

Juno Steel and the Prince of Mars
(Part 2)

By

Kevin Vibert and Sophie Kaner

[Trigger Warnings](#)

JUNO STEEL AND THE PRINCE OF MARS (PART TWO)

Scene: 1

(HOOSEGOW PENITENTIARY, VISITOR'S WARD.
EARLY MORNING.)

SOUND: THE SOUNDS OF HOOSEGOW. SMALL CROWD TALKING TO THEIR
LOVED ONES. A TV PLAYING THE KANAGAWA EQUIVALENT OF
ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT, EXCEPT THE ONLY CELEBRITY INTERVIEWED IS
CECIL.

MUSIC: JUNO THEME.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

You can walk through Hoosegow for nearly twenty minutes before you even realize it's a prison. It looks like a hotel to start - a weird hotel, sure, with bellhops a little broader than most. But it's got a lobby, a bar, carts for room service, televisions on every surface that'll hold them. It's not until you see the first camera that you know what you're in for.

RITA:

Mista Steel? Why did everything just get so... gray?

JUNO:

Because you're in a prison, Rita, and that's what some entertainment exec floating over Uptown thinks a prison looks like.

RITA:

Bars over the windows... Orange jumpsuits... How come an entertainment exec got to design this place?

JUNO:

See that camera over there?

RITA:

...Yeah...

JUNO:

You're on TV now, Rita. Smile.

RITA:

Boss! You didn't tell me! I don't have my face on or anything!

JUNO:

This isn't an audition. They don't film horror flicks in Hoosegow.

RITA:

I'M BLOWIN' MY BIG MOMENT OVER HERE MISTA STEEL

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I calmed Rita down and dragged her to the visitation room. We watched bad TV for an hour without any sign of our client - Saffron Pharmaceuticals' mascot, the Prince of Mars.

RITA:

What do you think's takin' em so long, boss?

JUNO:

Orientation. It takes a lot of time and signatures to sell your soul away, even in a place like this. Julian'll be here soon.

RITA:

Julian? Who's Julian?

JUNO:

The Saffron Prince of Mars.

PRINCE:

(DISTANT)

Did someone call my name?

SOUND: GUARDS ESCORT PRINCE TO SEAT. HE SITS. HANDCUFFS CLINKING.

Juno! Oh, how good it is to see you again. Have you been to Hoosegow before? Nice, isn't it? I've been meaning to ask who designed the place but things just move so quickly--

GUARD:

You get fifteen minutes. We have to get him through makeup before his big debut.

PRINCE:

Oh, before you go, dear! - Juno, would you or your lady friend like anything? Coffee? You must want coffee.

JUNO:

I'm all right, thanks.

PRINCE:

Garcon, a coffee for my guest, please. I'll take a quintuple macchiato with two pumps agave and a halfsquirt Valles oysterbrau, easy on the seafoam, thank you, watching my figure, you know how it is.

GUARD:

Two coffees. Gotcha.

SOUND: GUARD WALKS AWAY.

JUNO:

You do know how Hoosegow works, don't you?

PRINCE:

Oh, they explained it all on the way in. I think it's a very generous system, all told. They keep track of your tab, so you don't have to; they give you employment to work it all off...

JUNO:

... They charge two hundred creds a coffee and pay about three creds a day.

PRINCE:

I don't see it becoming an issue. I'll just pay them from my own pocket once you get me out of here.

JUNO:

(SIGH)

All right, let's get to it. Got a pen, Rita?

... Rita?

RITA:

(GASPING)

PRINCE:

Should we call the doctors? She looks like she's having trouble breathing.

JUNO:

She gets like this. Just a little starstruck.

Come on, Rita...

RITA:

Aren't you going to introduce me

JUNO:

(GROWL)

Julian, this is my useless secretary, Rita. Rita, this is--

RITA:

The Saffron Prince of Mars oh my God I have seen all of your commercials and tried all of your products even the facial hair remover not that I have facial hair not that there's anything wrong with facial hair it looked good on you that one time for SaffLax oh my god with the *horse* on the *mountain* and the *muscles* and and and

PRINCE:

A fan! It always thrills me to meet a fan. Can I get you anything, Rita? Coffee? Let's do coffee. Garcon!

SOUND: JUNO POUNDS THE TABLE AND THEY BOTH STOP.

JUNO:

We have twelve minutes. Let's go.

Rita, pen.

RITA:

Got it, boss.

JUNO:

All right, Julian. I've got a lot to ask you and I'll bet you already know what most of my questions are, so let's save some time here. Tell me what I need to know.

PRINCE:

I didn't kill Tony.

JUNO:

How are you going to prove it?

PRINCE:

That's... that's really the detective's work, isn't it?

RITA:

He's got you there, Mista Steel.

JUNO:

What happened? How did you find his body?

PRINCE:

Juno, it was so horrible... I don't know if I can...

JUNO:

Eleven minutes, Julian.

PRINCE:

(SIGH)

I was in bed. Our bed. I was asleep, dreaming about...

It doesn't matter. I was awoken by this incredible noise. Screaming air, like a tornado touched down in our bedroom. And then the light! A blinding red light, that became brighter, and brighter, and brighter, until it hurt me even when my eyes were closed. I buried my face in the bed. I thought I was going to die.

JUNO:

And then?

PRINCE:

Then it was over. In an instant. When I looked out the room was dark again... but not quiet.

Tony. He was in the bed, moaning, rasping... A knife sticking out of him... The sheets were wet with blood... He called for me.

JUNO:

He was *alive*?

PRINCE:

For a moment, yes.

JUNO:

You didn't touch him, did you?

PRINCE:

He called for me, Juno. He was alive. He was inches away. By the time I thought about it my hands were...

I was trying to keep him alive. You don't blame me, do you? It was terribly stupid, wasn't it?

JUNO:

Stupid, yeah. But I don't blame you.

You get all that, Rita?

RITA:

You bet.

PRINCE:

Is she even writing any of this down, Juno? Her pen is hardly moving.

RITA:

Course I am! Here, see?

JUNO:

I don't think that's a good...

SOUND: NOTES HANDED OVER.

...idea.

PRINCE:

This is a drawing of a horse.

RITA:

Pretty good, ain't it?

PRINCE:

There is a bottom sitting on the horse.

RITA:

Well, I didn't get to the rest of you yet.

PRINCE:

Juno. Dear. I trust you more than anyone with my safety, but...

JUNO:

Read back those notes, Rita.

SOUND: RITA SNATCHES THE NOTES.

RITA:

Sleeping last night, dreaming about Mr. DiMaggio, when at around four in the morning you heard a tornado in your bedroom, woke you up, big red light, husband went poof and appeared in your bed, died in your arms, you called Juno, police arrived during the call.

