

JUNO STEEL AND THE CASE OF THE MURDEROUS MASK (PART ONE V2)

SOUND: DOOR OPENS. BELL RINGS.

MUSIC: STARTS.

CONCIERGE

E:

Ah, good evening Traveler! Welcome to The Penumbra. May I take your coat? You've picked an excellent place to spend the night, dear Traveler. The Penumbra is the grandest hotel this side of nowhere. Countless rooms and countless halls. Just look ahead of you. See the doors go on and on... even we aren't sure how many there are, or what lies behind them.

Will you be staying long? Many of our guests do. You're in good company, Traveler. The Penumbra draws guests from everywhere and everywhen. And all of them have stories to tell. Stories that will excite you, delight you, and maybe even terrify you.

Don't believe me? Well, see for yourself.

SOUND: KEYS JANGLING.

This guest has been a fixture at The Penumbra for as long as anyone can recall. He's a detective by the name of "Steel," and he's just received a very strange message from a very old friend.

An ancient curse has supposedly claimed its very first victim. And if the crime scene is to be believed, Detective Steel might just be its second.

SOUND: KNOCKING ON A DOOR. A SOUND LIKE A DECOMPRESSED ACCORDION.

What luck! Sounds like he's in. Come, Traveler. Come with me into room J12.

SOUND: DOOR CREAKING
OPEN.

Juno Steel and the Case of the Murderous Mask.

MUSIC: ENDS.

2

Scene: 1

JUNO (NARRATOR):
Hyperion City.

MUSIC: STARTS.

Some people say it's the most beautiful place in the galaxy. The rest of us live there.

It's one of those places that they make postcards about, Hyperion – a hell of a skyline, twinkling lights and neon waves below, and shimmering satellites hanging high above. But here's the thing about a skyline: it only shows you the outside of things. On the inside... inside, things can get messy.

I was thinking about that messiness a lot, on the day I took the Grim's Mask case. Probably because I was looking at someone's insides at the time.

SOUND: INTERCOM BEEP.

RITA: Mista Steel! Mista Steel, what's with that weird message you got a minute ago? Boss?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

On my screen I saw what was supposed to be a glass trophy case, but it was hard to tell with all the blood covering it and the lower half of a human being hanging out one side.

But believe it or not, that wasn't even what made my heart stop when I looked at it. That honor went to the wall behind the case, on which was written, in blood, "YOU'RE NEXT, JUNO STEEL."

And that's kind of a problem for me – cuz it turns out my name is Juno Steel. I'm a Private Eye. In a town as ugly as this one, cleaning things up is supposed to be my business. But most of the time... most of the time, it just feels like I'm spreading the mess around.

3

SOUND: COMMS BEEP. THEN, INTERCOM.

RITA: Whoa! Boss, I'm gettin' another weird message! It's a call'a some kind but the readings are all woobly and—

JUNO:
Who's it from?

RITA: Can't even feel safe your own boss's office anymore... Almost made me choke on my Pretzel Bits and now I got Salmon Paste all over my—

JUNO:
Just put it through already!

RITA:
I'm tryin' to Boss, but it just kinda—

SOUND: COMMS
BEEP.

WIRE: Chipper as ever I see, Juno. It sounds like you treat your secretary about as well as you treat your friends.

RITA: Went through... by... itself...

JUNO:
It's alright, Rita. Let her through. It's just... Sasha Wire.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
Excuse me: *Agent* Sasha Wire, operative for the Dark Matters Special

Investigations team. We were friends as kids, but it had been fifteen years since the last time I saw her. In Hyperion City there are only three kinds of people: people who eat, people who get eaten, and people like Sasha Wire, who are smart enough to leave.

I had to admit, the Dark Matters spook suit looked good on her: the sunglasses were the same color as her hair and the same temperature as her eyes.

JUNO:

4

What's with the long face, Sasha? Regretting not staying away longer? Or maybe you're just upset that you had to break your streak?

WIRE: Isn't it possible that I could just be concerned for your safety, Juno?

JUNO:
Nope.

WIRE: Fair enough. Have you heard of the Death Mask of Grimpotheuthis?

JUNO: Well, I guess we're talking about business now, then.

Hang on, Grim's Mask? You gotta be kidding me, Sasha. Don't tell me Dark Matters goes in for hokey urban legends and ghost stories.

WIRE: Until a century ago Dark Matters *was* a "hokey urban legend," Juno. Forgive us for lending them some professional courtesy.

JUNO: Fine. Grim's Mask, then. Undisturbed Ancient Martian tomb gets discovered over by Olympus Mons during the filming of a Kanagawa primetime special. Croesus Kanagawa films his big flashy exposé of the excavation, destroys a few thousand years worth of priceless Ancient Martian artefacts, blah blah, until he opens the burial chamber of an Ancient Martian

ruler. He finds a Death Mask there, and the carvings around the Mask say something about *who caaaaaaaaaaaaaares*.

WIRE:

We do, Juno. And you probably should.

JUNO:

Uggggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

WIRE:

5

The carvings surrounding Grim's Mask *specifically* state that, quote, "Grimpotheuthis has earned eternal rest," endquote, and that the Mask is to be left undisturbed... or else the ghost of Grim will walk again and seek vengeance upon those who disturbed the tomb.

JUNO: When do we get to the part where the guy has a hook for a hand, Sasha? That's my favorite.

WIRE: Take this seriously, Juno. Urban legend or no, all evidence points toward the fact that someone has managed to infiltrate the incredibly sophisticated security system at Kanagawa Mansion, murder Croesus Kanagawa, and *paint your name on the wall*. Your *life* is on the line here.

