

DETECTIVE PALOOKA
PILOT

Written by

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ON BLACK

MALE VOICE

So what do you think, boss?

OTHER MALE VOICE

Still a bunch of nonsense, Palooka.

MALE VOICE

Gotcha, I'll just explain it again.

OTHER MALE VOICE

Ugh.

FADE IN:

INT. PALOOKA'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON CLUTTERED PIN BOARD

We sweep through a pin board cluttered with newspaper clippings, printouts of news articles, and junk mail, coming to a focus on two takeout menus. One for Baklava Gardens and the other for Happy Sad Gourmet Chinese.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

So you see, both Baklava Gardens and Happy Sad Gourmet Chinese offer chicken strips.

The menus open up to show they have chicken strips, circled in red marker. The CAMERA QUICKLY TRACKS a string underneath the menus to a picture of a Greek man labeled "Calil Oz", seemingly found on the restaurant's website, and a picture of a Chinese woman labeled "Zo Lilac", cut out of an ad for her restaurant.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The owners are Calil Oz and Zo Lilac. But Calil Oz is just Zo Lilac spelled backwards. And you know what words you can create with those letters?

The CAMERA QUICKLY TRACKS again, following two strings attached to the bottom of the pictures. Both strings lead to the same piece of legal paper with a bunch of different combinations of letters. Heavily underlined are:

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Local and Cola! And that's talking about...

The CAMERA QUICKLY TRACKS one last time, following a string to a printed article next to a label torn off a soda bottle for Cyclops Cola.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The local soda factory!

A sausage of a finger enters the shot as it presses against the label.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And you know who owns it?

FULL SHOT

We see DETECTIVE OSWALD PALOOKA, a man the size and build of a brick wall with an equally strong heart, pointing at his findings, staring expectantly at ALEC BARROW. Alec is a thin juxtaposition of unkempt hair and pessimism, with a puppet of a generic superhero attached to his left hand.

PALOOKA (MALE VOICE)

Happy Gardner.

PALOOKA CLAPS his hands and waits for Alec to show that his mind has been blown by this revelation. Alec walks across the room and flops down on a couch that looks like it can't take many more flops. He turns to face a large out of date flatscreen.

ALEC (OTHER MALE VOICE)

Lots of restaurants have chicken strips Palooka. It's a boring food for boring people.

Alec absentmindedly tries to dig the puppet in between the cushions of the couch. He looks and realizes he's using his puppet hand. He throws his hands up in annoyance. The puppet does not budge from his hand. He uses his empty hand to fish the remote out from between the cushions and TURNS ON THE TELEVISION.

Disappointed, Palooka slumps onto his office stool, and swivels towards his desk to face Alec. He thumbs through a pile of Cyclops Soda labels. He picks one up and studies it.

PALOOKA

I don't know, boss, seems like a pretty weird coincidence to me.

ALEC

Everything's been a weird coincidence to you lately.

(MORE)

ALEC (CONT'D)

The mailman started showing up fifteen minutes early, the onion ring you got in your fries. You even got suspicious of my new shoes, which I still can't find.

Palooka shifts his eyes suspiciously.

PALOOKA

Yes, an ongoing mystery.

He reaches down and slowly closes a desk drawer labeled "Evidence" containing a new pair of sneakers.

ALEC

Also, quit it with all this "boss" stuff. If anything you're my boss now.

PALOOKA

Sorry bo-- Alec, old habits. I like to think of our deal as more of a partnership. You help me with my detective work, I help you get that puppet off your hand.

ALEC

Yeah, and you investigating chicken wings--

PALOOKA

Strips.

ALEC

Isn't helping either of us.

Palooka absentmindedly puts the label he was holding into his pocket.

PALOOKA

(sighs)

Maybe you're right. If only somebody in this town needed the help of an up and coming detective like me.

Palooka whips his head to the TV, which is playing AN AD FOR TOOTHPASTE. Alec looks at Palooka, then back at the television, then back at Palooka.

ALEC

What are you doing?

Palooka stares at the television for another beat, then turns away disappointed.

PALOOKA

Well usually in these sorts of scenarios the news would come on and show us a----

There's a KNOCK at the DOOR.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)

Oh, there we go.

Palooka gets up to answer the door, but before he can make it;

NEWS ANCHOR

We interrupt this program for a breaking news bulletin.

