

The Greatest Superpower

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EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND AT A COMMUNITY PARK - SUMMER DAY

Two teenage boys with baseball mitts throw a baseball back and forth in the hot summer sun.

REUBEN (18) crouches behind home plate, pounding his mitt with his fist, and waits for JOE (12) to throw the ball from the pitcher's mound.

REUBEN

Come on, Joe, is your arm made of lead? Put her right here! I can take it!

JOE

Okay, Reuben, but you're going to regret it!

Joe throws the baseball as hard as he can. Reuben catches the ball and falls backward into the dirt, pretending the throw was too much for him.

JOE

I got you, Reuben!

REUBEN

(laughing and picking himself up)
Good job, Joe! That was great! You'll be pitching for the New York Yankees someday. I'll be cheering you on at Yankee Stadium. Come on, your turn to catch.

The two boys exchange a spirited high-five as they switch positions.

Standing on the pitcher's mound, Reuben takes his time before pitching. Joe quickly catches the ball.

JOE

Don't be soft, Reuben; pitch it!

Overhead, the hot sun disappears as black storm clouds race across the sky. Rough winds rustle the trees, bringing rain and loud thunderclaps.

The two boys look up, feeling the cool rain on their hot, sweaty faces.

REUBEN

We'd better go home, Joe. This looks

REUBEN (CONT.)
like a bad storm.

As the two boys hurry across the park, jagged lightning hurls from the sky, throwing Reuben to the ground. Joe rushes to the boy's side and shakes him, but Reuben does not respond.

INT. INSIDE REUBEN'S HEAD

Reuben opens his eyes and sees a beautiful LADY bending over him, shimmering with white light.

REUBEN
You're too beautiful to be real. I must be dead.

LADY
(her voice like a thousand tinkling windchimes)
Not quite, but close enough. You've been chosen, Reuben, to do a great deed. You've proven what a kind and thoughtful big brother you've been with little Joe. He adores you and will grow to be a great man because of your positive influence. The world will end today unless you can stop it.

REUBEN
(trying to lift his head)
What are you talking about? I'm no saint. I'm no hero. I don't even go to church on Sunday. I'm nobody. I can't stop the end of the world. I'm no superhero, lady!

LADY
(softly chuckles)
It only takes one good person to stop this tide of disaster, Reuben. You've been chosen. If you refuse, the world will end, and your brother will die.

REUBEN
What do I have to do?

LADY
Accept the gift and use it.

REUBEN
What's the gift? How will I know what

REUBEN (CONT.)

to do?

LADY

LOVE. The gift is LOVE, Reuben - more LOVE than you've ever felt. Your heart will tell you what to do. Believe me; LOVE is more powerful than any superpower.

REUBEN

All right. I accept.

Another fiery bolt strikes Reuben, but it isn't lightning this time.

EXT. BACK AT THE PARK - DAY

Reuben wakes up, his face drenched with rain and his brother bending over him, shaking him.

REUBEN

I'm okay, Joe. I feel like a new person.

He pushes his brother aside and jumps to his feet. Laughing, he grabs his brother and hugs him tightly.

REUBEN

I'll never let anything happen to you, Joe. I love you too much.

JOE

(crying and hugging him back)
I thought I lost you, Reuben. I thought you were dead. I love you, too.

The wind's intensity lessens, and the two boys race through the park gates.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE TO THE PARK - DAY

Wearing a dripping yellow slicker, a HOMELESS MAN steps before them, blocking their path.

HOMELESS MAN

I need money, man. Gimme some cash.

Thunder cracks so loudly that Reuben stops in his tracks and covers his ears with his hands. He pulls Joe behind him for

safety. He shows the man his empty hands.

REUBEN

I don't have any money.

HOMELESS MAN

Boys like you always have money. Give it to me now!

The wind whips up again, blowing rain into Reuben's eyes. He wipes his arm across his face and smiles.

HOMELESS MAN

Come on, hurry up!

REUBEN

All I can give you is a hug and all my love.

HOMELESS MAN

I don't want no damn hug! Go on, get out of here, you crazy motherfucker.

Reuben wraps his arms around the man. Instantly, the wind tapers off, and the rain slows down. When he releases him, the man stumbles away, muttering under his breath.

REUBEN

I understand now, Joe. All I have to do is keep hugging people.

JOE

(shivering)

I don't know what you're talking about. That lightning did something to your head, Reuben. Just stop it! I feel scared. I'm wet and tired, and I want to go home.

REUBEN

No, you're right, little brother. This mission belongs to me alone. You run home and tell Mom and Dad I'll be there soon. Here, let me hug you.

Reuben hugs his brother, and the wind suddenly stops.

REUBEN

See, I told you, Joe. It's working!

INT. REUBEN AND JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe rushes into his parent's middle-class house, slamming the door behind him. He's dripping wet and visibly upset.

JOE

Mom! Dad! Something's wrong with Reuben.

Joe's FATHER and MOTHER hurry into the hallway from the living room.

FATHER

Where's Reuben? Why are you alone?

MOTHER

What's wrong, Joe? Has something happened to your brother?

JOE

I'll explain in the car. We've got to find him. Hurry!

INT. A SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD COFFEE BAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Reuben enters a warm and cozy coffee bar. Although he leaves a water trail all over the floor, his face radiates warmth and exaltation. CUSTOMERS watch him curiously as he approaches the CASHIER.

CASHIER

Can I help you, Sir?

REUBEN

Yes, I need to hug you.

CASHIER

Excuse me, Sir? I can't let you do that.

As the words tumble out of her mouth, rain and hail batter the roof overhead. Reuben points to the shop window.

