

THE MASKED RIDER
EPISODE 8 - "OPERATION: EXTERMINATION, PART 2"

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THE MASKED RIDER - "OPERATION: EXTERMINATION, PART 2"

PRE-TITLES 1. INT. RUINS OF A CONDEMNED BUILDING- NIGHT
(FLASHBACK)

It is raining heavily, pounding down outside and trickling through the unfinished roof. A younger RENÉ is leaning against the crumbling wall, his hand shakily clutching the belt buckle.

RENÉ (V.O.)

The ancient Greeks believed their super-heroes to be on par with Gods.

A tall, hooded figure wielding a huge scythe -- the DEATH TROJANITE -- slowly advances towards him. A burst of lightning reveals its terrifying, un-dead visage, three skulls mounted atop one another above a slicked ribcage, and bedecked by a crusty robe, sodden with mud and bits of clay.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

Heracles, Perseus, Achilles, all those guys were the super-heroes of the day, and all of them were somehow celestially-inclined.

RENÉ clips the buckle onto his belt and lifts up the Cyclone and Joker Keys.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

What people tend to forget is, once in a while, no matter how strong or fast or godly he is--

RENÉ (Cont'd)

Ride up!

He plugs the two Keys into the buckle and we

FLASH TO BLACK.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

--every super-hero gets one-upped.

PRE-TITLES 2. INT. TUNNEL NEXT TO SWIMMING BATHS- DAY

We open up where we left off in the previous episode, with the COCKROACH TROJANITE facing down a grossly de-powered RENÉ. He is chucking the poached Lunar Key up in the air and catching it again repeatedly whilst laughing in a low, taunting manner.

RENÉ

Give those back!

COCKROACH TROJANITE

You want them?

He rushes towards RENÉ using his super-speed and hits him across the chest.

COCKROACH TROJANITE (Cont'd)

Come and get them!

He strikes RENÉ three more times, then floors him with a jump-kick. RENÉ starts to recover when the TROJANITE takes him down again with a diving tackle. RENÉ quickly gets back up.

RENÉ

That's it. Now I'm ticked.

He spins out of the way in time to avoid another attack and plugs the Heat and Metal Keys into his belt buckle. While the Keys emit their distinctive electronic hum, the TROJANITE floors him then doubles back for an eighth hit.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

Got you!

He clicks the belt's chambers into place, activating the transformation.

BELT'S A.I.

Heat-Metal!

RENÉ'S armour changes colour from yellow and blue to red and silver and his quarterstaff materialises on his back at such an angle that it deals a hard jab to the TROJANITE'S chin, knocking him onto his back. RENÉ unsheathes the weapon and powers forth into the TROJANITE, seeming to turn the tables on his opponent. This lasts only for a short period of time before the TROJANITE is able to dodge a swing from the quarterstaff and pull the Keys from the belt buckle again. RENÉ, not noticing this, cracks the TROJANITE with his quarterstaff and sends him rolling along the floor.

The TROJANITE gets back up, laughing and holding out the two Keys. RENÉ only now realises what has happened.

RENÉ

Again?!

COCKROACH TROJANITE

And then there were four--

He displays the Lunar and Trigger Keys as well.

COCKROACH TROJANITE (Cont'd)

--I almost have the whole set.

He pockets all four beneath his carapace, cracks his knuckles and then pulls both hands back past his shoulders.

COCKROACH TROJANITE (Cont'd)

Now, before you so rudely interrupted--

He charges forward and plants both fists hard into RENÉ'S chest, smashing him through the wall. His armour is dismissed in a shower of red and silver particles as he lies stunned and bleeding amidst the debris.

COCKROACH TROJANITE (Cont'd)

--I had a job to finish.

The COCKROACH TROJANITE exits. RENÉ tries to crawl after him.

RENÉ

No...you...

He collapses in pain.

(ROLL OPENING TITLES)

1. EXT. SISKO & SISKO OFFICE- DAWN

EST. SHOT of the office door.

TITLE CARD: "OPERATION: EXTERMINATION, PART 2"

2. INT. RUINS OF A CONDEMNED BUILDING- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

It is still raining heavily. Lightning cracks and thunder roars. The younger RENÉ, wearing his armour, faces off against the DEATH TROJANITE. PHILIP watches on, holding the now-empty suitcase in which the belt buckle and Rider Keys were being stored. The TROJANITE continually swings its scythe, forcing RENÉ backwards across the battle-field. RENÉ trips over a lump of debris and lands hard on his back. The DEATH TROJANITE lifts its scythe into the air.

RENÉ plugs the Heat Key into the belt and the right side of his armour changes colour from green to red. He ignites his hand and reaches up just in time to catch the blade of the scythe. Steam rises as he burns it away. He keeps a grip on it as he stands up. He launches a hard punch towards us and we

FLASH TO:

3. INT. HOSPITAL ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY WARD- DAY

RENÉ'S eyes open and he sits up in a hospital bed. A NURSE comes over to him. His clothes are neatly folded on an adjacent chair and his boots are tucked underneath it.

NURSE

Ah, Mr Sisko, you're up. How are you feeling?

RENÉ

My throat's kind of dry. Could I get some water?

NURSE

Of course.

RENÉ

One more thing...how'd I get here?