PALOOKA

Aw nuts.

As if being pulled by the arms, Palooka leans between the TV and the door, unsure of which path to take.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)

Uh, uh, uh, door!

Palooka rushes to the door.

Alec shrugs and turns off the TV.

Palooka opens the door to reveal TOBEY RENE, a slender, beautiful looking man dressed to the nines and giving off an air of importance.

In other words, very out of place.

TOBEY

Um, are you Detective Palooka?

Palooka points excitedly at Tobey, and looks at Alec.

PALOOKA

Hey, he said it!

ALEC

(couldn't care less)
Congratulations.

Palooka excitedly grabs Tobey's hand.

PALOOKA
Detective Oswald Palooka, at your
service.

Tobey, a little nervous, lets his hand be shaken.

TOBEY
Tobey.

As Palooka and Tobey walk to Palooka's desk, Palooka gestures
to Alec.

PALOOKA
This is my partner, Alec.

Tobey notices Alec's puppet as Alec makes an effort to look
uninterested. Tobey sits down.

TOBEY
And who's that?

Alec sees that Tobey is referring to the puppet and tucks it
under his arm.

ALEC
It doesn't have a name.

PALOOKA
We don't want to get too attached.

Palooka sits behind his desk. He realizes that the couch is
awkwardly far from him.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)
Alec, could you...

Palooka motions for Alec to move the couch forward, who gives
an over exaggerated groan. Tobey begins to get up, but Alec
puts up a hand to stop him.

ALEC
Please, don't put yourself out.

Alec then slips his free hand into the gloved hand of the
puppet, giving him control of the puppet's right hand. TOBEY
LETS OUT A SMALL SCREAM as Alec lifts the couch using the
puppet's hand. He holds on for dear life as Alec walks a few
steps towards the desk.

Alec places the couch down and plops back onto it.

TOBEY
Strong puppet.

ALEC
It's not the puppet!

Alec closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

ALEC (CONT'D)
It's not the puppet.

Tobey scoots as far away from Alec as the couch will allow.

PALOOKA
Alright, let's cut the brass and
chase it. What brings you in today?

Tobey
My fiancé, Zack. I think he's
cheating on me.

ALEC
Probably is.

TOBEY
Excuse me?!

ALEC
Listen man, cheating allegations
account for 99 percent of detective
work. And almost every time,
someone is having an affair. That's
just life.

Tobey begins fuming, as we hear DISAPPROVING BEEPS coming from ALEC'S PUPPET. Alec lifts the puppet up to see that the number on the puppet's chest, which was previously 99, is now 98.

ALEC (CONT'D)
What? No!

Alec sighs and begrudgingly turns to Tobey.

ALEC (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I do not know if Zack is
cheating on you. You entered with
an air of power that made me
jealous, so I wanted to cut you
down with my words.

Alec then looks at the PUPPET again, which plays POSITIVE BEEPS as the number goes back up to 99. He gives a sigh of relief. Tobey stares at Alec in confusion, then looks over to Palooka, who is giving him nothing.

TOBEY

Ok, somebody needs to explain the puppet.

PALOOKA

That's fair. See, Alec used to be a super--

ALEC

Bad person.

(Glares at Palooka)

I used to be a bad person who did bad things. And now, I have this dumb puppet that's forcing me to do a certain number of good things for it to go away. If I do too many bad things and this number hits zero, I lose my powers.

TOBEY

What's the certain number of good things?

ALEC

One billion.

Alec seethes in rage as everyone sits in this tension for a beat.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Which is why I came to Palooka.

PALOOKA

I help him do good deeds, and he helps me out here.

ALEC

Palooka's the only person I know doing something good with their life.

TOBEY

How did you know each other before?

Alec and Tobey look at each other as we

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. BANK VAULT - NIGHT

The interior of a bank vault, containing shelves full of cash and gold bricks. The ROOM SHAKES as a large crack forms in the back wall.

IT EXPLODES, as Alec, dressed as his former supervillain identity ABADDON, punches through it. Several goons run past him into the vault. Alec's suit prioritizes function over style, with the only things of note being a helmet covering his entire head and a strict red and black color scheme. This color scheme is also followed by his goons, who wear black pants, masks, and red turtle necks. Alec carries his helmet under his arm as he surveys the area.

