

THE HERO COMPLEX

A story about fake superheroes and real conspiracies

PROLOGUE: Stick to the Script

(PART 3)

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For my amazing daughters who will always be the most important people in my life,
and who definitely should not read this. Not yet.

This book contains frequent coarse language, occasional very coarse language, drug use, sexual references, horror themes, acts of violence (funny), acts of violence (not so funny), descriptions of acts of violence (very funny), sexism & mysogyny (never funny), a bunch of dicks (people, not penises), descriptions of a sexual assault (not very graphic, but still potentially confronting), a violent act of retribution (possibly related), depictions of mental illnesses and other troubles of the brain (everyone's a bit fucked up), political opinions (mostly Left-ish), blasphemy (mild), atheism (implied), mockery (general), thinly veiled references to real people (living and dead), unveiled references to real people (mostly dead or close to it), excessive use of nerdy pop-culture references (mostly Marvel), poorly thought through philosophy (mostly wrong), lots more swearing (fuck!), some overt virtue signaling (save the bees!), Oxford commas (here's one...), and jokes that you might not like.

IT IS ALSO REALLY SILLY, AND POSSIBLY WON'T MAKE SENSE.

The opinions of the characters, and the opinions of the author are not necessarily the same.
Some of these people are real dicks.

If you're cool with all of that, read on.

PART 3

In which we get a peak behind the curtains of The Hero Complex

The Story So Far

Felicity is hungover, late, and pissed off. She's also a fake superhero called The CopyCat. She's with another fake superhero called Derek. His superhero name is Eagle-Man. He has ridiculous wings.

Felicity and Derek are on a Field Op (a fake superhero event) called **Operation: Bloodlust**. It was written and directed by Sepp Weedling, who is an asshole. The plot has lots of holes in it.

When Felicity and Derek find Peter (a young boy who definitely should not have been in the building, even though it is his home) Felicity is ready to call the whole thing off. But for reasons that can only be described as flimsy plot devices, that option is not available.

When Felicity and Derek find Peter's dead parents, the whole scenario takes a sinister turn.

Felicity refused to believe that anyone else could be trusted to help Peter, which suggests she has a hero complex of her own. However, given what she knows, it's probably an astute judgment call.

Sepp shows what a man-baby he is by setting off the pyrotechnics a minute early, which meant Felicity and Peter (and Derek) were much closer to the blast than expected, causing Felicity to drop Peter (and Derek to shit his pants). Peter lived, and quite enjoyed the ride. Derek, less so.

Felicity kicked Sepp, and 2 cops, in the balls and leaves the scene by unauthorized public transport. By some combination of fate and misfortune, Felicity's taxi driver is a conspiracy theorist who tries to rescue her because he has a boner. Felicity politely declined.

Felicity walked into the Hero Complex knowing that her life was about to take another turn for the worse. She had no fucks left to give. Or so she thought.

CHAPTER 11: NARRATIVE MANAGEMENT

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Panel 1

This panel is entirely dark except for the speech bubbles and sound effects.

CAPTION: June 1, 1999. 9:13 AM, inside the Hero Complex, Felicity's apartment.

SFX: **BIP BIP BIP, BEEEEEP BEEEEEP, BIP BIP BIP**

FELICITY: Urngfugh

Panel 2

Close-up of Felicity's hand holding a 1998 model Nokia 5110 mobile phone. The only light is from the screen.

SCREEN: 7 Missed Calls

Panel 3

Same, but now she's reading a message.

SCREEN: CALL ME!!!!!!!

Panel 4

Felicity is now talking on her phone. All the lights are still out, it's just the faint glow of the phone providing some illumination. It's kind of creepy looking because it's lighting up one side of her head.

FELICITY: Calm down, I'm fine.

Panel 5

Felicity pulls open the curtain to light up the bedroom.

VOICE: No, you're not! Get up and turn on your TV, you need to see this!

Panel 6

In a small panel, we see a close-up of Felicity's hand holding the remote.

SFX: CLICK

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Panel 1

Felicity is now in her living room. She sits on a couch, looks at the TV, and has her phone to her ear.

The TV is a 1990's TV, none of this fancy flat-screen stuff, this is boxy with a curved screen. You can see that the room is a mess: empty take-away food containers and piles of clothes & magazines everywhere. There's a coffee table in front of her with none of the tabletop visible. There's probably an empty bourbon bottle somewhere.

FELICITY: What channel?

VOICE: All of them!

Panel 2

Felicity's POV. You can see the mess of stuff on the coffee table in front of her. And the remote control in her hand.

TV: ...DONE DIRT CHEAP!

FELICITY: I'm just seeing ads

VOICE: Try FOX?

FELICITY: Do I have to?

Panel 3

Same angle, but now it's a weather report.

SFX (Remote): CLICK

WEATHERMAN: Well no sign of Global Warming yet, it's another beautiful day in...

FELICITY: If I was on TV, it'd be right there, as soon as I turned the fucking thing on.

VOICE: **YOU ARE ON TV! YOU'RE ALL FUCKING OVER IT!**

Panel 4

Close up on the TV. There's a generic-looking newsreader in a studio, looking earnestly at the reader.

NEWSREADER: ...a city-wide manhunt, or should I say...

NEWSREADER (cont): ...*cat hunt* is underway today for New York's newest supervillain...

NEWSREADER (cont): ...*The CopyCat*, who is...

