

The Vermilion Mosquito

By

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version new.0

EXT. PITTSBURGH STREETS - NIGHT

Running feet. Heavy BREATHING. Manicured hands desperately clutching a briefcase.

A BUSINESSWOMAN runs down the deserted Pittsburgh streets. Two men pursue her, thugs hired to obtain the briefcase at all costs.

The woman turns down an alley, hoping to lose them. She doesn't notice the fence blocking the end of the alley until she runs into it. She shrinks against it, all hope lost as the thugs advance on her.

A metal trashcan hurtles between the men. It glances off their midsections with a CLANG before falling to the ground and rolling towards the woman.

All heads turn to the mouth of the alley, where a third man has appeared. His costume and a belt buckle emblazoned with VM reveal his superhero identity: the VERMILION MOSQUITO.

One thug makes a break for the briefcase as the other runs at the Mosquito.

A wicked grin breaks across our hero's face. He punches his assailant in the face hard enough to send the thug CRASHING into the alley wall. Mortar dust issues from the wall and pieces of brick fall off; as the thug slides to the ground, there is a definite indentation in the wall.

It's a miracle he isn't dead.

The other thug's priorities lie with the briefcase, not his partner. He grapples with the businesswoman for it. The Vermilion Mosquito runs toward them and wrenches the briefcase away from both of them. A loud SNAP and the woman's SCREAM proclaim her broken wrist.

The Vermilion Mosquito reams the remaining thug in the head with the briefcase. The case itself goes flying with the thug; the handle remains in the Mosquito's hand.

The superhero dusts off his hands as SIRENS approach. He picks up the briefcase and hands it to the businesswoman with a good-natured smile.

BUSINESSWOMAN
You could have killed me, you son
of a bitch!

(CONTINUED)

VERMILION MOSQUITO
(cheerfully)
You're welcome.

He quickly runs up a fire escape and disappears just as the police cars pull up.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD

FADE IN:

NEWS COVERAGE OF THE MAYOR

at a press conference. The MAYOR is in the middle of speaking about the Vermilion Mosquito.

MAYOR
The Vermilion Mosquito is a menace.
His irresponsible actions have
caused hundreds of thousands of
dollars in property damage. This
so-called vigilante has done
nothing more than inspire fear in
the hearts of our citizens. His
failure to answer subpoenas and pay
the fines set before him...

SLOW PULL BACK to reveal:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The BARTENDER changes the channel on the TV several times. News coverage of a protest against the Vermilion Mosquito. An interview with the injured woman. A Colbert-esque parody anchor. The Steelers game, where it stays.

BARTENDER
Sorry for the downer there, folks.
'Nother round, Javi?

He addresses JAVIER FUENTES, Spanish, late 20s, deep in a glass of Scotch. Javi nods, downing what little remains in his glass. Most of the conversation in the bar has turned to the game, but a pair of guys near Javi are still talking about the Vermilion Mosquito.

(CONTINUED)

GUY #1

That Mosquito guy needs to get the message. That shit might work in Gotham or wherever, but we don't need his kind in the 'Burgh.

GUY #2

The fuck kind of a name is that, anyway? Vermilion Mosquito. "Yeah, hi, I'm a superhero and I'm a bug."

They laugh boisterously but bitterly. The bartender refills Javier's glass. Javi eyes the men next to him, taking a swig.

GUY #1

And what the hell's a "vermillion," anyway?

JAVIER

It's a color. It's a shade of red.

The two guys glare at Javier, who busies himself with his Scotch.

GUY #1

Yeah? And what do you care?

BARTENDER

Hey, back off. Some of us went to college.

GUY #2

He's a grown-ass man, he can take care of himself.

The guys wait for a response from Javi. He takes another sip before meeting their eyes.

JAVIER

Like he said. Some of us went to college. Maybe I'm a painter. Maybe I care about colors.

GUY #1

Yeah? And what about mosquitoes, you care about them? You care about a piece of shit like--

Javier has been trying to control himself previously, but now his anger and the Scotch get the better of him. He gets in the guy's face.

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER

At least the Vermilion Mosquito's
putting his life on the line to go
out there and protect ungrateful
drunks like you.

