

SUPERHEROES ANONYMOUS

A short play
by
Dean Lundquist

Rev. Date
18 February 2009

CONTACT:
Dean Lundquist
dean@deanlundquist.com
dean.lundquist@gmail.com

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SUPERHEROES ANONYMOUS

CHARACTERS

BRUCE

PROFESSOR XXX

STEVE

DONNA

TIME

The present.

PLACE

A community center in Metropolis.

SUPERHEROES ANONYMOUS

Music: *Superman (It's not easy)* by Five for Fighting. As lights come up and music fades, from stage right to left are an empty folding chair, David (standing), Prof. XXX (in wheel chair) and Steve in (in folding chair) in a semi-circle. Propped up against the back of Steve's chair, is a patriotically painted trash can lid.

DAVID

Well, Professor, I don't know if I'd call it discrimination.

PROFESSOR

Then what would you call it?

DAVID

I mean they even had a sign out front that said we're going green.

STEVE

Did you get the job or not?

DAVID

Yes, but...

PROFESSOR

Go on. We're here to help.

DAVID

Well, it happened again. On Friday. I got a job working security—not very glamorous, I know, but... I had to nearly beg for that job. I lied on my resume, of course. The bank manager said that they had a hiring freeze on account of the sad state of the economy, but my predecessor died of old age so he took pity on me...

PROFESSOR

Good. Go on.

DAVID

So it was last Friday—payday. I was helping to put the money in the vault and these guys came in—all of them in clown masks. I thought, "Oh, no! A bunch of idiots who saw that movie!" They whip out some automatic weapons and tell everyone to get down. One of 'em hits me in the face with the butt of his gun and--and--then...

He grits his teeth, starts to rumble inside, looks as if he's about to have a seizure and then flexes his muscles and growls.

You know. But that uniform was just too tight. They said they'd get me a bigger one but I had to wait a couple weeks. And I—you know.

He looks down at his crotch.

I was so embarrassed. My stuff just dangling in the wind like that. I ran off and they escaped with the loot.

PROFESSOR

Why didn't you call your sponsor?

DAVID

Who? Wally? Are you kidding? He never has time for me. He's always speedin', speedin', speedin' all over.

As he says this, his head darts from place to place as if he were following "Wally" moving at incredible speed.

And frankly, I think he's hooked on amphetamines.

PROFESSOR

I'll make a note of that.

STEVE

I told you last month to go and see my tailor!

DAVID

You've got to be joking. Spandex?

STEVE

What? It feels nice next to your skin.

DAVID

I don't want to look like some kind of pansy!

STEVE

(Stands to confront him.)

Hey, you better watch it there, son.

DAVID

Who you calling, "son"?

STEVE

Me! The Captain! That's who!

DAVID

What you going to do about it? Hit me with your trash can lid?

STEVE

I'll do more than that!

They are both ready to fight, toe to toe, aggressively facing each other from across the semi-circle. David starts to rumble and quake as if he is about to change form.

DAVID

Don't make me angry! You wouldn't like me when I'm angry!

The Professor puts her fingers to her temples and sings a high note with heavy vibrato. David and Steve grab their heads in throbbing anguish.

DAVID

Must—control—rage...

STEVE

Truth—Justice—The American—Way ...

They slump back down to their seats as Donna enters in a long over coat. She removes it to reveal her sexy superhero outfit, however, she no longer has the girlish figure appropriate for it.

DONNA

(depressed and downtrodden)

Hey guys, sorry I'm late. I missed the bus. What's going on?

PROFESSOR

(SHOUTS)

I WANNA SEE YOUR INCREDIBLE, BIG, HULKING, GREEN SCHLONG!

They all look at her.

STEVE

Excuse me ma'am, but would you mind the potty mouth?

PROFESSOR

Did I say that out loud?

They all nod their heads.

Sorry!

They all sit.

DONNA

You know she can't help it, Steve.

DAVID

You took the bus, Donna?

DONNA

Yeah? What's wrong with that? (beat) Just trying to be like everyone else, that's all.

STEVE

Did you lock your keys in the invisible car again?

She shamefully nods her head.

PROFESSOR

David—or is it Bruce this week?

DAVID

David. Bruce. Incredible. Whatever...

PROFESSOR

Well, our incredible friend here was just telling us about his episode at the bank.

DONNA

Did you expose your... again?

Hulk reluctantly nods and buries his head in shame.

STEVE

Have you thought about getting a sidekick?

DAVID

A sidekick?

STEVE

You know, a young boy that you can train. Someone who looks up to you and can fill in when you're in trouble. Someone who can be your best buddy, your intimate friend—who knows all your secrets. Someone to workout with—who will give you a rub down—an oil massage—or

PROFESSOR

(Shouts)

WHO WANTS TO SCREW A BALD CHICK?

