

Superscore

By Carter Paterson & Max Lichtenstein

A disgraced musical theater legend reluctantly partners with an 80's rock icon and her beleaguered former assistant to produce Broadway's first-ever comic-book rock opera.

Loosely inspired by true events.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

TEXT: Inspired by true events

MEDICAL TEAM bursts through a set of hallway double doors pushing a gurney, flanked by SERAFINA and WESLEY. Serafina, 48, hair in a messy bun and a pen tucked behind her ear, strides along the medics attempting to duck between them to get near the patient. Wesley, 36, out of breath and shirt improperly buttoned, struggles to keep up. FABIAN, 24, in a yellow and red spandex suit emblazoned with lightning bolts, moans cartoonishly on the stretcher, visible only from the waist up.

MEDIC #1

We need to prep the ER, one of the fractures severed an artery.

MEDIC #2

Doctor Lee is en route from west campus, ETA ten minutes.

Fabian's eyes open and search the faces above him until he locates Serafina.

FABIAN

I did it chica, I finally hit the mark.

Serafina nods, lips pursed and eyebrows raised.

SERAFINA

Uh huh, I should have never doubted you.

FABIAN

Hi-five-

Fabian smiles weakly. He goes to raise his hands for a double hi-five, revealing that both hands are bent backwards by 180 degrees. Wesley's eyes go wide and he turns around, making audible gag noises. Serafina puts a hand to her brow to shield her eyes.

Fabian focuses on his hands for a moment; his eyes go wide, and he begins to shriek, looking back and forth in terror.

Serafina and Wesley slow behind the gurney team as they pass through another set of double doors. Serafina's phone rings, prompting her to tuck her script binder under her arm as she removes the phone from her pocket.

SERAFINA

Hello...yeah we're with
him....well, his X-Rays seem
promising.

In the background, a nurse opens a binder to share X-ray results. The doctor audibly gags.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Wesley gravitates toward a television in the adjoining waiting room, where a news broadcast is playing live. A NEWSANCHOR reports above a chyron reading "More Headaches for Beleaguered Superhero Musical"

NEWSANCHOR

Forget Macbeth; stage managers have
a new name to fear in the world of
Broadway as yet another performer
suffers a freak accident during
previews for PowerSurge: Ignite the
Night.

A clip plays on the monitor showing shaky cellphone footage of the incident. Fabian, dressed in costume, hovers atop the stage on a suspended platform. Below, tesla coil arcs jump between the platform bottom and the stage, as if he's "flying" by electricity. He belts a cheesy musical number.

FABIAN (O.S.)

And justice seen is justice served,
it's time you get what you des-

Suddenly the platform careens forward, and Fabian is hurled down to the stage, to the screams of audience members.

The clip ends and the screen displays photos of both Serafina and Wesley; whereas Serafina is LinkedIn polished, Wesley's photo is seemingly ripped from a college disposable camera (red eye, beer soaked t-shirt with just the word "DUCKS" on it in black font).

NEWSANCHOR (V.O.)

Tonight's fall marks yet another
setback for production, which has
reportedly run ten million dollars
over-budget under director Serafina
Bianchi and producer Wesley Nagel.

Wesley groans as Serafina sidles up to him, typing on her phone. She looks up to see the broadcast.

WESLEY

Why would they use that photo?

Serafina, distracted, returns her focus to her phone.

SERAFINA

It's your IMDB profile.

WESLEY

It wouldn't let me change it, I tried a thousand times!

SERAFINA

Why was it there in the first place?

WESLEY

It's my only acting credit! Rumpus House II, The Rumpus Amongst Us.

A beat.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Build a whole career and you'll still be "Guy Who Drinks Dog Pee."

Wesley turns away from the broadcast to Serafina.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

What did Paul say?

SERAFINA

Brian. Defcon 2.

Wesley pulls his phone from his pocket.

WESLEY

Woof, pretty serious.

Over the shoulder shot of Wesley googling "what is bad defcon"

SERAFINA

No press, total media blackout. Wait, why am I handling this, this is producer shit.

She gestures towards Wesley with her phone.

WESLEY

I just don't think he likes me. His secretary's been forwarding me to a Domino's in El Paso.

SERAFINA

So what you're saying is, the studio is talking to me and *not* talking to you.

WESLEY

Now, really? Sera-

TIKTOK REPORTER runs up to Serafina and Wesley, shoves her iPhone in Wesley's face as OTHER TIKTOK GIRL films from a distance.

TIKTOK REPORTER

@TheRealSarah here, and seems like it's CurtainCall-

She makes a peace sign and sticks her tongue out.

-for Power Surge. I'm live with Welsey Nagel, producer, care to comment?

Serafina looks at him out of the corner of her eye, mouths "Don't". Wesley looks back and forth, panicked. Again, Serafina insists, "don't." Wesley starts to make a weird stammering noise. We close on Wesley as his panic transitions into an eerie confidence. He turns....to fumble the response.

WESLEY

I just wanna make Broadway magic!-

He throws his arms out in a very uncomfortable flourish, backhanding a nurse and nearly blinding her. She screams in pain, prompting Wesley to shrink in embarrassment. Serafina puts a hand to her brow.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE

TEXT: THREE YEARS EARLIER

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - MORNING

KYLIE, ponytail pulled through hat, and SHAWN, Patagonia vest and flipping a pencil, lean back in rolling chairs at the control board, chatting idly. The door opens behind them, prompting them to swivel and rise to greet Serafina as she enters, lost in her phone.

SHAWN

Hey, hey, there she is! Is that a Tony in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?

Kylie purses her lips and cuffs Shawn on the shoulder.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

What?

KYLIE

Congrats on the big win last night, surprised you didn't wanna reschedule.

Serafina hits send on her text and sighs, coming up for air.