JUNO:

That's good. I've been looking for a nice, low-stakes case.

WIRE:

(SIGH) I thought you might say that.

JUNO:

Say what?

WIRE: "Case." Not everyone looks at a death threat and sees a job opportunity, Juno. Dark Matters is also willing to offer you protection.

JUNO: I'll pass. I'm guessing your "protection" looks like a new name and a one-room apartment out on some asteroid a billion miles from nowhere.

WIRE: Well, regardless, it's certainly fortunate that you're *willing* to take this case. We thought it might be a... conflict of interest to have you on this, but the Kanagawa family requested you investigate specifically.

JUNO: The Kanagawas want me there, huh? So that's the catch.

6

Sorry, Sasha, you can keep your lousy case. I'll take death threats all day, but I won't walk straight into the guillotine.

WIRE:
Juno, they were very insistent--

JUNO: Insistent! I'll tell you what I'm insistent about, Sasha: not getting gutted by a bunch of mobsters with a TV station! Do you know the last thing Croesus said to me?

WIRE:
No.

JUNO: It was a little hard to hear through the concussion but I think it went something to the tune of, "If you ever set foot in here again, I'll kill you."

WIRE:
What in the world did you do to deserve that?

JUNO: Just saved his son, is all. I mean, most of his son. But listen, anyway, that's not the point. I'm not going back there, Sasha, so you can just tell Croesus Kanagawa and his cronies that Juno Steel's not gonna be their stooge any—

WIRE: I couldn't tell him that even if I wanted to, Juno. That corpse in the photograph? That's Croesus.

JUNO:
Alright. So it turns out I'm interested.

WIRE: You had better be. Either you take this case with our assistance, or you and I start talking about what asteroid you might want to live on. I hear XZ2B-21-Z is very nice, this time of century. It has an excellent view of Pluto.

JUNO:
Ughhhhhhhhhh.

7

WIRE: Don't throw a tantrum, Juno. An Agent will be arriving shortly to aid your investigation. He can fill you in on the details.

JUNO: Oh, boy. This day just gets better. I am *not* being followed around by some jerk in a suit all day, Sasha.

WIRE: Perhaps you can talk him out of the suit, but his assistance is not up for debate. His name is Agent Rex Glass. I've never met him, but his record is spotless, and he specializes in issues of this variety.

JUNO:
Murders?

WIRE:
The occult.

JUNO:
The *what*?

WIRE:

Goodbye, Juno. I'll see you in another fifteen years.

SOUND: COMMS

BEEP.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Juno Steel is a lot of different guys, depending on the day. Collector of bad art. Decent cook. Terrible gambler. But here's one thing he's not: an *exorcist*.

So I threw on my coat, grabbed my keys, and spun the right laser carts into my blaster. If I could get out quick enough I might have been able to solve this case without ever having to hear about ghosts or bogeymen or whatever Agent Tyrannosaurus was into.

Might have been able to. If I'd moved a little quicker.

SOUND: KNOCK ON THE
DOOR.

8

REX:

(THROUGH THE DOOR) Hello? Detective Steel, are you in there?

JUNO: ... damn.

SOUND: HE WALKS TO THE WINDOW. OPENS IT.

REX:

(THROUGH THE DOOR) Dear,
could I ask you to...

SOUND: DOOR
OPENS.

Thank you. You are a gem upon Mars, Rita – and twice as beautiful.

RITA:

(GIGGLING)

REX:

Ah, Detective Steel. How lovely to meet you at... last...

Detective, are you trying to crawl out that window?

JUNO: *I'd* say I was succeeding.

REX:

Well, I heard they do things differently on Mars, but I must admit this is a surprise! (LAUGH) You'll have to show me your customs, Detective. Is there room in that window for two?

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

His face was lean, but soft, with a cherub's smile and a fox's teeth. He looked like he was happy to see me and like he'd be just as happy to kill me, if push came to shove. It wasn't unpleasant, all things considered.

JUNO:

9

(WITH A SIGH, CLIMBING BACK OUT THE WINDOW)
Agent Glass, right?

REX:

Only to my mother, Detective Steel. Call me Rex, please.

JUNO:

Yeah, I think I'll pass. Rita! (PAUSE)
Rita!

REX:

Oh, I wouldn't bother calling for her, Detective. Miss Rita has been... taken care of.

JUNO:

The hell is that supposed to mean?

REX:

Dealt with? Accounted for? I've euphemisms to go around, Detective.

JUNO:

Rita! You better not have laid a finger on her, you—

REX:

Oh no, nothing of the kind.

SOUND: THE DOOR
OPENS.

RITA:

Oh, hello there, Agent Glaaaaaaaass!

SOUND: THE DOOR
CLOSES.

REX:

I just found the right way to talk to her. There's a right way to talk to everyone, Detective – you just have to find it. Here's hoping we find ours soon, eh?

JUNO: ... Huh. You... uh, you should tell your coworker that. Just
got off the phone with Agent Wire.

1
0

REX:

Oh? Would you mind catching me up on what you know over dinner?
Introductions make me peckish.

JUNO: You can eat in the car. I'm in kind of a rush. Some mummy
wants me dead or something.

REX:

It doesn't sound like that scares you much.

JUNO:

Honestly, it doesn't.

REX:

Well, perhaps you've been poorly informed, then. You see, according to legend, Grim's ghost takes a subcorporeal form made primarily of animal bones, serrated brass, and clotted blood, and he tears each of the targets of his vengeance into—

JUNO:

You getting in the car or what?

