FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

A film projector runs before a group of unseen, but heard audience of pre-teen kids.

Black screen. Dust, scratches on the 16 millimeter film. The footage flashes a hypnotic strobe beat...a kaleidoscope of colors. The wall-clock’s hands move quickly from 1:30 to 1:45.

The faces of the mannequin children watch as the presentation ends. The reel’s film feed end slaps around in a spin cycle.

Seated in the far back of the row, JOE (13) looks up from his comic book. Joe jolts up from his seat, gazes over the plastic, expressionless faces of his classmates - all of them the same.

Joe glances to the teacher’s desk. The nameplate on the desk reads MRS. GRENGEKO and she is a splitting image of a department store mannequin.

Joe backs up, afraid. Bumps into his own desk. His papers, pencil and comic book splatter to the floor. His eyes dart right to them.

In between the comics pages, a large upper right panel displays a figure with a big, dark tweed coat, white eye mask and brim hat. The hero’s caption reads “I must stop the Psychobrain!”

Joe bends down, picks up the comic. On the cover – The Platinum Phantom- “Fabulous FIRST issue!”. Tucks it under his arm.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Joe strolls on by a random mannequin. He stops, does a double-take. His demeanor changes. A sinister grin creeps over his face as he swats the dummy in the shoulder with his comic book.

JOE
Flies are on you! Hornets!

Stuffs the comic under his arm, comes up closer to the Alex mannequin. Digs in Alex mannequin’s jacket pockets. Pulls out a roll of gum, a wadded up dollar and two quarters.
Stuffs the money in his pants pocket. Considers the gum. Rips off part of the wrapper and plops a stick in his mouth. Smiles as he chews and chews.

JOE
Oh, yeah, big bad dude now...

Blows a bubble, lets it pop. Takes the gum out of his mouth. Places the slimy mass on Alex mannequin's shirt.

PLATINUM PHANTOM (O.S.)
Hey, kid!

Joe whirls about, sees a figure down the long hallway, dressed like the comic book character The Platinum Phantom.

Platinum Phantom marches towards Joe. Joe backs up a step, dumbfounded. He scrambles back to his comic book, slips it out of the cover. Looks back at the approaching figure, now in front of him.

JOE
Can’t be.

Joe glances down, flips pages. His eyes widen, as artwork panels reveal his discovery of the room of kid mannequins, his revenge on the Alex mannequin.

The last panel has Platinum Phantom saying the quote from a moment ago. The Next page has empty artwork. An image fades on the first panel...

JOE
This is wicked.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Wicked... Who’s this?

Thumbs to Alex.

JOE
School bully. Shakes me down for my lunch money. Just a little payback.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Getting what was taken from you is one thing. Revenge is another.

JOE
I’m not a bad kid - I get good grades!
PLATINUM PHANTOM
I know. If you were, you would have jammed it up his... never mind. It’s not important. What is -

JOE
Cool! You going to save the world?

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Yes! And you’re going to help!

JOE
Awesome! What do I have to do?

PLATINUM PHANTOM
That document opens a dimensional portal between two dimensions.

JOE
The comic book?

PLATINUM PHANTOM
A criminal known as Psychobrain constructed a device which created... comic book and swapped everyone in this school with crash test dummies and mannequins.

JOE
How come?

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Because that’s how a twisted mind works. He made a ransom demand to the city, I came to stop him. I was about to find him...now I’m here.

Joe scuffles away.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Where are you going?

JOE
I need a drink.

Platinum Phantom frowns, follows Joe. They head straight to a pop machine. Joe fishes for his change.

JOE
Think I have enough.

Plops in the coins, makes a selection.
PLATINUM PHANTOM
The fate of the world is at risk and all you want is a root beer?

JOE
If it was the end of the world, wouldn’t you just want to have a root beer?

PLATINUM PHANTOM
I’d try to save -- what kind of a question is that?

JOE
And is it really the end of the world? No more bullies! No more cardboard pizza for lunch! No more homework!

Toasts the Platinum Phantom.

JOE
Freedom is a root beer.

Platinum Phantom gives Joe a shocked look.

JOE
Plat, you’re asking the wrong questions.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
You lost me kid.

Joe hands him the comic.

JOE
Take a look.

Platinum Phantom thumbs through it. Does a double take.

JOE
Find any bad guys? No? Why is that? Psychobrain’s got to be around here, but you never met Psychobrain.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Impossible!

JOE
Is it, Plat? That out of all the kids in school, the most gifted student -me- is the only one unaffected by this dastardly plan?
Platinum Phantom goes to beginning of the comic. As he reads, Platinum Phantom grits his teeth.

JOE
That’s right. You never left your dimension. I left mine. The dummy army was never sent.

Platinum Phantom looks Joe in the eyes. Not pleased.

JOE
Everyone from my side is alive and well. World’s fine. Both of them.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Your parents! What about them!

JOE
Relax, Plat. In comics, nobody ages. Besides, I really didn’t do anything really evil –

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Still wrong. Unethical.

JOE
Apples and oranges. We need to come up with a new name for me, seeing how I’m your new sidekick.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
Sidekick?

JOE
Hey, that could work. A little lame, but I don’t think it’s taken. I got to learn some ground and pound, stuff like that.

PLATINUM PHANTOM
I am not calling you “Sidekick”. You’re right. It is lame.

JOE
You’ll get over it. Just call me...

FADE OUT