PRINCE:

How...! How...!

JUNO:

Don't ask. Trust me.

PRINCE:

How did you know...! That was...! I can't believe...!

RITA:

Well! The horse's eyes look just like Lawrence Fatima's eyes on *Martian Medical*, and they just had a story where his wife died, not in his arms but under a bus, but that's why the horse's tail looks like...

JUNO:

I think he gets the idea.

All right, Julian. I just have one more question for you, and we've got no time for you to dance around it. Either you answer me, or you stay locked up. Your pick.

PRINCE:

I'll tell you anything, Juno. I'll never question you again!

SOUND: JINGLING NOISE OF THE MARTIAN CRYSTAL.

JUNO:

What's this?

PRINCE:

... Oh.

Are you sure this is... absolutely necessary? I don't see how it's related.

JUNO:

Neither do I. That's why you're going to explain.

Five minutes.

PRINCE:

Well... all right. But we'll have to keep it down. I hear there are cameras in here.

JUNO:

What gave you the hint? The potted plant with the lenses over there? Or was it the giant screen right behind me with us plastered all over it?

PRINCE:

We'll just have to be careful. You've seen my commercials, haven't you?

JUNO:

Once or twice.

PRINCE:

(WHISPER)

Do you remember what we say about our products? That they're ancient Martian? That they come from my... people?

JUNO:

Sounds familiar.

PRINCE:

Well...

(WHISPERED)

I'm not really a Martian.

RITA:

NO!

JUNO:

I'm betting the product isn't, either.

PRINCE:

I'm... I'm so ashamed, but... it isn't! And it never has been!

RITA:

NO! NO NO NO!

JUNO:

(WHISPERED)

What's that have to do with this thing?

PRINCE:

Well... when we were digging out the foundation for our new factory, somebody found... that. And Juno, this one is *real*.

JUNO:

Real what?

PRINCE:

Real Martian medicine! Thousands upon thousands of years old!

RITA:

No!

JUNO:

This thing? It looks like a rock. A nice rock, but still...

PRINCE:

We don't know much about it. We know you're supposed to swallow it. We know... well, *vaguely* what it does.

JUNO:

Which is?

PRINCE:

It's an intense sensory stimulant - we already have some of those on the market.

RITA:

Alacrity, Amalia, Big Happy...

PRINCE:

The specifics are beyond me, to be completely honest, but I've been told it particularly excites portions of the brain in charge of interpreting electromagnetic frequencies... specifically, frequencies quite similar to those of the neurons in our brains.

RITA:

Oh! I get it! Oh! So if you took this you could *read your own mind?!?*

PRINCE:

That's very, very close, dear!

JUNO:

You think whoever swallows this thing will be able to read the brainwaves of people around them.

PRINCE:

That is much closer. To what we're guessing, anyway.

JUNO:

Well, have you tested it?

PRINCE:

How could we? This is the only one we've found. If we test it, we'll lose it forever.

JUNO:

Then how do you know what it does?

PRINCE:

We had one of our best working on it... for a while.

JUNO:

You're gonna need to run that by me one more time.

PRINCE:

Tony and I disagree...

...We disagreed about what to do with this, once we found out what it did. He wanted to lock it away - to destroy it, if necessary.

JUNO:

More responsible than I'd expect from a corporate bigwig. Most would mass-produce it, sell it, and watch the world burn from on top of their pile of money. What did you want to do?

PRINCE:

Well... mass-produce and sell it.

JUNO:

... Ah.

PRINCE:

You sound just like Tony did. The world burning! This could really help people. Just imagine, Juno - if you understand what your enemy is thinking, how he feels, there's no more war. There's no more argument! Imagine how much easier it is to find the ones you love, to understand those you don't!

Or... to know what your loved ones are thinking. Where they're going.

JUNO:

That's a pretty idea, Julian. Wish I could think it, too.

SOUND: GUARD FOOTSTEPS.

GUARD:

All right, time's up. Back to your cell, DiMaggio.

JUNO:

Does anyone else know about this thing?

PRINCE:

Doctor Strauss! Doctor Lillian Strauss! Look her up in our directory; she'll tell you everything you need to know!

GUARD:

Let's go!

SOUND: PRINCE DRAGGED AWAY.

PRINCE:

Juno! Help me!

JUNO:

It'll be all right, Julian. I did it before, didn't I?

SOUND: DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES.

Here's hoping I can do it again.

You get all that, Rita?

RITA:

Course I did.

JUNO:

Let's get out of here before one of the guards decides we're on the wrong side of the glass.

SOUND: JUNO AND RITA'S FOOTSTEPS.

RITA:

What a story, huh boss? The Prince of Mars! An indoor tornado! A murdered exec!

JUNO:

Yeah, it's real exciting.

RITA:

What do you think...

OH I KNOW

A teleporter! The bad guys stabbed Mista DiMaggio, then teleported him into his own bed! It's just like in that movie I saw, Mista Steel, it's called *Any Teleport In a Storm* and there are these smugglers and there's a war and refugees and well I couldn't follow that part but there was this one who--

JUNO:

Teleporters? Seriously?

RITA:

Of course, teleporters! The Prince just said that Mista DiMaggio--

JUNO:

I know what he said. But you can't believe everything you hear from people like Julian, Rita; his memory could turn a rude cashier into a pickpocketing robot who eats quarter-creds and goes "Cha-ching!" when he swallows.

RITA:

But he *teleported*, boss!

JUNO:

Teleporters are for science fiction stories, Rita. People have been trying to get a teleporter to work for thousands of years, and they've never gotten any further than shooting a mouse across the room and turning him inside-out.

RITA:

So if you're so smart, what do you think happened?

JUNO:

I think DiMaggio really was stabbed before he ended up in his bed. That's the clue. If we find out how he got in that bed, we'll prove Julian innocent.

RITA:

How did he, then?

JUNO:

No idea. But I do have a plan - two of them, in fact. First is for you to do some reading up on Saffron Pharmaceuticals - their competitors especially. Even with the Christmas lights and hurricanes this still smells like your typical corporate warfare to me.

RITA:

And the second plan?

JUNO:

I'm betting she's waiting for us outside.

RITA:

Whuh?

SOUND: DOOR OPENING. JUNO AND RITA STOP. STRONG'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

STRONG:

Steel.

JUNO:

Rita, I think you know Detective Strong.

RITA:

Is she...! Are you...!

JUNO:

She is.

STRONG:

Charming. Mind sending your girl home? I came here for business.