REX:

Only teasing, Detective, only teasing. And even if you are torn to shreds by the talons of an undead nightmare, it won't have been for nothing! This little escapade has gotten me to Mars, and it's gotten me to you, Juno Steel – and I have to say I'm enjoying both already.

JUNO:

You sure sound like it.

SOUND: KEYS JANGLING.

Ready to go?

REX:

Oh, Juno. I'm always ready.

SOUND: THEY WALK OUT. TRANSITION INTO CAR NOISES.

1
1

Scene: 2

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Croesus Kanagawa lived in one of those mansions over Uptown. It's easy to find, especially at night. Just look up for the moon, then look for the bigger moon right next to it. That's Kanagawa's.

The mansion was heavily-staffed, and I don't mean there were a lot of people there. I mean just looking at the biceps of the women guarding the door was enough to make you think about how brittle your bones were. Between muscle and firepower, the staff was armed... and they had one other thing in common, too:

MUSIC: STARTS.

REX:

Juno, is it just me, or... did every single one of those people we passed just now have the last name "Kanagawa" on their name tags?

JUNO:

They like to keep their business in the family.

REX:

But... there were so many of...

JUNO: There weren't that many. They're just good at surrounding you.

REX:

Oh! That's comforting!

JUNO: Look, the Kanagawas breed like rabbits, Rex. Which is to say that most of 'em don't make it past sixteen, but the ones that do are crafty, mean, and they'll sell your leg straight off your body if they think they can get five creds for it.

REX:

Those are savvy rabbits. The kind I'm used to eat carrots and wrinkle their little nosies.

JUNO: This must be your first visit to Mars, then. If you want to keep your limbs, stay clear of the sewers.

REX:
Duly noted. What do they do, anyway? These Kanagawas?

JUNO: ... You're kidding.

REX:
Oh, I know the broad facts. Stars of stream and screen by day, kings of the criminal underground by night. But that's all textbook. I want to hear what it's like down on the ground. Go on, regale me.

JUNO: You got most of it. But stars and kings... eh. They've been losing money steadily for a few years now. Word on the street is that Croesus is... *was*... making a lot of bad business decisions. Giving to charity, that kind of thing.

REX:
He's gone soft, then.

JUNO: Lost his edge, too. As of about a year ago he was taking show ideas from anyone who'd talk to him. That's why I'm in this mess in the first place.

REX:
You mean... why the curse chose you? Because you gave Croesus the idea for a *show*?

JUNO: OK, last time I was here – sometime after I saved his son and before Croesus kicked my teeth in – he asked me what kind of shows someone like Juno Steel watches. I told him whatever my secretary leaves on. And when he wouldn't take that for an answer and he still hadn't paid me, I said,

"Y'know what, Croesus? Right now I think I'd pay about ten thousand creds to watch you dig a deep, deep hole, and then bury yourself in it."

1
3

REX:

What's that have to do with the Mask?

JUNO: That's how he found the Tomb. After he beat the tar out of me he brought a camera crew to the desert, dug a deep, deep hole, and jumped in... to an undiscovered Martian Tomb, with that dumb Death-Mask inside. Got good ratings, from what I hear.

Come on. Crime scene should be just up ahead.

REX:

Allow me to get that door, Detective.

SOUND: FUTURE DOOR
OPENING.

JUNO:

I can open a door.

REX:

Forgive me. Chivalry runs in the bloodline. "Show your heart through your deeds," Mother used to say.

JUNO: Keep your heart inside and I'll do the same, Glass.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSES BEHIND
THEM.

REX:

(GASP)
Incredible!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It was something, alright. Croesus had been killed in his art gallery, where Grim's Mask was being kept. And Croesus knew exactly what he liked.

REX:

Can you imagine? Hundreds of death masks, vaults, tomb stones, sarcophagi, all staring you down. Perhaps it's where he wanted to die all along.

JUNO:

I don't think Croesus expected to die at all.

REX:

And you, Juno? Where do you imagine yourself dying?

JUNO: In a cold ditch somewhere, just like everybody else.

REX:

Oh, dream a little!

JUNO: Fine. A warm ditch, then.

REX:

You don't take anything seriously, do you?

JUNO: You got a problem with that?

REX:

No, I think it's admirable. Standing up against the big, mean world and laughing.

JUNO: Don't really feel like laughing now. This place gives me the creeps.

REX:

I thought you said you didn't believe in curses.

JUNO: This isn't about Grim's stupid Mask, Glass. Someone in this mansion wants me *dead*.

REX:

Not *dead*, technically speaking. The literature suggests that the walking ghost of Grim keeps one's consciousness alive in a state of semi-eternal torment—

JUNO: The literature can suggest whatever it wants, Glass, but there are no goddamn ghosts!

VOICE:

1
5

(DEEP, ECHOING)
JUNO. STEEL.

JUNO: ... Huh.

VOICE:

YOU'RE NEXT. JUNO. STEEL.

REX:

Incredible!

SOUND: DOOR RATTLES BUT DOES NOT OPEN.

JUNO:

Uh oh.

VOICE: TURN AROUND, JUNO STEEL. YOUR TIME HAS COME, JUNO STEEL.
RAISE YOUR HANDS, JUNO STEEL, OR I WILL STRIKE YOU DOWN
WHERE YOU STAND.

REX:

(WHISPERED) Perhaps... you had better do as the specter asks, Juno. He
might shave a few years off your eternity for good behavior.

JUNO:

(TO REX) Shut up! (SIGH. THEN, CALLING ACROSS THE ROOM) Fine,
they're up, they're up. Mind coming out so I can see the ghost that's gonna
chat me to death?