SERAFINA

Micah's up before sunset, we gotta capitalize. Where is he anyway?

KYLIE

Already in the booth.

They all look through the glass to the recording booth, where MICAH, 28, is face down asleep on the floor, backwards hat and sunglasses pushed up on his brow.

SERAFINA

The man gets one nom for Jungle Book and he turns into Phillip Seymour Hoffman.

SHAWN

Well not yet, right.

Shawn laughs. Kylie and Serafina both flash him disapproving glares. Shawn puts his hands up in mock surrender.

KYLIE
I'll take this one.

Kylie walks over to the mic and patches through to the booth. The tenor of her voice switches to one of faux panic.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Jesus Micah what did you do??
Twitter is lighting you up!!

Micah's eyes flash open as he leaps up, wide awake and rabid as a caged animal.

MICAH
He said it first, I didn't even
know that was a word for Moldovans.

He surveys the control room through the glass; upon processing things his shoulders relax and he pulls his sunglasses down over his eyes.

MICAH (CONT'D)
Oh ha ha, very funny. Wake me up
when there's a real crisis.

Serafina walks up to the mic and presses the button to speak.

SERAFINA
Well, TMZ *is* still running your
Riverdale texts.

MICAH
I said I was CURIOUS what she
tasted like, I'm not a GODDAMN
CANNIBAL.

Serafina rolls her eyes and turns back to Kylie and Shawn. Shawn tilts his head to the booth and speaks under his breath.

SHAWN
Finger-nibbling motherfucker.

Micah groans in the booth.

MICAH
Can we get this over with? I have
to meet some fuckin' cancer kid at
3.

Pan to reveal a bald child with a balloon sitting in the opposite corner of the booth who stares at the group out of the corner of his eyes.

SERAFINA

You heard the man, let's cue it up.

Kylie and Shawn shrug, return to their chairs. Shawn adjusts various components on the control board before giving Kylie a thumbs up. Kylie addresses Micah in the booth.

KYLIE

Alright, Micah let's take that pick-up from last week. Rolling sound on *National Treasure: The Musical*, track "History of Love"

A beat starts playing and Micah bobs his head waiting for several bars before launching into a Nick Cage impression, singing.

MICAH

"And it's the only plan that could ever make sense, I'll steal the Dec-la-ray-tion of Ind-eh-pen-den-"

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - MAIN LOBBY - MORNING

Serafina exits the control room into the lobby, headed for the exit. Shawn follows behind and jogs to close the distance between them.

SHAWN

Hey Serafina, before you go-

Serafina turns to face him, eyebrows knitted.

SERAFINA

Yeah what's up?

SHAWN

There's actually someone who wanted to meet you, if you had a second.

Serafina checks her watch, goes to follow him. Shawn nods and takes this as a cue to direct her onward.

INT. MASTER RECORDING SUITE - MORNING

Shawn escorts Serafina into a massive, light-filled recording space replete with instrument stations: guitar, bass, drum sets, keyboards and vocalist setups. The four members of SMOOCH sit chatting on stools bedecked in black and silver bedazzled suits, their faces each painted in a different black and white design.

The lead, DEAN SIMMS, 68, rises up to greet them, prompting the rest of the band to follow suit. Dean's face make-up features black and white leopard stripes, with scattered "scrape" marks. Shawn gestures with a dramatic flourish between Dean and Serafina.

SHAWN

Serafina Bianchi, Dean Simms, lead singer of Smooch.

A cough comes from the other three band members.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

And of course, the, uh, rest of Smooch. Wolfboy, Moneyface, King of Clubs.

As Shawn gestures to the various members the camera pans between their distinctive face paints. WOLFBOY has a larger, tooth filled mouth painted around his own mouth, with black eyeshadow. MONEYFACE has dollar signs painted over his eyes with bills curved down his cheeks. KING OF CLUBS has a large black club painted over his right eye.

MONEYFACE

We have names you know-

Dean Simms thrusts forward a muscular, firm hand for Serafina, which she accepts for a hearty handshake.

DEAN SIMMS

They also call me The Man-imal.

Serafina smiles warmly.

SERAFINA

As if I didn't have your face on my wall as a kid. I used to sneak into my brother's room to steal his copy of "Hello Havoc." That's cool you guys are still doing facepaint, are you guys playing Barclays tonight?

MONEYFACE

No.

SERAFINA

Oh.

A beat. Serafina clocks that these are their street clothes, Dean Simms forges ahead.

DEAN SIMMS

Well since I'm talking with a fan,
I can skip half the pitch.
Picture this:

Dean Simms pauses for effect.

DEAN SIMMS (CONT'D)

Power Surge: The Musical.

Serafina stares blankly.

SERAFINA

....that was half the pitch? Power
Surge, like the comic book guy?

DEAN SIMMS

More like the *nine figure* film
franchise. The Michael Cera
trilogy, half a decade ago? Three
billion worldwide. And this
Scottish bloke, Richard Todd, gets
the idea to purchase the musical
rights, been sitting on 'em ever
since. I don't know what Glasgow
gash goes for these days but he's
ready to cash in.

KING OF CLUBS

Gross, dude.

DEAN SIMMS

Sorry, *vagina*.

Dean gives Serafina a roll of the eyes, like *can you believe
this shit*.

SERAFINA

And I factor into this?

DEAN SIMMS

Here's what I'm thinking. IP from
Miracle Comics. Music by Smooch.
And story.... by Serafina Bianchi.

Serafina blushes, puts a hand to her forehead.

SERAFINA

Oh wow...I mean, certainly
flattered but I am not a comic book
expert by any means, I hardly know
the character-

DEAN SIMMS

Listen, I took my kids to see your Winnie the Poohsical four times, they wouldn't shut the hell up about it. I was bawlin' my goddamn eyes out when Piglet died. Only you can take Eeyore and turn him into Oedipus.