Panel 5

Close up on Felicity, totally stoic. She was expecting this. She's strong. She's still on the phone.

TV (off-panel): ...wanted for kidnapping and super-slaughter after a dramatic incident in Manhattan last night.

Panel 6

Felicity is still talking on the phone but her attention is grabbed by the sound of smashing dishes.

FELICITY: Bunch of cu...

SFX: **KA-TASH! KA-TAKLE-AKLE-AKLE-AKLE!**

FELICITY: Oh Shit! Gotta go, babe, I'll call you back.

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Panel 1

Felicity's POV: Peter is standing in the kitchen surrounded by broken dishes and spilled milk. The milk is coming from the milk carton that Peter obviously just dropped. The kitchen is a bigger mess than the living room, and that's got nothing to do with Peter. Dishes and bowls and pots and pans are piled all over the place, it's no wonder something fell when Peter touched it.

PETER: I'm sorry.

FELICITY: Probably for the best, I'm not sure how old that milk was. Are you hurt?

PETER: No.

FELICITY: Ok don't move.

Panel 2

Felicity is cleaning up the floor. Peter looks over Felicity's shoulder at the TV. Felicity looks at the TV also. Sepp is on screen.

VOICE (TV): Well I **thought** she was a Superhero, because she was carrying this kid you see, like she'd rescued him from the explosion... So we all cheered...

PETER: That's the bad man.

FELICITY: That's one of them.

Panel 3

Now we're seeing what's on the screen. Betsy is interviewing Sepp. Sepp looks like he was very recently kicked very hard in the balls but is pretending it didn't hurt. He's not convincing anyone.

SEPP (TV): Only, when I went up to ask if there was anything I could do to help, she kicked me, right in the you-know-whats.

SEPP (TV): It hardly hurt at all to be honest, so she doesn't have super strength.

CAPTION (ON SCREEN): Rupert, Victim

FELICITY (OFF PANEL): Lying weasel.

Panel 4

The image on the screen changes to Derek walking awkwardly away from the scene. It was shot from the same spot by Betsy & Jim, and carefully cropped to hide the rigging. They were not careful to hide the shit stains on his costume.

BETSY (VOICEOVER): Eagle-Man was seen leaving the scene in some distress. 2 hours later, he was dead.

FELICITY (off panel): Fuckers.

Panel 5

Back to Felicity and Peter. Peter looks distraught?

PETER: Eagle-Man died!?

FELICITY: Just his character, Peter. Derek is fine.

Panel 6

A file image of Eagle-Man (probably a posed promotional image) fills the screen

FELICITY (off panel): I hope.

Eagle-Man
Serving New York
1983 - 1999
RIP

In Derek's Story there is more detail about the TV coverage of Eagle-Man's death. It's not very flattering.

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Panel 1

Felicity grabs the remote again and begins to flick channels.

FELICITY: That's about enough of all this hey, Peter. Let's find a cartoon.

SFX (remote): CLICK

Panel 2

On TV we see DASH LUMBORE. He looks a lot like Rush Limbaugh. Only fatter and uglier. His name is presented large and proudly behind him.

DASH: I'm telling you folks, there's something off here.

DASH (cont): What are they calling her? The PussyCat?... The CopyCat? I've seen the pictures, I don't know what she was meant to be copying, but it wasn't pretty.

Panel 3

Felicity looks confused as Dash continues.

DASH: There are a lot of lady heroes here in New York, right? And they all have menstrual cycles, yeah? Now this is where I'm a genius because I've thought about this and...

SFX (remote): CLICK

FELICITY: Nope!

Panel 4

On the screen appears ALEX. He is very, very, very much like Alex Jones. But it's a young and surprisingly good-looking version of Alex Jones. Before he got fat and went completely insane.

ALEX: The story makes no Goddamned sense! Days and days of vampires, vampires, vampires! Then suddenly it's not vampires?

ALEX (cont): **WELL I'M NOT BUYING IT!**

Panel 5

Alex is in an extreme close-up while looking irate.

ALEX: **BECAUSE THE VAMPIRES CONTROL THE GOVERNMENT!**

FELICITY (off panel): He's not wrong.

Panel 6

Felicity is turning off the TV.

SFX (remote): CLICK

PETER: Really?

FELICITY: Metaphorically.

PETER: Oh.

Panel 7

Felicity is startled by a thumping on her door.

SFX: **THKUNK! THKUNK! THKUNK! THKUNK!**

VOICE (Outside Door): **IT'S CARMILLA. OPEN UP.**

FELICITY: Speak of the devil.

PETER: Really?

FELICITY: Absolutely.

PETER: Oh.

CHAPTER 12: LOOSE ENDS

PAGE 62

Panel 1

Felicity hurries Peter into the bathroom

FELICITY: **HOLD ON! I'M TAKING A DUMP!**

Panel 2

Felicity and Peter are in the bathroom. Peter is sitting on the toilet (with the lid down, using it as a seat). Felicity is whispering to him, he's nodding 'yes'. She's about to flush

FELICITY (softly): Just stay here and be very quiet, can you do that?

SFX: **GULUUGLLOSHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH**

Panel 3

The door is open, and 2 very solidly built security guards (uniform TBA) are coming through, followed by a much smaller woman in a smart suit. This is CARMILLA. She is in her late 30's, short, a little pear-shaped, very stern-looking, and clearly enjoys being in charge of situations like this.

