS REGULAR, HUMAN FORM. MORE OF THE BLACKBOARD BEHIND RHETT CAN BE SEEN NOW. WRITTEN ON IT, IN TIDY CURSIVE SCRIPT, ARE THE WORDS ...

1 CHALKBOARD: "Special Guest: Col. Rhett Corsair, 'Armed Escort."
 2 FX: FWIPP!
 3 RHETT: Now, I don't want y'all thinking that bringing guns into school is a cool thing to do ...
 4 RHETT: But Ms. Hart let me do my stuff so I could show y'all some of the ways your ol' pal Armed Escort helps the fine men and women in our armed forces protect folks against all those nasty supervillains and alien invaders out there.

[2.2] ANGLE ON MS. HART, NOW AT RHETT'S SIDE. IN FRONT OF THEM, A BUNCH OF SMALL HANDS FROM THE EAGER STUDENTS HAVE ALREADY POPPED UP IN ANTICIPATION OF HER REQUEST.

5 MS. HART: And that was a very impressive demonstration, Colonel Corsair, thank you!
 6 MS. HART: Now, does anyone have any questions they'd like —?
 7 CHATTER: Me!
 8 CHATTER: I wanna ask!
 9 CHATTER: Make a fire-thrower!

[2.3] RHETT & MS. HART'S P.O.V. OF THE EAGER KIDS. SHE POINTS TO KEVIN DUNBAR, A HUSKY (NOT FAT), BLACK-HAIRED BOY WHO'S LOOKING AT RHETT WITH A SERIOUS EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE.

10 MS. HART: Let's start with ... Kevin.
 11 MS. HART: Would you like to ask the colonel something about his cybernetic arm?

[2.4] KEVIN, LOOKING VERY FOCUSED.

12 KEVIN: No, ma'am.

[2.5] RHETT, SMILING, EXPECTING A "CUTE KID QUESTION."

13 KEVIN (off): I'd like to ask the colonel what he'd do with his arm if he couldn't use it on supervillains.

[2.6] SAME ANGLE AS RHETT GOES TOTALLY BLANK.

[No copy]

PAGE 3 / FIVE PANELS

[3.1] KEVIN, STILL FOCUSED, BUT CLEARLY SINCERE. THIS KID COULD FIT IN AT A WHITE HOUSE PRESS CONFERENCE. THE OTHER KIDS ARE GIVING HIM "HUH?" LOOKS.

1 KEVIN: I mean, your arm is neat and all, sir, but ...
2 KEVIN: What if there were no bad guys? Or they just quit?
3 KEVIN: What would you do?

[3.2] RHETT RUBS HIS CHIN, SERIOUSLY PONDERING THE QUESTION.

4 RHETT: Well, son ... No one's ever asked me that one.
5 RHETT: But I reckon if that ever happened ...

[3.3] RHETT, DROPPING TO ONE KNEE BEFORE KEVIN, WHO LOOKS A BIT INTIMIDATED NOW.

6 RHETT: I'd ask the government to let me retire on a nice, big, quiet ranch
someplace.
7 RHETT: Not that it'll ever happen, 'cause we'll always have bad guys
somewhere.
8 RHETT: So I'll always be there, watchin' your back.

[3.4] RHETT, PLACING HIS HAND ON KEVIN'S SHOULDER, AND SMILING.

9 RHETT: Good question, partner.
10 RHETT: You'd make a darn fine reporter someday, Mister ...?

[3.5] KEVIN, BEAMING, AND A LITTLE EMBARRASSED.

11 KEVIN: D-Dunbar, sir.
12 KEVIN: Kevin Dunbar.

PAGE 4 / THREE PANELS

- [4.1] "MATCH-CUT" TO A SIMILAR CLOSE ANGLE ON DUNBAR, 25 YEARS LATER. HE'S 32, STILL A GOOD-LOOKING GUY WITH A YOUTHFUL FACE THAT'S PRETTY MAD RIGHT NOW. HE'S OUTSIDE SOMEWHERE, WITH SOMEONE SPEAKING OFF PANEL, BUT WE CAN'T SEE EITHER OF THOSE YET.

1 CAPTION: 25 Years Later — Today
 2 MORALES (off): Dunbar —
 3 DUNBAR: Denied!

- [4.2] WIDER ANGLE THAT PROVIDES A BETTER VIEW OF DUNBAR. HE'S GOT A BURLY, EX-FOOTBALL PLAYER'S BUILD THAT'S WELL-MAINTAINED, BUT NOT HEAVILY MUSCLED. HE WEARS A POLO SHIRT (WITH THE WORDS "SUPERHUMAN TIMES" EMBROIDERED OVER THE LEFT CHEST) AND KHAKIS. HE IS WALKING BESIDE GLENN MORALES, A MAN IN HIS LATE 40S WEARING A DRESS SHIRT WITH SHIRT SLEEVES ROLLED UP, A LOOSENEED NECKTIE, AND PANTS FROM A SUIT. HE CARRIES A COMPACT PORTFOLIO UNDER HIS ARM. THEY'RE WALKING THROUGH A LARGE AMERICAN CITY, ON A SIDEWALK THAT RUNS BESIDE A NICE PARK WITH TREES, JOGGING PATHS, ETC. BOTH MEN WEAR LANYARDS AROUND THEIR NECKS WITH I.D. BADGES FOR "THE SUPERHUMAN TIMES" HANGING FROM THE ENDS. AS THEY ARGUE, THEY DON'T NOTICE SOMETHING STREAKING OUT OF THE PARK, OVER THEIR HEADS: A FLYING ST. BERNARD HOLDING A TERRIFIED MUGGER WITH ITS TEETH BY THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS. THE DOG IS FLYING THE MUGGER OUT OF THE WOODS, AND OUT OF THE PARK. IT WEARS A VEST SIMILAR TO THOSE WORN BY SEEING-EYE DOGS. THE VEST BEARS THE SLEEK LOGO FOR "PAWS FOR ALARMS — YOUR SUPER-PET SECURITY SERVICE." IT'S LUNCH HOUR, SO THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER PEOPLE AROUND, BUT NONE OF THEM TAKE MUCH NOTICE OF THE DOG, EITHER.

4 MUGGER: I dropped her purse, ya dumb mutt! Put me down!
 5 DOG: Rrrrrr
 6 DUNBAR: "Let's get lunch out today, Dunbar. Nice day for a stroll, Dunbar. Can ya give me 2,000 words over the weekend, Dunbar?"

- [4.3] DUNBAR & MORALES, STILL WALKING UP THE AVENUE, STILL FIGHTING AS THEY APPROACH A CONSTRUCTION SITE FOR A SKYSCRAPER. THERE ARE HUMAN-OPERATED CRANES LIFTING BUNDLES OF STEEL GIRDERS TO UPPER FLOORS, AND MUSCULAR HARD HAT-WEARING SUPERHUMANS FLYING EQUALLY LARGE BUNDLES OF GIRDERS AND MATERIALS TO OTHER FLOORS. HUMAN AND SUPERHUMAN WELDERS CAN ALSO BE SEEN WORKING ON THE BUILDING. BOTH WEAR SAFETY GEAR, BUT THE HUMANS USE TORCHES WHILE THE SUPERHUMANS USE FLAME FROM THEIR FINGERS OR BEAMS FROM THEIR EYES.

7 MORALES: Listen to my pitch before you —
 8 DUNBAR: Morales, I'm spending this weekend at ComiConference with 75,000 of my closest friends, and I'm not writing a profile about any of them.
 9 MORALES: You'll have plenty of time to see everyone, I promise. But pop-culture is your beat, and you'll be at the epicenter.

PAGE 5 / THREE PANELS

[5.1] DUNBAR & MORALES, STILL WALKING, STILL FIGHTING, THIS TIME PASSING THE LARGE STOREFRONT WINDOW OF THE MULTIPLIKATIE TEMPORARY AGENCY. THROUGH A LARGE WINDOW, A BEAUTIFUL, PROFESSIONAL YOUNG WOMAN IN HER LATE 20S — KATE — CAN BE SEEN TALKING ON A PHONE, WRITING SOMETHING DOWN. AT THE SAME TIME, A SEMI-SOLID IMAGE OF KATE, AN EXACT DUPLICATE, IS "EMERGING" FROM BEHIND HER. OUTSIDE, AS DUNBAR & MORALES PASS THE BUILDING, TWO OTHER KATES ARE WALKING OUT OF THE BUILDING, PASSING THEM ON EITHER SIDE. EACH KATE IS IDENTICALLY DRESSED.

1 WINDOW: "MULTIPLIKATIE OFFICE TEMPS — MORE THAN A WOMAN!"
 2 MORALES: Devlin Markleigh plans to sign a very talented new comics creator during the show.
 3 DUNBAR: Devlin Markleigh?! The "Agent of Evil"? At ComiConference? Hope they draw a pentagram to contain him.
 4 MORALES: He's made a lot of bad guys some good money.
 5 KATIE 1 & 2: Hey, Dunbar!
 6 DUNBAR: Hey, Kate.

[5.2] DUNBAR & MORALES, NOW WALKING PAST A LARGE METRO BOOKSTORE, APPROACHING A BUSY INTERSECTION. THERE IS A LINE OF READERS STANDING OUTSIDE THE BOOKSTORE, EACH HOLDING A COPY OF THE BOOK PROMOTED ON A LARGE SANDWICH BOARD-TYPE SIGN IN FRONT OF THE STORE. DUNBAR APPEARS DISTRACTED BY THE ACTIVITY.

7 SIGN: "GLADYS MESERVEY (FORMERLY MRS. DR. FEROCIO)
 8 SIGN: "AUTHOR OF STAND BY YOUR MEGALOMANIAC!
 9 SIGN: "SIGNING TODAY, NOON-3:00 P.M."
 10 MORALES: Maybe you could talk to him about your novel.
 11 DUNBAR (SL): You're really winning me over here, Morales.
 12 MORALES: He could make it a best seller.

[5.3] DUNBAR AND MORALES CROSSING THE STREET, AND PROCEEDING TOWARDS THE LARGE, GLASS SUPERHUMAN TIMES BUILDING. DUNBAR'S STILL LOOKING BACK AT THE LINE OF PEOPLE WAITING TO GET SOMEONE ELSE'S BOOK SIGNED.

13 DUNBAR: Our circulation is ten million a month. That's best selling.
 14 DUNBAR: Right ..?

PAGES 6-7 / TWO-PAGE SPREAD

[6-7.1] HIGH ANGLE LOOKING DOWN AT DUNBAR & MORALES AS THEY ENTER THE MAIN FOYER OF THE SUPERHUMAN TIMES OFFICES. THIS IS A LARGE, BRIGHT, CURVED ATRIUM WITH BENCHES, FERNS, BIG FRONT WINDOWS. ITS KEY DECORATIONS ARE A SIGN PROCLAIMING THE MAGAZINE'S MOTTO – "EVERYONE'S STORY IS A STORY FOR OUR TIMES." — AND SEVERAL HUGE BANNERS HANGING FROM THE CEILING, EACH RECREATING A NOTEWORTHY SUPERHUMAN TIMES COVER.
NOTE: THEY SHOULD LOOK LIKE NEWS MAGAZINE COVERS, NOT TABLOIDS.

THREE OF THESE COVER BANNERS ARE ESPECIALLY PROMINENT:

THE FIRST COVER IMAGE SHOWS A MUSCULAR, IMPOSING BEING IN AN EQUALLY IMPOSING SUIT OF HI-TECH ARMOR. HE WEARS A HELMET, BUT NO MASK. HIS FACE IS WEATHERED; HIS BLACK HAIR HAS WHITE ROOTS THAT FRAME HIS FACE LIKE A CROWN; HIS PIERCING GREY EYES LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE CAMERA. THE COVER COPY READS:

- 1 **MALVOLIO NACHT BLACKMAILED!**
- 2 **Why is Earth's most fearsome villain "retiring" —**
- 3 **and could the answer be an even bigger threat?**

THE SECOND COVER IMAGE SHOWS A CAPED FIGURE STANDING WITH HER BACK TO THE CAMERA, FACING A DESERTED CITY STREET. NO PEOPLE. NO CARS. NOTHING BUT EMPTY STREETS AND QUIET BUILDINGS. THE COVER COPY READS:

- 4 **NOW, WHAT?**
- 5 **A year after Malvolio Nacht retired,**
- 6 **Earth's heroes have caught all the "other" villains.**
- 7 **But have they done their jobs too well?**

THE THIRD COVER IMAGE SHOWS A "SPLIT-SCREEN" OF TWO MASKED FIGURES STANDING BACK-TO-BACK, SMILING AT THE CAMERA. ON ONE SIDE IS A MATURE FEMALE DRESSED IN A BUSINESS SUIT, POSED IN FRONT OF THE U.S. CAPITOL HOLDING A COPY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL NEWSPAPER "ROLL CALL"; ON THE OTHER IS A MALE IN AN OPEN DRESS SHIRT (EXPOSING A SUPERHERO COSTUME OF SOME TYPE UNDERNEATH). HE'S HOLDING A COMIC BOOK THAT FEATURES A HERO WITH HIS MASKED FACE — IN FULL HEROIC COSTUME — ON THE COVER. THE TITLE OF THE BOOK, SHOWN IN A DISTINCTIVE LOGO, IS "COURAGION COMICS." BEHIND HIM IS A WALL OF COMIC BOOKS, ALL SUPERHERO TITLES (AND ALL FEATURING HIM; THE SHAPE OF THE LOGO ON EACH COVER SHOULD CONVEY THAT). THE COVER COPY READS:

- 8 **SPECIAL REPORT: TEN YEARS LATER**
- 9 **From Congress to comic-book publishing,**
- 10 **how superhumans are leading human lives.**

AS FOR THE REST OF THE LOBBY, IT'S PRETTY NORMAL — PEOPLE DARTING IN & OUT (IT IS LUNCHTIME, AFTER ALL), VISITORS SIGNING IN AT A SECURITY DESK, ETC.

- 11 DUNBAR: So, which ex-supervillain sacrificed the goat to summon Markleigh to a comic-book con?
- 12 MORALES: Uh-uh. Not a supervillain.

PAGE 8 / FOUR PANELS

[8.1] ANGLE ON DUNBAR, STANDING WITH THE SECOND COVER BLOW-UP ABOVE & BEHIND HIM.

1 DUNBAR: Ex-superhero?
2 MORALES (off): Nope.

[8.2] ANGLE ON MORALES, WITH THE THIRD COVER BLOW-UP ABOVE & BEHIND HIM AS HE HOLDS THE PORTFOLIO OUT TO DUNBAR. IT HAS A BUSINESS CARD ATTACHED TO THE FRONT OF IT.

3 MORALES: That's the hook.
4 MORALES: She's not superhuman.

[8.3] DUNBAR, NOW CURIOUS, HOLDING OUT HIS HAND TO ACCEPT THE PORTFOLIO.

[No copy]

[8.4] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF REI'S PORTFOLIO, EMPHASIZING THE BUSINESS CARD — A CUSTOM JOB WITH SHARP, DISTINCTIVE, ALMOST EXOTIC LETTERING.

5 BUSINESS CARD: **REIKO SHINOZAKI**
6 BUSINESS CARD: GRAPHICS - COMIC ART - PHOTOGRAPHY
7 BUSINESS CARD: 424/555-0178

8 MORALES (off): With all the out-of-work heroes and villains reheating their war stories in comics, can you imagine what it must take for a human to crack that industry now?

9 MORALES (off): The talent. The imagination? The raw nerve?

10 DUNBAR (off): Why would she bother?

11 MORALES (off): Good question, Dunbar.

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[9.1] INSIDE THE SUPERHUMAN TIMES OFFICES, SPECIFICALLY DUNBAR'S CLUTTER-FILLED CUBICLE, WHERE HE SITS STUDYING THE NOW-OPEN PORTFOLIO WHILE HOLDING HIS PHONE AND LISTENING TO IT RING. IT'S POSITIONED BY A LARGE WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE CITY. THERE'S A WINDOW WASHER ON A SCAFFOLD OUTSIDE. ONE OF HIS HANDS HAS TRANSFORMED INTO A JET OF WATER THAT HE USES TO COAT THE WINDOW; THE OTHER, "HUMAN" HAND HOLDS A SQUEEGEE. THIS ANGLE ALSO SHOWS MUCH OF DUNBAR'S SURROUNDINGS, SUCH AS HIS NAMEPLATE ON THE OUTSIDE CUBICLE WALL ("KEVIN DUNBAR/POP-CULTURE CORRESPONDENT") AND THE OFFICE (BUSY AS HELL, WITH LOTS OF REPORTERS & STAFF MOVING ABOUT, TALKING ON PHONES, WRITING, CONFERRING, ALL DRESSED IN BUSINESS-CASUAL WEAR).

1 MORALES (CAP): "Why don't you ask her when you call to set up the interview?"

2 CHATTER: — just want to confirm this new charge with the mayor —

3 CHATTER: All I'm asking is, why would she need steroids when she can bench press a house?

4 CHATTER: — on a deadline, so if his "body" turns up, have him call me at —

5 DUNBAR'S PHONE (ELEC): BRRRRRT

[9.2] OVER DUNBAR'S SHOULDER, LOOKING AT A PIECE OF REIKO'S ART IN THE OPEN PORTFOLIO: A MASSIVE COSMIC BATTLE, HIGHLY DETAILED, PLENTY OF CHARACTERS, LOADS OF ACTION — EVEN IN ITS ROUGH FORM, IT'S WELL-DEFINED AND DAMN GOOD.

6 DUNBAR (TH): I'll say one thing for her. She's terrific.

7 PHONE (ELEC): BRRRRRT

[9.3] DUNBAR, NOW SITTING BACK IN HIS CHAIR, HOLDING A PENCIL WITH HIS DIALING HAND, TAPPING IT LIGHTLY AGAINST A SMALL NOTEBOOK ON HIS DESK, BY A DESK CLOCK. THE TIME IS 2:15.

NOTE: WHEN REI ANSWERS THE PHONE, AND THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION, HER DIALOGUE SHOULD BE DISPLAYED IN THE SAME DISTINCTIVE, SLIGHTLY EXOTIC FONT AS HER BUSINESS CARD.

8 PHONE (ELEC): BRRRRRT

9 DUNBAR (TH): But she's gonna need more than talent to break —

10 PHONE (ELEC): BRRT— CLICK.

[9.4] DUNBAR, CAUGHT COMPLETELY OFF GUARD, LIKE HE'S BEEN HIT WITH A SIREN'S SONG.

11 REI (ELEC): Hello?

12 DUNBAR (WH, SL): Yowza.

13 REI (ELEC): Hello? Is someone there?

PAGE 10 / FIVE PANELS

[10.1] WIDER ON DUNBAR, FORCING HIMSELF TO RECOVER QUICKLY AND BECOME A PROFESSIONAL.

1 DUNBAR: Um, yeah. Me.
 2 DUNBAR: I mean, is — is this Reiko Shinozaki?
 3 REI (ELEC): Yes.
 4 DUNBAR: H-hi. My name's Kevin Dunbar. I'm a writer for —

[10.2] OVER DUNBAR'S SHOULDER AGAIN, VIEWING ANOTHER PORTFOLIO SAMPLE: A COLORFUL PAINTING OF AN ALIEN LANDSCAPE. HIS FACE CAN BE SEEN TO THE SIDE OF THE PANEL.

5 REI (ELEC): The SuperHuman Times?!
 6 DUNBAR: Uh ... yeah. M-my magazine wants me to do a profile on you.

[10.3] SAME ANGLE OF ANOTHER SAMPLE: A CHARCOAL SKETCH OF TWO HEAVILY MUSCLED BARBARIANS IN A SWORD FIGHT. DUNBAR'S DISMAYED BY HER REACTION TO HIS REQUEST.

7 REI (ELEC): No.
 8 DUNBAR: Please? I promise not to take up too much of your time.

[10.4] SAME ANGLE, ANOTHER SAMPLE: A DELICATE PENCIL SKETCH OF A MAN AND A WOMAN — BOTH DRESSED IN SIMILAR UNIFORMS, LIKE THOSE OF A STARSHIP CREW — IN A PASSIONATE EMBRACE. DUNBAR HAS LIFTED THIS PIECE OUT OF THE PORTFOLIO TO LOOK AT IT. HE LOOKS RELIEVED BY HER EXPLANATION.

9 REI (ELEC): Oh, I didn't mean "no" to the interview. I meant, "no" as in "No, I can't believe you'd want to interview me."
 10 DUNBAR: I would, indeed, Miss Shinozaki.
 11 REI (ELEC): Rei. Please.

[10.5] DUNBAR'S DESK CLOCK AND NOTEBOOK. DUNBAR'S HAND (HOLDING A PEN) HAS WRITTEN REI'S FULL NAME, BUT IS SCRATCHING OUT THE "KO."

12 HW NOTE: REI~~KO~~ SHINOZAKI
 13 DUNBAR: Great. I'm — I'm Kevin.
 14 DUNBAR: I wondered if you'd have time to talk this weekend at ComiConference. What time will be good for you, Rei?

PAGE 11 / FOUR PANELS

SEQUENCE OF ANGLES — DIFFERENT AREAS AROUND DUNBAR'S DESK & CUBICLE. HE (OR PART OF HIM — HIS HAND HOLDING THE PEN, HIS FOOT PROPPED AGAINST THE EDGE OF THE DESK, ETC.) SHOULD BE VISIBLE FROM EACH ANGLE.

[11.1] CLOSE SHOT OF A PHOTOGRAPH: RHETT CORSAIR, AROUND 55-60, AND THE CURRENT, ADULT VERSION OF DUNBAR. THE MEN ARE FLASHING BIG GRINS AND "THUMBS-UP" GESTURES TO THE CAMERA. IN THE PICTURE, RHETT WEARS AN ARMY GENERAL'S UNIFORM WITH MANY DECORATIONS. BEHIND THEM HANGS A BANNER THAT READS: "HAPPY TRAILS, ARMED ESCORT!"

1 DUNBAR: — wouldn't say I know a lot of them, but there are a few I've maintained contact with over the years.
 2 DUNBAR: Some of them will be at the show. I'll introduce you. It couldn't hurt to have them in your corner.
 3 REI (ELEC): I couldn't ask —
 4 DUNBAR: You didn't. That's why I offered.

[11.2] A FRAMED COLOR PHOTO COVER FROM A SUPERHUMAN TIMES ISSUE, HANGING ON A WALL OF THE CUBICLE. THE PHOTO IS OF MNEMONICA, A SMILING, ELEGANT-LOOKING WOMAN IN HER 60S, DRESSED IN A STYLISH, FLATTERING BUSINESS SUIT AGAINST A NEUTRAL BACKDROP. THE HEADLINE READS: "MNEMONICA REMEMBERS IT ALL FOR YOU — BY KEVIN DUNBAR." SITTING IN FRONT OF THE PICTURE IS A LETTER TO DUNBAR, PRINTED IN STANDARD COURIER TEXT. THE LETTER LIES FOLDED IN THIRDS ON THE DESK SO THAT ONLY A PORTION (SHOWING THE MIDDLE/END OF A PARAGRAPH) IS VISIBLE.

5 LETTER TEXT: "that your novel is well-plotted, but lacks a distinctive tone — a writer's voice, if you will — to set your work apart from that of other authors."
 6 REI (ELEC): I love comic books, but if I just drew those, I'd go insane, you know?
 7 REI (ELEC): I mean, you probably write lots of other stuff when you aren't writing your column, right?
 8 DUNBAR: Um ... sure.

[11.3] THE MONITOR OF DUNBAR'S PC. A FAINT REFLECTION OF HIM ON THE PHONE, LISTENING/SPEAKING WITH INTEREST, IS VISIBLE ON THE SCREEN. THE CLOCK ON THE TASKBAR AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN READS 3:05.

9 DUNBAR: Yeah, I saw that one. Pretty good. I like it when he does movies with comedy in them.
 10 REI: Hey, I'd watch "Plan Nine from Outer Space" with him in it.
 11 DUNBAR: Ah, so that's the kind of hunk you're looking for.
 12 REI: No, no, I'm too busy to look for a "hunk" of my own.
 13 DUNBAR: Oh.
 14 REI: But, you know, if the right one found me, I wouldn't complain.

PAGE 11 (CONT'D)

[11.4] THE DESK CLOCK AND THE SCRATCH PAD AGAIN. A FEW MORE NOTES THAN BEFORE, THE LAST TWO OF WHICH DUNBAR'S HAND IS ACTIVELY SCRATCHING OUT (BUT IT'S STILL READABLE). THE DESK CLOCK NOW READS 3:35 P.M.

15 HW NOTES POSS. TITLES: "REI OF ~~LIGHT~~" "~~HOPE~~" "~~INSPIRATION~~"

16 HW NOTES: REI ~~DUNBAR~~ SHINOZAKI ~~DUNBAR~~

17 REI (ELEC): Actually, the only "Mister Shinozaki" who says anything about my career is my dad. He tries to be supportive, but I ... why do you — ?