SERAFINA

Haven't these comics been adapted like fifteen times already?

DEAN SIMMS

But never by you! This could be your baby!

SERAFINA

It wouldn't really be mine, though, would it? Just an exercise in corporate MadLibs. It's not my jam; people hear superhero and they expect flips, fights, explosions-

DEAN SIMMS

Which is why you'd have a movie level budget, and then some.

Serafina scoffs.

SERAFINA

Yeah, sure.

Shawn leans into Serafina's ear.

SHAWN

Dean's prepared to front two million just to get other investors on board.

Serafina looks to Dean, who nods, eyebrows raised.

DEAN SIMMS

Already set aside, LLC pending for Power Play Inc.

Serafina winces at the pun.

SERAFINA

Are we completely wed to the name?

DEAN SIMMS

Put up two mil and you can name it Cock Breath Enterprises.

SERAFINA
Fair enough.

Serafina paces a tight circle, uses her hands to work out imaginary logistics, mumbles to herself.

A beat.

SERAFINA (CONT'D)
You know what, Dean, I really am flattered, this is an ambitious undertaking. I admire it, I do, but for me right now....it feels like a step back. Artistically, that is.

Dean stumbles back, miming being shot. He smiles sadly.

MONEYFACE
Dean!

DEAN SIMMS
It's a joke, Garrett. Well listen, if you change your mind....

He hands her a business card. It reads "Dean "Manimal" Simms; underneath, "A Man, A Plan, A Canal, Ecuador."

SERAFINA
"A Man, A Plan, A Canal, Ecuador."

DEAN SIMMS
It's the same backwards and forwards baby, 'cause I'm past present and future.

He clicks his tongue and gives a finger gun before departing. Serafina turns the card over in her hand, doing the math on that subheader with a brow raised. Moneyface walks over, own business card in hand, not being discreet. Pretends to yawn and extends his right arm with a business card ending in front of Serafina's face.

SERAFINA
Do you do bar mitzvahs?

MONEYFACE
No. A lot of Make-A-Wish work, though.

Camera pans to reveal a second Make-A-Wish kid in hospital gown, sitting in the corner with a tambourine.

MAKE-A-WISH KID #2
You guys aren't playing Barclays?

INT. HIPSTER COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Serafina sits alone in a booth at a posh white and gold coffee shop. She fiddles with the business card. A mom and her young son approach timidly. The mom gives a shy wave to get her attention.

COFFEE MOM

Hi, so sorry to bother you
but...are you Serafina Bianchi?

Serafina smiles warmly, surprised to be recognized.

SERAFINA

The one and only.

COFFEE MOM

Oh wow. Kyle, sweetie, you remember
when we went to go see Barely
Legal?

KYLE

No.

COFFEE MOM

**Yeah you do, the one about the
Bearenstein Bears.**

(to Serafina)

**We loved it! The way you brought in
the Mandela Effect, ugh! I thought
I was losing my mind.**

SERAFINA

Yeah well you know, an artistic
challenge but glad someone enjoyed
it!

COFFEE MOM

So you have to tell us about your
next project!

SERAFINA

Oh I really can't-

Serafina skirts a glance at the business card again.

SERAFINA (CONT'D)

Well as a matter of fact, I've been
toying with an original concept.
There's a car crash, and the lone
survivor is this girl who ends up
working through her grief by
teaching driver's ed. And...she's
bi-sexual.

The mom raises her eyebrows, fails to hide her disappointment

COFFEE MOM

Ohhhh-

KYLE

Why?

COFFEE MOM

-Kyle!

SERAFINA

No it's ok, I get it. It's a shift for me. Time to really drill into raw, real stories. Leap of faith!

COFFEE MOM

Oh, see-

The woman glances about, lowering her voice.

COFFEE MOM (CONT'D)

I thought you were working on that superhero musical?

The light leaves Serafina's eyes and her smile vanishes.

SERAFINA

Where...what are you talking about?

COFFEE MOM

Oops! Sorry, Hollywood NDAs, NFTs, NBDs. Don't wanna get you in trouble. But it's all over Twitter.

Serafina scrambles to open Twitter on her phone. We watch as her eyes widen. The screen shows a Deadline article: "Remake Visionary Rumored for Power Surge Musical"

INT. CAR - SERAFINA - DRIVING - DAY

Serafina talks with her agent, DANNY, as she furiously weaves through sidewalk pedestrians, ranting and gesticulating.

SERAFINA

It wasn't even a meeting, I bumped into them at MOTO Records.

DANNY (O.C.)

Work is work. You took a business card? That's a meeting. You suck a dick or two outside Chateau Marmont?

(MORE)

DANNY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
That's a meeting, even if Martin Short declines the Venmo. But I digress, this is out there now.

SERAFINA
Whatever, this will wash out of the news cycle in a day. If we're lucky there'll be a wildfire.

DANNY
God willing, fucking trees.

SERAFINA
It's fine, I just need to focus on Airbag, anyway.

DANNY
What the fuck is Airbag?

SERAFINA
Danny! My original? I've been working on it for almost a year? You should be shopping this out!

DANNY
Jesus, this again. Look, maybe some big IP isn't the worst thing in the world?

SERAFINA
Fuck you, I have some powerful stories to tell!

DANNY
Sweetie, I've pitched you to every rumrunner and dipspitter on this godforsaken Dutch bayou and there are no takers. You have a reputation and it's-

SERAFINA
-visionary?

DANNY
Visionary! Yes! Also, huge bitch. No one wants to work with you.

SERAFINA
Oh come on, no one? What about Frank Stunkis? Guy loves me.

DANNY
Yeah so Frank's dead.

SERAFINA

Uhhh that was Frank wasn't it. With the-

DANNY

Suicide note, mentioned you by name?

SERAFINA

It was a typo though. Right?