Guy #1 lunges at Javi, Guy #2 close behind him. The
bartender leans across the bar, getting between them.

BARTENDER

Guys! Chill out. Javi, back off,
man.

He gives Javier a shove. The bartender addresses the pair of
guys.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Calm down and finish your drinks. A
man's entitled to his opinion.

The guys grab their beers and move to a table. The bartender
turns to Javier.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Javi, man. Why you always gotta do
that?

JAVIER

Because it's true. Pittsburgh's
dying, and the Vermilion Mosquito's
the only one who cares at all. At
least he's going out there,
catching bad guys, trying to clean
up the streets...

He trails off at the bartender's look. Javi doesn't realize
his voice has been rising steadily. Half the bar is staring
at him contemptuously.

BARTENDER

Maybe you should get out of here.

Javier slams his glass down on the bar.

JAVIER

Maybe I should.

A redheaded woman watches him leave, a look of concentration
on her face.

INT. JAVIER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning. The apartment is spartan, tidy but dusty. An unseen sound system PLAYS police chatter. Javier presses a button on his phone and it switches to quiet rock music and proclaims the name of a radio station.

Last night's trip to the bar still heavy on his mind, he starts cleaning up. He accesses the voicemail on his phone and puts it on speaker.

SUPERVISOR #1 (V.O.)
Javi, it's me. You can't keep
missing shifts like this, man. I've
been going easy on you--

Javier deletes it. Unpaid bills go into the trash.

SUPERVISOR #2 (V.O.)
Javier Fuentes. You were supposed
to come in this morning--

Delete. He breaks up a package of ramen into a bowl of water and pops it into the microwave.

SUPERVISOR #3 (V.O.)
Javier, this is your last warning.
I'm done covering for you--

Delete. The messages ended, he wanders into his bedroom, leaving the ramen to cook.

INT. JAVIER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The only room with any furnishings worth mentioning. A male dress form stands in the corner, proudly wearing the Vermilion Mosquito suit.

Javi opens the closet to reveal a glass case full of gadgetry and weapons. He opens the door to the most unfinished inventions.

The microwave BEEPS in the kitchen. He pulls out a pair of gloves and boots and carries them into the kitchen.

INT. JAVIER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

A half eaten bowl of ramen in front of him, Javi tinkers with the boots and gloves. He's managed to make them highly frictive, but they can't yet bear weight.

(CONTINUED)

He sets up a hotspot on his cell and powers up his laptop. He starts Googling various solutions to his problem, perusing multiple physics forums.

The radio starts CHATTERING urgently. A keystroke on his phone turns up the volume.

REPORTER

... just announced that his next target will be none other than the Carnegie Museum of Art. Little is known about the famous thief on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, but the mayor assures us that law enforcement will apprehend Apollo before he can claim anything from the museum...

The bulletin fades out. Javier stares out the window, his eyes unfocused. He suddenly snaps back to the present. He opens a new tab in his browser and types "thief Apollo" into a search engine.

He navigates to a wiki page and reads intently.

AROUND PITTSBURGH - MONTAGE

A) EXT. CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART - GROUNDS - DAY

Javi takes pictures around the outside of the Carnegie Museum of Art, casing easy entry points.

B) INT. JAVIER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Javi enters his apartment, arms laden with plastic grocery bags. He carefully unpacks them on the table, revealing various electronics, tools, and a few lengths of fabric.

C) INT. CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

Javi pretends to be a patron of the museum. He surreptitiously takes pictures of air vents, windows, and fire exits.

D) EXT. PITTSBURGH STREET - DAY

Javi walks past a convenience store that's being robbed. He makes to duck into the nearest alley and change just as the police show up. Thinking better of it, he continues walking, noticeably disappointed.

E) INT. JAVIER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Javi tinkers with the gloves and boots. Satisfied, he puts down a jeweler's screwdriver and admires his handiwork.

F) EXT. PITTSBURGH STREET - NIGHT

Javi, in full VM garb, scales a building in a remote part of town. His foot slips out of his boot, which remains stuck to the building. He manages to slide his foot back in just as a hand slides out of a glove. Beginning to panic, he starts to crawl down to a safer height.