18 DUNBAR: Huh? Uh, wow, look at the time!

19 DUNBAR (TH): You idiot!

PAGE 12 / FIVE PANELS

[12.1] DUNBAR, LEANING AGAINST THE FRONT OF HIS DESK, AMUSED BY REI'S REACTION TO THE TIME SPENT ON THE PHONE.

1 REI (ELEC): Omigod, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to go on for so long! We never figured out a time for the interview. This wasn't it, was it?

[12.2] CLOSER ON DUNBAR, HALF-SMILING. IT'S CLEAR HE DOESN'T REALLY WANT THIS TO END.

2 DUNBAR: No. We'll set up a real time when we get to the show.

3 DUNBAR: Now, get back to work.

4 REI (ELEC): You, too.

5 DUNBAR: And Rei? Nice talking to you.

6 REI (ELEC): You, too, Kevin. Bye.

7 DUNBAR: Bye.

[12.3] DUNBAR, HANGING UP. HE DOESN'T RELEASE THE RECEIVER. HE'S LOOKING AT THE PHONE WITH A THOUGHTFUL, ALMOST ENTRANCED LOOK ON HIS FACE.

[No copy]

[12.4] CLOSE ON THE PHONE AS ONE OF DUNBAR'S HANDS LIFTS THE RECEIVER AGAIN, AND THE OTHER PUNCHES A LINE BUTTON LABELED "MORALES."

8 MORALES (ELEC): Yeah?

9 DUNBAR: Glenn? If you're gonna take away my weekend, it'll cost you.

[12.5] DUNBAR, HOLDING THE RECEIVER AGAINST ONE EAR WITH HIS SHOULDER WHILE HIS HANDS WORK HIS PC MOUSE AND KEYBOARD.

10 FX (SL): Taptaptaptaptaptaptap

11 DUNBAR (TH) "Hi, Rei. I'm Kevin Dunbar from the Times. We spoke on the phone yesterday."

12 DUNBAR: One company car. A nice one.

13 DUNBAR (TH) "Yeah, well, I figured you might be a little surprised ..."

14 DUNBAR: Fully loaded. Unlimited mileage. GPS. The works.

15 DUNBAR (TH) "But I thought I'd drop by before the con and introduce myself."

16 DUNBAR: Because I want to make a good impression.

17 DUNBAR (TH): "Is this a bad time?"

PAGE 13 / FOUR PANELS

[13.1] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF REI SHINOZAKI. SHE'S TALL, SLENDER, AND BREATHTAKING, WITH SHORT, CASUALLY STYLED PLATINUM BLONDE HAIR. SHE'S DRESSED IN SWEATS AND LOOKING RATHER RUMPLED, LIKE SHE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF DOING SOMETHING BEFORE DUNBAR (OBVIOUSLY) ARRIVED AND INTRODUCED HIMSELF. SHE'S ALSO EXTREMELY ANGRY.

1 REI: Bastard!

[13.2] SAME ANGLE AS SHE SLAMS THE DOOR IN HIS FACE. (IT HAS A NAMEPLATE ON IT THAT READS "R. SHINOZAKI" IN REI'S BUSINESS-CARD SCRIPT. IT'S A PLAIN, PAINTED DOOR, NEITHER SHABBY NOR OPULENT.

2 FX: SLAM!

[13.3] DUNBAR, WITH AN ABSOLUTELY FLAT EXPRESSION.

3 DUNBAR (TH): Huh.

4 DUNBAR (TH): Platinum blonde.

5 DUNBAR (TH): Didn't see that com—

[13.4] REI, OPENING THE DOOR AND THRUSTING TWO TOOLBOX-LIKE CASES INTO DUNBAR'S CHEST. HE BARELY RAISES HIS ARMS IN TIME TO HOLD THEM.

6 REI: Here! As long as I'm stuck with you, be useful and take my supplies, please!

7 DUNBAR: "Stuck with" — OOF! — what are you talking—?

PAGE 14 / THREE PANELS

[14.1] REI, STORMING PAST DUNBAR, HEADING DOWN THE NEARBY STAIRS WITH A LARGE, COLLAPSIBLE DRAWING BOARD UNDER ONE ARM. DUNBAR'S GENUINELY PERPLEXED. (SOME MORE OF REI'S APARTMENT BUILDING CAN BE SEEN HERE. IT'S A PRETTY TYPICAL, MIDDLE-INCOME PLACE, WELL-MAINTAINED, BUT NOT LUXURIOUS.)

1 REI: Save it! Devlin told me everything about you last night!
2 DUNBAR: Excuse me? I barely know —

[14.2] LOOKING UP THE STAIRCASE AS REI NEARS THE BOTTOM. DUNBAR — NOW CARRYING ONE TOOLBOX BY THE HANDLE AND THE OTHER UNDER HIS ARM — RACES TO KEEP UP WITH HER.

3 REI: I know about the arrangements, Mister Dunbar. All of them!
4 REI: How Devlin asked your editor to get you to write about me.
5 REI: How we're supposed to stick together during the entire show, the big celebrity reporter, dating the up-and-coming —
6 DUNBAR: "Dating?"! How can — ? We just —

[14.3] REI, WALKING OUT OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING, STILL TALKING, STILL STEWING, DUNBAR'S VISIBLE IN THE DOORWAY OF THE BUILDING, TRYING TO KEEP UP. SHE'S HEADING FOR A HATCHBACK THAT'S SEEN BETTER DAYS. IT'S PARKED, TRUNK END-IN, IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING. THE CARGO AREA OF THE HATCHBACK ALREADY HAS A SUITCASE, DRAWING PADS, AND CANVASSES OF VARIOUS SIZES STACKED IN IT. BESIDE HER CAR IS A HANDSOME, DARK BLUE TOWN CAR WITH THE LICENSE PLATE "TIMES 1." CLEARLY, IT'S DUNBAR'S COMPANY CAR. (THE APARTMENT BUILDING IS ONE OF SEVERAL THAT MAKE UP A NICE, LANDSCAPED LITTLE COMMUNITY WITH GRASS, TREES, ETC.)

7 REI: Turn some heads, start some buzz, get people talking about us like we're some Hollywood couple, then show my work to some publishers.
8 REI: And they'll look because, well, she's with Dunbar, everyone's watching her, we'd better get her before —

PAGE 15 / FOUR PANELS

[15.1] DUNBAR, MUTTERING TO HIMSELF AS REI GIVES HIM ANOTHER NASTY LOOK. SHE LAYS THE PORTABLE TABLE FLAT ON THE LIP OF THE HATCHBACK TRUNK.

1 DUNBAR (SL) Before she's put away.
2 REI: What?
3 DUNBAR: Nothing.
4 DUNBAR: Why are you even going along with ... whatever this is?

[15.2] A TWO-SHOT AS DUNBAR ARRIVES AT THE HATCHBACK. REI SHOVS THE TABLE INTO THE TRUNK WITH A LOUD —

5 FX: SHHHUNK!
6 REI: Same as you: business.
7 REI: If I don't, Devlin might not represent me. I need his connections.
8 REI: And you need my story.

[15.3] REI, TAKING THE TOOLBOXES FROM DUNBAR AND PUTTING THEM IN HER TRUNK.

9 REI: So, I will walk with you, maybe even hold hands if it'll score me some good press, but that's it!
10 REI: Once we're out of public view, I'd appreciate it if you'd stay
11 REI: Got it, Mister Dunbar?

[15.4] CLOSE ON DUNBAR, WEARING A POKER FACE THAT MASKS A WAR OF EMOTIONS: ANGER OVER BEING ROPED INTO A PLOT; DISAPPOINTMENT OVER HOW THIS "FIRST DATE" IS GOING; PAIN OVER TAKING SUCH ABUSE FROM HIS DREAM GIRL; AND HELPLESSNESS OVER KNOWING SHE HAS EVERY RIGHT TO BE ANGRY, AND THAT NOTHING HE SAYS WILL PACIFY HER, DAMMIT.

12 DUNBAR: Shouldn't be too hard, Miss Shinozaki.
13 DUNBAR: I'll have plenty of friends to hang out with.
14 DUNBAR: After all ...

PAGES 16-17 / TWO-PAGE SPREAD

[16-7.1] A PANORAMA WITH A SMALLER PANEL INSET AT THE BOTTOM OF 17. THIS IS THE VAST EXHIBITION HALL OF THE WEINBERGER CONVENTION CENTER, WHICH IS COMPLETELY OCCUPIED BY A COMBINATION COMIC BOOK CONVENTION AND SUPERHUMAN CELEBRITY SHOWCASE. TABLES AND BOOTHS ARE ARRANGED INTO LABRYNTHINE, BUT NAVIGABLE, AISLES. A LARGE BANNER HANGS FROM THE CEILING IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM. IT READS: "COMICONFERENCE XXVI WELCOMES YOU!" IT'S YOUR STANDARD MONSTER OF A CON, WITH NUMEROUS PUBLISHER BOOTHS (SOME WITH HUGE LOGOS AND STRUCTURES, OTHERS WITH MUCH LESS), CELEBRITY SIGNING TABLES, PORTFOLIO REVIEWS, AND DEALERS, ALL CONDUCTING THEIR RESPECTIVE BUSINESS IN VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE HALL. THE ROOM IS PACKED WITH HUMANS AND SUPERHUMANS ALIKE HERE, DRESSED IN EVERYTHING FROM T-SHIRTS AND SHORTS AND CASUAL BUSINESS ATTIRE TO SUITS & TIES AND SUPERHERO UNIFORMS/COSTUMES. (NOTE: HUMANS IN SUPERHUMAN COSTUMES SHOULD LOOK CONSPICUOUSLY NON-SUPER.) EVERYBODY WEARS A COMICONFERENCE BADGE. AMONG THE MORE IMPORTANT SIGHTS ON THE FLOOR:

- DUNBAR & REI, WALKING DOWN THE CENTER AISLE, SIDE BY SIDE, CLOSE TOGETHER, BUT NOT HAND-IN-HAND. DUNBAR WAVES TO ONE OF THE DEALERS THEY PASS, WHO WAVES BACK.
- IN ONE CORNER OF THE ROOM, A SHORT, THICK-LOOKING GUY IS TALKING TO A TRIO OF TALLER, THINNER, MORE INTENSE GUYS. THE SHORT GUY APPEARS TO BE POINTING OUT AND EXPLAINING THINGS TO THE OTHER THREE. ALL FOUR ARE WEARING BUSINESS SUITS. THE LITTLE GUY IS BRICK HOUSEMAN; THE THREE SUITS ARE HIS GUESTS. WE'LL SEE MORE OF THEM LATER.
- AT ONE TABLE, ENJOYING VISITS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH A SMALL GROUP OF FANS, IS AN ELEGANT, WELL-DRESSED WOMAN IN HER 60S, SIGNING PHOTOS. BEHIND HER IS A CARDBOARD STANDUP OF HERSELF FROM ABOUT 30 YEARS AGO. HER NAME: MNEMONICA, AND WE'LL SEE HER AGAIN VERY SOON, TOO.

1 DUNBAR (CAP): "... it's a big con."

2 CHATTER: I ain't running an auction. Forty-five bucks is cheap for a first issue from last year!

3 CHATTER: — we're still married. Amazingly, he can still walk.

4 CHATTER: — detail is very good, but work on your action lines, make the poses more extreme, more dynamic. And I'd have another organ dangling out over here —

5 CHATTER: — haven't tried stopping a bullet for a while, but if we can clear some space —

(CONTINUED)

PAGES 16-17 (CONT'D)

[17.2] ON THE EXHIBIT HALL FLOOR, LOOKING AT DUNBAR & REI, WHO LOOK ANYTHING BUT THRILLED TO BE HERE. DUNBAR'S PRETTY RELAXED, BUT REI WOULD RATHER BE ANYWHERE ELSE — OR, AT LEAST, WITH ANYONE ELSE.

6 DUNBAR:	Having fun?
7 REI:	I'm not here to enjoy myself.
8 DUNBAR:	Ah. My work here is done.

PAGE 18 / SIX PANELS

[18.1] DUNBAR, POINTING OUT A TALL, ELDERLY-LOOKING GENTLEMAN IN CASUAL GEAR BROWSING A DEALER'S TABLE.

1 DUNBAR: Wow! You see the old man over there?
2 REI: What about him?

[18.2] THE OLD MAN, BERTHOLD METTERKLUME, GLANCING THROUGH A LONG WHITE BOX OF OLD COMICS, CHATTING WITH THE DEALER. HE LOOKS POSITIVELY BENIGN.

3 DUNBAR (off) That's Berthold Metterklume, psychiatrist to the superhumans. Treats good guys and bad guys alike. Knows the dirt on all of 'em. He helped a lot of superhumans readjust after the big shakeout.
4 DUNBAR (off) They're so grateful to him for keeping their secrets that he's under everyone's protection. Reporters can't get near him.
5 REI (off): Who's protecting him now?

[18.3] DUNBAR & REI. DUNBAR LOOKS LIKE A KID WITH HIS NOSE AGAINST THE WINDOW OF A TOY STORE. REI APPEARS SUSPICIOUS.

6 DUNBAR: Exactly. Now's my chance to meet him. You okay by yourself?
7 REI: Please! I can —

[18.4] DUNBAR, BACKING AWAY FROM REI, TOWARDS METTERKLUME AND THE DEALER TABLE. HE'S "SMILING" AND YELLING TO HER TO BE HEARD BY ALL. AND TO ANNOY HER.

8 DUNBAR: Great! I'll be right back ...
9 DUNBAR: Sweetie!

[18.5] REI, WATCHING DUNBAR LEAVE, SUITABLY ANNOYED.

[No copy]

[18.6] SAME ANGLE AS AN UNEXPECTED VOICE IN FRONT OF HER, FROM OFF-PANEL, TAKES HER BY SURPRISE. NOTE: THE LETTERING FOR THIS NEW VOICE SHOULD HAVE A COSMIC, ALMOST MAJESTIC APPEARANCE THROUGHOUT.

10 VOICE (off): Good day, Reiko Shinozaki.
11 REI: Wha— GASP!

PAGE 19 / SIX PANELS

[19.1] TWO-SHOT OF REI AND THE SPEAKER — STAR WITNESS (A.K.A. "WIT"), A PAIR OF WISE-LOOKING, VERY EXPRESSIVE EYES FLOATING SLIGHTLY ABOVE, AND LOOKING DOWN AT, HER. AN INFINITE STARFIELD — PRESUMABLY THE UNIVERSE — CAN BE SEEN INSIDE THE PUPILS OF THE EYES. THE EYES THEMSELVES ARE SURROUNDED BY COSMIC MATTER A LA CLASSIC JACK KIRBY BLACK SPOTS. THE ANGLE ON REI & STAR WITNESS STAYS THE SAME THROUGHOUT THEIR CONVERSATION.

AT ALL TIMES, DUNBAR'S ATTEMPT TO MEET METTERKLUME CAN BE SEEN BEHIND THEM. THAT ENCOUNTER IS SILENT. NEITHER REI NOR STAR WITNESS PAY ANY ATTENTION TO IT.

AT THIS POINT, DUNBAR HAD REACHED METTERKLUME AND IS EXTENDING HIS HAND IN INTRODUCTION. MEANWHILE, A BLUR — COMING DOWN FROM ABOVE — "LANDS" RIGHT BEHIND DUNBAR.

1 WIT: Please forgive me. I did not mean to frighten you.
2 REI: Who — who —?

[19.2] SAME ANGLE — THE "BLUR" BEHIND DUNBAR IS NOW STANDING STILL. IT'S A BEEFY MAN OF SUPERHEROIC PROPORTIONS IN A BLACK SUIT WITH DARK GLASSES, AND A CON BADGE. HE'S STARING DOWN AT DUNBAR, WHO DOESN'T NOTICE BECAUSE HE AND METTERKLUME ARE TOO BUSY STARTING A VERY NICE CONVERSATION.

3 WIT: I am known by many names to many peoples.
4 WIT: To your kind, I am known as Star Witness, seer of all things.
5 WIT: I have seen the births and deaths of races, of planets, of entire universes.

[19.3] SAME ANGLE — THE BEEFY GUY HAS NOW PICKED DUNBAR UP BY THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS. DUNBAR IS PRACTICALLY WETTING HIS SHORTS. METTERKLUME IS URGING THE BEEFY GUY TO STAY CALM. THE DEALER IS MOVING THE LONG WHITES OUT OF HARM'S WAY.

6 WIT: I have also seen your lovely work. At the Comicoastal art show last year.
7 WIT: You show great potential. More than you know, I suspect.

[19.4] SAME ANGLE — THE BEEFY GUY NOW HOLDS DUNBAR OVER HIS HEAD AND IS SPINNING HIM LIKE A PIZZA PIE. METTERKLUME IS SCOLDING THE BEEFY GUY.

8 REI: Why, thank you.
9 WIT: I wanted to be an artist once.

[19.5] SAME ANGLE — THE BEEFY GUY PUTS DUNBAR BACK ON THE FLOOR. DUNBAR IS REELING; METTERKLUME IS TRYING TO HOLD HIM UP.

10 WIT: Eons ago, I was given a choice:
11 WIT: Total omniscience or opposable thumbs.
12 WIT: What can I say? We all make choices.

PAGE 19 (CONT'D)

[19.6] SAME ANGLE — THE BEEFY GUY SCHLEPS AWAY FROM THE TABLE AS
METTERKLUME SEES TO DUNBAR, WHO GESTURES THAT HE'S OKAY. BARELY.

13 REI:	Do you regret your choice?
14 WIT:	Well, sometimes I feel like the History Channel for everything that has ever lived.
15 WIT:	But I do get to <u>travel</u> , and —

PAGE 20 / SIX PANELS

[20.1] SAME ANGLE — DUNBAR APPROACHES THEM, FOLLOWING A SOMEWHAT WOBBLY & ERRATIC PATH AS HE WALKS AWAY FROM THE DEALER TABLE. HE'S JOYOUSLY WAVING A BUSINESS CARD. NOW, REI & STAR WITNESS NOTICE HIM.

1 DUNBAR: Reiiii! Reiiii, didja — didja see?
2 DUNBAR: I g-got his card! He actually said I c-could call —

[20.2] DUNBAR LEANS AGAINST REI, WHO TRIES TO MOVE ASIDE. STAR WITNESS IS LESS THAN THRILLED TO SEE HIM.

3 DUNBAR: Oh, hi, Wit, what's shakin'? You ready to try —?
4 WIT: I did not become one with the cosmos in order to guess your weight, Dunbar, so do not ask again.

[20.3] CLOSER ON STAR WITNESS AS HE FLOATS CLOSER TO REI, AS IF SPEAKING "IN CONFIDENCE." DUNBAR CAN BE SEEN BESIDE HER.

5 WIT: I shall watch your career with great interest, Miss Shinozaki. I wish you luck.

[20.4] STAR WITNESS GLANCES AT DUNBAR.

6 WIT: For obvious reasons.
7 WIT: Farewell.

[20.5] THE RECOVERING DUNBAR & A DAZZLED REI, WATCHING STAR WITNESS VANISH IN A COSMIC TWINKLE.

8 REI: Now, that was impressive.
9 DUNBAR: Solar windbag ...

[20.6] HIGH ANGLE OVER DUNBAR & REI, AS STAR WITNESS GETS ONE LAST SHOT IN AS A BIG, "DISEMBODIED" WORD BALLOON. EVERYONE IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY TURNS TOWARDS THEM WHEN STAR WITNESS RUMBLES, IN THE IMPRESSIVE FONT. REI TRIES TO COVER A LAUGH. DUNBAR IS MORTIFIED.

10 STAR (BL): Say, Dunbar, how is that novel of yours coming along?
11 STAR (BL): BWAH-HA-HA-HA-HAAAAA!

PAGE 21 / SIX PANELS

[21.1] MNEMONICA'S TABLE, FROM DUNBAR & REI'S P.O.V., AS SHE GIVES DUNBAR WHAT CAN ONLY BE A "MOM'S LOOK" FROM HER TABLE ON THE FLOOR. IN FRONT OF THE TABLE IS A NICE BANNER READING: "MEET MNEMONICA, MISTRESS OF MEMORY!" BEHIND HER IS A CARDBOARD STANDUP OF HER FROM YOUNGER DAYS, DRESSED IN A SEXY, FORM-FITTING COSTUME. SHE HAS AGED INCREDIBLY WELL. THERE IS ALSO A PHOTO OF HER SUPERHUMAN TIMES COVER (THE SAME ONE THAT'S IN DUNBAR'S CUBICLE) ON HER TABLE, WITH A STACK OF THE SAME PICTURE SITTING NEARBY FOR AUTOGRAPHS. DESPITE HER ADMONISHMENT, DUNBAR IS SMILING WIDELY AT HER.

1 MNEMONICA: What have I told you about trying to match wits with cosmic entities, young man?

[21.2] DUNBAR, APPROACHING MNEMONICA AS SHE RISES TO GREET HIM. REI FOLLOWS HIM.

2 DUNBAR: How's the most beautiful woman in the room?

3 MNEMONICA: Looks like you just walked in with her.

4 DUNBAR: Phooey.

[21.3] CLOSE TWO-SHOT OF DUNBAR CLASPING MNEMONICA'S HANDS WHILE KISSING HER CHEEK. THERE IS A VISIBLE SPARK AT BOTH POINTS OF CONTACT.

5 FX HANDS (SL): FZZT!

6 FX CHEEK (SL): SZZT!

7 MNEMONICA: Oww! What is it with you and static every time?

8 DUNBAR: That's not static. It's charisma.

9 REI (off, SL): Oy vey ...

[21.4] DUNBAR, STEPPING ASIDE TO PRESENT REI, WHO SHAKES MNEMONICA'S HAND.

10 DUNBAR: Mnemonica, meet Rei Shinozaki. I have the "honor" of showing her around the con.

11 MNEMONICA: My pleasure, dear.

12 REI: I read the article about your work on the Aries murders. What an extraordinary gift you have.

[21.5] MNEMONIC, GESTURING AT THE TIMES COVER PHOTO.

13 MNEMONICA: The police wouldn't have utilized my "gift" at all if it hadn't been for Kevin's wonderful profile in the Times.

[21.6] MNEMONICA, LOOKING AT DUNBAR WITH GRATITUDE. HE IS VISIBLY MOVED, EVEN HUMBLED, BY HER COMPLIMENTS. REI APPEARS SURPRISED BY HIS REACTION. (REMEMBER: SHE STILL THINKS HE'S IN ON DEVLIN'S SET-UP, SO SHE STILL HASN'T QUITE ACKNOWLEDGED HIM AS A HUMAN BEING — BUT THIS HELPS.)

14 MNEMONICA: I may be able to remember everything about any person I've ever met ...

15 MNEMONICA: But Kevin remembered me.

PAGE 22 / FIVE PANELS

[22.1] ANGLE ON ALL THREE AS MNEMONICA KEEPS TALKING — AND DUNBAR'S FACE GETS REDDER AS HE TRIES TO LEAD A VERY INTERESTED REI AWAY FROM THE TABLE.

1 MNEMONICA: What's really fun is coming to these shows and seeing adults who first met me when they were kids.
 2 MNEMONICA: The looks they get when I remember our first meetings ... like when I met Dunbar.
 3 REI: Really? What happened?
 4 DUNBAR: Uh, we have to go.
 5 MNEMONICA: He was about twelve, I think —
 6 DUNBAR: We-have-to-go-goodbye-nice-old-broad.

[22.2] CLOSE ON DUNBAR & MNEMONICA, PLAYFULLY SMILING, AS HE LEANS BACK IN TO SAY GOODBYE WHILE SHOVING REI AWAY FROM THE TABLE.

7 DUNBAR (WH): Buy you a drink at the dance tonight?
 8 MNEMONICA (WH): You'd better. "Old broad," indeed.

[22.3] DUNBAR & REI, AS DUNBAR LEADS THEM AWAY FROM MNEMONICA'S TABLE. SHE'S STILL CURIOUS. HE'S STILL EMBARRASSED. IN THE BACKGROUND, WE SEE THAT MNEMONICA IS ALREADY GREETING A NEW CLUSTER OF FANS.

9 REI: So, what happened when you met her?
 10 DUNBAR: No.

[22.4] FLOOR-LEVEL ANGLE AS REI & DUNBAR'S CASUALLY DRESSED FEET WALK IN ONE DIRECTION UP AN AISLE. THERE'S ANOTHER GROUP OF FEET WALKING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION — FOUR PAIRS, TOTAL — ALL CLAD IN NICE SLACKS AND DRESS SHOES. ONE PAIR LEADS THE OTHER THREE.

11 REI (off): Come on? Did you say something stupid?
 12 DUNBAR (off): No.
 13 REI (off): Bet you did.
 14 DUNBAR (off): Cut it out, willya, just cut it ...

[22.5] SAME ANGLE. AS ALL OF THE FEET MEET AND STOP. DUNBAR'S STOP DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE LEAD PAIR FROM THE OTHER GROUP.