NURSE

The young man outside in the waiting room brought you in a couple of hours ago. He said you were in a bad accident, but apart from a knock on the head you seem to be recovering just fine.

She walks away. RENÉ looks towards the double-doors at the end of the ward. The NURSE returns with a plastic cup of water.

NURSE (Cont'd)

Here you go, sir.

RENÉ

Merci, cher.

He sips from it.

4. INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM- SOON AFTER

The waiting room is void of life save for the NURSES operating the station, and DANNY who is sitting in a chair with his head resting against the wall and his eyes closed. His earphones are plugged in and he is listening to something on his MP3 player, tapping his fingers on his knees and singing quietly.

DANNY

*Move it down your finger, Finger on the Trigger,
Wagamama O tokihanatte, tsune ni hataraku jiseishin O,
Damarase shoot 'em up...*

RENÉ walks through the open double-doors, dressed and buttoning up his shirt, and stops in front of DANNY.

RENÉ

Hey.

DANNY straightens his back and takes out his earphones. He starts to get up but RENÉ stops him with a hand on his shoulder.

DANNY

Mr Sisko, I--

RENÉ

No need to stand up on my account, Danny.

He drops down into the chair beside DANNY and flashes him a charming grin.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

*Hoo-ee! The nurses in this place are really something,
ain't they? It's like they pour them into those uniforms
ever' morning!*

DANNY says nothing, instead staring into his lap. RENÉ sighs and decides to drop the gleeful façade.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

I know what this is. It's about your girlfriend.

DANNY

She's gone...just like that...she won't even answer her cell.

RENÉ

Yeah. Girls are funny that way. They find out you sicced a homicidal bug on them and they totally lose their minds. Who'd have thought it?

DANNY looks forlorn, and a pang of guilt strikes RENÉ.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

Sorry. That was uncalled for.

DANNY

No. I deserved it.

A moment of silence passes between them. RENÉ stands up and walks towards the nurse's station.

RENÉ

Hang about for me, would you?

DANNY

Where you going?

RENÉ

Where else? I gotta sign myself out. I *am* working your case, after all.

DANNY

My case?

RENÉ

Oh, please, as if you'd hire me if I couldn't work out it was you who broke my window. Next time you feel like givin' air mail a try, use the post office. It'll cost you less money.

DANNY

Wait, you you're charging me for the window too? Dude!

RENÉ

If I don't, my landlady will.

5. INT. BELINDA'S- DAY

The café is fairly busy. PHILIP is sitting at a table close to the counter, idly stirring a cup of coffee.

FLASH TO:

6. EXT. PARKLAND- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A STREAK of GOLD comes to a halt in front of PHILIP and BELINDA, revealing itself to be the SMILODON TROJANITE.

The TROJANITE tenses, then lunges towards them with its claws extended to their full length.

FLASH TO:

7. INT. BELINDA'S- PRESENT

BELINDA sits down opposite PHILIP and ruffles his hair.

PHILIP

Hmm?

BELINDA

Hey, Philly. Feeling any better?

PHILIP

Oh. Yes, I am.

BELINDA

Really? I thought you might've been brooding, because if you keep attacking that coffee, it's going to start fighting back.

PHILIP

It will?

He lets go of the plastic swizzle-stick and gazes at the murky-coloured beverage. BELINDA shakes her head, unable to resist his endearing childishness.

BELINDA

For a genius, you can sure be naïve sometimes. Are you still thinking about that cat-monster from before?

PHILIP

Yes.

BELINDA

I know it was scary, but we escaped it, right? In the most potentially suicidal way possible, I'll grant you, but needs must an' all that.

BELINDA unconsciously rubs the wrist that used to carry the bracelet she threw on the ground in the previous episode.

PHILIP

Does your wrist hurt?

She realises and immediately stops.

BELINDA

Oh! No, no, not at all. It's just...

PHILIP

You are not mad at René anymore?

BELINDA

(Sigh) No, I can't stay mad at him, even if he is the world's biggest dimwit sometimes. What can I say, Philly? I love him.

PHILIP

I am happy you feel the same as I do.

BELINDA

Why?

PHILIP

Because he is sitting right over there, talking to the street-dancing boy.

BELINDA

What?!

She looks in the direction in which PHILIP is pointing. Indeed, RENÉ is in a corner booth with DANNY, writing in his notepad as the boy talks and occasionally taking a sip from the cup in front of him.

BELINDA (Cont'd)

The nerve of that jerk!

She stands up. PHILIP grabs her wrist.

PHILIP

Belinda, do not do anything rash. All is forgiven, remember?

BELINDA

Oh, I'll forgive him, all right, when he comes crawlin' for it on his knees.

She pulls free and storms in the direction of the table. PHILIP scratches the side of his head, perplexed, then goes after her.

At their table, RENÉ stops writing in his notepad and takes another draught from his beverage.

RENÉ

Is that everything?

DANNY

Yes, sir.

RENÉ

All right, let's recap and make sure I have everything.

FLASH TO:

8. EXT. SCHOOLGROUNDS- DAY (FLASHBACK)

It is break time, evidenced by all the STUDENTS outside of class. DANNY and LOTTIE dance in perfect rhythm to the music pumping from a boom-box.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

About a year ago, you an' Lottie decided to form a street-dance duo for an annual State-wide contest. Neither of you were old enough at the time, but you wanted to get ahead of the competition.