VOICE: SILENCE. NOW REPEAT AFTER ME. I, JUNO STEEL, FORFEIT MY
SOUL TO THE GREAT
GRIMPOTHEUTHIS.

JUNO:

I, Juno Steel, forfeit my soul to the great Grimpotheuthis.

VOICE: AND I REALLY WISH I HAD CHECKED IN WITH MY OLD FRIENDS MORE

1
6

BEFORE I DIED.

REX:

Unresolved regret... Temporal verb tense confusion...

VOICE:

AND I ALSO REGRET THIS HAIRCUT, BECAUSE, WOW, I LOOK
AWFUL.

JUNO:

Knock it off!

VOICE:

SAY IIIIIITTTTTTTT.

JUNO: Cassandra, I know it's you! Just get the hell out here,
already!

CASSANDRA (THE VOICE):

(A LONG LAUGH – THE EFFECT ON HER VOICE FADES AWAY)

You never could take a joke, could you, Juno?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Cassandra Kanagawa had a style all her own – according to her lawyers, that is. There were a few hundred small-town rock stars with acid-washed hair and serrated teeth that might've claimed she'd stolen their look, but according to Martian copyright law and a few million in bribes it was all legally distinct... and more importantly, it was very popular.

I liked Cassandra. She was a lot of fun. But I kept reminding myself about that theft anyway, because you can't trust a businessperson in Hyperion City... especially if you like them.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS AS CASSANDRA APPROACHES JUNO AND
REX.

CASSANDR

A:

I figured you'd be shaking in your ten-cred shoes, so I thought I'd give you
the warm Kanagawa welcome.

JUNO:

Real considerate. My dry cleaning's going into your expenses for this
one.

CASSANDR

A:

Hey, who's Mister Sunglasses over here?

REX:

My name is Agent Rex Glass, Ms. Kanagawa. It's an honor to meet you.

CASSANDR

A:

(TO REX) Yeah? Wish I could say the same. (BACK TO JUNO) Min told me you were on the way.

REX:

Min?

JUNO:

(ASIDE) Their stepmother. (TO CASSANDRA) So where is Min, anyway? Expected to get the warm Kanagawa welcome from *her*, to be honest.

CASSANDR

A:

Death of a family member comes with a lot of prep, Juno. Meetings with the actuary, the funeral director, the writers...

REX:

Writers?

CASSANDR

A:

Yeah, *writers*. Gotta figure out how we're gonna spin this into a three-hour stream special, right? Milk the old man for everything he's worth. It's what he would've wanted.

JUNO: You always were sentimental, Cass. You mind leading us to the crime scene, already?

CASSANDR

A:

Aw, what's the rush? It's not like Dad's *going* anywhere.

SOUND: SUDDEN BANGING AND MECHANICAL NOISES BEHIND A WALL.

JUNO: Damn it, Cassandra, cut it out with the bumps-in-the-night,
already.

CASSANDR

A:

Sorry, wasn't me. All bumped out.

REX:

It sounded like it came from that... tomb.

JUNO: Come on, Glass, this is a gallery, not a graveyard. There's
no way Croesus fit a *tomb* in here.

CASSANDR

A:

Don't be stupid, Juno, of course he did. What do you call *that*?

JUNO: That thing? That's just a... giant, terrifying stone door
with the words "Rest in Peace" carved into it. Is all.

SOUND: MONSTROUS
GROAN.

JUNO:

(YELPS)

CASSANDR

A:

You always were jumpy.

JUNO:

You aren't even a little bit worried about that *noise*?

CASSANDR

A:

Oh, no, Juno. Of course I am. I bet it's just a bunch of ghosts, all in a pile, making big spooky ghost faces! Boo!

(LAUGHS)

Come on, the noise can wait. Let's go.

1
9

REX:

Allow me to get that door.

SOUND: DOOR
OPENS.

After you.

JUNO: Y'know, Glass, it was barely cute the first time, so I
don't—

CASSANDR

A:

Oh, quit stalling, Juno. Dad's right in here.

SOUND: THEY WALK THROUGH THE DOOR, WHICH OPENS AND
CLOSES.

REX:

Incredible!

CASSANDR

A:

Yeah, it's... quite a scene.

JUNO: I'm not that big a fan of it, either. "YOU'RE NEXT, JUNO STEEL..." You usually get my fan mail on your wall, Cass?

CASSANDR

A:

Don't remind me. Curses and ghosts and whatever... too creepy.

REX:

Mmm, yes, "creepy." Ms. Kanagawa, do you mind if we conduct our investigation now? I'm afraid you'll have to step back from the body so that Detective Steel can examine it.

JUNO:

Me?

REX:

You *are* the Detective, Detective. You aren't afraid of a little blood, are you?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Really, it was "a lot of blood" that was the problem – it looked like someone popped a balloon full of pasta

2
0

Bolognese in that damn case. But Glass wasn't budging, so I took a deep breath and stuck my head inside.

There was something on Croesus's face, but it didn't look like any kind of mask I'd ever seen. It was more like a big bronze folding chair crumpled up where his head was supposed to be. If there was a face crammed in there, it probably didn't look much like a face anymore.

CASSANDR

A:

Find anything interesting?

JUNO:

Just a plot summary of all my nightmares for the next year.

REX:

You haven't even seen the best part. Step aside, please.

JUNO:

H-hey, watch where you're--

SOUND: CLANGING METAL. SOMETHING SNAPPING OPEN. DRIPPING.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Suddenly the mask snapped open like an accordion. Whatever wore it would've looked like it had three little masks across three little heads, each with too many eyes and noses and other things to count. As for Croesus... well, the thing had tried to split his one big head into three small ones, and succeeded.