DANNY

Very much handwritten. Look, all I'm saying is, unless this is a one woman show, you might be S-O-L. Sounds like this thing comes with a blank slate of new faces! People you can traumatize from scratch! You and I both know you can do this in your sleep, take the goddamn gig.

Serafina sighs.

SERAFINA

You know this "asshole agent" bit you do, it's not very funny.

DANNY

Yeah tell that to my other clients.

SERAFINA

You haven't had another client since Sylvia Plath.

DANNY

And I maintain that cookbook was a hit! Take the fucking meeting.

Danny hangs up.

INT. TODDGASM STUDIOS - RICHARD TODD'S OFFICE

Dean Simms and Serafina sit on a massive leather sectional couch while RICHARD TODD, 55, a slim, grinning giant of a man stirs tea at a barista station along the wall. He lopes giddily over to his guests swaying his shoulders, exuding pure joy. He leans against the front of his desk, facing the others.

RICHARD TODD

You're sure I can't get you anything?

(MORE)

RICHARD TODD (CONT'D)
Mostly health muck in the fridge
but we can fetch some...Doctor
Sprite Cola? For our American
friends? Jess-

He gestures to an assistant off screen with a finger.

SERAFINA
Oh, no I'm fine, thank you, and
sorry for the delay, these
soundtrack masters have been
absolute hell.

RICHARD TODD
Yes, Dean tells me you've been
holding court over at Moto Records.
Surprised you're trekking out to
Westchester, what with the stage
run complete?

Serafina looks to Dean as she retorts.

SERAFINA
Depressed Peloton moms and rampant
tax fraud. Feels like home. But
anyway: Dean's told you about how I
work, I imagine.

RICHARD TODD
Of course. I love working with
obsessives, reminds me to take my
medication.

SERAFINA
Well I hope that applies to your
brother. Is he not coming?

Richard tilts his head and knits his brows. He looks to Dean
for clarification.

RICHARD TODD
My brother?

DEAN SIMMS
Yeah, met us at the Sheffield last
time, wrote up the gist of those
first couple blue sky talks on
this? I told Serafina he'd be
joining us.

Richard chews his tongue for a second, before grasping the
misunderstanding. He laughs and slaps a hand to his forehead.

RICHARD TODD

Oh, Wesley! I couldn't for the life of me place who you were getting at! In a sense I suppose he is like family, yes, but brothers, no. He's our chief counsel.

The door opens and WESLEY enters, looking disheveled.

RICHARD TODD (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil!

WESLEY

Sorry, sorry everyone. Got caught up in a meeting.

RICHARD TODD

Did we have another call this morning?

WESLEY

Hmmmm? No, uh. No I was... I don't know why I lied sorry, I was just sitting in my car.

An awkward silence.

RICHARD TODD

Well, Serafina, this is Wesley Nagel, my in house counsel. The arc of the law bends at the elbow, as they say.

Dean leans over to Serafina.

DEAN SIMMS (WHISPERING)

Is that a saying?

RICHARD TODD

Wesley, Ms. Serafina Bianchi.

WESLEY

Nice to meet you.

Wesley extends a hand and Serafina shakes. She grimaces at the contact, tilts her head.

SERAFINA

Is your hand wet?

WESLEY

Oh yeah I was outside.

SERAFINA
It's not raining.

Wesley smiles, earnestly.

WESLEY
Nice to meet you.

Wesley goes to sit down as Serafina studies him with confusion and wipes her hand on her jacket. Richard continues, unaffected.

RICHARD TODD
Now Dean mentioned you weren't particularly familiar with the franchise-

DEAN SIMMS
-hardly a problem, I noted, as you've gone on record that you hadn't read Winnie the Pooh prior to that billion dollar production.

SERAFINA
Yes, I'm well prepared.

RICHARD TODD
Great! I figured we'd start with delving into some essential reading. Bit of a crash course in our super subject.

Ricahrd Todd produces a banker's box filled with comics. Serafina, Dean and Wesley each take a comic book and begin rifling through the pages.

RICHARD TODD (CONT'D)
Now, Dean has spent perhaps the most time in the trenches here, as he was eager to get things rolling on score. Would you like to set the scene for us sir?

DEAN SIMMS
Let's do it. Why don't we take things-

Dean raises his eyebrows, speaks cheekily.

DEAN SIMMS (CONT'D)
To the conference room?

Wesley shrieks, unprompted.

WESLEY (MIMICKING BATMAN SOUND)
BAH NAH NAH NAH NAH NAH NAH

He smiles like a kid. Everyone spins to him in terror.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Oh I was.....I was doing
the.....yeah let's go.

INT. TODDGASM STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM

Dean clicks a remote, summoning a slide projection of "Fantastic Tales #19: Power Play." The cover page shows a man dressed in red, yellow and black spandex, with lightning emanating from behind him in all directions. Shadowy villains at the end of the page, shield their eyes and turn away.

DEAN SIMMS
Fantastic Tales nineteen, first
foray for Arnold Turnblatt, a.k.a.
Power Surge. Orphaned teen living
with his grandparents bitten by a
radioactive lightning bug, giving
him enhanced sight, speed and the
ability to shoot electricity from
his fingertips-

Serafina hold up a hand.

SERAFINA
Sorry....he controls electricity?

Dean Simms laughs and rubs a hand to his temple.

DEAN SIMMS
Yes, uh, depending on the timing
and the leadership on each run,
it's been half gadgets, half just
his body sort of generating it. The
2000s films went with the second
one, so we figure we'd play to that
base.

SERAFINA
But...he got bit by what, a
firefly?

DEAN SIMMS
At a lab facility yes, so it had
been tampered with and was
basically magic, or whatever.

SERAFINA

Ok yes, but how does that explain the electricity. **If I got bit by a rattlesnake do I control maracas?**

WESLEY

Well first you'd probably lose your vision-

SERAFINA

I don't mean literally, I'm just wrapping my head around the connection.