They all look at the Professor again.

Out loud?

They all nod.

I'm so sorry...um, did you have anything else to add, David?

DAVID

Well, I called Stan—thought maybe he could help—for old time's sake. He was the one who had the movie ideas, you know. I was supposed to get a royalty! But after both the films flopped, he just didn't know what to do. I told him I wanted to retire—but I've never planned for retirement—I don't have a retirement account—I don't even have a social security number! I don't have any children to support me. The accident made me...you know.

He looks at his crotch again.

PROFESSOR

(shouts)

GIVE THE MAN SOME VIAGRA!

They all look at her.

Sorry...

STEVE

Did you think about taking Stan to court? After all, he's been making money off us for years!

DAVID

Oh, yeah. I can see it now. They ask me to prove who I am, I reveal my identity—they all laugh—I lose it and wreck the whole joint!

DONNA

Probably not a good idea.

David shrugs and sits down.

PROFESSOR

Okay, Donna. Would you like to share today?

Donna sighs. Puts out her cigarette, and reluctantly stands up.

DONNA

Okay. My name is Donna....

PROFESSOR

Go on.

DONNA

...and I'm a superhero.

ALL

Welcome, Donna.

DONNA

I was my birthday on Thursday.

PROFESSOR

Congratulations!

DAVID

Why didn't you tell us?

STEVE

I don't think she needs any more birthday cake.

PROFESSOR

You be quiet!

DONNA

I'm sixty-nine!

Professor XXX wants to blurt out something, catches herself, struggles and covers her mouth with her hand.

I'm sixty-nine years young and, well, I had kind of a realization this week.

PROFESSOR

Good. Tell us all about it.

DONNA

As I sat alone with my cake, reading my two birthday cards from Mom and--
(rolls her eyes)

big sister, Diana, that make-over show came on TV. You know the one where they give you a new wardrobe after they perform plastic surgery on those dog-faced people?

STEVE

I think they call them "aesthetically challenged".

DONNA

Yeah, whatever. And I thought. This just isn't fair. It's all the media's fault! I thought getting a couple of "us" on the inside—you know, Peter and Jor-el--would change things. Why do I have to be Wonder GIRL? I mean, the press gave me that name. Didn't they ever think that I would grow up?

PROFESSOR

Good. This is very good, Donna. Keep going.

DONNA

So I get the phone book and call up one of those plastic surgeons. He says, “Tell me what you don’t like about yourself.” And I describe to him how my once pert and perky boobs used to bounce as I chased after bad guys. I never had cellulite. My hair was lustrous and I didn’t have crows feet either. Sometimes my bombshell body was distracting enough to foil a crime. I never used to use Oil of Olay and my skin was as tight as—as a virgin’s—

PROFESSOR

I think we get the idea.

STEVE

Did you ever think of Weight Watchers? Or maybe going to the gym?

PROFESSOR

Steve, be quiet please and wait your turn. Sorry, Donna.

DONNA

So I tell the doctor that I don’t really feel very wonder-ful at all. I don’t have a sidekick or even a nemesis. I don’t even really have any super powers: all I have are these stupid bracelets and an invisible car--and I can never remember where I parked it!

STEVE

Typical.

PROFESSOR

Shh!

DONNA

I’ve always lived in my big sister’s shadow. And how could I ever measure up to her? People were always comparing us, and sometimes they even used to mistake me for her. We’re not even really sisters for Christ sake: I’m adopted!

PROFESSOR

Good. Good. This is excellent.

DONNA

So he says he thinks I am still an attractive woman...for my age. FOR MY AGE?!? I’m old enough to be his grandma! And they call me Wonder GIRL! I am woman—Goddamnit! Hear me roar!

PROFESSOR

Good. Get it out. Let it go. Let the healing begin.

DONNA

So I say, let's get down to brass tacks, doc! Boob job! Face lift! Liposuction! Botox! Collagen! Teeth whitening! Brazilian butt lift! How much for the works? And he writes it down on a piece of paper and slides it across the desk. Well, let's just say there was no superhero discount, that's for damn sure. I mean, who does he think I am? Bruce freakin' Wayne! I don't live in a mansion sipping champagne and eating caviar all day. I get food stamps and live in a trailer park! You see, nobody pays us to be superheroes! Nobody! Nowadays, superheroes have to have day jobs just like everybody else. Back in the Golden Age, we had plenty of work and money was never an issue, but now...

PROFESSOR

So what did you do next?