REX:

Amazing, isn't it? One can only imagine what the Ancient Martians' skeletal structure was like, if they could split in this way...

JUNO: If you don't shut up about that right now, me and my breakfast are gonna contaminate this crime scene.

CASSANDR

A:

Oh, pull him out of there, Agent. Dad's gonna roll over in his grave if you mess up his stupid trophy case.

2
1

JUNO: Don't know if you've noticed, Cass, but I don't think this case could get any messier.

CASSANDR

A:

All that? That'll come right out. This thing's supposed to get blood on it.

JUNO: ... What.

REX:

She's referring to the locks, I believe. Look here, Juno -- a set of two DNA-key locks, set to open only if the right genetic sample is placed within them. Only the people with the correct DNA signatures could open this case. Unhackable, otherwise.

JUNO: So, let me get this straight: anytime Croesus wanted to take his Mask out to play, he had to cut his hand open and bleed all over both locks?

CASSANDR

A:

Not both, moron. Dad wanted to make sure this thing was completely thief-proof, so he got two that have to be opened simultaneously. The left one was set to his DNA. The right was set to Cecil's... and mine.

JUNO:

Pretty interesting detail there, Cass.

CASSANDR

A:

You keep looking at me like that and I'm gonna knock your eyes right out of your skull, Steel.

JUNO: Like what? This is how I look at all my friends who've got a fifty-fifty shot at being murderers.

CASSANDR

A:

You little--!

REX:

Ms. Kanagawa, would it interrupt any of your family's plans

for mourning if I were to remove the Mask? I have some readings I'd like to run on it.

CASSANDR

A:

... Whatever. Knock yourself out.

JUNO:

Say hi to Croesus for me.

(ASIDE) And, uh... thanks, Glass.

REX:

Anytime.

SOUND: REX WALKS
AWAY.

JUNO:

(AFTER CLEARING HIS THROAT) Gotta admit, it's weird seeing Croesus in there. Knew they'd call me in to investigate him one day, but I always thought he'd be the killer, not the victim.

CASSANDR

A:

Don't count him out yet. Dad found a way to cheat everyone he ever met. Death's got its work cut out for it.

SOUND: IN THE BACKGROUND, REX INVESTIGATES THE CRIME SCENE WITH AN ASSORTMENT OF TOOLS AND GADGETS.

REX:

Fascinating! What an extraordinary polymer!

JUNO: If you don't mind my saying, Cass, you don't sound all that upset the old man's dead. He cheat you recently?

CASSANDR

A:

No. No, he didn't, actually. It's just... this is a lot easier if I pretend he did.

REX:

The mask's material... unlike anything else! Incredible! It changes to assume the shape of what it contains...

2
3

JUNO: So, what were you looking for when we first came in here?

CASSANDR

A:

What are you talking about?

JUNO: Come on, it doesn't take a genius to figure it out. When you stepped in through the door the first thing you did was look behind that plant. Not that hard to find Croesus. He's right in front of my love-letter on the wall over there.

REX:

Just one good push... that's all it would take. With one good push, the Mask could swallow its victim whole--

JUNO:

Rex! Kind of in the middle of an interrogation over here!

REX:

Oh! Apologies, Detective! I'll just... bring the Mask over here, then!

CASSANDR

A:

Interrogation, huh? You haven't changed a bit.

JUNO: Just trying to lay it all out on the table for you, Cass.

You can lie to me as much as you want, but I'm gonna figure it all out eventually, and it's not gonna look good for ya if you start fibbing.

CASSANDR

A:

The hell happened to you, Juno? You used to be... I don't know, fun.

JUNO: You and I might've called it fun, Cass, but my liver had a slightly different interpretation. Look, I'm not saying you killed him. But I am saying you'd better start talking if you wanna persuade me otherwise.

REX:

(GADGETS BEEPING)

Mhmm...

2
4

CASSANDR

A:

Look, what if I had one of those... those lullaby things?

JUNO: I hope you mean "alibi," Cass, cuz I'm not really in the mood for a nap.

CASSANDR

A:

Yeah. Yeah, that. I was out all night last night, with my bodyguards and driver. The car has a time-stamped camera feed, too. Here, I'll bring it up on my comms.

SOUND: ELECTRONIC
BEEPS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

The footage looked alright. Cassandra Kanagawa, lounging in a stretch limo with half-a-dozen bodyguards and room enough for a dozen more. She flipped forward two hours, and the stream showed her drinking in a bar with her

chauffeur; another two hours, and she was shouting down some poor cashier; another two, and she was back in the limo. It was an alibi airtight enough to suffocate in.

CASSANDR

A:

That about clear me?

JUNO: The way I operate, Cass, not even I'm cleared until this case is closed. You think Cecil has an alibi like this?

CASSANDR

A:

Cecil was here all night. Min grounded him.

JUNO:

Grounded? Isn't he, like, thirty?

CASSANDR

A:

That says a lot about either Cecil or Min, Juno. I'll let you pick which.

JUNO: I'm pretty sure Cecil's televised himself killing a guy before, Cass. What's it take to get grounded in the Kanagawa household?

2
5

CASSANDR

A:

Cecil's been blowing through money like it's for sale, Juno. He got the collectors' bug real bad.

JUNO:

For, like, holo-stamps or something?

CASSANDR

A:

Old torture devices, actually. Min keeps making him sell them all back, but he's grounded until he can control his wallet. Poor kid's not gonna see the light of day until he's ready to retire.