G) INT. BAR - NIGHT

Javi hustles pool in the back of the bar. He's good. Women cheer him on. Several look ready to go home with him, but his attention stays with one particular (and familiar) redhead. Everyone disperses as he counts up his winnings, flirting with the redhead. Something he says earns him a slap and she leaves in a huff.

H) EXT. PITTSBURGH STREETS - NIGHT

Javi rapidly climbs up a building under cover of night, his suit seemingly perfected. He reaches the top and propels himself off the building to the next one, catching the wall easily. He scampers to the top and looks out over the city towards the museum.

INT. CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART - NIGHT

A strange fog fills the museum, its source indeterminable. As it begins to dissipate, a figure clad in gold drops into a gallery from the ceiling. The figure saunters toward the nearest painting.

JAVIER (O.S.)
So we meet at last, Apollo.

(CONTINUED)

The figure stops and turns, a gas mask obscuring the face. The Vermilion Mosquito stands in a corner of the gallery, in a triumphant pose.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Don't you think yellow is a little
flashy for a thief?

Off comes the gas mask, which was evidently the only thing holding back the mass of red hair that tumbles down.

Apollo is a woman. Javier can hear his manly pride shattering.

APOLLO

I've never had any resistance
before. And Apollo is the god of
the sun, after all. One must be
true to one's namesake.

She gives Javier elevator eyes and makes no effort to hide her sarcasm.

APOLLO (CONT'D)

Which I suppose means you're a
bloodsucking insect in real life?
You're quite the superhero, Mr.
Mosquito.

JAVIER

You're... a woman? But the Greek
Apollo was a dude.

APOLLO

Wow, sexist much?

Apollo walks slowly, deliberately, toward Javier. Her face dares him to do something. Anything.

JAVIER

Stop! In the name of the law--I
mean, the Vermilion Mosquito!

Javier's well-practiced Hero Speech (TM) quickly loses momentum.

JAVIER

I'm here to... stop you, from
stealing... whatever exactly it is
you're stealing.

(CONTINUED)

APOLLO

Yes, I was wondering about that.
How exactly do you intend to
"thwart my evil plot" without
backup? You are very clearly
outmatched.

JAVIER

What makes you think I don't have
backup?

APOLLO

The knockout gas I pumped through
the entire museum. I assume your
mask has a filtration system. Even
if the police were going to help
you, which I know they weren't,
there is no way they will be able
to now.

Javier is slowly losing what remains of his composure.

JAVIER

What makes you think--

APOLLO

--that the police would have
arrested you on sight? Unlike you,
Javier Fuentes, I've been doing my
research. You are a failure as a
superhero. The entire city is out
for your blood. You think you have
it all figured out, but you can
barely hold a job.

Javier stares at her. Suddenly, the red hair and accent are
very familiar to him.

JAVIER

You're that girl from the bar.

APOLLO

Well done, Mr. Mosquito.

She begins to circle around him. Javier follows suit. They
stare each other down.

JAVIER

How did you find me? How did you
even know where to look?

(CONTINUED)

APOLLO

I am a master thief. I am not going to burgle a place I haven't thoroughly figured out. I could tell you the Fantastic Four's secret identities. Finding out who you were was child's play.

They slowly but steadily close their circuit around each other.

JAVIER

Then why didn't you just kill me when you had the chance?

APOLLO

I'm getting bored of all this. I became a thief because I had too much time on my hands and a skill for picking locks. But it was all just so easy.

JAVIER

That explains the costume.

APOLLO

And announcing my marks. Honestly, I just want a challenge. I was hoping you could at least make this interesting for me.

Apollo makes a break for the nearest painting. Careful of the priceless art around him, Javier sprints after her, tackling her to the ground. They grapple until Apollo manages to throw Javier off of her.

He only slides a short distance, but it's plenty of time for Apollo to leap gracefully to her feet.

APOLLO

Is that all?

She dusts herself off, giving Javier time to recover. He lunges at her; she sidesteps out of the way. He tries to sweep her feet out from under her and she somersaults away.

JAVIER

Hey, that's cheating!

