

Small Town Hero

by Bryan Schuder

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! SLAP!

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! SLAP!

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! Stumble THUD

"Oww! Goddammit! Where the hell did I put that- Oh here it is. And... You be quiet."

CLICK

That's the start of my day. I started getting too used to my alarm. I was unconsciously turning it off. So, I wrap it in a towel and throw it somewhere in my room. Makes me get out of bed to go find it. A swish of some mouthwash, and I put the suit on. It's really some decorated jumpsuit that my girlfriend put together for me. She does cosplaying at a lot of the science fiction conventions. Turns out the local superhero work I do gives her opportunity to get A LOT of practice in fixing and designing. I'm really liking this latest model, I hope it lasts a while.

I get the coffee going. Candace takes her's black. Usually the smell will start to get her waking up. Night classes at the local tech college pretty much shift her sleeping schedule, so she doesn't wake until a hour after me. We started living together a few months ago, so we're figuring it out as we go. Hopefully, once she finishes out her classes, we can see about moving to the state university. But that all depends if the local superhero league has an opening and thinks I can manage it. Otherwise, I'll see if the IT department has an opening... I'm not against dusting off my computer science degrees.

I set off and walk down to the town square. Despite what Internet Hero Database says, I can actually fly. The town is just so small, it's really not necessary. I can fly pretty fast too, it's probably why the IHDB lists one of my powers as teleportation. Damn, I wish I could teleport, but... when the town is only a few miles wide and when you can break the sound barrier, it must seem like teleportation.

At the town square, I do my rounds with everyone. We've got Gus at the hardware store. Mary Ellen runs the grocery. Grover runs the local card/game/toy/video/etc shop. I play D&D there on Wednesday nights. Jake runs the convenience shop and gas station. Robert runs the pharmacy. And Hugh and Sydney, are getting the town hall open to handle business. And Officer Hayes, usually is rolling out of the station by now... Yep, there he is.

I stop by the police station, get the incident list from last night, and see if there's anything they need help on. I sit in on the morning briefings. I try not to interfere too much, as I'm only suppose tackle anything too out of the ordinary.

Then I start my patrol around town. I hit the schools, clinic, parks, and few other public places to just make sure nothing is leftover from the night before. Then move over to the few strip malls and check to see if anything is off there. Usually, I get a call from- There she is.

"Morning, babe. ... Did you find the cinnamon rolls I put in the microwave? ... Yah, I'll swing by the game shop for lunch. ... I don't know. Umm, how about a sandwich from Jasper's? ... Okay, Club Sandwich. ... I'll swing by the grocery and get a 2-liter of Dr. Pepper. ... Nah, we

don't need ice. I'll just chill it myself. ... HA! I'll be careful. Worst case, we'll have Dr. Pepper slushes. ... Okay. Love you, too. Bye."

She's great. She's really pushing me to get into a bigger town. Truthfully, that whole economy dropping out was the worst and best thing to happen to me. Lost my job in software development. Got broke. Lost hope. Moved here. Got shitty job. Nearly died. Somehow got superpowers. Got better job with the county superhero league. Finally crawled out of my pit of despair, saw daylight and people, and met Candace playing D&D.

Ah, finally, the e-mail newsletter from the State Superhero League... Usually nothing too crazy to worry about. Most the big names handle the ridiculous stuff. I just like to keep an eye out for stragglers and leakage from other operations. I've been able to nab a few crooks. This town is so small, it's easy to pick anyone not from here. And most aren't really smart anyway and try to start something. As I've figured out my abilities more, I've come up with some really cool looking stunts to make them just give up. It doesn't take much. The big heroes have already put the fear of everything in them. My favorite one lately is catching bullets, making it look like I toss them in my mouth, chew them up, and spit out figurines of me. It's just some sleight of hand with my D&D character's mini. Most crooks are so dumbfounded, that I can usually walk them out and right into the police station before they get their senses about them again.

But... Nothing on the list today. Oh well.

I stop by Jasper's the local sandwich shop, get Candace's and my order. Grab a 2-liter, and manage to use some thermal transfer ability to chill it down. Still figuring that one out. Hope to figure out how to make some dry ice eventually. Next Halloween is going to be awesome.

I like the game shop. Candace works there, we got a lot of friends there, and there's actually people who keep up with the whole Superhero Leagues world. After eating lunch at the counter, I have a chair outside facing the town square. I hang out around the square, since it's the center of activity for the town for quite some time after lunch. That and people actually started to come here first when they needed me, so I made it my unofficial office.

I leave for the schools right before they let out and help with traffic. Keeps the cops on patrol and there's something to be said for having someone that can actually stop traffic if needed. The schools originally called me in to deal with this one asshole that keep speeding through the zones. It's amazing how willing to change someone is when you've grabbed and dragged their car to a stop and explaining what the school zone signs were... by using the actual, lifted from the ground sign with the concrete base still attached as a visual aid. After that the schools just prefer to let me handle it. People watch their speedometers and keep right at 15MPH.

Town rush happens... Well, a rush for this town. I usually head off to the local bank, since they have the tall building around I can watch everything from. I tried that whole hovering above the city thing, but that just distracted too many people and almost caused a few traffic accidents.

My active shift is over at this point. I'm always on-call, but they don't need me patrolling around. Zoom over to the game shop to pick up Candace and fly back home. Need to get out of the suit for a bit and she needs to get ready for class. Then, I fly her over to the tech college. Thankfully, there's a balcony at the student union that no one really uses, so it's a nice landing spot that doesn't attract too much attention.

I zoom back home, sit back in the computer chair, and goof around until Candace's class lets out. Zoom over, and fly her back. Sometimes we take the scenic route back and talk about things. From a 100ft up, the town and county is really pretty. Sometimes I feel she's a bit worried about the whole superhero/non-superhero relationship thing.

"It's just that..."

"That?"

"That well, you can fly! And have strength, speed, and all other kinds of abilities. We're still discovering things!"

"Exactly. We. We are discovering things."

"Come on. They are your powers!"

"That I wouldn't have bothered learning about without you."

"Bullshit, you would have figured them out, eventually."

"Maybe. Maybe not. I'm actually a very lazy person at heart. I wouldn't have even bothered with trying most things outside of three things without you."

"..."

"Without you, I'd have no motivation to do more than what was needed to pay the power bill to keep my computer running. I'd be trying to fight crime in my regular clothes with some random safety gear I had laying around. I'd have nothing but a smelly hovel to retreat to at the end of the day. And there'd be no one around to keep me human."

"Damn you... now you're going all sappy."

"Sap nothing. I got someone to fight along side with in this strange life we live. And I get to do a lot of it in progressively more awesome super suits."

"That reminds me, I almost finished up the next costume for the con next week."

"Wait... The one for..."

"Yes."

". . . !"

"You want me to put it on, BEFORE I complete it?"

"What's not complete with it?"

She whispers in my ear. The scenic route gets shortcut by a near zoom back home. She won't admit it, but she LOVES that sudden burst of speed.

I respect those superheros with the big cities. I really do. Some days I really want one of those cities. Other days... and nights... I appreciate this peaceful little town and its "not much" going on.