[No copy]

PAGE 23 / SIX PANELS

[23.1] FULL SHOT OF THE TWO GROUPS, STANDING IN THE AISLE. DUNBAR AND REI ARE FACING BRICK HOUSEMAN, THE SQUAT MAN IN THE SUIT DESCRIBED IN THE ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE CON. HE IS AT LEAST A HEAD SHORTER THAN DUNBAR, BUT HIS SCOWL REACHES INTO DUNBAR'S EYES WITH NO PROBLEM. DUNBAR, UNIMPRESSED, DOESN'T FLINCH. BEHIND BRICK STAND THE THREE INTENSE-LOOKING GUESTS IN SUITS, EACH OF WHOM IS SOMEWHAT CONCERNED OVER WHAT MAY HAPPEN NEXT, AS IS REI.

1 DUNBAR: Brick.
2 BRICK: Dunbar.

[23.2] SAME ANGLE. REI AND THE THREE SUITS WAIT. NO CHANGE IN EXPRESSION OR POSITION FOR THE TWO MEN.

[No copy]

[23.3] SAME ANGLE.

3 REI: If you boys want to hug, don't let me stop you.

[23.4] EVERYONE, AS DUNBAR MAKES THE INTRODUCTIONS.

4 DUNBAR: Rei Shinozaki, Brick Houseman, formerly of the super-team known as the Quarry.
5 DUNBAR: And of every casino in Vegas and Atlantic City.

[23.5] BRICK, HALF-SCOWLING, HALF-LEERING AT AN INSULTED, BUT CONTROLLED REI.

6 BRICK: Well, well ... so Dunbar's cut himself a slice of the fresh meat everyone's been talkin' about.

[23.6] REI, MOVING FORWARD SLIGHTLY AS SHE CHALLENGES BRICK, UNAFRAID AND UNIMPRESSED.

7 REI: Wow.
8 REI: The same Brick Houseman who used to bet on whether or not the Quarry would win their fights?

PAGE 24 / SIX PANELS

[24.1] CLOSE ON BRICK. THIS IS A GUY WHO'S LIVED AND FOUGHT A LOT. HIS FACE CARRIES MORE THAN A FEW SCARS. HIS EYES ARE DARK, ALMOST SAD, AS HE REFLECTS ON THE PAST.

1 BRICK: FYI, lady, some superhumans don't live forever.
2 BRICK: You think super-teams have 401k plan? I had to save for the future!

[24.2] REI'S STANDING DIRECTLY BETWEEN HIM & DUNBAR, WHO'S BURYING HIS FACE AS SHE AGITATES BRICK ...

3 REI: By throwing battles?
4 BRICK: Nobody proved nothin'! I never took a dive, never sold out —

[24.3] BRICK, GESTURING AT THE THREE SUITS BEHIND HIM.

5 BRICK: Rrrr ... old news. I'm in a legit business now.
6 BRICK: These guys? My investors.
7 BRICK: They'll gimme a chance if I can show 'em there's a profit to be made here.

[24.4] DUNBAR, REI & BRICK, AS DUNBAR LOOKS UP, CURIOUS.

8 DUNBAR: Okay, Brick, I'll bite. What legit business?
9 BRICK: I'm startin' my own comic-book company.

[24.5] DUNBAR AND REI, GIVING EACH OTHER A "YOU'VE GOTTA BE SH*****G ME" LOOK.

[No copy]

[24.6] BRICK, SPEAKING WITH THE FERVOR OF SOMEONE WHO'S GONNA STICK IT TO THE MAN.

10 BRICK: You humans'll hire as many supes as you can get for the dangerous stuff.
11 BRICK: But all the regular jobs have quotas. That ain't fair.
12 BRICK: So, my company's gonna be a superhuman-only deal.
13 REI: Terrific. Ku Klux Komics.

PAGE 25 / THREE PANELS

[25.1] TIGHT ON REI & BRICK, GAZING DIRECTLY AT EACH OTHER (SHE'S BENDING DOWN SLIGHTLY). BRICK'S REALLY WOUND UP, POINTING AN ACCUSATORY FINGER UP AT REI.

1 BRICK: I'm tired of us gettin' shut out of decent jobs just 'cause we can do 'em all better than you.
 2 BRICK: No matter how good they say you are, little girl, the odds of you breakin' into our business ain't in yer favor.
 3 REI: Well, everyone knows how good you are at figuring odds, don't they, Mister Hou—

[25.2] LOOKING DOWN THE AISLE, AS DUNBAR YANKS REI AWAY BACKWARDS — BY THE COLLAR OF HER SHIRT — LEAVING BRICK BEHIND, FUMING. HIS INVESTORS APPEAR PENSIVE IN THE WAKE OF THE CONFRONTATION.

4 REI: Hey!
 5 REI: Come on, Dunbar! What's that lawn gnome gonna do to me in a room full of people?
 6 DUNBAR: I've seen that "lawn gnome" knock people twice my size through a steel wall with a flick of his finger.

[25.3] ELSEWHERE IN THE HALL: A SMALL, BUT PROFESSIONALLY DECKED-OUT NON-PROFIT BOOTH STAFFED BY ONE WOMAN (JEN) WHO IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTNG A CHECK FROM AN OFF-PANEL DONOR. A SUIT SLEEVE AND THE HAND OF AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE IS PRESENTING JEN WITH A CHECK.

7 BOOTH SIGN: "CREATORS! RETAILERS! READERS!
 "DEFEND YOUR RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION!
 "SUPPORT THE COMICS PROFESSIONALS LEGAL SERVICES DRIVE!"
 8 DEVLIN (off): I added a little more than we discussed to my donation, Jen. I hope that won't throw off your accounting.
 9 JEN: Only in a good way, Devlin. Thanks!

PAGE 26 / THREE PANELS

[26.1] BACK TO DUNBAR & REI. SHE FACES FORWARD NOW, PROUD OF HERSELF. DUNBAR'S STILL SORE FROM THEIR INITIAL MEETING.

1 REI: You're just embarrassed because I stood up to him.
2 DUNBAR: No. You put him in his place.
3 DUNBAR: Like you did with me back at your apartment.
4 DUNBAR: When you uncovered the big "conspiracy."

[26.2] ELSEWHERE IN THE HALL: A SMALL CHILD, AROUND SEVEN OR EIGHT, STANDS IN FRONT OF A DEALER TABLE FILLED WITH COMICS. HE SHOWS AN OLD BAGGED & BOARDED KIDDIE COMIC TO DEVLIN, WHO'S IN FRONT OF THE BOY, ON ONE KNEE, WITH HIS BACK TO US. WE CAN SEE THAT HE WEARS A VERY NICE, TAILORED SUIT WITH MATCHING FEDORA, BUT WE CAN'T SEE HIS FACE YET.

5 DEVLIN: Wow! I read this when I was your age.
6 CHILD: I saved my 'lowance to get it.
7 DEVLIN: Well, the man who drew it is here at the con, so be sure to ask him to sign it.
8 DEVLIN: Tell him that "Mister Devlin" sent you. If he's smart, he'll draw you a sketch, too!

[26.3] REI & DUNBAR. SHE'S A BIT APOLOGETIC NOW.

9 REI: Yeah, about that.
10 REI: I've been on edge because of the con, my workload, Devlin, everything.
11 REI: I shouldn't have been so suspicious, Dunbar —

PAGE 27 / FIVE PANELS

[27.1] A LARGE PANEL FACING THE CENTRAL HALLWAY THROUGH THE ROOM AS DEVLIN MARKLEIGH — A TALL, DASHING, MIDDLE-AGED AFRICAN-AMERICAN — ENTERS THE HALL. HIS DEemeanOR IS EFFERVESCENT, SPARKLING, AND HE REEKS OF SUCCESS, CHARISMA, AND SOPHISTICATION. HE IS FOLLOWED BY SHARKEY, A STRIKING, SERIOUS, PALE-SKINNED BLONDE WOMAN WHO LOOKS TO BE IN HER LATE 20S. EVERY HEAD IN THE ROOM TURNS TO DEVLIN AS HE WALKS IN. HUMANS AND SUPERHUMANS ALIKE ARE OVERWHELMED BY HIM, GENERATING LOTS OF CHATTER TO AND AROUND HIM. DESPITE THE HUBBUB, DEVLIN IS FOCUSED ON REI, WHO IS GIVING DUNBAR AN "I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN" LOOK. DUNBAR LOOKS INCREDIBLY FRUSTRATED.

1 DEVLIN: Dunbar, old man!
 2 DEVLIN: I knew I could trust you to take care of my "next big thing!"
 3 CHATTER: Look! Devlin Markleigh!
 4 CHATTER: — brought some of your favorite Golden Age books this weekend, Devlin. All mint, baby!
 5 CHATTER (WH): You think, maybe, Devlin and that girl ...?
 6 CHATTER (WH): Then, why's she here with the Times guy?
 7 CHATTER: — your rejection letter said my novel "needs work." Well —

[27.2] DEVLIN, REMOVING HIS FEDORA AND EXTENDING HIS HAND TO REI AS HE STOPS BEFORE HER AND DUNBAR. REI, SMILING NERVOUSLY, HOLDS OUT HER HAND TO HIM. DUNBAR WATCHES, UNIMPRESSED.

8 DEVLIN: After all those e-mails and phone calls, I finally get to see the ravishing woman behind the gift ...

[27.3] DEVLIN, KISSING HER HAND, AND DUNBAR, WHO'S ABSOLUTELY BLASÉ.

9 DUNBAR: Hey-buddy-what-are-you-doing with-my-girl?

[27.4] DEVLIN, NOW STANDING, PLACES A CONGENIAL ARM AROUND DUNBAR.

10 DEVLIN: Don't be so insecure, Dunbar.
 11 DEVLIN: You should be grateful to me for arranging this.
 12 DUNBAR: Yeah, I love bein' a ho'. Thanks, Huggy.

[27.5] WIDER AS DEVLIN STEPS BETWEEN DUNBAR & REI, SMILING, WRAPPING HIS ARMS AROUND THEM BOTH, AND STARTS TO WALK THEM BACK INTO THE EXHIBIT HALL, SHOWING THEM OFF AS THEY TALK. SHARKEY FOLLOWS BEHIND THEM. DUNBAR AND REI ARE BARELY SMILING FOR SHOW.

13 DEVLIN: Rubbish! You're a journalist with access to the comics industry's newest human find — and you're half of the convention's hottest "power couple."
 14 REI: Yeah. A fine romance.

PAGE 28 / FIVE PANELS

[28.1] CLOSER ON DEVLIN & DUNBAR (WHO'S STRAINING TO TALK THROUGH HIS FAUX SMILE).

1 DUNBAR: Could you at least tell her that I had no part in planning this little scam?

2 DEVLIN: Certainly, I could ...

[28.2] SIMILAR ANGLE, THIS TIME FAVORING DEVLIN & REI, WHO IS TRYING NOT TO BE EMBARRASSED BY DEVLIN'S HYPE.

3 DEVLIN But, first, I have some retailers and distributors I'd like Rei to meet. People who will be selling her books.

4 DEVLIN: It won't take them long to fall for you, my dear.

5 REI: Devlin, please, you're overselling me.

[28.3] REI & DUNBAR, LOOKING PAST DEVLIN, DIRECTLY AT EACH OTHER. DUNBAR IS DEAD SERIOUS, TOTALLY SINCERE, AND INTENT ON CONVEYING THAT TO HER.

6 DUNBAR: No.

7 DUNBAR: He's not.

[28.4] DUNBAR, WATCHING AS DEVLIN SWEEPS REI AWAY FROM HIM, TOWARDS A LARGE DEALER'S TABLE AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR.

8 DEVLIN: Fear not, old man, she'll be yours again shortly.

9 DEVLIN: Let's get to work, my —

[28.5] BEFORE DEVLIN & REI HAVE MOVED MORE THAN TWO STEPS, A THIN, GANGLY, EARNEST WANNABE IN HIS LATE 30S-EARLY 40S SHAMBLES INTO THEIR PATH. HE CARRIES AN OPEN, BEATEN-UP LEATHER SACHEL FILLED WITH MANUSCRIPT PAGES.

10 WANNABE: Mister Devlin! Mister Devlin!

11 WANNABE: Charles Widdoes here. Remember the novel I sent you? "Revenge of the Ganglia?"

12 DEVLIN (SL): Oh, Lord.

13 WANNABE: I know this is a comics show, but I knew you'd be here, so I brought the fifth rewrite to show —

14 DEVLIN (SL): Please excuse me, dear lady.

PAGE 30 / SIX PANELS

[30.1] DUNBAR'S P.O.V., AS HE CLOSELY WATCHES DEVLIN AND REI AT THE DEALER'S TABLE.

1 DEVLIN (SL): — many outstanding superhuman writers and artists out there.

[30.2] REVERSE ANGLE OF DEVLIN CHATTING UP REI WITH THE DEALER (DUNBAR WATCHES IN THE BACKGROUND, WITH SHARKEY BESIDE HIM.) REI IS SMILING PLEASANTLY, SHAKING HANDS WITH THE DEALER, MARTY — A THIN, MIDDLE-AGED, CLOISTERED TYPE — AS DEVLIN PITCHES HER.

2 DEVLIN: But, I tell you, Marty, Rei's gonna remind the world that this business, this art, was founded by humans.

3 DEVLIN: And, most importantly, she's gonna be a gold mine for the retailers carrying her books!

[30.3] MARTY, REACHING FOR SOMETHING BEHIND THE COUNTER. IT'S A COMIC BOOK, BAGGED AND BOARDED, BUT ITS COVER ISN'T VISIBLE YET. DEVLIN APPEARS EAGER TO SEE IT.

4 MARTY: Well, I wish you luck, Miss Shinozaki. But I've already got a gold mine.

5 MARTY: At least, I will when Devlin buys what I've brought him.

6 DEVLIN: You found it? Marty, I could kiss you!

[30.4] FROM MARTY'S P.O.V. AS HE PRESENTS THE COMIC TO DEVLIN. HE AND REI CAN SEE THE COVER. WE CAN'T. DEVLIN LOOKS LIKE HE'S JUST FOUND THE HOLY GRAIL. REI IS STANDING SLIGHTLY BEHIND HIM, LOOKING AT THE COVER, COVERING HER MOUTH, TRYING TO CONCEAL HER REACTION.

7 DEVLIN: My God ... she's beautiful. It's a miracle she survived all these years.

[30.5] THE COVER OF THE COMIC. THIS IS A JAPANESE BOOK WITH BOLD, BLACK-&-WHITE ART AND LETTERING WRITTEN IN ENGLISH. THE ART SHOWS A LITHE, MASKED, YOUNG (NO MORE THAN 20) GIRL IN A SIMPLE TUNIC AND SKIRT ADORNED WITH THE JAPANESE "RISING SUN" EMBLEM. SHE IS FLYING ABOVE A DISTINCTLY CAUCASIAN/ALLIED PLATOON OF TROOPS. JETS OF FIRE ARE ROARING OUT OF HER EYES, STRIKING AND INCINERATING THE TROOPS. THE CARNAGE IS PRETTY GRAPHIC FOR A 1940S WARTIME COMIC, LET ALONE A COVER. THE TITLE OF THE BOOK IS "DYNAMAID," AND A DRAMATIC BURST OVER THE ACTION READS, "WATCH THE FIERY FEMME FATALE DESTROY THE YANKEE INVADERS!" THE BOOK IS IN DECENT SHAPE — SOME FADING, VERY LITTLE WEAR ALONG THE EDGES AND BINDING. ALL TOLD, A NICE ACQUISITION.

8 DEVLIN (off): World War Two propaganda comics published by our side are practically a dime a dozen. But, these babies —

9 MARTY (off): And these English-language copies, the ones they dropped on our boys to shake their morale — they're nearly impossible to find!

(CONTINUED)

PAGE 30 (CONT'D)

[30.6] TIGHT SHOT ON REI'S EYES, STILL RIVETED TO THE COVER OF THE BOOK AND REFLECTING INTENSE EMOTION. WHETHER IT'S DISTRESS OR ANGER REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

10 DEVLIN (off): The way she roasted our boys, she didn't need comics to shake them.

11 DEVLIN (off): Anyone in your family ever talk about DynaMaid, Rei? I'd love to hear what —

12 DEVLIN (off): Rei?

PAGE 31 /FOUR PANELS

[31.1] WIDER ANGLE AS REI TURNS AWAY FROM DEVLIN, IN THE DIRECTION OF DUNBAR AND THE MAIN EXIT.

1 REI: Sorry, Devlin. I — I just remembered some f-finihing touches I wanted to put on those pieces for the auction.
2 REI: Excuse me.

[31.2] REI, NOW RUNNING FROM DEVLIN, PAST DUNBAR, AND OUT THE MAIN DOORWAY. HER EXIT DRAWS ATTENTION FROM SOME OF THE GUESTS AND ATTENDEES. IGNORING SHARKEY, DUNBAR TENTATIVELY REACHES OUT TO HER.

3 DUNBAR: Rei?
4 REI (SL): Leave me alone.

[31.3] DUNBAR, TURNING TO DEVLIN. HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, BUT HE SUSPECTS THAT DEVLIN TRIGGERED IT, SOMEHOW.

[No copy]

[31.4] DEVLIN, STILL TENDERLY HOLDING THE COMIC, IGNORING DUNBAR'S GAZE, AND WATCHING AFTER REI WITH A BARELY HIDDEN SMILE. MARTY APPEARS SLIGHTLY ANXIOUS — BUT, HEY, A SALE'S A SALE.

5 DEVLIN: Marty ...
6 DEVLIN: I'll take it.

PAGE 32 / FOUR PANELS

- [32.1] DOWNTOWN AT DUSK, THE EXTERIOR OF THE SHEPHERD HOTEL, A HIGHRISE POSITIONED DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM THE WEINBERGER CONVENTION CENTER. A BANNER READING "WELCOME COMICONFERENCE XXVI" HANGS ACROSS THE AWNING ABOVE THE MAIN ENTRANCE. TAXIS ARE PULLING UP TO AND AWAY FROM THE CURBSIDE DROP. A FEW CONVENTIONEERS WITH BADGES ENTER, LEAVE, AND CONGREGATE AROUND THE BUILDING.
NOTE: FOR THIS CAPTION, THE LETTERING SHOULD RESEMBLE THAT USED IN ANY STANDARD WORD PROCESSING/OFFICE PROGRAM (I.E., TIMES OR ARIAL FONT), WITH A CURSOR AT THE END OF THE TEXT.

1 CAPTION: Rei Shinozaki Interview Questions:

- [32.2] A DESK IN A NICELY APPOINTED HOTEL ROOM, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ANYONE SITTING BEHIND IT. THE DESK FACES A WINDOW WITH A LOVELY VIEW OF THE CITY; THE SUN IS SETTING OVER THE HARBOR. THERE'S A COMICONFERENCE XXVI PROGRAM BOOK AND A SMALLER "POCKET PROGRAM" EVENT SCHEDULE SPREAD OUT ON THE DESK, ALONG WITH AN ENGRAVED INVITATION WITH BEAUTIFUL CURSIVE LETTERING. FRONT & CENTER ON THE DESK IS A LAPTOP COMPUTER WITH A WORD-TYPE DOCUMENT OPEN ON THE SCREEN. THE LAPTOP'S KEYBOARD IS ALSO VISIBLE; A PAIR OF HANDS CLAD IN A WHITE FORMAL SHIRT WITH (CURRENTLY) UNDONE CUFFS IS TYPING ON IT. THERE'S ALSO A CORDLESS PHONESET ON THE DESK. A CELL PHONE RESTS BESIDE THE LAPTOP.

2 INVITATION: You and a guest are cordially invited to the
26th Annual ComiConference Opening Night Ball
for Convention Guests, Industry Professionals, and
Members of the Press.
Friday Night, 8:00 PM. Black tie. RSVP@comiconference.org

- [32.3] CLOSER ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN.

3 SCREEN: Rei Shinozaki Interview Questions:
When did you first know you wanted to be an artist?
Where did you study?
What was the first comics story that got you interested in the
medium?
Who were/are your influences?

4 DUNBAR (TH): Off the record, Miss Shinozaki ...

- [32.4] REVERSE ANGLE FROM BEHIND THE LAPTOP OF DUNBAR STANDING BEHIND THE CHAIR OF THE DESK, REACHING PAST IT TO TYPE. HE IS FRESHLY SCRUBBED AND LOOKS VERY HANDSOME, DRESSED IN MOST OF A TUXEDO: BLACK TROUSERS, WHITE SHIRT (WITH THE COLLAR UNDONE AS WELL AS THE CUFFS), UNKNOTTED BLACK BOW TIE AROUND HIS NECK. HE LOOKS PENSIVELY AT THE SCREEN; ITS GLOW, PLUS THE SHADOWS CAST ACROSS HIS FACE BY THE SUNSET OUTSIDE, MAKE HIS MOOD APPEAR EVEN DARKER.

5 DUNBAR (TH): What happened in the exhibit hall?
6 DUNBAR (TH): How did Devlin make you cry?
7 DUNBAR (TH): Do you really want a creep like that representing you?
8 DUNBAR (TH): What's he up to ...
9 DUNBAR (TH): And how do I convince you that I'm not part of it?

PAGE 33 / SIX PANELS

[33.1] REI, OPENING THE DOOR TO HER HOTEL ROOM (#3901), LOOKING SOMEWHAT AGITATED. SHE'S WEARING THE SAME CLOTHES AND LOOKS LIKE SHE'S BEEN WORKING OUT, OR MAYBE JUST WORKING. THERE'S A "DO NOT DISTURB" CARD HANGING FROM THE DOORKNOB AND, HAVING BEEN DISTURBED, THIS LOOKS LIKE A REPLAY OF THE ENCOUNTER AT HER APARTMENT.

1 REI: Hey, I hung this sign for a —
2 REI (SL): Oh.

[33.2] OVER HER SHOULDER, WE SEE DUNBAR, SMILING, FULLY DECKED OUT IN HIS TUX. HE WAS A DECENT-LOOKING GUY TO BEGIN WITH; THIS RIG MAKES HIM LOOK LIKE JAMES FREAKIN' BOND, BUT HE DOESN'T PUT ON ANY AIRS.

3 DUNBAR: Well, thanks. Beats the reaction you gave me this morning.
4 DUNBAR: I was on my way to the big dance.
5 DUNBAR: So, I wanted to ask if you were up to going so we could ... you know ...
6 DUNBAR: Make an entrance.

[33.3] REI, FROM DUNBAR'S P.O.V., COOLER BUT STILL ON THE DEFENSIVE.

7 REI: I can't. Work.
8 REI: Devlin's asked me to donate some works to the con's charity auction tomorrow, and I need to finish them.

[33.4] DUNBAR, NOT QUITE BUYING IT, BUT PLAYING ALONG.

9 DUNBAR: Ah.
10 DUNBAR: Well, you're not the only one racing a deadline.
11 DUNBAR: If you're set on staying in tonight, maybe we can knock out both of them.

[33.5] DUNBAR AND REI, AS SHE CONSIDERS IT.

12 REI: You'd ... miss the big dance for my interview?
13 DUNBAR: Sure. If you can talk and draw at the same time.
14 REI: Sure. If you can shut up, take notes, and not look at what I'm drawing at the same time, come on in.

PAGE 33 (CONT'D)

[33.6] LARGE PANEL OF REI'S HOTEL ROOM, WHICH IS IDENTICAL TO DUNBAR'S IN FURNISHING AND DÉCOR (BED, ARMCHAIR, DESK & CHAIR SET, TV, NIGHTSTAND, PHONE, CLOCK RADIO), EXCEPT THAT IT'S A MESS. HER SUITCASE IS OPEN ON THE BED WITH MUCH OF HER CLOTHING — JEANS, SOCKS, SHOES, POLO SHIRTS, BRAS, UNDERWEAR, ETC. (INCLUDING ONE ITEM IN A GARMENT BAG ON A HANGER, LYING ON HER BED) — STREWN ACROSS IT. SHE'S TAKEN OVER THE DESK IN HER ROOM WITH THE TWO HEAVY CASES THAT DUNBAR HELPED HER LUG TO THE CAR EARLIER. THEY'RE OPEN NOW, AND ARE FILLED WITH TOOLS FROM A WIDE VARIETY OF DRAWING MEDIA. THERE'S ENOUGH SPACE ON THE DESK FOR HER ANGLED PORTABLE DRAWING SURFACE, ON WHICH AN ILLUSTRATION BOARD RESTS OPEN. IT'S POSITIONED IN SUCH A WAY THAT REI IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SEE WHAT SHE'S WORKING ON. THERE'S ALSO A CORDLESS PHONESET (THE HOTEL'S) ON THE DESK BY THE BOARD. REI OPENS THE DOOR TO ADMIT DUNBAR, WHO LEANS IN AND LOOKS AT THE "CARNAGE" IN ASTONISHMENT.