REX:

(GRUNTS
)

JUNO: Well, that's some good news, anyway. Always thought the world'd be safer with Cecil locked up. What were you doing last night, Cass? You look pretty upset at that cashier.

CASSANDR

A:

Shopping around for interstellar haulers, if you gotta know.

JUNO:

A spaceship?

CASSANDR

A:

(MOCKINGLY) "A
spaceship?"

JUNO: This doesn't have anything to do with that big dream of yours, does it?

CASSANDR

A:

You... remembered?

JUNO:

Sounded like a hell of a show.

CASSANDR

A:

It isn't gonna be a *show*. Cecil has shows. Dad has shows. This is gonna be *art*, you *moron*. Documentaries across every habitable planet in the galaxy! A project so big nobody's ever even tried it before! I'm gonna show everyone--

JUNO: ... Show everyone how people really live. Show them there are places out there that aren't like this city. Show them how many ways people have figured out how to be people.

CASSANDR

A:

That's... yeah. That's right.

JUNO: Last you told me your dad wasn't going to let you do it.
Said it'd never make any money.

CASSANDR

A:

It still probably won't. But... he changed his mind. I guess. We had enough in the budget for one new show, so Cecil and I were each going to pitch one. Cecil's was good, too.

Would've more than made up for all his stupid torture machines.

But... Dad could tell how much this meant to me. He told me... he told me I could... I think I'm done talking now, Juno.

JUNO: Fair enough. Just one last question...

CASSANDR

A:

Do you not get what "done talking" means?

JUNO: What were you looking for in here?

CASSANDR

A:

I don't need to answer that. You have my alibi. That's enough.

JUNO:

Could be. I'd like to know for sure, though.

CASSANDR

A:

2
7

Trust me, Juno. There are some mysteries you don't want to solve. Some things... some things are just personal.

JUNO: Maybe. Why not tell me what you were looking for, then we can discuss which category this falls under?

CASSANDR

A:

If you want to know, you'll have to get a warrant. And a brace for those broken ribs.

JUNO:

Which broken—

SOUND: CASSANDRA PUNCHES
HIM.

... OW.

CASSANDR

A:

Those broken ribs. Later, Juno. Good luck with the whole death-curse thing.

SOUND: SHE STARTS WALKING AWAY.

JUNO: Hey, wait a second! At least tell me where we're supposed to find Cecil!

CASSANDR

A:

(STILL WALKING AWAY) He's probably in his stupid workshop.

JUNO:

Where the hell is that?

CASSANDR

A:

Remember those creepy tomb doors in Dad's collection?

JUNO:

You're kidding me.

CASSANDR

A:

Have fun in there. Just be sure Cecil's big machines don't get you first. After all... there's a monster on the loose. (SPOOKY NOISES AND LAUGHTER)

2
8

SOUND: DOORS
CLOSING.

JUNO:

Wow, I hate this family. Rex? You find anything over there?

REX:

Oh? Did Cassandra leave? It's a pity; I wanted to ask her about these doors.

JUNO:

What, are they haunted, or something?

REX:

No, I'm just looking to remodel. Shall we continue on, Juno?

JUNO: You're sure there's nothing else over there? That was pretty quick.

REX:

In training they taught us that your chances of solving a murder plummet seven hours after death, Detective. We have to keep moving.

JUNO:

Back in the HCPD they always said twenty-four hours.

REX:

Well, that certainly explains a lot about the Martian crime rate, I'd say. Shall we?

JUNO:

Sure, Rex. Whatever you say.

Scene: 3

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I dragged my heels on the way back to that creepy tomb door. I had something big on my mind, for one thing... but more pressingly, I really didn't want to know what

2
9

torture-machines or ancient ghosts or goddamn dinosaurs were lurking back there making that—

SOUND: AN OMINOUS ROAR. MYSTERIOUS CLICKING.

... noise.

SOUND: TOMB DOOR CREAKING
OPEN.

REX:

Well, the inside of this doesn't look like an abandoned tomb so much as an abandoned spaceship.

JUNO:

You sound disappointed.

REX:

Not at all. Some of the strongest paranormal activities have taken place in sunken ships. Space-pirates' curses and alien specters...

JUNO:

You don't really buy all that stuff, do you?

REX:

I believe in things bigger than us. In things outside of our comprehension. The universe is full of mysteries, Juno: where we go when we die, why some objects seem to bring luck or misery wherever they go... what strange force causes two strangers to become... closer.

JUNO: No mystery to that last one, Rex. I hear you can buy it by the bottle so long as you have a valid form of ID on you.

REX:

(CHUCKLE) What has you so cranky?

JUNO: I hear there's a name for it, but I've never asked. Psychiatrists give me the creeps.

REX:

Really, now. I want to work with you, Juno, but if I'm

going to do so you'll have to cooperate.

JUNO: Look, the last time I did a case for the Kanagawas, I...

messed up, okay? I did something really stupid, and they've wanted to get me for it ever since.

REX:

Which was?

JUNO:

Yeah, no. Not getting into that.

REX:

You're worried that this is a trap, then.

JUNO:

Thought that was pretty clear.

REX:

Well, allow me to alleviate those fears, Detective: it is *definitely* a trap.

JUNO:

Hey, wouldya look at that! My fears just up and disappeared!

That's incredible, Rex, really amazing Secret-Agent-stuff.

REX:

It's simple. Cassandra was far too willing to allow me to tamper with the crime scene; Min has invited you into her home and sent her daughter to you but she, herself, is nowhere to be found; absolutely everyone has been leading

us here, to this hallway, with those horrible noises—

SOUND: ANOTHER OMINOUS ROAR, MYSTERIOUS
CLICKING.