DEAN SIMMS

Well I don't want to get too hung up so soon, so why don't we put a pin and continue?

Serafina shrugs and goes back to rifling through her pages.

SERAFINA

So it seems like his nemesis is some....troll?

DEAN SIMMS

Ah, yes, the Orange Orc. Now I gotta tell you, we might want to focus even moreso on Sirius Cole than anyone else on our cast. WatchMojo ranked him as the number four villain of all time.

Wesley suddenly pipes up.

WESLEY

My son's dressed up as him for the last four years.

SERAFINA

Wow, how old is your son?

WESLEY

Twenty-Five.

Serafina sucks her lip, regrets she asked.

DEAN SIMMS

So you can see, popular figure.

SERAFINA

And what's his origin story, schtick?

RICHARD TODD

He's sort of a mad scientist
character-

DEAN SIMMS

But, more importantly, something of
a father figure to Arnold slash
Power Surge, so there's some
complexity there.

WESLEY

And he's agnostic.

DEAN SIMMS

And he's....well maybe, not sure
how that's relevant but sure.

Wesley nods, vindicated. Serafina, meanwhile, is knitting her
brows and pointing to a page in her copy.

SERAFINA

Now is PowerSurge flying here?

DEAN SIMMS

So, yes, that's going to be the
bulk of conversation on choreo down
the line. He does use lightning to
sort of "swing" through the city.

WESLEY

Like Arachnid-Lad!

Dean flashes him a stern look and shakes his head.

DEAN SIMMS

Definitely *not* like him, as we
are not trying to get in the weeds
here legally.

WESLEY

Oh yep of course. Duh. Copyright.
That was One-L.

He laughs to himself, sucks teeth and stares off into space.

WESLEY (UNDER BREATH) (CONT'D)

But it would be cool to get
Arachnid-Lad...

SERAFINA

Alright, let's talk other rogues.
Who else is Arnold going up
against?

RICHARD TODD

We'd narrowed it down to Fearworm,
Shipstain and Palindrome, but we
got approved on use for Frostburn.

Wesley coughs.

WESLEY

And, uh, Lochness Lad.

Richard sighs, nods and gestures a hand toward Wesley.

SERAFINA

You don't seem very enthused about
him.

RICHARD TODD

I'm not particularly fond of the
stereotype.

WESLEY

Whaaaaaat? What are you talking
about-

Wesley pulls out an iPad and enters several keystrokes,
before casting a video to the large television on the wall.
The clip displays a 1950's live-action "Power Surge" TV
episode, with ill-fitting hand sewn costumes and canned
dialogue.

VIDEO: "Power Surge" Episode 104 "Lady Loch"

POWER SURGE

Leaping lightning! Who could have
snaffled so much silver from the
Western Union?

There is a gruff laughing off stage as citizens scream in
fear. We see a terrified woman, pointing to something off
screen.

CITIZEN

Look out, it's the Loch Ness
Monster!

The camera shifts to the booted feet of LOCH NESS LAD, slowly
panning up to reveal hairy legs, a tartan kilt, a white
frilled shirt and then a loooooooooooooong neck, topped by an
almost offensively Scottish face below an argyle tam hat.

LOCH NESS LAD

Nae, lass, it be none other than
the Loch Ness Lad! Now gimme all
yer sheep-

The video comes to an abrupt pause as Richard Todd's outstretched hand hits stop on his own remote.

SERAFINA

Ah.

Dean whispers to Serafina, conspiratorially.

DEAN SIMMS

We'll do it tastefully.

EXT. TODDGASM STUDIOS - PARKING LOT - DUSK

Serafina carries a box of comics, escorted by Richard Todd. They arrive at her Uber, where Serafina slides the box into the car and turns to bid Richard goodbye.

RICHARD TODD

Look, Serafina, I know you were given free reign on previous projects-

SERAFINA

And my results speak for themselves.

RICHARD TODD

-but for this enterprise to succeed, I'm also going to have a guiding hand in things. There's a lot of capitol at play here and-

SERAFINA

Um, what happened to "complete trust in my methods".

RICHARD TODD

Methods made possible by 40 million dollars.

SERAFINA

Am I not worth that?

RICHARD TODD

I don't know yet.

A beat. Camera pans out to reveal Wesley at a halal cart one spot away, smiling mischievously through a mouthful of food.

WESLEY

...are you guys gonna *kiss*?

Wesley chuckles nervously to himself. The two resume, ignoring him.

RICHARD TODD

Well why don't we aim for parse through on a first draft later this month, say week of the 28th? And I'll put out some feelers for potential choreos this week and we'll set up some meetings. Sound good?

Serafina relaxes slightly, becomes more amicable. She nods.

SERAFINA

Sure. Could Dean share some broad strokes on score this week, to set some tone for those first pages?

RICHARD TODD

Absolutely, he's actually been hacking away at it for awhile now, said he should have something in a couple days for the overture.

Serafina is genuinely surprised.

SERAFINA

Oh that would be great. I'm honestly impressed, that's quite an accomplishment so early on. I'm excited to hear it!

INT. DEAN SIMM'S RESIDENCE - STUDY - NIGHT

Dean stands over his desk, hands confidently on his hips, staring at a piece of paper. The paper shows "1: Intro Song, 2: BIG NUMBER, 3: BIG NUMBER REPRISE"

Dean Simms nods, sucks his tongue. He calls out to someone in the next room.

DEAN SIMMS

Honey! What do you know about Broadway?

BLACKOUT.

INT. LILA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phone alights on the nightstand, displaying a call from "SERAFINA - DO NOT ANSWER".