JUNO:

Trust me, Rita is my business. I've been trying to make her someone else's for years now, but it never takes.

RITA:

Aww, Mista Steel, you say the nicest things.

STRONG:

You have something that belongs to me.

JUNO:

I've got something that belongs to a dead man, if that's what you mean.

STRONG:

He was my client.

JUNO:

Not anymore. You get paid?

STRONG:

Of course not.

JUNO:

I can see why you're concerned, then.

STRONG:

A guy calls you up three times over the course of a week, in a panic, asking you to get him something from his office. He sets you up for the easiest job going: gets you a key, a map, everything you need. And the day you agree to go get it, he shows up dead. That doesn't sound suspicious to you?

JUNO:

It does, but clients can get really creative if it means skipping a bill.

STRONG:

Here's how I read it: someone really didn't want DiMaggio to get his hands on that pill you've got there. I plan to find out who.

JUNO:

Hate to break it to you, but I don't think DiMaggio's going to be paying you from where he's gone.

STRONG:

This isn't about a paycheck.

JUNO:

(SIGH)

You're one of those, huh?

All right, Rita, guess you're walking home.

RITA:

What!!

JUNO:

Sorry, but Detective Strong and I need the car.

STRONG:

And why would I get in that car with you?

JUNO:

It's a nice car.

STRONG:

It's a piece of junk, Steel.

JUNO:

... and I've got a lead on the only person outside of Hoosegow that knows about that pill.

STRONG:

...Hmph.

Sorry, Rita. Should be a bus coming through here in forty minutes or so.

RITA:

WHAT!!

JUNO:

Glad you see things my way. Bye, Rita. Remember your homework.

RITA:

Mista Steel!!

SOUND: CAR DOORS.

STRONG:

So, Steel? Where we headed?

JUNO:

(TUNELESS WHISTLING)

SOUND: CAR STARTS.

STRONG:

Seriously.

JUNO:

I'm not a moron, Alessandra. If I say boo that gun comes out of your pockets and then the pill comes out of mine.

STRONG:

You've been doing this for a while, then.

JUNO:

So have you. Clearly. That's why I don't trust you.

MUSIC: TRANSITION.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

Scene: 2

(DOCTOR STRAUSS'S LAB)

SOUND: KNOCKING ON DOOR.

JUNO:

Hello? Anyone home?

SOUND: POUNDING ON DOOR.

Lookin for a Doctor Lillian Strauss!

STRONG:

Weird that didn't work, Steel. People usually respond well to you shouting down their doors like that?

JUNO:

No, but this works all right.

SOUND: GUNSHOT. DOOR OPENING. FOOTSTEPS.

STRONG:

(SIGH)

You leave a mess behind everywhere you go?

JUNO:

"Clients pay all expenses" is right there in the invoice, Alessandra. I don't usually take advantage of it, but if the client's got Saffron levels of money you might as well.
(SIGH)

SOUND: JUNO SITS.

STRONG:

What are you doing?

JUNO:

Waiting for Strauss. What's it look like?

STRONG:

Like you've got your feet up on her computer.

JUNO:

That's what that is?

STRONG:

Some place she's got... Forty-fifth floor, ten-foot ceilings... Hell of a view. Come take a look.

JUNO:

(NAUSEATED)

No thanks.

STRONG:

Pretty hotel across the street, little park down there...

JUNO:

Ughh. Stop it with the window, already.

STRONG:

What's the matter?

You're not afraid of heights or something stupid like that, right?

JUNO:

Of course I'm not afraid. I'm terrified.

STRONG:

Of all the lousy PIs in this town to get stuck with...

SOUND: STRONG'S FOOTSTEPS. DOOR OPENING.

Lot of rooms here, too. We could be searching this place for a while.

SOUND: STRONG WALKING. AS SHE LISTS ROOMS, DOORS OPEN.

Kitchen... even the takeout containers are bigger in this part of town. And there sure are a lot of them...

Bathroom... Hallway... And that's a... I have no idea what that is.

JUNO:

Careful where you poke around, Alessandra. Might find something you'll wish you didn't.

STRONG:

I'll be...

SOUND: A FEW MORE STEPS. DOOR OPENS.

...Hello.

JUNO:

Warned you.

VALET:

How did you get in here?

What's burning?

JUNO:

The door.

VALET:

Burglars! Brigands! You've no right to be in here!

JUNO:

And you do? What's your story?

VALET:

I'm the Doctor's valet. Who are you? What do you want?

STRONG:

We're—

JUNO:

-- auditors. Auditors, working for Saffron Pharma. We're here about your boss.

VALET:

Well, you can go audit somewhere else, then. Doctor Strauss isn't home.

JUNO:

I think I'll stay. This is a nice chair. And seeing as it might be mine in a minute, I don't see any reason to get out of it.

STRONG:

We got a tip that the good Doctor might be dipping into the Saffron coffers for personal use. We're just checking in.

VALET:

Well, you'll find nothing untoward here. I file the Doctor's receipts myself. I keep track of every expenditure, from her toilet paper to that priceless jade comb your friend is picking his teeth with.

JUNO:

You don't say.

VALET:

I do. Now. Do you have a warrant to search this apartment?

JUNO:

Shucks, no. Musta left it back at the office. Alessandra?

STRONG:

My pockets are empty.

VALET:

Then the law clearly states that you must leave, does it not?

STRONG:

It does.

JUNO:

Only it's a long drive just for one little sheet of paper. What if I just read a few of the lady's expenditures to you? If you've got receipts—

VALET:

I have receipts. What I don't have, sir, is time.

JUNO:

Sounds like we're ready to do business, then.

VALET:

If I find your receipts, will you go quietly?

STRONG:

He never goes quietly. But he will go.

JUNO:

All right, let me just pull 'em up... there we go. Last Friday. Bunch of expenses for what looks like a party in here. Liquor, hors d'oeuvres, a bill for some place called "Valles Vicky's Vixen Valley."

VALET:

I recall the mess, yes. And I wrote those checks myself. I'll find the records for you.

STRONG:

And while you're back there, see if you can find any customer receipts from Carbonella's. Fancy Indonesian place, you know the one. Looks like Strauss's run up a six-hundred-cred bill there every night for the last week.

VALET:

My, this is a thorough investigation, isn't it?

JUNO:

You have no idea.

VALET:

Now. Do you have any other useless questions, or may I find those receipts for you?

STRONG:

Yeah. Where do you want your bullet?

VALET:

What!

SOUND: GUNSHOT. BODY HITS FLOOR.

JUNO:

That was on stun, right?

STRONG:

I'm not a murderer.

JUNO:

I don't care what you are. Just thought I might want to talk to him later.