APOLLO

All's fair in hate and peacetime, dearie.

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER
Isn't that backw--

Apollo's left hook connects with Javier's face with a sickening CRUNCH. He turns back to her slowly, fury blazing in his eyes.

No one hits Javier's face and lives to tell about it.

His attacks become frenzied but amazingly controlled. Lunges, punches, kicks: Apollo can barely dodge a move in time before she has to block another. Her acrobatics are impressive and seemingly impossible, but still not quite good enough.

Apollo realizes she has no hope of beating him.

APOLLO
You're good, Mr. Mosquito. I think
I like you.

JAVIER
Thanks, I think.

APOLLO
Unfortunately, I don't have time to
play games with you anymore.

The thief starts leaping up the walls, the tips of her shoes barely connecting. Javier stares dumbstruck. She's escaping, heading for the skylight, and he's powerless to stop her!

Javier looks up. A glimmer in the air.

A wire.

And then he remembers his gloves and boots.

Javier scampers up the wall toward the ceiling. At a decent height, he propels himself off the wall towards the wire, pulling a knife from his belt. In an incredibly graceful act of heroism, he manages not only to sever the wire but also to catch himself on the opposite wall. Without breaking anything.

In a panic, the grounded Apollo makes a beeline for the nearest emergency exit. Javier leaps from the wall and lands right on top of her, pinning her to the ground. A CRASH is heard somewhere, faintly, but the Mosquito pays it no mind.

APOLLO
(dumbstruck, re: the boots)
Those are new.

(CONTINUED)

JAVIER
You like them? They're basically
just really friction-y.

APOLLO
Frictive.

JAVIER
(beat)
That too.

Javier yanks Apollo to her feet. He pulls a pair of
handcuffs from wherever it is superheroes seem to keep them.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Now it's off to the station with
you.

APOLLO
Sorry, but no, it's not. From where
I stand, it looks like you will be
the one behind bars.

Apollo gestures to the source of the crash, a now-shattered
object that looks strangely like...

JAVIER
Was that a--

APOLLO
Ming vase? Yeah.
(beat)
Well, this has been fun, but I have
to be going now. Say hi to the
police for me.

She pulls out a tazer and ZAPS him with it.

APOLLO
Catch you on the flip side, Mr.
Mosquito.

Javier passes out.

INT. CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART - LATER

Javier comes to just as the POLICE SIRENS reach their peak
volume and shut off. Knowing he has just seconds, he heads
for the nearest window.

EXT. PITTSBURGH STREETS - NIGHT

Javier leaps across the tops of buildings, heading for his apartment. He stops on the next-door roof.

There are police cars surrounding the building.

Defeated and alone, he sinks to his knees.

APOLLO (O.S.)

Well aren't you the picture of
destitution.

Javier starts and looks up. The girl from the bar - no, Apollo, changed into plain clothes - stands over him. She plops down next to him.

JAVIER

What are you doing here?

APOLLO

I was halfway to Brazil when I had
a sudden affliction of conscience.

JAVIER

Says the one who set the cops on
me.

He gestures to the police officers now swarming his apartment building.

APOLLO

I didn't feel bad until after I
called them.

JAVIER

You still haven't told me what
you're doing here.

He pulls off his mask. No point in hiding anymore. He rears back to throw it over the edge of the building when Apollo catches his arm.

APOLLO

I'm here to make you an offer. I
told you I was sick of all this
thief business, and I am. I want
out. You can help me with that.

JAVIER

How? And why should I bother when
you've just thrown me to the dogs?

(CONTINUED)

APOLLO

Because I can un-throw you to the
dogs.

Javier just stares at her. She stands up and walks around to
face him.

APOLLO (CONT'D)

I have more money right now than I
know what to do with. A couple of
bribes and I can make all of your
problems disappear.

Javi still stares.

JAVIER

What do you want from me?

APOLLO

Being a superhero seems infinitely
more interesting than being a
villain.

She holds out her hand to him.

APOLLO

I want you to help me be the
greatest superhero the world has
ever known. And I want the
Vermilion Mosquito to be my
sidekick.

SMASH TO BLACK.

THE END