15 DUNBAR: Of course, if you'd rather use the time to unpack, I'll understand.

PAGE 34 / ONE PANEL

[34.1] A Q&A MONTAGE ANCHORED BY TWO KEY IMAGES: REI AT THE DESK, BEHIND HER DRAWING TABLE, PEN IN HAND, WORKING ON HER UNSEEN ART WITH A SERIOUS EXPRESSION; AND DUNBAR — TUX JACKET OFF, SLEEVES ROLLED UP — SITTING IN AN ARMCHAIR WITH A SMALL NOTEPAD, GLANCING UP FROM HIS NOTES TO WATCH (PRESUMABLY) REI. THE IMAGE IS FRAMED BY PIECES OF THEIR INTERVIEW, REPRESENTED BY CAPTION BOXES (PERHAPS COLORED/TINTED DIFFERENTLY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN DUNBAR'S & REI'S).

1 REI: "I guess it was easier for my family to buy me comics every week than to take me to the museum.
 2 REI: "One reprint of 'The Evaporators' and I was hooked."
 3 DUNBAR: "I read that series! I started with the Melakon invasion saga in issue fifty-eight."
 4 REI: "Fifty-seven."
 5 DUNBAR: "... yeah."

 6 REI: "For all his cunning, Devlin's the first person to be interested in my work without being interested in ... something else, if you take my meaning."
 7 DUNBAR: "Has that been a problem?"
 8 REI: "Sure. Hell, even female superhumans in this racket have to deal with harassment."
 9 DUNBAR: "I don't hear much about that."
 10 REI: "That's because the harassers are too embarrassed to press charges after the harasseees put them in traction."

 11 REI: "History."
 12 DUNBAR: "No kidding?"
 13 REI: "Yeah, I met some older relatives from Japan when I was in high school and their stories got me interested in my family, the culture, the region. Lasted until junior year."
 14 DUNBAR: "What happened?"
 15 REI: "Also history. Ancient history. Next question."
 16 DUNBAR: "Okay ..."

 17 DUNBAR: "... but photojournalists like Dora aren't known for their ability to stay in one place for long periods. So we split up."
 18 REI: "Sounds like it should have been a good match. Words and pictures, y'know?"
 19 DUNBAR: "Yeah. Sorry. What was the question?"
 20 REI: "You asked me about my artistic influences and we made a left turn into your first marriage."
 21 DUNBAR: "Oops. Sorry. Dora likes Caravaggio, too."
 22 REI: "You don't talk about her much, do you?"
 23 DUNBAR: "I ... no. Why bore people with that?"
 24 DUNBAR: "You need to?"

 25 DUNBAR: "First thing you ever drew, and when?"
 26 REI: "The maple tree in my family's backyard; age five."
 27 DUNBAR: "How long did it take you?"
 28 REI: "Well, I was home from school sick for three days "
 29 DUNBAR: "A five-year-old taking three days to draw one tree?"
 30 REI: "I've always taken my art seriously, Dunbar."
 31 REI: "It's what I am."

PAGE 36 / SIX PANELS

[36.1] ANGLE FROM BEHIND THE DESK, LOOKING DOWN AT REI'S CLOSED PORTFOLIO.

1 DUNBAR (TH, off) Why pretend?

[36.2] SAME ANGLE, ONLY NOW DUNBAR'S HAND IS IN FRAME. HE'S NOW STANDING BEHIND THE DESK, TOUCHING — AND PREPARING TO OPEN — THE PORTFOLIO.

2 DUNBAR (TH, off): An interview should be enough for you, Dunbar.

[36.3] DUNBAR, WHO'S AGONIZING OVER THIS DECISION. SHOULD HE LOOK?

3 DUNBAR (TH): She says her art is what she is.

4 DUNBAR (TH): Is it worth betraying her trust for a glimpse into her soul?

[36.4] SAME ANGLE AS DUNBAR FLIPS OPEN THE PORTFOLIO. HE'S DUMBSTRUCK BY WHAT HE SEES INSIDE.

[No copy]

[36.5] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF THE PORTFOLIO, AND THE DRAWINGS INSIDE. THEY'RE NOT THE SCI-FI/SUPERHERO TYPE OF PIECES THAT HE SAW BACK AT THE TIMES OFFICES. THEY ARE PENCIL SKETCHES OF HIM, IN THE ARMCHAIR, IN HIS TUX, OBVIOUSLY RENDERED BY REI DURING THEIR INTERVIEW. SHE'S CAPTURED HIM, ACCURATELY AND STYLISHLY, FROM A NUMBER OF ANGLES — FULL BODY, MEDIUM, CLOSE-UP — AND POSES (WRITING NOTES, LISTENING TO HER, JUST SITTING). THERE'S ALSO A NICE SKETCH OF HIM AS HE APPEARED STANDING IN HER DOORWAY IN HIS FULL RIG. JUST PAST THE FRONT EDGE OF THE DESK, BARELY VISIBLE, IS A HINT OF GREEN SPARKLE.

5 REI (off): See anything you like?

6 REI (off): Of course. It's you.

[36.6] STILL BEHIND THE DESK AND OVER THE PORTFOLIO, BUT TILTED UP SLIGHTLY, AS IF DUNBAR'S LOOKING UP FROM THE SKETCHES TO SEE WHAT'S STANDING IN FRONT OF THE DESK. IT'S REI, HER HAIR BRUSHED OUT, HER FACE CLEANED UP (BUT NOT HEAVILY MADE UP), AND HER BODY CLAD IN A DAZZLING EVENING GOWN (THE SOURCE OF THE SPARKLE). SHE LOOKS STUNNING ... AND SHE'S FUMING.

[No copy]

PAGE 37 / THREE PANELS

[37.1] A BIG SHOT OF THE HOTEL'S GRAND BALLROOM. IT'S AN OPULENT ROOM WITH AN ORNATELY TILED FLOOR, ALL ILLUMINATED BY HUGE CHANDELIERS. EVERYONE IS DRESSED TO THE PROVERBIAL NINES. IF THEY AREN'T IN TUXEDOS OR EVENING GOWNS, THEY'RE WEARING FULL SUPERHUMAN COSTUMES. SOME FOLKS STILL LOOK DAMNED GOOD IN THEM; OTHERS SHOULD NEVER HAVE BOTHERED TO OPEN THEIR CLOSETS. THE DANCE FLOOR IS SURROUNDED BY ROUND TABLES WHERE GUESTS SIT AND SOCIALIZE, DO BUSINESS, REMINISCE, ETC. THE ORCHESTRA IS SITUATED AT THE END OF THE BALLROOM FARTHEST FROM THE DOUBLE-DOORED MAIN ENTRANCE. THERE'S A VERY BUSY BAR SITUATED OFF TO ONE SIDE OF THE DANCE FLOOR. DUNBAR & REI ARE WALKING THROUGH THE MAIN DOORWAY, ARM IN ARM. AS WITH THEIR LAST ENTRANCE, THIS ONE'S ATTRACTING ATTENTION FROM THE OTHER ATTENDEES.

- DEVLIN AND SHARKEY, FORMALLY DRESSED, ARE STATIONED AT A RINGSIDE TABLE WITH A GREAT VIEW OF EVERYTHING. SHARKEY IS POINTING OUT DUNBAR & REI.

- BRICK HOUSEMAN AND HIS INVESTORS INHABIT A TABLE ACROSS THE FLOOR FROM DEVLIN, CLOSER TO THE CASH BAR. HE'S TALKING; THEY'RE LISTENING.

- MNEMONICA SITS AT THE BAR TALKING ANIMATEDLY WITH SOME FELLOW SENIOR SUPERHUMANS.

[37.2] DUNBAR & REI, MAKING THEIR WAY INTO THE ROOM, AS FOLKS IN THE BACKGROUND WATCH THEM. ONCE AGAIN, THEY LOOK LIKE A HAPPY COUPLE ...

1 DUNBAR:	I just wanted to get to <u>know</u> you better.
2 REI:	What do you call a four-hour interview?
3 DUNBAR:	Just words.
4 DUNBAR:	I wanted to see <u>you</u> , the real <u>you</u> . You said your art —

[37.3] CLOSER ON REI & DUNBAR, STILL PLAYING HAPPY. DUNBAR, GRITTING HIS TEETH, IS POINTING AND WAVING TO SOMEONE OFF PANEL.

5 REI:	You wanted to be able to tell Devlin if I was really working on my auction pieces.
6 DUNBAR:	I'm sure you'll get a lot of bids for sketches of me.
7 REI:	Horror comics <u>are</u> making a comeback.

PAGE 38 / FIVE PANELS

[38.1] THE SERPENTINE DEVLIN, SLIDING UP BETWEEN THEM AND COILING AN ARM AROUND REI BEFORE DUNBAR CAN COUNTER.

1 DEVLIN: Rei, darling, so glad to see you've recovered.
 2 DEVLIN: Magnificently, I might add.
 3 DEVLIN: And Dunbar, you're looking more like a best selling novelist every time I see you.

[38.2] DUNBAR, WATCHING AS DEVLIN SPIRITS REI AWAY FROM HIM AGAIN, TOWARDS HIS TABLE, WHERE SHARKEY WAITS. DUNBAR WATCHES AFTER HER WITHOUT THE SAME DEGREE OF CONCERN HE HAD THIS AFTERNOON.

4 DEVLIN: My associate and I need to discuss some, ah, marketing strategies with Miss Shinozaki regarding her work.
 5 DEVLIN: Be a good chap and order another round of champagne for our table, won't you?

[38.3] OVERHEAD SHOT OF DUNBAR AND REI HEADING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS – REI TO DEVLIN'S TABLE, UNDER ESCORT, AND DUNBAR, WEAVING ACROSS THE DANCE FLOOR THROUGH DANCING GUESTS, TO THE BAR.

[No copy]

[38.4] CLOSE ON DUNBAR AT THE CROWDED BAR, ORDERING FROM A HOTEL BARTENDER.

6 DUNBAR: More champagne for Mister Markleigh's table.
 7 DUNBAR: Billed to his room, of course.
 8 BARTENDER: At once, sir.
 9 DUNBAR: And one gin gim--

[38.5] WIDER, NOW SHOWING MNEMONICA INTERRUPTING DUNBAR. SHE LOOKS EVEN BETTER CLOSE UP THAN SHE DID IN THE ESTABLISHING SHOT. DUNBAR'S AMUSED.

10 MNEMONICA -- one gin gimlet for Mister Dunbar, billed to my room.
 11 DUNBAR: Gee, thanks. This is why I love stayin' at Gran'ma's house!
 12 MNEMONICA Cancel that drink.

PAGE 39 / SIX PANELS

[39.1] FROM DEVLIN'S TABLE, LOOKING ACROSS THE ROOM THROUGH A BREAK IN THE CROWD AT DUNBAR AND MNEMONICA, WHO ARE LOOKING AT WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE TABLE. REI IS SITTING ACROSS FROM DEVLIN (WITH HER BACK TO DUNBAR), WHO'S TALKING TO HER LIKE A MAN OUTLINING A GRAND PLAN. SHE'S LISTENING WITH NO REACTION – YET. SHARKEY STANDS BEHIND HIS CHAIR. A WAITER IS DELIVERING A FRESH ICE BUCKET WITH CHAMPAGNE TO THE TABLE, PER DUNBAR'S ORDER.

1 MNEMONICA So, how are things going?
 2 DUNBAR: For Rei? Pretty good, it seems.
 3 DUNBAR: Me? I think I blew my last chance to impress her. Favorably, that is.
 4 MNEMONICA Always underestimating yourself, Kevin.

[39.2] FLASHBACK, 20 YEARS AGO: A 12-YEAR-OLD DUNBAR STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF A LINE OF PEOPLE EAGERLY WAITING TO GET AUTOGRAPHS FROM A YOUNG (AND VERY ATTRACTIVE) MNEMONICA AT ANOTHER CONVENTION. YOUNG DUNBAR HOLDS AN AUTOGRAPH BOOK AND LOOKS AT HER WITH SOME FEAR FROM THE BACK OF THE LINE.

5 MNEMONICA (CAP): "Remember when we first met?"
 6 DUNBAR (CAP): "I'll bet you do."
 7 MNEMONICA (CAP): "Well, that is my shtick."

[39.3] NARROW HORIZONTAL PANEL – THE LINE ADVANCES. MNEMONICA CHEERFULLY SIGNS PHOTOS AND TALK TO FANS. YOUNG DUNBAR ADVANCES, STILL LOOKING AT MNEMONICA NERVOUSLY FROM THE HALFWAY POINT IN THE LINE.

[No copy]

[39.4] NARROW HORIZONTAL PANEL – A BIT LATER. THE LINE CONTINUES TO ADVANCE. MNEMONICA IS HAVING HER PICTURE TAKEN WITH A COUPLE OF KIDS MUCH YOUNGER THAN YOUNG DUNBAR. THEY'RE NOT SCARED. YOUNG DUNBAR IS MOVING FARTHER BACK, BUT IS STILL WATCHING MNEMONICA.

[No copy]

[39.5] NARROW HORIZONTAL PANEL – LATER STILL AS THE LINE CONTINUES TO ADVANCE, AND SHORTEN ... AND YOUNG DUNBAR HAS CREPT HIS WAY TO THE VERY BACK OF IT.

[No copy]

[39.6] NARROW HORIZONTAL PANEL – THE LINE HAS FINALLY EVAPORATED. MNEMONICA'S SEATED AT HER TABLE, LOOKING ACROSS THE GULF AT THE YOUNG DUNBAR, WHO'S STILL STANDING AT THE END OF THE NOW NON-EXISTENT LINE. THERE'S NOTHING BETWEEN THEM. HE'S CLUTCHING HIS AUTOGRAPH BOOK.

[No copy]

PAGE 40 / SIX PANELS

[40.1] STILL IN THE FLASHBACK. HEAD-ON ANGLE OF YOUNG DUNBAR.

1 MNEMONICA (CAP): "You were so adorable."

[40.2] MNEMONICA FROM YOUNG DUNBAR'S P.O.V. AS SHE GIVES HIM A PERFECTLY WARM AND INNOCENT LOOK THAT COULD EASILY BE MISINTERPRETED BY A FULL-GROWN MAN. SHE EXTENDS HER HAND TO HIM.

2 DUNBAR (CAP): "You were ... too."

[40.3] CLOSE ON THEIR TWO HANDS AS THEY CLOSE IN ON EACH OTHER.

3 DUNBAR (CAP): "When I think of the friendship I would have missed if I hadn't shaken your hand that day ..."

4 MNEMONICA (CAP): "I didn't know how important you'd be to me, either."

[40.4] PRESENT-DAY, BACK AT THE DANCE. INTIMATE TWO-SHOT OF DUNBAR AND MNEMONICA AT THE BAR, NOW HOLDING HANDS, ALMOST LIKE MOTHER AND SON.

5 MNEMONICA: Who knows how important you could be to her.

6 DUNBAR: Right.

7 DUNBAR: Every time I try to get to know her, something screws it up. Usually me.

[40.5] DUNBAR, LOOKING BEHIND HIM AT DEVLIN'S TABLE AGAIN. THE WAITER HAS Poured FOUR GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE AND IS LEAVING. DEVLIN IS STILL TALKING TO REI. THERE'S NO WAY TO SEE HER EXPRESSION, BUT SHE'S NOW SITTING WITH HER HANDS FOLDED ON THE TABLE.

8 DUNBAR: She's got her talent. She's got Devlin to make her famous. Soon, she'll have fans. Lots of them.

9 DUNBAR: There's too much standing between us already.

[40.6] MNEMONICA, LEANING IN CLOSE TO DUNBAR AS SHE MAKES HER POINT.

10 MNEMONICA: If she's that good, Kevin, the line between you two is only going to get longer.

11 MNEMONICA: This is no time to hide at the back of it.

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[41.1] CLOSE ON DEVLIN, AS HIS FACE RECEIVES A GENEROUS SPLASH OF LIQUID, SPLATTERING HIS NICE TUX.

1 FX: SPLURSH!

[41.2] OVER DEVLIN'S SHOULDER, LOOKING CHIEFLY AT REI, WHO STANDS ACROSS THE TABLE HOLDING AN EMPTY CHAMPAGNE FLUTE WITH A DROP SPILLING OUT OF IT. SHE IS GIVING DEVLIN A DEADLY STARE AND IS SO FIXED UPON HIM THAT SHE DOESN'T NOTICE SHARKEY MOVING FORWARD WITH A SIMILAR LOOK, AIMED AT HER. BEHIND REI, DUNBAR CAN BE SEEN HUSTLING TOWARDS THE TABLE FROM THE BAR.

2 DEVLIN: I take it you have a problem with the marketing plan?

[41.3] REI, AS SHARKEY ADVANCES TOWARDS HER, AND DUNBAR RUNS TO GET BEHIND HER.

3 REI (WH): I should have expected this from you after this afternoon.
4 REI (WH): Stick your marketing plan and stick your contract! The deal's off!
5 SHARKEY: That's not your call, sister.

[41.4] CLOSER ON REI, TURNING HER ATTENTION TO SHARKEY AND DRAWING HER FIST BACK TO CLOCK HER. SHARKEY DOES NOTHING IN RESPONSE. DEVLIN WATCHES, BUT HIS EYEBROW HASN'T GONE UP — YET.

6 REI: Oh?

[41.5] CLOSE ON REI'S FIST, COCKED BACK, READY TO GO, AS DUNBAR'S OPEN HAND FALLS ON TOP OF IT FROM BEHIND. THERE'S A VERY SMALL SPARK AT THE POINT OF CONTACT.

7 FX: ZT!

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[42.1] WIDER ANGLE AS REI TURNS AND LOOKS BEHIND HER TO FIND DUNBAR THERE. SHE'S SURPRISED. HE'S DETERMINED NOT TO LET HER DO ANYTHING DUMB. THE FINGERS IN HER FIST HAVE LOOSENED ENOUGH THAT HIS FINGERS ARE ABLE TO SLIDE INBETWEEN THEM. IT'S ALMOST ROMANTIC.

[No copy]

[42.2] DEVLIN & SHARKEY — HE LOOKS COMPOSED, TRYING NOT TO BE TOO RELIEVED TO SEE DUNBAR. SHARKEY LOOKS DISAPPOINTED BY HIS INTERFERENCE.

1 DEVLIN: Ah. Masterful timing, old man.
2 DEVLIN: We were just —

[42.3] DUNBAR & REI, STILL LOOKING AT EACH OTHER. SHE'S STILL GOT A LOT OF RAGE IN HER, AND HE'S TRYING TO DIVERT IT.

3 DUNBAR: Just going to let me show off your "next big thing" on the dance floor.
4 DUNBAR: Please?

[42.4] ANGLE ON THE WHOLE TABLE. DEVLIN RISES AS DUNBAR — STILL HOLDING REI'S HAND TO LEAD HER — BACKS OUT TOWARDS THE DANCE FLOOR. SHARKEY IS WALKING OVER TO DEVLIN.

5 SHARKEY: Dev, why don't we just use the direct approach?

[42.5] DEVLIN & SHARKEY'S P.O.V. OF THE DEPARTING DUNBAR & REI.

6 DEVLIN: Because she's special. But we don't know how special.
7 DEVLIN: The "direct approach" may not work.
8 DEVLIN: However, I think we may have a more effective way to obtain Miss Shinozaki's cooperation ...

PAGE 43 / SIX PANELS

[43.1] HIGH ANGLE OF THE DANCE FLOOR, INCLUDING THE BANDSTAND, AS DUNBAR AND REI MAKE THEIR WAY ONTO IT. COUPLES THAT ARE ALREADY OUT ARE APPLAUDING AND PREPARING FOR THE NEXT TUNE DURING THE BANDLEADER'S INTRODUCTION.

1 BANDLEADER: Thank you very much, everyone. We'll give you a little time to breathe now with a nice, slow one.

[43.2] FULL BODY SHOT OF DUNBAR AND REI, DANCING AMID THE GUESTS. HE HOLDS HER CLOSE AS SHE LEANS INTO HIS BODY, GRIPPING HIS SHOULDERS, TRYING TO HIDE HER FACE. BEHIND THEM, THE TABLE WITH BRICK AND HIS INVESTORS CAN BE SEEN. THE INVESTORS ARE LISTENING AS BRICK, WITH A DRINK IN HIS HAND, APPEARS TO BE MAKING AN ANIMATED PITCH.

2 DUNBAR: Rei —
 3 REI: Don't even ask.
 4 REI: I — I don't want to talk right now, all right?
 5 DUNBAR: Not unless I can put it in print, huh?

[43.3] CLOSER ON DUNBAR & REI. HE'S SMILING AT HER. HER EYES FLASHING AT HIM, FILLED WITH TEARS. THAT SHOT HIT HER HARD, BUT SHE'S MAINTAINING CONTROL. BARELY. BEHIND HER, MNEMONICA (UNABLE TO SEE REI'S FACE) WATCHES FROM THE BAR, PLEASED.

6 DUNBAR: Go on and hit me if you want.
 7 DUNBAR: The way this relationship's going, that'll tell me you're okay.

[43.4] REI, ACTUALLY TRYING TO SMILE AND SHAKE IT OFF NOW, HER ARMS LOOSENING THEIR GRIP ON DUNBAR'S SHOULDERS.

8 REI: Sorry I flew off at you just now. And in the room. And at ... my place.
 9 DUNBAR: S'okay. I had it coming. Most of the time.
 10 REI: Can I ask you a question, Dunbar?
 11 DUNBAR: Another one? We just asked each other questions for four hours.
 12 REI: Yeah. Why did you let me talk for four hours when you could have come down here?
 13 REI: For that matter, why did you let me turn a minute of your workday into an hour on the phone?

[43.5] DUNBAR, GENTLY WIPING TEARS FROM HER CHEEKS. REI HAS DRAPED HER ARMS AROUND HIS NECK.

14 DUNBAR: Why did you draw me?
 15 REI: You sat still.
 16 DUNBAR: Yeah. For the same reason I stayed on the phone.
 17 DUNBAR: And showed up at your apartment.
 18 DUNBAR: And hung out in your room.

[43.6] VERY TIGHT TWO-SHOT OF THEM, GAZING INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES, ALMOST WITHIN KISSING DISTANCE. THIS COULD BE IT.

19 DUNBAR: I didn't want to be anywhere else.

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[44.1] WIDER ANGLE AS THE SMITTEN DUNBAR & REI DANCE RIGHT INTO BRICK'S TABLE, SLAMMING INTO IT, KNOCKING DRINKS INTO THE LAPS OF THE INVESTORS — AND BRICK — AS THEY STUMBLE OFF BALANCE. DUNBAR IS STUMBLING IN BRICK'S GENERAL DIRECTION. REI IS EN ROUTE TO THE FLOOR. SOME OF THE SURROUNDING GUESTS ARE STARTLED BY THE IMPACT.

1 FX: CRAAAAAASSSSSH!

[44.2] A PETRIFIED DUNBAR, LANDING ON THE DISRUPTED TABLE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE SEETHING BRICK, WHOSE TUX (LIKE THOSE OF HIS STUNNED INVESTORS) IS RUINED BY THE FALLEN DRINKS. VEINS ARE POPPING OUT OF THE BRUTE'S HEAD. HE'S GRABBED THE EDGE OF THE TABLE WITH BOTH HANDS.

2 DUNBAR: Rei?

3 DUNBAR: Run.

[44.3] BIG PANEL — DUNBAR HURLING REI TO THE FLOOR IN THE FOREGROUND AS, BEHIND THEM, BRICK HURLS HIS ENTIRE TABLE AT THEM LIKE A HUGE FRISBEE (WITH LEGS). THE TABLECLOTH AND ANY SILVERWARE/GLASSWARE FLIES OFF IN ALL DIRECTIONS AS HE CASTS THE TABLE OVER THEIR HEADS (TOWARDS US), BARELY MISSING THEM ON ITS WAY ACROSS THE ROOM. THE INVESTORS ARE QUITE ALARMED; SO ARE MOST OF THE FOLKS IN THE VICINITY.

4 BRICK: DUNBARRRRRR!

5 FX (TABLE): WHOOOOSH!

6 CHATTER: Omigod!

7 CHATTER: What hap—?

8 CHATTER: Duck!

[44.4] SMALL PANEL (PERHAPS AN INSET WITHIN THE ABOVE) OF A SET OF CAR KEYS FALLING OUT OF DUNBAR'S TUX JACKET, HITTING THE FLOOR AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME HE AND REI DO. THE KEYS ARE ATTACHED TO A KEY FOB WITH A LABEL ON IT.

9 FOB LABEL (LOGO): SUPERHUMAN TIMES MOTOR POOL/4105550844

10 FX (KEYS): KTINK!

[44.5] THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BALLROOM. PEOPLE ARE RUNNING LIKE HELL TO GET OUT OF THE TABLE'S WAY AS IT HITS ANOTHER SUPERHUMAN PARTY'S TABLE — ONE THAT'S APPARENTLY CELEBRATING A SPECIAL OCCASION FOR A TALL, LEAN, SHAGGY-HAIRED YOUNG MAN NAMED SIGHTLINE (WHO WEARS A GOLD EYEPATCH ENGRAVED WITH CROSSHAIRS AND A BLACK LEATHER JUMPSUIT) WITH A BIG CAKE. IN A SERIES OF IMAGES, BRICK'S TABLE LANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CAKE, SPLATTERING IT EVERYWHERE BEFORE BOUNCING OFF THE TABLE AND FINALLY EMBEDDING ITSELF IN THE NEARBY BALLROOM WALL.