CARMILLA: Hello Felicity, where's the boy?

FELICITY: What boy?

CARMILLA: There are over 1000 cameras in this building, dear. Which of these piles are you hiding him under?

Panel 4

Carmilla is talking to her goons.

CARMILLA: Check the bathroom.

FELICITY: I wouldn't, it was a pretty toxic dump.

CARMILLA: It all is. Hardly a safe environment for a child now is it?

Panel 5

Felicity looks a defeated.

FELICITY: It's OK, you can come out Peter.

FELICITY: Where are you taking him?

Panel 6

Carmilla moves some mess aside with her foot.

CARMILLA: We'll take him somewhere more hygienic for a start.

FELICITY: My manservant is on leave.

CARMILLA: You could afford a cleaner if you were less of a fuck up.

FELICITY: Life didn't afford me much of a choice in that department.

Panel 7

Felicity has refound her confidence and in turn her sass. Just as Peter appears by her side. He does not like the look of Carmilla.

CARMILLA: Ah yes, poor Felicity, always the victim.

FELICITY: It beats being the villain.

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Panel 1

Carmilla has switched from threatening to charming. Peter is shocked by the transition, and not buying it.

CARMILLA: Hello Peter, I'm Carmilla.

PETER: You're a bad person.

CARMILLA: I'm going to take very good care of you, Peter.

PETER: I want to stay here.

Panel 2

Peter runs into Felicity's bedroom and slams the door. Carmilla is talking to the security goons.

SFX: **KLATAMM!**

FELICITY: He has great instincts.

CARMILLA: Get the boy. Kick the door down if you need to.

Panel 3

Felicity blocks the goons' path, and is talking to Carmilla.

FELICITY: **WAIT!** I'll talk to him. Give me 5 minutes?

CARMILLA: 2 minutes. Do not lock the door, or I'll kick it in myself.

FELICITY: That's not as easy as it looks.

Panel 4

In the bedroom, Peter is sitting on Felicity's bed, in a similar pose to when we first met him. Felicity is on the floor beside the bed so she is lower, looking up at him.

FELICITY: You want to be a hero right?

FELICITY: Well, sometimes heroes let the villains think they've won. That way they can find out what they're up to.

Panel 5

Felicity is trying to look confident, Peter is not convinced.

FELICITY: That's what we're doing. We're going to let them think they've won and we're going to find out what they're up to. And then we're going to do what heroes do. We're going to win.

FELICITY: Because the heroes always win, right?

PETER: yes

FELICITY (cont): And we're the heroes of this story Peter. You and me.

Panel 6

Felicity pulls Peter close.

FELICITY: We're going to win.

PETER: How?

FELICITY: I don't fucking know.

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Panel 1

Felicity's face. On the edge of tears.

FELICITY: I'm sorry Peter. I'm sorry for what happened to you. I'm sorry you saw what you saw. I'm sorry you have to go with that horrible woman. I'm sorry I can't come with you. I'm sorry the world is so fucked up. And I'm sorry you got stuck with the worst superhero in New York.

Panel 2

Peter's face, looking directly at the reader, pure love.

PETER: You're *my* hero.

Panel 3

Felicity's face, tears

Panel 4

Felicity watches Peter walk down the hallway with Carmilla and the goons. Peter is looking back at her. It's the bravest face he can manage.

FELICITY: You're the bravest boy I know, Peter Parkinson.

Panel 5

Felicity walks through her empty apartment toward the bedroom.

Panel 6

She collapses onto the bed.

Panel 7

She curls up in the fetal position and weeps.

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Panel 1

Derek lives in an apartment very similar to Felicity's, only much tidier. Meticulously tidy.

He is on his couch, watching the same footage on TV as Felicity was watching. Derek is in civilian clothes now, jeans and a t-shirt. Pixies?

BETSY (VOICEOVER): Eagle-Man was seen leaving the scene in some distress. 2 hours later, he was dead.

DEREK: An indignant end. How fitting.

Panel 2

Derek is in an elevator. He was the last to get in. He stands at the front with 3 people behind him. They're all smirking. Derek is not angry, he's stoic.

PERSON 1: I think it's shitty what they did to you.

PERSON 2: Yeah, that really stinks.

PERSON 3: I'd lose my shit if they did that to me.

PERSON 1: He already did.

ALL: Bahahahahahah

Panel 3

Derek is sitting in a waiting room, kinda corporate office-like. There's a receptionist looking straight at Derek, with a mix of pity and disgust. There's a TV on in the corner.

TV: Eagle-Man was perhaps best known for his chicken-like costume, which has long been fodder for late-night television hosts.

Panel 4

A youngish David Letterman is doing his opening monologue.

LETTERMAN: Until Eagle-Man saved the day. What'd he do, sit on them until they hatched?

AUDIENCE: BAHAAHA!

DEREK (off-panel): Can we turn that off, please?

Panel 4

Meet GREG CLARKE. Greg is a classic alpha male middle-management type. Expensive suit, high blood pressure (red face), Mid 30's, working his way up. He looks a lot like Clark Gregg.

Avoid showing the back of his head, unless he's got a hat on. He has a big bald patch that gets revealed for the first time near the end.