9. EXT. LOCAL SWIMMING BATHS- DAY (FLASHBACK)

DANNY is walking past the building in an upbeat mood, when he notices LOTTIE coming out with a hold-all slung over her shoulder.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

Then two weeks ago, for reasons you still aren't aware of, Lottie stopped practising with you, and joined the swimmin' team.

DANNY approaches LOTTIE. Some inaudible words are exchanged and the conversation quickly goes from civil to aggressive, and LOTTIE flees. DANNY stares after her, upset.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

When you confronted her about it, she took off.

10. INT. DANNY'S BEDROOM- DAY (FLASHBACK)

DANNY sits at his personal computer, clicking aimlessly with the mouse. He stops, his attention caught by something on the monitor -- a certain message-board. Absorbing what is laid out before him, he starts to browse.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

You discovered an Internet forum, 'Operation: EXTERMINATION,' where the administrator, 'The Roach,' made a promise to exact vengeance for anyone who posted the name and details of those who hurt them.

DANNY finds and presses a tab marked, 'NEW REQUEST.' He begins typing a message.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

Your argument with Lottie left you emotionally unsettled, so without considerin' whether the site's claims were true or not, you acted out of anger...

He presses another tab, this one marked, 'POST REQUEST.'

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

...and the rest is history.

FLASH TO:

11. INT. BELINDA'S- PRESENT

RENÉ looks up from his notepad at DANNY.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

That's all I've got. Did I miss anythin'?

DANNY

Nuh-uh.

RENÉ

Great. Let's order us up some pie, hunt down the Trojanite responsible, and take him down for being the creepiest son-of-a-witch this side of the other side.

DANNY

I think we should take a rain-check on that, Mr Sisko.

He points off to the side. RENÉ looks. BELINDA, as if by magic, appears beside him, arms crossed and expression furious. PHILIP is behind her, notably less malevolent. RENÉ is unfazed.

BELINDA

Back room. Now.

RENÉ

Danny, my friend, this won't take a minute.

He pockets his notepad and picks up his hat, but does not put it on. He gets up and follows BELINDA and PHILIP through a door into BELINDA'S office.

12. INT. BELINDA'S OFFICE- CONTINUOUS

BELINDA drops down into her armchair and glares up at RENÉ, who stands side-by-side with PHILIP.

BELINDA

You're either stupidly bold, or boldly stupid, to walk in here like everythin's fine after what you put Philip through earlier. You don't even look sorry.

RENÉ

You done?

BELINDA

Why?

RENÉ

Because I was about to do this. Philip.

PHILIP

Mm?

RENÉ

I didn't mean what I said to you. The Trojanite got away 'cause I lost focus. You weren't to know what was happening.

He offers his hand.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

We still *frères*?

PHILIP smiles and accepts.

PHILIP

Yes, we are.

BELINDA'S expression softens but she struggles to maintain her hard-nosed countenance. RENÉ turns to her, reaches into his pocket and retrieves her bracelet.

RENÉ

Can you give this half-boiled gumshoe a second chance?

BELINDA stands up and goes to take the bracelet. RENÉ stops her and slides the jewelled object over her wrist. She starts to say something, dismisses the thought, and hugs him tightly.

BELINDA

You're not so bad.

RENÉ

I'll take that as a, 'yes.'

They pull apart. He wheels back on PHILIP.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

The two of us have work to do. Philip, you go with Danny and find Lottie. She needs to be kept safe 'cause chances are that Trojanite will go after her again.

PHILIP

Understood. What will you be doing?

RENÉ

I'll be using this city's finest voodooienne and gossip queen to track the perpetrator down through his own website. You in, Linda?

BELINDA

The flattery is appreciated. I might know a guy who can help us out.

RENÉ

Excellent! Get him on the line, babe.

BELINDA is already moving towards the telephone in the corner.

BELINDA

Way ahead of you.

RENÉ

Phil-bot, move out.

PHILIP salutes and marches out of the room.

13. INT. MUSEUM OF CULTURE & MYSTICISM, HALLWAY- DAY

BERNARD is descending a spiral stairway. His mobile 'phone rings. He stops, takes it out of his pocket, flips it open and puts it to his ear.

BERNARD

Hello?

The voice of the Cockroach Trojanite responds; he has returned to his human form, who we will henceforth identify as KAFKA.

KAFKA (Over the 'phone)

It's me.

BERNARD

Ah, Mr Kafka. How was your day, then? Good, I hope.

KAFKA (Over the 'phone)

Not too bad. My prey eluded me thanks to the Masked Rider. Still, I made a tidy profit off *him* all the same.

DIAHNNE slinks into view at the top of the staircase and listens closely to his conversation.

BERNARD

Do tell.

KAFKA (Over the 'phone)

Blue, yellow, red and silver.

BERNARD

(Mildly surprised) You mean you took four in such a short amount of time? Well done, Mr Kafka, I'm impressed.

KAFKA (Over the 'phone)

Thank you, sir, but there's a problem.

BERNARD

Problem? What sort of problem?