11 FX (TABLE): CRASSSSHHH!

12 FX (CAKE): SPLUSSH!

13 FX (WALL): SHUNK!

[44.6] SIGHTLINE, COVERED IN HIS OWN CAKE, BOILING AS HE LOOKS IN BRICK'S DIRECTION. THE CROSSHAIRS ANRE GLOWING BRIGHT BLUE.

14 SIGHTLINE: Right.

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THIS PAGE SHOULD BE A SERIES OF SMALL SHOTS, PERHAPS WITH A LARGER FIGHT TABLEAU GOING ON IN THE BACKGROUND.

[45.1] DOWN ON THE FLOOR WITH DUNBAR AND REI. HE KEEPS HER LOW AS THEY WATCH THE (UNSEEN) CHAOS UNFOLD AS SURROUNDING SOUND FX. (PERHAPS MULTIPLE IMAGES OF DUNBAR'S HEAD TURNING FROM SIDE TO SIDE AS HE CALLS THE FIGHT.)

1 DUNBAR: Here we go. Sightline takes his shot at Brick —
 2 FX: POW!
 3 DUNBAR: — and Brick throws him into the Ogress's table —
 4 FX: THOOM!
 5 DUNBAR: Wow, she crossed the room in one jump. Not bad.
 6 FX: WHAM!
 7 DUNBAR: Well, bad for Brick.
 8 REI: Uh, Dunbar, shouldn't we get out?

[45.2] FROM DUNBAR & REI'S P.O.V. ON THE FLOOR. THEY'RE CLOSE TO THE OPEN MAIN DOORWAY, BUT THERE ARE SUPERHUMAN BODIES — SOME HITTING, SOME GETTING HIT — WHIZZING IN FRONT OF THEM, AS THE FIGHT ERUPTS FULL FORCE.

9 DUNBAR: Crawl to the door.

[45.3] FACING DUNBAR & REI, AS DUNBAR IS ABRUPTLY HAULED UP OFF THE FLOOR FROM BEHIND, BY THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS BY BRICK, WHO LOOKS LIKE HE JUST TOOK A SERIOUS WHACK TO THE HEAD (PRESUMABLY FROM OGRESS).

10 BRICK: Leavin' so soon, Dunbar?

[45.4] ON THE FLOOR WITH REI, NOTICING DUNBAR'S CAR KEYS ON THE FLOOR BESIDE HER.

11 DUNBAR (off): Rei! Don't wait for —

[45.5] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF THE MAIN DOORS, AS A GLIMPSE OF THE FLEEING REI CAN BE SEEN — AND BRICK'S BIG FIST RACES TOWARD HIS FACE (US).

12 DUNBAR (off): Whew.
 13 BRICK (off): Join the party, Dunbar!

[45.6] BLACK.

14 BRICK (off): Have some punch! Har-har—

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[46.1] BLACKNESS, EXCEPT FOR A "DISEMBODIED" WORD BALLOON ...

1 DEVLIN (off): Still with us, old man?

2 DUNBAR (off): Groaannn ...

[46.2] P.O.V. FROM SOMEONE LYING DOWN (DUNBAR) LOOKING UP AT THE FUZZY, YET DISCERNIBLE OUTLINES OF DEVLIN'S SMILING FACE.

3 DEVLIN: Welcome back.

4 DEVLIN: We were starting to think we didn't get you away from Mister Houseman in time.

[46.3] DUNBAR — FROM THE CHEST UP, AS IF FROM DEVLIN'S P.O.V. — LYING ON A HOTEL ROOM BED, LOOKING A LITTLE DISHEVELED BUT OTHERWISE OKAY.

5 DUNBAR: D-Devlin ..? Where am I?

6 DEVLIN: Your room. We used your key. Hope you don't mind.

7 DUNBAR: I can't feel ... can't feel ...

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[47.1] WIDER ANGLE OF DUNBAR'S HOTEL ROOM. (WE CAN SEE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HIS LAPTOP ON THE DESK BY THE WINDOW.) DUNBAR, STILL A LITTLE DAZED AND VERY CONFUSED, LIES IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS BED, STILL IN HIS TUX, WITH HIS ARMS AND LEGS PINNED TOGETHER BY NO VISIBLE FORCE. HE CAN ONLY MOVE HIS HEAD. DEVLIN AND SHARKEY FLANK HIM ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BED.

1 DUNBAR: I can't feel anything. What the hell —?!
2 DEVLIN: Your paralysis is all in your head, Mister Dunbar. I put it there.
3 DEVLIN: You see, there's a reason why we barely got you out of that ballroom alive.

[47.2] DEVLIN, STILL PLEASANT, BUT DEFINITELY IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE SITUATION — AND OF DUNBAR.

4 DEVLIN: And if you want to leave this room the same way, you'll tell me what you've done with Miss Shinozaki.

[47.3] DUNBAR, SHOCKED.

5 DUNBAR: Rei?
6 DUNBAR: Rei's missing?!

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[48.1] DEVLIN, FROM DUNBAR'S P.O.V. SHARKEY IS STANDING BESIDE DEVLIN EXPECTANTLY.

1 DEVLIN: I thought you'd say as much.

[48.2] CLOSER ON DEVLIN, RAISING HIS EYEBROW.

2 DUNBAR (off): Devlin, Brick Houseman grabbed —

[48.3] BIG PANEL — DUNBAR ON THE BED, SUDDENLY THRASHING VIOLENTLY IN PAIN (AS MUCH AS HIS PSYCHIC BONDS WILL LET HIM), AS IF A TRILLION VOLTS OF ELECTRICITY WERE ENTERING HIS BODY THROUGH HIS BRAIN!

3 DUNBAR (BL): AAAAAAAAGGGGGGGHHHH!

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[49.1] WIDER ANGLE, A FEW SECONDS LATER. DUNBAR LIES ON THE BED, STILL CONFINED, BUT CLOSE TO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. DEVLIN & SHARKEY ARE UNAFFECTED BY HIS TORMENT.

1 SHARKEY: That one blast should have done it.
2 DUNBAR (SL): uhhhh
3 DEVLIN: Indeed. No need to confine him, then, eh?

[49.2] DUNBAR, SLOWLY RECOVERING, NOW ABLE TO MOVE HIS ARMS AND LEGS APART SLIGHTLY. DEVLIN & SHARKEY GIVE HIM SOME SPACE.

4 DUNBAR: Ooof ...
5 DEVLIN: I apologize for the rough stuff, Mister Dunbar, but I wanted to stress how far I'm willing to go to get Miss Shinozaki back.

[49.3] DUNBAR, SITTING UP, RUBBING HIS TEMPLES, FACING DEVLIN NOW.

6 DUNBAR: W-why? There are plenty of ... human artists out there ... looking for a break.
7 DEVLIN: Not like her. Sharkey?

[49.4] SHARKEY STEPS CLOSER TO THE BED TO EXPLAIN.

8 SHARKEY: In vetting Miss Shinozaki prior to offering her representation, we learned that she's part of a powerful superhuman bloodline.
9 SHARKEY: For centuries, in every third generation, one female in her line has exhibited the same powers, usually by puberty.
10 SHARKEY: Unlike her ancestors, Miss Shinozaki has never shown superhuman tendencies.
11 DEVLIN: Even when provoked. As she was in the exhibit hall yesterday.

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[50.1] DUNBAR, INTRIGUED.

1 DUNBAR: And at the dance last night.
2 DUNBAR: You tried to trigger her powers.

[50.2] DEVLIN, HIS MIND AT WORK, PLOTTING.

3 DEVLIN: Actually, I was trying to confirm that she didn't have powers.

[50.3] SHARKEY & A PUZZLED DUNBAR.

4 SHARKEY: A person with a bloodline as strong as Miss Shinozaki's can't be completely powerless.
5 SHARKEY: We think that her superhuman abilities may have mutated, making her a source of energy, rather than a user of it.

[50.4] DEVLIN. FROM THE LOOK HE'S GIVING DUNBAR, YOU CAN TELL HE'S BEEN WAITING TO ASK THIS QUESTION.

6 DEVLIN: What do you know about "jumpers," Mister Dunbar?

[50.5] DUNBAR, NOW MORE OR LESS STABILIZED.

7 DUNBAR: Only that they aren't real.
8 DUNBAR: I've heard stories about how superheroes in the war took on young sidekicks because their stamina gave them this weird ability to "jumpstart" the heroes if their powers ever gave out in battle.
9 DUNBAR: But no one's ever proved that such people ...

[50.6] FROM OVER DUNBAR'S SHOULDER — DEVLIN & SHARKEY, SMILING IN REPLY BEFORE HIS INEVITABLE QUESTION CAN COME OUT.

10 DUNBAR: You can't be serious.
11 DUNBAR: You want to market Rei as a ... a battery?

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[51.1] DEVLIN, LEANING CLOSER TO DUNBAR, REALLY ENTHUSED ABOUT THIS PLAN.

1 DEVLIN: Don't get me wrong. I'm still very interested in handling Miss Shinozaki's art.
2 DEVLIN: But she deserves to profit from all of her talents.
3 DEVLIN: As do I, for discovering them.

[51.2] DEVLIN STANDING APART FROM THEM WITH A CALCULATING EXPRESSION, REACHING INTO HIS JACKET POCKET.

4 DEVLIN: With several fields that are leaning towards becoming superhuman-only ...
5 DEVLIN: No one will dare turn us away.

[51.3] DEVLIN, PRODUCING AN ENVELOPE FROM HIS POCKET. THE ENVELOPE IS EMBOSSED WITH A FANCY, HIGHLY VISIBLE LETTERHEAD FOR THE MARKLEIGH AGENCY. DUNBAR LOOKS AT IT SUSPICIOUSLY.

6 DEVLIN: Speaking of things you shouldn't turn away ...
7 DEVLIN: Produce Miss Shinozaki and I guarantee that your novel will be read, and bought, by the right people.
8 DEVLIN: Here's the proof: your contract for my services, ready for your signature.

[51.4] DEVLIN, STANDING OPPOSITE DUNBAR, OPENING HIS TUX JACKET AND STUFFING THE CONTRACT IN AN INSIDE POCKET WHILE DUNBAR WATCHES, UNIMPRESSED.

9 DUNBAR: Why should I go after her? I barely know her.
10 DEVLIN: I don't need to be a mind reader to know that you care for her.
11 DUNBAR: Okay. Why should I help you exploit someone I care about?

[51.5] DEVLIN & SHARKEY STANDING OPPOSITE DUNBAR, LOOKING AS "NON-THREATENING" AS THEY CAN. SHARKEY WATCHES DEVLIN LIKE A TRUE FAN.

12 DEVLIN: Please, Mister Dunbar, don't create any headaches for me.

[51.6] CLOSER ON DEVLIN, HIS EYEBROW RAISED EVER SO SLIGHTLY.

13 DEVLIN: They're nothing compared to the headaches I can create for you.

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[52.1] A BIG PANEL. PRE-DAWN, ON A HIGHWAY HEADING OUT OF THE CITY. NOT MUCH TRAFFIC AT THIS HOUR, BUT IN THE FOREGROUND, HEADING TOWARDS US, IS REI'S HATCHBACK, WITH DUNBAR BEHIND THE WHEEL. HE'S STILL WEARING HIS TUX REMAINS AND STILL LOOKS TOUSLED FROM THE BALLROOM FIGHT AND HIS SESSION WITH DEVLIN, BUT HE ALSO LOOKS DETERMINED TO FIND HER.

NOTE: THE ELECTRONIC SOUND IS A "REAL TIME" FX, HAPPENING NOW, VERSUS THE CAPTIONED "FLASHBACK."

1 DUNBAR (CAP): "Hi, I'm Mister Dunbar in 3903.

2 DUNBAR (CAP): "My ... my friend, Miss Shinozaki, and I were alllll the way in the parking garage getting ready to leave the hotel when she realized she'd left her room key behind. She sent me to get her a duplicate key. She's in 3901.

3 DUNBAR (CAP): "Sure. Sure, I understand. Only to guests registered for the room, positive identification, and all that.

4 DUNBAR (CAP): "Say, could you positively identify the president on this fifty-dollar bill?"

5 DUNBAR (CAP): "Thanks."

6 ELEC: BRRRRRRRT!

[52.2] DUNBAR, ACTIVATING HIS CELL PHONE WITH A FREE HAND WHILE DRIVING.

7 DUNBAR: Dunbar.

8 MORALES (ELEC): Thank God! Are you okay?

9 DUNBAR: Glenn! Glenn, listen, something's happened. I need your help.

10 MORALES (ELEC): "Something's happened?"

11 MORALES (ELEC): Well, that explains why you're out in the middle of nowhere instead of at ComiConference doing your job.

[52.3] CLOSER ON DUNBAR, LISTENING ON THE PHONE, CURIOUS.

12 DUNBAR: How do you know —?

13 MORALES (ELEC): I came in early to get a jump on next week's issue, and I had a voice mail from the motor pool.

14 MORALES (ELEC): The GPS in your company car says you're not even near the convention center garage. They thought it might be stolen. I thought I'd better call to make sure you were okay.

15 MORALES (ELEC): And that you got the interview. You got it, right?

16 DUNBAR: Yeah. But, ah, I had to go out of town to check on something.

17 DUNBAR: Drove around all night, pulled over, must have fallen asleep.

18 MORALES (ELEC): Where are you?

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[53.1] OVER DUNBAR'S SHOULDER, THE HIGHWAY AHEAD, AS THE SUN STARTS TO RISE.

1 DUNBAR: I'm not really sure.
 2 DUNBAR: Say, Glenn ... what's that GPS location the motor pool gave you?
 3 DUNBAR: The exact location.

[53.2] SAME ANGLE, BUT SLIGHTLY LATER IN THE MORNING ON A DIFFERENT ROAD, MORE OF A PARKWAY THAN A HIGHWAY. THE ROAD IS BORDERED BY GROVES OF TREES. THROUGH DUNBAR'S WINDSHIELD, HIS TIMES CAR IS VISIBLE. IT'S BEEN DRIVEN OFF THE ROAD, ONTO THE RIGHT SHOULDER, ALMOST INTO THE TREES. DUNBAR IS PULLING UP BEHIND IT.

4 CAPTION: Ninety minutes later.

[53.3] OUTSIDE THE TWO CARS AS DUNBAR JUMPS OUT OF REI'S AND RUNS UP TO THE DRIVER'S SIDE OF THE TIMES CAR.

[No copy]

[53.4] OVER DUNBAR'S SHOULDER, LOOKING INTO THE TIMES CAR. ALL OF THE WINDOWS ARE UP. REI IS SLUMPED AGAINST THE DRIVER'S SIDE DOOR, SLEEPING. HER HEAD IS TURNED SUCH THAT HER BREATH IS FOGGING UP PART OF THE WINDOW DIRECTLY AGAINST HER. HE'S LEANING AGAINST THE ROOF OF THE CAR, BRACING HIMSELF AGAINST IT. DUNBAR'S FACE IS REFLECTED IN THE WINDOW.

5 DUNBAR (TH): Okay. You're breathing.
 6 DUNBAR (TH): Good.

[53.5] SAME ANGLE AS DUNBAR SUDDENLY, QUICKLY ROCKS THE CAR FROM SIDE-TO-SIDE, ENOUGH TO JOLT AN ALARMED REI OUT OF SLUMBER.

7 REI: GAAAAAAAA! No! No!
 8 REI: What —?

[53.6] INSIDE THE CAR, OVER REI'S SHOULDER. SHE'S CATCHING HER BREATH, LOOKING THROUGH THE WINDOW AT DUNBAR, WHO'S SMILING WITH GENUINE RELIEF.

[No copy]

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[54.1] OUTSIDE, AS REI'S CAR (WITH DUNBAR AND REI IN THE FRONT SEAT) PULLS AROUND THE TIMES CAR, TEARING AWAY AND LEAVING IT BEHIND IN A DUST CLOUD.

1 FX (CAR): SCREEEEEECH!
 2 DUNBAR (CAP): "So. I got into your room, found your car keys — somehow — and started driving."

[54.2] INSIDE REI'S CAR — DUNBAR & REI. SHE'S LOOKING BACK AT THE TIMES CAR, RECEDING IN THE DISTANCE.

3 REI: Where are we going now?
 4 DUNBAR: Away from the con so Devlin can't find you.
 5 DUNBAR: Away from company cars with GPS technology so he can't find us through my editor.

[54.3] THE BACK SEAT, WHERE REI'S VARIOUS PADS AND CANVASSES HAVE BEEN LAID AND STACKED, RATHER QUICKLY. (DUNBAR & REI SPEAK OFF-PANEL.)

6 DUNBAR (off): You're sure you got everything out of the trunk?
 7 REI (off): It's all here.
 8 DUNBAR (off): I'm surprised you had time to gather it up.

[54.4] REI, LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AT THE PASSING LANDSCAPE AS SHE SPEAKS.

9 REI: Crisis reflex.
 10 REI: One of the first things they tell you to take out of the house in a disaster is your photo album.
 11 REI: With me, it's my artwork. It's —

[54.5] DUNBAR & REI. HE UNDERSTANDS.

12 DUNBAR: It's what you are.
 13 REI: Yeah.
 14 REI: Plus, I didn't want to leave anything of potential value behind for Devlin.

[54.6] ANOTHER ANGLE OF DUNBAR & REI. HE'S TRYING NOT TO BE PUSHY. SHE'S TOO BEAT TO RESIST MUCH LONGER.

15 DUNBAR: Speaking of Devlin. And last night. And yesterday.
 16 REI: Yeah.
 17 DUNBAR: I'm gonna ask, y'know.
 18 REI: Yeah.
 19 DUNBAR: And if you don't tell me, I'm just gonna ask again.
 20 REI: Yeah.
 21 DUNBAR: So ..?

PAGE 55 / FOUR PANELS

[55.1] A "DUAL " PORTRAIT, WITH TWO HALVES MAKING ONE FACE: ON ONE SIDE, REI — SERIOUS AS SHE RELATES HER STORY; ON THE OTHER SIDE, DYNAMAID, IN FULL MASK, WEARING A PROUD SMILE, HER EYES AFLAME. REI SHOULD BE RENDERED NORMALLY, WHILE DYNAMAID — AND THE FLASHBACK SCENES THAT FOLLOW — SHOULD BE RENDERED IN THE STYLE OF THE '40S PROPAGANDA COMIC WE SAW EARLIER. (UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THESE SCENES LOOK LIKE OCNTEMPORARY MANGA.) DYNAMAID AND REI SHOULD SHARE SOMETHING OF A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE, BUT THEY SHOULD NOT LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE.

1 REI: Well, it kind of blows away your whole "human interest" article, but ...
 2 REI: My family tree has superhuman blood in it.
 3 REI: Back in World War II, some of it flowed through my great-grandmother. The Japanese army recruited her, gave her everything, including a name: DynaMaid, in English.

[55.2] FLASHBACK: A JAPANESE BEACH, FROM THE GROUND, AS A SMALL PLATOON OF ALLIED SOLDIERS FALLS UNDER ATTACK FROM A FULLY COSTUMED DYNAMAID, WHO'S IN THE SKY DIVING TOWARDS THEM, FLAMES RADIATING FROM HER EYES. SOME OF THE SOLDIERS ARE FIRING ON HER; SOME ARE TRYING TO THROW GRENADES AT HER; A FEW ARE TRYING TO DIVE AWAY. ALL OF THEM ARE SURPRISED AND TERRIFIED; MOST OF THEM ARE ON FIRE OR GETTING CREMATED BY HER EYES ON THE SPOT. SHE'S ENJOYING IT ALL IMMENSELY.

4 REI (CAP): She incinerated an estimated 50,000 Allied troops during the war.
 5 REI (CAP): Sometimes in combat. Sometimes for fun.
 6 REI (CAP): One day, when she was assigned to patrol a city on Honshu, she left her post to murder a small American patrol landing on another island.
 7 REI (CAP): The city she was supposed to protect ...

[55.3] IN THE BACKGROUND, THE SEARING, FAMILIAR SHAPE OF THE MUSHROOM CLOUD RISING FROM HIROSHIMA. IN THE FOREGROUND, THE SILHOUETTE OF DYNAMAID, ANGUISHED & KNEELING, IN THE ACT OF PLUNGING A SEPPUKU KNIFE INTO HER BODY.

8 REI (CAP): ... was Hiroshima.
 9 REI (CAP): When she got back, the atomic bomb had killed more than 200,000 Japanese.
 10 REI (CAP): Humiliated, she killed herself before her superiors could order her to do so.
 11 REI (CAP): It was more "honorable" that way.

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[56.1] PRESENT-DAY: REI, SINKING INTO HER SEAT, LOOKING MORE FRUSTRATED, BORDERING ON ANGRY.

1 REI: Devlin showed me an old "DynaMaid" propaganda comic at the con yesterday. That's what set me off.
 2 REI: My family's tried to put DynaMaid behind them. Devlin wants to use my heritage as a sales hook for my comics.
 3 REI: "Descendant of superhuman fire-bitch creates beauty to atone for great-grandma's crimes," that kind of thing.
 4 REI: I hate the man, but I need his help.

[56.2] DUNBAR, POINTING TO HIS EYES WITH TWO FINGERS FOR EMPHASIS.

5 DUNBAR: And you've never been able to ... you know ... look at someone and ... "FOOM?"

[56.3] DUNBAR & REI.

6 REI: No.
 7 DUNBAR: Never been able to do anything ... special? Besides draw?
 8 REI: No.
 9 DUNBAR: You're positive?
 10 REI: What are you getting at, Dunbar?

[56.4] DUNBAR, LOOKING TENSE.

11 DUNBAR: Do you know what a "jumper" is?

PAGE 57 / FIVE PANELS

[57.1] A DIFFERENT ROAD, MORE ISOLATED THAN THE LAST, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOT-QUITE-NOWHERE. THIS IS THE PARKING LOT OF AN OLD-SCHOOL DINER WITH A NEON SIGN (ALMA'S) IN A BIG PICTURE WINDOW, A COUPLE OF TRACTOR-TRAILERS PARKED ALONGSIDE A FEW REGULAR CARS — INCLUDING REI'S.

1 DUNBAR (CAP): "Rei?"

2 DUNBAR (CAP): "Please say something."

[57.2] INSIDE THE DINER, WHICH IS A SMALL, WELL-KEPT, OLD-FASHIONED GREASY SPOON WITH BAR AND BOOTH SEATING. THE TRUCKERS THAT BELONG TO THE RIGS OUTSIDE ARE CHATTING OVER COFFEE AT THE COUNTER. ONE OR TWO OLDER GENTLEMEN IN BUSINESS WEAR OCCUPY SEPARATE BOOTHS. ONE'S READING A NEWSPAPER; ONE'S TALKING ON A CELL PHONE. (HE'S FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM DUNBAR & REI THAT HIS CONVERSATION CAN'T BE HEARD.) DUNBAR & REI SIT AT A BOOTH ALONG A FAR WALL, NEAR AN EMERGENCY EXIT. IN THEIR FORMAL WEAR, THEY LOOK LIKE REFUGEES FROM PROM NIGHT. EACH HAS A COFFEE CUP IN FRONT OF THEM. DUNBAR'S HAS A TEA BAG TAG DRAPED OVER THE SIDE. REI'S DOESN'T; PRESUMABLY, IT'S COFFEE, WITH A SPOON IN IT. THEY SIT ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE TABLE. THE SEAT GIVES DUNBAR A VIEW OF THE MAIN WINDOW. REI IS SLUMPED IN HER SEAT, LOOKING DEFEATED, LIKE SHE'S BEEN OBLITERATED BY A BOMB. JUDGING FROM DUNBAR'S EXPRESSION, HE REGRETS BEING THE ONE TO HAVE DROPPED IT ON HER.

3 REI: What am I supposed to say?

4 REI: Devlin thinks I'm something I'm not, and he'll do anything to get to me.

5 REI: Even torture you.

[57.3] CLOSER ON DUNBAR & REI.

6 DUNBAR: It wasn't that bad.

7 DUNBAR: Besides, I now have a deeper appreciation for the plight of Third World political dissidents.

[57.4] REI, STIRRING HER COFFEE IN A LACKLUSTER WAY AS DUNBAR WATCHES.

8 REI: I'm sorry, Dunbar. About Devlin, about how I've treated you, about stealing your car ...

[57.5] CLOSE ON REI, GRAVELY STARING AT HER COFFEE.

9 REI (SL): I'm sorry I drew that damn maple tree.

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[58.1] DUNBAR & REI, AS DUNBAR TAKES BOTH OF HER HANDS. THERE'S A SPARK ON CONTACT FOR BOTH, BUT NEITHER JUMPS.