Derek is in Clarke's office. It reeks of power and status, especially his too-big desk. Everything is of the best quality. But leave room for bigger and better offices, he's still only upper-middle management. On his desk is a name plate that says

Gregory Clarke
VP Operations, Logistics Division

Carmilla is there as well, she has placed a chair awkwardly on the side of the desk because she thinks she should be sitting on the same side as Clarke, but Clarke disagrees.

DEREK: So that's it, I'm dead?

CLARKE: No, Derek, Eagle-Man is dead, you are born again. You're free.

DEREK: No one is free in this place.

Panel 5

DEREK: Permission to speak candidly, sir.

CLARKE: Be my guest, but don't forget there's a trial coming up.

DEREK: Candidly, sir, I don't give a fuck.

Panel 6

DEREK: I woke up this morning to the sight of my shit-stained ass on every channel. And that's not even close to the most undignified thing that's happened to me. My entire career has been one indignity after another and it started on my first fucking day.

DEREK: And it has ended as it began, with me and my costume as the butt of a joke.

DEREK: I'm fucking glad that it's over, and I fucking hate you all. Go fuck yourselves.

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Panel 1

CLARKE: There's something you need to know. About your case.

CARMILLA: The Burea admits liability. You will be compensated.

Panel 2

Derek is surprised and elated.

DEREK: I won?

CARMILLA: You won.

DEREK: I fucking won? I can't believe it! I won!

Panel 3

Derek quickly changes from delighted to suspicious.

DEREK: You're doing this to shut me up aren't you?

CLARKE: Yes, Derek.

DEREK: And last night? Was that all some elaborate ruse to get one last prank in at good old "he can take it" Derek's expense?

CLARKE: No, that was just dumb luck. You shat your own pants my man, and ain't no-one to blame for that but yourself.

Panel 4

DEREK: What do I get?

CLARKE: Everything you asked for.

Panel 5

DEREK: Offsite housing?

CARMILLA: Yes.

DEREK: Full pension?

CARMILLA: Yes.

DEREK: I can still work in the food court?

CARMILLA: As much as you want.

DEREK: Boat?

CARMILLA: A small one.

DEREK I didn't ask for a big one.

Panel 6

DEREK: And do I get an apology? On the record?

CARMILLA: You will. But there's one condition.

DEREK: What's that?

CARMILLA: Help us bury Felicity.

DEREK: Fuck you both.

CHAPTER 13 MORE LOOSE ENDS

Page 67

Panel 1

Peter is in a child-minding centre. He's the only kid there. And the place is completely trashed. There were other kids there, but they have evacuated to a safe room with all the teachers. Peter is calm.

Derek is walking past with Carmilla. The door was not supposed to be open. Both of them are shocked at the state of the place.

DEREK: Peter!?

PETER: I knew you weren't dead!

DEREK: So when you said to me it's under control, this is what you meant?

Panel 2

PETER: Why can't I go with Derek?

CARMILLA: Fuck, why didn't I think of that.

DEREK: Think of what?

Panel 3

CARMILLA: How would you like to be Peter's legal guardian?

DEREK: Ummmmm...

PETER: The correct answer is yes.

Panel 4

Where the documents appeared from is a mystery, but she is definitely holding them.

CARMILLA: I've got the documents right here. Sign this and the boy is yours.

DEREK: Hang on a second! I need a moment to consider this?

PETER: Don't you want me?

Panel 5

Derek indicates the mess around the room.

DEREK: I'm sorry Peter, but it's a big decision.

PETER: They killed my parents!

DEREK: Give me those papers.

Panel 6

Derek is signing the papers

CARMILLA: Why didn't we think of this sooner?

DEREK: We? I asked you. You told me you had it sorted.

CARMILLA: No, I said you could consider it sorted. I had a shortlist.

Panel 7

DEREK: And I wasn't on your shortlist? Even after I asked after him?

CARMILLA: ...

Panel 8

DEREK: Were you only thinking of white people?

CARMILLA: No I wa... um... yeah I guess so. My bad.

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Felicity is in Clarke's office.

Panel 1

Clarke really wants to yell at Felicity. And it is killing him.

Felicity looks stoic. Her eyes are still red from crying, but she is trying not to show any emotion.

CLARKE: There are things **you** don't know about this organisation. Fuck, there are things **I** don't know about this organisation. There are things **none of us** will ever know about this organisation.

Panel 2

Clarke is agitated. Felicity is still deadpan. A thought bubble above her head contains a very cliched comic book bomb. The fuse is lit. She is pushing his buttons, and she knows which buttons to push.

CLARKE: The script isn't a suggestion. The script is an **ORDER**. And your job is to follow fucking orders.

FELICITY: And leave Peter to die?

Panel 3

Focus on Clarke. You can see the nameplate on his desk.

CLARKE: Maybe the kid was supposed to die. I don't fucking know. It's not my job to know. Do you know what my job is?

FELICITY: Logistics?

Panel 4

The fuse is getting shorter.

CLARKE: My job is to make sure that all the fucking people out there keep believing in fucking Superheroes.

CLARKE: I didn't ask for this fucking job, but it is **my fucking job**. And I do my job fucking well.

FELICITY: Congratulations, I hope you get a pay rise.

Panel 5

The fuse is getting shorter.

CLARKE: When fuckups happen, it looks like ***I fucked up.***

CLARKE: And I do not like looking like a fuckup.

FELICITY: Then why did you put me and Sepp in the same room?

Panel 6

The bomb has exploded.