Lila wakes up, startled, squints at the phone, groans. She lets it go to voicemail. Seconds later, another call. She lets this go to voicemail, puts pillow over her head. Moments later, a *third* call to her landline. She shrieks into her mattress.

INT. LILA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lila does some contorted attempt at a smile to psych herself up. Picks up the phone from the wall hanger.

LILA
Seraaaaaaaaa, it is 5am, that's awesome. How are you?

SERAFINA
Lila, thank *God* it's an emergency, I need you here asap. Same place. See you soon bye!

Lila gets back into bed, brief seconds of piece. The phone rings again, her eyes bust open.

LILA
FUCKING-

EXT/INT. LILA'S CAR - OUTSIDE SERAFINA'S HOUSE - DAWN

HARD CUT to profile of Lila sitting behind the wheel of her car on a Brooklyn street, barely daylight. She places her face in her hands and rubs her fingers coarsely through her hair. She is dead tired. She takes a deep breath.

LILA
You're gonna go in there. Say "thanks but no." Leave. In. No. Leave. Fuck you. Maybe not fuck you. You can tell her her hair is big?

She looks up and raises her eyebrows, slowly grasps that's a nonsense insult.

A beat.

LILA (CONT'D)
No...Ok.

She swiftly pushes open the car door and exits.

EXT. SERAFINA'S BROWNSTONE - MORNING

Lila summits the steps outside a tall white door with a polished golden knocker of classical theater masks. She is about to knock when the door whips open to show Serafina, bird's nest hair and dressed in wrinkled pajamas, exerting manic energy.

SERAFINA

Lila!

Lila, eyes wide at Serafina's appearance.

LILA

Serafina! I came over because I wanted to say-

SERAFINA

Yeah yeah, I'm good, family's good?
Your family's good? Great, come in,
come in.

She gestures emphatically for Lila to follow her inside. She enters, not checking behind her. Lila looks down at her feet. She sighs, already defeated, and follows her in.

INT. SERAFINA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lila follows Serafina into her opulent living room. A grand piano, a fireplace, framed posters of Serafina's previous musical successes ("Winnie the Poohsical", Hercules: God of Rhythm"). The floor is invisible beneath PowerSurge comic books, scribbled notes, post-its and half-finished coffee mugs. Serafina weaves her way between patches of exposed floor to a small uncovered splotch of carpet.

LILA

I was worried, said it was something urgent....uh, what's going on here?

SERAFINA

This... is our blueprint! Equal parts, tragedy, sex, thrill, mystique-

LILA

No, look, Serafina, I'm sure this will be your magnum opus or whatever, but this isn't *our* anything, I came here to-

Lila finally clocks all of the comic books on the floor.

LILA (CONT'D)

-are these comic books? So what,
you're doing a superhero musical?

Serafina's eyes flash and she points to Lila.

SERAFINA

Not a musical! A rock opera; also
comic books is so reductive, modern
auteurs like us call them graphic
novels.

LILA

We're talking about the same books
with a guy whose powers only work
in libraries? Dewey Decimal?

SERAFINA

Think BIGGER, Lila. This is how we
elevate low art to a finer
clientele. We're going to do to
comic books what Bob Dylan did to
rock and roll.

LILA

Inspire a generation of pretentious
Pitchfork bloggers?

SERAFINA

I'm serious, this is a third wave
of the performative genre! We're
taking fantasy and wedding it to
the oldest story-telling form known
to man. We'll be evoking the epic
tradition of the theater, the fury
of the Gods! We have a boy who can
wield supernatural forces, we can't
do that convincingly without the
titans of Sophocles, Euripedes,
Aeschylus-

LILA

Sera, you know I have the utmost
respect for you. I wouldn't be
where I am without you, and there's
not many people I answer a 5am call
for. But aren't you worried this is
a little...

Lila winces as she continues.

LILA (CONT'D)
beneath...your previous work? How much are they even paying you for this?

SERAFINA
Two hundred thousand.

A beat.

LILA
Well...that's great, for you. But it's-

She checks her watch.

LILA (CONT'D)
Fuck, five forty five in the morning and I have work in an hour. Do you know many people pre-order Pad See Ews at 6 in the morning?

SERAFINA
No?

LILA
Forget it, it would bum you out. Look, Sera-

Lila balls her fists up at her sides, ready to finally stand up for herself.

LILA (CONT'D)
I need to set boundaries. Last time around, "we"-

Lila emphasizes with finger quotes.

LILA (CONT'D)
-worked me into the ground. For once, my life is my own. And I'm just not ready to-

Serafina is scrolling Twitter on her phone. Without looking up, she interrupts Lila's big speech.

SERAFINA
-I'll give you forty grand for 6 weeks.

Lila answers through a sigh.

LILA
Yeah, okay.

SFX: 80's Techno Music

MONTAGE I/C SERAFINA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Close-ups of the musical's beat board; we see index cards connected by red string; basically, a conspiracy theory. Hard cuts between wildly unrelated concepts, interrupted by Serafina breaking down the character for Lila.

CARD #1: Controls lightning (and fireflies??)

CARD #2: Guilt!

LILA (CONT'D)

Ok, sure. But so, he is lightning?

SERAFINA

Yes.

LOUIS GERSH

And he controls electricity?

SERAFINA

Yes.

LILA

So he controls lightning.

Serafina points as if to confirm, then rejects this fact.

SERAFINA

No.

CARD #3: Sondheim Tribute

CARD #4: Bi?

Serafina is pacing with a comic in hand, Lila is straightening index cards on the board.

LILA

So this takes place on Earth-927?

SERAFINA

Yeah, but only for the first half of Act II. Then we adapt beats from the Discopocalypse arc.

LILA

Well then we'd have to scrap the dinner scene. There's no Thanksgiving in that universe.

Card 5: Christian values (underlined)

Card 6: Full frontal nudity (think "Daniel Radcliffe")

Lila is lying on the couch, Serafina is splaying out four comics against the wall, trying to read all at once.