1 DUNBAR: Never say that again.
2 FX (HANDS, SL): BZT! FZT!
3 REI (SL): That's just freakish.
4 DUNBAR: Forget about Devlin. Once my article comes out, you won't believe how many publishers will want you.

[58.2] REI, NOW LEANING IN CLOSER TO DUNBAR. THEY'RE STILL HOLDING HANDS. IF THIS WERE A LESS INTENSE MOMENT, THEY MIGHT BE KISSING. BUT ...

5 REI: You think Devlin's going to let anyone else get control of his "jumper?"
6 REI: Dunbar ... I'd kill myself before I let him get his hands on me.
7 DUNBAR: I won't let it come to that. Before we do anything else, we need to find out if you are a "jumper."
8 REI: How?

[58.3] DUNBAR, PULLING OUT HIS CELL PHONE.

9 DUNBAR: We go back to the con.
10 REI: What?!
11 DUNBAR: I know people there who can help us, people we can trust.
12 REI: And Devlin will be expecting us.

[58.4] CLOSER ON DUNBAR DIALING HIS PHONE, LOOKING CONFIDENT.

13 DUNBAR: He won't be expecting this.

PAGE 59 / FOUR PANELS

[59.1] THAT AFTERNOON. HIGH ANGLE OVER AN OLD, RUNDOWN STRIP MOTEL CONSISTING OF A SIMPLE OFFICE AND 12 ROOMS. EACH HAS A LARGE (DIRTY) PICTURE WINDOW. THERE ARE ONLY TWO CARS IN PARKED IN FRONT OF THE ROOMS. ONE IS A DARK LUXURY CAR. THE OTHER IS REI'S CAR (WITH WINDOWS DOWN). DUNBAR STANDS BY THE DOOR OF THE ROOM IN FRONT OF REI'S CAR AS HE TALKS ON HIS CELL PHONE. (HE'S NOT WEARING HIS TUX JACKET.)

1 DUNBAR: I cracked a story here a year or so ago. It's nice and isolated. Easy to see if anyone's coming.

2 DUNBAR: I wanted to get Rei someplace where she could sleep for a while.

[59.2] DUNBAR, CRACKING OPEN THE DOOR TO THE DINGY MOTEL ROOM IN FRONT OF THE CAR AND PEEKING INSIDE. IT'S AS WORN DOWN AS THE EXTERIOR OF THE HOTEL. REI IS LYING ON THE ONLY BED IN THE SMALL ROOM, WHICH ALSO HAS A CHEAP TV, A CHAIR, A SMALL TABLE, AND A BATHROOM. SHE'S STILL IN HER EVENING GOWN. HIS TUX JACKET LIES ACROSS THE FOOT OF THE BED.

3 DUNBAR: I figure we'll take off around nightfall, which should put us at your place in about two hours.

4 DUNBAR: Once we figure out how to get into the con — quietly — we'll look for Mnemonic. If Rei's really a —

[59.3] CLOSE ON DUNBAR, STILL ON THE PHONE, BUT DISTRACTED BY A NOISE COMING FROM OFF PANEL.

5 DUNBAR: What? No, don't do that, Rhett. Stay put. I'll call —

6 ELEC (off): ZZZZZTbar ...

[59.4] ANGLE FROM INSIDE REI'S CAR, BEHIND THE WHEEL, LOOKING AT THE DASH AND THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD AT DUNBAR. THERE'S ANOTHER ELECTRONIC SOUND, THIS TIME COMING FROM REI'S CAR RADIO. DUNBAR CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT THIS COULD BE.

7 DUNBAR: I'll call when we leave. See ya.

8 RADIO (ELEC): DunZZZZTDunbar!

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[60.1] DUNBAR, OPENING THE DRIVER'S SIDE CAR DOOR, LOOKING IN AT THE RADIO, MYSTIFIED.

1 RADIO (ELEC): DunbarZZZZZZZZTyou hear me?
2 DUNBAR: Mnemonica? What — how —?

[60.2] DUNBAR, BENDING DOWN TO BE "FACE-TO-FACE" WITH THE RADIO. THE OTHER CAR IN THE LOT IS NOW VISIBLE THROUGH THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW

3 RADIO (ELEC): —ank God! Been tryZZZZZZTcontact you all night.
4 DUNBAR: Why are you in the radio?
5 RADIO (ELEC): Actually, I'mZZZZTyour head. You just think it'sZZZZZZT radio. ThoughtZZZZZZTless disruptive.

[60.3] BEHIND DUNBAR, UNSEEN BY HIM, A RED SPORTS CAR (WHICH SEATS TWO UP FRONT, TWO IN BACK) PULLS UP ALONGSIDE THE BLACK LUXURY CAR. IT'S A CONVERTIBLE, SO WE CAN SEE THE DRIVER. IT'S BRICK HOUSEMAN, NOW WEARING HIS BUSINESS SUIT AND AN ANGRY FACE.

6 DUNBAR: Since when did you become telepathic? I thought memory was your —
7 RADIO (ELEC): People who live as long asZZZZZZTmany secrets.

[60.4] DUNBAR'S ATTENTION REMAINS FOCUSED ON THE RADIO AS BRICK GETS OUT OF HIS CAR AND STALKS ANGRILY TOWARDS THE DOOR OF THE MOTEL ROOM NEAREST THE BLACK LUXURY CAR.

8 RADIO (ELEC): DevlinZZT looking everywhereZZZZZZT Rei.
9 RADIO (ELEC): Using his psionicZZZZZZZZTpowerful.
10 RADIO (ELEC): Scanning everyoneZZZZZZT. Not deeply, but enough.

[60.5] BRICK KICKS IN THE DOOR OF THE MOTEL ROOM. DUNBAR, DESPERATE TO HEAR MNEMONICA, TRIES TO CUP HIS HANDS/COVER HIS EARS AND SHUT OUT THE NOISE.

11 FX (DOOR): WHAM!
12 RADIO (ELEC): Can't transmit long. Might pick up my signal, evenZZZZZZT weak.
13 RADIO (ELEC): Had to reach you, Kevin. Had to make sure youZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT —
14 RADIO (ELEC): ...

[60.6] BRICK CHARGES INTO THE MOTEL ROOM. DUNBAR, TOO CONCERNED ABOUT MNEMONICA, DOESN'T NOTICE.

15 DUNBAR: Mnemonica ..?
16 DUNBAR: Mnemonica!

PAGE 61 / SIX PANELS

[61.1] DUNBAR, NOW OUT OF THE CAR, BOLTING THROUGH THE DOORWAY OF HIS & REI'S MOTEL ROOM. WHEN HE YELLS TO HER, IT JOLTS HER AWAKE (AGAIN).

1 DUNBAR: REI!
2 REI: What?! What's —?!

[61.2] REI, RECOVERED, BUT LOOKING A LITTLE TIRED OF DUNBAR THE HUMAN ALARM CLOCK.

3 REI: Y'think just once today you could wake me up without scaring the hell out of me?
4 DUNBAR: We have to go back to the con now.
5 REI: Is your friend —?

[61.3] DUNBAR, HURRIEDLY GRABBING HIS TUX JACKET AS HE SPEAKS. THE ENVELOPE DEVLIN GAVE HIM IS VISIBLE. IT'S FALLING OUT. HE DOESN'T SEE IT.

6 DUNBAR: We can't wait for Rhett.
7 DUNBAR: I just heard from Mnemonica. I think she may be — what?

[61.4] THE ENVELOPE, DROPPING TOWARDS THE BED — AND REI LEANING FORWARD TO CATCH IT.

[No copy]

[61.5] CLOSE ON REI, HOLDING UP THE ENVELOPE AND LOOKING TOWARDS DUNBAR WITH SHOCK & SUSPICION.

8 REI: Nice contract.
9 REI: Your book deal for "services rendered?"
10 REI: Services like taking me back to the con?

[61.6] DUNBAR, FRUSTRATED, IMPATIENT, WANTING TO EXPLAIN AND GET UNDERWAY.

11 DUNBAR: Rei, Devlin put that in my — I never signed—

PAGE 62 / SIX PANELS

[62.1] WIDE ANGLE OF THE ROOM AS THE WHOLE PLACE SHUDDERS VIOLENTLY, AS IF IT'S NEAR A BOMB BLAST. THE WALLS AND CEILING SHUDDER, LOOSENING PIECES OF DRYWALL. THE FURNITURE ACTUALLY RISES AN INCH OR SO OFF THE FLOOR. REI IS THROWN DOWN. DUNBAR'S KNOCKED OFF HIS FEET.

1 FX: KRA-KOOOOOM!!!

[62.2] DUNBAR & REI, BOTH STARTING TO RISE. HE'S SINKING HIS HAND INTO HIS PANTS POCKET.

2 DUNBAR: Whatever that was ... it was big ...
3 DUNBAR: ... and probably not safe.

[62.3] DUNBAR, TAKING REI'S CAR KEYS OUT OF HIS POCKET AND TOSSING THEM TO REI.

4 DUNBAR: Go! Get out of here!

[62.4] REI, CATCHING HER KEYS.

5 FX (KEYS): SSHINK!
6 REI: I can't leave you here.

[62.5] DUNBAR, HEADING OUT THE DOOR.

7 DUNBAR: I work for Devlin, remember?
8 DUNBAR: You're the only one you trust to save your butt.
9 DUNBAR: So save it.

[62.6] ANGLE ON REI, CLUTCHING HER KEYS AND WATCHING DUNBAR EXIT THE ROOM AS SHE CONSIDERS HIS WORDS.

[No copy]

PAGE 63 / SIX PANELS

[63.1] DUNBAR APPROACHES THE WINDOW OF THE MOTEL ROOM. A GROAN EMANATES FROM INSIDE.

1 "GROAN": Uhhhh ...

[63.2] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THE OTHER DINGY ROOM. INSIDE, BRICK HOLDS HIS BOOKIE AGAINST A WALL. THE BOOKIE — A SMALLISH, OLDER GENTLEMAN DRESSED CASUALLY — IS ACTUALLY EMBEDDED IN THE CRACKED WALL, HAVING JUST BEEN SHOVED INTO IT BY BRICK. (CLEARLY, THE IMPACT WAS THE SOURCE OF THE " KRA-KOOOOOM," AND HE WAS THE SOURCE OF THE GROAN.)

2 DUNBAR (TH): Brick?!

3 DUNBAR (TH): His bookie's still working out of this dump?

4 DUNBAR (TH): I thought the cops shut him down after I broke the story.

[63.3] INSIDE THE ROOM AS BRICK PULLS THE BOOKIE OUT OF THE WALL AND INTO HIS SNARLING FACE.

5 BOOKIE: Brick, I (GASP) I can't c-control —

6 BRICK: You said they'd win! I need that money, Harvey!

7 BRICK: Without it, I can't start over!

8 BOOKIE: B-b-but, your investors —

BRICK: They ran last night after that Dunbar jerk started this big —

[63.4] OUTSIDE THE ROOM, AS DUNBAR LOOKS DOWN TOWARDS HIS & REI'S ROOM, WHERE REI IS RUNNING OUT, TOWARDS HER CAR, YELLING TO HIM. HEARING HER CALL, AND BEING AT BRICK'S WINDOW WHEN HE HEARS HIS NAME, HE'S MORTIFIED.

9 REI: Dunbar, come on!

[63.5] INSIDE BRICK'S ROOM. BRICK, DISTRACTED FROM THE BOOKIE, CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE JUST HEARD, AND SNAPS HIS HEAD TOWARDS THE WINDOW.

10 BRICK: Dunbar?

[63.6] BRICK'S P.O.V. OF THE DISCOVERED DUNBAR OUTSIDE, IN THE MIDDLE OF MOUTHING THE "F" OF AN APPROPRIATE OBSCENITY.

[No copy]

PAGE 64 / FOUR PANELS

[64.1] DUNBAR, RUNNING LIKE HELL AS, BEHIND HIM, BRICK SMASHES THROUGH THE WALL OF THE BOOKIE'S MOTEL ROOM WITH HIS DENSE BODY. DRYWALL, WOOD, AND GLASS FLY EVERYWHERE, BUT IT ALL BOUNCES OFF BRICK, WHO LOOKS MADDER THAN HE'S LOOKED BEFORE NOW — VEINS AND MUSCLES BULGING, FACE RED.

1 FX (WALL; BL): SMASH!!!
2 BRICK: DUUUUUNNNNNNBAAAAAR!

[64.2] BRICK, GRABBING THE BOOKIE'S LUXURY CAR AND LIFTING IT OVER HIS HEAD.

3 BRICK: That fight you started scared off my backers!
4 BRICK: They said the comics biz was too "vo-la-tile!"
5 BRICK: HA!

[64.3] DUNBAR, NOW AT THE DOOR TO THEIR ROOM. REI, WATCHING AND LISTENING TO BRICK, IS STILL BESIDE HER CAR — AND BRICK HAS THROWN THE BOOKIE'S CAR INTO THE AIR, ACROSS THE LOT, IN HER DIRECTION.

6 BRICK: Now, this —
7 FX (CAR): WHOOOOSH!!
8 DUNBAR: Incoming!

[64.4] A SPLIT-SECOND LATER, AS REI BARELY DIVES AWAY FROM HER CAR, TOWARDS DUNBAR AND THE ROOM, WHEN THE BOOKIE'S CAR LANDS ON HERS WITH ENOUGH FORCE TO SMASH THROUGH THE ROOF AND FRONT SEAT.

9 FX (CAR): CHOOM!
10 BRICK: This is "vo-la-tile"!

PAGE 65 / SIX PANELS

[65.1] INSIDE DUNBAR & REI'S ROOM AS HE HAULS HER INSIDE AND HUSTLES HER TOWARDS THE —

1 DUNBAR: Bathroom!
2 REI: That door won't keep him out!

[65.2] INSIDE THE BATHROOM AS DUNBAR (HIS ARMS ONLY SEEN IN FRAME) SHOVES HER THROUGH THE DOORWAY.

3 DUNBAR: He wants me, not you. Get in there!
4 REI: He'll kill y—

[65.3] ANGLE ON THE ROOM AS DUNBAR PULLS THE BATHROOM DOOR CLOSED ... AND FINDS BRICK STANDING IN THE DOORWAY TO THE MOTEL ROOM, "SMILING."

5 FX (DOOR): SLAM!
6 BRICK: Yeah.
7 BRICK: He will.

[65.4] CLOSER ON BRICK, AND THAT SMILE. BRRRR!

8 BRICK: Unless ya wanna make a deal.

[65.5] INSIDE THE BATHROOM — REI, PRESSING HER EAR AGAINST THE DOOR AND LISTENING.

9 DUNBAR (off): What kind of deal?
10 BRICK (off): Markleigh's got a bounty out for that chickie you got in the can.
11 BRICK (off): Enough bucks to reload my bank book.
12 BRICK (off): Give her to me, and you walk away.

[65.6] STILL IN THE BATHROOM. REI PULLS OUT DUNBAR'S CONTRACT FROM HER POCKET ...

13 BRICK (off): Markleigh might even give you somethin' for yer trouble.
14 BRICK (off): Maybe cut you in on her action.
15 BRICK (off): Of course, you probably had a piece of her "action," huh?
16 BRICK (off): Har-har-har-har—

PAGE 66 / FIVE PANELS

[66.1] OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM. DUNBAR, STILL BLOCKING THE DOOR, LOOKING STONEFACED. THEN ...

1 DUNBAR: Deal.

[66.2] INSIDE THE BATHROOM — REI, LISTENING AGAINST THE DOOR IN SHOCK & DISBELIEF, DROPPING THE CONTRACT ON THE FLOOR.

2 BRICK (off): Wha—?

3 DUNBAR (off): Why should I care about her? She doesn't even trust me.

4 DUNBAR (off): But I want one thing in exchange. From you.

5 DUNBAR (off): I'll let you have her if you do it for me now.

[66.3] OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM. DUNBAR'S DEFIANT, AND BRICK'S GETTING IMPATIENT.

6 BRICK: Whaddya want me to do?

[66.4] CLOSE ON DUNBAR, LEANING FORWARD, HISSING IN BRICK'S FACE.

7 DUNBAR: Kiss.

8 DUNBAR: My.

9 DUNBAR: A—

[66.5] BRICK'S HAND IS IN FRAME, THE INDEX FINGER GENTLY SNAPPING AGAINST DUNBAR'S CHIN. IT'S ENOUGH TO KNOCK THE STRAPPING DUNBAR BACKWARDS, IN THE DIRECTION OF THE BATHROOM DOOR, AT HIGH SPEED.

10 FX (TAP): POINK!

11 DUNBAR (off): Urrrf!

PAGE 67 / THREE HORIZONTAL PANELS

[67.1] THE MOTEL ROOM AND THE BATHROOM, AS BRICK'S "GLANCING" BLOW KNOCKS DUNBAR BACK WITH POWERFUL FORCE.
FIRST, DUNBAR CRASHES THROUGH THE BATHROOM DOOR BEHIND HIM ...

1 FX: CRASSSSH!

[67.2] ... AND CONTINUES FLYING INTO REI (WHO GETS HIT WITH THE FULL FORCE OF DUNBAR AND THE REMAINS OF THE SPLINTERING DOOR); AND ...

2 REI: UNNH!
3 DUNBAR: OOOF!

[67.3] ... SAILS WITH HER ACROSS THE BATHROOM INTO — AND ALMOST THROUGH — THE FAR WALL, PART OF WHICH CRUMBLES AND FALLS ONTO THEM FROM THEIR IMPACT.

4 FX: KRAAAAACK!
5 FX: WHAMMMM!

PAGE 68 / SIX PANELS

[68.1] BRICK, AS SEEN FROM DUNBAR & REI'S POSITION ON THE BATHROOM FLOOR. DUNBAR IS BARELY CONSCIOUS; REI IS OUT COLD. BOTH ARE BRUISED AND BLEEDING AS BRICK LOOKS DOWN AT THEM.

1 BRICK: You got strong neck muscles, Dunbar.
2 BRICK: Only yer head was s'posed to go through —

[68.2] CLOSER ON BRICK'S FACE AS SOMETHING TINY HITS THE BACK OF HIS HEAD — FROM AN AS-YET UNSEEN SOURCE. WHEN IT HITS, HE GETS AN "OOH!" LOOK OF SURPRISE.

3 BRICK: But that wouldn'ta been as much fun as what —
4 FX (SL): POP!

[68.3] BRICK, FROM DUNBAR'S P.O.V. — HE'S PARALYZED AND COATED IN WHAT LOOKS LIKE A BLUE HAZE.

5 FX: VMMMMMMMMMMMM

[68.4] SAME ANGLE AS BRICK SUDDENLY BECOMES TRANSLUCENT AND DEMATERIALIZES, REVEALING A TALL, HUSKY SILHOUETTE BEHIND HIM.

6 FX: MMMMMmmmmmmm

[68.5] BIG, DRAMATIC PANEL, SAME ANGLE AS BRICK COMPLETELY EVAPORATES, ALLOWING THE SILHOUETTE TO WALK INTO THE BATHROOM — IT'S RHETT CORSAIR, 25 YEARS OLDER, A FEW POUNDS HEAVIER, BUT STILL LOOKING DAMN GOOD — ESPECIALLY WITH HIS RIGHT HAND MORPHED INTO A HIGH-TECH PISTOL. TRACES OF BLUE "SMOKE" RESEMBLING THE HAZE THAT ENVELOPED BRICK RISE FROM THE BARREL. HE WEARS A VERY COOL-LOOKING JETPACK STRAPPED TO HIS BACK.

7 RHETT: Someone here call for an "Armed ...
8 RHETT (SL): Escort ..?"

[68.6] RHETT'S P.O.V. OF DUNBAR (HIS EYES BARELY OPEN, HIS MOUTH BARELY SMILING, HIS CHIN BRUISED FROM BRICK'S HIT), REI (STILL OUT AND LOOKING PRETTY BAD), AND THE DECIMATED BATHROOM.

9 RHETT: Lord almighty, partner ...

PAGE 69 / FIVE PANELS

[69.1] LATE AFTERNOON. HIGH ANGLE OF BRICK'S SPORTS CAR SPEEDING ALONG THE BARREN HIGHWAY WITH RHETT AT THE WHEEL. (BOTH OF HIS HANDS ARE NORMAL NOW.) DUNBAR & REI ARE IN THE BACK SEAT. REI IS LYING ACROSS DUNBAR'S LAP. HE IS HOLDING HER HAND.

1 RHETT (CAP): "Brick Houseman was a jerk, but he picked a sweet ride.
 2 RHETT (CAP): "Too bad I can't strap my jet pack to it.
 3 RHETT (CAP): "Cuts a two-hour road trip down to twenty minutes.
 4 RHETT (CAP): "Anyway, about these 'jumpers.'
 5 RHETT (CAP): "Never knew any, but I heard horror stories about humans who thought they could get super-powers from them. 'Course, when they tried, they —
 6 RHETT (CAP): "You gettin' all this, partner? Kev?"

[69.2] IN THE CAR — DUNBAR IS SITTING UPRIGHT, BUT HIS HEAD IS JERKING UPRIGHT, ROUSED FROM NEAR-UNCONSCIOUSNESS BY RHETT'S CALL. AND IT HURTS.

7 RHETT (off): KEY!
 8 DUNBAR: Huh?!
 9 DUNBAR: Oww ... sorry, Rhett. Keep talking. D-don't let me fall off again.

[69.3] RHETT & DUNBAR, WHO IS HOLDING REI EVEN CLOSER TO HIM AS HE SPEAKS.

10 RHETT: Son, I know Markleigh might be watchin' the hospitals, but —
 11 DUNBAR: Can't risk it. Not gonna let him get her.
 12 DUNBAR: She said she'd rather ... no.

[69.4] RHETT, DRIVING WHILE WATCHING DUNBAR IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR.

13 RHETT: Okay, but we've still got an hour ahead of us, so you do the talkin'.
 14 DUNBAR: About what?
 15 RHETT: How about that novel of yours? How's it comin'? What's it about, anyway?

[69.5] DUNBAR, NOW CONSCIOUS ENOUGH TO BE WARY OF TALKING ABOUT THIS, AT LEAST AROUND RHETT.

16 DUNBAR: Oh, it's an ... an epic ...
 17 DUNBAR: Uh, historical ...
 18 DUNBAR: Romancenovelformen.

PAGE 70 / SIX PANELS

[70.1] OUTSIDE THE CAR, AS RHETT ABRUPTLY HITS THE BRAKES. THE CAR SPINS, KICKING UP A HUGE CLOUD OF DUST.

1 FX (CAR): EEERRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRKKKKKKKKKKKKKKK!

[70.2] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF RHETT, LOOKING BACK AT HIM THROUGH THE PASSING DUST CLOUD WITH INTENSE DISBELIEF, LIKE A FATHER WHOSE ALL-PRO QUARTERBACK SON JUST ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO GET A SEX CHANGE. TODAY.

[No copy]

[70.3] DUNBAR, REMAINING COHERENT AND DEFIANT AS HE FIGHTS HIS CONDITION.

2 DUNBAR: Don't give me that look.
3 DUNBAR: I've seen you publicly read guys the riot act when they disrespected their dates.
4 DUNBAR: You're the only "good ol' boy" I know who can sing all of Puccini's operas. In Italian!
5 DUNBAR: Hell, you're the most romantic guy I know, Rhett.

[70.4] DUNBAR, LOOKING DOWN AT REI TENDERLY.

6 DUNBAR: Ever since I met Rei, whenever she made me crazy, I kept asking myself, "What would Rhett do?"
7 DUNBAR: And the answer was always the same:
8 DUNBAR: "The lady needs help, partner. Stay with her."

[70.5] ANGLE ON RHETT, NOW TURNED FORWARD AGAIN, WEIGHING DUNBAR'S WORDS AS HE BEGINS STEERING THE CAR BACK ON COURSE.

9 DUNBAR: I'm betting some of them want to read stories about guys like them. It's an untapped market.
10 RHETT: Uh-huh.
11 FX (CAR): VROOOOOOOOM ...

[70.6] THE LANDSCAPE, AS THE CAR RACES AWAY, AND THE SUN BEGINS TO SET.

12 DUNBAR: Patterned the hero after you.
13 RHETT: Didn't use my name, did ya?
14 DUNBAR: Nah. Named him "Beau."
15 RHETT: "Beau." Ugh.

PAGE 71 / SIX PANELS

[71.1] NIGHT. RHETT'S BUNKHOUSE — A LARGE, RUSTIC HOUSE ON A HUGE PIECE OF REAL ESTATE. IT'S SURROUNDED BY MOUNTAINS AND WHAT APPEARS TO BE A TYPICAL RANCH FENCE, EXCEPT THAT EACH POST IN THE FENCE IS TOPPED BY A TALL METAL POLE THAT EXTENDS ABOVE THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE, AND IS TOPPED, IN TURN, BY A SECURITY CAMERA AND A LARGE LIGHT. BRICK'S SPORTS CAR AND A LARGE S.U.V., PRESUMABLY RHETT'S, ARE PARKED IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE.