CLARKE: I don't like fuckups at all. I do not like hearing about fuckups, I do not like having to fix fuck ups, and I definitely do not like having to explain said fuckup to people more powerful than myself.

CLARKE (cont): Do you know what I like doing?

FELICITY: Masturbating over pics of teenage superheroes?

FELICITY (thought bubble): BOOM!

Panel 7

Clarke is on his feet. He's yelling. He's throwing something at the wall.

Page 69

Clarke's office is trashed. It's just Felicity and Clarke surrounded by broken furniture, trashed office equipment (fax machine?), and scattered papers. They're sitting on the floor. It's almost father-daughter-like. It certainly implies there's a more complex relationship here.

Panel 1

CLARKE: Don't for a second think I don't understand how fucked up the situation was, and how badly other people handled it.

Panel 2

Clarke is looking directly at Felicity.

CLARKE: But understand this. You did more than anyone else on the scene to expose the Hero Program. And that was a very, very bad idea. We have a duty to maintain the current state of affairs. A duty to not let on that things are not as they seem.

CLARKE (cont): We have a duty to the public to maintain their expected reality. Whether we like it or not.

Panel 3

CLARKE: Right now, those people live in a world that has Superheroes. The fact that those Superheroes are fake is, undoubtedly, pretty fucked up.

CLARKE: The whole situation is a fucking mess, full of fucked up things piled on top of more fucked up things.

CLARKE: And the thing that helps them sleep at night is knowing that there are superheroes out there protecting them from the bad stuff.

Panel 4

FELICITY: The bad guys are fake too. It's all fucking bullshit.

CLARKE: No. The bad guys are very fucking real. They're just not the ones the public sees.

CLARKE: The bad guys work upstairs. And they decide which fucked up things happen, and which ones don't.

CLARKE: We do what we're fucking told.

CLARKE: Otherwise, people die.

Panel 5

FELICITY: People die when we do what we're told.

CLARKE: You didn't do what you were fucking told. And now you are going to be punished.

CLARKE: Tomorrow you face the consequences. How dire those consequences are depends entirely on how you behave between now and the end of your Trial.

Panel 6

Clarke points to her heart

CLARKE: Control your impulses.

CLARKE: Stop using this...

Panel 7

Clarke points to her head.

CLARKE: ...and start using this.

CLARKE: I need you to be the best version of yourself.

FELICITY: Great speech. Can I go now?

Panel 8

Clarke looks genuinely concerned.

CLARKE: Just don't be a fucking idiot, OK?

CLARKE: Go back to your apartment, get a good night's sleep, and please, for the sake of the Gods, wake up sober.

PAGE 70

Jon & Josef are in identical but reversed interrogation rooms. Each time with the same 2 interrogators. We know nothing about them.

Panel 1

CAPTION: Elsewhere. Earlier.

JON: I get it, It's the Prisoner's Dilemma.

INTERROGATOR 1: What the fuck's that?

JON: You offer us both a deal to rat each other out because if we both keep our mouths shut you've got nothing.

Panel 2

JON: I have to decide whether my friend is feeling altruistic or selfish, but I already know.

INTERROGATOR 2: Oh you do, do you?

JON: Well, I'm his math tutor, and I know he understood the concept, and I think he's quite rational, so yes, I think I do.

Panel 3

INTERROGATOR 1: And what's that?

JON: Josef will betray me. He'll tell you everything you need to know to put me away.

INTERROGATOR 1: Well we'll see about that won't we, wait, what?

Panel 4

Josef is with the same interrogators, in a similar room but reversed.

CAPTION: Elsewhere. Later

JOSEF: Yeah, man, he's into some real weird shit. I mean he's a nice guy and all, and he's a good math tutor, but he just won't shut the fuck up about superheroes.

Panel 6

CAPTION: Later

JOSEF: You know that psycho drove around the same city block for like 2 hours because he was convinced that some fake superhero shit was going down, only it was real superhero shit, and there was a massive explosion and I coulda got hurt.

Panel 7

CAPTION: Later

JOSEF: Nah man, we all just want to play games and talk shit. It's just him. He always tries to bring it back to conspiracies. There's even a sign on the counter just to remind Jon to shut the fuck up about conspiracy theories.

Panel 8

CAPTION: Later

JOSEF: Honestly, man, you'd be doing us a favor if you lock him up.

Panel 9

Jon is being led past the window by the interrogators. Jon & Josef make eye contact.

CAPTION: Later

Panel 10

Josef is alone in the interrogation room, he's crying.

CAPTION: Later

CHAPTER 14: A LONG WAY DOWN

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Panel 1

Felicity is back in her apartment, curled up on the couch. Her phone is beeping.

CAPTION: 3 hours later...

SFX: **BIP BIP BIP, BEEEEEP**

Panel 2

Felicity is pissed off as she reaches for her phone.

SFX: **BEEEEEP, BIP BIP BIP**

FELICITY: ohfafarkssaaak

Panel 3

Close up of phone.

SCREEN: Get dressed, we're going out.

Panel 4

Felicity barely had time to check the message when she's interrupted by a thumping on the door.

SFX: **DANK! Da-dang! DANK!**

Panel 5

A dishevelled Felicity heads for the door.

VOICE (behind door): OPEN UP, BITCH!

FELICITY: FUCK OFF, I'M BUSY.