ALEC

Alright, boys, the heroes are still wrapped up with that shape-shifting demon invasion, so we've got about 10 minutes. Prioritize cash, our gold smelting guy's still on vacation.

NEARBY GOON

(to another nearby goon)
I'm glad Derrick's finally getting to see Reno.

Alec puts his helmet on as the goons shovel cash into their bags. After a beat of theft, the vault door opens. Several security guards stand in the doorway, tasers drawn. The one who opened the door stands in front of the group and speaks into his shoulder mounted radio.

SECURITY GUARD

We've got a super villain break in.
Looks like Abaddon.

ALEC

Oh great.
(points to someone off screen)
You, take care of it.

The guards stay trained on Alec, until the a guard is blindsided by a fist the size of a fruitcake. The rest of the guards take out their batons as a goon, who, despite his mask, is clearly Palooka, begins beating down the guards.

INT. PALOOKA'S OFFICE - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

The flashback ends mid fight as we return to Palooka and Alec staring at each other. They turn back to Tobey.

PALOOKA

Underwater Basket Weaving

ALEC

Underwater Basket Weaving

Tobey cocks his head, but dismisses it, wondering why he even asked.

PALOOKA
So, where would Zack...

TOBEY
Ziegler.

PALOOKA
Where would Zack Ziegler be right now.

TOBEY
Well if he's not a lying bag of garbage he should be getting groceries like he said he would.

Palooka stands up and holds out his hand.

PALOOKA
Tobey.

Tobey stands up and stares at the hand. Against his better judgment, he grabs it.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)
We're on the case.

Palooka runs towards the door and bolts up the stairs out of their basement office. Alec reluctantly follows.

INT. KARAOKE CLUB - DAY

Palooka and Alec enter a blue-lit karaoke club with a long bar and a stage in the back with a neon lit sign above it that reads "SAYAMA'S." On that stage is SAYAMA, a short older person, singing a slow sad power ballad.

Palooka heads towards the stage, but Alec grabs his arm.

ALEC
Where're you going?
(gestures out the front door)
Car's that way.

PALOOKA
But we've gotta tell Sayama we got a case!

ALEC
Actually we do not.

PALOOKA

Come on Alec, I know you don't like Sayama. But they've let me live, and set up an office, in their basement, for free.

ALEC

No, not free. "6 pennies and a lucky song". That's not free, that's weird. They're weird.

PALOOKA

Says the puppet man.

Palooka leaves a defeated Alec and walks to the stage. Alec stomps his foot in anger and joins him.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)

Hey, Sayama! This place is looking real fancy.

Sayama breaks out of the romantic trance the song had put them in and looks down at the two.

SAYAMA

Ha ha, my boys! Join me!

PALOOKA

Not right now, Sayama.

ALEC

No.

PALOOKA

We're actually headed out on a case, like an actual case!

SAYAMA

What wondrous news indeed!

PALOOKA

So we need you to watch the office while we're gone.

SAYAMA

Well I can do more than that boys. Here, something to help you on your journey.

Sayama takes off a hat that they definitely weren't wearing a moment ago and holds it out in front of them. Out of it floats a glowing rectangle that slowly drifts in front of Alec. It hovers in front of him for a second, then flings into his face and falls on the ground.

Alec picks it up and looks at it.

ALEC

This is a 10 dollar gift card to
Chili's.

Sayama, suddenly wearing a very flashy cowboy outfit, tips
his cowboy hat.

SAYAMA

Darn tootin'.

Sayama then starts singing the chorus to Rhinestone Cowboy as
if that's what they've been singing the whole time.

Alec turns to Palooka.

ALEC

What does any of this mean?

Palooka shrugs. He then waves to Sayama.

PALOOKA

Bye, Sayama.

Palooka and Alec leave as Sayama continues to sing.

EXT. KARAOKE CLUB - DAY

They walk out onto the streets of Vivid City. The metropolis
is tightly packed with buildings of all different shapes and
sizes, with the glow of the heart of the city in the
distance. The immediate area is filled with lower quality
buildings, but each one pops with artistry.

A SIREN WAILS as a pickup truck with an ATM strapped to the
back speeds down the street, pursued by a police car and two
people flying along wearing police themed superhero uniforms.
A person standing on the ATM shoots fire from their hands,
trying to stop the pursuers.