1 RHETT (CAP): "I'll keep trying my buddy at the VA hospital.
2 RHETT (CAP): "Wish I had more Band-Aids for y'all, partner."

[71.2] THE BEDROOM. IT'S A BIG ONE, JUST AS RUSTIC AS THE HOUSE, WITH A LARGE, COMFORTABLE-LOOKING BED, A FIREPLACE (WITH A LOW FIRE GOING), AND THE USUAL ACCOUTREMENTS (DRESSER, MIRROR, CLOSET, LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS, ETC.) NOT TOO MACHO, BUT DEFINITELY A GUY'S ROOM. THERE'S A DIGITAL CLOCK ON A NIGHTSTAND BY THE BED; IT'S 8:30 P.M. DUNBAR'S WEARING SOME BUTTERFLY BANDAGES ON HIS FACE, BAND-AIDS ON SCRATCHES, ETC. HOLDING AN ICE PACK TO HIS BRUISED CHIN. HE'S LYING ON THE BED NEXT TO REI, WHO WEARS MORE BANDAGES THAN DUNBAR, AND LIES ON HER BACK, STILL UNCONSCIOUS. DUNBAR IS STILL HOLDING HER HANDS. HE LOOKS A LITTLE MORE ALERT, BUT STILL FATIGUED.
NOTE: AT VARIOUS POINTS IN THE SCENE, THE LYRICS FROM AN OPERA ARIA "PLAY" IN THE BACKGROUND.

3 OPERA: *This little hand is frozen, let me warm it here in mine ...**
4 DUNBAR: You did fine, thanks.
5 DUNBAR: She's still breathing. That's enough for now.
6 CAPTION: * Translated from Italian.

[71.3] RHETT. OUTSIDE THE ROOM, LOOKING DOWN THE ADJOINING CORRIDOR TO ANOTHER, LARGER ROOM. ONLY ONE WALL CAN BE SEEN FROM THIS ANGLE, AND IT'S PACKED WITH SECURITY MONITORS.

7 RHETT: Perimeter monitors are all clear.
8 RHETT: I'll turn down the music in the rumpus room so you can get some sack.

[71.4] DUNBAR, BARELY LOOKING AWAY FROM REI.

9 OPERA: *In my dreams and reveries I build castles in the air ...*
10 DUNBAR: Sure.
11 DUNBAR: What are we listening to? Pavarotti?

[71.5] RHETT, STANDING BY THE DOOR, HAND ON THE LIGHT SWITCH BESIDE IT.

12 RHETT: Um, yeah. "Che Gelida Manina."
13 RHETT: From, uh, *La Boheme*.

[71.6] DUNBAR, SMILING KNOWINGLY AS RHETT SWITCHES OFF THE ROOM LIGHTS. HE STANDS SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE LIGHT FROM THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE. THE BEDROOM IS LIT BY THE FIREPLACE.

14 DUNBAR: Puccini, huh? Manly.
15 RHETT: Zip it and heal.

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[72.1] DUNBAR, LYING ON THE PILLOW BESIDE REI, CLOSE TO HER EAR.

1 OPERA: *All my gems are stolen by two thieves ...*
 2 DUNBAR (WH): Rei?
 3 DUNBAR (WH): I know you're in there.

[72.2] REI'S FACE. EVEN UNCONSCIOUS AND SCRAPED UP, SHE'S A BEAUTY.

4 OPERA: *... a pair of lovely eyes.*
 5 DUNBAR (WH): Please open your eyes.
 6 DUNBAR (WH): Please talk to me.

[72.3] DUNBAR, HOLDING HER HAND CLOSE TO HIS LIPS. THE FIRE CONTINUES TO DIM.

7 DUNBAR (WH): I need to hear your voice. I need to hear you call me a bastard again.
 8 DUNBAR (WH): As in, "Dunbar, you're a selfish bastard ..."
 9 DUNBAR (WH): "For picking such a rotten time to tell me ..."

[72.4] SAME ANGLE OF DUNBAR, WITH HIS EYES TIGHTLY CLOSED. ALONG THE JUNCTURE OF THEIR HANDS IS A THIN, ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLE "GLOW."

10 DUNBAR (WH): To tell you I'm in love with you.

[72.5] DUNBAR & REI, AS DUNBAR — EYES STILL CLOSED — LIES AS CLOSE TO REI'S SHOULDER AS HE CAN. HE'S LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS FAST. THE FIRELIGHT DIMS; THE "GLOW" BETWEEN THEIR HANDS GETS JUST A LITTLE BRIGHTER.

11 DUNBAR (WH): Please, Rei ...

[72.6] WIDER ANGLE — THEY'RE BOTH OUT COLD. THE LAST EMBERS BURN IN THE FIREPLACE. AND THE ONLY REAL LIGHT IN THE ROOM COMES FROM THE DIGITAL CLOCK — WHICH READS 8:45 P.M. NOW — AND THAT ODD "GLOW"...

12 OPERA: *Beautiful dreams I'd cherished ... vanished without a trace.*
 13 DUNBAR (WH): Talk to me ...

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[73.1] RHETT'S "RUMPUS ROOM," A HANDSOMELY APPOINTED LIVING AREA, COMFORTABLY FURNISHED WITH A PLUSH SECTIONAL AND EASY CHAIRS, AND WITH LOTS OF EXTRAS — DART BOARD, BILLIARDS TABLE, HUNTING TROPHIES, VARIOUS PHOTOS OF THE "HERE'S RHETT WITH A DIGNITARY/CELEBRITY" TYPE ON THE WALLS, A FULLY STOCKED BAR, A HOME ENTERTAINMENT CENTER WITH A BIG LCD TV/STEREO/HOME THEATRE SETUP, AND A WALL LOADED WITH MONITOR SCREENS THAT SEEM TO SHOW EVERY SQUARE INCH OF THE COMPOUND. (THE CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE BEDROOM SHOULD BE VISIBLE IN ONE WALL. WE SAW THESE SCREENS BRIEFLY IN THE PREVIOUS SCENE.) A LARGE CLOCK OVER THE SECURITY SCREENS READS "03:25:38 HRS." RHETT SLEEPS IN A RECLINER, FACING THE MONITORS.

1 RHETT: *Zzzzzzz ...*

[73.2] CLOSER ON RHETT IN HIS CHAIR. THERE'S A SIDE TABLE NEXT TO HIM WITH OPEN, EMPTY CD CASES FOR PUCCINI'S "LA BOHEME" AND "MADAMA BUTTERFLY," VERDI'S "LA FORZA DEL DESTINO," AND GIOVANNI TARGIONI-TOZZETTI & GUIDO MENASCI'S "CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA." AN OPEN, MOSTLY EMPTIED BOTTLE OF BEER ALSO SITS ON THE TABLE (ON A COASTER).

2 RHETT: *Zzzzzzz ...*

[73.3] RHETT'S FACE, SUDDENLY ALERT AS AN ALARM SOUNDS!

3 FX (ALARM): VEETVEETVEETVEETVEETVEETVEET!

4 RHETT: *Zzz — wha—? — KEY!*

[73.4] RHETT, ON HIS FEET AND READY FOR ANYTHING, LEFT HAND CLENCHED IN A TIGHT FIST, RIGHT ARM IN THE FINAL STAGES OF 'MORPHING INTO A NASTY-LOOKING GUN/CANNON. HE'S LOOKING AT THE MONITORS WITH COLD EYES. BEHIND HIM, DUNBAR — AWAKE, BUT STILL UNSTEADY ENOUGH TO HAVE TO HOLD ONTO THE DOOR JAMB TO THE BEDROOM — CAN BE SEEN.

5 FX (ARM): FWIZZZ-cha-CHAAK!

6 RHETT: Alarm off.

7 FX (ALARM): VEETVEETVEE—

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[74.1] RHETT'S P.O.V. (WITH HIS 'MORPHED ARM IN THE FOREGROUND OF THE SHOT) OF A SCREEN ON THE MONITOR BANK. THE MONITOR SHOWS A LARGE GATE, PRESUMABLY THE FRONT GATE OF THE FENCE SURROUNDING THE RANCH, HAS BEEN BASHED THROUGH. TIRE TRACKS LEAD AWAY FROM THE GATE, ONTO THE GROUNDS.

1 RHETT: Hope they're Jehovah's Witnesses, 'cause they're about to meet up with —

[74.2] ANGLE ON RHETT AND DUNBAR (WHO'S MADE HIS WAY TO THE CORRIDOR FROM THE BEDROOM) AS THE DOORBELL RINGS. DUNBAR POINTS TO THE MONITORS, ALARMED.

2 FX (DOORBELL): DING-DONG!

3 DUNBAR: Front porch.

[74.3] THEIR P.O.V. OF ONE OF THE MONITORS. LYING AGAINST THE DOOR IS MNEMONICA, ALONE, DRESSED IN ONE OF HER STYLISH BUSINESS SUITS, BUT LOOKING LIKE SHE'S BEEN RUN OVER BY A TRUCK — OR WORSE. SHE'S TRYING TO REACH THE DOORBELL AGAIN. A BLACK LIMOUSINE, PASSENGER SIDE FACING THE HOUSE, IDLES ON THE GROUNDS BEHIND HER.

4 DUNBAR (off): Mnemonic!

5 RHETT (off): She's bait.

6 DUNBAR (off): I know that! But she's also my friend.

7 DUNBAR (off): What do we do?

8 RHETT (off): Me? I take the bait and take out the fisherman.

[74.4] DUNBAR, NOW STANDING AT RHETT'S SIDE. BOTH ARE LOOKING AT THE MONITORS. DUNBAR IS SWEATING OVER MNEMONICA; RHETT LOOKS AT HIM WITH AS GRIM A FACE AS WE'VE EVER SEEN ON HIM.

9 RHETT: You? Get back to Rei.

10 RHETT: Lock the door.

11 RHETT: If you come out for any reason, I will plug you myself.

12 RHETT: Am I clear?

13 DUNBAR: Sir, yes, sir.

14 FX (DOORBELL): DING-DONG!

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[75.1] THE FRONT PORCH — MNEMONICA LIES CRUMPLED NEAR THE DOORWAY AS THE DOOR OPENS. LIGHT FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND RHETT'S SHADOW, SPILL ACROSS HER. RHETT STANDS OVER HER, UNSEEN.

1 FX (DOOR): CREEAAK
2 MNEMONICA: Uhhh ...
3 RHETT (off): Rest easy, Miss.

[75.2] RHETT & MNEMONICA, AS HE KNEELS BESIDE HER AND WRAPS HIS NON-MORPHED ARM AROUND HER.

4 MNEMONICA: They ... made me ring ...
5 RHETT: Ol' Rhett'll look after ya.

[75.3] OVER RHETT'S SHOULDER, LOOKING AT THE LIMO.

[No copy]

[75.4] RHETT, AIMING HIS GUN ARM AT THE LIMO AS THE WEAPON POWERS UP.

6 RHETT: This ain't how a gentleman drops off his date, Devlin.
7 FX (GUN): VWWWWEEEEEEEEEE!

[75.5] MNEMONICA SEIZES HER TEMPLES AND FALLS TO THE GROUND, WRITHING IN PAIN. RHETT TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO HER INSTEAD OF THE CAR.

8 MNEMONICA: AAAAAAGGGGHHHHH! NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

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[76.1] THE LIMO, AS THE REAR PASSENGER SIDE WINDOW SLIDES DOWN TO REVEAL DEVLIN IN THE BACK, UNIMPRESSED BY RHETT'S WEAPON. DEVLIN'S LOOKING AT MNEMONICA, EYEBROW RAISED.

1 FX (WINDOW): vrrrrrr
 2 DEVLIN: Bet I can put a hole through her head faster than you can put one through mine.
 3 MNEMONICA (off): UNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNHHHHHHH!

[76.2] CLOSER ANGLE ON DEVLIN.

4 DEVLIN: I suggest you disarm.
 5 MNEMONICA (off): AAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRR!
 6 DEVLIN: Completely.

[76.3] MNEMONICA, CLUTCHING RHETT'S SHIRT, DEFIANT, BUT SUFFERING

7 MNEMONICA: N-nooo ... NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

[76.4] RHETT, STILL BESIDE MNEMONICA AND UNABLE TO IGNORE HER, LOWERING HIS RIGHT ARM, REACHING OVER TO IT WITH HIS LEFT HAND, AND SQUEEZING HIS RIGHT WRIST.

8 FX (SQUEEZE): PWISH!

[76.5] RHETT, POPPING OFF THE CYBERNETIC ARM, REVEALING THE ELECTRONICS IN HIS ARM AND SHOULDER. THE ARM REMAINS IN GUN FORM, BUT THE GUN POWERS DOWN.

9 RHETT (SL): #@\$%^!
 10 FX (ARM): CHA-POP!
 11 FX (GUN): OOOOOOOOMMMMM

[76.6] THE LIMO — SHARKEY IS OUT OF THE FRONT SEAT AND HOLDING THE REAR DOOR OPEN FOR DEVLIN, WHO'S STANDING BY THE LIMO, PUTTING HIS FEDORA ON HIS HEAD.

12 DEVLIN: Now, General, if you'll kindly throw your weapon away ...
 13 DEVLIN: I'm late for a meeting with my client.

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[77.1] THE BEDROOM — DUNBAR, LISTENING AT THE CLOSED DOOR OF THE BEDROOM.

1 DEVLIN (CAP): "I know Rei and Dunbar are here, General.

2 DEVLIN (CAP): "But don't blame Mnemonica. She didn't betray them. Exactly."

[77.2] THE RUMPUS ROOM — RHETT IS MOVING THE DRAINED MNEMONICA TO HIS EASY CHAIR.

3 DEVLIN: All she did was use her little-known telepathic powers to contact Dunbar out of concern.

[77.3] THE BEDROOM — DUNBAR, STILL AT THE DOOR, TURNS TO REI.

4 DEVLIN (CAP): "Fortunately, I picked up her signal.

5 DEVLIN (CAP): "After a little 'digging,' we found out exactly where Mnemonica reached Dunbar."

[77.4] THE RUMPUS ROOM — RHETT SITS DOWN BESIDE MNEMONICA, KEEPING HIS ARM AROUND HER WHILE DEVLIN CONTINUES.

6 DEVLIN: We missed them at the "Rats" Carlton Hotel, but the late Mister Houseman's bookie told us about your timely arrival.

7 DEVLIN: And from your reputation, we knew you'd never turn away —

[77.5] THE BEDROOM — DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF REI ON THE BED. SHE DOESN'T LOOK ANY BETTER THAN BEFORE.

8 DEVLIN (CAP): "— a lady in distress."

9 DUNBAR (TH): What do I do, Rei?

[77.6] "FLASHBACK" PANEL (SPECIFICALLY 77.#): DUNBAR & REI IN THE DINER, HOLDING HANDS, AS SHE SAYS ...

10 REI: *I'd kill myself before I let him get his hands on me.*

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[78.1] THE BEDROOM — DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF REI AND THE PILLOW BESIDE HER. HE HOLDS HER HAND WITH ONE HAND (NO FX) ... AND PICKS UP THE FREE PILLOW WITH HIS OTHER HAND.

1 DEVLIN (CAP): "Which brings me back to my original question.

2 DEVLIN (CAP): "Where are they?"

[78.2] THE RUMPUS ROOM — RHETT & DEVLIN.

3 RHETT: You're holdin' the cards, hombre.

4 RHETT: Search the house.

5 DEVLIN: Search a house designed by the world's foremost expert on security and armaments?

[78.3] THE BEDROOM — DUNBAR, FROM WHAT WOULD BE REI'S P.O.V., CLUTCHING THE PILLOW CLOSE TO HIM WITH ONE HAND, LOOKING DOWN AT HER, WEEPING.

6 DEVLIN (CAP): "Why don't I just walk into that open fire?"

7 RHETT (CAP): "Works for me."

8 DUNBAR (TH): Forgive me, Rei ... forgive me ...

[78.4] THE RUMPUS ROOM — DEVLIN, CALLING, JUST ABOUT OUT OF PATIENCE.

9 DEVLIN: Dunbar! I'm sure you can hear me!

10 DEVLIN: There's nothing more you can do for her.

11 DEVLIN: She's leaving with me.

12 DEVLIN: Give up, Dunbar.

[78.5] THE BEDROOM, SAME ANGLE OF DUNBAR AS BEFORE — BUT ALL THAT CAN BE SEEN IN FRAME IS THE PILLOW COMING DOWN ON TOP OF "REI'S" FACE.

13 DEVLIN (CAP): "It's over."

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[79.1] DEVLIN TURNING HIS ATTENTIONS TO MNEMONICA AND RHETT.

1 DEVLIN: I don't think he can hear me.
2 DEVLIN: Maybe I should pump up the volume with a couple of screams.

[79.2] THE WHOLE ROOM. WHEN DUNBAR SPEAKS OFF-PANEL, EVERYONE TURNS TOWARDS THE CORRIDOR.

3 DUNBAR (off): Aim at me instead, Devlin.

[79.3] DUNBAR, STEPPING INTO THE RUMPUS ROOM, STILL HOLDING THE PILLOW.

4 DUNBAR: Rei's dead.
5 DUNBAR: Go see for yourself.

[79.4] DEVLIN & SHARKEY IN THE FOREGROUND, CONFERRING. BEHIND THEM, DUNBAR IS CROSSING TO MNEMONICA AND RHETT. HE DROPS THE PILLOW ALONG THE WAY.

6 DEVLIN: I'm going in.
7 DEVLIN: Be ready to fire up the limo in case we have to get Miss Shinozaki to a hospital.

[79.5] SAME ANGLE. DEVLIN'S GIVING ORDERS AS HE HEADS FOR THE BEDROOM. DUNBAR IS ON HIS KNEES, BROKEN, OBVIOUSLY TELLING RHETT AND MNEMONICA WHAT HE DID. THEY REACT WITH DISBELIEF.

8 DEVLIN: Make sure they don't try anything.
9 DEVLIN: Not that they're in any condition to give us trouble.

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[80.1] AS RHETT ENTERS THE CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE BEDROOM, AND SHARKEY STANDS WATCH ACROSS THE RUMPUS ROOM, RHETT AND MNEMONICA TRY TO COMFORT DUNBAR. MNEMONICA'S REACHING FOR DUNBAR'S HANDS.

1 RHETT: Kev, I —
2 MNEMONICA: Sweetheart, come here ...

[80.2] THE SPARK FROM THE CONTACT BETWEEN DUNBAR & MNEMONICA IS UNSEEN, BUT IT'S THERE. MNEMONICA JUMPS LIKE SHE'S JUST RECEIVED AN INTRAVENOUS CAFFEINE RUSH.

3 FX (HANDS): FZAPPP!
4 MNEMONICA: (GASP)

[80.3] DUNBAR, MNEMONICA, & RHETT, TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S GOING ON. MNEMONICA'S TREMBLING A BIT, CLENCHING DUNBAR'S HAND WITH BOTH OF HERS. THE SUSTAINED GLOW HE GENERATED WHEN HE HELD REI'S HANDS KICKS IN, BUT HE'S BLOCKING IT FROM BEING SEEN BY SHARKEY WITH HIS BODY, AND MNEMONICA'S COVERING THE REST.

5 DUNBAR (WH): Are you all right?
6 MNEMONICA(WH): Don't l-let go, Kevin.
7 DUNBAR (WH): What?
8 RHETT (WH): How do you feel, Miss?

[80.4] CLOSE ON MNEMONICA, QUICKLY STARTING TO LOOK LIKE HERSELF.

9 MNEMONICA (WH): Strong.

[80.5] DUNBAR, MNEMONICA, & RHETT — DUNBAR IS CONFUSED; RHETT IS ASTOUNDED; MNEMONICA IS STILL IMPROVING.

10 DUNBAR (WH): How? What is it?
11 RHETT (WH): "It" is you, partner. Look at her.
12 RHETT (WH): You're fillin' her tank.

[80.6] CLOSE ON DUNBAR, FLABBERGASTED.

13 RHETT (WH, off): You're a junper!

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[81.1] IN THE BEDROOM, DEVLIN STANDING BY THE BED, REMOVING HIS FEDORA RESPECTFULLY.

1 RHETT (WH CAP): "Partner ... you been holdin' Rei's hand all night?"

2 DUNBAR (WH, CAP): "Yeah. Even when ... yeah."

3 RHETT (WH, CAP): "And didn't you tell me on the road that she's got superhumans in her family tree?"

4 DUNBAR (WH, CAP): "Yeah, but she doesn't ... didn't have any powers. If I'd tried to give her this stuff, I'd kill her. You said so."

[81.2] DEVLIN, TURNING AND LEAVING THE BEDROOM.

5 RHETT (WH, CAP): "Shh. He's comin' back.

6 RHETT (WH, CAP): "You up for a fight, Miss?"

7 MNEMONICA (WH, CAP): "General, you read my mind."

[81.3] CLOSER ON REI, ALONE LYING ON THE BED.

8 DEVLIN (CAP): "My condolences on your loss, Dunbar.

9 DEVLIN (CAP): "Give Miss Shinozaki my compliments when you see her again.

[81.4] CLOSER ON REI — HER BODY ARCHING AS SHE COMES BACK TO LIFE, HER EYES WIDE OPEN AND FILLED WITH FIRE, ROARING OUT OF THEM, UPWARDS.

10 DEVLIN: "Which will be very soon."

11 REI: (GASP)

12 FX (FIRE): HWHOOOOOOOOOSH!

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[82.1] WIDE ANGLE OF THE BUNKHOUSE AS TWO SLENDER PILLARS OF FLAME BLAST THROUGH THE ROOF FROM THE APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE BEDROOM, EXTENDING INTO THE NIGHT SKY WITHOUT END.

1 FX: BWA-BWA-BHOOOOM!

[82.2] THE RUMPUS ROOM — A MONSTROUS FIREBALL FROM THE BEDROOM BLOWS THROUGH THE WALL SEPARATING THE BEDROOM AND THE CORRIDOR AND HEADS FOR THE RUMPUS ROOM. (**NOTE:** WHILE THERE'S NO COPY SPECIFIED FOR THE NEXT THREE PANELS, THIS EFFECT COULD BE DRAWN TO EXTEND THROUGH THEM.)

2 FX: SHOOOOOOM!

[82.3] THE RUMPUS ROOM, CATCHING FIRE — DEVLIN AND SHARKEY HIGHTAIL IT OUT THE FRONT DOOR WHILE RHETT SHOVS DUNBAR AND MNEMONICA IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

[No copy]

[82.4] OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR, AS MNEMONICA, DUNBAR, THEN RHETT RUSH OUT, AND THE FIRE ENGULFS THE ROOM, PRACTICALLY FOLLOWING THEM OUT THE DOOR.

[No copy]

[82.5] FARTHER AWAY FROM THE BUNKHOUSE — MNEMONICA, DUNBAR, & RHETT HAVE STOPPED AT A SAFE DISTANCE FROM THE CONFLAGRATION, THEIR BACKS TO US. THEY STAND SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE INFERNO. DEVLIN AND SHARKEY STAND AWAY FROM THEM, BUT ARE ALSO SAFE. THE FIRE HAS SWALLOWED EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE FOUNDATION OF THE BUNKHOUSE.

[No copy]

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[83.1] CLOSE ON DUNBAR. IF HE WASN'T DEVASTATED BEFORE, HE IS NOW.

1 DUNBAR (SL): Rei ...

[83.2] DUNBAR'S P.O.V. OF THE BUNKHOUSE. IN THE DARKNESS ABOVE THE FIRE, WE SEE TWO SMALL FLAMES, MAKING STREAKS IN THE NIGHT SKY AS THEY FLY ABOVE THE HOUSE, TOWARDS THEM, IN UNCERTAIN ARCS.

2 FX (TRAILS): SWOOP!

[83.3] DEVLIN AND SHARKEY, LOOKING UP IN THE SAME DIRECTION IN DISBELIEF.

3 DEVLIN: What the hell ...?

4 FX (TRAILS, off): SWOOP!

[83.4] SMALL PANEL — CLOSE ON DUNBAR, STILL LOOKING UP, NOW ASTOUNDED, AND SMILING. HE APPEARS TO BE ILLUMINATED BY A LIGHT FROM ABOVE, RATHER THAN BY THE HOUSE FIRE.

5 FX (TRAILS, off): SWOOOOOP!

[83.5] BIG PANEL, ANGLE ON ALL OF THEM LOOKING UP FROM THE GROUND AS REI — NAKED, BUT UNHARMED BY THE EXPLOSION — "SWOOPS" INTO POSITION, HOVERING ABOVE THEM, HER EYES ABLAZE, HER STANCE DEFENSIVE. (NOTE: THEY'RE FAR ENOUGH FROM THE BIG FIRE THAT MOST OF THE LIGHT SHOULD BE COMING FROM HER EYES, MEANING THAT OUTLINES, BUT NOT DETAILS, OF HER BODY SHOULD BE VISIBLE.)