Panel 6

Felicity opens the door and we meet VALERIE. She's taller than Felicity, with a darker complexion, and has some Latina in her lineage. She walks in carrying a full gym bag. She's wearing a yellow simile hoodie which is an obvious reference to The Watchmen, including a red wine stain for the blood.

VALERIE: We're going to the Bechdel Bar.

FELICITY: No can do.

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Panel 1

VALERIE has walked in.

VALERIE: Can do. Will do. Must do.

FELICITY: The trial is tomorrow.

VALERIE: Sounds like you need a drink.

FELICITY: Are you already drunk?

Panel 2

Valerie has put the gym bag down. She's defensive. Felicity is pointing to the wine stain.

VALERIE: No!

FELICITY: What's that?

VALERIE: A waste of good wine. This shit's stressful and you're not making it any easier.

FELICITY: **You're** stressed!?

VALERIE: I'm worried about **you** bitch!

Panel 3

FELICITY: I can't. I'm sorry.

VALERIE: What the fuck man? You've been begging me to get you into the Bechdel for months. I've finally got you an invite and you're negging out?

FELICITY: Another time.

VALERIE: You might not get another time.

Panel 4

Valerie tries a different approach. This one is far more serious.

VALERIE: The Coven want to meet you.

FELICITY: I don't care.

VALERIE: They've got power.

FELICITY: Not enough.

Panel 5

VALERIE: They can help you.

FELICITY: I'm beyond help.

VALERIE: They know where Peter is going.

Panel 6

FELICITY: When do we leave?

VALERIE: That's my girl.

Panel 7

FELICITY: How are we doing this without being caught?

VALERIE: You've got leisure complex access. That's all we need.

FELICITY: How do you know?

VALERIE: I checked with dad.

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Panel 1

In a big splashy panel we get to see how big the Hero Complex is. Scale is important. This is a massive building, with a lot of facilities. What we're communicating here is that people live virtually their whole lives in this Complex, so everything possible has been done to make that bearable. And highly secure, both from external and internal threats. Except the security is not perhaps as on the ball as it should be. It's a lot to get across.

This is also another opportunity for lots of Easter Eggs. This time there's a specific theme: Marvel movies/TV shows made or set pre 1999. So that gives us all the animated series, The Incredible Hulk TV series (1977 - 1982), Howard the Duck (1984), The Incredible Hulk Returns (1988 - includes Thor references), Blade (1998), and the 1944 Captain America movie, along with MCU Captain America (set 1943), Agent Carter (set 1946 - possibly her red hat hidden somewhere), Captain Marvel (set 1995).

Panel 2

Waiting for the Elevator. We see Felicity and Valerie from behind, they are facing the closed elevator doors. Next to the elevator is a directory. The Up button is lit.

The directory reads...

LEVEL 14

DIRECTORY

Level 90 - 100 Penthouses

Level 70 - 89 - Luxury Residences

Level 40 - 69 - Offices

Level 30 - 39 - Leisure Complex

Level 14 - 29 - Residences

Level 1 - 12 - Production & Logistics

GROUND - Lobby

Basement 1 - Archives

Basement 2 - 10 - Storage

Basement 11 - 40 - RESTRICTED ACCESS

Panel 3

The elevator doors open. The elevator is full. Felicity and Valerie go about squeezing in.

FELICITY: Weird they didn't revoke my access.

VALERIE: There's been a lot going on.

Panel 4

Felicity and Valerie leaving the elevator. Valerie gestures upward to the camera on the roof. Felicity looks straight at it, she's very nervous.

VALERIE: Smile for the cameras.

Panel 5

FELICITY: Are you sure we should be drawing attention?

VALERIE: Yes.

Panel 6

Inside a security room, with a massive bank of monitors on the wall. WARREN (AKA Security Guy 1) is sitting in a chair, a young guy. REID (Ricardo Reid, AKA Rick, AKA Security Guy 2) is standing next to him with a cup of coffee in his hand. He's an older Latino man (in his 60's) with a streak of silver in his dark hair. He's very tall and rake thin, and has a nametag with "REID" on it. He looks like Valerie's dad.

Over Warren's shoulder we see on the monitor that Felicity and Valerie are on the treadmills. The camera is zoomed a little too tight on them, from behind.

There are a few clues about what's coming up on the other monitors.

REID: Still got eyes on them?

WARREN: They're in the gym.

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Panel 1

WARREN: They've finished their workout. They're in the change room. No cameras there, unfortunately.

REID: You know who that is don't you?

WARREN: Shit, sorry boss. No disrespect intended. I meant in general, not right at this moment to look at your daughter, sir.

REID: That didn't help.

Panel 2

Felicity and Valerie are on the main monitor. They're in the gym, walking toward the treadmills.

WARREN: What's going on here anyway, Rick?

REID: All I know is an Op went South, badly, and they want to know where Felicity is at all times.

WARREN: They want **us** to know.

REID: So we can tell **them** when **they** want to know. That's the job.

Panel 3

WARREN: So she's in deep shit?

REID: The deepest.

WARREN: Aren't you worried about Val?

REID: Always. She's got ideas, that one. And there's nothing I can say to change them.

Panel 4

We re-join Valerie and Felicity as they are about to exit the change room. You can see clearly that Valerie is in the green hoodie, and Felicity is in the yellow.

FELICITY: Couldn't find me something clean?

VALERIE: I've had a rough day. Deal with it.

FELICITY: Dealt with.

VALERIE: Ready?