Cars immediately pull back onto the road with a swiftness
that shows annoyance in this repeated interruption of heroes
vs villains.

Palooka and Alec jump into Palooka's car park right in front
of Sayama's, a world war two spitfire converted into a car,
and peel out onto the road.

EXT. ALPHA FOODS - DAY

Palooka and Alec pull into the parking lot of the large grocery store chain Alpha Foods. A PLANT-BASED HERO swings by dodging projectiles being thrown by a MAN IN A JETPACK. Another hero slams into the parking lot, causing someone with a shopping cart to swerve slightly. The hero shrugs off the hit and flies back into the sky.

INT. ALPHA FOODS - DAY

ZACK ZIEGLER, a very muscular man in a tank top and a drawstring backpack, walks down the cereal aisle. He eats out of a bag of cheese puffs.

He sees a box of Cardboard Crunch on the shelf, checks his grocery list, smiles, and grabs a box. Next to that is a box of Grump-Os and a box of Lovable Lummoxes, both of which have the majority of the box taken up by mascots that look like Alec and Palooka respectively. The eyes have been cut out of these boxes, showing real eyes following Zack.

Once Zack passes by, the boxes are pulled away, revealing Palooka behind the Grump-Os and Alec behind to Lovable Lummoxes.

ALEC

Is that the guy?

Zack, staring at the baking supplies, takes out his phone and makes a call.

ZACK

Hey honey. I know you're at work, but, I just wanted to know if you wanted me to get some cake mix. I know it's not something we usually get, and we've never really made cake, and don't know how. Honestly, I'm lonely and just wanted to call you. Alright I love you.

(beat)

This is Zack by the way.

(beat)

Ziegler.

Zack hangs. Alec nods in affirmation as Palooka stares quizzically.

PALOOKA

That doesn't sound like someone cheating on their fiancé.

Before Alec can answer, Zack's phone starts to ring. He reaches into a different pocket and pulls out a different phone, and answers it.

ZACK

Hello... Right now? Like now now?
Ok... yeah, I'll be right there.

Zack runs out of the store, leaving his groceries behind. Alec and Palooka jump out of the shelf, with Alec being successful, but Palooka knocking the entire shelf over.

ALEC

Told you.

PALOOKA

Come on, we've got follow him.

Before they run off, they approached by a scrawny ALPHA FOODS TEEN.

ALPHA FOODS TEEN

Um, sirs. Are you responsible for
this mess?

Palooka and Alec look at each other, panicked.

Alec picks up a handful of cereal and throws it in the teens face.

ALEC

Book it!

Alec and Palooka run off. Off screen you can hear the DISAPPROVING BEEPS.

The Alpha Foods Teen kicks a bit of the cereal in frustration.

EXT. TRAFFIC - DAY

Palooka and Alec sit in bumper to bumper traffic, looking for Zack.

ALEC

Well isn't this just peachy.

Palooka grabs Alec's shoulder.

PALOOKA

Got him.

Palooka points to Zack, who is running through the traffic, rounding a corner. Palooka and Alec hop out of their car and follow him.

EXT. KAIJU STREET- CONTINUOUS

Alec and Palooka round the corner to find the source of the traffic. A giant orange monster that looks like a cross between a cyclops, a duck, and a pile of slime.

The monster slurps down the city block, shooting sludge from its hand which pulsates different shades of cryptic symbols floating around it, dissolving everything it touches.

The monster locks eyes with Palooka, roars, and launches a sludge projectile in his direction. Palooka and Alec jump out of the way.

Another sludge is hurled towards Palooka. Palooka grabs the driver's side door of a nearby car and rips it off, holding it in front of him as a shield.

The WOMAN sitting in the driver's seat SCREAMS. The sludge hits the door and it dissolves. Palooka looks at the woman, embarrassed.

PALOOKA

Sorry ma'am.

Palooka runs off to avoid another sludge.

Palooka dashes through the packed traffic, jumping on roofs and sliding on hoods, until he makes it to the sidewalk. He's blocked by the side of a building, as sludge hurdles towards him.

But before it can hit him, Alec races to Palooka's side, slips his hand into the puppet's hand glove, and rips a fire hydrant out of the ground in front of them, causing a LARGE GEYSER OF WATER to block the sludge.

ALEC

I think the duck guys got a thing for you.