LILA (CONT'D)
Why would he want to get inside
when there's a thunderstorm?

SERAFINA
HE'S AFRAID OF STORMS.

Lila throws her hands up at the ceiling, screams.

LILA (SCREAMING)
WHY?

INT. SERAFINA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Several hours have passed. Serafina paces back and forth in front of the fireplace while Lila sits forward on the couch with a notepad.

LILA
....which takes us into
intermission. Holy shit, I think
this might work.

SERAFINA
Well, we still haven't talked about
the biggest part.

Lila, incredulous.

LILA
What-what are you talking about?

Serafina rips a page out of her legal pad with a detailed sketch. She re-navigates the labyrinth of documents and hands the sketch to Lila.

The drawing, titled "Tempestia," features hundreds of lightning branches in the shape of a svelte feminine figure.

SERAFINA
She is power in primordial form, a
mythical ancestor to Arnold's
pubescent alter ego. She's a Greek
chorus whispering in the ear of
every good-doer and ne'er-do-well
in a cosmic game of elemental
chess. Power Surge's perfect
opposite.

LILA
Opposite? They're exactly the same.

SERAFINA
Lila, Lila, Lila. My little...Lila.

LILA
You know Lilac was right there.

SERAFINA
We're tired. You're not thinking
symbolically. The Power Surge name
alone won't put butts in seats. But
a villain who transcends audience
expectations of not only a
superhero musical but art itself?

LILA
I don't know, we have so much
history to draw on.

Lila gestures to the comics strewn about the floor.

LILA (CONT'D)
You want the main villain to be
someone you just made up?

SERAFINA
I didn't just
(in air quotes)
Make her up, Lila. She summoned
herself.

Lila rubs her brow.

LILA
Um, ok. So she shows up in Act II?
I feel like we need to introduce
her after Mary Kate leaves New
York?

SERAFINA (NODDING)
Yeah, yeah. OR....we kick things
off early. You know, we want the
audience to know this isn't a story
they've read before.

LILA
Well yeah exactly, they won't know
the character. How do we explain
her?

SERAFINA

What's there to explain? It feels pretty intuitive.

Hard cut to the chicken scrawl drawing again; it seems to make even less sense now.

LILA

Why don't we table this for now.

SERAFINA

Totally, absolutely-

Serafina goes to put the drawing in the middle of the bulletin board, satisfied. Lila eyes this with apprehension.

SERAFINA (CONT'D)

Just gonna put this riiiiiiight here.

WESLEY (O.S.)

Perfect!

Lila and Serafina scream in terror.

SERAFINA

Jesus-

LILA

Who is that-

Hard cut to reveal Wesley sitting in the far opposite corner of the living room. As Lila and Serafina catch their breath, Serafina berates Wesley.

SERAFINA

Wesley, how long have you been here? What are you doing in my house?

WESLEY (CONFUSED)

You... asked me to come over. To sign off on things.

LILA

Sorry, what is your role in this?

WESLEY (ALMOST CRYING)

Counsel.

SERAFINA

Well you better not bill these hours.

WESLEY
...I can do that?

SERAFINA
And anyway, what do you think? Will
this get the sign-off?

WESLEY
I don't know, the front office
might really want that Thanksgiving
number.

SERAFINA
It's...possible, we can work it in
before intermission.

Wesley pumps a quiet fist, then reverts to semi-professionalism.

WESLEY
I mean yeah, I think the suits will
go for that.

SERAFINA
Great, let's just get this draft
over to Richard, thank FUCK for
him.

EXT. UNION SQUARE PARK - MORNING

Lila walks with her boyfriend, PHIL, 28, unkempt facial hair, flannel shirt and jeans. He is mousey but kind. She speaks frenetically and takes frequent sips from a large coffee cup.

LILA
-And the whole thing is a dream,
but then it's a nightmare, and then-
you just gotta see it on stage.

PHIL
And this is on Thanksgiving?

LILA
Phil, are you even listening?
Thanksgiving *does not exist* in this
universe.

Phil laughs.

PHIL
Sorry! Just good to see you excited
about writing again.
(MORE)

PHIL (CONT'D)

So it sounds like whats-her-face
has really turned a new leaf?

LILA

Well I guess but, you know she
wasn't ever that bad. She's just
very particular. And she gets
results!

PHIL

Didn't she slash your tires when
you tried to leave early that one
time?

LILA

Well it was a company car. If
anything, she slashed her own
tires. Oh, I didn't even tell you!
She's paying me!

PHIL

Pretty low bar, right?

LILA

Jesus, Phil, can't you just say
congrats? This is going to be huge
for us.

PHIL

For us?

LILA

For me, and by extension, you.

Lila becomes cloyingly sweet, nuzzles up to him.

LILA (CONT'D)

Maybe we can finally move in
together, you can move out of your
shitty apartment.

Phil stops walking and turns to her abruptly.

PHIL

Ok no shade, but I live on a third
floor walk-up. The city classed
your apartment as a "pizza
kitchen."

LILA

I'm just saying things are gonna
change and that's not a bad thing.
Let's just ride this out.

She leans in to kiss him and he returns a sincere kiss. They hold hands and continue walking.

LILA (CONT'D)
And I believe it was a "culinary
tenement," asshole.

She gives him a playful punch as they walk out of frame.

EXT. PRIVATE ROOFTOP POOL - MORNING

Serafina enters the pool deck through a glass door, and walks up to the edge of a lap pool where Richard Todd emerges full force in his swimming cap, goggles and speedo. The dude is RIPPED.

RICHARD TODD
Serafina, so good of you to join
me. Apologies for the uniform, or
lack thereof.

SERAFINA
Where is everyone? It's like ninety
degrees outside.