Panel 5

Close up on Felicity as she pulls her hood over her head.

FELICITY: No. Do you really think security are stupid enough to--

VALERIE: I **know** they are. Hoods up, heads down, let's go.

Panel 6

View from the Felicity and Valerie have just exited the change rooms They both have their hoods up and heads down.

WARREN: Game on.

REID: Watch them, they're a tricky pair.

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Panel 1

Outside an elevator on a different floor. Felicity and Valerie go their separate ways. There's a sign on the wall that says

LIBRARY →
← CINEMA

VALERIE: Happy reading.

FELICITY: Enjoy the movie.

Panel 2

Back in the security room. You can see Valerie and Felicity on different monitors, but you can't see their faces

WARREN: They've split up.

REID: Follow Felicity. I don't care if you lose Val.

WARREN: Which one's Felicity?

REID: The one in Green.

Panel 3

Valerie dressed as Felicity is walking past various "Now Showing" and "Coming Soon" posters. One of these is a poster for a biopic of Ronald Reagan as First Lieutenant America titled "PRESIDENT BONZO: The First Super Soldier". Another is "Toy Story 2" (coming soon). More posters if there's room. There are lots of people.

Panel 4

Felicity dressed as Valerie is in a library, walking past a display with a sign that says "Have you read these classics?" You can make out some of the titles - Catch 22, The Trial, Gulliver's Travels, Animal Farm, Brave New World, Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The Prince, Slaughterhouse 5, Starship Troopers, The Rat, The Time Machine, American Psycho, The Princess Bride, Maus, Utopia. The library is empty.

Panel 5

Back in the Security room.

WARREN: Felicity is in the cinemas. Valerie is at the Library.

REID: Val's no bookworm.

Panel 6

Focus is on Reid and Warren who are looking at each other and not the monitors. On one of the smaller monitors, Felicity exits the cinema dressed in completely different clothes and without her gym bag. She's wearing a pair of cargo pants and a black t-shirt and sunglasses. She walks right past a security guard, in plain sight of Warren and Reid.

WARREN: Well, unless they've swapped clothes

REID: Fuck! Shenanigans!

[DELETED SCENE: THE LONG WAY ROUND - EXTENDED VERSION](#)

CHAPTER 15: A LONG WAY DOWN PART 2

PAGE 76

Panel 1

Valerie and Felicity meet by a Service Elevator. Valerie is wearing a fast food franchise uniform, and Felicity has blonde hair. This is never explained.

The down button is lit. There's a security camera in the image, and Felicity and Valerie are very deliberately facing away from it.

CAPTION: An hour later

FELICITY: This is some serious shit I'm in, isn't it?

VALERIE: Yesterday is yesterday, today is today, tomorrow is tomorrow, and the mountain is the mountain.

Panel 2

In the elevator, they are alone. They are still being careful to avoid looking at the camera.

FELICITY: What the fuck does that mean?

VALERIE: It means you're probably fucked, but you're not fucked yet, so enjoy the view.

Panel 3

Close up, Felicity and Valerie looking at each other with love. This was a mistake, because they are now visible in profile to the camera. This is the image Reid discovers later.

FELICITY: I like the view.

VALERIE: I love the hair!

Panel 4

They exit the Service Elevator on level B10. There is a man living in the basement.

VALERIE: I can't believe we just worked out you're hotter blonde.

Panel 5

We meet Alan who has his head down in his writing. He looks like Alan Moore, only more disheveled if that's possible, but younger, because this is 1999. He's built quite a comfortable home next to a dumpster (paper only) using a discarded mattress and some old office furniture. He has a bookshelf that's full to overflowing (no titles visible). He even has an old typewriter, and a very fat manuscript on a desk. The desk has a broken leg and some old books propping it up. There are a lot of cats.

Valerie obviously knows him, Felicity is standoffish.

VALERIE: Hey Alan, how've you been my good man?

ALAN: The belly of the beast is warm and dry.

Panel 6

Alan looks up and squints to make them out.

VALERIE: Still writing, I see.

ALAN: If a story is written that nobody reads, was it written at all?

VALERIE: You'll find a way. The truth always gets out.

Panel 7

Alan looks Felicity up and down.

ALAN: Is this the infamous ball crusher?

VALERIE: This is Felicity.

ALAN: Lovely to meet you.

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Panel 1

FELICITY: Wow, word spreads fast.

VALERIE: Alan knows everything. Don't ask me how.

ALAN: In trash is truth.

Panel 2

ALAN: Tell me... was it courage or stupidity?

FELICITY: Is there a difference?

ALAN: Of course. It's a matter of foresight.

Panel 3

Alan offers only a hint of a smile. It's hard to see through his beard.

ALAN: If you did it without giving thought to the consequences, then you were without fear. Meaning you were not brave. You were a fool.

ALAN: If you did so knowing fully what was in store for you, then it was a matter of principle. You were still a fool, but a courageous one, and one to be admired.

Panel 3

FELICITY: Great, I'll be the most admired woman on Level 13.

ALAN: The Hero Complex is a prison no matter what level you're on. Down here is the freest you can be in this place.

FELICITY: I don't doubt it.

VALERIE: We should go.

Panel 4

ALAN: Before you depart, a word of advice for Felicity, if I may be so bold?

FELICITY: You seem like the only guy around here who sees through the bullshit, so shoot.

Panel 5

ALAN: I abandoned my disguise and became myself, free from fear or weakness or lust.