PALOOKA

I do look good today.

Before the two can continue their banter, THE GOLDEN GHOST, a hero wearing a gold and white sleeveless jumpsuit with a full cowl, flies out of a nearby alleyway. He pauses as he eyes up the monster. Palooka looks at The Golden Ghost and notices his fingers.

They're covered in cheese dust.

Golden Ghost flies at the monster. Palooka runs into the alley.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

A dark alleyway with a large dumpster. Palooka runs to the dumpster and throws it open. He jumps in and starts digging through it as Alec looks on, grossed out.

Palooka hops back out of the dumpster holding Zack's drawstring backpack. He rips it open and pulls out Zack's clothes. Palooka and Alec share a look of shock as MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY.

PALOOKA
(singing)
ALEC CAN'T YOU SEE?

ALEC
(not singing)
What are you doing?

PALOOKA
THE ANSWER TO OUR MYSTERY?

ALEC
Are you singing? Do we sing in this?

PALOOKA
THE CASE THAT WE'VE BEEN SO ENGROSSED.

ALEC
Surely I'm not singing.

PALOOKA
OUR CHEATING FIANCE WAS IN FACT...

ALEC
Oh alright

PALOOKA
THE GOLDEN GHOST

ALEC (CONT'D)
(harmonizing)
THE GOLDEN GHOST

EXT. KAIJU ATTACK - DAY

We see Zack, as The Golden Ghost, flying towards the sludge monster, as THE GOLDEN GHOST SONG plays.

The SLUDGE MONSTER notices him, ROARS, and starts launching sludge at The Golden Ghost. Zack separates his molecules, which makes him look slightly transparent, allowing the slime to pass through him.

THE GOLDEN GHOST SONG (V.O.)
 FLYING THROUGH THE AIR WITH EASE
 HIS BODY PASSES THROUGH THE BREEZE
 MOLECULAR MANIPULATION

Alec and Palooka chase Golden Ghost below, dodging the falling sludge. Alec plays an electric guitar and Palooka plays a full drum set attached to his body.

As Golden Ghost flies towards the monster, he rears his fist back. His fist turns from translucent, to normal, to becoming slightly bigger with a thick outline.

THE GOLDEN GHOST SONG (V.O.)
 PULLS HIS MOLECULES IN DENSE
 INDESTRUCTIBLE INTENSE
 PACKS A POWERFUL PUNCH
 IMPENETRABLE

Golden Ghost punches the sludge monster with his impenetrable fist. Sludge flies off the monster's face from the blow, and falls towards a small group of civilians on a nearby roof.

Golden Ghost sees this and flies over to them, grabbing them all seconds before the slime reaches them, and turns them all translucent. He flies them through the roof into the building below. Golden Ghost gives the group a quick salute and flies back out of the building towards the monster.

THE GOLDEN GHOST SONG (V.O.)
 A HERO FOR THE PEOPLE OF VIVID CITY
 THAT'S THE NAME OF THE CITY WE'RE
 IN!

The slime that landed on the roof melts through the base of a satellite dish. The dish starts to fall off the roof onto a couple too distracted by the monster to notice. Alec and Palooka dive in and push the people out of the way. They then hand these people their instruments.

PALOOKA
 (not singing)
 Keep playing; it's almost done.

Palooka and Alec run off in their pursuit as the two bystanders, confused, begin to play the instruments.

Golden Ghost flies up to the monster, and zooms right past him, flying straight up into the air. He looks down and adjusts his positioning, then condenses his entire body, causing it all to become bigger and thicker like his fist. He curls into a ball and falls like a bowling ball directly onto the monster.

The color fades from the slime as it explodes everywhere. THE SONG ENDS. Golden Ghost stands up. Covered in goo, he makes himself translucent. The goo falls through him onto the ground. A crowd of thankful civilians starts to surround him. Golden Ghost gives an awkward smile and a wave. Soon enough he can't take the social pressure and phases through the floor.

Alec and Palooka have been watching on from behind a nearby car.

ALEC

So what do we do now?

Palooka shrugs.

PALOOKA

Our job?

INT. TOBEY AND ZACK'S APARTMENT - EVENING

TOBEY

A superhero?!

Tobey and Zack are arguing in their penthouse apartment in the heart of Vivid City. It's a large rooftop apartment, with an ultra sleek, ultra modern aesthetic.