STRONG:

What tipped you off that he wasn't really a valet?

JUNO:

We practically begged him to call the cops and he didn't even look at the phone. Not to mention a woman running secret experiments out of her apartment isn't going to hold parties in her living-room-slash-secret-lab.

STRONG:

... and with all those boxes in the kitchen I don't think she's eaten anything outside of a takeout container in months.

SOUND: STRONG RIFLING THROUGH THE VALET'S POCKETS.

JUNO:

...what are you doing?

STRONG:

Looking for some kind of... There. His phone.

JUNO:

Well, what's on...

SOUND: SOMETHING HEAVY FALLS OVER, DISTANT.

STRAUSS:

(MUFFLED SCREAMING)

JUNO:

(SIGH)

There's always something, isn't there?

STRONG:

Come on.

SOUND: JUNO AND STRONG'S FOOTSTEPS. DOOR OPENING.

STRAUSS:

(MUFFLED SCREAMING, STRUGGLING)

JUNO:

That looks like our Doctor.

STRONG:

Taped to the chair... looks beat up pretty bad. And with all the equipment scattered around here, this looks like an interrogation. Better not get too close.

JUNO:

How are we supposed to get her free, then? Encouragement?
Maybe sing a song?

STRAUSS:

(MUFFLED SCREAMING)

STRONG:

In high-profile cases like this they sometimes account for
interruptions. She might be... booby-trapped.

STRAUSS:

(MUFFLED SCREAMING)

JUNO:

She's tied up, Alessandra, not *deaf*.

STRAUSS:

Don't worry, Doctor! Just stay still and you'll be out in
no time.

(WHISPERED)

We'll just check the area around her for any surprises, all
right? Be careful.

SOUND: THINGS BEING MOVED.

JUNO:

Hey, Alessandra. In the hotel window over there. Does that
look like a--

STRONG:

Not now, Steel.

JUNO:

Really, it looks like a camera...

Get down!

SOUND: DISTANT GUNSHOT. GLASS SHATTERING. BODY HITTING THE GROUND.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It was a second that lasted a thousand years. I saw the flash of a laser scope from one of the windows across the street. I hit Strong; Strong hit the floor; the bolt hit the window.

And glass came down slowly, like shimmering snow. I covered my face. I heard the thud.

STRONG:

(HISSED)

Steel! Get the hell off me!

JUNO:

(WHISPERED)

Strauss!

I'll check her out. Take cover.

SOUND: TINKLE OF BROKEN GLASS.

She's dead.

STRONG:

Yeah, I hear a trillion volts to the brain'll do that.

JUNO:

Cool it. I didn't kill her.

STRONG:

You could've saved her!

JUNO:

The bolt was aimed at you.

STRONG:

...Oh.

JUNO:

Don't think too hard about it. You were right about the trap, Alessandra, just not where they put it. They set up a sniper across the street -

SOUND: LASER BOLT, DISTANT. MORE GLASS SHATTERS.

... and it looks like they know we're still kicking.

STRONG:

Let's kick a little harder, then.

SOUND: GUN COCKING. TWO SHOTS. A BIRD SQUAWKS AND DIES IN THE DISTANCE.

JUNO:

Some shooting, Strong.

STRONG:

Can it.

JUNO:

You really taught that cloud a lesson.

STRONG:

Think you're any better?

SOUND: GUN COCKING. SHOT. GLASS BREAKS IN DISTANCE.

JUNO:

I'll pin our guardian angel over there. You look through Strauss's papers.

STRONG:

For what?

JUNO:

I'm not leaving empty-handed. A name, an address. Whatever you can get.

STRONG:

They're not just going to let us sit here and shoot back, Steel. We can expect a house call any minute now.

SOUND: DISTANT GUNSHOT. TWO CLOSE GUNSHOTS.

JUNO:

You'll have to move quick, then.

STRONG:

Fine.

SOUND: MORE GUNSHOTS, DISTANT AND CLOSE. SHATTERING GLASS. OPENING AND CLOSING DRAWERS. COMMS BLIP.

JUNO:

Rita, we're gonna need a ride. Lillian Strauss's place. Elysium Memorial Square. Look her up.

RITA:

(THROUGH COMMS)

But Boss, you took the car!

JUNO:

Borrow one, then! Now!

RITA:

But why do you need--!

SOUND: PHONE CALL CUTS OFF.

SOUND: DISTANT RIFLE SHOTS.

STRONG:

(DISTANT)

You can't get rid of him?

JUNO:

This is a laser pistol, not a sniper rifle. If I had something a little bigger I might be able to...

SOUND: STRONG TOSSES A RIFLE AT JUNO'S FEET.

Quite a find. She keep a lot of military-grade rifles in her sock drawer?

STRONG:

Just that one. Strauss was rich, scared, and short. Guarantees something at least that big. I'm just surprised I didn't find it under her pillow.

SOUND: GUN CLICKS, AS JUNO SETS HIMSELF UP.

JUNO:

(STRAINING)

Sounds like you're talking from experience. You know a lot of short, scared people?

STRONG:

Came with the territory, where I used to work.

JUNO:

Ex-HCPD?

STRONG:

Ex-military.

SOUND: DISTANT RIFLE SHOT.

JUNO:

Veteran, huh? It's an honor. Only vet I ever see is the one I get my shots from.

SOUND: DISTANT RIFLE SHOT.

STRONG:

Ha-ha. You ever gonna stop kidding around and deal with our problem out there?

SOUND: RIFLE SHOT, CLOSE. SILENCE.

JUNO:

Done.

STRONG:

...Really?

JUNO:

Really. Find anything?

STRONG:

Grabbed a folder of test results from her desk, but I can't make head or tails of it.

JUNO:

Nothing labeled "secret enemies?"

STRONG:

Afraid not. If you can buy me twenty minutes I should be able to get into her computer and look through her messages...

SOUND: SLAMMING ON DOOR.

...What was that?

JUNO:

Someone's at the door. You want to get it, or should I?

SOUND: GUNSHOT, DISTANT. DOOR OPENS. FOOTSTEPS, DISTANT, APPROACHING.

STRONG:

...How's that ride looking?

JUNO:

Let's find out.

SOUND: COMM BLIP. RITA SPEAKS OVER RADIO.

Rita, where the hell are you?

RITA:

(THROUGH COMMS)

I'm outside, just like you asked! But Mista Steel, there are a bunch of cops on the way, and—

JUNO:

Pull up to the window.

RITA:

What?!

JUNO:

The forty-fifth floor window. You'll know it because it's the one that's missing.

SOUND: SLAMMING ON DOOR, CLOSE.