14. INT. KAFKA'S FLAT, BEDROOM- MEANWHILE

KAFKA, a rat-like man with untidy black hair, sits in the middle of the floor, surrounded by the mountains of bric-a-brac that occupy most of the room, and indeed a great deal of the flat's other rooms too.

He is speaking into a telephone receiver and is using his free hand to press the Lunar Key against the circuitry tattoo on the sole of his left foot.

KAFKA

When I try to use them, nothing happens.

BERNARD (Over the 'phone)

Yes, my research tells me that these Keys are rather different to the rest. Without the Seal of Damballah, you may as well just have four new paperweights.

KAFKA

What the heck is the Seal of Damballah?

BERNARD (Over the 'phone)

That pretty little belt buckle he wears. It is one of a set created by a master smith as tools to be used in certain voodoo practises. It's very important that you retrieve it for me.

KAFKA

Listen, sir, I may live in Louisiana, but I don't buy all that voodoo-hoodoo mumbo-jumbo. That bug-eyed motorhead's still got two of his Keys and I'll bet my vintage Jack Kirby collection he's itchin' to get the others back, so unless you tell your pal Smith to whip me up one of those Seals, I might not be so lucky next time.

BERNARD (Over the 'phone)

A smith, Mr Kafka, a *metal-smith*, and I'm afraid that I could not have another one created even if I wanted to.

15. INT. MUSEUM OF CULTURE & MYSTICISM, HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

DIAHNNE is walking down towards BERNARD as he continues his conversation.

BERNARD (Cont'd)

With only two Keys, the Masked Rider will be severely weakened. If you could overcome him before, then you will certainly be able to do so again.

KAFKA (Over the 'phone)

But--

BERNARD

(Interrupting) This conversation is over. Goodbye, Mr Kafka.

He hangs up.

BERNARD (Cont'd)

Lord, give me strength.

DIAHNNE wraps her arms around him from behind, shaping herself affectionately against his back.

DIAHNNE

You're a natural at giving orders, my darling, but I'm not sure my father would appreciate you tellin' just anybody about the Seals.

BERNARD

Relax. It's not like I said anything that geek could use against us. I just played to his interests as someone who connects better with his fantasies than with real people. Besides, we *do* need that Seal, if we're going to keep the Masked Rider from interfering in our work.

DIAHNNE

Mm...you're learning. I knew there was a reason I picked you, Bernard.

She unlatches herself from him and smiles slyly.

DIAHNNE (Cont'd)

So don't give me reason to think otherwise.

She saunters off down the hallway. BERNARD watches her retreating back with a look of controlled disdain, then heads in the opposite direction.

BERNARD (V.O.)

Just keep pushing your luck, 'my darling.'

He walks past a plant pot, behind which is SIR TIGSWORTHY. The cat mews quietly to himself and pads after him, tail erect.

16. INT. KAFKA'S FLAT, BEDROOM- DAY

KAFKA sweeps some junk off his writing desk and starts working on some more comic pages, drawing at an almost frantic pace.

KAFKA

(Muttering to himself) He's right. I've got four of those Key things and he's only got two. By the time I'm through with you, Masked Rider or whoever you really are, Ville Venteuse is going to have a *new* hero -- the Roach! And the Roach never lets his prey elude him for long!

17. EXT. COMIC BOOK STREET- DAY

WIDE SHOT of the street, which is void of life, save for an illustrated version of LOTTIE walking at a brisk pace. SOMEONE moves in the shadows between two buildings, and LOTTIE goes into an alleyway.

18. EXT. COMIC BOOK ALLEYWAY- CONTINUOUS

LOTTIE walks on through the alleyway. A sneaking darkness surrounds her, gradually closing in as if to snare her. She begins to grow nervous and peers over her shoulder.

Wide-eyed, she breaks into a run. She reaches the end of the alleyway and turns into the next corner, straight into...

19. EXT. STREET- CONTINUOUS

...PHILIP, accompanied by DANNY. LOTTIE lets out a short shriek and swings her handbag, but PHILIP nonchalantly catches it.

PHILIP

Good afternoon, Ms Hebet. My name is Philip and I am a friend. Please come with us.

LOTTIE

I'm not going anywhere with him!

PHILIP

Danny did not ask you. I did.

LOTTIE

And why should I do what you ask, huh? I don't know you!

PHILIP

Between us and the Cockroach Trojanite, whose company would you prefer?

20. EXT. BLOCK OF FLATS, DOWNTOWN VILLE VENTEUSE- DAY

EST. SHOT of the building. René's motorcycle is parked by the kerb. We focus on one half-open window in particular, as the voices of BELINDA and another man, INZHANE, can be heard from inside.

BELINDA (From inside the flat)

Can't you go any faster, Zhane?

ZHANE (From inside the flat)

Listen, Linda, I might be the master at this kind of thing--

21. INT. ZHANE'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

An elaborate computer set-up takes up one wall of the flat, with multiple monitors all a-flood with flowing streams of data and rapidly shifting web-pages, and countless plugs taking up extension leads which are duct taped to the wall. This is the self-made centre of power for perhaps the greatest computer whiz in the entire city.

Seated in front of all this technological paraphernalia and typing at the speed of sound is INZHANE, a Japanese man wearing a Hawaiian shirt, khakis and sandals.

BELINDA and RENÉ are poised on either side of him.