... case in point. It seems absolutely certain that they all want us to come *here*, to where Cecil is... the only question is why.

JUNO:

Or if they even have the same reasons.

SOUND: ANOTHER ROAR, SLIGHTLY LOUDER.

That sound like it's getting closer to you?

REX:

I would certainly rather not find out.

SOUND: HORRIBLE NOISE AGAIN, LOUDER.

JUNO:

Damn it, there's nowhere to hide!

REX:

I wouldn't be so sure of that. Now, if I recall correctly...

SOUND: TAPPING AS REX RUNS HIS HANDS ALONG THE WALLS.

JUNO: Glass, this really seem like the time to give the wall a massage?

REX:

Just a moment...

SOUND: A CLICK! A DOOR OPENS.

Aha! Quickly, in here.

JUNO: What in the...

REX:

Now!

SOUND: A BIG ROAR. SCREECHING. REX PULLS JUNO IN. THE SECRET DOOR CLOSES, AND THE ROAR IS SLIGHTLY DROWNED OUT.

Well. That sounds like it was... very close.

JUNO: Hey, Glass? Mind telling me where the hell this secret door came from? You got a top-secret classified door-making gadget hidden in that coat of yours?

3
2

REX:

No, no, those aren't available until the clearance level above mine. But a good Agent never goes into a job unprepared, and when I read about the Kanagawas' reputation I took the precaution of memorizing the floor plan to their mansion.

JUNO:

Y'don't say.

REX:

You can tell a lot about the denizens of a building from its floor plan. Houses are much like the people within them: all hold secrets, twists and turns...

SOUND: GROSS ROAR NOISE. CLICKING.

JUNO: ... And giant screaming monsters, apparently. It sounds like it's right outside. What the hell are we gonna do about this thing?

REX:

Oh, nothing at all.

JUNO:

That's... not what I expected.

REX:

If we open this door, it will find us and likely kill us.

If it opens this door, the very same. This may be difficult for an Investigator to swallow, but there are some things one should not Investigate.

JUNO: You're not the first person today to tell me that.

REX:

3
3

So, given all that, there's nothing to be done but wait, hope that we don't die, and hope even more that the creature leaves some evidence or ectoplasm behind to examine. And in the meantime... I'm much more interested in *you*.

JUNO: That makes one of us.

REX:

You've just implied that everyone has a monster lurking in the halls of their mind. If we're going to rely on each other in this haunted mansion, is it so strange that I would be interested in what shapes your demons take?

JUNO: I'm a little more concerned about the shape of the demon that wants me dead, honestly.

REX:

You have a very interesting name. Juno. Juno. Like the goddess, I assume? Mothers, guardians, protectors...

JUNO: Not sure that's what Mom had in mind. Looked the name up once. Turns out Juno was a real piece of work. Had a mean streak a mile wide and a nasty habit of killing her kids.

REX:

And do *you* have a mean streak, Detective?

JUNO: Nope. Mom did, though. Never killed me, but that wasn't for lack of trying. How about Rex? That mean anything?

REX:
Look at me, Juno.

JUNO: I...

am...?

REX:
No, no. Look at me. Really look. Now tell me. What do you think Rex means?

3
4

JUNO:
Right now I'm thinking it's someone who took Psych 101 a little too seriously.

REX:
Very close. It means king, Juno, in a language dead ten thousand years. I take my name as a creed to live by. Control your name... and you control your self.

JUNO:
It's a pretty thought, Rex. Wish it were that simple... "Goddess of Protectors..."

REX:
What was that?

JUNO: We've wasted enough time already. That thing hasn't made any noises in a while; maybe it found somebody else to eat.

SOUND: DOOR

OPENS.

REX:

I would advise caution...

JUNO:

Looks like the coast's clear. Let's go.

REX:

... Well. So much for caution.

SOUND: A SERIES OF QUIET CLICKING NOISES PLAY – LIKE A CAMERA VIEWFINDER ZOOMING, OR PICTURES BEING TAKEN.

Juno... I do want to apologize. I hope you haven't taken too much offense--

JUNO:

Shhh!

REX:

I can tell you're upset, Detective, but "shushing" seems

3
5

entirely unnecessary.

JUNO:

Just shut up! Don't you hear that?

REX:

Hear...

SOUND: THE MOTOR WHIRRING AND CLICKING BECOME LOUDER.

What in the world is that? It sounds so... familiar

JUNO: It might be...
(QUIET GASP)

Camera Men.

REX:

It might be *what*?

JUNO:

(WHISPER) Rex. I need you to do two things for me. First: look above us.
Slowly.

REX:

Detective.

JUNO:

Yeah?

REX:

Is that a man with a camera for a head hanging from the ceiling?

JUNO:

By a broad definition, yeah.

REX:

And what's the second thing you wanted me to do?

SOUND: MONSTER ROAR, THE SNAPSHOT OF A CAMERA

.

JUNO:

Run!

SOUND: THE CAMERA MAN DROPS FROM THE CEILING AND HITS THE
GROUND. JUNO AND REX RUN. THE CAMERA MAN CHASES.

REX:

(RUNNING) What in the world is that thing!

JUNO:

(RUNNING) It's a Camera Man! One of Cecil's goddamn genetic engineering experiments! Mix up a DNA cocktail from all the biggest, fastest, meanest climbers in the animal kingdom, then replace its hands with grappling hooks and its head with the best cybernetic video camera money can buy!

REX:

You've seen these before and you didn't recognize that *noise*?

SOUND:

ROAR.