ZACK

I promise I was going to tell you.

TOBEY

When?

ZACK

Soon. Before the wedding at least.

TOBEY

You promised we'd never hide things from each other

ZACK

Yeah; in hindsight that wasn't the best thing to promise.

TOBEY

What about if something had happened to you, huh? You go out and fight one of the million threats the Golden Ghost faces every day, and you get hurt, you get killed. Suddenly you're gone and I have no idea what happened to you.

Zack doesn't know what to say to this, so the two stand in heated silence.

From off screen, PALOOKA CLEARS HIS THROAT. The CAMERA PANS over to show Alec and Palooka have been awkwardly standing nearby.

ZACK

(gesturing to Alec and Palooka)

And who are these guys?

Palooka keeps his head down.

PALOOKA

Detective Palooka, nice to meet you.

Alec gives a small wave.

ALEC

Hey how you doing?

Zack steps towards them, studying their faces.

ZACK

Have we met before?

Alec and Palooka look at each other.

FLASHBACK - INT. BANK VAULT - NIGHT

We return to the scene in the bank vault where we left off, with Palooka easily eliminating the guards. As the final guard falls, Palooka rolls back his shoulders and joins the other goons in bagging the money.

NEARBY GOON

Great job, Oswald.

PALOOKA

Thanks, guys.

Suddenly, the entry to the vault flashes a light violet color. Everyone looks over to see the top heroes of Vivid City: ALLIE KAZAM, an older woman in a mix of classic magicians garb and ancient mystical fantasy armor, THE MIGHTY MANATEE, a younger, muscular woman in a jumpsuit with an M on the stomach and an M on her belt and a ball cap with a manatee on it, and The Golden Ghost.

ALLIE KAZAM

That's enough Abaddon.

ALEC

(a devious chuckle)

The Awesome Alliance of Heroes.

NEARBY GOON

AAH!

ALEC

Exactly.

(Looks at Golden Ghost)

And who's this?

ZACK

Name's Golden Ghost. You'll learn it quick, don't worry.

ALEC

Big mouth. Looks like I'll have to teach you some manners.

Alec hurls a shelving unit at the group.

INT. TOBEY AND ZACK'S APARTMENT - EVENING (BACK TO PRESENT)

Alec and Zack are looking at each other. They turn to Zack.

PALOOKA

Underwater basket weaving

ALEC

Underwater basket weaving

ZACK

What?

(dismisses them and
returns to Tobey)

Honey, I love you, but I can't talk about this right now.

TOBEY

Excuse me?

ZACK

The city's in danger from slime
duck cyclops monsters.

TOBEY

Isn't it always? What about us?

The argument fades into the background as Palooka begins to think.

PALOOKA

Slime... duck.

Suddenly, the images from Palooka's cork board surround him. The Happy Sad Gourmet Chinese menu stops in front of him. It opens up, and the words "fried duck tenders", found right under the chicken tenders, float out of it. Then the Baklava Gardens menu appears. It opens up and the words "new Tzatziki slime sauce" join the other words.

Palooka stares at this revelation for half a beat, before pulling something out of his pocket.

The torn soda label for Cyclops Cola.

Palooka looks to Zack.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)

Mr. Golden.

ZACK

Technically it'd be Mr. Ghost, but
Zack is fine.

PALOOKA

You stay here with Tobey and work
things out. Alec and I can figure
out your Kaiju conundrum.

Alec

We can who the what now?

PALOOKA

Come on boss, we gotta hurry.

Palooka then hurls himself out of a large nearby window.

Tobey lets out a small scream as Alec slides his hand into the puppet glove. He rolls his eyes as he jumps out the window after him. Tobey and Zack run to the window. Zack starts to turn translucent, when Alec flies up to the window holding on to Palooka.

ZACK
Strong puppet.

ALEC
It's not the puppet!

Alec and Palooka ZOOM away.

EXT. SODA FACTORY - EVENING

Alec and Palooka sneak towards an unassuming industrial building with a small sign reading "Cyclops Cola". It's flanked by abandoned storage facilities on one side, and forest on the other, yet to be landscaped by industry.

ALEC
(whispering)
So what do you think we've got in there?