REUBEN

Do you see that storm? It's the end of the world. That storm is going to kill all of us unless I stop it. I need to hug you and everybody else in this place.

CASHIER

Did you want to place an order, Sir?
If not, I'm going to have to ask you
to leave.

REUBEN

I don't have any money.

The cashier pulls out her cell phone and calls 911.

CASHIER

I need the police here right now to
deal with a demanding customer. He
won't listen to me, and he won't
leave. He's trying to touch customers
in the store. Thank you.

REUBEN

You had to do that, but it won't stop
the storm.

The wind rages outside, blowing hail against the shop window.
Visible dents blemish parked cars.

REUBEN

(appealing to the other customers)
I love you! This storm will not stop;
it will only get worse. The only way I
can stop it is to give you my love and
great big hugs. I know it sounds
crazy, but I need you to trust me.

The wind wails around the building, rattling the front door.

GRANDMOTHERLY WOMAN

You can hug me, young man. I need a
good hug. My husband is in the
hospital with pneumonia. I'll take a
chance on you.

Reuben walks over to her table and engulfs her in a warm hug.
The rattling stops.

REUBEN

Thank you, ma'am. I love you with all
my heart. And I hope your husband
recovers soon. Is anybody else willing
to take a chance?

HIPPIE-LOOKING DUDE

So let's just have one big orgy in the

HIPPIE-LOOKING DUDE (CONT.)
middle of the floor, man. Who do you
think you are, Jesus Christ?

REUBEN
I'm nobody. But I was given a mission
to save all of you. Can I hug you?

HIPPIE-LOOKING DUDE
What the hell, dude? Give me a hug if
that's what floats your boat.

Reuben moves over to the young man's table, and they embrace.
The wailing stops.

REUBEN
Do you see what I mean? The wind is
already dying down. Is anybody else
game?

A LITTLE BLOND BOY
You're all wet. I don't want a wet
hug.

The wind wails again, and Reuben turns to the boy and his
mother.

BOY'S MOTHER
I'm sorry. He doesn't like to get wet.
He won't go swimming, and baths scare
him.

REUBEN
It's okay; it's okay. My little
brother never liked getting wet, but I
taught him how to swim. Now, he's a
champion swimmer. He wins blue ribbons
and owns a shelf full of trophies.

A LITTLE BLOND BOY
Really? Okay, you can hug me.

Reuben moves over to the boy's table and hugs him. The wind
stops wailing again.

A LITTLE BLOND BOY
(clapping his hands)
It worked!

REUBEN
Of course, it worked. Can I hug Mommy,

REUBEN (CONT.)

too?

The little boy nods, and his mother smiles encouragingly. Reuben and the mother embrace. The hail stops falling.

REUBEN

It's working, folks! Pretty soon, you will all be driving home safe and sound.

Hands shoot up in the air. Reuben navigates his way from table to table, giving each occupant a big hug.

Gradually, the wind dies down. A gentle rain melts the hail.

In the corner, a PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN eyes Reuben suspiciously. He takes a step toward her table.

PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN

Don't you dare touch me! That's what my brother said right before he raped me. "You'll be all right, Annie. I love you and need to touch you."

She pulls a small pistol from her purse and points it at him. Reuben stands still, raising his hands in the air.

REUBEN

It's okay - Annie, you said? Nobody's going to hurt you. I want to stop this storm.

PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN

It's just a stupid storm. Nobody can stop it.

REUBEN

At least, let me try.

PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN

You're just another pervert, like my brother.

REUBEN

I'm sorry about what happened to you.
 (he waves his hand toward the other customers)
 Why not let us help? Is there family we can call? The police will be here soon. Please. . .put down the gun.

PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN
 Nobody can help me. My brother is
 dead. I shot him right before coming
 here. I want to die now.

The gun goes off, hitting Reuben's right shoulder.

REUBEN
 Please, Annie, killing me won't solve
 anything. Let me help you.

Outside, wind, rain, and hail escalate to hurricane-like
 force, ripping small trees from their roots. The front window
 shatters, throwing broken glass onto screaming customers.

The woman fires the gun again, grazing Reuben's right side.
 His face contorts with pain as he looms over the woman's
 table. When she fires again, the bullet tears through his
 belly.

Reuben falls over, wrapping his arms around the woman's
 shoulders.

REUBEN
 (grunting)
 I love you. . .

The woman shrieks and drops the gun.

PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN
 Get off me, you perverted bastard!

She tries to push Reuben off of her, but he's too heavy. She
 gives up and begins to cry.

PALE-FACED YOUNG WOMAN
 I-I'm sorry. . .Please forgive me. I
 loved my brother, but he betrayed me.
 I didn't mean to hurt you. It's not
 your fault. Please don't die!

The storm disappears, and brilliant sunshine illuminates
 clear blue skies. TWO POLICE OFFICERS rush into the shop. One
 officer calls for backup and an ambulance while the other
 checks Reuben's pulse.

Joe rushes into the shop with his mother and father.

JOE
 Reuben!

Joe tries to rush to his brother, but his father holds him back. Sirens whine in the background.

OFFICER CHECKING PULSE

He's alive.

REUBEN'S FATHER

(engulfing his son and wife in a
big hug)

Thank God!

Customers and EMPLOYEES cheer and hug each other with tears streaming down their faces. PARAMEDICS enter the shop with a gurney.

The paramedics retrieve Reuben's body, strap it onto the gurney, and head for the door.

The police officer stands the pale young woman up, cuffs her, and follows close behind. Her clothing is covered with blood.

As the gurney passes Joe and his parents, Joe throws himself across REUBEN'S body.

JOE

I love you, Reuben. I'll be cheering
you on until you get well.

Reuben moans.

REUBEN

I. . .love. . .you. . .Joe.