INZHANE (Cont'd)

--but if you want me to accurately pinpoint your man's location with no margin of error, I absolutely cannot be rushed! And for the last time, you know I've had my name changed by deed poll!

BELINDA

I'm not callin' you, 'InZhane.'

INZHANE

But I *am* InZhane!

RENÉ

Can you really find out where he is through his web-site?

INZHANE

I'm not this city's top tech-head for nothin', detective, though to be honest my software *is* a bit out of date.

RENÉ

How out of date?

INZHANE

A week.

RENÉ

When was the last time you upgraded your stuff?

INZHANE

A week.

RENÉ scratches the side of his head.

RENÉ (V.O.)

This super-hacker stuff makes my brain hurt.

INZHANE

Oh, please, you'd be totally blitzed if I really got started. Anyway, a little hocus, a little pocus and...I found him. 15C Samsa Heights.

BELINDA

Great work, Zhane.

INZHANE

So, how are you to going to pay me for my invaluable services?

RENÉ

By not turning this city's top *computer hacker* over to the cops.

INZHANE

Ha! You wouldn't dare turn me in.

RENÉ holds up his mobile 'phone.

RENÉ

Oh, *oui*? I've got them on speed-dial.

INZHANE deflates in his chair.

INZHANE

Dude! ...Not cool.

RENÉ pockets his 'phone and starts striding towards the door.

RENÉ

Relax, *mon ami*. You were invaluable in this case, but considering I can barely afford to pay my own rent, I'm not goin' to throw money away for somethin' I can get for free. *Au revoir pour maintenant*.

He exits, leaving INZHANE in awe.

INZHANE

Whoa. That's hard-boiled.

BELINDA

Tell me 'bout it.

22. EXT. BLOCK OF FLATS- MOMENTS LATER

RENÉ, mounted on his motorcycle, pulls on his crash helmet and starts the ignition. He drives away from the kerb.

23. INT. SSKO & SSKO OFFICE- DAY

Two small chairs have been set up facing each other. DANNY and LOTTIE sit on them, staring intently into each other's eyes. For a long time there is silence between them. PHILIP enters, carrying a tray with three mugs of coffee on it. He hands two of them to his guests, then sits on the sofa with his own.

PHILIP

Drink. But make sure they do not attack you, all right?

DANNY and LOTTIE look at him, equally confused, then decide not to question him.

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DANNY nurses his coffee mug between his palms while LOTTIE drinks the hot beverage. She is visibly the tenser of the two. After a while...

LOTTIE

Why did you bring me here?

PHILIP

Your protection.

LOTTIE

Not you. (*Coldly*) Him.

DANNY

I wanted to make it up to you.

LOTTIE

(*In disbelief*) You wanted to make it up to me?
(*Angry*) That monster's going to kill me because of you. Did you even think that the first thing you should've done was, I dunno, cancel the hit?! I wish I'd known at the start that you were such a freak!

DANNY loses his apologetic visage and points at her.

DANNY

Oh, yeah? I wish I'd known that you were such a hard-nosed shrew! And another thing; who taught you how to street dance, the Indian Michael Jackson?

LOTTIE

What did you say?!

DANNY

Couldn't you hear over the sound of your own ego?!

They lunge at each other. PHILIP spreads his arms between them, keeping them apart.

PHILIP

I anticipated this agitation. Please wait one second.

He stands and walks OFF-SCREEN. The lights go out, plunging everyone into darkness. We hear DANNY and LOTTIE struggling.

A door opens...scuffling footsteps descending metal stairs...a loud, mechanical whirring...a resounding SLAM!

24. INT. THE RECKONING- DAY

Azure lights in the walls and ceiling switch on. DANNY and LOTTIE are standing together inside the massive vehicle. They feel out the arching inner walls, trying to find a door with no success.

25. INT. PHILIP'S WORKSHOP- CONTINUOUS

PHILIP walks up and down the catwalk, as if on patrol.

PHILIP

In dark, cramped quarters, devoid of any distractions, those two will have to strike up a conversation to stave off boredom. Under those circumstances, the truth will out and reconciliation is certain to follow.

LOTTIE (From inside)

This is all your fault you stupid creep!

DANNY (From inside)

My fault?! You were the one who-

LOTTIE (From inside)

Oh, that's typical! Don't you dare try to pin this one on me like you do everything else, Danny Mazerolle!

DANNY (From inside)

What's that supposed to mean?!

LOTTIE (From inside)

I'd tell you but I don't speak troglodyte!

PHILIP

(Sigh) ...Almost certain.

26. EXT. WALKWAY OUTSIDE KAFKA'S FLAT- DAY

RENÉ stands outside the door to 15C. He rings the doorbell.

27. INT. KAFKA'S FLAT, BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

KAFKA is still working on his comic. He looks up when he hears the 'bell, and cautiously rises to his feet. He edges towards the door of the room.

KAFKA

Who is it?

RENÉ (From outside)

(Pinched-nose falsetto) Special delivery.

28. EXT. WALKWAY OUTSIDE KAFKA'S FLAT- CONTINUOUS

The door opens. KAFKA stares at RENÉ. His eyes bulge in his sockets as recognition sinks in. He tries to slam the door in his face, but RENÉ catches it one-handed.

KAFKA

You!