PALOOKA
(whispering)
Well, Vivid city has a few Kaiju based super-villains, one or two slimed based, and of course, Duck and Cover.

ALEC
The ducks and explosives themed villain.

PALOOKA
Bingo.

Alec and Palooka make it to the entryway, Palooka goes to open the door, but it's locked. He starts rummaging through his pockets.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)
What can we use to open this?

Alec starts to go through his pockets too. He feels something, gets hopeful, but then slumps. Palooka sees this and slowly forms a big grin.

Alec pulls out the Chili's gift card.

Palooka snatches it up.

ALEC
This better not work.

Much to Alec's frustration, it works.

PALOOKA
Are you ready?

Alec nods. Palooka steps through the door.

INT. WHITE - MEANINGLESS

Palooka enters sterile whiteness, never-ending. There is no indication that he had just stepped into a building, or indication that there is a building, or indication that anything has ever been anywhere.

PALOOKA
Aw nuts.

Palooka takes a step. As his foot hits the floor, a million colors ripple out from the impact and flow on through infinity. He takes another step. The same thing happens.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)
Groovy.

Palooka begins stepping in place, faster and faster, creating more and more colors. Finally he jumps, and instead of landing on the surface he was standing on, he falls, as if the surface had never been there. PALOOKA SCREAMS.

A beat of fear.

Palooka stops screaming as, while it feels like he's falling, his surroundings indicate no such thing. Suddenly the myriad of colors appear in front of him in a circle.

The circle begins to morph, until finally ending up as a feminine version of the Duck Cyclops Monster. When she appears, she reaches out both her hands, stopping Palooka, making him unable to move.

Palooka looks around.

PALOOKA (CONT'D)
Kind of an open space concept you got here.

THE MAINTAINER says nothing.

A beat

PALOOKA (CONT'D)
The name's detec--

THE MAINTAINER
Detective Oswald Palooka.

PALOOKA

You were just waiting to do that.

THE MAINTAINER

Your current course is not in line with what was and what should be.

PALOOKA

(nodding his head
confused)

Gotcha.

THE MAINTAINER

I have again been tasked with righting your course. Previous attempts have been ineffective, so I appeal to you in person.

PALOOKA

Listen lady, I'm sorry if I did something wrong, but your monster put a lot of people in danger so you're --

THE MAINTAINER

You must cease at once.

PALOOKA

Wow you really like doing that. Cease what, what am I ceasing?

THE MAINTAINER

Your life.

PALOOKA

Oh. Yeah, no thanks.

Palooka begins to struggle with all of his might. The Maintainer laughs.

THE MAINTAINER

You have no power he...

She trails off as she sees Palooka start to glow. The color starts out red, but fades into violet, then blue, back to violet, then back to red, repeating.

The Maintainer looks on in horror.

THE MAINTAINER (CONT'D)

But, this is unseen.

PALOOKA
 (struggling)
 You're... gonna... have to...
 come... with... me!

Palooka finally gains control of his hand, and reaches forward to grab the Maintainer. His vision is suddenly filled with blurry images, some of which include:

A crowd in a theater booing

Palooka chained to a wall

Alec's puppet in a strange costume shouting at him

A wild looking Palooka poring through documents

Palooka looking out a window in a nice suit

Palooka running rooftop to rooftop, angry.

Finally ending with a figure in red and black surround by fire and destruction.

Palooka returns to reality to see The Maintainer staring daggers into him.

THE MAINTAINER
 How dare--

The Maintainer suddenly stands rigid, staring into space.

A beat

THE MAINTAINER (CONT'D)
 The universe has been rewritten
 once again.

The Maintainer looks at Palooka with seething rage. Palooka is scared, trying to contain what he'd just seen. The Maintainer throws her hands out, and everything

FADES OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. SODA FACTORY - EVENING

ALEC
 Palooka! Palooka! Oswald!

Palooka slowly comes to as Alec shakes him on the ground. He's in the entryway to the empty Soda Factory. Alec helps Palooka get to his feet.

PALOOKA
What happened?

ALEC
I don't know. You walked in and just collapsed. Are you ok?

Palooka stares at Alec for a beat. He then shakes whatever thought he had in his head away and smiles.

PALOOKA
You know what? Probably just dehydrated. Now come on, we've still got a case to solve.

Palooka walks off into the empty factory.