RITA:

Mista Steel, you know this neighborhood ain't zoned for two-level driving!

JUNO:

Now, Rita!

RITA:

But I already got a ticket and if I get another they're gonna take my license and then how am I gonna see my sick aunt on Sundays and

JUNO:

If you don't get up here they're going to take our *heads*!

RITA:

Oooooooooooooohhh!!!

SOUND: COMM HANGS UP. DOOR SLAMMING. CREAKING.

JUNO:

I think we're about to have company. Ready to take them on?

STRONG:

Readier than you are.

JUNO:

Yeah.

SOUND: DOOR BREAKS DOWN.

GOON 1:

There they are! Get 'em!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Six of the goons pushed into the doorway, but Strong was ready. She gave the head of the pack a right hook that just kept on giving and sent him sprawling back through the door... and through all five of his buddies.

SOUND: DURING THE ABOVE, A PUNCH, SOME OOF'S, AND SOMEONE FALLING DOWN.

STRONG:

How about that ride, *Steel*?

SOUND: FLYING CAR, GROWING LOUDER. STOPS AT THE WINDOW. SIRENS, DISTANT.

RITA:

(SHOUTING)

Mista Steel! You better get in here! I don't think the boys and girls in blue are very happy!

STRONG:
Right on time!

GOON 1:
Don't let 'em get away!

SOUND: STRONG RUNNING, STEEL WALKING.

STRONG:
Steel! Get in here!

RITA:
Come on, boss, we gotta go!

JUNO:
I'm... I'm coming...

SOUND: HEAVY FOOTSTEPS START RUNNING. LASER PISTOL FIRE.

STRONG:
Steel!!

JUNO:
I'll make it, I... just don't like...

STRONG:
Is this your stupid thing about heights again?!

JUNO:
It's not stupid!

GOON 1:
Draw 'em, boys! Bring that car down!

RITA:
Stop 'em, Mista Steel! If I chip the paint Frannie's gonna kill me!!

JUNO:

Don't rush me!

STRONG:

Oh,
(STRAINED)
get in here!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Alessandra reached across the gap and grabbed me. She had good hands. Powerful hands. I wouldn't've minded holding them a little longer.

Then she pulled.

JUNO:

(NAUSEATED, TERRIFIED WAIL)

STRONG:

Stop whining!

SOUND: GUNSHOTS.

GOON 1:

Fire! Fire!

STRONG:

Rita! Get us out of here!

RITA:

Yes, ma'am!

SOUND: FLYING CAR FLIES AWAY. GUNSHOTS AND SIRENS RECEDE INTO DISTANCE.

STRONG:

(SIGH OF RELIEF)
Thanks for that, Rita.

RITA:

You hear that, Mista Steel? At least someone says thank you.

JUNO:

(GRUNT)

You'll get a thank-you when you earn one. Did you find anything on the competition?

RITA:

Nothin' you don't see every day. The head of Paulson Chemical got kidnapped a few months ago, but they only took a few fingers.

JUNO:

Nothing, huh? How about you, Alessandra. Still got that phone?

STRONG:

Yeah, but we aren't going to get anything out of it. I found phone numbers, but the names and messages they're attached to are wrapped in fifteen layers of encryption and tied off with a bow.

JUNO:

Alessandra, show Rita the phone.

STRONG:

What good's that gonna do?

JUNO:

Watch this.

Rita, you recognize any of these phone numbers?

RITA:

Boss, I should be watchin' the—

JUNO:

Road's clear. Just scroll a minute.

RITA:

Ummmm... Boss, that's a lot of numbers... I don't know...

STRONG:

This is a waste of time.

JUNO:

Wait for it.

RITA:

OH! Oh oh oh! That's the man that doesn't exist!

STRONG:

... what?

JUNO:

We call that "bingo," Alessandra.

What man?

RITA:

Well, I was thinkin'. It was on one of my shows, you know,
Furthest from the Son? Have you ever seen that one,
Alessandra?

JUNO:

Don't--

STRONG:

I haven't.

JUNO:

(SIGHS)

RITA:

Well! It all takes place on Pluto, on a research base, you know, and it's about this woman, and her son, and she's been away for years on this base, and then her son comes to

live with her, and they're trying to get to know each other, but they're so distant, and it's so sad, and then in season three her son falls in love with a Plutonian Mindeater and it's a whole thing-

JUNO:

Skip to the guy who doesn't exist.

RITA:

-- anyway the Plutonian Mindeaters Order has this meeting, and Pauline goes to the meeting in *disguise*, like wearing one of their *hoods*, you know the kind they wear. Anyway, she's checking the records, because she has this whole issue with Mindeaters, and I don't know why, I mean if you ask me you can eat whoever's mind you want so long as you close the blinds first, I mean I'm not a *prude* or anything--

JUNO:

Rita!

RITA:

Anyway, religious differences aside. She checks the register... and *Samantha's not on there!*

STRONG:

... Who?

RITA:

Samantha!!

The Mindeater that her son's in love with!!!

STRONG:

I don't get it.

JUNO:

And you never will.

RITA:

And Pauline goes and checks the Plutonian Census, too...
but Samantha's not there either!! And then she never comes
over again!!! Because she never existed at all!!!!

STRONG:

... Oh. So...

The phone?

RITA:

ANYWAY it was lunch and I was tired of all the researching
so I was looking at the list of Saffron Pharmaceutical's
top stockholders to pass the time, and I saw two names I
knew, Anthony DiMaggio and Saffron Prince, and then right
below them a third name, Christopher Morales, and I did
what I always do which is look them up in all the
databases, just in case they're a Samantha because *wouldn't
that be exciting?*

And then he was, and this is his number.

STRONG:

A Samantha?

JUNO:

Try and keep up, Alessandra.

RITA:

He *didn't exist!* His phone number's real, but the address
listed there just leads to a factory, and his ID number
belongs to a Christopher Morales who boarded a rocket off
Mars twenty years ago and never bought a ticket back.

STRONG:

That sounds... exciting.

RITA:

It was.

STRONG:

I think I'm starting to get your problem, Steel.

JUNO:

She's somethin', isn't she?

STRONG:

I'll look through the logs on his GPS.

Rita, do you see that address anywhere on this list?

RITA:

That one! Right there!

STRONG:

Gotcha.

JUNO:

All right, Rita. You know where we're headed. Let's go pay
a call on this man who doesn't exist.

MUSIC: TRANSITION.

SOUND: FLYING CAR FLIES INTO THE DISTANCE.

Scene: 3

(STAKEOUT. HYPERION CITY'S OLD INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT.)

JUNO (NARRATOR) :

Our Man-Who-Wasn't picked a good neighborhood to set up shop in: the Old Industrial District, a place blasted by sandstorms and cosmic rays so hard that not even the roaches would live there anymore. The shields protecting the rest of Hyperion didn't reach this far, and so neither would most of its citizens. It was the perfect place to do bad business - so long as you didn't mind a tumor or two.

Rita dropped us off near our target and we found a hiding spot in an alley across the street. We waited there for hours, marinating in what the rats had left behind.

STRONG:

Stop fidgeting, Steel, you're driving me nuts.

JUNO:

We've been out here for two hours, Alessandra, and nobody's come in or out of that place. Let's kick down the door, already.

STRONG:

Weren't you a cop? You should be used to a stakeout by now.

JUNO:

Yeah, well, I'm all staked out. I hate this part. We've been waiting so long I forget what it's like to feel my knees. The lights are off, everything's quiet, and nobody's home. Let's just go.

STRONG:

We don't know anything about what's in there. Could we just walk in? Sure. But until we see someone come in or out, there's no way of knowing if this is just a trap... or how armed they are.

JUNO:

Hmph.

STRONG:

You're just going to keep whining, aren't you?

JUNO:

I'm not whining.

STRONG:

Steel, this is nothing. Back in the war I once sat in the same foxhole for three days before they could even get food in to me.

(SIGH)

Listen, we'll trade. I'll tell you about the worst client I've ever had if you tell me about yours. Deal?

JUNO:

I'm finding it hard to think back further than the current train wreck, but sure, I'll bite.

STRONG:

All right. Ever hear of Miles Crawford?

JUNO:

...The weatherman?

STRONG:

That's the guy. He was my first client, believe it or not. I'd just gotten back to Mars and I was looking for work - signed up with the PI Registry and forgot about it. Apparently he called them in a sweat looking for someone green, someone "off the grid," "without connections," that kind of thing.

JUNO:

That never goes anywhere good.

STRONG:

So they gave me his address and I drove over. Place was a funhouse. I rang the doorbell and it nearly killed me - laser pistol came out the wall and straight for my head. Trap doors in the halls, a landmine sitting in the middle of the kitchen floor. Used up eight of my nine lives just finding him.

JUNO:

And then?

STRONG:

He pulled a gun on me.

JUNO:

Charming.

STRONG:

Very. He didn't remember calling. Kept shouting something about how the news station was going to replace him with an animatronic puppet. Kept telling me I wouldn't kill him, no matter how many times I tried. I thought about proving him wrong, didn't, and left.

JUNO:

And they still let that guy do the weather?

STRONG:

Nah. Last I heard they replaced him with an animatronic puppet.

JUNO AND STRONG:

(LAUGH)

STRONG:

How about you, Steel? Worst client?

JUNO:

Friend of mine.

STRONG:

...That doesn't sound so bad. What was the case?

JUNO:

She asked me to prove her husband was cheating on her. I did.

STRONG:

And what happened after that?

JUNO:

Let's... not talk about it.

Hey, what's the folder from Strauss's say, anyway? The test results, I mean.

STRONG:

(CLEARS THROAT)

Honestly, I can't figure most of it. We should've left the thing with Rita.

JUNO:

If we had it'd be a fleet of paper spaceships by now.

STRONG:

So I've got nothing on the test results, but... she's got some notes in here. Theories, things like that.

JUNO:

And?

STRONG:

Most of it's what you already told me - the thing lets you read minds, whatever. But it's powerful. Powerful enough that she didn't think a person could handle it.

JUNO:

So, what? The Martians take the pill, read each others' minds, and croak?

STRONG:

That's a guess. But she had a different one. Hang on, I'll read it to you:

SOUND: FLIPPING PAGES.

"... but what if this is more of a Martian supplement? Its strength might suggest that the Martians expected a certain degree of this ability within their natural states; with age or infirmity the ability might fade, and they may have found a way to recreate it."

JUNO:

Martian cold medicine, huh? And that lines up with what we know about them?

STRONG:

It couldn't. Nobody's ever seen a Martian. Didn't you follow the news back when they were digging out that tomb? There aren't even any bodies left. Just the things they made.

It's like a ghost story, Steel. Things like that aren't supposed to happen.

JUNO:

We're not supposed to read each other's minds, either.

STRONG:

No?

JUNO:

Don't tell me you think this pill's a good idea.

STRONG:

You know what? Yeah. Yeah, I do.

JUNO:

Another one.

STRONG:

Because people are good, when you get down to it. The one evil thing people have in them is they can't see the good in other people.

JUNO:

So they kill each other. That seems good to you?

STRONG:

It seems stupid. But stupid and bad aren't the same thing, and if this pill could make us smarter... if it could make us understand one another...

Mars wouldn't need people like us. And we wouldn't have needed a war, either.

JUNO:

(SHORT, HARSH LAUGH)

That's a fairy tale and you know it, Alessandra.

STRONG:

It really isn't.

JUNO:

No more war? Ha. I've seen people get shot just because they looked at their neighbors' husbands funny. What happens when you can hear exactly what they want to do to him?

STRONG:

They wouldn't—

JUNO:

They would. All civilization is, Alessandra, is a bunch of people smart enough not to say what they're thinking. You

take that out, you let all the thoughts roam free? That's the end of humanity.

STRONG:

You wouldn't want to be here with me, if you knew what I was thinking?

JUNO:

I wouldn't.

STRONG:

Let's test it.

JUNO:

What?

STRONG:

Get over here, Juno, and I'll show you what I'm thinking.

SOUND: THEY KISS.

So? Building's still standing. I don't smell any fire. If that was the end of civilization, it was a very quiet end.

JUNO:

Fine. You win this one.

Best two out of three?

STRONG:

(LAUGHS)

You're on.

SOUND: THEY KISS. THEN: AN INCREDIBLE, SUCKING TORNADO SOUND.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It was a sound like the end of the world. A red light poured out of the windows across the street. Wind came from

every direction, but all of it went the same way: there.
Across the road. The home of the man who wasn't.

STRONG:

What the hell was that?

JUNO:

That's... what Julian said he saw on the night his husband died.

Sounds like we're tied, Alessandra.

STRONG:

Maybe. Tiebreaker once this is all over?

JUNO:

Oh, now she wants to rush in. What happened to the stakeout?

STRONG:

You said the last time that light appeared someone died.
I'm not going to let it happen again.

JUNO:

That's more like it.

SOUND: RUNNING FOOTSTEPS. DOOR OPENING.

GOON 5:

Hey! You can't be in here--!

SOUND: LASER GUN.

JUNO:

Wow, Alessandra. That was cold.