RENÉ

Me. You got somethin' of mine, boy. I want them back.

29. INT. KAFKA'S FLAT, HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

KAFKA rushes away from the door towards the bedroom. RENÉ follows him, casually cracking his knuckles and whistling the tune to Bernard Herrmann's, 'Twisted Nerve.'

30. INT. KAFKA'S FLAT, BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

KAFKA darts through the door into the room and snatches something off his writing desk -- a box containing the four stolen Rider Keys, and his own Trojanite Key. RENÉ enters. KAFKA sneers at him.

KAFKA

Oh, I got something for you all right, peach-fuzz. I'll give it to you after I turn the Hebet girl into a smear on the tarmac!

He raises his left foot and puts the Trojanite Key against the tattoo. It disappears inside and a layer of slimy exudes from his body, turning him into the COCKROACH TROJANITE. He makes a break for the open window.

31. EXT. KAFKA'S FLAT- CONTINUOUS

The COCKROACH TROJANITE leaps out of the window, lands in the adjacent alleyway and takes off. RENÉ leans through and fishes his mobile 'phone out of his pocket.

RENÉ

After him, Bugsy.

The 'phone transforms and zips away in pursuit.

32. INT. PHILIP'S WORKSHOP- DAY

PHILIP is sitting with his back against the Reckoning, reading a book and looking bored as the argument continues to rage inside...then everything suddenly goes silent.

33. INT. THE RECKONING- CONTINUOUS

DANNY and LOTTIE are leaning against opposing walls, catching their breath after their shouting match. LOTTIE looks down at her feet. Their voices are quieter and slightly hoarse.

LOTTIE

I wasn't trying to hurt our partnership, Danny. I was...I was trying to save it.

DANNY

Save it? But, Lottie, we're great together! You're the one who choreographed all our best stuff!

LOTTIE

Right, but as far as actually carrying those moves off, you were always light-years ahead of me. We wouldn't get anywhere with me holding you back all the time. That's why I joined the swim team.

DANNY

I...I don't understand.

LOTTIE reaches into her pocket and takes out a stopwatch.

LOTTIE

Synchronised swimming, Danny, it improves your timing, strength, flexibility, all that stuff, and it teaches you how to control your breathing so you don't get tired halfway through a routine.

DANNY

How come you didn't tell me earlier?

LOTTIE

You always look so happy when we performed, I didn't wanna give you reason to worry about compensating or anything to cover the fact I suck.

DANNY stares, nonplussed. After a moment, he sighs and walks closer to her.

DANNY

I'd never think that about you, Lottie, no matter what.

LOTTIE

I'm sorry, Danny.

DANNY

Yeah, me too. Never again?

LOTTIE

Never again.

He takes her hand in his own, then they smile tiredly at each other and embrace.

34. INT. PHILIP'S WORKSHOP- CONTINUOUS

PHILIP listens to the conversation with his ear pressed to the side of the vehicle. He smiles and nods in approval.

35. EXT. WALKWAY ABOVE AN INDUSTRIAL PARK- DAY

The COCKROACH TROJANITE skitters left and right along the walkway, trying to avoid Bugsy, which is following him from above using a red-tinted targeting reticule. Eventually, the TROJANITE spins on his heels and launches a jet of slime from his palm. Bugsy, smothered in the stuff, drops like a stone and lands on the walkway with a clatter. The moment it returns to 'phone form, it begins to ring.

36. INT. SISKO & SISKO OFFICE- DAY

PHILIP is seated behind the desk with the office telephone's receiver pressed to his ear. His free hand is fiddling with a pen, scribbling mathematical equations on a notepad.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Leave a message.

PHILIP

René, I just thought you would like to know that Danny and Lottie are friends again. I telephoned Belinda and she suggested we celebrate at the café. Please let me know how everything is going on your end. See you.

37. EXT. WALKWAY ABOVE AN INDUSTRIAL PARK- CONTINUOUS

The TROJANITE, holding the 'phone, has heard everything.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

Belinda's, huh?

He chuckles, throws the 'phone into the air, and dashes away before it lands.

38. EXT. BELINDA'S- DAY

HIP-HOP MUSIC permeates the air, rumbling out of a boom-box. DANNY and LOTTIE are performing their double-act, and a SMALL CROWD has gathered to watch, including PHILIP, BELINDA and the

members of Danny's dance group. A few of them are clapping in rhythm with the music. The performance reaches towards its climax. DANNY takes LOTTIE'S hands and gets ready for the big finale...when a manhole cover explodes out of its hole and bangs into LOTTIE'S leg, dislocating her knee and dropping both youths in a flailing pile of limbs.

The COCKROACH TROJANITE jumps out of the manhole and lands on the street, throwing the crowd into panicked chaos. BELINDA and PHILIP go to check on LOTTIE, who is holding her leg in agony. DANNY rises, glaring angrily at the TROJANITE.

DANNY

Leave her alone!

COCKROACH TROJANITE

Didn't you read the small print, kid? Requests aren't retractable.

DANNY

Retract this!

DANNY charges at the TROJANITE, who catches his wrist and twists his arm up behind his back.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

That's seriously the best you could come up with? Who the heck are you, Bob Budiansky? Get outta my way!