RICHARD TODD
Ah, I have it locked down until
one. Too much carbon dioxide is bad
for the cool down.

SERAFINA
Right...of course. Per your
request, brought some hard copies
of our story thus far, figured you
can see what your money is getting
you.

Serafina pulls a packet from her purse and hands it toward Richard, which he excitedly snatches from her. From waist up, we see Richard squirm slightly, before producing a ballpoint pen. Serafina is perplexed.

SERAFINA (CONT'D)
Were you swimming with that?

RICHARD TODD
My father always said a deal
doesn't stop beneath the waves.
They never found his submarine,
sadly.

He traces the pen along the page, nodding and "hmmmming" to himself.

Serafina struggles to ascertain where on the page he is, peeking over the top of the packet as Richard leafs through the packet rapidly.

SERAFINA

I hired an old colleague to assist with some light clerical work, so if anything doesn't seem right-

RICHARD TODD

No problem at all, we want you to have every weapon in your arsenal.

Richard fans the packet shut definitively.

RICHARD TODD (CONT'D)

And that...should do it. Top notch Serafina, truly. There's the bones of something marvelous here.

Richard hands the packet back, now soaking wet and dripping red ink. Serafina scoffs lightly, in spite of herself.

SERAFINA

Oh well, this is basically done. We always work out the kinks in rehearsals.

RICHARD TODD

Oh no, I'm afraid that won't do. The script is phenomenal; we also simply can't afford half of what you're suggesting.

SERAFINA

These aren't suggestions. I'm telling you this is what it needs to be to land with audiences. Superhero stories are a dime a dozen; this is why you hired me.

RICHARD TODD

I hired you to write a script, and this has the makings of a damn good one; my job is to make sure we can afford what's on each page.

SERAFINA

Richard, let me do my job.

RICHARD TODD

Of course, and allow me to do mine.

Serafina grits her teeth while Richard maintains his amiable, cool composure. A beat.

SERAFINA

Fine, well. Soulless corporate fluff it is. You know what, cut all the corners you want. You can build the set yourself. Wesley can star!

RICHARD TODD

Don't let him hear that, he's sewn his own costume.

Serafina storms off. Richard calls after her.

RICHARD TODD (CONT'D)

Hope to see you at Dean's tomorrow!

SERAFINA

Fuck off!

INT. DEAN SIMM'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Richard Todd sits at the arm of an elegant sofa in front of several neat packets laid out on a broad mahogany coffee table. Dean sits adjacent, leaning forward in a leather recliner, his elbows resting on his knees. A phone sits atop one packet, with Wesley on speakerphone.

RICHARD TODD

-But setting aside Serafina for the moment, the rest of these have your stamp of approval?

WESLEY

Yes, she still wants to discuss her official credit, but everyone else just needs countersign. We might-

There's distorted noises on the line from Wesley's end.

DEAN SIMMS

Are you on the train?

WESLEY

No, I'm-sorry just one second.

Distorted rustling noises heard over the phone. Dean rolls his eyes as Richard drums his fingers on the sofa.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Ok, yes I'm back.

RICHARD TODD
Where are you Wes?

WESLEY
Oh just...

They both wait for him to finish, but he doesn't.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Anyway once those are fully
executed I can forward them over to
Dana for their viz on them.

DEAN SIMMS
Dana?

RICHARD TODD
BlackRock. The money, Dean.

DEAN SIMMS
Ah.

RICHARD TODD
So signature seals it then, Wes?

WESLEY
That'll do Dick.

RICHARD TODD
Alright then, well we'll let you
get back to whatever Furry Con
you're at and I'll have these
scanned over to you in the AM.

WESLEY
I'm not....I'm at a birthday party.

DEAN SIMMS
Good talkin' to you Wes-

Dean hangs up the call, raises his eyebrows toward Richard.
He settles back in his chair with an exhale, then suddenly
leaps up.

DEAN SIMMS (CONT'D)
Well I think this demands a drink,
don't you?

Dean slaps Richard on the shoulder as he signs the documents,
causing his pen to slide. He chuckles and waves him off.

RICHARD TODD
Careful mate, bond company will
think I was having a stroke.

Dean procures a bottle of whiskey from the cabinet, gets to work on pouring glasses.

DEAN SIMMS

Dick, if you drop dead this close to the finish line, I'll eat my fucking car.

RICHARD TODD

Which one, the Mazz or the Lamborgini?

DEAN SIMMS

Man, don't make me pick.

Dean re-joins him and goes to hand him a glass. Richard shakes his head, places a new packet atop his current one.

RICHARD TODD

Mmmm mmm, one more to go, bad luck to toast prematurely.

Dean smiles and rolls his eyes, takes a sip. He places the glass on the coffee table and seats himself in the recliner.

DEAN SIMMS

Now that is some apex scotch.

RICHARD TODD

What did you grab, the Glennigoolie? Got that bottle from Bob Durst.

DEAN SIMMS

Robert Durst?

RICHARD TODD

What? Oh, christ, could you imagine! No, no, friend of the family. Unfortunate name, though, to be sure.

Richard signs the page with a dramatic flourish, then turns to smile at Dean. He picks up the other glass and raises it for a toast.

RICHARD TODD (CONT'D)

To saving Broadway-

Dean sits up, clinks his glass with Richard.

DEAN SIMMS

-with rock and roll.

The two smile. Dean throws back his scotch with a single swallow. When he lowers the glass, Richard's smile is frozen on his face, his glass still raised in a toast. Dean laughs.

DEAN SIMMS (CONT'D)
Helluva a scotch there, Dick.

Richard doesn't move.

DEAN SIMMS (CONT'D)
You ok there, boss?

Richard, posture locked, slowly tilts forward onto the coffee table. The glass spiderwebs out from the center as he makes contact.

DEAN SIMMS (CONT'D)
.....oh God.

BLACKOUT