DONNA

Well, I realized that even if I had the money and I was back to looking "girly" again, things wouldn't really change. So I decided I was going to try and form a superhero union where we could have collective bargaining rights and we...we...we could go on strike!

STEVE

We tried that before.

DAVID

Yeah.

DONNA

You did?

STEVE

The Liberty League.

DAVID

The Justice Society.

PROFESSOR

(shouts)

A BIG ORGY OF SUPERHEROES!

They all look at her. She bows her head in shame.

DAVID

Why do you want to start a union?

DONNA

I got to thinking what would happen if we weren't around when the world really needed us/ Then they'd start to realize how much they take us for granted.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Policemen, firemen, people in the military—they all get a salary, right? And then, one day, they get to retire. Right? So why not start a union?

DAVID

Nah. You get that many type-A personalities together and it becomes all about who is going to be in charge.

STEVE

I agree with you in theory, Donna, but I'm sorry, I don't think I can help.

DONNA

Why not?

STEVE

Because...I'm dead.

DONNA

What?

PROFESSOR

What do you mean, Steve?

STEVE

I don't know if I can talk about it.

PROFESSOR

Go on, Cap. Get it off your chest. I'm sure it will help.

STEVE

Okay. I'm Steve. And I was a superhero.

ALL

Welcome, Steve.

STEVE

You know, I've always had it especially difficult in this modern age. It used to be easy: the Nazis, the Communists—the enemy was easy to spot. But now, it's all changed. A few years ago, I was semi-retired and I spent my days working out with Bucky and discovering the joy of musical theatre. And then...September 11th. So, I dashed up to DC and met with the President. He said, "I'm so glad you came, Cap. America needs you once again."

He starts getting emotionally choked up.

I was so proud. He said, "We need to win this war on terror, and I need you to lead us—to be a symbol of America's fighting spirit once again."

He salutes patriotically.

“Yes, Sir!” He told me that one of the generals would brief me on the plan. He then capitalized on the photo op and left.

PROFESSOR

(Shouts)

I CAN SEE YOUR PACKAGE IN THOSE TIGHTS!

They all look at her. Steve covers his crotch with his “shield”.

Sorry. Please go on.

STEVE

So the general says that he doesn’t know where the enemy is—no one does. But, he wanted me to go and rally our citizens and remind them once again what the country stands for. So, the comics went back into production, we took photos, made posters, I was on TV, young men and women started enlisting—it was just like the good old days.

PROFESSOR

That’s great, Cap.

STEVE

A World War II vet stopped me on the street, looked me square in the eyes and said, “Cap, I’m glad your back. I was with you on the beach at Normandy. We’ve never needed you more than we do now.” Then he saluted and introduced me to his great grand kids. But then, things started to change.

He stifles his tears as patriotic music starts to underscore him as he speaks.

A group of kids wrote to the publisher saying that they didn’t want me involved the Middle East. That this “War on Terror” wasn’t a war at all—that it was just a big government propaganda campaign to distract us from the fact that the government didn’t know what was going on and it was all a ruse to line the pockets of government war profiteers. They sent a signed a petition pleading for me not to get involved and claiming that Patriot Act was nothing more than an invasion of privacy and the end of individual liberty. They said it was time for Cap to stand up for the principles our nation has always stood for.

DAVID & DONNA

Wow.

STEVE

I showed them to the publishers and the generals in DC. They said that the mail room was swamped with similar letters—and that we had a serious problem.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Someone suggested that I retire. I said there was no way the Cap could turn his back on the country in its hour of need. They questioned my loyalty, and I said, "I'm loyal only to the dream. In the '40s, I made pledge to uphold the dream...and as long as the dream remains unfulfilled, I can't desert it!" They said, "Do it for the country." And I said, "Who is "the Country"? Is it the Government? No! The Government's supposed to be a temporary servant; it can't be its prerogative to determine what is right and what is wrong, and decide who and who isn't a patriot. Its function is to follow orders, not originate them. Who then is "the country"? By God, the country is the people!"

DONNA

What an inspiration!

DAVID

You said it, sister.

STEVE

And then someone said, there was only one alternative...martyrdom.

The music abruptly stops. They all gasp.

DONNA

Oh, god, Steve, I'm so sorry.

DAVID

Isn't that what the terrorists wanted?

STEVE

I thought, okay. I did it before—they put me on ice after the big war. And then when the cold war started they thawed me out from a long holiday in suspended animation. But they said, "No, not this time." And "giving my life for my country would be the ultimate sacrifice." So they quickly published an issue where I was assassinated.

PROFESSOR

And that was it?

STEVE

Yep. All smoke and mirrors. No gold watch. No pension. No nothing—they staged my funeral and even buried my shield.

DAVID

Taking the man's shield...that's just wrong.