INT. SAYAMA'S KARAOKE CLUB - NIGHT

Palooka and Alec sit next to Zack at the bar.

ZACK
Nothing?

PALOOKA
(shrugs)
Completely abandoned.

ALEC
Like nothing was ever there.

PALOOKA
So, suspicious. We'll keep the case under our "ongoing" file.

ALEC
We'll have to remember to make an "ongoing" file.

ZACK
(sighs)
Well, there haven't been any more slime duck monsters, so I guess you did something. I really appreciate it guys. Um, also... about the whole secret identity thing?

PALOOKA

Mr. Ghost, we're on the same side here. You can trust us.

ALEC

For the right fee.

Alec's PUPPET makes the DISAPPROVING BEEPS.

Alec throws his hands up.

ALEC (CONT'D)

It was a joke!

ZACK

Well...

(a beat)

I guess that makes us pals.

Zack holds out his hand, and Palooka shakes it.

Tobey walks into the club. He walks over to the group, looks at Zack, then glares at Palooka and Alec. Palooka and Alec get the hint and awkwardly scooch their chairs out of frame.

TOBEY

Hey.

ZACK

Hey.

Tobey and Zack awkwardly avoid eye contact as Sayama slowly rises from behind the bar, wearing a bartending outfit, holding two drinks.

SAYAMA

Two sours, on the rocks.

Sayama puts the drinks in front of them.

ZACK

We didn't order anything.

TOBEY

I just walked in.

Zack takes a sip.

ZACK

This is lukewarm tap water.

SAYAMA

Please enjoy.

Sayama sinks back behind the bar.

Zack and Tobey looks at their drinks in confusion, and then laugh together.

ZACK
I'm sorry.

TOBEY
Are you sorry yet?

Zack is taken aback, having hoped that they'd say the same thing in unison.

ZACK
Well, not as romantic as I was hoping that'd be, but it's a start.

TOBEY
Listen, I understand. You were trying to keep me out of harm's way. But this is still a big deal. I need time.

ZACK
(worried)
What does that mean?

Tobey eyes his engagement ring. It's simple, something that Zack bought himself, without Tobey's money. He takes it off and hands it over to Zack.

TOBEY
I think you need to try again.

Zack immediately gets down on one knee. Tobey turns red and looks behind him. He sees a shocked Palooka and Sayama and an indifferent Alec.

TOBEY (CONT'D)
Not yet. Not here. Later, once I've gotten to know the rest of you.

Tobey helps Zack back to his stool and gives him a kiss on the forehead. Palooka and Alec scoot back over.

PALOOKA
Well I don't know how long this'll be a karaoke place, so I'm gonna enjoy it.

ZACK
What does that mean?

PALOOKA
Don't worry about it. Alec, you want to join me?

ALEC
I don't know...

PALOOKA
Come on.

A beat.

Alec sighs.

The PUPPET makes the APPROVING BEEPS.

INT. SAYAMA'S KARAOKE CLUB - STAGE - NIGHT

Palooka, Alec, Zack, Tobey, and Sayama all sing the chorus to Rhinestone Cowboy as we

FADE OUT.

FADE IN (END CREDITS):

INT. KARAOKE CLUB - NIGHT

Palooka holds the door open for his friends. The club's house lights are all on, as it has closed for the night. Zack and Tobey say their good-byes and head off. Alec stops at the door.

ALEC
Hey, are you sure you're ok?

PALOOKA
What, you mean at the factory. Yeah
I don't know what came over me.
Probably pressure of our first real
case getting the better of me.

ALEC
I thought you said it was
dehydration?

Palooka shrugs. Alec peers at him, looking for the reason this doesn't add up. He doesn't find anything. He gives Palooka a playful punch to the shoulder.

ALEC (CONT'D)
Well, you better get used to the
big cases, because unfortunately, I
think business is gonna start
picking up.

Palooka smiles, rubbing his shoulder.

PALOOKA

I'll see you tomorrow bo-- Alec.

Alec smiles and leaves.

Palooka's face turns sullen as he dashes towards his office.

INT. PALOOKA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Palooka runs to his desk and takes out a note pad and a pencil. He rips out a page and begins frantically drawing. He mutters to himself.

PALOOKA

Gotta remember, gotta remember.

We see that the drawing is an outline of the final vision of the man in red and black surrounded by fire as we.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE