

UNWITTING ACCOMPLICE

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FADE IN:

INT. NAIL SALON - DAY

A fairly busy inner-city establishment with several Chinese MANICURISTS serving varied CUSTOMERS. One of the Manicurists, YI (26) finishes up with her Customer, rises to take a break.

A Latina Customer, CONSUELA (18) enters the salon, rushes over and takes that seat immediately.

CONSUELA

Yi, don't go. I got an emergency here.

Consuela holds up a hand with very well-done fake nails, except that the tips of three of them are melted. Yi's surgical mask doesn't hide her astonishment.

CONSUELA

Freak accident at work. Can you fix it? Please?

YI

I can fix this, but you must be more careful.

Consuela crosses her heart with her free hand. As Yi expertly removes the ruined nails, Consuela's free hand slides a folded bit of paper to Yi.

CONSUELA

From a guy I know, who said it was from another guy. I think you should make him ask you in person.

Yi takes a look at the note, and her eyes widen even more than last time.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - DAY

A Latino man in a long black coat and gloves plus a colorful *lucha libre* mask, stands idly twirling a length of chain. Depending on who you ask, MAL SUERTE (22) is either a dark superhero... or a supervillain with flashes of conscience.

Descending directly from above, the superheroine JUST ICE (26) floats down to street level. She is translucent blue with vaguely Chinese features. Frost forms a white uniform of sorts on her body.

A loud BARK behind Mal Suerte gets his attention.

MAL SUERTE

No, Duke, I didn't think she'd come alone.

DUKE, a German Shepherd dog wearing a brightly-colored costume of his own, steps from the shadows.

MAL SUERTE

Just Ice, I knew you'd bring another hero from the fancy cape club. But... Duke? Señorita, you wound me.

JUST ICE

He understands everyone, everyone understands him, and he can sniff out anything... including lies.

MAL SUERTE

He can also bite through steel, but you know this. What you want to know: why has Mal Suerte asked me here? I have a street justice thing you will want to be part of. Come.

Mal Suerte whips his chain - now much longer than it was - around a pole and swings to a high fire escape.

Just Ice flies after him, and Duke runs along the ground.

MAL SUERTE

That museum heist you broke up a couple days ago... Señor Vice thinks someone tipped off the cops.

Duke yips at them from below as Mal Suerte swings from perch to perch down the alley.

MAL SUERTE

Yes, that someone is in danger. Two suppliers he suspects. One provided the superstrong acid, the other one provided the climbing gear.

JUST ICE

Look. I don't like you. I don't like how you steal good or bad karma from one person and stick it on someone else. But protecting a tipster I can agree with.

Mal Suerte lands near Duke, holds out a bright violet piece of cloth for the superdog to sniff.

MAL SUERTE
It's from the guy who bought the
superstrong acid.

Duke dashes off, and the other two follow.

MAL SUERTE
And the karma thing is not my
fault. The Chain of Events, she is
magic, and she chose me. And let me
tell you: my own luck is loco.

At just that moment, Mal Suerte's landing on a fire escape
scatters seven mason jars. One bounces back into his hand. He
wraps his chain around that one.

MAL SUERTE
(softly)
Heh, lucky seven.

Another mason jar falls to street level, where it smashes a
mirror. Mal Suerte grimaces and moves on.

JUST ICE
He's a costumed henchman of Mister
Vice. With some luck, he's laying
low, and we'll get him quietly.

Duke barks a couple times then leaps over a fence.

EXT. PUBLIC POOL - DAY

Mal Suerte and Just Ice land next to Duke, facing a city pool
teeming with dozens of SWIMMERS.

An athletic HENCHMAN (21) in bright violet tights emblazoned
with a white "V" holds a glass vial up high. It contains an
orange liquid.

HENCHMAN
You follow me one more step, I'll
throw it in the pool. Even diluted,
you know it'll kill them all.

Predictably, the Swimmers panic.

HENCHMAN
No one move!

MAL SUERTE
"Some luck" she says. But all bad.

Three barks from Duke get the Swimmers to stay still.

The lower part of the Chain of Events puts down the mason jar, extends back through the fence. Soon that end of the Chain has extended enough to slither up behind the Henchman.

He notices the sound of metal on concrete, throws the vial before the Chain wraps him up.

White beams from Just Ice's hands flash-freeze the pool.

The vial breaks on the ice, and the orange acid freezes.

Duke darts over to Swimmers trapped in the ice, chomps the ice to free them.

The Chain of Events leaves the Henchman dangling from a lamp post then returns to its normal length.

Mal Suerte pulls out a knife, and starts scraping the acid into the mason jar.

JUST ICE

Tell me no one's under the surface.

Duke's barking reassures Just Ice.

Mal Suerte seals the acid inside the mason jar as Duke frees the last Swimmer.

MAL SUERTE

He won't tell Señor Vice anything.
Now for the other supplier.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ROOFTOP - DAY

The heroes look across the street through the window of a CHINESE MAN (29) writing in a journal. Mal Suerte hands a small pair of binoculars to Just Ice.

POV binoculars: The Man's previous journal entry reads "I knew they were up to no good. I should have called the cops, but I was too chicken." Back to normal POV.

JUST ICE

He's... not the tipster. Just some sporting goods salesman.

MAL SUERTE

But the most likely suspect. And he has family. His defenseless little sister works in a nail salon.

Duke snarls.

MAL SUERTE

Okay, maybe not so defenseless. But still, no one knows who the tipster is, and Señor Vice is going to off SOMEONE as an example. I think he picks this guy.

Duke sniffs lightly, nods toward Just Ice.

JUST ICE

We should prevent that murder, no matter who it is.

Duke snorts in agreement.

MAL SUERTE

We can protect him and hope he's the one targeted... or give him the luck he needs that Señor Vice offs some lowlife instead.

Wisps of vapor rise from Just Ice.

JUST ICE

Doing this your way would cause problems for another case I'm on.

Just Ice looks over at Duke, holds his gaze for a moment. She then hangs her head and holds out her hand. More vapor.

MAL SUERTE

I swear I will take as little of your good karma as I can. But you have so much, he'll probably win the lottery tomorrow.

The tip of the Chain of Events "sips" a bit of Just Ice's unseen aura, stirring the vapor slightly. Mal Suerte flings the aura at the Chinese Man through the open window.

MAL SUERTE

Welcome to the gray area.

He hands the jar of acid to Just Ice.

MAL SUERTE

You may want to dissolve that journal in here. Someone may --

Just Ice stares at the jar, and is enveloped by a cloud of vapor. She slumps against Mal Suerte as Yi - manicurist's lab coat, surgical mask, name tag, and all.

YI

I told it would case problems.

MAL SUERTE

Your power depends on you being a stick-in-the-mud? How inconvenient.

YI

I could be out for days.

MAL SUERTE

Why nothing goes to plan today? Allow me to help. What is your very righteous case?

YI

One of the street gangs is running a huge fake I.D. operation.

MAL SUERTE

Consider it done.

INT. DINGY HALLWAY - DAY

Mal Suerte takes off his mask, coat, and gloves. The Chain of Events loops around to become his belt. He opens a door to --

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Consuela operates a high-speed ID card printer, careful to avoid the "Danger - Hot Surface" parts. More young adult GANGSTERS work in other stages of fake ID creation.

CONSUELA

(addresses Mal Suerte)

Hey, Paco, how's things?

PACO

Ai! At work, it's "El Jefe." You esbirros think you can step up the pace here?

Consuela and the other Gangsters nod, afraid to say no.

PACO

Good. 'Cause as luck would have it, I found out the law was closing in on this place. I nudged them toward the other fake I.D. shop in town.

FADE OUT.