Thank you, yes, but the demonstration is not necessary!

JUNO: This looks like a new model! They didn't have quite so many *arms* the last time I saw them!

SOUND:

ROAR.

REX:

It's gaining!

JUNO: Yeah, I can see that, thanks! Maybe think about coming up with an idea instead of shouting status updates like a goddamn—

REX:

Juno, watch where you're going!

JUNO:

OOF!

3
7

SOUND: JUNO TRIPS AND HITS THE GROUND. THE CAMERA MAN STOPS, SNAPS SOME SHOTS, GROWLS QUIETLY.

REX:

It's... stopped...

JUNO:

(PANTING, PICKING HIMSELF UP) Very courteous. I'll just run facefirst into a few more floors and maybe it'll start going backwards.

SOUND: CAMERA MAN SNIFFS THE AIR. GRUNTS. IT COMES CLOSER.

REX:

It's moving again... what in the world? Juno... why didn't the Camera Man drop onto us immediately when you discovered it? We looked up at it and it wasn't until we started running that it followed. Perhaps it doesn't want to catch us.

SOUND: CAMERA MAN GROANS. CRASH. REX AND JUNO DODGE.

JUNO:

Funny way of showing it. But that's not a bad point, Rex. If it wanted to catch us, drag us off to wherever Cecil wants us... why didn't it just get us then? Or when I fell?

REX:

Perhaps it... was enjoying the show?

JUNO:

The show! That's it!

SOUND: CAMERA MAN ROARS.

Quick, Rex! Hit me!

REX:

W-what?

JUNO:

Damn it, do I gotta do everything myself? (HE
PUNCHES HIMSELF)

3
8

SOUND: THE MONSTER STOPS CHASING THEM. ANOTHER CAMERA
FLASH SOUNDS.

REX:

That was... Well, I suppose that *was* good television.

SOUND: THE CAMERA MAN
GROWLS.

JUNO:

(WINDED) Good television's what it wants. Now you hit me. Quickly.

REX:

Well, if you insist...

JUNO:

(WEAK
GRUNT)

SOUND: CAMERA MAN
ROARS.

Come on, are you kidding me? That was nothing!

REX:

Juno, this is the strangest case...

JUNO:

Hit me!

REX:

Umf!

SOUND: ANOTHER PUNCH. EVEN MORE
SNAPSHOTS.

JUNO:

(WINDED) Alright... Hit me again and move closer to the door.

REX:

Are you sure *you* shouldn't hit *me*—

JUNO:

Just do it!

REX:

UMF

!

3
9

SOUND: ANOTHER
PUNCH.

JUNO: Almost... there...

SOUND: DOOR OPENS. THE CAMERA MAN ROARS. DOOR
CLOSES.

REX:

(PANTING) Well, that was...
exhilarating.

JUNO:

(PANTING) Glad you enjoyed it. I'm gonna go sit down now.

REX:

Allow me to--

JUNO:

I can get there on my own.

SOUND: JUNO WALKS OVER TO A CHAIR AND SITS DOWN. REX SITS IN A

CHAIR NEXT TO HIM.

REX:

This mansion is certainly full of surprises.

JUNO: Can we just... be quiet for a second? Please?

REX:

... Of course. (SHORT PAUSE) I wonder where we are now. It's so dark in here, but from the sound of it the room is very large. And these chairs are very strange, aren't they? Such an odd design. Why, from the look of it they appear to be...

Oh dear.

JUNO:

What now?

REX:

4
0

Didn't Cassandra say... that Cecil had been collecting
ancient torture
devices?

JUNO:

Yeah, but he sold them all off.

REX:

Because... well, I don't know how to break this to you Detective, but these chairs appear to be...

SOUND: A METALLIC CLINK.

JUNO:

What the hell!

REX:

These bars... the chairs have locked us into place!

SOUND: LIGHTS CLICK ON WITH AN ECHO. DRUMROLL.

CECIL:

(DISTANT AND BOOMING) Esteemed visitors... elders and gentlechildren... human beings from across the span of age and space!

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO:

Oh god damn it.

CECIL:

Tonight, for your viewing pleasure: a Private Investigator and a Special Agent, two experts of the quick escape, will attempt the most deadly feat to ever air on-stream!

REX:

We... will?

CECIL:

They've avoided the beast of the halls... they've avoided my mother... but can they avoid... The Throne of Spinning Blades!

SOUND: THE REVVING OF METAL BLADES.

4
1

REX AND JUNO:

(YELP)

CECIL: Brought to you by the Kanagawa Corporation, this is...

Cecil Kanagawa's *From the Jaws of Death!* (MANIACAL LAUGHTER.) Hello there, Junebug. Remember me?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Did I remember Cecil Kanagawa? Of course I did. Because if, like Agent Glass

says, everyone's mind is like a building with monsters inside, let's call Cecil's mind a demons' apartment complex, with room after room of narcissism and sadism and all the -isms that should have guaranteed him a lot of professional help. Instead, it got him the most popular entertainment network on Mars.

REX:

(WHISPER) Do you have a plan,
Juno?

CECIL:

Camera Men! It's showtime!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

In the light of the room I could see them now, half-a-dozen Camera Men
clambering up onto all of those nightmare sets
in Cecil's playground of spikes and blades and brand logos.
All their lenses were trained on us.

REX:

Juno, I asked you if you had a plan!

JUNO: Just one: bust out of here, and then bust Cecil in his
twisted little face.

REX:

Very helpful. And until then?

4
2

JUNO: Only one thing to do, Rex: smile for the camera...

MUSIC: ENDS.