

**Road Trip**  
**A Life of Ace Journeyman Story**

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Dogboy symbol Trademark 2017-Present BLT Publishing

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# The Aura Thief

As usual, Glen's right jab knocked me out, thus allowing me to ascend to the Astral Plane. Once free of my physical body, I jumped into the air and flew towards the cracking viewing deck like a missile. Fortunately, since I had no physical form my speed caused no sonic boom or other effect.

When I arrived, rescued workers were already evacuating the people from the observation deck. Another team was on the ground controlling the crowd. Small bits of debris, about the size of pebbles or rocks, of the deck crumbled to the ground causing the crowd to gasp and shriek.

"Get back!" ordered a police officer.

Meanwhile, the tremor, which dislodged the pieces, caused the patrons and rescue workers to stumble. The deck's metal bracings began to groan and moan. Those would be my first stop. I hovered by the bracings and extended my hand. The metal reacted to my will and began to steady themselves. But, I felt something was wrong. My power should have restored the beams long enough for the rescue workers to save the people. I could feel the metal already weakening.

I scanned the area trying to pinpoint what could be causing this unnatural state of decay. It didn't take long to spot the cause. The building's life-energy was being drained from it. Just like humans, animals, and plants, objects have lifeforces. These lifeforces can be seen by astral beings. Most people would call these bio-energy fields auras or a soul.

Once the life-energy/aura of a person or object moves on, the physical body begins to decay. Or in the case of a building...collapse.

Basically, something was stealing the building's soul and without it, the building was dying.

The rescue workers had the evacuation under control; I needed to deal with the real problem. If I didn't find out what was taking the building's aura, it'd completely fall.

I spotted a beam of energy being pulled out from the building and followed it. It led me to a nearby figure dressed completely in black skin-tight clothes. He stood just a few feet from the fleeing Hauntington customers and staff.

I doubt he *actually* wore a skin-tight suit. In the Astral Plane, you see things symbolically. Since I don't know who this villain was, I saw him as a faceless, dark figure—for all I knew it could be a female. The Astral Plane was telling me this was the perpetrator by showing me what I understood as an "unknown bad guy."

The mystery figure looked to be pulling the energy into a jar. Again, I doubt they were really standing there holding a jar; but since I don't know what device they were using, the Astral Plane showed me a Mason jar. It didn't matter so much as what it looked like as what it did.

I landed behind him and slowly approached.

Suddenly, the figure chuckled. "I was hoping you'd show up." He slowly turned to face me.

He was wearing spook specs!

Spook specs are a white and purple eye visor that allow people to see and hear into the astral world—kind of like those cameras that can take pictures of auras but much better.

"So, the rumors are true," said the mystery man. His voice was distorted since I didn't know what they sounded like. "There is a journey-man protecting Newton." He shrugged. "Doesn't matter. You can't stop me from carrying out my plan."

"Which is?"

"Wouldn't you like to know."

"Yes. I would. That's why I just asked you."

His smile widened below the visor. It was an animalistic smile. Actually, an animal bearing its teeth looked friendlier.

In a flash of movement, he flung his arms out. I registered a whirling noise then felt pain. I checked my arm. Something cut through the sleeve of my white jacket. I could see some blood. I covered the hole with my hand and groaned. The man chuckled again. He revealed to me a curved obsidian-like blade with red markings that looked both natural and intentional.

"A reaper blade," I whispered.

Reaper blades, along with magic bullets/arrows, are capable of harming an astral body.

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The holographic video paused.

"The specs and blades are made from the materials found at Neo-Geo, right?" asked Joe.

Ace nodded. "When the asteroid that put the dinosaurs to sleep hit, the blast was powerful enough to not only create Neo-Geo Mountain, but alter the stones around it."

The video and narration began again.

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"I'll just have to keep my distance then." I held my hand towards a drinking fountain. The water sprayed out and started to form a spear. The water dropped abruptly as I cried out in pain. A reaper blade cut a hole in my white jeans near my knee. The black and red blade clattered to the ground nearby.

The mystery man pulled a larger curved blade from a holder near his hips. "Ye-aaAAAH!!" he yelled before charging towards me.

I summoned the fire/light/heat from the light fixtures. It formed into a flaming sword just as the blade and man reached me. Our weapons clashed in a sound of metal even though mine was made of flames.

The two of us went at it, our swords smashing and crashing. My training with Ether Operations was paying off. He sliced at my mid-section. I barely dodged by leaping backwards. The blade did cut into my white shirt, but not deep enough to hurt. We moved around the skyscraper's observation deck slashing and stabbing at each other—neither of us getting hits.

I'm not sure what the scene looked like to the others present. It could have looked like some guy trying to fight an invisible foe. Normally in these situations, people seem to not notice or care. If the event becomes "too weird," reality has a way of "snapping back to normal." For instance, one time I was fighting a hydra in the park, but people only reported a wild animal on the loose. This strange fight would probably be explained away as some person who lost it during the crisis.

Well, that's what I thought until the mystery man decided to up the stakes by grabbing a six-year-old girl.

"Let me finish my work, Journey-man, or I'll kill this child," he snarled. The girl whimpered a cry.

The remaining people screamed and the building rumbled. I could hear close by windows crackle. A person pointed at me. "It's the Spook!"

Now that the encounter had moved from just some random guy freaking out to some random guy threatening an innocent, the people—for whatever reason—could see me. Of course once the event was over, there'd be no evidence of me being here and any remaining stories of a "ghost man" would be considered urban legend or conspiracy theories.

"This is between you and me," I said. "No need to endanger anyone."

"You're right. This is between us." He pointed his blade towards the black and white Ether Operations badge attached to my white with black stripes letterman jacket. "And them. They say they hunt monsters, but *they* are the monsters. They don't like anyone different than them."

“Let the girl go, and we can discuss this.”

The stranger shrugged. “OK.” He then pitched the girl over the edge. The girl and parents screamed. Everyone else gasped in horror. I ran for then dived over the deck’s edge.

She dropped quickly, her black braids whipping in the air. She continued her high-pitched scream and thrashed her limbs.

Since at the time I was an astral being, I was not restricted to things like speed. I could easily catch up with her, but it would do no good. I’m not physical; she would pass right through me.

I aimed my arms towards her. The wind began to circle her. The small twister of air grew stronger and stronger. Finally, she began to slow. By the time we reached the bottom, she landed with as much force as a leaf in autumn.

Of course, by the time I returned to the observation deck the man was gone. At least without him stealing the building’s energy, the crisis was over.

Thank you for reading.

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