FELICITY: I have no fucking idea what that means.

ALAN: Ponder it. You'll have plenty of time.

Panel 6

FELICITY: I thought you said you had advice, not a fucking riddle.

ALAN: My advice is this, make friends with Walter, he's the only decent human working that floor, and he may be your only friend for a while.

FELICITY: Thanks Alan, I'll take that on board.

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Panel 1

Felicity and Valerie arrive at a door. Valerie is shaping to knock but the door is already opening.

CAPTION: Storeroom Q, Basement 10, The Hero Complex.

SIGN: Q

SIMONE (behind door): Hello darling, this must be the famous Felicity I've been hearing about?

FELICITY: Ye...

Panel 2

The door is pulled inward to reveal SIMONE. Simone is a trans woman, very glamorously dressed. She is a tall, powerfully built woman.

SIMONE: I don't condone violence dear, but in this case, I think I approve.

SIMONE: What a horrible little shit he is.

FELICITY: Ye...

SIMONE: One for the sisterhood hey? Well done girl. Good for you.

Panel 3

Felicity and Valerie are now inside a storeroom that has racks and racks of women's clothes, all in those protective plastic covers that you get when you get your clothes back from the dry cleaners.

SIMONE: So, are we comfortable as we are? Or are we glamming up tonight?

FELICITY: I'm fine ho...

VALERIE: Glam us up baby!

SIMONE: Excellent choice.

Panel 4

Over the next three panels Felicity comes out in three different outfits. Valerie and Simone disapprove of the first two before settling on number 3. Valerie is already glammed up in

panel 4 She's familiar with Simone and the storeroom - it would make sense she already had a gown in mind. Felicity is looking uncomfortable in a low cut dress.

SIMONE: I think something lower cut for you dear.

FELICITY: How?

Panel 5

SIMONE: Have you told her yet?

FELICITY: Told me what?

VALERIE: Ah fuck!

Panel 6

VALERIE: That costume you wore last night, was supposed to be mine. For my new character.

FELICITY: New character?

VALERIE: I was going to surprise you.

FELICITY: Oh fuck babe, I'm so sorry.

VALERIE: It's not your fault. It was Sepp.

SIMONE: Horrible little shit.

Panel 7

Felicity is imagining Valerie in the CopyCat suit. She looks HOT!

FELICITY: Fuck, you would have rocked it.

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Panel 1

In the security room Reid is buckling under the pressure.

RADIO: Ah, control room, this is Level 33.

REID: Steve? C'mon bud, whatcha got?

Panel 2

Steve looks up at the camera with his finger on his ear and holding up a gym bag

STEVE: Movies long over. There was a gym bag left in there. It's got a yellow hoodie in it. Looks like she changed outfits.

REID: God damn it! We already knew that!

Panel 3

Bill is on camera in the food court. He's outside Joe's Cajun Sushi. The mascot is duck, who looks like Howard the Duck.

BILL: Best I can work out they left they changed outfits, met up here in the food court, then they just disappeared again. Oh, and Felicity may have a new hair cut.

REID: FUCK!

Panel 4

Bill is on camera in the food court. He's outside Joe's Cajun Sushi

BILL: Um, what happened last night?

Panel 5

Reid is sitting at his desk, he has frozen the screen on an image of Felicity and Valerie in the service elevator. He looks calm.

REID: Found them.

REID: And I know where they're going.

Panel 6

Warren has entered the frame.

WARREN: Where?

REID: The Bechdel Bar.

WARREN: Where's that?

REID: It's where trouble brews.

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Panel 1

Felicity and Valerie are now wearing dresses and are glam as fuck. Felicity looks less comfortable than Valerie. Simone is assisting Felicity with some last-minute makeup.

SIMONE: The Bechdel Bar can be a bit daunting for first-timers.

SIMONE: And for you, meeting The Coven as well... that's gotta be causing a few extra butterflies.

FELICITY: I do...

Panel 3

Close-up of Felicity having make-up applied.

SIMONE: Just remember that you've been invited here for a reason.

FELICITY: I'm no...

Panel 3

SIMONE: They think you're worthy, so you **are** worthy.

FELICITY: It's ju...

Panel 4

Valerie is giving Simone the "cut" sign behind Felicity's back.

SIMONE: And don't worry, there's no one else in there.

FELICITY: What?

Panel 5

Simone has ramped up to full flamboyance.

SIMONE: Now go dazzle those witches!

Panel 6

Valerie leads Felicity to a door at the back of the storeroom that we hadn't seen before.

Panel 7

Felicity and Valerie are standing at a large, heavy-looking door. It's right at the back of the storeroom, and has been hidden from view behind all the racks of clothing.

On the door is a printed sign on A4 paper, which has been altered in thick purple marker:

SIGN: Loose Lips Sink ~~Ships~~ Anarcha-Feminist Collectives.

VALERIE: You ready?

FELICITY: No.

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DOUBLE-PAGE SPREAD

View from behind Felicity. There's a crowd of smiling, cheering, clapping women. About half are glammed up, the other half are overly casual. A few are trying for something in between.

They are in a large room, but you can't make out much detail. Most of them have drinks in their hands.

Valerie has gone through the door first, just in front of Felicity, and is looking back at her with a big cheesy grin on her face. You can't see Felicity's reaction.

CROWD: **HUZZAH!**

FELICITY: You bitch.