STRONG:

I stunned him. He can take it up with me in court later, if he wants to.

JUNO:

Still, you didn't have to shoot him in the--

STRONG:

All right, two hallways. Got a guess which hall's our--

SOUND: WHOOSHING TELEPORTER NOISE AGAIN. MUCH LOUDER.

That... you didn't just see that, did you?

JUNO:

The blinding light coming down both halls? Yeah. I did.

SOUND: GUN CLICK.

STRONG:

Are they just trying to distract us? Split us up?

JUNO:

Probably. Let's...

STRONG:

What's the matter, Juno?

... Juno?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

That smell. I knew I'd smelled it before. A cologne that had once lingered in my apartment for weeks - a smell like another world.

And then, a shadow in the red light of the left hall: a man. Long legs, arms, fingers. I couldn't see his face, but I could imagine it. The sweet smile. The cutting teeth.

Then the light faded, and he was gone.

STRONG:

Juno, did you see something?

JUNO:

No. Nothing.

Let's split up. I'm going this way.

STRONG:

Split up? That's what they want us to do!

JUNO:

You want to let another person die?

STRONG:

Of course not.

JUNO:

Then I'll see you back here in twenty minutes.

STRONG:

Juno!

JUNO:

Okay, twenty-five.

Just be careful. You're good at that.

STRONG:

Juno...

Twenty minutes. If you're even a second late...

JUNO:

Don't tell me. I want it to be a surprise. Good luck,
Alessandra. Stay safe.

STRONG:

You too.

SOUND: STRONG'S FOOTSTEPS RECEDE. JUNO'S CONTINUE.DOOR NOISE.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

The only door down that end of the hall opened on a staircase. It was very, very dark down there.

I ran down. I didn't want to live forever.

SOUND: COMMS BEEP.

Comms went out as soon as I stepped through that door. I was alone... but it didn't feel like it. In the dim red light I saw another staircase. I ran down it. Then another below that. The noise kept getting louder, the light brighter. I swore I heard running footsteps ahead of me - swore I could smell that cologne, could hear his voice.

But I couldn't know. Over the echo of my own feet, over the smell of my own desperation... I couldn't tell.

Finally I hit the bottom floor...

SOUND: TRIP AND THUD ON GROUND.

... facefirst. That last step's a doozy.

The smell was gone. The footsteps were gone. I was alone.

Well... not quite alone.

GOON 2:

(DISTANT)

What the...! You hear that?

GOON 3:

(DISTANT)

Who's out there!

GOON 2:

Hey, keep it together—

GOON 3:

Hands over your head or I'll start shooting!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

They were coming from the same direction as the red light.
I had to hide. I crept back... and felt the door open
behind me.

SOUND: DOOR OPENING.

GOON 3:

There's something down there!

GOON 2:

Calm down. Door's probably just on the fritz. We'll check
it out.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I fell back. The door closed.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSING. FLUORESCENT BUZZ.

The footsteps got louder. The guards weren't letting up.
They'd have me any second now... and then they'd have the
pill.

SOUND: MARTIAN DRUG TINKLING.

Whoever ran this place had already killed two people to get
this pill. I didn't think they'd hesitate to kill a third.
So it was too late for me. I didn't know why they wanted
this thing. But I knew I couldn't let them get it.

I threw it on the ground and stomped.

SOUND: STOMP.

GOON 3:
 (BEHIND DOOR)
 Maria!! There's someone in there!!

JUNO:
 Ow, ow, ow—

GOON 2:
 (BEHIND DOOR)
 I'm calling in backup.

SOUND: COMMS BLIP BEHIND DOOR.

 This is Sanchez. Got an intruder down in the B6 custodial closet. Please advise.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
 My boot couldn't even scratch the pill. I tried everything I could...

SOUND: STOMPS, AND EVEN A FEW GUNSHOTS.

 ... But it wouldn't break.

GOON 3:
 The door won't open!

GOON 2:
 He must've shot out the motor out.

SOUND: COMMS BEEP BEHIND DOOR.

 This is Sanchez. Bring your rifle. The intruder is armed.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
 Any second now they'd pull that door open. I didn't know what they wanted the Martian pill for, but I couldn't let them have it.

But it was a pill - and there was just one thing I hadn't tried yet.

JUNO:

Well... Bottoms up.

SOUND: MARTIAN DRUG TINKLING.

(GULPS)

Huh. Doesn't feel like...

SOUND: WHISPERING, COMING FROM FAR AWAY. RUSHING WIND NOISES.

Uh-oh.

This is gonna hurrreeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

SOUND: HE HITS THE FLOOR. THE WHISPERING GROWS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I didn't black out. When you black out, you feel nothing. I felt... everything.

(ALL LINES AHEAD ARE SPOKEN SIMULTANEOUSLY UNTIL ???)

GOON 2:

Check the doors, nothing there, Paul better have those keys or I'm gonna, it's every time with him the son of what was that?, it's nothing, he's making me crack, Paul, Paul, if I lose this gig because of him I'll twist his, straight off his, and then I'll tell Sandra and she'll, that Paul

GOON 3:

What was that? What? What?! I hear this guy's a! He's a! And then he'll! Maria's looking at me funny she always does that! Right before she! But what did I! Where's my gun my gun my gun there it is, whew, and What was that noise! The boss! They said the boss is here but I hope not last guy

who saw the boss he never where did can't let that happen
to me I swear I'm quitting tomorrWHAT was that

STRONG:

Juno, where... if they've got Juno... the moron who splits
up in a place like this, what are you talking about you let
him go, stupid, stupid, talking about the war you idiot,
he'll look you up and if he finds out about Marcus he'll
Juno! Where the hell are you, Juno? Steel

COP 1:

Steel huh I've heard that name before where have I heard it
did Sarge mention was kicked out barely one day as squad
captain

COP 2:

Never thought I'd see the day Juno Steel can't wait to get
you in for questioning crossed the wrong I'll show you who
looks like a Venusian bulldog you sonavah

GOON 4:

They're here who called the get out get out get out where's
my gun gun not going back to Hoosegow I swear Ma can't see
me like that again it'd kill her can't go back I'll let em
shoot my brains out

COP 3:

Get back from vacation and this is what I get SWAT duty day
one just my luck see some action at least rrghh back quack
chiropractor I swear if Laura wasn't making me then

SOUND: SUCKING WIND NOISE OF THE TELEPORTER. POUNDING FOOTSTEPS.
COMPLETE CHAOS. THEN, A SINGLE VOICE, SLIGHTLY GARBLED:

???:

Hello, Juno Steel.

You took my pill, didn't you. What made you do it? Duty? Curiosity? Did you take it just to spite me? But how could you? You don't even know who I am.