He shoves DANNY painfully into the wall of the building and advances on LOTTIE. BELINDA puts her arms protectively around her. PHILIP, expression fierce, interposes himself between the monster and the girls. The TROJANITE grabs him roughly by the throat and lifts him off his feet, choking him.

BELINDA

Philly!

COCKROACH TROJANITE

There's only room for one hero in Ville Venteuse, and I'll waste anyone who gets in my way to prove it.

PHILIP

(Struggling) You...are not...a hero...you...are a...murderer...!

COCKROACH TROJANITE

I destroy those who deserve it. People come to me when they've been hurt, when nobody else will listen to their problems, to make sure those who hurt them don't get a chance to do so again! I save this world by exterminating its putrid elements!

While he rants on, LOTTIE crawls over to the dazed DANNY, even though she is in visibly excruciating pain.

PHILIP

Maybe...you should try...writing a newspaper column...!

The TROJANITE snarls and pulls back his fist. PHILIP closes his eyes and waits for it. Suddenly, BELINDA jumps in with a can of *Raid* and unloads it in the creature's face, forcing him to release his captive and stagger blindly, bellowing in pain.

BELINDA

You all right, Philly?

PHILIP

(Coughing) Yes, thank you. Why were you carrying that?

BELINDA

Rule #1 if you visit the Bayou regularly. Always carry somethin' for the mosquitoes.

PHILIP grins, then they both go to help DANNY and LOTTIE. The TROJANITE looks daggers at them, his eyes red and rheumy.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

(Breathing heavily) That does it...now I'm mad!

RENÉ (O.O.S.)

Take a number an' wait your turn!

All eyes turn in the direction of the voice. RENÉ rides in on his motorcycle and parks at the kerb. He removes his helmet and climbs off. He points an accusing finger at the monster.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

You owe me a new 'phone, dirt-breath!

PHILIP

René!

RENÉ

Sorry I'm late, Philip. You and Belinda get those crazy kids outta here. I got the bug.

PHILIP nods, and puts LOTTIE'S arm around his shoulders to take the weight off her wounded leg. BELINDA aids DANNY the same way and all four head up the street. Once they are out of sight, RENÉ reaches under his waistcoat, retrieves the buckle and attaches it to his belt, then reveals the black and green Rider Keys.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

Let's dance...ride up!

He plugs the Keys into the buckle's chambers and charges at the blinded Trojanite as green and purple electricity arcs out of the buckle and wraps around his body.

BELT'S A.I.

Cyclone-Joker!

RENÉ, now clad in his armour, leaps from the cloud of energy and drives his foot into the TROJANITE'S gut. The monster bounces off a lamppost, trembles as he somehow keeps his balance, then jumps down the open manhole.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

See you!

RENÉ

Nice try.

He dives in as well.

39. EXT. PUBLIC PLAZA- DAY

The COCKROACH TROJANITE bursts out of another manhole and lands near an underpass. RENÉ appears seconds later and the two square off. The TROJANITE brushes one of his wing extensions aside, revealing the box with the four stolen Rider Keys hanging off his waist.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

I'll be taking those last two Keys of yours now...and the Seal of Damballah.

RENÉ

You mean my belt?

He pauses to reflect, then starts towards his opponent with an unusually rhythmic movement, half-fighting, half-dancing.

RENÉ (Cont'd)

Then you'd better be ready to work for it!

He swings his leg out in high and low roundhouse kicks, which the TROJANITE evades. He avoids the TROJANITE'S swipes, then returns with a punch to the chest. He deals a kick, then puts a hand on the ground and lifts his entire weight into the air for a heel strike!

At the far end of the plaza, SANDIFER leans into view. He already has his 'phone to his ear. His face registers utter bewilderment. He ducks around the corner before anyone can spot him.

SANDIFER

Sinister, it's Sandifer...um...could you do a search on Capoeira schools in the area? Why? Well, uh, think I'd better get a photo or you're not gonna believe me.

He holds out the 'phone so it faces the battle, turns on the camera function and snaps a few shots.

RENÉ dodges two more swipes, kicks the TROJANITE twice, darts away from another attack, then supports himself with his hand on the ground like before, this time bringing his foot up into the TROJANITE'S mid-section before propelling himself into a rising corkscrew manoeuvre. He lands on his hands and spins in a low roundhouse, flooring his opponent.

The TROJANITE stands again, clutching his chest with one hand while staring at RENÉ in stunned amazement.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

(In disbelief) What are you doing?!

RENÉ

It's called moving to the beat, *mon ami*.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

What beat?! There is no beat! I--

He stops. Listens. There is a definite sound of music, and it is coming closer. The TROJANITE covers his ears with his hands and runs screeching towards the corner of the plaza in the opposite direction from where SANDIFER is watching transfixed.

He reaches the corner, but before he can turn down it, a sheepskin-booted foot shoots out of nowhere and smashes him across the face. The TROJANITE is thrown clear across the plaza and lands in a crumpled heap. PHILIP enters, carrying Danny and Lottie's boom-box. He goes over to RENÉ.

RENÉ

Welcome to the party.

PHILIP

Let us squash this pesky vermin.

He cranks up the volume and puts it on the ground.

The recovering TROJANITE watches helplessly as the pair charge at him. In his still half-blinded P.O.V., they seem to be melding into one composite entity, causing him to back away in a pathetic attempt to retreat.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

N-no! Stop!