6 FX (TRAILS): SWOOP!

[83.6] SMALL PANEL — CLOSE ON REI, GAZING IN RAGE AT DEVLIN ... AND LOOKING EERILY LIKE DYNAMAID ON THE COVER OF THAT PROPAGANDA COMIC.

7 REI: What do you think of your next big thing now, Devlin?

PAGE 84 / SIX PANELS

[84.1] DEVLIN & SHARKEY, LOOKING UP AT THE BLAZING REI. DEVLIN LOOKS QUITE DISAPPOINTED.

1 DEVLIN: (SIGH)
2 DEVLIN: You're just another superhuman.
3 DEVLIN: That makes you common.

[84.2] CLOSER ON DEVLIN, ARCHING HIS EYEBROW TO GIVE REI "THE LOOK."

4 DEVLIN: And useless.

[84.3] REI, AS THE FORCE OF THE PSIONIC HIT KNOCKS HER BETWEEN THE EYES, SENDING HER FLYNG BACKWARDS THROUGH THE AIR, AWAY FROM EVERYONE.

5 REI: OWWWWWWW!

[84.4] DUNBAR, FURIOUSLY CHARGING AT DEVLIN FULL THROTTLE.

[No copy]

[84.5] SHARKEY, DIVING BETWEEN DUNBAR & DEVLIN LIKE A SECRET SERVICE AGENT WHILE DEVLIN WATCHES AFTER REI, WHO'S A THIN, SPIRALING TRAIL OF FIRE IN THE DISTANCE.

[No copy]

[84.6] DUNBAR, THROWING SHARKEY OUT OF THE WAY AND CONTINUING HIS CHARGE AT DEVLIN.

6 SHARKEY: OOOF!

PAGE 85 / SIX PANELS

[85.1] DEVLIN, TURNING TO SEE DUNBAR'S APPROACH JUST AS DUNBAR LANDS A SOLID RIGHT CROSS ON HIS JAW.

1 FX: WHACK!
2 DEVLIN: ERRF!

[85.2] DUNBAR, HURLING HIS ENTIRE BODY INTO DEVLIN'S MIDSECTION, TAKING HIM DOWN TO THE GROUND.

3 FX: BMMMMF!

[85.3] DUNBAR, GRABBING DEVLIN BY THE FRONT OF HIS SHIRT AND PREPARING TO DELIVER A BLOW TO THE CENTER OF HIS FACE. THE UNPREPARED, BLOODIED DEVLIN IS TOO DAZED TO RETALIATE, PSIONICALLY OR OTHERWISE. BOTH OF THEM DON'T IMMEDIATELY HEAR THE LAUGHTER COMING FROM OFF-PANEL, BEHIND DUNBAR.

4 SHARKEY (off): Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha ...

[85.4] DUNBAR, LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER AT SHARKEY, THE SOURCE OF THE LAUGHTER. SHE'S STILL DOWN ON THE GROUND WHERE HE THREW HER, BUT HOLDING HERSELF UP BY HER ARMS. SHE LOOKS LIKE AN ANIMAL ABOUT TO POUNCE.

5 SHARKEY: Ha-ha-HA-HA-HA-HAAA!
6 SHARKEY: Mister Dunbar, haven't you ever heard the old saying?

[85.5] SHARKEY, SMILING EVILLY, STARING DIRECTLY AT "DUNBAR" (US).

7 SHARKEY: Behind every great man ...
8 SHARKEY: There's a woman.

[85.6] DUNBAR, SUDDENLY GRABBING HIS HEAD AND FALLING BACKWARD, AWAY FROM DEVLIN. THE PAIN HE'S FEELING IS 100 TIMES WORSE THAN THE PSIONIC BLAST HE GOT HIT WITH AT THE HOTEL.

9 DUNBAR: GAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGGGGGGGH!

PAGE 86 / FIVE PANELS

[86.1] DUNBAR, LYING ON THE GROUND, STILL SEIZING HIS HEAD, WHILE SHARKEY STANDS ABOVE HIM. BEHIND HER, DEVLIN CAN BE SEEN ROLLING ONTO HIS SIDE.

1 SHARKEY: No offense taken.
 2 SHARKEY: It's a natural mistake.
 3 SHARKEY: One that's taken Devlin and me a long way.

[86.2] FLASHBACK: P.O.V. OF A NEATLY PRINTED NOTE HANDED TO A TELLER AT A WINDOW IN A CITY BANK, WITH SHARKEY PATIENTLY STANDING ON THE CUSTOMER SIDE OF THE COUNTER, SMILING. THE TELLER IS READING THE NOTE WHILE RUBBING ONE OF HER TEMPLES, AS IF SUFFERING A SLIGHT HEADACHE.

4 SHARKEY (CAP): "Years ago, I planned to go into banking.
 5 SHARKEY (CAP): "Withdrawals, of course."

6 NOTE: Give me all of the money in your drawer
 7 NOTE: or that splitting headache of yours
 8 NOTE: will split your head open.

[86.3] A SMALL, BARELY COMFORTABLE OFFICE WITH A SMALL WINDOW LOOKING OUT AT THE BRICK WALL OF A BUILDING NEXT DOOR. SHARKEY — DRESSED IN BUSINESS WEAR — IS ENTERING THE OFFICE WITH A FILE FOLDER. THERE'S A DESK AND TWO CHAIRS. BEHIND THE DESK SITS A YOUNGER DEVLIN, WELL-DRESSED, BUT WITHOUT THE STYLE AND FLAIR WE'VE SEEN SO FAR. (THINK K-MART VS. BROOKS BROS.) HE'S ON THE PHONE, SMILING AS HE SPEAKS.

9 SHARKEY (CAP): "Then, Malvolio Nacht quit, and all the heroes who used to deal with him came after the rest of us.

10 SHARKEY (CAP): "I stayed off their radar by hiding behind my regular job.

11 SHARKEY (CAP): "I was a secretary in a literary agency, assigned to a junior agent named Devlin Markleigh."

12 DEVLIN: So, bottom line is, we can provide you with a much broader range of oppor—

13 DEVLIN: Oh? You have? They did?

[86.4] SHARKEY, LEAVING THE OFFICE, GLANCING BACK AT A DESPAIRING DEVLIN AS SHE CLOSES THE DOOR. HE'S PROPPING UP HIS WEARY HEAD WITH ONE HAND AND HOLDING THE PHONE WITH THE OTHER. SHE HAS A CALCULATING LOOK ON HER FACE.

14 DEVLIN: For your first novel? Wow ...

15 SHARKEY (CAP): "I could see Devlin had drive and talent.

16 SHARKEY (CAP): "But he needed something special to make him a player. He needed a competitive edge.

17 SHARKEY (CAP): "He needed me."

(CONTINUED)

PAGE 86 (CONT'D)

[86.5] A MUCH NICER OFFICE WITH A MUCH BIGGER PICTURE WINDOW. DEVLIN SITS BEHIND A HUGE DESK, HANDS FOLDED, EYEBROW RAISED, WITH SHARKEY STANDING BEHIND HIS CHAIR. THERE'S AN UNFOLDED, UNSIGNED CONTRACT ON THE DESK. A LARGE, NASTY-LOOKING SUPERVILLAIN CLIENT — WEARING AN EQUALLY MALEVOLENT COSTUME — SITS IN FRONT OF THE DESK, RUBBING HIS HEAD AND WINCING AS HE SIGNS THE CONTRACT.

18 SHARKEY (CAP): "So, in exchange for half of his commissions, I helped Devlin craft his image as a 'shrewd negotiator' ...

19 SHARKEY (CAP): "Even among our toughest clients."

PAGE 87 / SIX PANELS

[87.1] THE PRESENT: IN THE FOREGROUND, DEVLIN SPOTS RHETT'S GUN-ARM ON THE GROUND. BEHIND HIM, SHARKEY HAS KNELT DOWN BESIDE DUNBAR, WHO'S STILL ON THE GROUND, HOLDING HIS HEAD, LOOKING AWAY FROM DEVLIN.

1 SHARKEY: Within six months, we were running that agency.

[87.2] CLOSE ON SHARKEY, NOW IN DUNBAR'S AGONIZED FACE, TREATING THIS ALMOST LIKE A SEDUCTION INSTEAD OF A MURDER.

2 SHARKEY: It's been a very lucrative partnership.

3 SHARKEY: And I won't let you ruin it.

4 DEVLIN (off): No.

[87.3] DEVLIN, STANDING BEHIND SHARKEY, POINTING RHETT'S GUN-ARM AT DUNBAR, WHO'S ROLLED OVER TO FACE HIM. SHARKEY IS FACING HIM NOW, TOO.

5 DEVLIN: We won't.

6 DEVLIN: If I can find the ... trigger ...?

[87.4] CLOSE ON RHETT & MNEMONICA. RHETT'S SMILING, WATCHING DEVLIN. MNEMONICA'S MORE CONCERNED; SHE'S LOOKING AT SHARKEY AND CONCENTRATING — HARD!

7 RHETT (SL): I'm the trigger, dickweed.

8 RHETT (SL): If it ain't hooked up to me, you can't —

9 MNEMONICA (TH): Sharkey!

[87.5] DEVLIN, TAKING THE ARM, HOLDING IT LIKE A CLUB (SHOULDER-END UP) AND PREPARING TO SWING IT AT DUNBAR'S HEAD LIKE A HUGE GOLF CLUB. SHARKEY'S DISTRACTED BY MNEMONICA'S TELEPATHY. THIS RELEASES DUNBAR.

10 MNEMONICA (TH, off): Sharkey! Over here!

11 SHARKEY: What? Who said — ?

12 DUNBAR: Nnnhhh ...

[87.6] DUNBAR, DAZED, RISING TO HIS KNEES, STARTING TO TURN TOWARDS DEVLIN & SHARKEY. SHARKEY'S STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO CALLED HER, WHILE DEVLIN IS IN MID-SWING.

13 MNEMONICA (TH): Kevin!

14 DUNBAR: Wha —?

15 MNEMONICA (TH): DUCK!

PAGE 88 / SIX PANELS

[88.1] DUNBAR, GRABBING SHARKEY AND PULLING HER IN FRONT OF HIM — IN THE PATH OF DEVLIN'S SWING. SHE TAKES THE FULL HIT WITH HER HEAD AND IS KNOCKED ASIDE.

1 FX: STONNNG!
2 DEVLIN: No!

[88.2] DEVLIN, SWINGING THE GUN-ARM IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AS DUNBAR STARTS TO RISE. THIS TIME, HE CONNECTS WITH DUNBAR'S FACE WITH A —

3 FX: THWONGG!

[88.3] DUNBAR, FALLING TO THE GROUND, LANDING ON HIS BACK, AS DEVLIN — NOW HOLDING BOTH ENDS OF THE GUN ARM IN EACH HAND — LUNGES DOWN AT HIM.

4 FX (FALL): BOOF!

[88.4] DUNBAR, AS DEVLIN BRINGS THE GUN ARM DOWN ACROSS HIS THROAT, CHOKING HIM.

5 DUNBAR: GAAGGHK!
6 DUNBAR (TH): Want power, Devlin?

[88.5] DEVLIN, LOSING HIS SMILE AS DUNBAR'S HANDS GRAB HIM BY THE THROAT IN A STRANGLEHOLD.

7 DUNBAR (TH): Come get some.
8 DEVLIN: ARRRGH!
9 DUNBAR (TH): I hope.

[88.6] MNEMONICA & RHETT, WATCHING.

10 RHETT: Yes! Let it flow, partner!
11 MNEMONICA: What is he doing?

PAGE 89 / FOUR PANELS

[89.1] DUNBAR, STARING INTO DEVLIN'S EYES, MAINTAINING HIS GRIP. DEVLIN'S FACE BEGINS TO GLOW.

1 RHETT (CAP): "Y'know what happens when lightning sends a power surge into something that's not built to handle it?"

[89.2] DUNBAR, RELENTLESSLY GRIPPING DEVLIN'S THROAT.

2 FX (CHARGE): FZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[89.3] DEVLIN, HIS ENTIRE BODY NOW GLOWING LIKE A SUN FROM DUNBAR'S POWER SURGE.

3 FX (CHARGE): FZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

4 DEVLIN: Aaag ...

[89.4] BIG PANEL AS DEVLIN EXPLODES IN A BALL OF ENERGY ABOVE DUNBAR! THERE'S NO BLOOD, NO GUTS, JUST A MASSIVE FLASH AND ENOUGH CONCUSSIVE FORCE TO DRIVE DUNBAR ABOUT A FOOT INTO THE GROUND. RHETT TURNS MNEMONICA AWAY FROM THE BLAST.

5 RHETT (CAP): "Overload."

6 FX (EXPLOSION): ZZZTZABOOMMMMMMM!!

PAGE 90 / SIX PANELS

[90.1] DUNBAR, LYING IN THE "BLAST CRATER," IMMOBILE. HIS FACE CARRIES THE EQUIVALENT OF THIRD-DEGREE BURNS. RHETT AND MNEMONICA HURRY TOWARDS THE CRATER.

1 RHETT (off): Partner! You okay? Kev?
2 MNEMONICA (off): Kevin? Can you hear us?

[90.2] SHARKEY, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CRATER, RECOVERING, CROUCHING IN THE FOREGROUND, GIVING THEM THE EYE. RHETT & MNEMONICA COLLAPSE, SEIZING THEIR TEMPLES.

3 RHETT: AARRRGH!
4 MNEMONICA: YIIIII!
5 SHARKEY: Sorry, folks. Can't have witness—

[90.3] REI, RECOVERED, NOW FLIES ABOVE AND BEHIND SHARKEY — AND SENDS TWO BRILLIANT JETS OF FIRE FROM HER EYES INTO SHARKEY, ENGULFING HER ON CONTACT. RHETT SHIELDS MNEMONICA FROM ANY POSSIBLE FALLOUT WITH HIS BODY, BUT WATCHES, CHEERING.

6 FX (FIRE): ROOAARRRRRR!
7 SHARKEY: SHRIEEEEEE —
9 RHETT: Atta girl!

[90.4] CLOSE ON REI, HER FACE SMILING, HER EYES STILL FIRING. SHE LOOKS MUCH LIKE DYNAMAID RIGHT NOW.

9 RHETT (off): Show her the talent runs in the family!
10 REI: Wha..?

[90.5] REI'S AIRBORNE P.O.V. OF SHARKEY, OR WHAT'S LEFT OF HER: A GRUESOME PILE OF ASH AND SOME BONE. REI'S NOT FIRING ANYMORE. SHE'S ALSO NOT SMILING.

11 REI: No ...

[90.6] REI, THROWING HER PALMS AGAINST HER EYES, HORRIFIED BY WHAT SHE'S DONE. (NOTE: HER HANDS DO NOT SUSTAIN DAMAGE FROM THE FLAMES.)

12 REI: NO!

PAGE 91 / FIVE PANELS

[91.1] REI IN THE FOREGROUND, DROPPING TO THE GROUND, LANDING HARD, ON HER KNEES, EYES COVERED. HER FACE IS TURNED AWAY, BUT THERE'S STILL A HINT OF A GLOW AROUND HER FACE. MNEMONICA IS RUNNING UP BEHIND HER, STARTING TO TAKE OFF HER BLAZER. BEHIND HER, IN THE DISTANCE, DUNBAR'S CRATER IS SMOULDERING; RHETT IS MOVING TOWARDS IT.

1 MNEMONICA: Rei!
 2 REI: No ...
 3 FX (IMPACT): THOMP!

[91.2] MNEMONICA 'S P.O.V. AS SHE APPROACHES REI FROM BEHIND, DRAPING HER BLAZER ACROSS HER BACK. REI'S STILL LOOKING AWAY FROM HER.

4 REI: Can't ... can't believe it ...
 5 MNEMONICA: Neither can I. In all my years, I never —

[91.3] STILL MNEMONICA'S P.O.V., AS REI TURNS AND LOOKS UP AT HER. HER EYES ARE "SMOULDERING"; HER TRUE EYES ARE VISIBLE THROUGH A THIN, BUT SLIGHTLY MENACING FILM OF FLAME. SHE WEARS A SOMEWHAT ASTONISHED EXPRESSION.

6 REI: Can't believe that ...
 7 REI: Felt so ... good.

[91.4] REI, AS THE FIRE IN HER EYES FADES AND HER EXPRESSION SOFTENS WHILE MNEMONICA HOLDS HER.

8 REI: Almost couldn't stop ... didn't want to ...
 9 MNEMONICA: Easy ...
 10 REI: Oh, God. Please ... don't tell ...

[91.5] DUNBAR IN THE CRATER, AS REI RUSHES OVER, FOLLOWED BY MNEMONICA. RHETT KNEELS BY HIM, CHECKING HIS PULSE BUT UNSURE OF HOW LONG IT'LL HOLD UP.

11 REI (off): DUNBAR!
 12 RHETT: Still hangin' in.
 13 RHETT: Barely.

PAGE 92 / SIX PANELS

[92.1] CLOSE ON REI'S HAND AS SHE TAKES DUNBAR'S. THERE'S NO SPARK.

[No copy]

[92.2] REI AND RHETT, STATIONED ON EITHER SIDE OF DUNBAR.

1 RHETT: Talk to him, darlin'.

[92.3] RHETT, GIVING REI A LOOK OF CONFIDENCE AND DESPERATION. THIS MAY BE DUNBAR'S ONLY SHOT, AND HE KNOWS IT.

2 RHETT: That's what brought him to you in the first place. Told me so.

3 RHETT: Make him tell ya himself.

4 RHETT: Talk to him.

[92.4] REI, LEANING CLOSE TO DUNBAR, GENTLY PLACING HER HANDS ON HIS FACE.

5 REI: Dunbar?

6 REI: Kevin? Can you hear me?

7 REI: I'm right here.

8 REI: And I'm not going anywhere.

9 REI: I promise.

[92.5] ANGLE ON DUNBAR, STILL OUT, AS A DETERMINED REI REORIENTS HERSELF TO LIE BESIDE HIM.

10 REI: Come on, Kevin.

11 REI: There's ... there's a hot, naked woman lying next to you right now and you're missing it.

[92.6] HIGH ANGLE OF THE SCENE, NOW BARELY LIT BY WHAT'S LEFT OF THE BUNKHOUSE. REI IS LYING BESIDE DUNBAR IN THE CRATER, BURYING HER FACE AGAINST DUNBAR'S SHOULDER (MUCH LIKE SHE DID AT THE DANCE) WHILE MNEMONICA AND RHETT WATCH. AND WAIT.

12 REI: Kevin, please. Follow my voice.

13 REI: Follow my voice ...

PAGE 93 / FIVE PANELS

[93.1] DOWNTOWN, EXTERIOR SHOT OF A LARGE HOSPITAL IN THE LATE AFTERNOON.

1 DUNBAR (CAP): "A space heater?!"
 2 DUNBAR (CAP): "He blamed the fire on a space heater?!"
 3 REI (CAP): "Told the feds he got distracted working on a new weapon. They'll send him blueprints for a new house tomorrow."

[93.2] INSIDE THE HOSPITAL, DUNBAR'S ROOM. HE'S IN A BED HOOKED UP TO A STANDARD HEART MONITOR AND AN I.V. DRIP AND WEARING A VARIETY OF BANDAGES AND SALVES ON HIS WOUNDS. HE LOOKS TIRED, BUT BETTER. REI SITS BESIDE HIM, CLEANED UP AND WEARING CASUAL CLOTHES. THEIR HANDS REST BY EACH OTHER, BUT THEY ARE NOT TOUCHING. SHE WEARS AN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY WARM EXPRESSION AS SHE LOOKS AT HIM. IN ADDITION TO A DOOR TO THE ROOM (OPEN, WITH THE OCCASIONAL DOCTOR OR NURSE PASSING BY), THERE'S A WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE CITY ACROSS FROM THE BED. THE WINDOW IS COVERED BY VENETIAN BLINDS, WHICH ARE DOWN BUT OPEN ENOUGH TO LET STRIPES OF LATE AFTERNOON LIGHT IN. THERE IS ALSO A NIGHTSTAND BY DUNBAR'S BED, WITH A CLOCK THAT READS "5:40 PM."

4 REI: If anything's really distracting Rhett, it's Mnemonica.
 5 REI: Wouldn't leave her side until the doctor said she was okay.
 6 REI: Like you stayed with me while I was knocked out.

[93.3] DUNBAR, SMILING MODESTLY.

7 REI (off): He told me how you wouldn't let go of my hand ...

[93.4] SAME ANGLE — DUNBAR CRINGING AS SHE SAYS

8 REI (off): ...even when you tried to smother me.

[93.5] REI, BEAMING AT HIM.

9 REI: Hey ... I appreciate the effort.
 10 REI: Guess your little generator kept me going anyway.

PAGE 94 / SIX PANELS

[94.1] CLOSE ON THEIR HANDS ON THE BED. DUNBAR'S HAND MOVES TOWARDS REI'S.

1 DUNBAR (off): I'm glad.

2 DUNBAR (off): The way you were breathing, I really thought I'd —

[94.2] SAME ANGLE — REI PULLS HER HAND AWAY.

3 DUNBAR (off): Um, so, your hands okay?

[94.3] REI, NOW STANDING, WALKING AWAY FROM DUNBAR, TOWARDS THE WINDOW.

4 REI: Hmm?

5 DUNBAR: Your hands. Rhett said you covered your eyes at some point last night —

[94.4] REI, LOOKING DOWN AT HER PALMS. NO BURNS OR INJURIES. THIS GIVES HER NO COMFORT.

6 REI: Fine. They're fine.

7 DUNBAR (off): Makes sense that you're fireproof.

[94.5] ANGLE FROM OUTSIDE THE WINDOW, LOOKING THROUGH ONE OF THE SPACES IN THE BLINDS AT REI'S EYES. THEY'RE INTENSE, ANGRY, ALMOST AS IF THEY MIGHT BURST INTO FLAME AGAIN. IN THE BACKGROUND, DUNBAR WATCHES UNEASILY.

8 REI: I wish I wasn't.

9 REI: I wish I could just ... look at myself, and ...

[94.6] BACK IN THE ROOM, REI, LEANING AGAINST THE WINDOW, HER BACK TO DUNBAR.

10 REI: I killed that woman, Kevin.

11 REI: And when I felt that power flowing through me ...

PAGE 95 / SIX PANELS

[95.1] DUNBAR, LEANING FORWARD IN BED.

1 DUNBAR: You saved my life.
2 DUNBAR: I say that's a good thing.
3 DUNBAR: And you can do other good things with your power.

[95.2] CLOSE ANGLE ON REI'S EYES.

4 REI: How many benign uses can you think of for a flamethrower?

[95.3] DUNBAR, BITING HIS LIP, UNABLE TO RESPOND.

[No copy.]

[95.4] REI, STILL AT THE WINDOW, TURNING HER HEAD JUST ENOUGH TO LOOK AT HIM OVER HER SHOULDER.

5 REI: What about you, jumper?

[95.5] ANGLE ON BOTH AS DUNBAR PENSIVELY CONSIDERS THIS QUESTION. THE OPTIONS DON'T SIT WELL WITH REI.

6 DUNBAR: I don't know. I could go public, try to make myself useful.
7 DUNBAR: Help out in a superhuman hospital ward.
8 DUNBAR: Maybe see if there are other jumpers out there.

[95.6] CLOSER ON DUNBAR LOOKING TENTATIVE, A LITTLE AFRAID TO SUGGEST THIS NEXT OPTION TO HER ...

9 DUNBAR: Or maybe we can keep it between us. You know.
10 DUNBAR: Like a secret couples keep.

PAGE 96 / FIVE PANELS

[96.1] REI, NOW FACING HIM, SMILING.

1 REI: I'd just draw comics, you'd just write novels, that kind of thing?

[96.2] REI APPROACHES THE BED WHILE DUNBAR SPEAKS.

2 DUNBAR: No more novels. No one will read them.

3 DUNBAR: Good plot, the publishers say, but my prose lacks passion.

4 DUNBAR: Well-written, they say, but my pacing's off.

5 DUNBAR: Oh, and my favorite rejection to date ...

[96.3] DUNBAR & REI. SHE'S CLOSER. HER HAND IS ON THE BED BESIDE HIS. HE'S LOOKING STRAIGHT INTO HER EYES AS HE SAYS THIS, UNABLE TO RESIST SMILING.

6 DUNBAR: They say I haven't found my "voice."

[96.4] CLOSE ON THEIR HANDS AS THEY TOUCH. THERE'S A DEFINITE SPARK, AND A TINY GLOW.

7 FX: ZZZT!

[96.5] THIS FILLS THE BALANCE OF THE PAGE — REI & DUNBAR LOCKED IN A DEEP, PASSIONATE KISS, THEIR FIRST ONE, AND IT'S A LULU. IN THE RELATIVE DARKNESS OF THE ROOM, THEIR FACES ARE ILLUMINATED BY THE GLOW OF THE JUMP EMANATING FROM THEIR LIPS.

8 REI: What do "they" know?

THE END