And here's something that's going to drive you wild, Juno: you never will know who I am. It will happen in the dark. It will be simple. And you'll never know who you crossed.

A stubborn detective like you... that's going to be the worst part, isn't it? Dying without knowing a thing.

Maybe I'll do it tomorrow. Maybe in a year. But nobody stays in debt to me. You may have swallowed the pill, but I will take what I want. If I have to suck it out of your veins myself, I will have what I want.

Goodbye, Juno Steel. Enjoy the rest of your little life.

SOUND: TELEPORTER NOISE GROWS, CRESCENDOS VIOLENTLY. DOOR OPENS. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS.

STRONG:

Juno!

SOUND: ALL NOISES CRESCENDO FURTHER - VOICES FROM BEFORE CUT IN - ABOVE ALL, NUREYEV LAUGHING - ALL GROWS, AND THEN SUDDENLY, SILENCE.

Scene: 4

(A HOSPITAL BED)

RITA:

Mista Steel! Hello!

Are you asleep, or just hoping I'm gonna leave?

JUNO:

(GROGGY)

Does it make a difference?

RITA:

Oh, good! You're awake! I can't wait much longer. I just had to update you on that...

*business.*SOUND: SHEETS RUSTLE QUICKLY.

JUNO:

(ALERT)

Never say that again.

RITA:

Hey, you look pretty good today! The doctors finally get all that Martian poison outta ya?

JUNO:

Can't say for sure, but they definitely took most of me out of me.

RITA:

I'll say. Y'look good, boss. Trim.

JUNO:

... Never say that again, either.

RITA:

I just tell it like it is, Mista Steel. Speakin' a' trim, the Prince of Mars says hi.

JUNO:

Do me a favor and return that message unopened.

RITA:

Mista Steel! He really cares about you! That whole week you were out he was in here every day, moanin' and wailin' and—

JUNO:

No he wasn't. He was in Hoosegow.

RITA:

I mean in *spirit*. Don't be such a stick.

JUNO:

(SIGH)

How's Julian doing? The HCPD turn anything up?

RITA:

Well, they did find something pretty interesting...

JUNO:

Just spit it out.

RITA:

Oh, I don't know if you want to hear about it. You said it couldn't be real. Well... guess what they found, boss?

JUNO:

You're kidding me.

RITA:

Teleporters! A whole room fulla teleporters! And one of 'em had Anthony DiMaggio's blood on it!!

So? You got anything to say for yourself? I thought you said there weren't any teleporters.

JUNO:

I said no human ever made one.

RITA:

What! What! That's cheating!

JUNO:

My guess is that these teleporters are Martian tech. That right?

RITA:

How'd you know?!

JUNO:

Let's just say we're gonna be seeing a lot more Martian stuff popping up over the next few months.

RITA:

How exciting! You think they got a time machine, boss? I always wanted to take a ride in a time machine.

JUNO:

Let's hope not. And DiMaggio? Did they ever figure out...

They were keeping him in that building for the week before they killed him, weren't they?

RITA:

Yep. They got the blood to prove it, too - real messy place over there, y'think they'd clean up once in a while.

JUNO:

So they must have driven him out to those payphones... forced him to call Strong for the pill...

Anyway. Did they free Julian yet?

RITA:

He's under house arrest, but not even the DA thinks his trial's gonna go anywhere.

JUNO:

How do you... Never mind. I don't want to know.

RITA:

Oh, easy. It was in the middle of a really steamy e-mail to his--

JUNO:

Rita, if that's all your business--

RITA:

Oh, oh! One more thing.

JUNO:

...what?

RITA:

You got a visitor.

SOUND: DOOR OPENING. HEAVY BOOTSTEPS.

STRONG:

Hey there, Steel.

JUNO:

Alessandra.

RITA:

Play nice, you two.

SOUND: RITA'S FOOTSTEPS. DOOR CLOSES.

JUNO:

I never got a chance to thank you before.

STRONG:

I know. Better make it good, Steel. I collect interest.

JUNO:

...Thanks.

STRONG:

If all your payments are that size you're going to be in debt for a long, long time.

JUNO:

Really. I'd be paste without you. And that's best-case scenario.

STRONG:

Don't get genuine on me. It doesn't look good on you.

So... the doctors say you took that pill.

JUNO:

I think that's really between me and my kidneys.

STRONG:

Did you... You didn't hear anything, did you?

JUNO:

What happened to your little telepathic utopia, Alessandra? Didn't think a little mind reading would bother you.

STRONG:

I'm not ashamed of anything I've done. I just like to be in control of how it gets out.

So? You didn't hear anything that's going to get between us, did you?

JUNO:

No, I didn't. I didn't hear anything at all, actually. Damn thing doesn't work.

STRONG:
Good.

SOUND: SHE SITS ON THE BED.

You worried me there for a minute, Juno.

JUNO:
I'll try not to make a habit of it.

STRONG:
How about we start a different habit instead?

SOUND: THEY KISS.

I could get used to that.

JUNO:
Alessandra...

STRONG:
(SIGH)
Got something to say, Juno?

JUNO:
Alessandra... listen, I...

STRONG:
Spit it out.

JUNO:
It's not gonna work, between you and me. I wish it could.
But it won't.

STRONG:
That doesn't make any sense.

JUNO:
I know.

STRONG:

If you want it to work, it'll work. That's how it works.

JUNO:

Should be.

STRONG:

There's someone else.

(SIGH)

Of course there is.

JUNO:

I thought I was done with him, but... I'm not.

STRONG:

I'm not just gonna wait around, Juno.

JUNO:

Good. You shouldn't.

STRONG:

I don't play third wheel. I find it hard enough to play second.

So... I guess this is it.

JUNO:

Guess so.

STRONG:

You ever get in over your head again, give me a call. We make an all right team, Steel.

JUNO:

We do.

SOUND: BOOTSTEPS. DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE.

MUSIC: JUNO'S THEME.

JUNO (NARRATOR) :

Hyperion City's the kind of town where you can walk for years and still end up back where you started. Same old job; same old wants; same old hurts. You don't keep anything you make in Hyperion City... besides enemies. And boy, had I made one of those.

I thought about what I'd heard, with that Martian pill blowing out my brains. Someone out there had done a lot to get that pill. They'd probably do a lot worse, to get whatever else they were after. Someone out there had it in for me.

Well, join the club, buddy. I'll be waiting for you.

THE END

Trigger Warnings:

- Alcohol
- Death and violence
- Gore
- Deception and gaslighting
- Sudden loud noises
- Claustrophobic spaces
- Drug use

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