The brothers dance around the monster, alternating speedy kicks, punches, and elbow and knee strikes, completely in synch with one another. One corkscrews, forces the TROJANITE towards his partner, then back again. Soon, they are dancing back-to-back. PHILIP bends towards RENÉ, hands outstretched. RENÉ catches hold with his own hands and is lifted vertically into the air, legs spread for balance. The brothers rapidly spin their bodies, first in the same inclination, then one-handed in opposition. They become a literal whirlwind of green energy, assaulting the TROJANITE with kicks, eliciting sparks from the enemy's body.

The TROJANITE roars as he bounces off the support column of a stone awning and the box with the other Rider Keys is knocked free. RENÉ drops to *terra firma* and catches it out of mid-air.

RENÉ

Come to papa.

PHILIP withdraws as RENÉ takes a few steps towards the TROJANITE. He plucks out the green and black Keys and replaces them with the yellow and blue ones.

BELT'S A.I.

Lunar-Trigger!

His armour changes colour and he unclips his pistol as it materialises on his chest. The TROJANITE tries to flee.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

Forget it! You can be the hero! I'm splitsville!

RENÉ plugs the Trigger Key into his pistol and slides the secondary barrel into place. A loud electronic chime emits as destructive power flows into the weapon. He primes the weapon on the TROJANITE'S back.

BELT'S A.I.

Rider Cluster!

He squeezes the trigger. Five bolts of light shoot from the barrel, slow and wide at first, then converge rapidly on the TROJANITE, who disappears inside the ensuing explosion.

COCKROACH TROJANITE

NO!

RENÉ blows imaginary smoke from the pistol's barrel and twirls it on his index finger. KAFKA falls to the ground and his Key pops next to his bare left foot. RENÉ and PHILIP put their fists together in acknowledgement.

RENÉ

Roaches check in.

PHILIP

But they do not check out.

PHILIP smiles and though RENÉ'S head is covered by his helmet, we can rightly assume that the gesture is returned.

FADE TO:

40. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC PLAZA- SUNSET

TWO POLICEMEN wrestle KAFKA into the back of a patrol car. CAPTAIN CHARBONNEAU watches from the sidelines, coolly sipping coffee from a plastic cup.

KAFKA

Wait! Wait, listen to me! I know who the Masked Rider is!

CHARBONNEAU

Sure you do, pal.

RENÉ (V.O.)

Rodney Kafka, a promising artist, fired from Dark Storm Comics for acts of workplace violence three years ago, when he attacked his editor over a dispute relating to his creation, the Roach, was taken into custody.

A little way up the street, standing in the space between two buildings, is none other than BERNARD, who seems positively livid. KAFKA catches a glimpse of him, and BERNARD moves his index finger across the front of his throat. KAFKA makes one more attempt to break free but is shoved into the patrol car.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

Unfortunately, he vanished from his cell. He's presumed to be at large. Operation: EXTERMINATION was shut down permanently, becoming nothing but a horrible memory.

A GRAPHIC of the Operation: EXTERMINATION forum fills the screen. It flickers to black as if it has been switched off, replaced by a reflection of PHILIP, sitting at a computer.

41. EXT. PARKLAND- SUNSET

DANNY and LOTTIE practise their routine while the gang look on. About halfway through, DANNY flubs it and drops LOTTIE squarely on her rear end. The gang turn to each other with expressions of exasperation as an inaudible argument erupts.

RENÉ (V.O., Cont'd)

Lottie made a complete recovery, and has been working hard with Danny. They still argue sometimes, but I think if they stick together, those two will go real far. *Les imperfections rendent...*

42. INT. SERAFINE SISCO'S LIVING ROOM- EVENING

RENÉ (civilian guise) sits in an armchair, working away at an antiquated typewriter on the coffee table. His hat sits beside it. BELINDA stands behind him, reading over his shoulder.

RENÉ

...la fleur d'éclat d'amour tellement plus jolie.

BELINDA

'*Imperfections make the flower of love bloom so much prettier.*' Hey, you know that's pretty good. You should trademark it.

RENÉ

Hmm...maybe I'll save it for a wedding speech.

BELINDA

Wedding? Jeez. You're not getting gushy on me now, are you, detective?

He looks up at her with a smile. She meets his gaze and bends down a little.

RENÉ (V.O.)

When a hero has to go the extra mile to prove what he's made of, the path taken is usually slow and hard...

The gap between them grows smaller. Their eyes slowly close.

RENÉ

Feu de mon désir...

RENÉ (V.O.)

...But the rewards you reap at the end make it worthwhile.

They are about to kiss, when all of a sudden...SNAP! FLASH!

The Masked Rider
Episode 8: "Operation: EXTERMINATION, Part 2"

The pair react with surprise, blinking the spots out of their eyes before looking at the door between the room and the hall. SERAFINE and PHILIP are standing there, the former holding up an old camera. Both are grinning broadly.

PHILIP

This is going on our agency's web-site.

RENÉ rises, grabbing his hat from the coffee table, and chases after PHILIP. The image FREEZE FRAMES before transitioning into a COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATION, accompanied by the sounds of the united laughter of all four people. The comic closes, and printed on the back cover is:

THE END