DONNA

So what are you going to do about it?

STEVE

I don't know. America's not what it used to be. Maybe there's no place for me in it anymore. It seems like only yesterday when people were proud to be American. They loved the stars and stripes. They were welcomed in foreign lands. But now they conceal their identities and hide their heads in shame!

He shakes his head in disgust.

PROFESSOR

What about going public?

DAVID

Telling the people the truth?

DONNA

Coming out of the closet?

STEVE

And telling them I'm gay?

PROFESSOR

Well, that too.

DAVID

I knew it!

STEVE

I thought about that. But they'd probably think I was an imposter or that it was all a publicity stunt.

PROFESSOR

Then what are you going to do?

STEVE

I thought about going somewhere else--another country that needed me.

DONNA

Where, like England?

STEVE

Well, there already have "Captain Britain." And the Canadians have "Captain Canada."

DAVID

And "Captain Cannuck."

DONNA

And "The Mad Maple Leaf."

PROFESSOR

HE GAVE ME A “FRENCH TICKLER”!

She giggles. They all look at her.

Well, he did.

STEVE

I’m an American—so I’d have to go to some place where they speak American.

The rest snigger at Steve.

What?

DONNA

What about Australia?

STEVE

They don’t speak American in Australia—they speak GERMAN! Everybody knows that!

DONNA

Oh, yeah, sorry.

PROFESSOR

(Shouts)

HIRE THE HANDICAPPED, THEY’RE FUN TO WATCH!

They all look at her.

I meant to say that.

STEVE

What?

PROFESSOR

Whinge, whinge, whinge. That’s all you guys do. Look at me! I’m a bald, paraplegic woman--who hasn’t had sex in years--with an embarrassing case of Tourette’s syndrome. But do you hear me complain? No. Do I mind that kids call me Professor “Triple” X behind my back? No. Do I mind that I was the inspiration for one of the most popular comic book franchises in the last fifty years and I never got me one red cent? No. We were born in a different age. We didn’t have to compete with TV or the internet. There was no Japanese anime! And I know that kids today can create “graphic novels” with their home computers. I know times are tough, and with the economy the way it is, a lot of kids can’t afford comic books. But that’s not going to stop me. You don’t hear me complaining that “my clothes are too tight” or “I don’t really have any super powers” or “my country doesn’t need me anymore.” Instead I fight for the rights of the disabled. I represent the underrepresented. If we superheroes don’t look out for the little guy, then who will?

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

So on those days when you wake up and aren't feeling "wonderful" or "marvelous" or "incredible", just remember if you're feeling like a zero—you can still be a hero. And even though the world may have forgotten about us, we haven't forgotten about them. And some day, some day, they will call on us once again. And we must be ready to answer that call...

They are stunned. David gets his guitar.

DONNA

Yeah, I guess you're right.

STEVE

Well said, professor.

DAVID

You know what guys? Sometimes, when I'm alone, and have those thoughts of doubt, when those angry feelings start to creep up on me, and feel bitter and like the world has done me wrong, I stop and sing this little song:

He begins to play his guitar and sings.

It's not that easy being green;
Having to spend each day the color of the leaves.
When I think it could be nicer being red, or white or blue...
or something much more colorful like that.

The rest of the heroes sing backing vocals.

It's not easy being green.
It seems you don't blend in with so many other ord'nary folks.
And people tend to pass you over 'cause you're
Mean and have torn and shabby clothes because you tear them when you get angry and
can't afford new ones and you often break a lot of things without knowing it.

But green's the color of Spring.
And green can be cool and friendly-like.
And green can be big like an ocean, or important like a mountain,
or tall like a tree.

When green is all there is to be
It could make you wonder why, but why wonder why?
Wonder, I am green and it'll do fine, it's beautiful!
And I think it's what I want to be.

PROFESSOR

Thanks, David. I guess we've all felt a little green sometimes.

DONNA

I'm glad I came today.

STEVE

Me too. I feel better already.

PROFESSOR

So, let's adjourn for this week.

They all agree. And begin to leave.

STEVE

Hey, Donna. You want to go to the gym sometime?

DONNA

Maybe.

STEVE

How about I help you get those keys out of your car?

DONNA

Thanks, Steve.

STEVE

I'm pretty handy with a coat hanger.

DONNA

Now if I could only remember where I left it...

David gets his guitar and hands it to the Professor and begins to push her off.

PROFESSOR

Hey David, you know there's an anger management group that meets on Wednesdays.

DAVID

Yeah? I was thinking about Zen meditation or maybe even Tai Chi.

As they exit, we hear a reprise of *Superman (It's not easy)* by Five For Fighting. Fade to black.

END.